



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

BATHISH OR BAT-HEESH: LEARNING TO BE MODERN  
AT THE SYRIAN PROTESTANT COLLEGE

by  
MOHAMAD YAHIA HASSAN HAMADE

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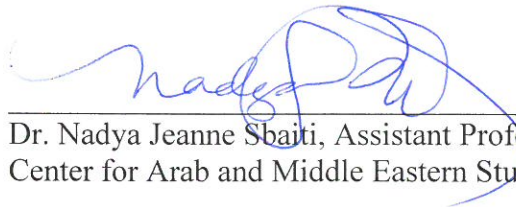
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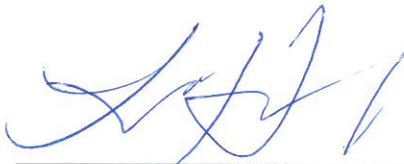
Approved by:



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Dr. Nadya Jeanne Sbaiti, Assistant Professor  
Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies

First Reader



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Dr. Lisa Lynn Hajjar, Visiting Professor  
Center for American Studies and Research

Second Reader

Date of project presentation: April 25, 2016

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT


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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Mohamad Yahia Hassan Hamade for Master of Arts  
Major: Transnational American Studies

Title: Bathish or Bat-heesh: Learning to be Modern at the Syrian Protestant College

My project charts the historical context of conflicts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that coincided with the founding of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) in Beirut. I am interested in documenting how two college crises expose the redefinition of missionary work by examining a multitude of views on modernity and liberalism manifest at SPC.

My project contributes to debates on how the faculty and the students adopt political liberalism differently, both of who maintain their religious and moral views, but also engage in social cooperation for the advancement of SPC. I fill a gap in the critical literature of exposing crucial turning points in the transnational history that influenced the founding of a university at the peripheries of the Ottoman Empire.

The ensuing discussion reveals the silent context and often overlooked students that defined the onset of intellectualism in contemporary Beirut, where AUB remains an important intellectual space in the Middle East and North Africa.

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إذا غامرت في شرفِ مَرُومٍ، فلا تَقْنَعِ بما دونَ النُّجومِ

For Sumela... Δῶς μοι πᾶ στῶ καὶ τὰν γᾶν κινάσω.



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This project began as a study of the methods utilized to teach English composition at the Syrian Protestant College. The scope of my study evolved over the course of my research from a myriad of notions and thoughts into a distilled idea. My project emerged from these ruminations as a study of moments of crisis on the SPC campus and how these events reveal a rebranding of the work of American Protestant missionaries, who retained their view of modernity that was contrary to the one prevalent among the local intelligentsia in Beirut. By investigating the belief that American Protestant missionaries were interested in education for its own merit, I argue that education was not their primary concern. Their promotion of a liberal education at SPC was for the purpose of attracting locals and preparing them for conversion. Following the events of the founding of SPC, my project provides the insight to scrutinize how a secular, liberal arts college established by American missionaries came into fruition, and how moments of tension on campus uncover contradictory views on modernity and the role of education by the college's faculty, board of trustees, and students. Furthermore, exploring the historical context and regional moments of crisis allows me to follow the evolution—for lack of a better term—of the American Protestant mission that had established the cornerstone of a modern educational institution. Beirut's location presented the missionaries with an opportunity to set grounds for expansion around the Eastern Mediterranean. They had hoped that local converts would be ordained and would build new churches to continue the mission of conversion, while the Americans would move on to the next place.

My project's timeframe covers several moments across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Events, such as the *Tanzimat*, the summer war of 1860 in Mount Lebanon, and the Lewis Affair are identified and juxtaposed with other significant events as watershed moments for my understanding of the nature of missionary work by the Americans. Situating my study in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century anchors my project in the relevant period to follow the main characters, American missionaries, local Syrian intellectuals, and of course, students at SPC.

The American University of Beirut was founded in 1866 under the name of Syrian Protestant College as the first higher education institution funded by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The ABCFM defined education as the teaching of gospel, and higher education was understood to be seminary.<sup>1</sup> Thus at first glance, SPC does not fit this description given its status as a liberal arts college where students from Syria and across the region assembled to receive an education from missionaries. I argue that the Beirut-based American missionaries' decision to go against the ABCFM's definition of education was in order to remain intellectually, culturally, and religiously relevant in order to be able to continue their missionary work in the city. My project focuses on Beirut in the early nineteenth century, at a time when the city rose to prominence as the hub for local intellectuals who defined modernity according to their cultural context and had established schools, literary and scientific societies, and clubs to spread this notion across Beirut and the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, the rebranding of missionary work

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1910-1927*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.

by the Americans in Beirut and their views on modernity did not emerge into a vacuum. Interactions and conversations with locals during the mid-nineteenth century had effectively changed the missionaries' methods of conversion, which, when they first arrived, was to prepare the world for the Second Coming.

Moments of crisis depicted in my project reveal a transnational narrative that suggests modernity was not shipped from West to East. Rather, I argue that modernity was the result of its own events and contexts. A reading of relevant archives from this time period, which include faculty minutes, memoirs, letters, and student petitions, lays the foundations to explore this transnational history in my project. Works of local intellectuals are also examined in order to frame native views of modernity and education. Primary sources, such as these, illuminate the reasons and motivations for missionaries to remain adamant in their view of education, despite the fact that it went against Boston's mandate. Given the wealth of information available in the archives, my project does not claim that the sources utilized here address all the issues and complexities of the time period. Views of locals on modernity, such as Butrus al-Bustani, whose publications and school are explored in my project, were not identical across the intellectual scene. Education and the quintessential role it had in promoting a local modernity was ubiquitous and shared by Bustani and his compatriots, however.

My project supplements a well-established trend in literature that points at local agency in what has been previously been viewed as processes that introduce change from the outside. I propose that the important feat in Beirut is not American missionaries establishing SPC, but rather the locals, who were insistent on having an institution for a modern education. Thus, American missionaries had no choice but to meet such a demand. Scholars, including Marwa Elshakry and Ussama Makdisi,

interpret the shift in the missionaries' view on education as an adaptation to the demands and needs of the local population. They also suggest that was an inevitable outcome of the missionaries' failure to convert a significant number of the local population. Elshakry and Makdisi propose that the locals had persuaded the Americans away from evangelism. That allowed missionaries to get involved with the promotion of a liberal education. This view puts agency back with the local population, which seems to be in line with other research on missionary activity in the region, such as in Egypt. In her study of Egypt, Heather Sharkey observes a reciprocal relationship between the local population and missionaries. Sharkey proposes that these interactions and associations prompted missionaries to adjust their practices while dealing with the locals. Additionally, she observes that locals seemed to embrace and take on some of the mannerisms of the missionaries.

Pierre Bourdieu provides a lens to examine the emergence of the liberal subject in juxtaposition to the subject produced through the missionaries' ideology on a grander scale. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu claims that individuals who are interpellated as subjects do not possess the process of interpellation intrinsically; rather, there exists a "cultivated disposition, inscribed in the body schema and the schemas of thought, which enables each agent to engender all the practices consistent with the logic of challenge and riposte," Bourdieu says. "And only such practices, by means of countless inventions, which the stereotyped unfolding of ritual would in no way demand."<sup>2</sup> Habitus is the process by which Bourdieu suggests the ideological significations within society are structured. Social formation and structure produces

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 15.

habitus. It is a system of “durable, transposable dispositions,” Bourdieu declares. They “function as structuring structures, that is as principles of generation and structuring practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without any way being the product of obedience to rules.”<sup>3</sup> Having this perspective on conversion allows for a more nuanced reading of the archives that is not bound to a binary interpretation of missionary work in terms of success or failure.

The study of SPC by Elshakry and Makdisi suggests that missionaries and faculty members of the college maintained their evangelical beliefs, but tends to undervalue the influence of locals. With that actuality, Makdisi suggests the emergence a holistic newfound type of discourse regarding modernity, which was fashioned by the juncture of Protestantism and liberalism. He identifies Bustani as a representative of this new discourse. Bustani emphasized evangelical sympathy that mirrored American ideals of modernization, yet built his ideals on the notion of coexistence and religious tolerance that shied away from extremism. The discourse Makdisi identifies could be best described as a support of the region’s religious diversity, but also as a promoter of a free conscience, which mirrored the initial Protestant evangelical message. However, this faith had a new liberal and secular face. Similarly, the Protestants preached to individuals to break through their struggle in pursuit of faith. On the other hand, Bustani called for an Arab renaissance. By situating the American missionary activity within the framework of discussions over modernity and education, my project fills a gap in literature by suggesting that Bustani’s educational initiative and ideals served as the standard for American missionaries to emulate and recreate at SPC. Conversations and interactions between the American missionaries and locals are identified in my project

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

as catalysts for the spread of ideas on modernity and education, instead of crediting an Occidental export of ideas into the Orient.

Chapter 2, “From Boston to Beirut” examines the transnational context, as the title suggests, which spanned across continental borders. Beirut’s extraordinary growth, both in population and economic power, allowed for an easier exchange and flow of ideas. The city is also identified as an incubator for *Al-Nahda*, which promoted an Arab renaissance and revival of the language. By tracing this history, I indicate that locals in Beirut had already established views on modernity and education, which were facilitated by the flow of capital that allowed for intellectual pursuits to take place. The chapter then moves to New England, where I explore the origins of American missionary thought within the contemporary contexts that influenced the missionaries’ views on theology and epistemology. The chapter returns yet again to the Eastern Mediterranean with an overview of the *Tanzimat*. Education and views on modernity are examined as the Ottomans begin the implementation of modernization reforms across the late empire. Regional crises, both in Asia and North America, are cited in this chapter as having an impact on the framework that resulted in the missionaries’ justification for the founding of SPC.

My project proceeds to inspect the way missionaries had begun to interact with the local population and how the method of interaction changed over time in Chapter 3, “Connections and Competition.” This change is significant enough to note because I argue it signals to the beginning of the transformation of missionary work in Syria that eventually led to the establishment of SPC. The conflict of summer 1860 in Mount Lebanon is identified in the chapter as a substantial turning point when American missionaries began sensing they were losing ground in Beirut to other missionaries.

Competitors included European Protestants and Jesuits who had their own evangelical pursuits in Beirut. I suggest that founding SPC by the American missionaries was, in a way, their attempt to preserve footing on the slippery coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Chapter 4, “Parallel Imports,” continues to explore the threats the American missionaries faced, but this time from local converts, mainly Butrus al-Bustani. We are introduced to Bustani in the chapter, an interesting figure of his time, and to his views on modernity. I argue that his school and its curriculum served as the model that SPC was built on, despite the fact that the Americans do not acknowledge this fact. In this light, I maintain that SPC cannot be the product of the Protestant missionary’s objective munificence to introduce the Ottoman Syrians to the American liberal arts education system. The college was the product of a historical, social, and economic context in Beirut.

Chapter 5, “Crises on Campus,” discusses two crises at SPC, one in 1882 over Darwinism, and the second in 1909 over a sermon delivered during the mandatory chapel attendance. My analysis of both events suggests that these were conflicts over what kind of modernity should be dominant at SPC. Episodes of protest provide an insight to the opposing views of modernity from the eyes of both the missionaries and the students on a shared campus. A study of these conflicts reveals how a Protestant view of modernity came to be coupled with a college curriculum that nurtured the antithesis of evangelism, but was viewed as a means to convert the students by the missionaries.

My research focuses on the exchanges between the American missionaries and

the local community in Beirut. Such encounters were part of multi-lateral conversations that had a transnational impact. “We are in the end,” as Makdisi suggests, “all implicated in one another’s histories.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2009, 220.



## CHAPTER 2

### FROM BOSTON TO BEIRUT

Beirut's heritage and claim to classical antiquity did not afford the town a significant role as a Mediterranean port city at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Berytus, as the city was known during the Greek and Roman eras, has been continuously inhabited from the Bronze Age. This chapter traces the historical context by examining Beirut, Boston, and Istanbul. A transnational flow of people allowed the transfer of ideas and culture across continental borders from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and vice versa. Movements that resulted in the encounters of American missionaries with locals in Syria are better understood with a view of the contemporary setting in the nineteenth century.

