

from the missionaries that the best tool for conversion was a new Arabic Bible. Therefore, the missionaries wrote to the Prudential Committee stating that they needed more funds to undertake their most important missionary task, a translation of the Bible.

The American Mission then appointed Smith as the lead missionary for the Bible translation project in 1847. Smith focused his energy on what would be his last missionary endeavor before his death in 1857. He finally began to wed his scholarly ability and perfectionism with the Mission's desire for a new Arabic Bible.⁴³ This work allowed him to focus on translating the Scriptures into the language and cultural idioms of Arab Syrian culture. He was only able to do this, however, because of the assistance of his close friend Buṭrus al-Bustānī.

In reading through Smith's formal correspondence of the Mission, as well as his personal letters within the archives of the ABCFM, it is clear that he was held in high esteem by his colleagues, the Syrians with whom he conversed, and even by Rufus Anderson.⁴⁴ Smith was recognized and appreciated for his abilities and outlook. His communication with Anderson in Boston ranged from official reports of the mission stations in Syria to current social issues. He would often translate local letters and *fatwas* of important clergy and sheikhs related to the religious atmosphere within the Empire and forward them on to Anderson so that he was aware of local issues and events.

Smith held ongoing conversations with a wide array of Syrians, including Protestants, Greek Catholics, some Maronites, and even a Samaritan Priest. His lengthy correspondence, with the Greek Catholic Mikhā'il Mashāqa during his time in Damascus is of particular interest. Mashāqa eventually converted to Protestantism. Letters between Smith and Mashāqa, between Smith and the Greek Catholic Patriarch, and Mashāqa's journal found in the archives of the ABCFM will undoubtedly provide further information about Mashāqa's life and his conversion to Protestantism.⁴⁵ Here is another indigenous story waiting to be told, whether the Greek Patriarch or Smith will be the protagonist is yet to be seen.

43 Smith and Van Dyck, *Documentary History*, 1–4.

44 Unsorted Arabic correspondence. ABCFM archives, 50 and 60, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

45 Fruma Zachs, "Mikhā'il Mishāqa—The First Historian of Modern Syria," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 28, no. 1 (May, 2001), 72–3. For the personal correspondence between Smith and Mashāqa see ABCFM 50, boxes 1–3. The correspondence between the two are scattered throughout the collection. For other correspondence see Smith to Anderson, January 27, 1849; and Smith to Anderson; ABCFM archives, v. 5 Syrian Mission, 1847–1859 v. 2; microfilm A467: Reel 544; entries 182–187.

Smith was a deeply committed puritan "Bible man." He was no theological pluralist, and was deeply committed to converting both "fanatical" Muslims and "nominal" Oriental Christians to the evangelical faith. He firmly believed the "heathen world" was in need of salvation. Yet, one can see a softening of his evangelical fervor throughout his life. In 1832, while Smith was in the U.S. editing *Researches in Armenia* before heading out to Beirut for the first time, he preached a sermon entitled, "Moral and Religious Condition of Western Asia." Here Smith preached to a supportive constituency in order to drum up support for the work of the ABCFM.⁴⁶ And yet, when we compare this with the personal correspondence of Smith during the 1840s and 1850s while in Beirut, the Arabic poetry presented to him by acquaintances, as well as the calligraphic verses he penned from the Qur'an, we find a man much more attuned to the people and culture of the Syria, than a heavy-handed pietistic American missionary seeking to civilize the Arabs. A poetic eulogy of Smith's life by Nāṣif al-Yāzījī, cited below, provides a window into the effect that Smith had on those around him that is not reflected in the official correspondence of the mission society.

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Buṭrus al-Bustānī

Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883) is certainly the most famous Syrian to be connected with the American Syrian mission and this translation of the Bible. While he is noted in the missionary records, somewhat hesitatingly, as a participant in the Arabic Bible translation, he is most well-known by the Arabic-speaking world for his Arabic dictionary, *Muḥiṭ al-muḥiṭ*, and the first modern Arabic encyclopedia, *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif*. In addition, he had a vital impact on the popularizing of the new literary genre of Arabic journals in Syria that propelled the literary *Nahḍa*. He has been called the "grandfather" of the publishing movement by Kamāl al-Yāzījī.⁴⁷ According to Adel Beshara, Buṭrus al-Bustānī was one of the leading *ruwwād al-Nahḍa* [pioneers of the Renaissance].⁴⁸ He is also well known for developing the concept of modern Syrian Nationalism. In fact, the phrase *ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān* [Love of nation is an article of faith] was the byline of his popular journal *Nafīr Sūriyya* that appeared in 1860. His ideas, however, were not limited to the written page. In 1863 he founded the short-lived but important *al-madrasa al-waṭaniyya* [the National School], which was

46 Eli Smith, *Missionary Sermons and Addresses* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1833), 13–84.

47 Fā'iz 'Alam al-Dīn Qays, *Athar al-Mu'allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī fī l-nahḍa al-waṭaniyya fī Lubnān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 2005), 89.

48 Sheehi, 61.