

incarnation.

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... In February of this year, another professed convert from Islam to Christianity came to Beirut. His name is Ibrahim Effendi from Bagdad — a man about thirty-five years of age, of scholarly bearing, refined and courteous. He said he was the brother of the wife of Abbas Effendi, the new Babi religious head, who last year succeeded Beha Allah in Acre. Threatened three years ago in Bagdad because he would not become a Babi, he fled to Deir on the Euphrates and practiced pharmacy, and from there came to Beirut. He was looking for a place where he could work for Moslems without restriction from the government. I wrote to Mr. Zwemer at Bahrein about him, and on reaching Alexandria, April 28th, I found him there an attendant on the religious services of Rev. Dr. Ewing. ...

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... In October I received a letter from Chicago inquiring about Mr. Ibrahim Khairullah, the Syrian, who was attempting to propagate Babism in the United States. I sent to Mr. Stowell a "Life of Mr. Ibrahim Khairullah," written by his relative and intimate friend in Beirut. I give here a copy of my letter, but the "Memoir" is not of sufficient value to be reproduced. His temporary success in the occult art business is only another instance of the gullibility of human nature. Three years later I visited Abbas Effendi in Haifa and an account of the interview was published in the Outlook of June 22, 1901. A recent book by M. H. Phelps of New York, 1904, gives a very fair account of this Persian bubble, showing that it is nothing new in religious history but a revamp of ancient Pantheistic theories [online at [khanum_phelps_abbas_effendi](#)]. Mr. Phelps' summary of Abbas Effendi's teaching as "Love to God and Man" shows it to be as old as Christ and Moses. It is the essence of New Testament ethics, and there are millions of Christians to-day living according to this standard as far as they can by the aid of divine grace. Abbas Effendi is almost a Christian. But his latitudinarian views that all men, pagans, idolaters, and all are accepted of God, would seem to make any attempt to propagate Babism a work of supererogation.

The letter to Mr. Stowell is as follows:

"I received yours of September 24th in due time, and last week sent your letter to a reliable person in Beirut who is a relative of the man you mention. It is evident that the man has been at his wit's end to know how to make a living and is now trying a new religion. The enclosed brief chronicle you can rely upon as being correct.

"The book you speak of as 'Bab el Din,' Revelation from the

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East, is either that mongrel of stuff by the Greek priest, Christofory Jebara, for the World's Parliament of Religions, in which the author would bring about

a union between Christianity and Islam by our all becoming Moslems; or some new rehash of Professor Browne of Cambridge, England, on the 'Episode of the Bab,' the Persian delusion whose head man Beha-ullah in Acre claimed to be an incarnation of God and on his death a few years ago his son, Abbas Effendi, succeeded him and is running the 'incarnation' fraud for all that it is worth, and that is worth a good deal, as pilgrims constantly come from the Babite sect in Persia and bring their offerings of money with great liberality.

"Such men as Jebara and the Babites of Persia turn up now and then in the East, 'go up like a rocket and down like the stick.'" The priest Jebara made no converts as far as I can learn, unless Mr. Khairullah be one. The fact is there was nothing to be converted to. You can't love or pray to a mere negation.

"The Babite movement in Persia started out as an attempt at a reform of Islam and ended by the leader claiming to be divine and invulnerable in battle, but when he died, another was found ready to succeed to his pretensions.

"They teach a strange mixture of truth and error, of extreme liberality and unscrupulous persecution of those obnoxious to them. I had a friend a few years ago, a learned Mohammedan of Bagdad, who was feeling his way to Christianity. His father, a wealthy man, died when he was young, and his uncle, a Babite, determined to train up the lad as a Babite. But the boy as he grew up refused to accept Babism. The uncle then robbed him of his property and drove him out of Bagdad. A few years ago he came here, professed Christianity, and was baptized in Alexandria, Egypt. While here, he went down to Acre to visit one of the Babites whom he had formerly known. After remaining there a few days, he found out that his uncle had written to Acre about him and one night he received word that his life was in danger if he stayed through the night and he escaped to Beirut in great terror.

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"Some months ago, an elderly Persian Babite called at our press in Beirut, and some time after brought a beautiful gilt motto on a large wall card which he gave us. He said he prayed to that motto for twelve years, and now, after reading the Bible, he has decided to give up such folly. (On the card was written in Arabic 'O glory of the most glorious,' — the mystic prayer of the Babites.)

"The Greek Jebara wants the Moslem lion and the Christian lamb to lie down together, only the lamb must be inside the lion.