The exponential increase in trade in the Eastern Mediterranean can be explained due to the incorporation of the region into a global trade route, both on land and sea. Another, more influential, occurrence that illustrates the factors that contributed to the growing importance of Beirut was the decline of Acre's portal functions in the Ottoman Empire. With such exponential growth on several levels, so enters the issue of modernity and how locals perceived themselves as being modern. The Egyptian occupation of Syria in 1831 is often cited as a catalyst of Beirut's rise to regional prominence. Beirut, unlike Acre, accommodated the Egyptian invaders. Acre resisted

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<sup>5</sup> See: William A. Ward, (ed), *The Role of the Phoenicians in the Interaction of Mediterranean Civilizations: Papers Presented to the Archaeological Symposium at the American University of Beirut, March, 1967*. Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1968.

and was subsequently crushed by the Egyptian army.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime, these actions caused Beirut to begin unseating Acre as the regional port, compounded along with a thriving silk industry. This event marked European interests in commercial and diplomatic ties in Beirut.

As maritime trade surged, it elevated Beirut's status, on several levels, and shifted traffic from the Syrian interior to the coast. Beirut, despite its picturesque scenery, did not monopolize the sea just yet; the city shared the Eastern Mediterranean with other far more illustrious Ottoman littoral towns. Acre, and to a lesser extent Tyre, were still the default access points to Ottoman Syria's heartland, but their prominence began to wane during Ahmed *al-Jezzar* (the Butcher) Pasha's occupation.<sup>7</sup> Ahmed Pasha began to impose trade sanctions in those towns after his armies immobilized Napoleon's invasion from Egypt to the Syrian coast, in an attempt to control the maritime economic scene in Ottoman Syria. The failed French campaign caused Ahmed Pasha to banish all European merchants from the Ottoman coasts.<sup>8</sup> By the time of Ahmed Pasha's death, Acre and Tyre had lost their roles as entry points to Syria, and Beirut then slowly began taking over its role once more. It started to expand and merchants began to settle with their families by building their homes near the city's port.

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<sup>6</sup> Mahmoud Haddad, "The City, the Coast, the Mountain, and the Hinterland: Beirut's Commercial and Political Rivalries in the 19th and Early 20th Century" in Thomas Philipp and Brigit Schaebler (eds.) *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation; Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to to the 20th Century*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998, 129-151.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Phillip, *Acre. The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City, 1730-1831*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1990.

Local merchants rose to prominence and defined the city's economic life through a substantial increase in imports and exports via the port of Beirut.<sup>9</sup> A decade of political stability and security further enhanced Beirut's growth during the Egyptian occupation of Ottoman Syria from 1831 to 1840—allowing the population of Beirut to expand with immigration from Mount Lebanon and from within the Syrian heartland.<sup>10</sup> Migrants flocked to Beirut for political reasons rather than purely economic interests, and Ottoman Syrian subjects fled their villages fearing persecution from their non-Christian neighbors. This migration transformed Beirut, which had not been divided into religiously segregated quarters, into a city where refugees settled along religious and communal lines. Beirut experienced unprecedented growth for two decades between the 1840s and 1860s that shifted its demographics to a largely Christian city.<sup>11</sup>

The province of Mount Lebanon was created shortly after the war of 1860 and did not include Beirut.<sup>12</sup> However, despite their separation on paper, Mount Lebanon and Beirut remained connected. Political elites, who left Mount Lebanon, maintained their power and continued to impose significant influence over their constituents in Beirut. The elites' power rested on ties to an ancestral root in the mountain that were difficult to sever even, after people moved to Beirut, because they remained registered to vote in their villages and towns in Mount Lebanon.<sup>13</sup> As such, the ideologies of the

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<sup>9</sup> Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983, 68.

<sup>10</sup> The occupation's ramifications will be elaborated in Chapter 3. See: Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

<sup>11</sup> Samir Kassir, *Beirut*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 111. The war of 1860 will be addressed in further details in the Chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 167.

mountain persisted among the city's residents, especially between Maronite Christians who never viewed themselves at home in Beirut.<sup>14</sup> This ideological appeal will be revisited in subsequent chapters as it has a significant impact on how modernity is perceived differently among locals and expats in Beirut.

With an increased population came an improved infrastructure in the city. Roads were set up and a new route was paved to link Beirut to Damascus. The two-day journey now took half a day to complete. A telegraph line was also set up to connect Beirut to Europe. These improvements established a Syrian dependence on Beirut for trade, investment, and global communication.<sup>15</sup> Local merchants began to benefit from these reforms in order to expand their entrepreneurial advances, which, evidently, also benefited European commercial interests that further contributed to Beirut's prosperity. By the end of the nineteenth century, Beirut had been granted the status of an Ottoman province. Beirut's rise also ushered the city's status as a hub of intellectualism and knowledge production. Intellectuals and thinkers associated with *Al-Nahda* were all based in Beirut. They came down from Mount Lebanon to build schools, establish literary and scientific societies, and to print journals, newspapers, and books. Butrus al-Bustani, Nasif al-Yaziji, Hussein Bayhum, Ahmad Abbas, and Yusuf al-Asir were the most renowned intellectual elites who were engaged in spreading knowledge and notions of modernity in the city, and the Eastern Mediterranean at large.

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<sup>14</sup>Albert Hourani, "Ideologies of the Mountain and the City" in Roger Owen (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*. London: Ithaca Press, 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Eugene Rogan, "Instant Communication: The Impact of the Telegraph in Ottoman Syria" in Thomas Philipp and Brigit Schaebler (eds.), *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation; Bilad al-Sham From the 18th to the 20th Century*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998, 113.

*City upon a Hill*

William Goodell and Isaac Bird, along with their wives Abigail Goodell and Ann Bird, were the first American missionaries to set foot on Beirut's shores in 1823.<sup>16</sup> The couples departed from the port of New York in 1822 with a "general view of [their] benevolent operations" but had no knowledge of what lay ahead in Beirut.<sup>17</sup> The Goodells and the Birds came to Beirut in order to save Ottoman subjects by converting them to Protestantism.<sup>18</sup> Both William Goodell and Isaac Bird received their education at the Andover Theological Seminary but had no contact with Islam prior to their visits to the region. Their mission, as entrusted to them by the ABCFM, was to spread the gospel. The reasons why these men, along with their wives, felt compelled to seek out an overseas career to modernize Syrians require further scrutiny.

Historians argue that the U.S. Constitution and the democratization of American religion caused a Protestant retreat from a progressively secular change in New England.<sup>19</sup> Other primary sources, including views shared by Goodell and Bird, point out that nineteenth century Congregationalism demonstrates that the denomination

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<sup>16</sup> "Statistical View of the Board and its Missions," *The Missionary Herald* 36, 1840, 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> *The Missionary Herald's* cover page contains the following text: "The Missionary Herald: Containing the Proceedings at Large of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: With a General View of Other Benevolent Operations."

<sup>18</sup> American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Instructions to the Missionaries about to Embark for the Sandwich Islands, and to the Rev. Messrs. William Goodell & Isaac Bird, Attached to the Palestine Mission: Delivered by the Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1823.

<sup>19</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. For a detailed nineteenth century analysis, see William: Goodell. *The Democracy of Christianity: or, An analysis of the Bible and its Doctrines in Their Relation to the Principle of Democracy, Volume I*. New York: Cady and Burgess, 1849.

transitioned voluntarily, suggesting that these Protestant Americans departed on their missions from a position of power, not weakness. The personal reasons why these missionaries embarked to “where the beast and the false prophet are” are perhaps less important in our discussion at this stage than where they came and the contemporary social context on their side of the Atlantic.<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that not all early missionaries to the Eastern Mediterranean were inhabitants of Massachusetts or came from Congregationalist backgrounds. Regardless of their denomination, their shared education at Andover, in Massachusetts, ensured these men shared a religiously homogenous belief that traced its origins to the early Puritans.<sup>21</sup>

After the arrival of Puritan settlers to the New World in the 1630s, they sought to establish a Protestant theocracy in which the Bible would frame the laws of the land.<sup>22</sup> Based on congregational rules of governance, the legislators of the Massachusetts General Court dictated the lives of the colony’s subjects.<sup>23</sup> Settlement in Massachusetts was conditional upon one’s membership in a Congregational church and adherence to the articles of its faith. Dissent in the colony was illegal and those bold enough to challenge authority were banished. Conformity, religious orthodoxy, and a

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<sup>20</sup> Leonard Woods, *Memoirs of American Missionaries, Formerly Connected with the Society of Inquiry Respecting Missions, in the Andover Theological Seminary: Embracing a History of the Society, Etc., with an Introductory Essay*. Boston: Peirce and Parker, 1833, 256-258.

<sup>21</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006, 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Everett H. Emerson, *Puritanism in America: 1620-1750*. Detroit: Twayne Publishers, 1977.

<sup>23</sup> George Lee Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts: A Study in Tradition and Design*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1985. See also: Emory Washburn. *Sketches of the Judicial History of Massachusetts: From 1630 to the Revolution in 1775*. Clark: The Lawbook Exchange, LTD, 2007.

communal understanding of theology were the norm.<sup>24</sup> With the growth of the colony and the absence of any formal church structure in New England, local clergy deemed it necessary to maintain a “carefully articulated consensus, monitored by an educated core of scholars-pastors and watchful laypeople in the pews. Harvard College, it goes without saying, was central to this ambitious project.”<sup>25</sup> Harvard University, as it is currently known, was established in 1636, only a few years after the arrival of Puritan settlers, and was intended to serve as a facility for the training of clergy and the creation of consensus.<sup>26</sup>

As settlements in New England grew more diverse, the clergy found it challenging to keep their congregations united in doctrine and practice. Perhaps the most decisive and dividing event was the 1730s evangelical and revitalization movement, known as the Great Awakening. This effectively split clergy and congregations across New England into two camps: the Old Lights and the New Lights. The Great Awakening resulted in theological debates that may be reduced to the idea that the support of the pious zeal was pitted against the opposition to the emotional excesses of the revival.<sup>27</sup> The American Revolution of 1776 instigated further political turmoil in the ongoing reflections. The clergymen, who had maintained a religious monopoly over New England and had grown accustomed to receiving tax revenues

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Grossberg and Christopher Tomlins (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Law in America, Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Margret Lamberts Bendroth, *A School of the Church: Andover Newton Across Two Centuries*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed narrative on the founding of Harvard University, see: Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

<sup>27</sup> See: Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield*. Boston: Charles Tappan, 1845.

from their churches, were appalled with the Constitution's separation of church and state (i.e., disestablishmentarianism) and the elimination of vital sources of state funding for their churches. Massachusetts, distraught and defiant, did not ratify the First Amendment until 1833.<sup>28</sup>

The Second Great Awakening that swept through New England congregations and college campuses from 1790 to 1840 overlapped with decades of discord over the place of religion in American politics.<sup>29</sup> During these times, clergymen found it arduous to maintain order in their congregations. Harvard College, which was considered the zenith of the theological authority and intellectual life of Protestant America, was one of the loci of this sweeping change. Harvard became the epicenter of Protestant uproar after the appointment of a Unitarian professor as the Chair of Divinity in 1805. Congregationalists, who maintained the most conservative standpoint, retreated from the college and established the Andover Theological Seminary near Boston—a clear attempt to maintain their perception of religiosity.<sup>30</sup> Andover ultimately became the training center for ABCFM's missionaries as it produced the bulk of the early Congregational missionary force.<sup>31</sup> Understanding the aforementioned contextual background provides a scope for us to engage and assess the missionaries' views on

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<sup>28</sup> James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Henry K. Rowe, *History of Andover Theological Seminary*. Boston: Thomas Todd Company Printers, 1933, 1-10.

