

From Pastor Chris: *A Tale of Two Arrivals (and 50 Years Between)* From the October 2007 FBF Newsletter

On September 8, 2007, Mansoor Khajpoor arrived at the Clinton home of FBF member Ed Jaeger. Mansoor brought good news – the newly published “Good News” Bible in the Persian language. The Persian inscription on the inside cover translates approximately to the following:

1 Corinthians 15:58

Finally, my dear friends, be strong and solid, always in the work of the Lord be busy because you know your work in the Lord is not without result.

Dear worker in the Lord, High and exalted pastor, Edwin Jaeger, with thanks and much gratitude from all the trouble you had in all the warm working together in this new translation of the Bible. This Bible is a token of appreciation for all the trouble that you took in your ministering in this way. It is our wish that all of the heavenly blessings that are found in this Bible will be poured out daily upon you, upon your dear family and whatever field of work God has given to you.



The inscription page had been signed by David Tourin, head of the United Bible Society in Asia and Nahid Sepehri, the editor for the new translation (and wife of Mansoor Khajpoor) in Istanbul, Turkey on August 14, 2007.

Fifty years earlier, in January 1957, Ed and Belle Jaeger arrived in Iran, taking up residence in the city of Hamadan (ancient Ecbatana) because their mission agency had determined that the Farsi (Persian) spoken there did not have the distinctive accents of some other cities. Their first two years in Iran were spent learning the language, studying thirty hours per week from the Persian Bible and text books used in Iran’s elementary school system.

The Persian Bible had been translated 55 years previous, and to modern Iranians had a lofty, stilted sound to it. People laughed at Ed and Belle as they tried to communicate in the language learned from the Persian Bible. “No one talks like that anymore,” they said.

So Ed set about learning the language of the street. Whenever he and his teacher, Mohammad Mesbah, studied a

passage of Scripture together, Ed would ask, “How would someone say this in everyday speech?” And Ed would write it down.

In 1959, Ed, Belle and their growing family of three boys were sent to live and work in Nahavand in the Zagros mountains. Belle took a job teaching English at the girls’ high school, and Ed taught English in the boys’ high school “to justify our presence there,” Ed says. Their predecessor in Nahavand, Allen McAnlis, had one special convert, Kay Khosro, a high school sophomore. As a young boy Kay had contracted polio, which was never treated because his father, a Sufi dervish, did not believe in modern medicine. So instead of being involved in sports or play, Kay spent all of his time studying and developed a brilliant mind.

One time when he and Ed were studying the Bible together, Kay said, “I want to somehow show the Lord how much I appreciate the salvation he has given me – what can I do?” Ed knew how to answer. For the next two years Ed and Kay worked together to translate Paul’s epistles into modern Persian. Their work was published in 1962 under the title “Namehaye Javedan” (Eternal Letters).

Response was phenomenal. Many Iranians, even some pastors and evangelists, told Ed that Namehaye Javedan had helped them understand Paul’s teaching for the first time. A local Shiite mullah even used Namahaye Javadan (while falsely attributing it to a Muslim source) on his daily radio show. Another popular radio commentator also quoted extensively from Namahaye Javadan with accurate attribution, but mysteriously died shortly afterward. Christianity can be hazardous to one’s health in some parts of the world.

In 1963 Ed and Kay published a compilation of the life of Christ drawn from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They called the work “Foorooqe Bi-payan” (Eternal Glory). A popular weekly magazine published excerpts (without attribution) for almost a year, even including portions on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Ed remembers thinking, “This is one of the most blatant cases of plagiarism ever – PRAISE THE LORD!”

Having already translated the gospels and Paul’s letters, Ed and Kay were asked by the Bible Society of Iran to translate the remaining books of the New Testament. Eighteen years after Kay had asked Ed what he could do for the Lord, their Persian New Testament was published. To God’s glory and Ed’s satisfaction, it has been reprinted many, many times since then.

With Ayatollah Khomeini’s rise to power in 1979, Ed and Belle left Iran, but God was not through using Ed there. For the past three years, Ed has been one of a handful of translation “checkers”

(the only non-Iranian one) for the Bible Society’s translation of the Old Testament, which was to be translated together with Ed’s New Testament translation. Ed still has copies of the manuscripts over which he spent countless hours checking the Persian against the original Hebrew.

So when Mansoor knocked on Ed’s door a few weeks ago, he brought with him the reward of 50 years of faithful labor by Ed and his wife Belle, who has been living at Golden Living Center in Clinton since a stroke in 2005. “The miracle is that I was an inner city kid in Chicago who couldn’t even speak proper English,” Ed says. “Then I flunked Latin in high school. But when I came to Christ I think one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit I was given was the gift of languages. I went to college and took up Greek and thought I had died and gone to heaven. And when we got to Iran I had no trouble whatsoever learning Persian.”

One of the lessons of his life for us, Ed says, is that we have our plans and the Lord has his. Ours sometimes get frustrated, but his do not. Some of those times in Iran were frustrating, and converts were few and far between. Ed and Belle went to Iran as missionaries, not as linguists. Now time and time again Iranian Christians tell Ed that his translation of the New Testament changed everything. Now there are new Christians by the thousands, and house churches by the hundreds. And today Ed and Belle Jaeger can hold in their hands the visible evidence that their work in and for Iran, and in and for the Lord, was not in vain.

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”
1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV)

Yours because Christ’s,

Pastor Chris

