



## Fr. Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī

### Biography and Achievements

(1657-1746)

#### Name

Sources mention the name of the author in three different forms: Tūlāwī, Tūlawī and Tūlānī. The first form – Tūlāwī – was mentioned by the author of a manuscript in the introduction to his contemplations<sup>1</sup>. It was mentioned later by Bishop Yūsuf Ad-Dibs in his works *History of Syria*<sup>2</sup> and *A Detailed and Comprehensive Book on the Maronite Legacy*<sup>3</sup> as well as in *Al-Mashriq* journal<sup>4</sup>. The name Tūlāwī was also mentioned by Kamāl Yūsuf Al-Ḥāj in his book *A Synopsis of Lebanese Philosophy*<sup>5</sup>. The second version – At-Tūlawī – comes from the pen of Monsignor Jirjis Manash in an Article published in *Al-Mashriq*<sup>6</sup> journal. At-Tūlānī, the third version of the name, appears on the first page of the manuscript (subject of this book), which was transcribed by Fāris Bin Yūsuf ash-Shidyāq.

In order to clear up the ambiguity that veils the correct name, it is important to refer to a linguistic explanation of the origin of the name. The name may be a relational adjective of the name Tūlā, the author’s village.

After studying thoroughly the transformation of the Arabic nouns ending with an “a” into adjectives and the variations that accompany that change it becomes clear that the adjective originating from the name Tūlā must be either Tūlāwī or Tūlī.

<sup>1</sup> One of Tūlāwī’s manuscripts

<sup>2</sup> Public Printing Press, Beirut 1905, tome 4, volume 8, p. 552

<sup>3</sup> Laḥd Khāṭir Publishing House, Beirut, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1982, p. 306

<sup>4</sup> Year 1901, p. 786

<sup>5</sup> Aspects of Human Intellect series, Beirut, 1974, p. 352

<sup>6</sup> Year 1903, p. 770

According to the rules of the Arabic language, an “a” may also be extended to the word Tūlāwī so Tūlāwī may be applicable and in conformity with the rules of the Arabic language. Thus, according to the above-mentioned linguistic explanation, the adjectives Tūlawī, Tūlāwī and Tūlī, are the only linguistically-applicable adjectives. As for the “n” in Tūlānī, it has proved to be a linguistic mistake and thus cannot be adopted.

Since the name Tūlī has not been applied to the author even though it is linguistically applicable, we are now left with two correct terms: Tūlawī and Tūlāwī. The latter was more commonly used, being easier to pronounce. So, the name Toulāwy has been adopted as the true and correct name of the learned philosopher Father Buṭrūs.

### **Al Tūlāwī’s Biography**

His full name is ‘Abdallah Bin (i.e. son of) Buṭrus Bin Ishāq At-Tūlāwī<sup>1</sup>. He was born in Tūlā, a village in the Batrūn district, in 1657<sup>2</sup>. He also bore the surname Zaytū<sup>3</sup>. In one of his signatures<sup>4</sup>, he wrote his name in Latin in the following manner: Pietro Oliva Tulense. It seems that his father took great care of his education. He was taught the basics of the Syriac language by the village priest. In 1669 at the age of twelve, he was sent by Patriarch Jirjis Al-Bsib ‘alī with some other Lebanese youths<sup>5</sup> to the Maronite college in Rome directed by the Jesuit Fathers.

In Rome, At-Tūlāwī learned Logic, Rhetoric, Oration, Philosophy, Physics, Divine Science, Canon Law, Theology--both theoretical and ethical--general and specific history<sup>6</sup> along with

<sup>1</sup> He mentions his ancestral line in the introduction to his meditations as follows: “Maronite priest ‘Abdallah Būṭros Bin Būṭrus Bin Ishāq Tūlāwī (from Tūlā).

<sup>2</sup> This date was mentioned by Bishop Yousef Ad-Debs in his book *A detailed and comprehensive book...* p.306, and in *The History of Syria*, tome 4., Volume 8, p.552. Monsignor Jirjis Manash did not mention his date of birth. As for Kamāl Yūsuf Al-Ḥāj, he specifies At-Tūlāwī’s date of birth as the year 1655 without justifying this date. Therefore, we rely on the two old references of Bishop Yūsuf ad-Dibs and adopt the year 1657 as being the true date of birth of At-Tūlāwī.

