

TORN NEST

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1. Friends in England

I sit alone with my thoughts and my prayers. I sit in England instead of Pakistan. I sit with tears instead of family celebration and joy at this time when my dear son Obed was to be married. And I sit deprived of his presence and help as our bread winner in the time of my retirement.

He was shot by Muslim fanatics. It happened on that fateful night of June 2, 1990, six months ago now. In one sense my family had been prepared for this, because I had received threatening letters four years previously. The reality was devastating. But it was also a time of grace. Because of my poor health, my daughter assisted me on the day following to go over to the church, where the funeral service was led by the Reverend Johnson from Hyderabad. I was not expected to take part, but managed to get to my feet and to say, "I have forgiven those people

who have killed my son. I am even prepared to kiss their hands if they come to me." I sent telegrams the next day, requesting prayer, and was able to write to friends in England, "I have taken this injury in a thankful way. I have sacrificed the precious son I had in Pakistan. My wife, Daisy, and I are the most fortunate parents to share the cup of the sufferings. We are now realising what it means to forgive those who give us great pain."

Yes, and at the same time we were all utterly shattered. Our nest was torn. It was broken. In our numbness and our grief we faced a lot of practical tasks. We had to leave Sukkur. I took my wife, Daisy, to the comparative security of her house in Sialkot. After seventeen years at St. Saviour's Church in Sukkur, I prepared to hand over my responsibilities, and on October 1, I was retired after 30 years in the ordained ministry in the Sindh Province of Pakistan.

Daisy and I were very quickly invited by my CMS friends to spend at least six months in the safety of England, and I managed to obtain the needed entry permits. But her grief was very deep and she chose to remain in Sialkot, awaiting our older son's return from Korea on completion of his theological studies. Our daughter, Khulda, also remained behind in Karachi to finish the last months of her post-graduate studies in anaesthetics. So on that day, October 17, 1990, I flew alone to Heathrow Airport, with no idea of what I would be doing in England. On a previous occasion the CMS friends had made arrangements for me. This time I felt like a defeated general who had all his supporting forces killed in the field. I felt that there would not be much with me to offer to anybody, but only to show my

wounds and share some tears with the people of God. Yet, I was at peace as I faced this new situation.

I was met by Mrs Catherine Ray, and was taken to their home in Birmingham. After we had gone inside I soon realised that Pastor and Mrs Ray had moved into this house only a few days before, because things were lying about and needed to be put in their proper places. After I was shown around and made comfortable, I had nothing to do but sit and watch Catherine busily mending her nest. I became curious as to why she was doing it all herself and finally I questioned her. She explained to me that labour in Britain was very expensive and that they could not afford to take on any workmen. She was busy until the very last minute before the whole family left for London, and I remained quietly on my own in their new nest. It became a sign of hope to me.

Where would my own new nest be? Several suggestions had been made by the friends who had invited me - Bishop Michael Nazir Ali, the Reverend Mark Oxbrow of CMS, Arthur Pont and Keith Wood of Interserve, and others. But nothing definite had been decided. I began to get in touch with my friends in different parts of the country and I travelled to visit them. When I returned to Birmingham I was told by the Reverend and Mrs Ray that in Edinburgh there was a group of young people who called themselves "Asian Concern". They had set themselves to reach out with the Word of Hope to the many Indians, Pakistanis and others living in Edinburgh. They had invited me to meet them. So I went up there and found a lovely group of people. They included Rachel Marsh and Abby McGill, a real Scot who I sometimes found rather

difficult to understand! I also met Marilyn Armstrong who had some experience of being in Pakistan for a short time. I also met Shabash Joshi and Shameem, a lovely couple with their three fine sons newly converted to the Christian faith. And I met Birendra Rongong from Nepal and his wife Morag and Timbu, their son, and many others. I had great joy in being with people who had a vision, longing and willingness for the work of God. They wanted me to join them, and are preparing a house for me. As yet nothing is finalised so I have time to meet Asians in Birmingham, and I have time to go on sitting quietly. My tears flow again. My own loss and emptiness seem to trigger off long-ago memories of other people's miseries.

2. Torn to Pieces

Today, as I sit here, a ghastly scene has flashed back to my mind from the time of the Second World War. I had been posted to Burma and saw Rangoon bombed several times. First the Japanese raided and bombed and then the Allied Forces tried to drive them back. This was repeated and I think Rangoon was bombed four times until practically nothing was left. After the Japanese attacks, we were ordered to go around the city to see if there were any signs of life. I remember the day when I entered a heavily bombed area. I climbed up to a room after crossing broken staircases and went into a place where blood was coming from under the door. It was a shocking sight, a newly wed couple in their bed, both killed. I saw so many plundered nests in those days.

I remember some in the red-light areas of the city, just after the war. I had been

transferred to be in charge of the Staff Police and had to patrol the areas where there were young prostitutes from various parts of India, Chittagong and all over Bengal. I questioned what it was that made them adopt such a life style instead of the secure family home to which my orthodox Muslim background had accustomed me. The girls overcame their fear of me sufficiently to tell me that it was hunger and the desperate need of money to feed their families which drove them to prostitution. In those days a large part of the Indian population went hungry, with no relief in sight from the government. I felt it was my moral duty to get food given out from the surplus rations in our unit stores in Bengal. I ended up being taken to task for being unfaithful to the British government and charges were brought against me.

Then, early in 1947, I was discharged from the Royal Air Force and I returned to Jammu in Kashmir and to more destruction. It was a time of political turmoil with the Partition of India and Pakistan and sensitivities were heightened in Kashmir, which had a Muslim majority but was controlled by a Hindu ruler and his army powers. I wondered what I should do next. My desire was to please God. I was led by my Muslim religious leaders to join the freedom fighter forces to get Kashmir liberated from the Hindus and ceded to Pakistan. I was very much convinced that I should help my Muslim brothers in this Jihad ('holy war'), but I became responsible for a great deal of destruction. Their tactics were to set fire to Hindu villages in the southern part of Kashmir late at night. I became a kind of specialist in this fearful and macabre game of destroying nests.

I was influenced by some of my friends who were from the Khaksar Movement, the followers of Ullaham Inayatullah Mashraqi. This man was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was a very clever person. His interpretation of Islam was that before it was taken as a religion, it was an army formation with each Muslim a soldier, each mosque a fort or castle and each Muslim colony a cantonment. He taught that when Muslims are called - I refer to the call from the minaret of the mosque - it was a roll call, and when they stood in rows it was to count them, and the Khutba sermon given during assembly prayer was a kind of operational address. He produced a very fine book which I read, called Sidhasaff, which means a straight line. He wrote this book simply to justify his movement and his causes. He captivated many earnest young Muslims.

I had a second-in-command in those days who helped me on the Kashmir border. His name was Bashir Mujanid and he was a very disturbed person. He was always restless and often didn't sleep at night. Finally I said to him, "Bashir, what's wrong with you? You always seem to be utterly miserable." He said, "Sir, I want to kill someone and then die. I have no other ambition left, because I have seen the cruelty of life and I have been robbed. I was in love with a girl who was my relative. When things became very difficult in Delhi, another relative who was my friend gave shelter to the family of my beloved Nasrin, who had been living in a colony where there were many Hindus, and they were feeling insecure. He took Nasrin's family to his house. But then he made advances at her and, finally, because she had no place to go to she had to surrender to him and became pregnant.

Then she killed herself. I couldn't take that and this is why I am like this now. I have got to kill somebody and then I will die." I loved Bashir and I grieved for him and his torn nest. Then, one day later, he was killed on the front. It was very sad.

I remember another tragic incident. This was in mid-September 1947, when I was on the Kashmir border. I called my juniors back in the raiding sections, and I was told that there was a Sikh ex-army man called Sher Singh. They thought he was a captain with the British Forces. He was trying to migrate over to India across the Kashmir border. But when he got quite close to the border he thought that he would be intercepted by Muslim fanatics who would be interested in taking women. This Sikh gentleman ex-captain had his mother, young wife and young daughter of about fourteen years only with him. He felt sure that people would surround him and snatch them from him. He was carrying a service rifle, and he killed first his mother, then his wife, and then his daughter also. He was sitting beside their dead bodies and refused to talk to anybody. My juniors wanted me to sort out this situation. It was almost dark when I got there. I called out to him, "Sirdar Sahib, are you willing to talk to somebody?" He said, "Yes, If your intention is good." I said, "I am your friend, because I have never attacked anybody who is in a neutral position." So he said, "You are welcome to come." So I went to him and there the three dead bodies were lying beside him. I said, "What have you been doing, Sirdar?" He replied, "I am not here to harm anybody. But I know these Muslims, they can even abuse dead bodies. So I am waiting here until their bodies start decaying. Then I am going to kill myself and that will be the

end of it all. I won't be able to see my daughter being disgraced by these Muslims." It was a horrible story. I said, "Sirdar, you shouldn't have killed them because I wouldn't have attacked you. You are neutral and we would have helped you to get safe into Indian territory." He replied, "But you weren't here and I have seen these villagers around here doing the same things." Then I said to him, "So what do you want now?" He said, "I am not wanting anything. You go, but please let me stay here." I felt the pain and grief in his face and in his voice. I reckoned that this man was as good as dead already. So when I said goodbye to him I asked one of my juniors to put an end to his grief and pain. One of them fired at him and I heard him say, "Thank you, sir. Thank you, you are good people." It's not a very pleasant story. That was all that I could offer him.

As a Muslim I still believed I was pleasing God by causing the destruction of Hindus. Then one night, as my juniors and I were again witnessing people being burned alive and shooting those trying to escape. I was suddenly confronted by an old woman. She had just run out from a house and had a baby in her arms. She saw me and she threw the child at my feet. She started crying, saying, "Kill him, kill this baby first because he is the child of a Hindu and because your God is pleased with killing people. Kill him first." It was a most beautiful child. I have been responsible for the deaths of many children, but when this one was thrown at my feet I just could not move. I said, "Tell me, mother, why should I begin by killing him first?" She repeated, "Because your God is pleased by killing people. Kill him." But I couldn't. She went on, "My boy, do you think that God is pleased when you destroy his

supreme creation? All of us are his beautiful creation. And you are the ones who are destroying it. How can your God be pleased?" I was silent, and she continued, "When children play in the wet clay, they make clay dolls, and sometimes houses and wedding parties. You must have seen them making mud toys, cows, buffalos, elephants. If you were to break them in pieces would the children be pleased?" I said, "No, that would really upset them, Mother." Then she added, "If a child is hurt when he sees his creation being destroyed, how can you think that God is pleased with what you are doing?" That finished me and I started to cry. I said, "Mother, forgive me. In future my hands will not be used to kill another person. My Muslim religious leaders led me to do this." She said, "Do you really think that God is so weak that He is asking for your help? My dear boy, you are misled and you must repent."

