

Tributes to Fr. Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī

(Chronological Order)

Fr. Buṭrus was welcomed and cherished from the moment he reached Aleppo. This incited him more to perform great works, manifest subtle virtues, and reveal wide knowledge. It made old and young people from all sects and classes respect and appreciate him and consider him an edifice.

He taught Italian and Latin languages in the Maronite school there and his students benefitted from his skills and they became known for their knowledge of Literature at the time.

Bishop Germanus Farḥāt was one of his student, as well as Bishop ‘Abdallah Qara‘lī, Bishop Jibrā‘l Ḥawwā, pastors ‘Abd al-Masīḥ Lubyān and ‘Aṭāllah Zindah, priest Nicholaos aṣ-Ṣāyigh, deacons ‘Abdallah Zākhir and Makardij al-Kasīḥ and many other great scholars and renowned men who bequeathed several valuable writings on religion and on the world.

Later, Germanus Farḥāt made him a member of his council of scholars. Tūlāwī then became active in writing about logic, rhetoric, philosophy, theology, physics, religious studies and other exalted domains. This gave him an extensive reputation to become one of first class great scholars.

[...] His place in the various exalted disciplines of scholarship is of note. Whenever a subject is presented to him, he directly discussed it as if it were his own specialty, while understanding and revealing its hidden meaning and different aspects. His judgement of any art parallels that of its composer. In general, what God endowed him within his intellectual capacity, broad mind and discernment, is the utmost that can happen to other renowned men, and there is no exaggeration in this matter. Thanks be to God who grants His worshippers as He wishes.

As to his character, he is a man who had great ambitions, and his heart was prevailed by peace and purity, and he was generous in giving what he had. He relied on God in all matters, and does not mind what the future had to offer him as it unfolded. He cared little for the world and its

futile glories and he was far from conceit and its embellishment. He was fond of great matters, abstaining from the world's pettiness, and in general his virtues are similar to his knowledge, and perfection is to God alone.

Pastor Jirjis Manash Al-Mārūnī,

From *Al Mashriq* journal “al-Khūrī Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī: al Faylasūf ash-Shahīr” (Fr. Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī, the Prominent Philosopher) Beirut, vol. 17, 1, 9, 1903, pp. 774, 776.

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He is the distinguished Father, the knowledgeable, the scholar, the seeker of truth and discoverer of the obscure who extracted from the sea of knowledge its diversities and refuted ambiguities. He gathered from the meanings of the Holy Books its pearls and kernels and bestowed the essence on its pursuers to convert them and to enlighten and to set an example to his followers. I am referring to the noble and brilliant Maronite priest Buṭrus bin Buṭrus Ishāq At-Tūlāwī, originally from the village of Tūla. He became the resident of Aleppo, the herald of its parish, the father of the Maronite congregation and the econome of its church.

The copyist pastor Lawindos Būlus Sālim al-Ḥalabī,

From the introduction of the manuscript: *Thalūthūna Ta'amulan* (Thirty Reflections), no (219) by the copyist pastor Lawindos Būlus Sālim al-Ḥalabī, copied from priest Buṭrus Fahd, Table of contents of *the Syriac and Arabic manuscripts*, 1972, p. 81.

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He entered the College of Rome in 1668 when he was eleven years old. Ad-Dibs [Bishop Yūsuf] said of him: he graduated from this college in sciences and art then returned to Lebanon and was ordained a priest by ad-Duwayhī [Patriarch Istiphān] and was sent as a preacher to Aleppo. He became renowned in his scholarly knowledge to an extent that senior scholars sought his advice for he studied jurisprudence and excelled in it.

He was a philosopher, and most of his ideas were based on academic grounds for he was a professor in natural sciences.

He established a school which vied with the renowned schools of Aleppo at that time, and many were his students who excelled and were considered from among the important scholars as

Bishop Farḥāt, and Bishop ʿAbdallah Qaraʿīl, deacon ʿAbdallah Zākhir and priest Nicholaos aṣ-Sayigh. Besides, he also authored books, preached and advised.

[...] This great scholar died at an elderly age in his nineties. We truly call him the master of pioneers.

Mārūn ʿAbbūd,

ʿAbbūd Complete Works, *Adab al-ʿArab*, (*Literature of the Arabs*) Vol. 1 of Al-Dirāsāt, Beirut, Dār Mārūn ʿAbbūd, Dār ath-Thaqāfah, 3rd ed., 1978, pp. 405-406.

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During his time [Patriarch Yaʿqūb ʿAwwād] there were a number of graduates. One of them was the noblest and the greatest, the star of the East and the pinnacle of wisdom: Fr. Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī Al-Batrūnī, known both in the East and the West. He lived in the city of Aleppo and enriched many in his sermons, his teachings and the books that he wrote and translated from foreign languages into Arabic. He knew perfectly both the Arabic and Syriac languages. He was especially concerned to save souls and was endowed with extensive skill and courage to argue with heretics and dissidents converting many Orthodox, Nestorians and Jacobites to Catholicism. He had solemnity and dignity to command respect even from atheists. He arranged rites and several good adorations in the churches. He had several disciples, among them two Melkites: ʿAbdallah Zākhir, (known for making a printing press in Shwayr, Lebanon), and priest Nicholas aṣ-Ṣayigh. Thanks to Tūlāwī, both were warded off from heresy and disbelief to acknowledge the Roman Catholic Church.

He had two very important students belonging to our sect in Mount Lebanon, who were famous in their knowledge and their holiness. One was ʿAbdallah Quaraʿīl the Allepine who founded the Lebanese Monastic order and formulated its rules and mystical obligations. He was a very humble worshipper, skilled in universal jurisprudence and religious studies. This is why he deserved to be ordained Bishop of Beirut.