"The Babites want all to become lambs, even if they have to use force to make them so. Their blasphemous claim that the Acre sheikh is God is quite enough to condemn them.

"I earnestly pray that Mr. Khairullah may be led by God's Spirit back to the pure faith of his youth when he covenanted to take the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

"It is easy to be specious and plausible but secret religious sects are

dangerous and secret propagandism which you say is his method, is a confession of weakness. Truth loves the light and if the 'Bab el Din'* is afraid of the light and of open discussion, it should be avoided by every God-fearing man and woman. ...

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... November 12th, by the advice of our physician, Mrs. Jessup and I took the Austrian steamer Helios for Haifa to spend a season at Hotel Pross on Mount Carmel. There is no more restful place in Syria. The scenery is inspiring and the absolute quiet of that German hotel and its clean, wholesome appointments give one just the rest and refreshment that the weary in mind and body need. We remained the first day after landing at

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Hotel Carmel in the German colony, and there were brought into contact with the Babites. An American lady, who became enamoured of this system of mysticism, was at the hotel, and Captain Wells, a chaplain from the Philippines, had come there for the express purpose of keeping her out of that abyss of religious platitudes. We spent four and a half hours in conversation with her. She could give no reason for following Abbas Effendi, excepting a kind of hypnotic fascination. Abbas Effendi's two brothers, Mohammed Ali and Bedea [Badî], were then in a bitter quarrel with him, and Mrs. ___ said that Abbas feared for his life. While we were talking, a tall youth with a long Persian coat passed the door and stopped. She called out, "There he is, that awful creature. He is trying to kill Abbas, and is a spy trying to hear what we are saying."

The next day, by invitation, I called with Captain Wells on Abbas Effendi. I published in the Outlook a full account of my conversation with him in Arabic. He is an elderly and venerable man, very similar to scores of venerable Moslem and Druse sheikhs I have met in this land. I can understand how an intelligent Moslem might be attracted to Babism, on account of its liberality towards other sects, as contrasted with the narrow conceited illiberality of Islam. But I cannot understand how a true Christian can possibly exchange the liberty with which Christ makes us free and the clear, consistent plan of salvation through a Redeemer, for the misty and mystical platitudes of Babism. It has helped in breaking up the solidity of Islam in Persia, but is becoming more and more of a "sect." It may result in good if it spreads among the Sunni Moslems of Turkey and Egypt as it has among the Shiahs of Persia.

An extensive movement towards Babism, or the doctrine of the Mystic Shadhilees, would do more than anything else to break up Pan-Islamism.

In March, 1901, Rev. Mr. Bray of Wisconsin dined with Mohammed Ali and Bedea Effendi, brothers of Abbas. They showed him the tomb of their father, Beha Allah, who they insisted was an incarnation of the Holy Ghost. "What," said

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Mr. Bray, "is this the tomb of a dead Holy Ghost?" Mohammed Effendi was

perplexed and made no reply.

Any religious system which depends on the life of one man or family must tumble one day from its foundation of sand.

I left Abbas Effendi with the painful feeling that he was accepting divine honours from simple-minded women from America and receiving their gifts of gold, without a protest or rebuke.

I hear that his younger brother, Bedea, has become reconciled to him, but I would not guarantee that his main object is not to gain his share of the money which is in the possession of Abbas Effendi. It is not long since he was threatening to kill Abbas, and assassination is an old fashion of Persian fanatics.

In December an American woman was brought ashore from a steamer and placed in St. John's Hospital in Beirut in a state of collapse. When sufficiently revived to speak, she said she was Mrs. ___ of Chicago, and had left contrary to her husband's request to visit the Bab Incarnation, Abbas Effendi of Acre. She was literally starved through seasickness, and before her death, she moaned and mourned her folly in leaving her husband and home to visit the "Master" Abbas. An autopsy revealed perforation of the coats of the stomach. The poor woman had taken this long journey alone and must have suffered untold agonies, ignorant of the language and helpless through seasickness in a winter voyage. Yet to what lengths of exposure will religious delusion drive people! This Holy Land is the happy hunting-ground of cranks and visionaries of all stripes, Oriental and Occidental.

One of the recent woman pilgrims to the shrine of Abbas Effendi was an English-speaking woman who stated that she had been successively an Agnostic, Christian Scientist, and Theosophist and now was going to try Abbasism. Palestine, whether it ever witnesses the turning of the Jews from Europe and America to their old fatherland or not, is certainly now witnessing the "turning of the cranks."

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