This clinched the matter and brought me to my senses. It was not the first intervention of God in my life. He had touched me through several of His children. There was Baxter, who prayed for us in the midst of a Japanese air raid and two Christian nurses, who cared for me with great love and concern after I was wounded and lost my right eye while test flying an aircraft. There was also Philip, whose love for Jesus made him able to be free from local custom and tradition in an amazing way. On another unforgettable night in the Kashmir Jihad, a small Christian girl, whom we were going to kill, said, "The Lord Jesus is here to save and protect us." She and her elderly parents were at our mercy and we were about to destroy them. I let her pray to Jesus and then suddenly they were shielded by an unearthly wall of

fire. I was terrified and completely unnerved. What an evidence of the living God! It made me more insecure and finally it was the little old Hindu lady whose words penetrated and completely broke me. This was the end of my freedom fighter days. Gone forever was my blind conviction that Allah willed Jihad.

I left the freedom fighters and all I knew was that I must pray to Almighty God to put me on the right path. Again I was alone, for I had left my home. I was searching and praying in deep misery and darkness and fear of death and hell. I prayed to God to reach me and put me on the right path. Then he answered. I heard him saying to me, "My grace is sufficient for you. My grace is sufficient for you." These words rang in my ears. He forgave all the evil I had committed. I was a new person, that night of May 5, 1949. I started singing, rejoicing and praising the Lord. He has led me on from there.

But this was an embarrassing and offending situation for my family. They were landed and influential people, and their good reputation was at stake. In their eyes, Islam was a noble and exalted religion. For my part, I loved them all and I owed them so much. My father was a man of high ideals. He was inwardly a mystic, and outwardly a great example as a public spirited and positive man. He was always kind and compassionate and gentle. I know he has deeply influenced my attitudes in my future life of service. But at this time I faced the heartbreaking contradiction of severe persecution from my own brothers. I had relatives in a number of places, Sialkot, Lahore, Faisalabad and elsewhere, and they were people of influence. I was sometimes chased by professional killers. Finally, I

was taken to my mother. And I think that was the last weapon to bring me back. She said, "My dear child! You know all your brothers are married. They all have their own homes and you are the only one left to look after me and to share my loneliness. When your father died, you were away on the Burma Front and couldn't even come and share in my grief." She pleaded, "Please, don't leave this home. I'll be with you and support you and help you, but I beg you not to leave." Her plea stirred me to the depths. But I had to say to her, "Mother, I do love you and honour you. But to remain in this house is impossible for me. I cannot give up my faith. Please forgive me for this lack of submission. I am certain that the Lord has much for me to do for Him and for His people." In this way, with great sorrow and grief, I had to refuse her.

I also took the decision to remove a further cause of my brothers' hostility. I signed away my right of inheritance to my father's property. Following my mother's death I would be legally the owner of the property. But the Lord had shown me that He alone is my heritage, my refuge, my all. So I severed this last attachment to my family. Because of their harassment I took the advice of one of my Christian friends, Chandu Ray, later Bishop of Karachi. I accepted his invitation to come south to the Sindh Province to work among Hindu tribal people.

This is how I lost my ancestral nest. Then, too, I had to start building a new one in a different culture and with a different language. I exchanged the pure air of Kashmir for life among impoverished Sindhi Gujeratis who were wholly dependent upon their landlords. It was hard going, but my heart was light. My

Lord was so real to me. I knew what it was like to be loved by my Creator, and to find a responsive love stirring within me. I gave myself totally to living and witnessing for my Lord. I was convinced that when God wanted to win this world over to Him and draw humanity to himself, he had to show himself and his concern through Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, the full manifestation of God's love, had to become like us. He took the shape of total humility and become shelterless and homeless. He was a person who owned nothing. I had to be the same and to start living with people who were at the same stage of having nothing. This had been the basis of my life and ministry from the beginning. I lived among illiterate and impoverished labourers and I was soon to see more of the cycle of deprivation and want in which they were trapped.

3. Nest building and education

As I look back, I realise how deeply I have been affected by my parents' emphasis on disciplined training and education. From the start, in 1950, I saw the hopelessness of illiterate tribal people unable to escape from the injustice and oppression of their landlords. After some time of living among them I saw how the Lord opened a way, and these people started to listen and to co-operate. I took an interest in their family problems and stood up for them against their landlords. After this their children started reading and writing, and then everyone's confidence grew. This was a kind of pilot project and led later to the beginnings of my boys' hostel in Mirpurkhas. We had boys from the villages, boys from families with no resources at all. I was happy to see these boys and young men being educated, first

going to school and then to college.

All along Daisy and I have felt that Christians living in Pakistan needed to be educated, given chances to build their lives. I have always thought that, humanly speaking, education is the key factor which can make Christians in Pakistan survive. As a Christian you have to be two steps ahead of your Muslim friends. This has been our vision and our conviction.

It was to be tested very early on. When Daisy and I were newly married and studying at the Theological Seminary in Gujranwala, we were given an assignment for pastoral work. All the other students had rushed to our professor and they were assigned to some established villages with nice supporting congregations where they simply had to help the pastor during the Sunday service. I came late to the professor and when I entered his office I said, "Is there any place left for me?" He said, "There is, but I don't think you will like it." "Could you tell me what it is?" I asked. He told me, "There is one assignment left which nobody has taken, and that is to work among a community called the Gugas. I don't think they possess any religion. They have some beliefs, but they are mixed, they are neither Hindu nor Muslim. They worship nature and are very superstitious. Their men go around gathering rags from the rubbish dumps and their women folk go around begging in the towns. They always settle near big towns where they are allotted a special area, because they eat dead chickens and all sorts of other thrown-away foods." So this was the community left for me to work with. I said, "I will gladly do it." My professor was very surprised. He said, "Will you?" "Why not? If the Son of God can leave His

Father's presence and come down to my level, why can't I go to these people?" I went home and shared this challenge with Daisy, and she said, "Yes, we will do it."

So at first I started going to this community on my own. When I entered their village they were welcoming but a bit suspicious, because they had never had anybody visiting their village as I did. There were some people who used to come looking for their beautiful girls and their women. But I approached their community leaders and explained to them, "I am here with the Word of God and to start with, I shall teach you how to read and write. If that works we shall start doing something for your children." They agreed half-heartedly, but they never expected that I would stay with them for any length of time. So I started my literacy project. I started my classes with prayer and they didn't object to that. They said, "It is good; we can only be successful if we have God with us." So that was a good start. It was hot, and they were reluctant to offer me a drink of water or anything to eat, because they knew that they were not expected to do that. Certainly it was hard to continue with this community because the area was smelly and disgusting. Sometimes it was hard even to breathe because the feathers of those dead chickens were scattered all around their houses. They gathered filthy rags and until they were washed properly they were smelly too. Next, some of their spiritual leaders started complaining and telling them that these Christians were not people of good character, and so their women and young girls were in danger. But because they had watched me minutely, they decided that I did not have that kind of intention.

I felt that the time had come to start taking

Daisy along. She was a great help, because, being a nurse, she could look after their sick children. She advised the pregnant mothers and gave teaching on nutrition, sanitation and hygiene. This made them very grateful. Then they started reading and writing from what I had with me, which was the Word of God. I placed large-print gospels in front of them and they eagerly read them through. First, one of their leaders, Manna, was baptised in their village. Then I started bringing their young school-age children, especially boys, over to my seminary primary school. The education committee kindly waived their fees and Daisy made some school uniforms for them. They first came to our little home to wash their faces and put on their school uniforms and then they went to school. After school, they came to our home, left their uniforms there and went to their village in their usual clothes. Then the United Presbyterian Mission people agreed that it was very hard for these small children to come barefoot all the way from their village, especially in the heat. So they decided to open a small primary school in their village, providing two teachers and their salaries.

After these Gugeras had studied the Word of God and understood something about personal, family and community sanctity, they stopped their woman going to the town. They had ostensibly gone to beg, but in reality they went out for prostitution. This was now changed. By the grace of God, a day before I was going to be graduated at the end of my theological studies, eight families from this community were baptised and each family consisted of about five to seven members. That was a big group of newly baptised people and I could see now life starting in

that village. This Manna, who was illiterate before, now became their teacher, and was able to give them the Word of God. He was a practical and respected leader. After about ten years when I was working in southern Sindh I once revisited this northern village and met my old friends. They were thriving and joyful, and I saw that the same young men who had been roaming about and gathering filthy rags and rubbish had now taken good jobs. Some of them had become motor mechanics, some electricians, and so on. I was especially happy to see that there was no immorality in that community now. They were people made new, they were saved people, by the grace of God through His Son Jesus Christ their Saviour. I thank God for that.

In 1973 I was transferred to Sukkur in Upper Sindh. This was in part for the education of my own children, because Sukkur had good schools and colleges. St Saviour's School was right next door to the church. But it had been taken over by the government during Mr Bhuttos time. He changed Sunday to Friday as the national weekly holiday and nationalised all private schools and colleges. The education department placed a Muslim headmaster in our school, who started hanging Quranic verses on the walls. Next he claimed the house in which we lived. I received notices, without any proper justification, from the education department to hand over the entire vicarage. Their aim was that the noise of children on Sundays during church services would cause the congregation to look for a quieter location. St Saviour's Church is a kind of showpiece of the town on a prime site. In earlier days under British rule some officers were very generous to the church authorities,

allocating them central sites. This caused us much pressure and hassle. I sometimes couldn't sleep because I was so disturbed and worried. I prayed, "Lord, you are the only one who can come to our rescue." I wrote letters to the government authorities and I also kept sending telegrams and telephone messages. The day came when the local district magistrate received a telegraphic message from Islamabad, from the Prime Minister himself: "Please don't disturb the Reverend Naaman and don't try to take this church property to the education department." So that was the end of the matter. The Muslim headmaster, who had kept giving us a hard time, finally stopped.