<sup>31</sup> David W. Kling, "The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" in Wilbert R. Shenk (ed.). *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004.



modernity, the reasons why they decided to export it to the world, Beirut in our case, and eventually establish the Syrian Protestant College—the keywords here being Syrian, Protestant, and college.

*Istanbul (Not Constantinople)*

On the other side of the Atlantic, nestled between the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Bosphorus, the Ottoman Empire had a starkly different concept of religious diversity. When the Andover-trained ABCFM missionaries landed on the shores of Beirut, they stepped into a centuries-old empire that ruled three continents simultaneously and had thirty million subjects of great religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity within its borders.<sup>32</sup>

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 transferred ancient Christian institutions from Byzantine to Ottoman hands. The number of institutions grew as the Ottomans laid claim to Syria and Egypt. Ruling from Topkapı Palace in Constantinople, the capital of Greek Orthodoxy, the Ottoman Sultans controlled Jerusalem, the holy city of three monotheistic religions.<sup>33</sup> Jewish and Christian subjects were considered as *Ahl al-Kitab* (The People of the Book), and were ruled over in accordance to the implementing regulations of the Pact of Omar. Now, it would be erroneous to take for granted the fact that the Ottoman Empire was effectively a Muslim empire. However, given our more recent understanding of the historical context, we may begin to appreciate the increased, and more public claims Sultans made to be the caliphs and *Dhilul Allah fi al-Aalam*

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<sup>32</sup> Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991.

(God's Shadow on the Earth).<sup>34</sup> Social hierarchy in the Ottoman Empire had Muslims on the top. Because Ottoman law did not recognize ethnicity or citizenship, Muslims of any ethnic background enjoyed the same rights and privileges. The pact ensured *Ahl al-Dhimma* (Non-Muslims) to protection of property and rites in return for their capitulation to their Muslim rulers. Jews and Christians were also granted autonomy in the *millet* system (confessional law) involving property, family, and contract law among its members in the community.<sup>35</sup> Ottoman law, in principle, recognized interfaith coexistence, asserted the preeminence of Muslims, and permitted non-Muslim elites to flourish, given that the communities they represented maintained the payment of tribute. This allowed Maronites to live “like a rose among thorns” in the Ottoman Empire, as they accepted and promoted the status quo, and survived “against an encroaching world rather than being a narrative of Christian conquest.”<sup>36</sup> Challenging religions, proselytizing, or abandoning faith in this social order was not allowed—unless one wished to convert to Islam.

A watershed moment in Ottoman history was the accession of Abdul Hamid II to throne on August 1876. Besides being the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Abdul Hamid's legacy includes the continuing of *Tanzimat*, or the period of reorganization that began well before his reign in 1839. The *Tanzimat* were an attempt to modernize

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<sup>34</sup> This title was rarely used before the nineteenth century. However, given recent nationalistic tendencies in Europe, and a fear of seeing a repeat from Ottoman subjects, Ottoman authorities invoked a loyalty based on a shared Islamic faith and heritage. For an overview of the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, see: William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 38.

the Ottoman Empire and ward off nationalist movements within the borders. *Osmanlılık*, or Ottomanism, promoted equality among the *millets* and affirmed that all subjects were equal before the law. This did not mean that the *millet* system was undone, however. Rather secular organizations and policies were adopted in the Ottoman Empire in order to apply taxes, education, conscription, and military service to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. “Ottoman polity was committed to creating its own solution,” Benjamin Fortna argues was the reason behind *Tanzimat*.<sup>37</sup> Modernity in the Empire was to be achieved by incorporating Western models on an Ottoman and Islamic basis. Fortna suggests that education reforms were undertaken by the Ottoman Empire in order to preserve the Ottoman state and culture, which opposed the European enemy.

Legitimation policies of the *Tanzimat* were concerned with perceptions of internal audiences of the Empire as much as the projection of the image the Ottomans were trying to project to the outside world. Ceremonies, icons, and the official religious ideology maintained in Istanbul contained increased symbolism that was based on Islam, and was given legitimacy by the *Dhilul Allah fi al-Aalam*. Though seemingly religious, this version of Islam was Ottomanized and was a reaction “to appear as one of the club of European autocrats” and shed its image as the sick man of Europe.<sup>38</sup> Education, as scholars including Selim Deringil and Benjamin Fortna suggest, was central to this modernization project. The Ottoman quest for a modern education was an integral part of the ongoing struggle against Western competition. New educational

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<sup>37</sup> Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998, 272.

institutions were established and regarded as “fresh and quasi-magical, implying the ability to right all of society’s wrongs.”<sup>39</sup> The reformations were an effort to reconcile tensions between traditional and modern, and Islamic and secular within the Empire through the utilization of education.

In the aftermath of Napoleon’s defeat at Acre and when French merchants were expelled from the Eastern Mediterranean, many Syrian Christian merchants feared that they would be persecuted as well. Christian merchants subsequently fled Beirut and relocated further into the safer Mount Lebanon, drastically altering the city’s demographics yet again. Their collaboration with Napoleon and ties to Paris seem as plausible grounds for Ottoman retribution, but these reasons were not what instigated their fear. Rather, Ahmed Pasha had long yearned to control Beirut for his own profit, which prompted merchants to escape, given that *al-Jazzar* had a butchering reputation ready. Only the Sultan could command Ahmed Pasha, and he was not inclined to place sanctions on the man he had credited for defeating Napoleon. The amalgamation of events of this sort were commonplace in the Ottoman Empire and had permeated many factors, most importantly, the intellectual scene and had set the stage for the locals to define modernity and the foundations for a modern and liberal education. Incomparable and heterogeneous, these were the shores American missionaries had docked upon.

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<sup>39</sup> Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 85.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONNECTIONS AND COMPETITION

American missionaries who arrived to Beirut in 1823 were unaware of the diverse sociopolitical makeup of Beirut, and the Ottoman Empire at large, and had no working knowledge of Arabic.<sup>40</sup> Their early encounters with the Ottoman Syrian subjects included the memorization of parts of the Bible in Arabic and then reciting the verses to the locals.<sup>41</sup> Local interactions, however, soon expanded and were not limited to the missionaries' public delivery of memorized Arabic verses; they began hiring local intellectuals as language teachers and translators.<sup>42</sup> This chapter looks at how these local intellectuals were an important point of contact for the missionaries with the Ottoman world around them. Choosing Beirut as the home base for evangelizing did not seem to have been the result of a meticulous survey of the diverse political and religious landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean by the ABCFM. Instead, the city was an alternative when their initial plan to settle in Jerusalem was not sanctioned by the Ottoman authorities concerned. American missionaries did not heed to the unspoken, yet widely acknowledged Ottoman code of conduct shared by different Ottoman subjects who had coexisted for centuries without questioning their respective religious

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<sup>40</sup> William Goodell, 24 January 1824. ABCFM papers, A.B.C. 16. 6. reel 515; also cited in A.L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary, and Religious Work*. Oxford: Caledon Press, 1966, 48.

<sup>41</sup> Abdul Latif Tibawi, *American interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

beliefs.<sup>43</sup> American missionaries were unconcerned with the social and political implications of riling the ecclesiastical authorities in Mount Lebanon at that point in time. But had grown to learn to appreciate these nuances in order to remain relevant in the city that they had docked in.

Given the missionaries' adherence to the ABCFM's guidelines, and their indifference to cultural sensitivities around them, the results of their missionary work in the first decade resulted in very few conversions. This number did not mean locals avoided the Americans. The Liberati or Biblemen, as the Maronite Church referred to them, fascinated the local populations.<sup>44</sup> Intellectually curious and educated men served the missionaries as translators and teachers and proved to be invaluable to the mission. These Protestant converts were all Eastern Christian men, since the missionaries were not allowed to proselytize among the Muslims due to Ottoman laws prohibiting that.<sup>45</sup> Early schools had to make due with small spaces and a minor audience.

Tannus al-Haddad, a Syrian convert to Protestantism, was hired to teach local children reading and writing Arabic in a school set up by Abigail Goodell and Ann Bird.<sup>46</sup> Calling this establishment a school would be an optimistic nomenclature, given the fact that it was a tiny room that welcomed students for about three hours a day.

According to historian Abdul Latif Tibawi, "[t]here was no rigid division, however;

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<sup>43</sup> Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 38.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Converts from Islam are considered to have committed apostasy, a sin that is punishable by death. See: Selim Deringil, "'There is No Compulsion in Religion': On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839-1856." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42:3 (2000), 547-575.

<sup>46</sup> Samir Khalaf, *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant: Ungodly Puritans, 1820-1860*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

native teachers and Americans, male and female, shared the load in all schools ... a mixture of philanthropy and religious instruction, relief and teaching, for a missionary purpose.”<sup>47</sup> Ecclesiastical authorities in Mount Lebanon accused the Protestant schools of infiltrating their communities under the pretense of an educational facility in order to proselytize. Such accusations might not have been out of place, as we will observe through the establishment of SPC. Despite opposition and dismay from the churches, the school, along with a few others that received some form of missionary aid, kept catering for three hundred students.<sup>48</sup>

Despite a remarkable outcome that came forth from humble beginnings, this missionary success was short-lived. The Greek fight for independence had spilled over to Beirut’s shores in 1828 and forced the American missionaries to flee to Malta and suspend all mission work for the next two years. The missionaries returned to Beirut in May 1830 and resumed preaching to the locals, reopening one school, despite the disapproval of the clerical authorities of Mount Lebanon, and even the ABCFM back in Boston.<sup>49</sup> However, the regional turbulence that affected Beirut was not over yet. Muhammad Ali, the *khedive* (viceroy) of Egypt and Sudan, occupied Syria from 1831 to 1839, a rightful compensation he expected from the Sultan for his troubles for fighting the Greeks.<sup>50</sup> The ambitious Ottoman ruler brought two developments that

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<sup>47</sup> Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, 63-64.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Yanna Tzourmana, “Our Mission is to Bring Enlightenment and Freedom: L. Stanhope and the British Liberals in Revolutionary Greece.” “Στόχος μας να φέρουμε γνώση και ελευθερία: Ο Λ. Στάνχοπ και οι Βρετανοί φιλελεύθεροι στην επαναστατημένη Ελλάδα.” *Dokimes* 9.10 (2001): 47-86.

<sup>50</sup> Ceasar E. Farah, *Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, 13-16.

profited Beirut's economy and the missionary enterprise. First, Muhammad Ali established a firm control over Mount Lebanon, due in part to his army, which provided the security necessary to promote trade. Second, he eased travel restrictions for foreigners in the region by allowing them to move freely in Syria. This period marked the beginning of the missionaries' spread further inland, and in the early 1840s Americans began to establish village schools in the Lebanese mountains. These schools, however, could not last without the proper funding from the ABCFM. The mission provided Bibles, the standard text for these schools, along with the teachers' stipend. The founding of schools was due to an underlying intention to form an infrastructure of influence and communication across the Levant. In order to keep this network connected, the missionaries kept sending pleas to the ABCFM for more support.

Such requests fell on deaf ears in Boston since the ABCFM wanted churches planted, native pastors ordained, and the conversion of communities to the Protestant faith.<sup>51</sup> Schools remained peripheral in Boston's budgetary allocations, despite being the most active and the most effective field of missionary work—the reasons of which will be explored in upcoming sections of this project. Missionaries faced similar limitations in various fields across the world as the ABCFM considered that the “simple, cheaper, more effectual means of civilizing the savage, was the gospel alone.”<sup>52</sup> This was the modernity the ABCFM envisioned and was unwilling to accept the reality in Beirut, where reading and writing had a ready audience, whereas learning the gospel mattered to very few. The ABCFM obdurately opposed the inclusion of literary and scientific

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<sup>51</sup> Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions, Their Relations and Claims*. Cambridge: H. O. Houghton and Company, 1870, 112-114.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.



subjects to the seminary curriculum it had outlined, let alone the establishment of a Christian college. Boston had dispatched evangelizers, not teachers.

