Andreas Feldtkeller
Uta Zeuge-Buberl

Networks of Knowledge

Epistemic Entanglement initiated by American Protestant Missionary Presence in Nineteenth-Century Syria

Geschichte

Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv – 28

Franz Steiner Verlag

Andreas Feldtkeller und Uta Zeuge-Buberl
Networks of Knowledge

MISSIONSGESCHICHTLICHES ARCHIV

Studien der Berliner Gesellschaft für Missionsgeschichte

Herausgegeben im Auftrag des Vorstandes von
Andreas Feldtkeller, Irving Hexham, Ulrich van der Heyden,
Klaus Hock und Gunther Pakendorf
Band 28

Andreas Feldtkeller und Uta Zeuge-Buberl

Networks of Knowledge

Epistemic Entanglement initiated by American Protestant Missionary Presence in Nineteenth-Century Syria

Franz Steiner Verlag

Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Druck: Offsetdruck Bokor, Bad Tölz
Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.
Printed in Germany.
ISBN 978-3-515-11968-9 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-515-11974-0 (E-Book)

INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

PREFACE

This book will present the results of a research project funded by the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), a self-governing organization for science and research in Germany. We kindly thank the DFG for supporting this research project as well as the publication of this book.

The unpublished and published sources relevant for the project were consulted at archives and libraries in the United States, Lebanon, Germany and the United Kingdom. We are grateful for all the help and advice we received from archivists and librarians at Harvard University, the American University of Beirut, the National Library of Scotland and the Humboldt University of Berlin.

We would like to address special words of thanks to the Near East School of Theology, which hosted us several times during our research and granted us access to its wonderful archival collection. We are very grateful for all the help and support given by Dr. George Sabra, president of the Near East School of Theology, and the staff of its library, Dr. Christine Lindner, Hilda Nassar and Liza Titizian.

The research of several Arabic sources as well as the partial translation of some Arabic documents could not have been accomplished without the help of our research assistant in Beirut, Tarek Abboud. We thank him very much for his precise work and engagement.

For the present book, chapters 1 and 2 were drafted by Andreas Feldtkeller, chapters 3 and 4 by both authors, and chapter 5 by Uta Zeuge-Buberl.

Josephine Draper revised the English language of the book manuscript and Cornelia Beyer provided the layout. We kindly thank both for all their support.

We are grateful to the co-editors of the book series Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv for their kind approval to accept our book manuscript, and to Katharina Stüdemann for taking care of it at the publishing house.

We hope the book inspires readers from all countries, especially from those involved in the historical events being analyzed in this book.

Potsdam / Vienna, March 2018

INTRODUCTION

What happened during the decades when the world became "modern"? What happened when steam engines took over and accelerated the movements so far sustained by wind, water and horse power? What happened when telling a story moved away from the campfires and became a matter of printed media, competing for speed? What happened when drawing a map shifted from the domain of the artistic imagination to becoming a matter of exact measurements and abstract representation of a country's surface?

How was the process perceived in Europe, how in the Americas, and how in other parts of the world? During the nineteenth century, the populations of European countries were overwhelmed by dramatic changes that were not "made" by ordinary people, but which deeply affected them in their everyday lives. At the same time, or insignificantly later, very similar dramatic changes also had a bearing on the lives of people elsewhere in the world. Yet, simultaneously, a great portion of the world was affected and overpowered by a new wave of European military and economic expansion, by the experience of colonial rule.

The coincidence of both developments was not mere chance. The powers unleashed by "modern" inventions contributed to the potential that enabled European forces to undermine the authority of governments and subdue the populations in other regions of the world. But completely identifying the two developments would distort the complexity of human history. For a long time, Europe was perceived as if it was enchanted by modernity, and as if only Europe "owned" modernity.

Presenting world history this way overlooks at least two important factors: (1) Prior to the time when Europe seemed like it was bringing modernity to other parts of the world, Europe itself was not modern. Modernity took hold in Europe at basically the same time it developed elsewhere – although there, it also included European interference. (2) Europe would not have become the uncontested representation of modernity if it had not accumulated resources, (wo)manpower, and knowledge that owed credit to almost every other region of the world. It was the colonial imbalance that enabled European forces to enlarge the gap between themselves and other countries, and it was by consuming the wealth of others that Europe became the driving force behind modernity.