This leads to another story regarding St Saviour's School. During the time of General Zia's presidency we did get the school back, but Muslim influence, the recitation of the Quran and Islamic teaching were still going on. Our dear friend, Mr William Khan, who is now principal of the school, was finding it very hard to restore our earlier system of education. The parents of the students had become used to this system of Quranic teaching and opposed the changes that Mr Khan tried to make. We are thankful to the Lord who has been helping us, but there are still many things to be improved. We can only have good educational institutions in Pakistan if the church authorities have the planning in their hands. The system of education following nationalisation of these schools has become so bad that the teachers do not want to work. When the school was given back to the church authorities, we had 33 teachers at St Saviour's school and we then found ourselves left with only three Christian teachers. One of them was Mr

William Khan who had been living on the Church property and didn't want to go to work for the government. There was another old teacher who didn't want to be transferred; and the third, Alexander Das, also lived on the church property and didn't want to disturb his family. The rest of the 33 went to the government with the expectation of less work and more salary. This caused us great difficulties. It took a long time - I think almost two years - to get good teachers from the community, because we did not have enough educated young men who could replace the elderly teachers. Now by the grace of God we do have good and qualified teachers in our school. And improvements are continuing.

Yes, we struggle to improve the school standards. But all along it has been clear to me that school education is only one side of the coin. It is vital, but Pakistan needs more than that: my country urgently needs a demonstration of Christian morality.

4. The love that builds

Again I say, education is not enough. It can make people proud, as the Apostle Paul said. I feel very sad when I reflect on some nests that I have known. The case of a family who could have had a leading role in the church comes to mind. They lived in Mirpurkhas in the southern part of Sindh where I was posted in the early 1960's. This family had plenty of education. The head of the family was a retired police officer with no children. His wife considered herself to be from a high class Hindu family. She got converted back in India, but this was a very strange family. They had no respect for the church leaders. They did not often go to church. And whenever there was a question of giving to

the church they did give - I think they gave more than others did - but their attitude was patronising and unsympathetic, to say the least. I think the clergy before me did not feel like visiting this family very frequently. The head of the family died after having adopted two children from some orphanage. But this lady could maintain the family because she had property. She could afford to have servants. She never allowed anyone to sit down in her presence. Even her neighbours did not meet her very often because they would not be welcome. She trained her children to think they were superior to others and should not mix with other people. When they went to school she always sent her servant to watch over their activities and they were not allowed to talk to other students. As the Psalmist King David said in the Psalms, people who follow vanity will add to their griefs. This is what happened to this family. When these children grew up the girl started running after the boys and sleeping with them. They had nobody else to look after them and nobody felt sympathy towards them. People were simply waiting for the time when this rich old lady would get into trouble.

The boy was younger, but when he became a little older he got hooked on drugs and started womanising and drinking. Because he did have a little education, he could easily copy his mother's signature. This boy started withdrawing the little money she had in the bank and spending it on himself. The time came when they ran out of money. Then the property was lost because this boy sold it; and then he stole his sister's ornaments and sold them for much less than their value. He started borrowing

money from family friends and things reached the stage when his mother was forced out of her house. This is the story of people who had education but left God aside.

This is an extreme case, where love that could have built them up was rejected. In my ministry I have always wanted to build the nests of others. Becoming a pastor is not simply shouting from the pulpit and preaching the bare facts of the gospel. The full gospel is to take care of the person as a whole. When you look through the Scripture, the Lord Jesus restored people to be whole and complete, especially those who were considered to be outcast from society. Look at the miracle which was performed on a man who had leprosy. He shouted to the Lord asking for his mercy, "Lord, if you want, you can make me well and whole." Jesus repeated his words and said, "I want you to be healed and whole." Healing means spiritual healing which restores your inner being, which reaches your spirit and makes an unclean man whole. It restores him back to his society as a person with honour and respect. This wholeness comes by God's Spirit, through a ministry of preaching and practical identification.

If we are not able to meet the physical needs of poor people and if we force our spiritual message on them, this is not the right approach. You cannot preach a message of salvation to a person who has been hungry for the past two or three days. He first needs to be given some food. The Lord always did it that way. When people came in multitudes to him he welcomed them, then he fed them, he healed their wounds and then he preached the gospel. The tragedy with us in Pakistan has been that people who came to preach the gospel

to this continent did not understand the culture and the background of our people in Pakistan. They came and simply preached their message. People listened to them. But throughout my Christian life I have concluded that the response of many has remained shallow. Many have led a life of double standards, cheating their missionary friends. It sometimes seemed that the missionaries were interested in making reports and pleasing their supporters in other parts of the world, and lacked insight into what was really going on.

Rock bottom repentance is the only place to start - with a total and radically new motivation. Christian survival in Pakistan is through education, giving people skills and courage to stand on their own feet. Beyond that it must be this radical and total turning to Jesus Christ and his sustaining love. Our people's giving of themselves and their money stems from this. In our country our pocket is on our left side, just over our hearts. Until our heart is touched, money does not come out. But if the heart is touched and it is changed with the love of God, then money is not a problem.

I can testify to this from my own experience. When I came to Sukkur our monthly church income was very low and sometimes we were getting reminders from the Diocese when our assessment didn't reach them in time. Sometime my salary was withheld because my congregation had not sent in their share. We had a foreign missionary bishop whose expectation and style of management sometimes resulted in my family having to face prolonged hunger. Yet I found at the end of seventeen years in Sukkur, after hard labour and endurance and waiting on

the Lord, that people had changed. Those who earlier did not come to church, or came once or twice a year, started coming regularly. They listened to the Word of God and many committed their lives to the Lord. And after that they started giving to the Lord without being shouted at from the pulpit. I feel that the person who shouts from the pulpit for money is an unsuccessful pastor. If he has been able to reach people with the living and life-changing message of the gospel then he doesn't have to shout for money.

In fact preaching does not consist in criticising. It is totally different. The Christian life centres on getting involved in the difficulties and hardships of others, sharing their burdens and drawing closer to them. It is to offer the love of the Lord through involvement, not just words. By now I am very much convinced that the whole work has come to a stage where people have very little time or inclination to listen to sermons or to read a lot of books. Christians win the right to be heard by first reaching out to people with love and concern. Even an animal knows and responds to love. It is only we human beings who can be very difficult creatures for our Creator. We easily rebel, we don't listen to him, we do not surrender ourselves. Only sacrificial love and care can break through this. Hardships and labours are involved and often the suspicions and resentments of fellow Christians have to be faced. But I thank God that in Sukkur I was able gradually to see the fruits of my hardships and the hand of God in my small efforts to build nests and to glorify his wonderful Name.

I cannot tell what has been success or failure. Many nests remain only half-built. What I know is that my Lord's work was

to save and heal and build lives. My own family had suffered and shared with me in this ministry. I shall never know how much I owe them for their shared support.

5. Nests I remember

Building nests is building people. I remember so many examples of this. There was the case of Ibrahim and the melon field. This was in the villages around Mirpurkhas. I was driving from Tali railway station in a Land Rover. I saw a bullock cart in front of me with two or three men in it and because it has always been my habit not to throw up dust on people in slow transportation, I waited. Then I saw a young man from this bullock cart coming to my Land Rover and as I was driving slowly he started walking alongside. I opened the window and this man said, "Oh, thank you, sir." So I said, "For what?" "Do you remember that you got me released from the prison?" I asked, "Who are you?" He said, "I am Ibrahim." Then I remembered the story from about two months back. I was visiting a village near Tali. There was an old woman carrying a small baby of six months. She sat in the worship service and I was told afterwards that she wanted to talk to me and wanted me to visit her house. She was an elderly Muslim woman, about 60 years old. I accompanied her and when I reached her house there was an old man sitting in his bed and folding his hands to me in respect. I realised that he was crippled, so I asked, "Mother, why did you want me to come over here?" She started crying. There was another woman, hardly twenty years old, also present in the room. The mother then said to me, "We are tenants of Chaudri Barakat Ullah (the landlord of that village) and my son Ibrahim worked for

him." It seems that the landlord had a melon field and day and night he had to set a watch so that no one plucked his melons. Ibrahim was out in the fields guarding his melons. One night an old Bhil labourer walked from Tali station over to his village. He must have been feeling hungry. He got into the field, stole a melon and started eating it. Ibrahim was fast asleep, but the sound woke him. He got up and grabbed a big lathi (a thick stick) and hit this man on his head. Within no time this man was dead. So after daybreak this news went around, and the wife and two children of the man who died came crying. But because it was not intentionally done, people had some sympathy towards Ibrahim. They came to an agreement, 800 rupees were paid to this widow and she was content. I mean, that was a kind of ransom money. It happens this way with poor people, who are not in a position to do anything for themselves. So everyone felt that was the end of the matter.

But this Chaudri was a greedy man and he didn't get on well with his neighbouring landlords, let alone with his tenants. In the next village there were people who saw this as a good opportunity to stir up trouble against him. So somebody reported to the police that there was a murder case which had previously not been notified. The next thing was that Ibrahim was charged with murder. I knew that according to the existing law Ibrahim would be hanged, and in a sense that would be hanging the whole family, because Ibrahim's father would not be able to support the whole family. I returned to Mirpurkhas with a heavy heart. That day I had my elderly uncle Chaudri Ali Ahmed visiting me. I shared my burden with him and he said, "Right, I shall find some way of helping this young

man." So he spoke to another influential person, Dr. Siddiqui, an Ahmedi - I have seen some very good Muslims among the Ahmedis - and Dr Siddiqui approached his brother-in-law, Abdel Khair. He was an Arab lawyer practising in the court. He told him the story and simply asked him to get this man released. So Abdel Khair went to the court and got all the reports concerning Ibrahim and then appeared in the court when the day of his hearing came. And because there were no eye-witnesses, the case was weak and the police had no further interest. So finally, after a second hearing Ibrahim was set free. Then I asked him, "Ibrahim, when you got released why didn't you come to me?" "Sir, I was so excited and so happy that I could not think of anything but just coming home. Your advocate friend gave me my railway fare, he fed me and he even bought me a new set of clothes. I was so excited! But today, when I saw you, that was wonderful. I wanted to greet you and thank you." Then he started kissing my hands, which are not worthy to be kissed. But I was thankful to the Lord that he was able to use me to help out this needy person.