Another reality in Beirut was that the missionaries learned Arabic and built a livelihood in a city that was growing at an extraordinary pace, and engaged in a range of activities that did not fit the ABCFM's strict description of their missionary work. This was not an act of rebellion on the missionaries' part, but was instead due to the fact that these were educated and intellectually curious men who wanted to interact with the local intellectual scene. American missionaries settled in the Beirut neighborhood of Zokak el-Blat after returning in the aftermath the Greek War of Independence and the wake of the Egyptian occupation.<sup>53</sup> *Zokak el-Blat* (the Alley of Tiles) was the first residential quarter outside of the city walls of Beirut where prominent Syrian intellectuals of different religious denominations lived. The neighborhood's intelligentsias created an intellectual community that overrode their sectarian and religious identities. Zokak el-Blat's religious diversity was like nothing the American missionaries had experienced back in New England. The transnational and cosmopolitan scene of Zokak el-Blat intrigued the young missionaries.

### *A Place To Call Home*

Zokak el-Blat in the nineteenth century was "a tightly-knit network of neighbors who visited each other, participated in the same regular salons and were employed in

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<sup>53</sup> Jens Hanssen, "The Birth of an Education Quarter: Zokak el-Blat as a Cradle of Cultural Revival in the Arab World" in Hans Gebhardt (ed.). *History, Space and Social Conflict in Beirut: The Quarter of Zokak El-Blat*. Beirut: Orient-Institut; Würzburg Ergon Verlag in Kommission, 2005, 143-145.

the same institutions.”<sup>54</sup> Missionaries were treated to “splendidly decorated and lit-up” homes where discussions on the “reforms of customs and morals” were often carried out.<sup>55</sup> Butrus al-Bustani, a major figure in *Al-Nahda*, the Arab Renaissance, Khalil Sarkis, the founder of *Lisan al-Hal*, the oldest newspaper in Lebanon, Hussein Beyhum a local merchant, and Ahmad al-Azhari, an intellectual, all lived and worked in the burgeoning neighborhood.<sup>56</sup> Conversations that ignited *Al-Nahda* happened in this quarter and contributed to making Beirut the center for Arab cultural reform.

American missionaries realized Zokak el-Blat’s rising prominence as the hub of reformist thought and established day schools there, allowing an exchange within that space. Views of modernity and what it meant to be modern were budding in Zokak el-Blat and spreading around Syria and the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean at a rapid pace. Such conversations sparked Eli Smith’s interest in translating the Bible into Arabic, at a time of Arab renewal and interest in their own language and culture. The translation project required intensive intellectual collaboration and interaction with the Arabic-speaking locals, who were in many cases Smith’s Eastern Christian and Muslim neighbors.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps what is most fascinating about this Christian-Muslim cooperation of translating the Bible into Arabic is that the missionaries acknowledged and appreciated the eloquence of the Quran in Arabic and had hoped to produce an Arabic Bible in the same style. By the late 1840s and early 1850s, Zokak el-Blat had become

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 93-96.

<sup>57</sup> Margaret R. Leavy, *Eli Smith and the Arabic Bible*. New Haven: Yale Divinity School Library, 1993, 14-21.

Beirut's epicenter of literary and cultural associations, in which American missionaries were actively engaged. Three prominent societies existed in Zokak el-Blat between 1847 and 1859. These were the Syrian Society of Arts and Science, the Literary Society for the Promotion and Printing of Arabic Books, and the Society for Improvement.

Having not received word assuring them that churches were planted in the Eastern Mediterranean, the ABCFM grew increasingly impatient. Rufus Anderson, the ABCFM assistant corresponding secretary, was dispatched to the region in 1844 to remind the missionaries that they were not pastors or teachers but rather evangelists, who should move on to the next place as soon as their job was done. The educational mission was not producing native ministers, who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the region. Anderson returned yet again to the Levant in 1855 to prompt the missionaries of their denationalizing role by forbidding them to use mission funds to support scientific and literary associations.<sup>58</sup> This proclamation illustrates the stark difference in how the missionaries view modernity and what the locals are asking for. Anderson, and the ABCFM at large, did not want to call Beirut home and did not share such views on modernity.

Despite opposition from Boston, Eli Smith, Cornelius Van Dyck, Henry De Forest, and William Thomson were among the missionaries who participated in Beirut's societies. American missionaries no longer recited Bible verses they had learned by heart in the Arabic that they did not otherwise speak; they were now able to engage in intellectual conversations with locals. And given what followed, the missionaries were increasingly interested in continuing the conversation. These men were no longer

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<sup>58</sup> Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 209.

viewed by locals as evangelizers, but were accepted as intellectuals in, and in a way the result of, the Beirut scene. The Americans' affinity for Arabic, and its correlation to how modernity is communicated in Beirut that stemmed from such encounters, seems to have set the stage to adopt Arabic as the language of instruction at SPC. This issue will be addressed in upcoming sections of this project.

### *Good Times, Bad Times*

Trouble loomed on the horizon as violence broke out in Mount Lebanon in 1860, constituting a turning point in the modern history of Lebanon, as defined by current historians of the region.<sup>59</sup> Flowers and mulberry leaves were still in bloom the early summer of 1860 when Maronite and Druze communities in Mount Lebanon clashed ferociously. The conflict was not over their different faiths, but over the political and economic control of a religiously diverse area in Mount Lebanon.<sup>60</sup> Druze belligerents overpowered Maronite forces and sacked every Maronite town on their advance, burning down a total of two hundred villages. Villagers who did not flee the mayhem were killed, with estimates of 5,000 casualties and over 100,000 refugees in the short span of a few weeks.<sup>61</sup> Many Christians sought refuge in Beirut, and in doing so they significantly altered the city's confessional makeup. Muslims were no longer a majority in Beirut, with their numbers decreasing to over one third of the population, and

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<sup>59</sup> Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*. London: Pluto Press, 2007; Leila Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1994; and Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1990.

<sup>60</sup> Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 146-148.

<sup>61</sup> Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 39.

Christians increasing to about two thirds.<sup>62</sup> By the end of the summer of 1860, Ottoman authorities restored order back to Mount Lebanon, as they struggled to shift the conflict out of the external realm of international politics into an internal matter of local administration. Containment proved difficult, as we shall presently see.

Regional turmoil presented the American missionaries with an opportunity. Since their arrival to the shores of Beirut, American missionaries were not allowed to proselytize among Muslims and had tailored their activities to a minority of Christians in Beirut. The sudden displacement of a large, destitute population of Christian refugees from Mount Lebanon in Beirut dramatically expanded the audience for potential missionary work. As the Ottoman Empire, through the government of Mount Lebanon, was unable—or perhaps unwilling—to provide adequate relief, the ground was open to whoever possessed the resources, affording American missionaries a prospect to combine proselytizing with aid work. The opportunity, however, could not have arrived at a more inopportune time for the American missionaries. Earlier that year, the ABCFM had reduced the budget allocations of all outposts in half and did not hire any new missionaries; and in the years leading to the 1860 crisis, the Beirut mission had funded the operation of some thirty primary schools and operated two seminaries.<sup>63</sup> These schools were all shut down after the budget cut, and the operation of the Beirut mission was reduced to the bare minimum. With meager funds, American missionaries were unable to dispense support during these dreadful times.

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<sup>62</sup> Leila Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1994, 131.

<sup>63</sup> Abdul Latif Tibawi, “The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College.” *Middle East Journal* 21.1 (1967), 1-15.

During the first decades of the American mission, there had been an understanding on the way Ottoman authorities divided Syrian territory for missionary work. Americans were sanctioned to operate in Beirut, while the British worked in Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine. The 1860 war and its immediate aftermath not only strained already scarce missionary resources but also brought an end to the American monopoly over missionary work in Beirut. The 1860 crisis had been an Ottoman incident with a European audience keeping close tabs. Newspapers in Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia reported the refugee crisis in Beirut, which attracted the sympathy and the attention of other missionary groups.<sup>64</sup>

With the dust of 1860 still settling, Beirut witnessed the expansion of missions originating from Europe. The British Ladies Association for the Social and Religious Improvement of Syrian Females housed and employed widows and young women as seamstresses. As the project grew, given the association's funding, to include an evening school for males, a boarding school for females, and various aid projects for the disabled.<sup>65</sup> It seems the British Ladies knew what the locals wanted. The Prussian Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth also infringed on American educational work by establishing a school and an orphanage for girls in 1860 in Beirut.<sup>66</sup> Tempted by the better equipped and the well-financed Europeans, Syrians abandoned the Americans who could not compete with the European philanthropy. The incursion of well-funded

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<sup>64</sup> Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East*. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, 1910, 201-212.

<sup>65</sup> Henry Harris Jessup, *The Women of the Arabs: With a Chapter for Children*. New York: Dodd and Mead, Publishers, 1873.

<sup>66</sup> Julia Hauser, *German Religious Women in Late Ottoman Beirut: Competing Missions*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2015, 20, 33, 52-70.

European organizations spelled the end of the American monopoly on Protestant missionary work in Beirut, and the new founded European institutions were set up with long-term ambitions. In many ways, the Europeans were supplying the Syrian demand for a modern education. Without many restrictions on the kind of work they could do, and unlike their American counterparts, the British and Prussians opened schools where they taught a wide range of subjects. At the same time, the Americans were closing down their schools, and feared they would become increasingly irrelevant in a city that had initially spelled opportunity. The Americans' story in Beirut does not end here, however.

Beirut was now a different place for the missionaries; it was no longer the strange shore they docked on but rather had become home. Beirut was where they lived, worked, and socialized. Socializing included regular evening visits and conversations with the locals. Unfortunately—for us as researchers and readers of this archive—the Americans kept no detailed documentation of such encounters. Perhaps this was because alcohol, which was served alongside tobacco, flowed freely while music played. Such events were viewed as signs intemperance that went against Protestant ethics.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, we can still gauge the degree of interaction between the missionaries and the locals. Schools that remained open diversified their subjects of instruction to include arithmetic, a noticeable deviation from the ABCFM's views on education. Giving the locals what they wanted “gives us an excuse for visiting them at their home, and ensures us a welcome reception. It gives us something to say in the village where the school is established and a right to be there and hold intercourse with

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<sup>67</sup> Edwin Lewis, a faculty member at SPC, engaged in such activities on campus. His behavior and the controversy over his radical thoughts will be explored further in Chapter 5.

the people.”<sup>68</sup> This view, given the American participation in the literary and cultural societies in Beirut, did not mean they shared Beirut’s views on modernity. “They form nuclei for congregation,” Van Dyck writes, “to which the gospel may be preached clearly and pointedly.”<sup>69</sup> These connections and friendships afforded the American missionaries a firsthand insight to what education and modernity meant to the locals. This, as we shall see in the upcoming chapters, was the reason the missionaries in Beirut were adamant about Syria having a college, and through that college they would proselytize the Protestant faith. This proved a difficult task in light of what Boston deemed necessary and what Syria actually wanted from a college.

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<sup>68</sup> Letter of C.V.A. Van Dyck to Eli Smith, ABCFM papers, A.B.C. 16.8.1, reel 537.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*



## CHAPTER 4

### PARALLEL IMPORTS

Competition in Beirut was not limited to European missions, but was also present from local converts and neighbors, with the most notable competitor being Butrus al-Bustani.<sup>70</sup> While the crisis of 1860 raged, a distraught Bustani addressed his fellow *abna' al-watan*<sup>71</sup> (literally: sons of the country, or compatriots) through a series of eleven articles. These articles, which were later collected and published under the title of *Nafir Suriyya* (Clarion of Syria), expressed Bustani's grave concerns at witnessing such violence during *Al-Nahda*. This chapter outlines how Bustani contended that an understanding of the bases of the crisis would prevent any future repetition of such bloodshed. In his writings, Bustani blamed the incident on the backwardness of some of his compatriots due to an absence of *tamaddon* (civility).<sup>72</sup> Bustani deemed it prudent and necessary to bring his fellow *abna' al-watan* out of ignorance through the establishment of schools and printing presses to increase the communication and proximity among the people of Syria.<sup>73</sup> The chapter also explores the founding of SPC, and how a school set up by Bustani served as the model to establish the curriculum. I contend that the American missionaries understood the locals need for education, but

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<sup>70</sup> For a comprehensive account on Butrus al-Bustani, see: Adel Beshara (ed.). *Butrus al-Bustani: Spirit of the Age*. Melbourne: CreateSpace, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> *Watan* also translates to nation in Arabic, which explains why some scholars perceive consider Bustani as the forefather of nationalism in the Arab world. Such assertions are not made in this project, however.