When we look at relations across the Mediterranean Sea, it may be stated that before the beginning of the nineteenth century, no country around the Mediterranean in any direction was in any way "modern" in terms of how we might understand this notion with respect to later periods. These countries' histories of social, political, epistemic, and military transformations were much more synchronous than they have in the meantime been conceptualized to be. The French invasion of Egypt in 1798 has frequently been quoted as proof of the change in the relation of

power between the Ottoman Empire and European countries, but it should not be forgotten that during subsequent years, the French army was also able to invade most of Europe, and that a "modern" Egyptian army was able to challenge the Ottoman Empire over the course of the next three decades, with only minor delay caused to the French army challenging Europe.

In today's imagination, the idea of modernity has been disconnected from the practice of still asking the question of where it came from, and of whose resources were burnt in its fires. Arjun Appadurai argues that the definition of "modernity" in the social sciences has for a long time worked in such a disconnected way:

> One of the most problematic legacies of grand Western social science (Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Ferdinand Toennies, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim) is that it has steadily reinforced the sense of some single moment – call it the modern moment – that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present. Reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologized as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies, this view has been shown repeatedly to distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness.[1]

According to Appadurai, modernity is allegedly "a new kind of newness," which is different from any kind of newness that existed before. After the appearance of modernity, being "traditional" always entailed a momentum of inferiority. On the other hand, the European project of Enlightenment (prior to modernity) was perceived as an aspiration "to create persons who would, after the fact, have wished to have become modern."[2]

Appadurai maintains the idea of modernity making a difference, thus becoming one of the most important contributors to the debate on a more complex theory of modernity, or rather a plurality of modernities.[3]

> All major social forces have precursors, precedents, analogs, and sources in the past. It is these deep and multiple genealogies… that have frustrated the aspirations of modernizers in very different societies to synchronize their historical watches… This view of change – indeed, of rupture – needs to be explicated and distinguished from some earlier theories of radical transformation.[4]

Postcolonial theories, in their quest to overcome the roots and consequences of colonialisation, have both adapted and criticized the idea of a divide between "traditional" and "modern" societies. In this context, the relation between the so-called "Orient" and "Occident" has become an extensively debated area of analysis. Edward Said, whose book *Orientalism* (1978) is considered by many to be the point of departure for postcolonial theory, describes the relationship between the

1 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis 2005, p. 2–3.

2 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 1.

3 For the debate on modernity in colonial studies, cf. Frederick Cooper: *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley 2005, p. 113–149.

4 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 2.

Orient and Occident as "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony…"[5]

> The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be – that is, submitted to being – made Oriental.[6]

In Edward Said's theory, one important factor that enabled the "Orientalization" of the countries of the East was the epistemic dominance assumed by the West, especially through discourses in academy and literature:

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient… My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.[7]

The initial approach of Edward Said has been criticized from within postcolonial thinking for perpetuating the imposed dichotomy in the relation between Orient and Occident. The idea of only one order of knowledge – the "Occidental" – determining the whole process of establishing a modern perspective on the world is too simplistic. It overlooks the fact that exactly during the period of intensified interaction between people from different parts of the world during the nineteenth century (partly in conflict, partly in cooperation), a space was opened up for transcending *any* order of knowledge, for "thinking outside the box" and for developing knowledge in between different established orders of knowledge. If there is any truth to the idea of modernity being a "new kind of newness," then it is indebted to such "third spaces"[8] in between the orders of knowledge.

