



LIBRARY
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Short Essays by Syrian Boys in Beirut Manuscript Collection

Collection Summary

Creator: Syrian Protestant College
Dates: 1885
Extent: 1 archival box, .25 linear feet
Language(s): English, Arabic
Repository: Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Special Collections.

Historical Information

American Protestant missions to Syria began in 1819, with the arrival of representatives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Smyrna. The Syrian Protestant College was established in Beirut December 1866 under an independent board with informal relation to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church.

The school's first president, the Rev. Daniel Bliss oversaw education of 16 students. He was joined by David Stuart Dodge, who taught English; Nāṭf al-Yāzījī, Arabic; and Asad Shadūdī, mathematics. The name was changed in 1920 to the American University of Beirut.

Bliss envisioned the college's role as exposing young Syrians to a modern Western education through a diverse curriculum that included science, religion, history, mathematics, philosophy, and medicine. Students explored their country's archeological sites and museums. The college library held works in Arabic and English.

When the Rev. W.W. Martin joined the SPC faculty in 1883, 175 students were taught by ten American professors, five Syrian lecturers and instructors, plus student teachers. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York, Martin came from De Pauw University where he was Professor-elect in the Theological Department. He taught at SPC through 1887.

Martin arrived after what came to be known as "the Lewis affair." Dr. Edwin Lewis, a professor of chemistry and geology at SPC, delivered the 1882

commencement address to the graduating class of 1882. The speech, entitled "Knowledge, Science, and Wisdom," cited Charles Darwin as "an example of the transformation of knowledge into science by long and careful examination and accurate thinking." Lewis's sympathy to Darwin's theories generated swift negative reactions. Bliss's dismissal of Lewis led to a battle between the president and Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck of the medical school faculty.

The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America reports, "The growing opposition of the Turkish Government to such educational institutions, noted in last year's report, has recently passed into an acuter phase." (p. 64) These tensions within the college later would be credited with contributing to a renewed Arab intellectual movement.

Sources

Brown, Arthur Judson. 1936. One hundred years: A history of the foreign missionary work of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., with some account of countries, peoples and the policies and problems of modern missions. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co.

Leavitt, Donald M. "Darwinism in the Arab world: the Lewis affair at the Syrian Protestant College." *The Muslim World* 71, no. 2 (April 1981): 85-98. ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost(accessed August 11, 2015).

Penrose, Stephen Beasley Linnard. 1941. That they may have life: The story of the American University of Beirut, 1866-1941. New York: The Trustees of the American university of Beirut

Tibawi, A. L. 1967. The genesis and early history of the Syrian Protestant College. *Middle East Journal* 21, (2): 199-212

Zachs, Fruma. 2005. From the mission to the missionary: The Bliss family and the Syrian Protestant College (1866-1920). *Die Welt des Islams* 45, (2): 255-291

Scope and Content

The collection consists of more than 200 short handwritten essays by freshmen students in the Literary Department of the Syrian Protestant College in 1885. Topics include "Manliness," "Arabic Sciences," "Marriage in Our Country," "The Fights of Boys," "Death," "The Silk Worm," "Strength," "Home Life in Syria," "Ancient Scriptures and Vestige of Antiquity," "The Habits of Our Country," and more. The collection is bound in two volumes. Volume 2 may predate volume 1.

Subjects

Autobiographies.

Islam--Syria--History--19th century.

American University of Beirut

Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

Syrian Protestant College

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

The following is the acceptable citation for publication: Short Essays by Syrian Boys in Beirut Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

Provenance

The collection was given to Princeton Theological Seminary Library in 1917 by the Rev. W.W. Martin.

Access

There are no special restrictions to access of this collection. It may be examined by library patrons under the normal rules and conditions of Special Collections.

Arrangement

Bound in original order.