<sup>72</sup> *Tamaddon* may also mean modernity.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen Sheehi, "Butrus al-Bustani: Syria's Ideologue of the Age" in Adel Beshara (ed.). *The Origins of Syrian Nationhood: Histories, Pioneers and Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

were only able to supply that demand by emulating what Bustani had been doing. Remarkably, Bustani did not attempt to stop the missionaries, and even provided them a temporary rental space to set up SPC.

Bustani implemented his vision of *tamaddon* and modernity by founding a nonsectarian school, establishing an Arabic printing press, and publishing three journals over the span of two decades. Founding *Al-Madrasa al-Wataniya* (The National School) was Bustani's attempt at improving communication between members of different religious groups, an unprecedented move at a time when schools were affirming religious zeal in the communities in which they operated.<sup>74</sup> The secondary school opened in 1862 and accepted students regardless of their faith. *Al-Wataniya's* curriculum stipulated Arabic as the language of instruction, offered literary and scientific subjects, and offered language courses in Arabic, English, French, and Ottoman Turkish.<sup>75</sup> Students from Syria, Istanbul, Palestine, Egypt, and even Greece flocked to attend *Al-Wataniya*. Such students were the prime target for conversion in the eyes of the American missionaries. Bustani had defined modernity in Syria, or in part contributed to said definition. His conversion and reformist thought was coupled with his working knowledge of setting up an educational institution to spread these ideals that were shared by his compatriots as examined in the previous chapter. The school remained operational until the deaths of Butrus al-Bustani in 1883 and his son Salim in 1884.

In view of the local demand for education and the missionaries' inability to satisfy

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<sup>74</sup> Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 209.

<sup>75</sup> Maha Shuayb, *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion: International Case Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 67.

that need, it is not difficult to imagine that the Americans would have perceived Bustani's school as a threat, and, in certain ways I propose in this project, an inspiration. The threat posed by the school was that it was embracing and catalyzing a view of modernity that was the antithesis of what the missionaries were adamantly trying to instill in Syria. Moreover, Bustani's school was certainly not a small-scale social experiment. *Al-Wataniya* encompassed three buildings, with residence facilities for 150 students, a far larger operation than the one-room schools the Americans were setting up. As for the inspirational part of Bustani's school, we will explore that shortly.

Although Bustani was the most prominent Ottoman Syrian the missionaries succeeded in converting, his school was definitely not a Protestant Seminary. And despite being a pious Protestant, Bustani had no intention of converting his *abna' al-watan*, as the missionaries had hoped. Rather, Bustani had every intention of telling his students to keep their different religious beliefs to themselves. Religious services were permitted outside school, a stark contrast to missionary schools, where students, converted or not, were required to attend Protestant worship and follow the Protestant calendar. This comes off as quite the embarrassment for the mission, which might give us insight into why there is no mention of *Al-Wataniya* in correspondence between the American missionaries in Beirut and the ABCFM back in Boston. What Bustani set forth had been an unprecedented project in Mount Lebanon, where schools were an extension of religious communities and had a vested interest in the affirmation of religious differences and without superseding them.<sup>76</sup> Bustani's vision was to instill the notion of *watan* and *wataniya* in the Syrian youth, but did not attempt to dissolve the communal affiliations, which were alluded to in chapter two. *Al-Wataniya* was a

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<sup>76</sup> Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 209.

stepping stone to instilling views of coexistence and unity in society at large, a modernity that Bustani long advocated. Religious unity was not a prerequisite in the path to modernity for Bustani. Thus, it seems that the right time to introduce modernity was not an event that relied on converts; it must be created at the contemporary moment, simply put: there is no time better than the present.

Although American missionaries did not cite *Al-Wataniya* as having any impact on their decision to ask the ABCFM for permission to open what would become SPC, I propose that it had a substantial influence on their plans. Bustani's doctrine, and school policy, that faith was a matter between the believer and God, went against the main principles of evangelicalism, which challenged the religious beliefs of others. *Al-Wataniya's* size and financial stability, along with Bustani's reputation among intellectuals in the Eastern Mediterranean, ensured his enterprise a continued success. A non-evangelical school established by a Syrian convert, who was a practicing Protestant and rejected missionary dictates, may have been perceived as a larger affront than the European competition. Hence, Bustani's accomplishments were better left unmentioned in the missionaries' reports back to the ABCFM authorities, as they would indicate a failure rather than help win the blessing, support, and financial resources for a college project. Furthermore, given the size and prominence of *Al-Wataniya* as the product of Protestant conversion, there would be no need for an American Protestant school that taught human anatomy rather than the gospel.

### *Syria Will Have a College*

Aspirations to set up a Protestant college in Syria do not suggest that the missionaries gave up proselytizing, but rather implies that they were experimenting with

a new way to go about converting. We have already seen the unambiguous and blatant difference between the missionaries' attitudes towards the local population in the early nineteenth century and then again towards the end of it. The gospel, even if it were recited in Arabic, was not overwhelmingly powerful on its own to produce instant converts. Securing conversion, as it seemed to the Americans in Beirut, must be done gradually through indirect proselytizing.

The ABCFM did not support this subtle approach and was adamant in its insistence on direct proselytizing. In January 1862, during the annual meeting of American missionaries, it was decided that direct proselytizing would no longer be effective in Beirut. Ottoman Syrian youth yearned for a new kind of education that prepared them for the new times, something the Syria mission had come to know all too well at this point. Missionaries, who were well educated by the standards of their time, were in theory well-endowed to conduct the introduction of new educational venues, but found themselves unable to reopen and sustain their old, small schools. Since the ABCFM maintained their position on proselytizing and education, the Beirut-based American missionaries decided to dissent, a precedent that became a norm at SPC, as we shall explore in the upcoming chapter.<sup>77</sup> They had reached an impasse that required decisive action; either they had to open their own schools, or “abandon the whole cause of education, even for Protestant children, to the Jesuits, Sisters of Charity and other enemies of evangelical religion.”<sup>78</sup> The missionaries did not abandon their plans and requested the ABCFM's assistance in establishing a Protestant college in Beirut. The

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<sup>77</sup> Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910, 298

<sup>78</sup> Tibawi, “The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College,” 1-15

*Prospectus and Programme of the Syrian Protestant College Institute, Beirut* prepared by the Syrian Mission had two objectives: “First, to enable native youth to obtain, in the country, the literary, scientific, and professional education which the exigencies of the community demand; and Second, to make the institution indigenous, self-governing, and self sustaining.”<sup>79</sup> The college’s curriculum would be, unofficially, based on what was taught at *Al-Wataniya*, and would include the study of arts, sciences, languages, and medicine.

The prospectus outlined three important points about the proposed relationship between the college and Beirut, and by proxy the Syrian community within which it would operate. First, a proposed curriculum would be in accordance with the needs of the community demand, which the missionaries have documented. Beirut was the right place to build the campus, which was to be a Syrian institution. As we would expect, there was no mention of the project as being American and no comparison was made with Harvard or Andover. Second, the college would be a self-governing and self-sustaining institution run by local men from Syria. This proviso may have been included to appease Boston’s vision of conversion. Hiring locals to run a Protestant college would suggest that these people were converts who would propagate the evangelizing mission without requiring American assistance in the long run.

The Syria mission knew quite well that their proposal was not going to be readily accepted by the ABCFM, given the ABCFM’s closure of several literary and scientific education facilities during the 1850s. The justification for shutting down these missions was the failure to produce converts, which was blamed on general education, rather than

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<sup>79</sup> “A Protestant College in Syria.” *The Missionary Herald* 59, 1863. 36-39.

the teaching of the gospel. The Syria mission was stuck between opposition from Boston and competition in Beirut, but was not keen on surrendering their plan. Beirut had grown on the Americans. This was the place where they lived, worked, and socialized. Beirut's soil was the eternal resting ground for some of the men, women, and children who lived and died in the city. Beirut was, for all practical reasons, home.

In order to succeed in establishing a Protestant college in Beirut, the missionaries had to advance with the utmost caution. By using meticulous terminology, the missionaries concealed their request to the ABCFM and requested the Board's sanction, not just their financial assistance. William McClure Thomson and Daniel Bliss spearheaded the campaign on behalf of the missionaries in Beirut.<sup>80</sup> By involving the whole mission and speaking on behalf of a committee, the Syria mission had diffused the responsibility amongst themselves.<sup>81</sup> Any retribution by the ABCFM would not be levied on one person, but rather on the whole mission; this was an action both Beirut and Boston knew would be unlikely. Having Thomson as the official face of this campaign, given his reputation and public endorsement of the effort to establish a college in Syria, ensured the ABCFM would acknowledge the petition as a serious and legitimate request.<sup>82</sup> To dismiss the petition would risk bad press and potential dissent in the Syria mission, which had garnered a symbolic status back in Boston as the closest

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<sup>80</sup> David Shavit, *The United States in the Middle East: A Historical Dictionary*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 1988.

<sup>81</sup> The Bliss name remains widely recognizable in modern-day Beirut, as evident by Bliss Street, where AUB's Main Gate is located. Daniel Bliss is also hailed as the first president and founding father of AUB and several of the University's presidents assert a direct ancestry to him.

<sup>82</sup> Bayard Dodge, *The American University of Beirut: A Brief History of the University and the Lands Which it Serves*. Beirut: Khayat's, 1958.

Americans ever got to Jerusalem.

The intellectual space during Beirut's economic trade boom gave birth to many schools and colleges, of which SPC was one. In Boston, the ABCFM did not see this as beneficial or necessary for evangelical work. However, given the Syria mission's association with locals, they knew that they had to maintain an intellectual engagement with this community to remain intellectually relevant. Establishing a college was the ideal means to achieve this goal and pave the way to indirect proselytizing. It is for these reasons, the college can be considered as the product of an American desire to engage with the trends of an ever-growing city and remain relevant. This desire, which the Syria mission claimed was evangelical, did not fit the ABCFM's definition of evangelicalism. American missionaries in Beirut were not ready to give up on the idea just yet.

The ABCFM perceived the problem arising from an assumption that missionary work had led to the suggestion to establish a college in Syria. Missionaries, pursuant to the ABCFM's definition, were in Beirut to teach reading and writing to the locals only for the sake of reading the Bible. In this light, the ABCFM saw it unnecessary establish an educational institution in Beirut. Yet, whether the ABCFM wanted it or not, Syria would have a college. Boston had no choice other than to be affiliated with the Beirut project. As such, the ABCFM had set elaborate rules for their support, which came with the caveat that the college was to remain separate from the mission.

### *College upon a Hill*

Daniel Bliss attended the ABCFM's annual meeting in Springfield, Massachusetts, in hopes to secure finances for the college. This proved to be the perfect



occasion for Bliss not only to appeal the founding of the college, but also to begin networking to raise the necessary funds. There, Bliss met with potential benefactors, including William E. Dodge, a wealthy merchant and entrepreneur par excellence. Dodge was also a generous philanthropist who was hooked on the idea of a Protestant institution of higher learning in Syria and agreed to deliver a sizable endowment.<sup>83</sup> Following Bliss's fundraising campaign, Henry Jessup noted that "[Bliss] had secured about twenty thousand dollars for current expenses of the college and made many friends for the institution."<sup>84</sup> Dodge's younger son, Stuart, became heavily invested in the upcoming project. What had initially been envisioned as a modest operation in Beirut was soon taking shape as a grand enterprise by the Dodges in New York. The size of the endowment increased, and so did the plans for the college.