One of the lenses that has been developed to study the emergence of modernities in different contexts of the world is the notion of "entanglement," or "entangled histories."[9] The application of this concept to issues of knowledge and epistemology has prominently been addressed by Rey Chow. Building on an observation by Bruno Latour, she highlights that when orders of knowledge become entangled, the initial effect is confusion:

5 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London et al. 1978, p. 5.
6 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5–6.
7 Op. cit., p. 3.
8 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994.
9 Shalini Randeria, *Geteilte Geschichte und verwobene Moderne*, Berlin 1999; Shalini Randeria, *Vom Imperialismus zum Empire. Nicht-westliche Perspektiven auf Globalisierung*, Frankfurt (Main) 2009; Epple, Angelika / Olaf Kaltmeier / Ulrike Lindner (eds.): "Entangled histories. Reflecting on concepts of coloniality and postcoloniality", in *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, vol. 21/1, Leipzig 2011.

> As Bruno Latour suggests, many ideas tend to make sense only when they are kept segregated from one another as distinct, specialized domains of knowledge; once they are put side by side, the very sense that they have been making in isolation begins to evaporate. One outcome of entangled relationships, then, would be the fuzzing up of conventional classificatory categories due to the collapse of neatly maintained epistemic borders. The state of an intermixing, of a diminution of distances among phenomena that used to belong in separate orders of things, necessitates nothing short of a recalculation and redistribution of the normativized intelligibility of the world, including a realignment of the grids, sets, and slots that allow for such intelligibility in the first place. [10]

The point made by Rey Chow may generate awareness of the fact that it takes courage to bear the entanglement of epistemic orders. For persons in possession of epistemic power, the easier option would be to evade confusion and to stick with their orders of knowledge as they have always been. Only if people on every side of an epistemic entanglement are courageous enough and curious enough to explore what happens next after the confusion can the production of transcultural knowledge take place. Modernity would not have happened anywhere without such courage and curiosity.

The present book will examine the entanglements, the confusion, and the emergence of *third spaces* in between the grids, sets and slots of what Edward Said called "Orientalism." It is unquestionable that people in the eastern Mediterranean were partly dispossessed of their rights to define themselves politically, culturally, economically and epistemologically. This was caused by Western European colonial interference, and prior to that, it had already been caused by Ottoman dominance and by the rule of preceding Empires.

Still, many of the eastern Mediterranean people were actively involved in their own process of becoming "modern." Epistemic violence was indeed exercised in the creation of knowledge about "the Orient," but at the same time, the production of knowledge was partly a transcultural process. It included a space where both "Oriental" and "Occidental" people had agency to define themselves, to develop ideas beyond their respective orders of knowledge, and to cooperate in the search for improvements to their everyday lives that they may well have called "modern."

A prominent example of someone who made the voluntary choice to be "modern" while maintaining an attitude deeply rooted in Arab history and culture is Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883), who, after the civil war on Mount Lebanon in 1860, published a series of pamphlets and called upon the people of Syria to live together in diversity and appreciation, based on love of their home country and on their common use of the Arabic language.

> This region has been the scene of many opposing groups, having very conflicting religious and non-religious interests. However, no other region that witnessed the same events was able to remain as prosperous, most of its people upholding morals and principles of courage, hon-

10 Rey Chow: *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture*, Durham 2012, p. 9–10. The reference given to Bruno Latour reads: "See the opening pages of Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993."

> or, and zeal. This can only make us believe that the region can progress and prosper if put under modern rules that guarantee the good of the land and of its people.[11]

Al-Bustani had an interest in claiming modernity for a vernacular movement, because he did not want to leave modernism to the authoritarian politics of the Ottoman sultan alone.[12] Along with his positive attitude toward modernity, Butrus al-Bustani clearly expressed the necessity to critically evaluate the Western influence on the Arab world, and to make rational choices about what to accept and what to reject:

> We think that those who fully embrace everything that comes from Europe without a thorough examination or a sound assessment and without choosing those which are beneficial are deceiving themselves and accepting falsified and real money at the same time and patching old dresses with new clothes. Similarly, anyone who rejects anything just because it is European or accepts it just because it is Arabic and vice versa falls into a dangerous radicalism. People are seduced more by appearance than by essence, especially in matters which require thinking, patience, and sharp examination, like science and religion. The same applies to their approach to civilization.[13]