Then I remember the case of Fazl, a very poor and lonely man. He came to me and was given the job of looking after the cemetery and cleaning and taking care of the church. I was awake in the middle of the night and saw Fazl walking outside in the dark. I approached him and he was very restless. I asked him, "What's wrong?" He was very direct and open with me and simply said, "Padre Sahib, could you please bring my Guddo back to me?" Guddo was his wife. He got married many years back; the fact is he was a very poor man and his wife's parents were a bit

mental. They allowed Guddo to stay with them and made her earn her own living and also support them, as they were getting old and not ready to do anything for themselves. I said, "Right, Fazl, you just pray, and things will be sorted out." I had a friend living next door, who was the deputy collector of Narowal, Mohammed Hashim Memon. His children and mine were of the same age. I spoke to this gentleman and he said, "All right, we will deal with this." And he did. He was able to get this woman back to her husband and then Fazl and Guddo were together again. It was great and they were a real comfort and help to my family, too.

Sharifa is another case I call to mind. Her father-in-law, Petrus, was converted from a Sikh scheduled caste, the lowest of the low, and his eldest son, Luka, was Sharifa's husband. Sharifa had a baby girl but she then got involved with another Christian man. She ran away with him, leaving her four-month old baby behind. Her father-in-law, Petrus, came to our house. He threw his turban at Daisy's feet in desperation and started crying, "Sister, please help us. Please help us." Daisy referred to me and I said, "Yes, we shall do something." I reported the facts to one of my police officers who was my neighbour, Deputy Superintendent of Police Zakaullah. He passed orders to the local police station, and Sharifa and her boyfriend were chased down when they were travelling from Mirpurkhas to Hyderabad. They were caught on the way, brought back to the police station and she was then asked if she would go back to her husband. But she said, "No, you can kill me here, but I am not going to this man again. I take this boyfriend as my husband." When I learned that things were

getting worse, I requested Mr Zakauallah to allow Sharifa and her boyfriend to come to our house. They came, and after offering them water and tea, I then asked Sharifa if she was willing to go back to her husband. She said, "No. I have given my statement to the police officers, and have nothing else to say." I said, "All right." I have always kept a tonic or medicine for people whose heads aren't screwed on properly. To bring her back to her senses, she got "the treatment" from me, in the form of a shoe thrown at her! It worked. She agreed and was sent away with her husband, because Luka was also there with his father. Sharifa returned to him, had many more children, and after about fifteen or sixteen years I was able to get Sharifa's daughter married to a fine young man. It was the same baby girl whom she left behind when she ran away. So this was a nest which was, as it were, on fire and then restored. I am happy that I was able at least to save Petrus' dignity and respect, by the grace of God.

And now I recall one more case. It is the story of a man called Hans Taj. He, too, was from a very depressed community in the north of Sindh. After he became a Christian he started getting his children educated. His eldest daughter, Parveen, became a teacher and the next one also went to school. The third one also went to school. After some time the older two got married and the youngest was left at home. Hans Taj had a very unhappy home. His wife was mental; she could not do anything for herself and did not know what was happening around her. Hans Taj had to go to his work at about 4 o'clock in the morning and his daughter was left at home alone. She was tempted by a neighbour and finally she became pregnant. This was

a terrible blow to Hans Taj. He called me to his home and he was in tears when I met him. He said to me, "This girl has killed us, because this community of people who are still Hindus have been talking. They are saying, 'We shall see how you stand as a Christian. We shall just see how you get on since you left our community.' " I think this may have been part of the reason why this girl was raped. Hans Taj was threatening to commit suicide or to kill his daughter himself. I considered the matter and thought that if this man is left to commit suicide it would kill the whole family. If he killed his daughter, he would be killed under government law and that will be losing two people from one family. They were actually asking me to find some way of getting her aborted. But I tried to find some other way. So I got in touch with my friends in Lower Sindh, and then sent this girl to them along with her eldest sister. She gave birth to a baby boy who was then adopted by another family, and after about four months I got this girl married to a very fine committed Christian.

I believe that building nests is building people.

6. More nests and problems

Today my mind is on other incidents that I clearly remember. Nasreen was from a more educated family, and this is her story. It goes back about 28 years.

Nasreen was brought to my house in Mirpurkhas in Lower Sindh. She was the daughter of a wealthy man, a man with respect and reputation. But she was going through a hard time with her step-brothers and step-sisters. She was advised that the only way to get support and security was

to go to the Christians and to become a Christian.

She came first to St Theresa's Hospital, but the staff there would not keep her because they were wary of this rich man. So she was brought to me. Before long her father, who was concerned about his reputation, started looking for her. He came to St Theresa's Hospital and they told him that his daughter was with the Reverend Naaman. I had many influential Muslim relatives right in the same town. This man did not dare to come directly to my house, so he went to one of my cousins, Chaudri Nassir Ahmed, a leading advocate. He put his request to him, saying, "I hear that my daughter Nasreen is with the Reverend Naaman, but I just cannot go to him. Would you please give your help because I am deeply concerned that my daughter should not be spoiled." Chaudri Nassir Ahmed responded, "If she is with the Reverend Naaman, she will be safe because he is a person whom we can totally trust. He is not going to take advantage of her being a single girl." Then this father came to us frantic and in tears. He threw his turban at my feet saying, "I beg you to give my daughter back." I began laughing and said, "She is alright. But you must promise me that you will not punish her." Nasreen had told me that if she went back home her father would kill her. So I had to make him promise that he would do nothing to punish her. He did and she went back. If she had not gone back to her father he would have been accused and would have had no more standing in the community. I see this as a kind of "nest-saving" because this man would have committed suicide or he would have killed his daughter. If that had happened the government would have

hanged him, the punishment for murder in Pakistan.

A different case was the situation of Shameem, a nurse. She was a Christian, the eldest child in her family. And she trained as a nurse. She then started supporting her family. Her father became rich through her money from the Gulf. Shameem continued to work and nobody gave any thought to seeing if she wanted to get married. She was in fact a very strong character. I got to know her through her relatives, and we became friends. She spoke openly to me about her personal problems. She said, "Padre Sahib, you are the first person who had shown some concern for me." She told me of her desire to have a husband and home of her own. We prayed and I strongly urged her to marry only a Christian. She responded, "You just go on praying for me. I won't bring any embarrassment to the name of the Lord Jesus." There was a long delay, and finally Shameem told me that she had a young man, a Muslim who agreed to become a Christian. She came from the Gulf and I got her married. She now has a home with two beautiful little girls and her husband, Azher, is a committed Christian, bold in his total attitude and witness. So this is the story of another nest building.

A different nest was falling apart. It was the home of a Christian widow who had only two children, a boy and girl. The girl was in love with one of the Muslim boys for many, many years. Her mother was an elderly widow and could not say anything to her grown-up daughter; her brother was too timid to face anybody, and her relatives did not bother. People sometimes supported a situation like this because it gives them a freer hand for their own misdemeanors. But I knew that this was

not right. I was not prepared to have this sort of liaison going on. I spoke to this girl and she said, "Dear uncle, I have been in love with this man for the last sixteen years. Everybody knows that if I leave him there will not be a single person in the Christian community who would marry me. So what am I to do?" I spoke to the man and found he simply took their relationship for granted. He said, "Yes, I am in love with her and I am not going to leave her." So I had to be blunt with him. I said, "It is good that you don't want to leave her, but I have to tell you that you must end this relationship. It must end because it is an embarrassment. It is a disgrace to the Lord and it is a disgrace to His people living in this town." The girl had already told me that she would not have a Muslim wedding and so become a Muslim. After a week the young man came to me saying he was ready to be baptised. So I baptised him, and then I said, "I can't turn you into a committed Christian but one thing I want to say to you is that you should start coming to the church regularly." They now have a home and the Lord has blessed them with children also. I had to face many things because of this young man, since people knew that it was the Reverend Naaman who had turned him into a Christian. I was summoned by the deputy commissioner, and I said, "I have not forced him or anybody to change his faith. If you want to be sure you can call this young man and ask him why he has become a Christian." He was called, and by the grace of God he was very bold. So nobody said anything else to him. Subsequently he had a hard time from his department. He was working in a city bank, then he was demoted to a village branch with very few local facilities. But I thank God that both are

committed and witnessing Christians.

There were many who found it too difficult to commit themselves fully to the Lord. This last incident concerns what I call a half-built nest. It takes me back 30 years. I came to Lower Sindh to take charge of St John's church in Mirpurkhas, which was a mainly tribal area with village congregations. I was made an attorney by Bishop Chandu Ray. He was actually the person who brought me from the north down to this part of Pakistan, and he trusted and loved me. When he was himself a priest-in-charge of the same area, he had bought a piece of land at Sanghar. At that time it was not a district, but by early 1958 had become the district headquarters. He wanted me to check on this plot of land. So he sent me the necessary documents. When I approached the district revenue authorities I found that the plot had been taken by the government because nobody from the church side had taken any action. So that plot had become incorporated into the city plans because it was right in the middle of the town. I said that this was not our fault, and that we needed the plot. So the option given was that we take a larger plot outside the town, and the Deputy Commissioner asked if we were willing to have that larger plot. But the conditions were that we had to pay for the extra piece of land. He was willing to give us the area equal to our previous plot but the additional part would have to be purchased at the going rate. I said that we should not be penalised; that we were willing to take this plot but would pay the same rate at which we bought the original plot. It was they who had made a mistake in taking over our plot, and they gave in. So that was the plot that we were able to obtain, and we now have a beautiful

church and a pastor's house there.

During my visit to Sarghar when I met Padre Manzur Masih I could sense that, though I was able to save this property and the Diocese of Hyderabad was able to build a church and pastor's house on it, yet the local congregation was not as lively as it used to be in my earlier days. People were still depending on foreign aid. This is not a healthy sign for our local congregations in Pakistan because this leaning on others makes people crippled and they cannot grow spiritually. I view this as a half-built nest because I believe that the local congregation should have been willing and eager to take care of this property and to give more support to their leader, Padre Manzur. He was deeply depressed because there were not many people coming to church, and his wife, Grace, had to go out to work to support his growing children and give them a good education. I could sympathise with them both. But God can build us afresh when we commit ourselves to His divine care.

7. White elephants and cars

I am sitting in my room again, far from Pakistan, and remembering the frustration of not being able to get out to the villages to visit and preach. I needed transport and often did not have it.