The second is Pastor Jibrāyil Farḥāt al-Ḥalabī, who belonged to the Lebanese Order and was known for his knowledge of language, grammar and poetry. He wrote and edited several books.

Ash-Sheikh Anṭonyus Abi Khaṭṭār al-ʿAynṭūrī,

Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Jabal Lubnān (Summary of the History of Mount Lebanon), Laḥd Khāṭir Publishing House, Beirut, 1983, pp. 112-114.

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To introduce him and his school briefly, I will read the testimonies of two renowned Maronite scholars who were his contemporaries: Istiphān ʿAwwād as-Simʿānī and Yūsuf Simʿān as-Simʿānī, mentioned in the third volume of their voluminous book “Fahrasat Makḥṭūtāt al-Maktabah al-Vaticaniyyah” published in 1759 in Rome thirteen years after the death of at-Tūlāwī. The two Simʿānites, after describing a manuscript of his in Theology (Ms. no 219), state: The mentioned Buṭrus is the author of many publications. He is from the town of Tūlā (his father is Zaytūn). He went back to Syria after finishing his studies in grammar, philosophy and theology in the Maronite college in Rome. He was ordained priest by Patriarch Istiphān ad-Duwayhī, and was then sent to Aleppo to direct the Maronite Syriac Church and served as the econome and deputy of the Patriarch.

There he started teaching Syriac and Arabic grammar. Students from all Christian sects flocked to him: Maronites, Melkites, Jacobites, Nestorians, and Armenians. He excelled in writing, and in lecturing. He was the first to teach philosophy and Theology in this city, and he converted to Roman Catholicism many dissidents Melkites, Armenian heretics, Jacobites and Nestorians who discarded dissidence and denied heresy. He died in 1746 and was buried with reverence in the Maronite Church, the cathedral that God erected in the name of the prophet Elijah.

[...]. And thanks to the ideal spiritual and profound spiritual adoration that he endowed his students with, priesthood vocation gushed out and his school became a small seminary. He taught Philosophy and Theology and graduated successful priests, monks and bishops raising the standards of the clerics scientifically and spiritually. He was in himself a university.

[...] He carried a movement to Arabicize the rites giving priority to renew and revive the Arabic language.

In all what he wrote, translated or taught, he was preparing souls to embrace the reforms that led the Maronite council in 1736.

He was able to witness the reaping of what he sowed in his life. Thanks to him, the vocation of all the monastic founders in Lebanon, Maronites, Melkites and Armenians, from among his students gushed out. They left the easy life and wealth in Aleppo to a life of poverty and austerity in Lebanon. Thanks to them, monastic life flourished in Lebanon and tens of schools were established and a movement of writing and preaching was activated.

[...] The image that should remain in our memory about at-Tūlāwī is that of the philosopher [...].

Fr. Nabīl Al-Ḥāj

Batrūn First series of Lectures and Cultural Meetings, “Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī wa Madrasat Ḥalab” (Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī and the School of Aleppo), Manshurāt Batrūn Cultural Council, 1985, pp. 48-50.

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No doubt priest Buṭrus at-Tūlāwī imposes himself as a philosopher on his readers. His natural talents enabled him to fathom the ideas and the different philosophical opinions prevalent at his time, and to dominate and practice it minutely and skillfully, and then to transmit it to others in a satisfactory clear and convincing way.

[...] It could occur to some that father Buṭrus at-Tūlāwī did not leave any outstanding work in his legacy, and reflecting his very own personality and dealing with the problems of his society and times. If we suppose that this remark is true it would not lower his rank nor lessen his merit for nobody was able to do what he did, not even close to what he did. In addition, at-Tūlāwī’s personality is revealed more to those who consult his other works, the Sermons for example for it is in these works that he had a wider perspective to express himself, his ideas and convictions especially the problems he had to encounter at the beginning of his career, or from his missions or society.

Fr. Tūmā Muhannā,

Batrūn First series of Lectures and Cultural Meetings, *Buṭrus at-Tūlāwī: Nitajuhu al-Falsafī* (Buṭrus at-Tūlāwī: His Philosophical Writings) Manshūrāt al Majlis al-Thaqāfī al Batrūnī, 1985, pp. 55-56.

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Buṭrus at-Tūlāwī symbolizes a champion of philosophical awakening in the East. The edifice of this awakening starts with him in logic and its branches and ends in theology, passing through the Natural Sciences. This intellectual awakening adopted for itself a tight intellectual methodology and framework for a clear philosophical departure at a time and place when and where they were most needed.

Ameen Albert Rihani,

From the Introduction to *Al-Isagogi ‘aw al-Madkhal Ilal-Manṭiq, Maqhṭūt min al ‘ām 1688, (The Isagogi or a Preface to Logic)*, Notre Dame University Press, first edition, 2001, p.44.

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His philosophical heritage is in a series of consecutive systematical writings in all branches of Philosophy and Theology. He wrote in Logic, Dogmatic Theology, Literary Philosophy, Science, and Religious Thought.

[...] His contemporaries described him to be tall in stature with medium constitution and with a fair skin. He had nervous temperament and was stately looking and cheerful when you meet him. He was also intellectually alert, persuasive, articulate, good lecturer, and magnanimous with an unshakable heart. He was, in addition, patient, solemn, awesome, a scholar, hard worker and a philosopher. [...].

Kamāl Yūsuf Al-Hāj,

The Complete Works, Vol. 11, *Al-Falsafah Al-Lubnāniyyah (Lebanese Philosophy)* (2) Bayt al Fikr, Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hāj Foundation, First edition, 2014, 11/ Mujaz, pp. 871-872, “Mujaz al Falsafat al Lubnāniyyah” Al Kuraym Printing Press, 1974.