Thomas Bauer has recently proposed describing pre-modern Islamic thought as a "culture of ambiguity."[14] According to Bauer, the mainstream of Muslim scholars accepted more than one opinion as an authentic expression of Islam, and they were proud to present as many interpretations as possible for the same verse of the Qurʾan. It was only with the transition to modernity and with European influence that Islam was reinvented as a culture pressing for uniformity and universality. Thomas Bauer makes a good point about the misconception of Muslim history from a modern perspective. Nevertheless, his analysis does not focus on the process of how, when, and by whom the transition to the "modern" perspective on Muslim cultures was brought about. In his book, he mentions Butrus al-Bustani as one of the first Arabic authors who wrote about decline in the history of Arab cultures and who thereby represents the "modern" perspective.[15] On the other hand, he introduces Nasif al-Yaziji (1800–1871) as one of the last representatives of the "classic tradition" in Arabic literature, appreciating ambiguity and being criticized for this by a German Orientalist scholar, Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer (1801–1888).[16]

Now, the interesting thing is that Nasif al-Yaziji and Butrus al-Bustani were members of the *same* academic network. They both belonged to a group of only eleven Arab intellectuals who established an academic association at Beirut in

11 Butrus al Bustani: *Nafir Suriyya*, No. 5, Beirut, 1 November 1860. English translation provided for the present research by Tarek Abboud, Beirut.

12 Ussama Makdisi: "After 1860. Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire," in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, (2002), pp. 601–617, here p. 602.

13 Butrus al Bustani: *Nafir Suriyya*, No. 11, Beirut 22 April 1861.

14 Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams*, Berlin 2011.

15 Bauer, *Kultur der Ambiguität*, p. 305.

16 Op. cit., p. 250.

1846.[17] When al-Bustani later started a school in line with his ideals for a modern society, he gave al-Yaziji the important position of Arabic teacher.[18] In our research, we did not find any evidence that the two men perceived each other as representing different worlds.

The present book, as a case study for the production of entangled knowledge about "the Orient," will focus on exactly the milieu in which Nasif al-Yaziji and Butrus al-Bustani met – and which was occasionally extended, bringing Heinrich Fleischer into contact with them.[19] The milieu in question came into being through the presence of American Protestant missionaries, who from the 1820s to the 1860s were sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM)[20] from Boston, Massachusetts, and were active in the region between Jerusalem, Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo. The region in its entirety was at that time called "Syria" and constituted part of the Ottoman Empire (with the exception of some years under Egyptian rule in the 1830s). The American Protestant activities concentrated on the region that is today known as Lebanon. In 1870, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions[21] took over responsibility for the work so far organized by the ABCFM.

Concerning their religious ambitions, the efforts of the ABCFM in Syria were almost a complete failure. Only a small Protestant church resulted from it, mainly recruited from the ranks of people who had already been Christians before.[22] It is not the purpose of this book to examine the religious dimension of the American mission to Syria, nor is it within the scope of the book to make value judgments about its religious aspects. But in order to discuss matters of knowledge formation where missionaries are involved, it is necessary to reach a basic understanding between the authors and the readers of the book that a person does not automatically become a wrongdoer merely by virtue of the fact that they have taken residence in a foreign country and are offering access to a religious practice there. It all depends on the attitude and the specific characteristics of how this is done.[23]

17 Cf. chapter 3, p. 124.

18 Butrus Abu-Manneh: "The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism. The Ideas of Butrus Al-Bustani," in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 11 (1980), p. 287–304, here p. 294.

19 Cf. chapter 3, p. 133–134.

20 The ABCFM was established in 1810 as an interdenominational Prostestant mission agency, based on a "Plan of Union" that had been agreed upon between Congregationalists and Presbyterians in 1801. Cf. Peter Kawerau: *Amerika und die Orientalischen Kirchen. Ursprung und Anfang der Amerikanischen Mission unter den Nationalkirchen Westasiens*, Berlin 1958, p. 119–121.

21 The PBFM was established in 1837 after a conservative group of Presbyterians had left the "Plan of Union." Cf. Kawerau 1958, p. 121.