<sup>3</sup> The right name may be Zaytūn (i.e. olive) as stated by Bishop Yūsuf Ad-Dibs in his book *A Detailed and Comprehensive Book on the History of the Maronite Legacy*, p.306.

<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of the Maronite library manuscript in Aleppo no.179

<sup>5</sup> Father Nabīl Al-Ḥāj states that Patriarch Jirjis Bsib ‘alī sent four children to Rome in 1669 accompanied by an Italian Franciscan monk from the monks of Jerusalem named Father Buṭrus or Pietro. These Children were: Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī is from the village of Tūlā in Batrūn, Bakhus ad-Duwayhī and Nehmeh Yammīn from Ehden, and ‘Abdallah Habqūq from Bsha ‘lah. Father Nabil Al-Ḥāj “Father Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī and his Impact on the Awakening”, *Al-Manāra* Journal, 1984, no. 25, p.292, and Father Ignatius Sa’ādah, “Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī, Life and works”, a lecture given at the Batrūn First Cultural Assembly, published by Batrūn Cultural Council -I-, 1985, p.41.

<sup>6</sup> The Maronite Minister [Monsignor] Jirjis Manash, “Father Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī, the famous philosopher”, *Al-Mashriq* Journal, 1903, p.770.

Architecture, Music, and Astronomy<sup>1</sup>. He returned to Lebanon fourteen years later in 1682, holding a “Melfan”<sup>2</sup> degree in Philosophy and Theology. In that year, he was ordained as a priest by Patriarch Istiphān ad- Duwayhī, who appointed him as his secretary and as Minister in Qannūbīn Monastery. Meanwhile, At-Tūlāwī undertook the transcription of two manuscripts. The first revolves around a religious Christian theme, while the second has both Christian and Islamic religious themes. The first manuscript is entitled *The Book of the Law* written by Ibn At-Tayyib in the twelfth century. It comprises chapters about the Church, the Holy Books, patriarchs, bishops, monks, tithes and vows as well as matters of day-to-day living such as food, clothing and marriage.

At-Tūlāwī completed the transcription of this manuscript in August 1683. In the same year, At-Tūlāwī transcribed another manuscript which is a combination of six research studies written by Mikhā’īl al-Ḥaṣrūnī, the Maronite Bishop of Tripoli. The manuscript includes *The Book of Laws and Inheritance, Essences of the Pillars of Islam, Saints’ Feast Days according to the Maronite Liturgy, a Summary of the first seven Ecumenical Councils, and a List of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Sees of the Patriarchate based on Greek and Latin manuscripts*<sup>3</sup>.

Three years later, in 1685, Patriarch Ad-Duwayhī sent Father At-Tūlāwī to Aleppo and entrusted him with a mission of preaching, guidance, and education. The Patriarch chose Aleppo to be At-Tūlāwī’s destination because he wanted to “bestow unto the people of that region the spirit of knowledge so that it could be spread, through them, to all that Oriental Land. That was because the people of Aleppo mastered, more than any other Christian group, the Arabic language prevalent in the land. They were a source referred to by everyone. The Patriarch thought that this language should be the means through which all knowledge is spread, and for that purpose he chose... Father Buṭrus from Tūlā...”<sup>4</sup>

In Aleppo, Father At-Tūlāwī taught in a Maronite school founded by Father Istiphān Ad-Duwayhī in 1666 before he became patriarch. The subjects taught there were: Morphology and

<sup>1</sup> Father Ignatius Sa’ādah, publications of the Batrūn Cultural Council. P.43

<sup>2</sup> The term “melfan” comes from the Syriac word Melfono i.e. the learned teacher

<sup>3</sup> Father Nabīl Al-Ḥāj, *Al-Manārah*, Issues 1-2, Jounieh, 1984, p.295-296

<sup>4</sup> Buṭrus Chebli, *Translation of Estephanos Buṭrus Ad-Duwayhi*, *Al-Hikma* (Sagesse) Publications, Beirut, 1970, p.116

Grammar, Rhetoric, Diction, Syriac, Italian, Latin and Turkish along with Philosophy and theology<sup>1</sup>.

Besides teaching, At-Tūlāwī used to write, translate and preach.<sup>2</sup> He attracted a group of intelligent students and spread amongst them a thirst for knowledge, and a spirit of organization as well as spiritual values<sup>3</sup>. While teaching, At-Tūlāwī transcribed Ad-Duwayhī’s “Chirotono”<sup>4</sup>, meaning the ecclesiastic rituals. The transcription was completed in 1686<sup>5</sup>.