There was once a rajah, a ruler of some state or other. A poor man used to come to his court, and his job was to make the rajah laugh. Rajahs always had such people in their courts - laughing was a tonic which helped them live a long life. One day the rajah so enjoyed the poor man's wit and jokes that he gave him an elephant and said, "Now whenever you come to my court you must come riding on

this elephant." He said, "All right, sir. Thank you." He bowed before him and rode home. And I think that for a day or two he did manage to feed this elephant, but it became very hard for him to feed this huge animal. So he thought to himself that if he kept this elephant hungry, it would become weak and nobody would buy it. So while it was still a healthy animal he sold it. He must have made his living on the money which he got. The time came when he had to go to the rajah's court, and he remembered the words of this rajah that whenever he came back he must always come riding on that elephant. But he had sold it, so what should he do? These people are very clever and can come up with a solution in no time. He got hold of a rat, which is the same colour as an elephant. He kept that rat with him and went to the court. The rajah called him and said, "Didn't I tell you that you must come riding that elephant which I gave you?" He replied, "Yes, I do remember." The rajah said, "Where is that elephant?" The poor man said, "It's with me." "With you? How can you bring that elephant right here?" And he said, "It's with me, Sir." The rajah said, "All right, show me." So he released the rat which had been caught and the rat ran away. The rajah said, "That couldn't be an elephant." "Yes, sir, it has the same colour. The elephant became weak because he had no grass to eat." The poor man actually meant, of course, that it is easy to give an elephant but it is of no use if you don't provide it with food.

Something rather similar has happened to me. When I became sick and had a heart attack in 1965, I was sent down to my old place in Sindh because it was difficult to stay up in the high altitude in Quetta. When one of our nurse colleagues, Sister

Hildegard Guldau, went home on leave, she spoke to her friends in Germany about my ill health and the good times she had had with our family. This resulted in German Catholic friends sending a brand new Volkswagen and a refrigerator for our family. This car arrived at Karachi docks, but because I had no money to pay the customs duty, Bishop Chandu Ray was generous enough to provide some money to get this car released from customs duty. I was grateful to have a car, but there was no grass for this elephant. It couldn't survive for long. While I had a little money with me and was able to arrange for its maintenance, it did go and I was able to get out to the villages. But this car was not designed for those kinds of roads, it had an engine at the back which sucked the dust from the road, so it ground to a halt. This time I received no encouragement and no help for maintenance. I was told, "Because the diocese has spent money on getting it released from customs, this car belongs to the diocese." It was sold and I don't know who got the money that came in from the buyer. That all happened because this elephant did not bring grass with it to survive on.

Let me tell you another story about the same sort of elephant. Later on, in mid-1986, my diocesan bishop allowed me to keep an old Suzuki Jeep which had been used for a foreign missionary lady. I loved having it to get out to the villages. It was so convenient to use it for the people of God, sick needy people. But again, because there was no fund to look after and maintain this vehicle, when the tyres were worn down I asked my church authorities for the replacement of the tyres but got no reply. When it started

discharging smelly smoke and the engine needed reconditioning I asked my superiors but again with no affirmative response. I did try to use a little money from my own resources and some from my parish because my parishioners were keen to see the car in use. I tried hard to keep this vehicle on the road for as long as I could, but it became another white elephant which I had to leave behind. And I had no substitute to show to the people or to show my rajah that it had become too small! I have no personal regret, but all this has caused me deep heart searching and sadness to see that some church leaders who one generation ago were too poor to own a donkey are now in a position where they have newly imported, classy Japanese jeeps parked in front of their homes. It seemed tragic to me and very unfair that some in church authority apparently thought nothing of using four-wheel drive vehicles for their personal shopping but neglected their poorer brothers, who laboured to serve the same Lord and Master. They denied them medical allowances and hospital care and denied them scholarships for their children to get a good education.

With so many hindrances and discouragements in my life, people have sometimes asked me, "Was it worth leaving Islam and turning to Christ? What have you got out of it?" My Muslim relatives have asked me this. Well, I have some very plain answers. I have always told people that the Lord has called me not to store money for myself, but to become a beggar for God's people. I have been seeking to do this all my life. It was always very hard for me to make known my personal or family needs but I was always bold in asking my friends around

the world on behalf of others' needs. Surely this has been the style of life of God's people. Even the Apostle Paul mentioned in his letter to the Philippians, "I have robbed others and have helped you people." The Lord has put me in this position - not for myself but for others. He has given me sufficient grace to reach out for others. It is difficult for me to say this but over the years it has been a temptation to some of the church leaders in Pakistan to build their families with money donated to the church. But I can truly say that I have built others with my own resources. I have had to become a beggar on behalf of others, with nothing for my personal and family use. It may have appeared to others and to my own family that I have been the loser. Sometimes I had to lose my respect and dignity, if ever I had any. But the Lord has never forsaken us and our children. I remember when it was not in my power to send my son Samuel abroad because I had no resources. Samuel himself had often been baffled by our poverty. He used to ask me, "Abba, what have you done for us?" I felt numb and had no answer for that. I was not able to do anything for my family. St. John 14:1 says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me." This is what I have done ever since I came to him. Then, in 1986, along with many other blessings from the Lord, it happened that arrangements were made for Samuel to be accepted for his M.Div. in Seoul, Korea, which is a three-year course. This made Samuel understand what the word of Jesus means, "Trust in me also."

Our daughter Khulda's admittance to medical school was a similar tale of rejoicing for us. After her initial interview we heard nothing for months. In Pakistan

people tend to use their influence and status to get their children into higher medical institutions. We had no resources except trust in our God. Shortly before the term started we received a letter from the medical school asking why Khulda had not responded to an offer of a place in the school. We, of course, knew nothing of such an offer. Perhaps a letter had got lost in the post. So God opened the way for her, too, and has kept her there to complete her training.

This is what I have got out of following the Lord. This has been my reward. I thank God that he chose me and revealed Jesus Christ to me. I thank him that I have had the privilege of following Jesus Christ.

8. This was my nest

I reflect on all those nests in Pakistan, and now for the thousandth time I think about my own nest. My tears of grief and my thanks to God mingle together as I praise him for my family.

Our children were born to us as a direct answer to our prayers. Daisy and I prayed on December 19, 1959, the day before I was to be ordained as a priest: "Lord, we are lonely people and we need a son to bring beauty and warmth to our home." The Lord answered and Daisy became pregnant. Two months later we were transferred back to Mirpurkhas, where she tutored for a time at St. Theresa's Hospital. A Muslim gynaecologist surgeon, Salar Aziz, happened to visit the ward where Daisy was admitted for a time before her delivery. She was knitting a baby garment in blue wool and the surgeon understood what this meant. "Are you sure you are going to have a boy?" he asked her. "Oh yes," she said. He asked her how she could

be so sure, and she said, "Because we have prayed for him and we have even named this new baby boy Samuel Naaman." This surgeon was present when Daisy delivered, and he picked up Samuel in his arms and went round telling everybody, "Their faith is wonderful. Their God is wonderful. They are so sure of their prayers."

We dedicated Samuel for the Lord's service, naming him Samuel Ezra Naaman. You know, naming our children has a particular meaning. Having Ezra after Samuel meant that he will lead the people of God to their homeland, I mean winning people to the Lord and leading them to their destination.

We also prayed for a daughter because we felt our home would be incomplete without a daughter. It would lack that extra touch of grace and beauty. A baby girl was born to us and we named her Khulda Tabitha. Her first name means she will be prophesying and taking God's message to the people. And Tabitha means that she will be serving the needy through her talents, sharing her share of God's gifts with the people of God.

Then we said, "Lord, thank you. Now no more children for us." But the Lord has always done more than we asked. He said, "Why? I have always done more than people asked me for. I am going to give you another son." So Obed came and was added to the family. We named him Obed Nayer, meaning from the family in the ancestry of our Lord Jesus. And Nayer means a shining thing, a star, a place of light and guidance. Actually Obed was also given another name. He was born in the mission hospital in Quetta, and the English nurse Julie Dawber, who delivered

him, gave him the nickname Pompey. His birthweight was ten pounds, and Pompey he was from then on.

The circumstances of his birth were unforgettable to me. We had only arrived in Quetta in May 1963, four months previously. I was working as a hospital chaplain for a Christian hospital looked after jointly by Dr Ronnie Holland and Dr Henry Martyn Luther. Daisy started working on the women's side teaching student midwives. This was because we needed more financial help to look after our family as the cost of living in Quetta was very high, especially for us who had been used to living down in the less expensive (and much hotter) plains. Our baby was due on September 4, but I had received an invitation from my clergy brother Jalal Masih who was then at Khaipur, about fifteen miles from Sukkur. I was due to be with him on the morning of the 5th September. Daisy started labour in the morning of the 4th. She was taken to hospital and I think it was not more than three hours before the baby was born. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when I went to the hospital to see them and Daisy was awake and alert and asked me, "Haven't you gone to Khaipur to speak at that convention?" I asked her, "How can I? I have to look after Samuel and Khulda." She said, "This is the first time I have had an easy labour, so I think the Lord has helped me simply to set you free. So you please go and leave the children with the Rimal Shahs." Inayat Rimal Shah was the first Christian minister whom I saw after Jesus first came to me. Now in Quetta I took him as my father and my children started calling him Grandpa. Daisy said, "Why don't you leave them at Grandpa's house and tell him that it is hard

for you to look after them because they are so small, and then you just slip away." So I did that. I reached Khairpur but Senior Rimal Shah had already informed Jalal that Naaman is not coming. Jalal was very upset, because it was difficult to get another speaker at such short notice. But his wife, Sister Khurshid, kept saying to him, "Don't worry. He will come. He is trustworthy, he has always fulfilled his promises." So when I got there Brother Jalal was relieved and delighted.

The theme of that convention was "Old things have become new in the Lord Jesus." I was able to say to that congregation that if they had been keeping an old god, a god who was not able to change their lives, not able to make them new persons, to reach right into their heart, then they had better change him! It is my habit to speak to people from my personal experience, so I added a testimony which came from my eldest Muslim brother. After making me sit down beside him, all he could say was, "My dear brother, we do not understand your faith and your religion but we can clearly see that you have become a new man." I shared that testimony with my Christian friends. The Lord worked and many lives were touched and made new. I came back happy and ready to get a scolding from my children's grandpa, Senior Rimal Shah. I did get it but that was the usual kind of thing and I did not mind it. It had been wonderful to share my happiness with my friends down in Sindh.