22 Cf. Uta Zeuge-Buberl: *Die Mission des American Board in Syrien im 19. Jahrhundert. Implikationen eines transkulturellen Dialogs*, Stuttgart 2016, p. 35–36; Uta Zeuge-Buberl: *The Mission of the American Board in Syria. Implications of a Transcultural Dialogue*, Stuttgart 2017, p. 33–34, URL: https://elibrary.steiner-verlag.de/book/99.105010/9783515115995,

23 In Western countries today, there is quite a sizeable number of Buddhist monks and nuns from different countries in Asia who came for only one reason: to make available Buddhist

The scope of this book is knowledge formation and epistemic entanglement. In this respect, the presence of the American missionaries in nineteenth-century Syria had quite a remarkable impact on the eastern Mediterranean itself, on North America, and, indirectly, also on Europe.[24] The most visible result, still present today, is the existence of the American University of Beirut in Lebanon.[25] In the United States, the American Oriental Society came into being with a predominant reference to the knowledge exchange initiated by the ABCFM in different parts of Asia, among which, the mission to Syria played an important role.[26]

When it comes to a critical analysis of power and dominance, including their epistemic aspects, the example of American citizens during the nineteenth century may be relevant for transcending dualistic patterns. Whereas in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century the United States may be perceived, from an Arab perspective, as the center of the Western world in its role of continuously colonizing the East, it definitively was not in this position during the period that will be examined here. At the beginning of the American engagement in Syria, the United States constituted a country at the periphery of the world, along the eastern coast of North America. It was more advanced than any European country regarding its democratic procedures and its appreciation of religious diversity, but in view of technical skills and academic institutions, it saw itself far behind European achievements. This especially qualified it for a role *in between* the epistemic orders established in Europe and in the eastern Mediterranean.

Moreover, the Americans were in an ambiguous position regarding their attitude toward colonial power. Their own history was clearly rooted in a number of British colonies along the eastern coast, and they expanded westward to territories that had previously been colonized by France or Spain. On the other hand, the United States came into being as a political entity through an anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggle. The generation of Americans who, as young soldiers, had fought the American War of Independence against the colonial British Empire was still alive by the time the activities of the ABCFM in Syria started. The church buildings in Boston – where much of the money for the missionary activities of the ABCFM was raised – were places of remembrance for the struggle of American independence. The resistance movement against the British colonial

teaching and practices. There is no mainstream discourse in Western societies on these people doing anything wrong. We suggest looking at every single missionary personality mentioned in this book from an analytic perspective: is there anything in the attitude and behavior of this person that gives reason to see him or her in a different light than a Buddhist monk or nun offering Buddhism to Europeans?

24 For the general topic of missionaries involved in the generation of transcultural knowledge, cf. Reinhard Wendt (Ed.), *Sammeln, Vernetzen, Auswerten. Missionare und ihr Beitrag zum Wandel europäischer Weltsicht*, Tübingen 2001; Ulrich van der Heyden / Andreas Feldtkeller (Eds.), Missionsgeschichte als Geschichte der Globalisierung von Wissen. Transkulturelle Wissensaneignung und –vermittlung durch christliche Missionare in Afrika und Asien im 17., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert, Stuttgart 2012.

25 Cf. chapter 1, p. 39–44.

26 Cf. chapter 3, p. 107–113.

rule did not make use of any other assembly halls in Boston – its central city – than exactly these church buildings. Therefore, the American citizens in Syria would surely have agreed to most of the negative connotations that postcolonial thinking today has about "the Empire."

It was only in the early 1860s that people in Boston began to look more favorably on Britain again. This was in the middle of the American Civil War. The war brought about a financial crisis for the missionary institutions, and the northern states of the Union had to ask themselves who would financially support an anti-slavery cause. In this situation, British money started to become welcome again.

Throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, both African deportees and Native Americans suffered at the hands of white American dominance, exploitation, and violence. Yet their cause was disputed within the white American community, and the first secretary of the ABCFM, Jeremiah F. Evarts (1781–1831), was a prominent figure in the struggle against the exploitation and expulsion of Native Americans. Therefore, the American missionaries came from a social background that was deeply rooted in colonial power and continued to profit from it – but at the same time, they represented an organization that was advocating change to the situation of both Native and African Americans.