In appreciation of his work, in 1698, At-Tūlāwī was ordained as a pério-dheftis priest<sup>6</sup> by Jibrā’īl Al-Blūzāwī the Bishop of Aleppo, who entrusted him with presiding over the priests in that city<sup>7</sup>. Father Yousuf Mārūn Ad-Duwayhī, one of At-Tūlāwī’s contemporaries, mentions that among the people whom Tūlāwī guided and helped on the road to Catholicism were Father Nicholas Aṣ-Ṣāyigh and Deacons ‘Abdallah Az-Zākhir and Makardj Al-Kaṣṣh<sup>8</sup>.

Father Buṭrūs At-Tūlāwī was known for his great humility and deep knowledge of theology and philosophy. He was also known for his profound thought, his strong debating skills, and his keen logic, as well as for his eloquence. In addition, he was endowed with a keen insight and was characterized by a discerning and enlightened mind and by abundant accomplishments.

At-Tūlāwī died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1746<sup>9</sup> at an age close to ninety years, leaving

<sup>1</sup> Father Nabil-Al-Hajj, *Al-Manārah* journal, 1984, p.298

<sup>2</sup> At-Tūlāwī used to assist pastors Hannā Al-Bānī and Yūsuf Al-Bānī as well as Sheikh Ya’qūb Ad-Dibs, “the idol of all scholars and researchers”, in their teaching at the Maronite School in Aleppo. Both ministers were students at the Maronite School in Rome. Ref. Father Nabil Al-Ḥāj, *Al-Manārah* journal, 1984, p.298

<sup>3</sup> Father Būlus Sfayr, “The Influence of Students of the School of Rome on Maronite Spirituality”, Lectures given at the Holy Spirit University, Kaslik (USEK), 1985, p.95.

<sup>4</sup> It is a term of Greek origin meaning “raising to the order of priesthood”. See to Nakhleh, Father Rūfa’īl (S.J.), *Wonders of the Arabic Language*, text series 2, lesson 12, Catholic Printing Press, Beirut, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1960, pp. 260-261.

<sup>5</sup> Father Nabil Al-Ḥāj, *Al-Manārah* journal Manārah , p.298

<sup>6</sup> This term of Greek origin means “the wandering visitor”. The term “wandering visitor priest” was first defined along with the priest’s rights in a book entitled *The Lebanese Council*, p.335ff.

<sup>7</sup> Monsignor Jirjis Manash, “Father Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī, The Famous Philosopher”, *Al-Mashriq* journal, 1903, p.771

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Mashriq* journal, 1900, p.915

<sup>9</sup> Father Nabil Al-Ḥāj, *Al-Manārah*, 1984, p.317. The dating of Tūlāwī’s death in the year 1745 as has been stated in the writings of Bishop Yūsuf Ad-Dibs, Monsignor Jirjis Manash and Father Louis Sheikho, is not based on any official document. Father Nabil Al-Ḥāj has based the day, month and year of At-Tūlāwī’s death on the basis of the death registers of the Maronite Archbishopric in Aleppo.

behind him a heritage of numerous works in such fields as Philosophy, Theology, Ecclesiastical History, Language and Literature.

### **Languages Mastered by At-Tūlāwī**

In the college at Rome, At-Tūlāwī studied Syriac, Italian, Latin, Hebrew and Greek. His knowledge embraced the living and ancient languages as well as the language of Maronite tradition, i.e. Syriac, the language of logic, i.e. Latin, and the languages of the Old and New Testaments, i.e. ancient Hebrew and biblical Greek. At-Tūlāwī also mastered Italian. As for Arabic, it is not mentioned in the references although At-Tūlāwī mastered it both in writing and rhetoric. In this connection, Bishop Yūsuf Ad-Dibs mentions that At-Tūlāwī studied Islamic Jurisprudence and was a prominent jurist. It is said that he had a number of religious interpretations and that he used the laws of natural sciences<sup>1</sup> to support his arguments. Ad-Dibs confirms the high standing that At-Tūlāwī has amongst Muslim scholars, who “not only revered and respected him but also referred to him in matters of jurisprudence”<sup>2</sup>.

