

He could not wait for a caravan; it might be a week before one was ready to go, and the whole town would know he was leaving if he travelled that way. He must leave at once, and alone. So he sent a boy to his home for his bicycle repair outfit and for another pair of shoes, and proceeded to write a note to his wife,

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to the head master, and to the C.M.S. Mission, each to be delivered after he had left. His wife was a strong Bahai and would have moved heaven and earth to stop him.

The next difficulty was money. It was near the end of the month and he was penniless. He managed to borrow two shillings, and with these in his pocket he started off. His wife had sent back a message that if he wanted the repair outfit he must come and fetch it himself; but knowing the dangers of "bidding them farewell which are at home at my house," he went without it.

The task he undertook was herculean. The journey was over two hundred miles across the plain and mountains, following the camel and donkey route, anything but ideal conditions for cycling. It was summer, with the temperature at nearly 110 in the shade in the day, and not even cool at night. The roads were infested with brigands; he was alone, and on an errand which he could not explain without causing grave suspicion and endangering his safety.

His wife was mad with anger when she received his note. "He does not want to be baptized," she declared, "he has just gone off again with other women." The head master was also annoyed. "It is humbug," he declared; "he does not want to be baptized, all he wants is employment in the mission school." His wife called at the mission in a rage. "He'll come back, and insist on my being baptized," she stormed. "You needn't be afraid of that," she was told, "we will not baptize you until we believe that you are really converted."

A few days later Mohammad returned, weary and tired and covered from head to foot with dust. He had reached a village only about twelve miles out when his frail tyres punctured and he had no outfit to mend them. So he had set out to walk, but at a village about halfway the road guards refused to let him go further. They said that the road was not safe for one man alone, and he must wait for a caravan. He was now in a fix; he had hardly a penny left and it might be a week before a caravan arrived, so he decided to return the hundred miles home, pick up his bicycle on the way, get it repaired, and then start again. He got a lift on a donkey, and a few days later was back at his home town. He managed to procure new tyres for his cycle, and without giving any one time to stop him he was off again.

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When he reached his objective he was given preparation for baptism, and was baptized by Bishop Linton. He then hurried back for he meant to show that he was not seeking for another job, or for money, and he arrived in time for the new term at school.

He returned to face the opposition. He was accused of all sorts of ulterior and wrong motives. "Men act from three motives," was his reply, "from desire of money, or fame, or God. I got no money out of it; I had to borrow money to travel and return. I got no fame, but suffered shame and persecution. I leave you to judge why I went."

His wife bitterly opposed him, and life at home became worse than before. She balked him at every step. If he scolded she beat the children and made them cry, and his tender heart suffered terribly. When she went out she locked up the sugar and the tea so that he could not entertain his guests, a terrible breach of etiquette and politeness. Mohammad made no attempt to force her to change her faith, but it was his earnest desire that she should become a Christian of her own free will. He spoke little to her about it, but he left Christian books about so that she might read them if she would. She realized that her husband was a changed man; he no longer went with other women, and their children did not die at birth as before. After his conversion a son and two healthy daughters were born. The time of testing was long and bitter. But after eight years Mohammad had the joy of leading his wife to the Saviour.

Before long he became an evangelist so that he might spend his life telling others of the Lord. Then he conceived a plan to go to Afghanistan, a land closed to the Gospel and where no missionary or Christian teacher is allowed. This idea was laughed at; he was told that it was impossible and that he would surely be killed. "And what harm," he replied, "if I should be the first martyr of the new Church of Iran." He went, and as he could not enter Afghanistan only to do evangelistic work, he took with him tea and other articles to sell. He had also books and gospels which he intended to endeavour to sell and to give away. He had to be very wary, but his venture succeeded. When the time that he had set himself came for his return home he took off the binding of his Bible and carefully separated the pages, and when he sold tea to people who could read he wrapped the

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tea in a page of the Bible; and thus the Word of God which meant so much to him was spread abroad. He is still doing a fine work for the Lord, and his wife is helping him...