The Syrian Protestant College was successfully established and opened its doors in 1866 and operated in leased houses, from none other than Butrus al-Bustani.<sup>85</sup> Zokak el-Blat had one more new school added to its already diverse educational roster. This was a curse, rather than a blessing, as the SPC's location was not favorable for success in missionary work. The college was located in the center of the city with limited space that was rented out. This meant that the college would keep changing locations, projecting the aura of being instable and reactionary. "A college on wheels does not impress the East with the idea of stability," Daniel Bliss wrote. "We were not anxious to appear great, but we were anxious to lay foundations upon which greatness could be

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<sup>83</sup> David Stuart Dodge, *Memorials of William E. Dodge*. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1887. 182. Also see: Richard Lowitt. *A Merchant Prince of the Nineteenth Century, William E. Dodge*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954.

<sup>84</sup> Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, 297.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

built.”<sup>86</sup> It took nearly a decade and a half to design and begin working on the new campus, as envisioned not only by Bliss. Dodge hoped that SPC would be a city on a hill in a destitute land that needed the American missionaries’ help.<sup>87</sup> With that splendid image in mind, a plot of land outside Beirut’s city walls was purchased and George B. Post was commissioned as the architect that would bring this enterprise to life.<sup>88</sup>

Tracing the architectural history of SPC deserves a project on its own, but for the sake of our discussion, I am interested in exploring what type of purpose did the new campus serve and what it can tell us about the missionaries’ views on education, proselytizing, and modernity at large. We will trace that by examining the campus, as a physical entity, which tells the story of a gradual change that was happening.

Missionaries had rebranded themselves as teachers who taught a variety of subjects and were no longer adamant on spreading just the Word, but many words. The campus also reveals another fact. SPC was built on a hill at a distance from Beirut, as envisioned by its founders and its buildings stood out as grand and marvelous additions to the already picturesque scenery, truly as a city upon a hill.<sup>89</sup> This necessitated that students reside on campus if they were to seek an education at the college. As such,

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<sup>86</sup> Daniel Bliss, *Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss, Edited and Supplemented by His Eldest Son*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920, 188.

<sup>87</sup> Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations: 1820-2001*. Philadelphia: Perseus Books Group, 2010.

<sup>88</sup> Winston Weisman, “The Commercial Architecture of George B. Post,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31.3 (October 1972), 201-203.

<sup>89</sup> This notion invokes the ideas discussed in Chapter 1 on the separation of the space inside from the space outside. Refer to Patrick McGreevy, “American-Style Higher Education and the People of the Middle East” in Kathryn L. Kleypas and James I. McDougall (eds.). *The American-Style University at Large: Transplants, Outposts, and the Globalization of Higher Education*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012, 41-50.

SPC transcended its status as a mere site of instruction and became viewed as a community with College Hall at the center. With the only clock tower in Beirut looming over the campus, it was evident that time was a commodity that must be spent wisely; in and out of the classroom—given that a majority of students lived on campus. Proselytizing was now done directly and indirectly through mandatory chapel attendance and by having the missionaries set an example of what progress and modernity are like as Protestant Christians. Students were expected to attend their classes and participate in these *extra-curricular* activities. The missionaries had hoped that the students would internalize these values since they were kept at a distance from Beirut and their respective communities. Students were in fact keen on receiving a modern education, but were yet unconvinced on the proselytizing part, as illustrated through the on campus crises discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### CRISES ON CAMPUS

Two crises illustrate the way institutional power shifted and defined structures and hierarchies that replaced the previous diverse institutional models at SPC during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter traces these conflicts, which manifested through a shroud of convoluted bureaucracy and theological discourse, reveal a sharp cognitive dissonance on campus and the missionaries' dismissal of the students' views on education and modernity. In this chapter, we will examine two occasions, the Lewis Affair (1882) and the Muslim Controversy (1909), and how their aftermath forced SPC to settle evangelical desires and commit to the self-proclaimed image of being an institution of religious tolerance in Beirut.

With a plot of land and foundations set in stone, the American missionaries finally had a place they could call their own in Beirut: the Syrian Protestant College. SPC, however, was more just than a location for the decimation of knowledge and education—the college also offered lodging for the students and faculty. It was for all intents and purposes their home. At SPC, the missionaries had taken on the roles of teachers and members of faculty, but did not give up their main jobs as evangelizers, who were sent to the Eastern Mediterranean by the ABCFM. Their mission was still to proselytize to the locals, even if the locals wanted a liberal education fit for a modern world, and not the gospel. The missionaries knew this all too well, as demonstrated in the previous chapters.

Assumptions regarding the founding of SPC suggest that the college was a New

England settlement to the Eastern Mediterranean and a “pearl of the United States educational internationalism.”<sup>90</sup> Such contentions abridge a lengthier and a far more complex narrative. The State of New York chartered the college in 1863, many of the early faculty hailed from New England, and most of the SPC funding came from the United States. The college, nonetheless, is separate and independent of Beirut, but is at the same time, the product of its location and historical context. The Main Gate, a campus landmark, conjures images of the fortified entrances of castles, citadels, and walled towns. The gate is the forefront that marks the separation of “the space inside from the space outside.”<sup>91</sup>

A narrative of present-day AUB by Patrick McGreevy suggests students idealize the university’s campus as a zone of tolerance, efficiency, and reason. “They paint the society beyond its gates as corrupt, factional and backward,” McGreevy observes.<sup>92</sup> However, during the formative years of SPC from 1860 to 1871, the campus was not American soil planted on the shores of Beirut, but was rather a place in and of Beirut. American missionaries who taught at SPC did not only learn Arabic to communicate with the locals, but also lectured in it. Books were regularly translated from English to Arabic, a truly remarkable feat. There were also several attempts to translate the Bible into Arabic—an initiative that had its own ramifications on the history of SPC and

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<sup>90</sup> Samir Khalaf, “New England Puritanism and Liberal Education in the Middle East: the Syrian Protestant College as a Cultural Transplant” in Serif Mardin (ed.). *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

<sup>91</sup> Patrick McGreevy, “American-Style Higher Education and the People of the Middle East” in Kathryn L. Kleypas and James I. McDougall (eds.). *The American-Style University at Large: Transplants, Outposts, and the Globalization of Higher Education*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012, 41-50.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Mount Lebanon.<sup>93</sup> SPC was a location for the intersection of intellectuals and the city they inhabited. This encounter of different cultures, faiths, and languages suggests an amalgamation of identities. SPC, therefore, cannot simply be defined as American, Syrian, or Protestant.

From this we may deduce an intervention that addresses the notion that the Protestant missionaries' main concern was the education of the heathen, an extension of the notion of *mission civilisatrice*.<sup>94</sup> It is imperative to bear in mind that education by Protestant missionaries was understood to be the ability to read, write, and to understand the gospel. Although literacy is the foundation of education, reading and writing cannot be equated with an education in commerce, medicine, or composition. Recent historiographical assessments of nineteenth-century Protestant missionary work often narrate them as an educational mission in the broad sense of the word.<sup>95</sup> The ABCFM's definition of education was not as extensive—it meant teaching the basics of how to read and write in order to understand the Bible. American missionaries were thus sent overseas to spread the Word. The ABCFM had no qualms in terminating missions and shutting down schools that did not adhere to their notion of education. Liberal education, from this standpoint, seems to negate proselytizing.

In this light, SPC cannot be the product of the Protestant missionary's objective

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<sup>93</sup> A brief discussion of this project is outlined in Chapter 3. See: Walid Hamarneh, "Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq" in Roger Allen (ed.). *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography: 1850-1950*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz GmbH & Co., 2010. 317-328, and Margaret R. Leavy. *Eli Smith and the Arabic Bible*. New Haven: Yale Divinity School Library, 1993.

<sup>94</sup> Sujit Sivasundaram, *Nature and the Godly Empire: Science and the Evangelical Mission in the Pacific, 1795- 1850*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 58.

<sup>95</sup> Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.

munificence to introduce the Ottoman Syrians to the American liberal arts education system. The college was the product of a historical, social, and economic context in Beirut that will be expanded further in this project. Given the importance of the contemporary milieu, we observe that missionaries were keen on establishing their role as scholars in Beirut and engaging in the local intellectual scene. Founding SPC by the American missionaries was, in a way, their attempt to preserve footing on the slippery coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean. SPC, with its campus overlooking the glistening Mediterranean, was situated beyond the city walls of Beirut. The campus boasted New England-inspired buildings that were alien to the local architectural landscape, which was pastoral and predominantly Ottoman. Even florals that were not native to Syria were imported at the request of Daniel Bliss. Imported trees and other shrubs dotted the prospect and provided shade to pedestrians strolling on the grounds.<sup>96</sup> Comparisons to colleges in New England were rampant and faculty liked to boast and promote such associations to students and donors alike.<sup>97</sup> The campus looked the New England part, but the curriculum was a Syrian-Protestant hybrid. Students at SPC received the modern education they wanted and got their money's worth in the form of degrees. Many an accountant, pharmacist, and doctor graduated from SPC ready to join the world. Language, science, and math classes were coupled with mandatory religious studies and chapel attendance. Parallel educations, one liberal and the other religious, were offered at SPC. A balance was struck on campus; this equilibrium set the stage for the

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<sup>96</sup> Daniel Bliss, *Letters from a New Campus: Written to His Wife Abby and Their Four Children During Their Visit to Amherst, Massachusetts, 1873-1874*. Beirut: Syrian Protestant College Press, 1994.

<sup>97</sup> Stanley King, *The Consecrated Eminence: The Story of the Campus and Buildings of Amherst College*. Boston: Amherst College, 1951.

introduction of this curriculum on campus.

On campus, the donated money came with an agenda. Stuart Dodge, William E. Dodge's son, envisioned the college as American, going against what the *Prospectus* initially outlined. Hiring Syrians to run the college was no longer the forefront priority of the institution. Such sentiment was most evident with the opposition of the nomination of John "Yohanna" Wortabet, the son of a Protestant convert, as a professor in the medical department. The objection was "on the ground that he was not an American but a native of Syria."<sup>98</sup> William McClure Thomson, an advocate for the founding of a Syrian college, lobbied for the appointment of Wortabet. Thomson threatened that, "[i]f the appointment of native professors is to be impossible, simply because they are native, I must decline to have anything more to do with the college."<sup>99</sup> Wortabet was eventually elected "and did excellent work as a teacher. He is the author of *The Religions of Syria*, a standard book, which in its line has no peer," Jessup boasted.<sup>100</sup> The Wortabet issue marks only one of many conflicts that would arise on campus.