Did the Maronite school in Rome teach the Arabic language? Father Ignatius Sa‘ādah asserts that some of the Lebanese priests and monks who enrolled in the Maronite School in Rome used to teach its students Arabic<sup>3</sup>. It seems that Arabic was not included in the educational curriculum, so a number of students were driven to “learn the language on their own with the help of some Maronite priests living in Rome”<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, some of those students were driven to a kind of endeavor “towards the Arabic language, an endeavor that almost exceeded their enthusiasm towards Syriac. Thus, The Arabic language became to them a very essential language...”<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, it is said that At-Tūlāwī might have been influenced by his colleague in the Maronite school in Aleppo, Al-‘Ullama’ (the scholars) Sheikh Ya‘qūb Ed-Dibsī, teacher of the Arabic language in that school at the time.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Yūsuf Ad-Dibs, *The History of Syria*, Tome 4, volume 8, p.552

<sup>2</sup> Previous reference, p.552

<sup>3</sup> Extracted from a discussion held with Fr. Sa‘ādah on December 14, 2000

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Sarkīs At-Ṭabar, “The major stages in the History of the Maronite College in Rome”, *Dirāsāt* journal, Faculty of Education, Lebanese University, issues 16-17, 1985, p.27

<sup>5</sup> Dr. William Al-Khāzin, “The impact of the Maronite Church in Rome on Arabic Language and Literature”, *Dirāsāt* journal, Faculty of Education, Lebanese University, Issues 16-17, 1985, p.55

It should be mentioned that At-Tūlāwī transcribed a number of manuscripts, some of which, discussing the Islamic religious duties, were an important factor in his mastering of the Arabic language and its principles.

### **Some of At-Tūlāwī's Students**

Over a period of more than fifty years, At-Tūlāwī led a great number of students to the light of knowledge. Among his brightest students, famous in the fields of literature and religion, were Bishops Germanus Farḥāt, ‘Abdallah Qara<sup>c</sup>lī, Jibrā’ūl Ḥawwā, pastors ‘Abdilmasīḥ Libyān, ‘Aṭallah Zindah, the priest Nicholaos Aṣ-Ṣāyigh, deacons ‘Abdallah Az-Zākhir and Makardij Al-Kasīḥ, and others to whom At-Tūlāwī has taught logic, Italian, and Latin<sup>1</sup>. Anyone acquainted with the achievements of these students realizes the important and effective role that At-Tūlāwī played in spreading a thirst for knowledge scholarly practice, and intellectual and spiritual awareness among his students. After his death At-Tūlāwī's students carried the torch of the literary awakening in Lebanon and the Arab world from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

### **At-Tūlāwī's Titles**

At-Tūlāwī had a number of titles, although some of them contained traces of exaggeration. However, all his titles were signs that pointed to the high scholarly and intellectual ranking he held and the great esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries.

Among these titles were: The Perfect Philosopher, the Righteous Learned, The Imam of Orators, The Ideal of Scholars, The Star of the Orient, The Dome of Wisdom, The Chief Philosopher, The Chief of Theologians, The Cornerstone of Logical Proofs, The Treasure of Theology, and The Star of the Maronite Church.

These titles along with many others reveal the lofty position and the extent of the respect and admiration accorded to At-Tūlāwī by the intelligentsia of his time. Despite the great injustice and neglect with which At-Tūlāwī and most of the thinkers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century in Lebanon have been treated, the leading writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have mentioned At-Tūlāwī with all the appreciation that he deserves. Marūn ‘Abbūd praises At-Tūlāwī saying: “we rightfully call him

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Mashriq*, 1903, p.774.

the Master of Pioneers”<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Kamāl Yūsuf Al-Ḥāj considers that “his philosophical legacy is... a series of coherent and consecutive writings in all philosophical and theological subjects”<sup>2</sup>. The Reverend Father Dr. Tūmā Mhannā makes a clear connection between At-Tūlāwī as the human being and as a thinker by saying: “My position... in front of the personality of At-Tūlāwī is an introductory step towards... standing before his philosophical achievements”<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Pioneers of The Modern Awakening*, the complete series, Marūn ‘Abbūd Publishing House, Beirut 1978, Volume 1, p.406

<sup>2</sup> *Synopsis of Lebanese Philosophy*, Beirut, 1974, p.353

<sup>3</sup> *Buṭrus At-Tūlāwī, his philosophical Productions*, published by Batrūn Cultural Council, 1985, p.52