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... Had you been to the Christian Union in the Stileman Memorial School in Isfahan in 1934 you would have been attracted by an outspoken girl who took a leading part in the meeting. She was a village girl who had been supported through her school days and had become an active Christian, in fact she was looked upon as a future leader. One Saturday evening not long before the opening of the autumn term in 1935, her brother-in-law came in from the village with another man, a Bahai, and she suddenly announced that she was going back that evening to her village to be married to him. She had been among the loudest in denouncing marriages of Christians and non-Christians, and yet without warning to any of us she fell herself. A small group of Christians went

out the next morning to try to persuade her not to be married. But it was of no avail. She laughed at them and would not listen. Now instead of being one of the leaders of the Church, she is among those who oppose the Gospel. She had not merely fallen to a sudden temptation, she had been playing double...

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Appendix

The Mohammedan religion derives its name from its founder the prophet Mohammed, an Arab, who was born at Mecca in Arabia about the year 570 A.D. It is also called Islam, or the Islamic faith, from an Arabic word meaning submission, that is to say submission to God. In the same way a Mohammedan is often called a Moslem, that is one who has submitted to God.

There are many different sects, but the chief divisions are Sunnis and Shi'as. The Sunnis are orthodox and generally speaking very bigoted. The Shi'as are unorthodox and are considered heretics by the Sunnis; they are practically confined to Iran which is almost solidly Shi-a (pronounced Sheea). The Shi'as have always been much more open to the Gospel and less bigoted than the Sunnis. Instead of following the Caliphs, or leaders of Islam, they follow the twelve Imams or leaders of the faith. They trace this line through Mohammed, Ali (the son-in-law of Mohammed, who was the fourth Caliph), and then through the sons of Ali, Hassan and Hussein. The latter were murdered, and the Shi'as consider that their deaths were a form of propitiation.

The Sunnis trace their leadership through Mohammad, Abu Bekr, Omar, Othman, Ali, Mu'awiyah, and Yezid, the murderer of Hussein. To them religious and secular government is one, and the head of the State is the head of religion. Before the great war the Sultan of Turkey was the head of the Moslem world. After the revolution in Turkey that land practically rejected the Moslem faith and abolished the Caliphate.

The Bahais originated in Iran as a section of Islam, but they are now separate. The Shi'as believe that the twelfth Imam disappeared into hiding and is still living. He is Al Mahdi, and will return again. The original founder of the Bahai religion

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was Mirza Mohammed Ali, who was born in Shiraz in 1820. He assumed the title of the Bab, that is "the door," or the channel of grace between the absent Imam and his followers. His followers were called the Babis, and he gave them a new book called the Beyan, which he intended should supersede the Koran. There were riots in the land over this new religion, and the leader was put to death in 1850.

The Bab was followed by Baha'ulah and Abdu'l-Bahá, and the religion is now called Bahatism; the Bab now has little more than an historical importance and his teaching is no longer the standard. This religion is strong in Iran, but it is not officially recognized, and its schools were closed by the Government in

1934. The Bahais are not unduly hindered by this as it is part of their creed that they may deny their faith if they desire, and deception is one of the chief methods of progress. Some of their leaders have toured Europe and America and other lands with much publicity and boasting, with the result they have a few hundred followers in some of these lands. In the West Bahatism is a movement, not a religion.

Bahais have many high ideals, but make no contribution towards the attainment of them. They hold that all men should be brothers, that there should be no war, that all should speak one language, and have one international court of justice, and, moreover, that all religions are one at heart. They accept the fact of Christ coming into the world, but deny all that is fundamental in the Christian faith. They hold that their holy book, the Agdas, supersedes all previous scriptures, and endeavour to prove their case from the Scriptures. They practically deny the existence of evil.

The reader who wants to understand the position is referred to The Religion of the Baha'is, by the Rev. J. R. Richards. In Iran the Bahais are active opponents of the Gospel. A Bahai has been known to profess conversion and to be baptized so that he could propagate his own faith among the Christians. There have been many converts who have later become apostate and joined the Bahais, and probably they were all the time Bahais in heart. On the other hand there is a Christian evangelist, once a Bahai, who has served the Church for over twelve years, and is a sterling Christian.

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