Two years later we were transferred back to Mirpurkhas. Earlier in 1965 I had suffered a severe heart attack and was still not very strong physically. We found that the Mirpurkhas Convent School did not accept boys. So we decided to send

Samuel and Pompey back to Quetta to a Christian hostel which was then looked after by Keith and Joan Mitchell. I remember when Pompey started going to Convent School. When he was seven he wrote a letter to us in his broken English in which he said, "My health is fallen." When we read that we were deeply concerned and Daisy began to cry. She said, "See, you have sent my sons away and I think this little one is not well. You had better go post-haste to see him." So I went all the distance from Mirpurkhas to Quetta and there I caught sight of him playing in the playground. When he saw me he rushed up to me and I said, "What has happened to you, Pompey?" He said, "Nothing, Abba." Then I said, "You wrote in your letter that your health has fallen." He said, "No, Abba, I wrote in my letter, my teeth has fallen!" It was a big joke, but a very costly one, because due to my ill health and my bodily weakness it was very hard for me to travel that long distance from Mirpurkhas to Quetta. I did it because Pompey was very dear to me.

A little later I was told to call my children back to Mirpurkhas because the hostel was going to be closed. At this time I was far from well. I had to have an operation for my bad right kidney to be removed. I had constant pain and I became addicted to some of the pain-killing drugs. I was not fit to go out to the villages and I was left with only one kidney, which after a month had also started bothering me. So it was decided that we should go to a place where there were adequate hospital facilities nearby. My children's education was also a factor. We were transferred to Sukkur in the north of Sindh Province in July 1973.

Education in Pakistan was very expensive, so Daisy had to go to work. She took the

post of sister tutor in the Civil Hospital. I was sick and had to be hospitalised many times. And I needed more pain-killing drugs, which were very expensive. It was hard to cope with. Sometimes we had to sell some of our household things just to be able to pay our children's school fees. But we were able to give them a good education. When Samuel passed his BA he was given work with Campus Crusade for a time and he was able to finance his sister to continue her medical studies. During those last years in Sukkur, Daisy lost her job in the Civil Hospital but was immediately offered a position in a private hospital. When this was also terminated, the way was opened for an invitation from the Bishop, appointing Daisy to the job of organising women's prayer groups throughout the Diocese. For several years she travelled the length and breadth of Sindh, reaching the remote areas of the Diocese to form small prayer groups in the congregations. We need to build families in the faith, to have an altar in the family where parents pray with their children before they go out to face the Islamic world around them. There they have Islam being injected into them all the time through academic teaching and through the media. Daisy's ministry among the women has been fruitful and we praise God.

The Lord has also used my writing, which he led me to begin in Mirpurkhas after my first heart attack. In Sukkur I was able to publish my testimony. As funds became available other books followed: a novel on the life of a young Christian nurse, then a book on the Ten Commandments, entitled *A Code of Love*. Another was *The Mysteries of the Christian Life*, a book on Christian ethics. Others have followed, including several radio plays which were

put on at Christmas and Easter.

At the beginning of 1990, the fortieth anniversary of my Christian pilgrimage, our family's ministry in Sukkur was drawing to its close.

9. This was my Son

Our dear son, Pompey, our younger son, became a great tower of strength to us during those later years in Sukkur. He himself acknowledged that during his teenage years he messed around and wasted his time. Because his mother was obliged to work away from home and I was often sick, it was more difficult for him. But due to his brother's prayers and promptings, all at once he realised that he was wasting his time and he started to work hard. He passed his "Inters" at college and then his Bachelor of Science. After that he was taken by the Pakistan Railways as a senior audit officer. He completed his Master's in economics and Bachelor of Law and then, finally, his Master's in International Relations. He grew to be a fine handsome young man, a good athlete and gifted hockey and squash player, and he had a great sense of humour. He could go on telling jokes all day without boring you.

His maturing coincided with his decision to turn to Jesus Christ. This happened in early 1985. The background and atmosphere of the home led Pompey to start witnessing at once. As he realised the implications of his faith, he became increasingly aware of the Lord's standards of care and behaviour. He developed a deep concern for his own personal morality, and also for family and community morality and purity.

He really cared about individuals in the community. I remember a night when he took me out to visit some of my parishioners and to share their burdens. He noticed an old Muslim man sitting and selling bread and eggs. It was very cold and getting late at night. After our pastoral visit Obed asked me if I would buy the whole lot of eggs. There were, I think, some three dozen and a few loaves of bread. "But why this much?" I asked him. He said, "Abba, if you don't buy from this man, he will be sitting here until midnight and it is ever so cold here. Let's set him free to go home and rest in his warm bed." This touched me very deeply as I saw how much love my son had for others.

He began to take a strong stand against sexual compromise in the community. He could not tolerate it. It has become a normal thing in Pakistan for our Christian girls to get married to Muslims, sometimes becoming their third or fourth wife and still proclaiming themselves to be Christian. Sometimes they come to church along with their kids and along with their Muslim husbands. In my congregation, even if I was a little accommodating and not very blunt towards these people, if Pompey was there he would go and take them by the arm and send them out. He said to them quite plainly, "This place is not for you. God is not to be fooled. This is the place for his children, not for people who have dishonoured and disgraced God." I thank God that he was so outspoken. His confrontation with them did some good to my Protestant community. We had hardly any incidents of this sort, but we saw many girls going astray from other Christian communities.

With Muslim families having so many wives, so many mothers for the children, it

becomes very hard to draw a line between immorality and morality. When sons see their fathers keeping several wives, there is nothing unnatural in young men from such families running after women. But this son of mine never drank and never went after girls. It is nothing to boast about, but I think it was the solid Christian teaching about personal and family sanctity which he got from the Word of God and from his family Christian atmosphere. Pompey was able to save many families. Many young girls and many young boys came to the Lord through his effective testimony. I had a Muslim friend, a religious leader - a Pir - whose sons were friendly with my son. Sometimes they drank in front of their father, but my son never did. One day this leader came to me, "Naaman, you have raised a very strange kind of son, this young man Obed." I said, "You are referring to Pompey?" He said, "Yes, he doesn't drink when his friends are drinking." So I said, "I haven't stopped him. It is his personal decision and I think it is good. You people take it for granted that this drinking is allowed for the Christians, but this is not so. Financially it is destroying, and Scripturally it is forbidden. It is good that he doesn't drink." That was the testimony that came from my Muslim friends.

When Pompey was employed by the railways he got his visiting card printed, and it included the words, "My grace is sufficient for you." Those were the words the Lord Jesus spoke to me when he called me and that has been the theme of my life. So when Pompey handed this visiting card to his Muslim friends they of course asked, "Obed, what is this for? What does it mean?" Then there was a chance for him to share the message of the Lord Jesus. He

was a bold witness for the Lord. I have to admit that my son Pompey was able to do more evangelistic work within five years than I did during the 40 years of my Christian pilgrimage. It was fantastic, wonderful, I am so thankful to the Lord that he gave me such a witnessing son. He was taller than I am and as I got older I always loved to see him standing beside me; he became my strength and my confidence. When his brother Samuel left for his studies in Korea and Khulda went to her medical college, he remained at home with us. It was a blessing to have him with us because he provided comfort to us, confidence to the community, and witness to his Muslim friends. His friends were very varied, and he reached out to them fearlessly with the Gospel.

One particular incident highlights his zeal. When he was visiting his brother in Korea in 1988 he tried to join a Korean evangelistic team to reach the athletes who came to this part of the world during the Olympic Games. He did reach people from many countries with the message of the Gospel. He met a Korean who claimed to be a second Messiah. Pompey was very blunt and forthright with him. He said, "You man, if you were in Pakistan I would have killed you because you are not worthy to be alive. You are misleading people. You are the devil's agent." And that man had to run away saying, "Look at this foreigner talking to me like that. He is not frightened of anything." Pompey had said to him, "I cannot stand this nonsense. You go away! You get lost! I don't want to see you because there is one Messiah who died on the cross and who is coming again to judge the living and the dead. How can you claim yourself to be Messiah?" That really touched me and I thank God that

Pompey had such a strong faith and fearless attitude towards people who were to be rebuked. He did rebuke. I thank God for that also.

Living at home with his parents, with his older brother in Korea and his sister in college, I realised that he was facing an increasing loneliness. Back in 1987 he and his sister Khulda came to me smiling. "What's up?" I asked them. They told me that Khulda had been a bridesmaid in Karachi at the wedding of a Christian friend, and there they had met a humble and deeply committed Christian girl named Eileen Faiz. They said to me, "Abba, would you go to this family on our behalf and ask if they would agree for their daughter to be engaged to Pompey?" I gave that some thought and then I said, "My dear ones, it's never easy for me to ask a favour from anyone. But if you are sure that this is right then we could go." They said, "Yes, we have sensed that this girl will be an excellent match for Pompey." So I spoke to Eileen's father, "Brother Earnest Faiz, could I come and meet you?" He replied, "Certainly, you will be most welcome." So I arranged my travel down to Karachi and when I got there the father and this girl, who was nicknamed Pinky, were both at the station. I was taken to their house. Pinky's mother, Sister Enid, was also very happy to see me because we had something in common. Brother Earnest Faiz comes from the north. His uncle was the first archdeacon of the Church of England in that area, Archdeacon Barakat Ullah, and Brother Earnest's father was Faiz Ullah. Sister Enid comes from a family which was originally from my village. Her grandfather, Dr I.D. Shabbaz, was from my village and became a Christian, then a

well-known scholar. He translated the Psalms from Hebrew into Urdu, then into Punjabi poetry, and then he put beautiful tunes and rhythms to the poetry, which are still being sung by Punjabis everywhere. So it was lovely to see them again.

I was very much moved because I have always found it extremely difficult to ask any personal favour. The tears came to my eyes. Brother Earnest Faiz took me in his arms and said, "Brother, whyever are you so upset? Tell me what you want." I said, "Nothing is wrong. It is just that I want Pinky for my son Pompey." Then he said, "And that is why you are crying?" I replied, "I find it so difficult, because making requests doesn't come naturally to me." Then he simply said, "She is your daughter. There is absolutely no problem. Be assured that we are happy. We love you and we honour you greatly, and you are most welcome. From today Pinky belongs to your family." That was wonderful. I was very much touched by their attitude and their welcoming love. From that day Pinky started calling me, "Abba", which was something very special. She wasn't doing it out of duty. I could tell that she was calling me "Father" from her heart.