### *Ruffling Feathers*

Edwin Lewis, a devout Protestant and instructor of medicine, addressed the graduating class of 1882 with an Arabic talk entitled "Knowledge, Science, and Wisdom."<sup>101</sup> In that speech, Lewis cited Charles Darwin's *On the Origins of Species* as

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<sup>98</sup> Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, 303.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>101</sup> Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950*. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2013.



one of the pinnacles of contemporary scientific achievement. Lewis referred to Darwinism “as an example of the transformation of knowledge into science through a process of long careful study and subtle thought,” suggesting a successful triumph in the reconciliation of faith and science.<sup>102</sup> He was confident that a marriage of religious and scientific knowledge was conceivable because God “filled us with His light” and “[He] adopts the laws of nature in His work.”<sup>103</sup> Such a point of view was not on SPC’s curriculum, however.<sup>104</sup>

Shortly after the speech, Lewis’s fellow missionaries and faculty members protested the talk and asked other missionaries in Beirut not affiliated with SPC to write complaint letters about Lewis to the Board of Managers in New York. Daniel Bliss, the president of SPC, and Harvey Porter, a teacher from the Medical Department, were among the faculty who sent a letter to the trustees in New York requesting the immediate dismissal of Lewis. What made the issue of Darwin extremely problematic at SPC was the public delivery of Lewis’s speech at commencement in 1882. By addressing students, parents, faculty, administration, and board members, SPC claimed Lewis was offering “an apology for Bible truth and an acceptance as science unproved theories.”<sup>105</sup> This reveals a fissure in the way SPC claimed modernity was taught on

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<sup>102</sup> As quoted in Shafik Jeha, *Darwin and the Crisis of 1882 in the Medical Department and the First Student Protest in the Arab World in the Syrian Protestant College (Now the American University of Beirut)*. Trans. Sally Kaya. Beirut: American University Press, 2004.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>104</sup> A portrait of Charles Darwin overlooks my workspace at a coffee shop across from Post Hall as I write this chapter. It is interesting how Darwin is no longer stigmatized at AUB, and in Beirut—a stark difference from what unfolded in 1882

<sup>105</sup> As quoted in Nadia Farag, “The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of al-Muqtataf.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 8.1, 1972: 73-83, 78.

campus.

At SPC, habitus instruments are able to produce a set of practices that shape and change the society without being inscribed as a set of rules or laws through mandatory chapel attendance and other requirements from both faculty and students. Habitus provides symbolic identifications of social positions for students and sets the stage for their conversion, or so hoped the missionary teachers. Lewis, therefore, went against SPC's agenda of interpellation, which caused such a reaction towards him from his peers. Students saw beyond these bounds and spoke back, however. The symbolic capital produced at SPC is not linked to the personal relations between individuals; rather the relationship now exists within the social space for the students on campus. The objectification of this relationship displaces the subject in a new light and creates what appear to be permanent fixtures that the subject must abide by.

Using the press, Lewis retorted and defended his opinion by engaging the intellectual public with Darwin's writings. "[T]he scientific method, correctly applied, does not make men turn against their religion," Lewis wrote, because "no telescope can show us God; no microscope can show us the soul of man, and no chemistry will disclose the secret of life."<sup>106</sup> Contrary to current popular belief, nineteenth century theologians were not opposed to science. Lewis's speech perfectly outlines the tenants of natural theology, a study that argues the existence of God based on reason and the experience of nature.<sup>107</sup> As such, Darwin's study of nature, Lewis maintained, was a

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<sup>106</sup> Edwin Lewis, "Al-Madhhab al-Darwini." *Al-Muqtataf* 7 (1882): 287-290.

<sup>107</sup> William Paley and James Paxton, *Natural Theology: Or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature*. Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1837.

repository of proof for the existence of God. Other Protestant intellectuals attempted to reconcile evolution with their theological principles.<sup>108</sup>

“Lewis’s speech may have been innocent,” Nadia Farag, a scholar who traced the Lewis Affair’s coverage in *al-Muqtataf*, claims. “[B]ut Lewis himself had long stood convicted in the eyes of the conservative members of the faculty.”<sup>109</sup> Yet forcing Lewis to resign from his position would have been easier said than done. Lewis began causing controversy in early 1882, when he invited guests to his campus residence. Lewis served wine to his visitors and provided them entertainment by playing the violin. It seemed that Lewis had ignored the tenant of abstinence from alcohol and indulged in non-devotional music. Reckless actions, as his contemporary observers may have perceived them, reflected negatively on the college. Such transgressions were not to be taken lightly. American missionaries in Ottoman Syria aspired to lead a “simple and pure life,” which necessitated an “abstinence from frivolous habits of dress and conduct.”<sup>110</sup>

Stuart Dodge, who was troubled by Lewis’s transgression, asserted “he will be dismissed from the College, in which case, everyone would know why he was dismissed and his dismissal would set an example for his liberal comrades.”<sup>111</sup> In this light, Lewis was perceived as a potential instigator that would turn SPC’s students and

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<sup>108</sup> David N. Livingston, *Darwin’s Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987.

<sup>109</sup> Nadia Farag, “The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of al-Muqtataf.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 8.1, 1972: 73-83. 78.

<sup>110</sup> Donald M. Leavitt, “Darwinism in the Arab World: The Lewis Affair at the Syrian Protestant College.” *The Muslim World* 71.2 (1981): 85.

<sup>111</sup> Correspondence from Stuart Dodge to Daniel Bliss, New York, March 6, 1882, Box 5. AA:2.3.1, AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

local staff into temptation. Dodge had set an ultimatum: Lewis had to “turn squarely round or resign.” The complexity the Lewis Affair also lay in the fact that SPC was experiencing a shift in the purpose of teaching in Ottoman Syria. In contrast to the initial *Prospectus* that stipulated Arabic as the language of instruction, SPC was trying to implement a shift to English. Campus issues, which would normally be defaulted to the president, had to go through trustees in New York, instead of being resolved in Beirut. This led to extensive lobbying that resulted in the unanimous acceptance of Lewis’ resignation by the Board of Trustees.

Campus protests erupted in December 1882 after students learned about Lewis’s forced resignation. They abstained from attending chapel services and classes, and repeatedly petitioned the faculty to reinstate Lewis as a teacher. Letters were addressed to Bliss evoking issues of violation of student rights, while Bliss insisted that Lewis was an incompetent teacher. Students disagreed and considered Lewis a “pious excellent man” who was “suddenly suspended in a way that violates his rights and ignores his excellent and pious service to the College and country for 12 years.”<sup>112</sup> The students maintained that they “are not to blame should [they] lament [their] misfortune and the suffering that has befallen [them] after [their] beloved teacher, who [they] regarded as a loving Christian father and as the best of friends, was relieved of his duties.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> As quoted in Shafik Jeha, *Darwin and the Crisis of 1882 in the Medical Department and the First Student Protest in the Arab World in the Syrian Protestant College (Now the American University of Beirut)*. Trans. Sally Kaya. Beirut: American University Press, 2004, 55.

<sup>113</sup> My translation of an Arabic petition dated December 1882 into English. I found this petition to be quite fascinating given that the signature at the bottom of the petition read “*talabat al-ilm*,” which translates to “students of science,” “seekers of science,” or even “seekers of knowledge.”

Retort was not limited to the SPC campus. News of the Lewis Affair was in the public sphere, as *al-Muqtataf*, a well-read Arabic scientific journal established by Faris Nimr and Yaqub Sarruf, kept news about Lewis in circulation. Writers in *al-Muqtataf* threatened that their continued coverage of Lewis's dismissal would damage the college's reputation to its transnational readership beyond the Eastern Mediterranean. Articles in *al-Muqtataf* claimed that the firing of Lewis had little to do with Darwin; rather it was about personal issues. Despite the support Lewis got from the press and the students, their petitions failed, resulting in the suspension of thirty students. SPC faculty convened and:

Voted that [sic] the Board of Managers have heard an improper petition which has been handed in to them reflecting upon the personal character of the President and Dr. Post, members of the Faculty, that this petition be rejected and that the Board of Managers instruct the Faculty to suspend for one month those students whose names are attached to that petition and that no student thus suspended be received back who does not in writing withdraw his name from that petition and give to the Faculty satisfactory guarantee that he will conform to all the rules of the institution and refrain from all disorderly proceedings such as he has been engaged in.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, the only medical school in Ottoman Syria was left with a few students and only one teacher. This was a necessary sacrifice, as SPC justified it, to ensure order on campus, and the implantation of an updated agenda.<sup>115</sup> Two new faculty members were

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<sup>114</sup> *Book of Faculty Minutes 1867-1887*. 415-425. AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

<sup>115</sup> The Board of Managers had no issue to "close it entirely for a year or two if necessary," as quoted in Nadia Farag. "The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of al-Muqtataf." *Middle Eastern*

later hired for the following academic year. The new hires were required to sign a “Statement of Principles,” a set of conservative doctrines that became a standard for employment at SPC.<sup>116</sup> Amending the bylaws reinforces the idea stipulated in this project that SPC was not in Beirut merely to modernize, but rather to evangelize. Employment at SPC was scheduled to change yet again in 1884, when the Board of Managers did not renew the contracts of Faris Nimr and Yaqub Sarruf, the two prominent Syrian instructors and editors in *al-Muqtataf*.<sup>117</sup> Their departure also marked the resignation of John Wortabet, the last Syrian faculty member, whose employment had riled up the dismay of certain trustees, as aforementioned. With the removal of locals from the teaching positions, SPC changed the language of instruction from Arabic to English. Suddenly, the missionaries did not need Arabic in Beirut, but rather the locals needed English in order to enter and continue at SPC. But perhaps the most important change the Lewis Affair set in motion at SPC was the college’s refusal to acknowledge what its students were asking for; this was a blatant contrast to the way their predecessors of the 1860s had operated in Beirut. Policies and procedures, it seemed, were no longer inspired from, and for the benefit of, the Syrian commune.

### *Smooth Diplomacy*

“We, the Christians, are surrounded with great walls of enemies, the Muslims and

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*Studies* 8.1, 1972: 73-83. 79.

<sup>116</sup> For the full text, see: Stephen B. L. Penrose. *That They May Have Life: The Story of the American University of Beirut, 1866-1941*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1970.

<sup>117</sup> Yaqub Sarruf’s contributions to the SPC were acknowledged by erecting a statue, presented by Faris Nimr, in his honor at Jafet Memorial Library on June 20, 1937. The statue was relocated and now stands between West Hall and Ada Dodge Hall on the upper campus of AUB. I wrote sections of this project and a few of my *Outlook* editorials on the benches located near Sarruf’s statue.

others. They prevent us from spreading the true call and await the opportunity to devour us,” James H. Nicol preached on a cold January morning in 1909. “It is our business then, our sacred duty to break down these walls and tread upon them. [...] these obstacles to our faith and to our religion are doomed if we will only fight them as we should.”<sup>118</sup>

Nicol’s speech, entitled “Put Ye On the Whole Armor of God,” provoked a volatile reaction from SPC students, who did not hesitate to disperse the speech among the inhabitants of Beirut through the local press. In retaliation to the polemic speech, Muslim students circulated and signed a petition asking to be excused from religious work. This right to dissent, they had assumed, was the norm at all American schools. Faculty at SPC declined the petition, a move they had perfected since 1882. About 70 students had pledge an oath not to attend prayers and not to leave the college unless compelled by force. “This oath is the crux of our crisis; a bold crossing of the Rubicon in the full belief of Ottoman Government backing,” Franklin Moore said in a speech to the faculty. “[A]nd in the misapprehension that the American Government disallows religious instruction in all American schools.”<sup>119</sup>

As in 1882, SPC was divided between conservatives and liberals who were yet unable to comprehend the context of this uproar. The early 1900s witnessed a surge in Arabic and English articles and letters speculated the role of SPC in contemporary Ottoman Syria. Students and intellectuals alike mainly questioned the college’s undated

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<sup>118</sup> As quoted in Norbert J. Scholz, “Foreign Education and Indigenous Reaction in Late Ottoman Lebanon: Students and Teachers at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.” PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1997. 176-177.