In the December of 1988 after Christmas Pompey and Pinky were engaged up in Raiwind, because by that time Brother Faiz and Sister Enid had moved up to Raiwind and had built their new house. We had an engagement ceremony there which was conducted by my brothers and also by Bishop Sammy Ezaraiah representing the Church of Pakistan and my dear brother Farman Masih who represented the Salvation Army. We had a lovely gathering with these leading personalities from different churches. We came back happy, but Pompey said to me,

"Abba, if I had known that I was going to miss my older brother Samuel so much because he is still out in Korea, I would not have agreed to get myself engaged. I really miss my elder brother."

After that the wedding date was fixed for November 15, 1990. Samuel would then be home from Korea. In the meantime things were being purchased, made and stored. And it was lovely to watch Pinky. She was preparing herself for a glorious time when she would be able to start her married life and would also be closer to give love, concern and service to her dear old Abba. We were happy.

But that time never came. As well as sharing joy, we also lived with fears and apprehensions, which we constantly brought to God. In 1985 there had been a threatening event. In the time of unrest when the Kaaba was raided in Mecca and Imam Khomeini accused the Americans, our church was attacked by a mob. Obed was at home, he called me and we stood in the doorway. My son shouted, "As long as we are alive nobody can harm this house of God. We are humble servants of God, and will not allow anyone to damage this building." He stood there armed with a weapon in his hands, and then the people turned away and dispersed.

Before leaving for Korea, Samuel was employed by Campus Crusade and arranged a Christian literature distribution campaign in Sukkur with the help of Obed and some local Christians. Posters were put up all over the town and for a whole week Sukkur seemed to be talking of nothing but the Christian faith. Both of my sons also went out with the OM team boys distributing Christian books. Following this I was taken to the police many times.

The police chief had been approached by 37 Muslim religious leaders with the demand that these Christians should be stopped from these activities. When I was called I had an opportunity to speak to these religious leaders, and I said, "Dear friends, why are you frightened? If this religion, I mean this Islam, is from God then why don't you allow God to protect it? Why are you so opposed and so hostile? Let God protect it. If there is a religion which has to be protected by people, either it is not God-given or the religion itself has nothing to offer. It's like a clay doll which has to be kept delicately in case it breaks. We now listen to Islam all day long. It has become compulsory and our children study it in the schools and colleges; on the radio, in the newspapers and in textbooks of Islam we are being injected with it. But we have never agitated and we do not feel that Christianity is endangered. Yet when we are out for evangelism, to reach people with the message of hope, you start agitating and come out with a rain of stones. What is this? Please stop it, because you are disgracing God." They didn't care for this. Indeed, this made them very angry.

In 1986 I started getting threatening letters in the post. The following is a translation of one:

Padre Naaman Sahib,

Greetings. I give you notice that your way of life will take you to the mouth of death. Therefore I give you this last warning - change your way of life. Padre Sahib, your daughter is always under our men's control and your behaviour may cost her her life. Therefore, I give you a last warning, be a man. Otherwise, you will lose your daughter and son. Your son is always in front of our rifle. You cannot hide him anywhere or save him from us. If your life and your children's

lives are dear to you, take 50,000 rupees with you to the Rohri cement factory - on the corner - on the 30th. Arrive 6 pm. We have a blue video of your daughter which you may not know about. I tell you again, Padre Sahib, save your children. It is a small price to pay to save your children's lives. If you try to trick us the consequences will be very bad. Our people are watching your house and if you make one mistake we will destroy your whole family. We have put a small price on your children and blue video and we hope you will meet all our demands. If you inform the police, then the dead body of one of your children will be delivered to your house. You entered your daughter at Nawabshah Hospital and made our task easier. If you hide them in any corner of the world you cannot save them. That's it. Goodbye.

30th January, 6 pm. Don't forget. We will wait for you. If you don't come you are insulting us and we will take revenge for this insult.

From your friend.

At that time God clearly led us to trust him for the safety of our family. We agreed to this. I did not have the money, although there would have been no problem in asking my friends to help me. I was personally convinced that paying this ransom would be surrendering to the powers of evil, which I felt was not a Christian act. But I did go at 6 pm to that place which was mentioned in this threatening letter. I went just to see if there was anybody around that I could have a talk with. But there was practically nobody. I did not go with the police. I did not go with a weapon or anything of that sort. I went, and if I had met somebody I wanted to make an arrangement not to pay money but to explain to those people that this was not right. We were not injuring anybody. We were fully within our rights. But there was nobody. After that three more years passed.

In May 1990, I again suffered pain from my kidney stones and had to go to Karachi for treatment. Khulda interrupted her work to accompany me back to Sukkur. During this month political strife and violence was breaking out in Sindh. It became unsafe to travel. On the night of June 2, Khulda was still with us - the four of us were in the house. It was 10:25 pm, and Obed stepped out of the churchyard to inform Khulda's department in Karachi that she would not be on duty on June 3rd. He was on his way to the Post and Communications Office. Suddenly we heard the sound of gunfire. Khulda and I ran outside into the yard. Someone banged on the gate shouting out, "Please, uncle, open the door! Obed is shot!" We rushed to him. He was flat in the road, bleeding, bathed in his own blood. I felt his pulse. He was no more in the world. After I kissed his forehead and heard Khulda's screams, I lost consciousness.

News of Pompey's death reached his fiancée's home very quickly. They caught a train down to Sukkur and were present at the funeral. Pinky was in great shock. "Abba, where is my Pompey? Where is my Pompey?" she asked me with tragic eyes. I was dumb, and my heart still aches for her. On November 15th she would have been married to Obed. All of us were simply waiting for Samuel to return from Korea.

So we have given to the Lord what he gave us, a lovely gift in the shape of Obed. We are thankful to the Lord for the 26 years he was with us. We are thankful for the fragrant memories which he has left behind. At the funeral I saw people from the town crying uncontrollably. I realised how greatly he was loved, not only by fellow Christians, but by Muslim friends as well. Among the stream of condolence

letters which started to arrive, this is one from my cousin Chaudri Nassir Ahmed, advocate in Mirpurkhas:

Dear Brother Naaman,

I have read the shocking news about the sudden and untimely death of your son at the hands of terrorists. Both I and my wife share your bereavement. Words are but a poor consolation to describe your grief. Your son verily has died in the cause of humanity. He has died that others may live. It is indeed the death of a martyr. We pray that God may give you will and strength to bear the loss with perseverance. Let us pray that the soul of the deceased may rest in eternal peace in the heavens, Amen. Please accept our condolences, both mine and my wife's, on the sad demise of your beloved son.

I remain, yours sincerely,

N.A. Chaudri

Many letters, prayers, and tokens of practical help supported us in our grief. My son Samuel was still in Korea, but sent me a copy of Obed's written testimony, which forms the postscript to this booklet. I, myself, found comfort. I think it was Monday, June 4, after having buried my son at Sukkur the previous day, when I was having my own meditation the Word of God came to me: "I will never forsake you, I will never leave you, I will take care of you." This was sufficient for me. He does not leave me. He is going to look after me. He is going to take care of me and my family. Yes, I have even thanked him for bringing this bitterness to me. There are many people - perhaps the majority of people in the Christian world - who ask for blessing and prosperity, for release and relief from their pains. But there are very few available to the Lord who share his sufferings because he needs someone to share in his cup of bitterness, the cup of his sufferings. I thank him that

he has found me fit enough to be able to share his sorrows. And I leave this open invitation before the people of God to ask him to enable you and others to share his sufferings. He needs this. Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary, is lonely. He needs to be loved. He has become our friend and is looking for friends. He has visited us and is still waiting for people who will show their love and desire to be closer to him. He will never leave you alone just as he has not left me alone.

10. So take heed how you build

This booklet of my grief has no immediate ending. I do not know how long I may remain in my new nest in Scotland. It depends on London Home Office permission, it depends on finance, and it depends on my family. Khulda still has to complete her anaesthesiology exams in Karachi, and Samuel will be proceeding the USA for some time to do further study and to witness for his Lord.

Daisy, who has suffered so many things and stood by me for so long, remains far away in Pakistan. She was always very close to her younger son. In the past she has had indomitable courage; she has suffered with me through severe trials and has been able to accept all the hardships and deprivations. As a person she is very strong, and she has been much respected as a professional woman and as a spiritual guide. It must be that because she was so deeply attached to her younger son, his loss has proved insurmountable for the time being. I have to face the fact that she blames me for his loss. She still says, "If only you had paid that sum of 50,000 rupees, Obed would still be with is." If only... If only we had taken our son

away... If only we had gone to that hospital... If only we had hired that advocate... If only we had done so-and-so... In this way she holds on to him in her sorrows and cannot yet relinquish him to God. It is so understandable and at the same time it is so painful and disturbing to go on living with this rift, this gulf between us.

It takes time to see things come into a proper order. But the Lord is there. As for me, he goes on comforting me. He has taken care of me all these years. A few nights ago he brought me enormous comfort. I had a dream and in this dream Obed came to me. He said to me, "Abba, don't worry, I'm alive. I am helping you. I am serving you. I am still with you. Don't worry." I feel as though he is still nearby. Let me tell you what happened soon afterwards. On December 18 in the evening I travelled to Nottingham to meet Silas Samuel who is studying theology at St. John's College. When I arrived this boy missed me at the coach station. I was left there just like an unwanted baby. I didn't know what to do or where to go. So just to find something to do while waiting for this young man Silas, I went to the booking office of the National Express and found a young man sitting there. I asked him to book my onward journey to Salisbury and this young boy started looking into my face. He said, "You seem to be a stranger." "Yes, I am," I replied. Then he said, "Where are you going now?" I told him I was being met and that I did not know the details of the place where I had to go. He took from me the small piece of paper on which was written Silas' telephone number. He phoned and a lady at St. John's College answered. Then this young boy said to her that he would put me on the bus

and would somebody please meet me at the bus stop. This boy did that. It was very unusual. I find that British people often don't like getting involved in others' affairs. But this young man was extraordinary. He put me on the bus and there was Sylvia waiting at the bus stop in that cold weather, and she took me to Silas' house and there was Neela, Silas' wife, waiting at the door, holding her six weeks old baby. It was all so easy. I felt that this was a spiritual and divine arrangement, somebody helping me to reach my destination without confusion and difficulties. I can believe that the people of God don't die but are at least for a time somewhere near, serving and helping their dear ones. The physical separation is there and the wound of grief is there. But for my part I have accepted this blow in a thankful way. The Lord allowed Obed to be with us for 26 years and the sweet memories which he has left behind will keep him alive. I am so thankful to the Lord that he gave me such a dear son, who showed what a blameless Christian life is like. I am proud of him and I am thankful to the Lord for giving me three happy and really committed Christian children. I thank God that I still have Samuel and Khulda, whose love and encouragement mean so much to me.

The dear friends in Asian Concern in Edinburgh have already been a comfort to me. I am ready to make my nest among them and to witness to my Lord in that place. My life all these 40 years has been witnessing to him. From my son Obed's example I am filled with the determined wish to give a clear-cut testimony. In Pakistan I understood from the beginning that the message is clear-cut. It does not beat around the bush. The message of the

cross is an offence. It is not very acceptable to people. The Lord Jesus himself was firm and decisive. He was loving and caring towards the needy, but totally direct and outspoken to those who opposed him.

Both here in Birmingham and on my recent visit to Scotland I have found people with vision and willingness to work for God. But I have become aware that they feel very frightened of Islamic aggression. Some of them take an indirect, slow approach, and they are very careful not to hurt or offend anybody. Instead of approaching people directly with the Word of God, they try to create friendship and fellowship. But in many cases our Muslim friends and people from Asia take their hospitality and friendship as a sign of their weaknesses. They feel these western people have nothing to offer except compromise. Surely this is very wrong. We Christian should realise that if we don't want to offend anybody, we are not going to reach these people. The message of the cross does offend. As St. Paul wrote, it calls us to become like fools and like mad people, rather than very thoughtful and compromising.

I am aware that there are many scholars and highly literate people in this country who are authorities in Islamic research. But I have been a Muslim myself, and then a Christian for many years facing Islamic opposition in Pakistan. I have to say that the Islam which I know has little to offer but aggression, violence and lust. It disturbs the nest very frequently. From the history of Islam we know that polygamy was practised from the beginning. The Paradise which is introduced by Islam is nothing but lust. Even in this life if you are wealthy enough you have the right to keep

four wives. If you feel like changing, you can change them at any time. In Islam women have a very low position with no right to rebel or even to agitate. They are the victims of a male or males. I have often observed how many evils are the outcome of polygamy. I have seen wives and offspring oppose each other.

An instance comes to my mind of a friend of mine who had married two women and then found another wife who would go along with him and attend parties and become a social highlight. He had a daughter and a son by his last marriage. When I visited them I heard the mother saying to her son, her only son, "Be careful of your step-brothers, they are up to something. They are going to kill you just to deprive me of the whole property of your father." Later I came to know that she spent about 37,000 rupees on buying a nice dependable Russian rifle for her son. That was a mother who should have been injecting love, patience, concern, and endurance into her child's mind. Instead, she was giving him hatred and insecurity. I could tell you of many other examples.

On the national and international scale it is the same. Islam has given very little to this world except disturbance, fights, divisions. We have seen this with our own eyes in the events in the Islamic world. In the hostility between Iran and Iraq dozens of valuable army generals have been shot, countless people have lost their lives, and it still goes on. World powers make attempts to bring peace, but there cannot be peace as long as Islam is there. I know that there is only one Prince of Peace and his name is Jesus Christ, who died and after his death became victorious. He is victorious because he was humble, he never used violence, he never paid his

enemies back as they deserved. What we Christians believe is that the greatness of God is shown in his humility. Jesus Christ himself was totally submissive to his Father. In the world, greatness is shown through power and aggression, but it brings no lasting good. Thank God that there are people in this world who have surrendered before God, who have committed themselves to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. His way was not through might and sword; but through his submission, through his sacrifice, his blood which was shed on the cross, and through his loving attitude as he prayed from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). The Lord Jesus did know the ignorance of human beings and he still knows that the majority of people in this world are ignorant of what they are doing. He still forgives all those who do wrongs, and if they surrender themselves before him, he makes them new creatures, just as he made me new. What I have suffered was only possible because I know the Lord, I know him and he knows me and he gives me sufficient strength and grace to overcome all these problems. Job said, "When I am tested I shall become like gold" (Job 23:10). Only through tests and sufferings, trials and temptation are we able to become like gold; we become precious in his eyes. So I thank the Lord for all he has allowed me to go through. His name is to be proclaimed with total boldness, from a life committed to him.

I cannot close without asking you to keep praying for us. It takes time to see the wounds healed. But I have faith that if you come out with the balm of praise, this will help in getting our inner wounds healed. I thank our many friends in Britain for their

loving support and their prayers and encouragement and their hospitality. My thanks go to my friends Jock and Gwendy Anderson. They have typed and put this booklet into shape, and I am deeply grateful to them. I knew them 30 years ago, and now I see them physically limited but with inner peace and strength.

The other day in Birmingham I observed some birds' nests at the very top of a cluster of trees. They reminded me of some words from the poet Iqbal when he talked about eagles:

An eagle you are and your place is up high,
High where no evil can touch you.

Inner peace and strength is given to us. Nothing can touch or take away the peace that the Lord has given. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I give you my peace, peace that this world cannot give" (John 14:27). The world cannot steal that peace away. Even the plundering and tearing up of the nest is not able to remove God's peace. Because we are followers of Jesus Christ, "We know that we have another nest not made with hands" (II Cor. 5:1). To the extent that we can live in the love and power of Jesus Christ, the human pain is lessened. Heavenly love is there even while we may groan down here. So our pain is lessened, made one with his suffering, and finally death will be swallowed up by life.

11. Obed's testimony in his own words

I was born in a Christian family where my father is a convert from Islam. I am the third (youngest) child, having one older brother and a sister before me.

From my childhood we were attached to Sunday Schools and we had family worship and very regular church going. Though I was attending all this, I simply went like any other nominal Christian who did not understand at all what was taught in Sunday School and preached in church. From my teenage years I was very friendly with non-Christian boys who were really not good friends and of no help to me in my practical and spiritual life. My behaviour towards children around me was harsh, fighting, beating, abusing and looking down on them. Many complaints used to come to my home about my bad attitude towards other children. Every time I was told to try to be polite to others, I took no notice of this advice, and after some time was the same again.

Many years passed like that until I finished my high school and entered college. Because my elder brother used to help my father and other people in the church, I used to join them, but not from my heart. Yet I used to admire the humble and helpful life lived for others, which was my brother's attitude. One day I went to a youth convention along with my brother, who really forced me to come. According to my culture I could not refuse and disobey him. In this convention I heard a message from a preacher from the Bible, II Kings 7:9, where it was written about the lepers and about spreading the good news of freedom. I thought to myself that I myself am still bound in the slavery of sins, so how can I give good news to others. Due to the constant prayers for me and the deep interest of my elder brother in me, these words stuck in my brain and heart. I think this was God's time for me. I confessed all my sins to Jesus Christ, my crucified Saviour and placed my past life

before him. I asked him to make me clean by his blood and give me the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that in future I may be his and serve him all my days. I felt as if a great burden was taken off me and I was overjoyed. I was praising God and thanking him for the free gift of salvation through his grace.

Then God gave me courage and wisdom through the Holy Spirit and I started witnessing to Jesus as the only Saviour to my friends in the college and around me.

After passing my Bachelor Degree (BSc), I joined the Government Department of Pakistan Railways as Senior Auditor. In this office there are a lot of chances to witness to the Muslims about our Saviour. Even during my job I joined the night college to do my Master's degree in Economics (MA Econ) and after completing that I did another degree in Law (LLB) and presently I am about to complete my second Master's Degree in International Relations (MA, IR).

In my study time and job I had encouragement and more chances to meet different highly educated people and to witness to Jesus Christ. Besides all this I am feeling that I lack the deep knowledge of the Word of God. I am praying that God may grant me a chance to learn more about his Word so that I may be able to tell people more clearly and with spiritual wisdom about Jesus. I feel deeply convinced that God wants me to be fully and strongly equipped with his Word and to spend my future life according to God's plans, where he wants and whatever he wants. I have a great burden not only for my own country but for the entire world which is disturbed and lacking in salvation and peace, which is only in Jesus Christ,

who is the Way and the Truth and the Life. I am much in prayer and seeking God's will for me nowadays.

May God bless you,

yours in Christ,

Obed Nayer Naaman

12. Quiz

Dear Reader, if you have read this book you will be able to answer the following questions.

1. Which event tore the nest of the Naaman family? How did it happen?
2. How did the friends of the Naaman family respond?
3. Describe two of the incidents which led Brother Naaman to believe in Christ and to change his life.
4. How did brother Naaman's family respond to his conversion to Christianity?
5. Describe Brother Naaman's pastoral work assignment during his training. How did he go about building a relationship with the Gugeras?
6. What was Brother Naaman's strategy in dealing with the challenges he faced at St Saviour's Church in Sukkur?
7. What two aspects of service are included in the ministry of the "full gospel"? How did Brother Naaman practice both of them?
8. Describe one of the incidents that Brother Naaman was involved in because of his deep sense of justice.
9. What do the incidents of "nest-saving" show us about Brother Naaman's reputation among the Muslims?

10. What did the local Pakistani congregations do which kept them from growing spiritually as they might have otherwise?
11. What lesson does the story of the elephant which the rajah gave to the poor man teach us?
12. How would you react if you were given and “elephant” like Brother Naaman's?
13. What testimony does Brother Naaman give despite the difficult circumstances his family had to go through sometimes?
14. How did Daisy use the birth of their first son, Samuel, as an opportunity to witness to their faith in Jesus?
15. What was the “message” Brother Naaman's brother got about Christianity from Brother Naaman's life?
16. How did Obed's faith in Jesus affect his life?
17. How did Obed use his social behaviour and his profession as an opportunity to witness to his faith?
18. How did brother Naaman react to the death threat against his family?
19. What is Brother Naaman's attitude toward the suffering he has had to endure because of his son's death?
20. What is Brother Naaman's opinion of the non-confrontational attitude of many western Christians toward Islam?

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You can copy and paste the questions into the contact form and can write the answer below each question.

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