<sup>119</sup> AA: 4.3 - Students Life 1882-1980s AA: 4.3.1.7 - Students Crisis 1909 - General 1908-1909. AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

rules and regulations that include mandatory chapel attendance, and the fact that Syrians were no longer hired as instructors. “I found that within the names of the faculty, staff and teachers, that amount to 18 teachers, are all American,” Salim Sarkis, a student at SPC pondered in Arabic, given that the language of instruction was English. “So if we said that some of those respectable persons have not practiced the skill of teaching and knowledge in itself why find that in a different corner there is Jaber Efendy Doumit, for example, who has not been promoted even though he has attained a school degree in the year 1876 i.e. 32 years ago,” Sarkis asked.<sup>120</sup> Sentiments, such as Sarkis’s, were common among student on campus who found it strange to be receiving an education at an institution that had promised Americans would establish it but Syrians would maintain it. Condemnation of prayer requirements was also widespread, but remained unaddressed by the faculty.<sup>121</sup>

Criticism of the religious policy revolved on two issues. First, SPC was accused of not conforming to the new laws of religious liberty advocated by the Young Turks. Second, the Muslim Controversy was viewed as a Western, Christian attack on Islam. A special grievance against the Americans was SPC’s blatant disregard for religious liberty which had been promised decades ago.<sup>122</sup> By this point, it had become public knowledge that American missionaries had used liberalism as a pretext to garner

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<sup>120</sup> Student Life 1882-1980’s AA: 4.3 AA: 4.3.1.17 Students Crisis, 1909 Itihad Daily Article addressed to President Howard Bliss by Salim September 27, 1908. AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

<sup>121</sup> Faculty minutes from November 3, 1908 make reference to a request by Muslim students to attend services held at the mosque opposite to the Athletic Field. The motion remained unresolved by the time I read it in summer 2014. *Minutes of the Faculties, Syrian Protestant College, 1908-1917*. AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

<sup>122</sup> Refer to Chapter 4.



support and ensure enrollment at SPC. Gone were the days of Zokak el-Blat. An ivory tower manifested in the place of College Hall.

On campus, faculty members were pitted against each other. Conservatives portrayed the Muslim students' actions as a "contagious disease, whose germs would spread to the Christian students."<sup>123</sup> Liberals, on the other hand, realized that Christian and Jewish students were as opposed to mandatory chapel service as their Muslim counterparts.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, these liberals traced how old grievances against evangelism were expressed rhetorically in the wake of the Young Turks Revolution. Officially speaking, SPC put the responsibility the on the Board of Managers—who were conveniently located in New York. Beirut-based faculty claimed that the final decision rested at the Board's discretion. The students were insistent to make their voices heard. Students kept sending letters to SPC, writing in the local and regional press, and even taking the matter up to Istanbul, a possibility that distressed Bliss. A temporary compromise was drafted, in which dissenting students were excused from chapel until the end of the academic year. The only condition by the faculty was that students could return after they pledged loyalty to SPC, and maintained a regular attendance of Bible classes. Resolution of the Muslim Controversy is inconsequential in the course of our discussion in this project. Rather, what we are concerned with is students' steadfast refusal to have their identity diluted through forced conformity. Such

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<sup>123</sup> George Post, quoted in *al-Liwa'* (Feb. 6, 1909), as quoted in John Murchison Munro. *A mutual concern: the Story of the American University of Beirut*. Delmar: Caravan Books, 1977. 55.

<sup>124</sup> Syrian Muslims thank their fellow Christians for their support of the cause. AA: 4.2 Student Crisis 1909 AA: 4.3.1.15 Translation of Articles appeared in various newspapers: *Itehadd el-Othmani, al-Liwa', Mufid, Moweyid, ...* 1909, Jan 14 – 1911, April 28. AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

attitudes by the students reveals an inherent opposition to the modernity that is forced upon them by SPC.

These events demonstrate how American missionaries used promises of a liberal education to draw students to register at SPC, but did not do so in order to produce liberal subjects ready to face modernity. Despite that, SPC had maintained its end of the bargain by offering students the courses they wanted, while adding some unwelcome requirements to the curriculum. Instead of receiving a purely liberal education, students were greeted with mandatory chapel attendance and a Protestant upbringing.

The campus crises had the chance to be formative events that could have enhanced SPC's catering to the educational needs of students, but the Lewis Affair and the Muslim Controversy had different consequences for the college and caused it to lose some of the credibility it had amassed over decades in Beirut. The Lewis Affair illustrates there was a shift in the line of thought of faculty, such as Lewis himself, who were ready to reconcile with the kind of education the locals wanted and demanded. Lewis, a devout Protestant, thus echoed what Bustani had been advocating in *Al-Wataniya*. Religion, and religiousness at large, did not negate science and education, but rather complemented it. As for the Muslim Controversy, the event came at the culmination of the on campus frustration at the imposed curriculum that went against what they saw as their personal beliefs. The American missionaries suddenly stopped joining societies, engaging in intellectual debates, and breaking bread with Syrian intellectuals. The Biblemen had turned on Beirut and the city loathed them for it.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Moments of crisis, given the historical account set forth in this project, haunt the annals of the Syrian Protestant College. Both external conflicts and internal dissent incited redefining moments for the missionaries and locals at SPC. Modernity, as we have seen in this transnational narrative, was not shipped from West to East. Rather, it was the result of its own events and contexts. I want to suggest that the case of SPC should inspire exploration of a shared transnational history, along with a critical rereading of the archives of our region. It is in our best interests as scholars to inspect, understand, and rewrite the complicated relations of history, place, politics, and language in our region. In seeing how educational institutions are connected to a larger national and historical context and history, we may begin to more effectively recognize and value the realities and consequences of current events as they occur in Beirut and the rest of our region.

My project traces its origins back to an *Outlook* editorial I wrote to comment on student dissent at the American University of Beirut almost six years ago.<sup>126</sup> I observed the crowds from our newsroom at Bathish Hall protesting, rioting, and blocking most of the buildings on campus. What struck me the most was not the organized mayhem or the roaring crowds, per se, but rather what a student told me on a hot May afternoon, as she heard me calling out the building's name. "It is pronounced *Bat-heesh*, not *Bath-*

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<sup>126</sup> *Outlook* is the official student newspaper at AUB since 1949. During my tenure as editor-in-chief, *Outlook* reported the student-faculty discussions on the increase in tuition fees. See: *Outlook: Volume 42*.

*ish,*” the overzealous student wearing a cropped black t-shirt exclaimed, with a picket in her hand. The name stuck with me well beyond my years as an undergraduate student. I even recall correcting a few bystanders lamenting over their Civilization Sequence lecture being held at the auditorium in Bathish Hall.

The crises at SPC made it clear that students adhered to their views on modernity and education but stressed their loyalty to their college. They accepted the ideas and the curriculum stipulated by SPC in order to pursue a higher education, even if it meant the acceptance of mandatory chapel attendance and learning the Protestant dogma. They were well aware of the flaws and inconsistencies in SPC’s policy, but remained there since it fit their objectives to receive a modern education. The dismissal of Lewis for what appeared to be personal reasons and the refusal to excuse non-Protestants from compulsory prayer attendance provoked dissent and protest within the student body. SPC had failed to garner loyalty from the students because they soon discovered and criticized institutional contradictions at their alma mater. On the other hand, the faculty was exposed to have been more interested in evangelism than in the spreading of knowledge. Their educational endeavors were not innocuous and served to advance a proselytizing agenda. Modernity according to this definition by the missionaries in Beirut did not accommodate science, nor did it accept religious plurality. The Lewis Affair of 1882 can be viewed as a localized episode of a far more global Protestant uproar against Darwinism. In this light, we can view Edwin Lewis as a member of a progressive brand of Protestant missionaries. By following this line of thought, I argue that the sermon that sparked the Muslim Controversy was in response to the emergence of a global nationalist discourse. In such a scene, missionaries found it opportune to promote a Protestant identity in lieu of the dying Ottoman one.

The crises ushered a profusion of publications by the students, who followed in the footsteps of their reformist compatriots of *Al-Nahda*. Counting on SPC to provide the space for this change to occur was quite disappointing for the students and the reformist faculty members. Despite the founding fathers' wishes to leave the charge of running SPC to the locals, the Board of Managers and faculty did not allow this to come to fruition. Inherent contradictions in SPC's governance had thwarted hopes of creating a community as the one envisioned by Bustani at *Al-Wataniya*. It did, however, result in the production of intellectuals who challenged SPC on its own terms. Science was one of the catalysts that allowed such a discourse to emerge on, and eventually, off campus. Missionaries at SPC used science as an evangelical means to proselytize. The scientific method was used as a vehicle to indoctrinate Protestant ideals into students by introducing them to rational thought, which was linked to Protestantism. Students flocked to SPC not to learn Protestant ethics, but rather due to the college's focus on science. Students had an opposite view on the importance of science, since their definition of modern education included science as the means to reconcile the wealth of knowledge and ideas between the Orient and the Occident.

The Orient, Beirut in our case, had already established views on modernity and education among its intelligentsia. Local access to capital afforded schools the means to set up campuses and hire educators. Beirut was not waiting for the benevolent intervention of missionaries, or outsiders for that matter, in order to formulate local views on modernity and education. The *Tanzimat* also expedited modernization across the region. This had effectively set the stage for the American missionaries to join in on a conversation about modernity that was already occurring by the time they docked in Beirut. The Americans felt out of place at first when they tried to communicate with the

locals by reciting Arabic verses of the Bible. Such public displays seemed out of place in nineteenth century Beirut, a time of increased literacy and interest in science and arts. Rebranding was the reasonable thing to do for the American missionaries to remain intellectually, culturally, and religiously relevant in Beirut. Such actions were not acts of rebellion against the ABCFM by the Syria Mission, but were rather a necessary action in order to continue working in line with Boston's mandate. This would not be the last time the Americans had to adapt to suit the needs of Beirut.

Visitors to AUB who enter the campus from Main Gate are greeted with a Bible verse inscribed in English and Arabic on either side of the pillars. "That they may have life and have it more abundantly," the stone reads. Faculty minutes from February 1, 1921 claim that this was Howard Bliss's favorite verse. However, upon the inspection of any Bible, we find that the original text was purportedly much longer and stated in a different context that does not include liberal education.<sup>127</sup> "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy," Jesus Christ says. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The choice of words to be placed on AUB's entrance and the omission of any reference to Christ do not seem to have been placed at random. If left unaltered, the verse would have been better fitting for an evangelical mission, the kind of mission that first docked in Beirut. Updating the text suggests the proclamation and acceptance of the educational needs of local students; a modern education for modern times that will lead to a more abundant life may be achieved on this campus. AUB's motto signifies that this institution may have originated from a plan to convert the local population, but its very existence has been contingent on the locals themselves. Rebranding the American missionary into the

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<sup>127</sup> *Book of Faculty Minutes 1921*. AUB Archives (Jafet Memorial Library).

American teacher is evident in the latent lines on the entrance.

Our shared world and living space, as our cosmos itself, does not exist in nothingness. The student protest of 2010 that I alluded to earlier cannot be reduced to a reaction to the increase in tuition fees—as in the cases of the Lewis Affair and the Muslim Controversy. Rather, the causes and ramifications are too profound to be noticed and may take time for a curious observer to document and understand. An alternative, and more accurate, narrative of the events would keep in mind the regional, and international, context that had led to that event. Civil violence had erupted in Lebanon, pitting political factions against one another. Pretexts for such outbursts of viciousness included religious zeal and the defense of Lebanon. Protests in Beirut, a war in Syria, and a general discontent with governments in the Arab world also coincided with a global economic crisis that left chaos in its wake. Considering this transnational context allows us to understand and make sense of the way the on campus events unfolded and changed AUB throughout its 150 years of existence on the cerulean shores of the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>128</sup>

For many students at AUB today, as their counterparts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, education carries a different meaning according to their respective times, but the essence remains unchanged: a modern education for a modern time. This progressive view of education, coupled with contemporary regional events as connected to a larger transnational history, can help us more effectively recognize and value the everyday realities of the population. This in turn affects how AUB, along with other educational institutions in the region, can better serve students, wherever they may

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<sup>128</sup> I am pleased to have completed this project during AUB's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I consider this my contribution to the "We Make History" campaign to mark the event.

hail from, and provide them with the proper skills to gain economic, political, cultural, and social power, thus ensuring the continuation of a reformist dream that was envisaged a century earlier. The value of historiography, however, rests on lessons we draw from the story. Ultimately, the aim of this project is to inspire further discussion, rather than attempt to tie up loose ends; like whether the building facing the back of Marquand House is called Bathish or *Bat-heesh* Hall.



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