There existed in the minds of ABCFM missionaries yet another set of symbols that incited a negative attitude toward "the Empire," which may have been even more powerful, strange as it will seem to us from today's perspective. This set of symbols resulted from an apocalyptic framework of thinking: Taken from the books of Daniel and of Revelation, there was a widespread conviction among New England Protestants that the reign of the Antichrist on earth was the reason for the existence of religious institutions that acted in favor of imperial powers, suppressing the free will of a great percentage of humanity. This empire was expected to come to an end during future developments in world history, and many American Protestants hoped to see the change in their own lifetime.[27]

How relevant such an apocalyptic paradigm was for the work of the ABCFM can be seen from a sermon that was published in 1841 by the secretary of the ABCFM, Rufus Anderson (1796–1880):

> At the sound of the gospel trumpet, every Jericho shall come down; and at the call of the minister of Christ, the sun shall stay his progress. And then, as we believe, will Satan be bound, that he deceive the nations no more, and satanic power and influence be withdrawn from the earth. What a change will there be in the policy of the nations, when he, who has swayed his wicked scepter over them for ages, is hurled from his impious and bloody throne! What a change in the civil and social condition of mankind! What rapid and wonderful change will there be daily, all over the world! Men will yield themselves in masses to the divine influ-

27 Samir Khalaf, *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant. Ungodly Puritans, 1820–60,* London 2012, p. 21–27. For similar tendencies among Evangelicals in Britain cf. Andrew Porter, "Evangelicalism, Islam, and Millennial Expectation in the Nineteenth Century," in: Dana L. Robert (Ed.), *Converting Colonialism. Visions and Realities in Mission History*, 1706–1914, Grand Rapids 2008, p. 60–85.

> ence. Nations will be born in a day. Idols, idol-worship, and superstition in its thousand forms, will come to an end. The day of mercy for the world has come.[28]

The apocalyptic symbolism employed by the Americans in their expectations for political matters to improve clearly had an influence on Syrian intellectuals, who cooperated with them, but who also developed their own visions for the future of Syria independently of the Americans. The series of pamphlets by Butrus al-Bustani, mentioned above, employed such symbolism, beginning with its title *Nafir Suriyya* (Syrian clarion). The sound of the clarion initiating the events of the last days was an allusion that was intelligible to both Muslims and Christians.
In his arguments, al-Bustani repeatedly uses biblical metaphors for situations of transition and crisis, as in the following passage:

> [N]ever say that this time is not for religion, that we are preaching in the desert, or that we are just a lone voice in the wilderness, for these are ideas put in our head by our enemies who seek to devour us. Those being preached should listen, and preachers should take heed and not choose body over mind, because this is the right time, this is the time of redemption. Wake up! Wake up! Why are you asleep, watchmen of Israel and leaders of the people. Wild beasts are coming to devour the herd and the shepherds too.[29]

Although al-Bustani in his pamphlets is calling the people of Syria to their "homeland" (*waṭan*) in this world, he also reminds them that Syria is only a transitional *waṭan*, with the true *waṭan* still to come:

> And do not forget that the man's real fatherland is not of this world but of the world of spirits, after death, where he remains until judgment day. Many of our brothers have left us to that world this year. Reasons may vary but death is still the same. All we can do is prepare ourselves for that fatherland and that day.[30]

For the American missionaries as well as for their Syrian partners, the notion of "truth" was framed in religious expectations, but this does not necessarily mean that they were against searching for truth by means of science. Many of them were convinced that "truth" is what every human soul turns to, if not prevented from doing so by force or treachery. In their concept of "truth," the missionaries knew of no essential difference between religious truth and scientific truth, although their order of knowledge operated by distinguishing between religion and science.[31] "Truth" for them means what is expressed in the Gospel and what every human being can recognize as the truth if not kept away from it by force, and at the same time, truth is every insight the human mind can achieve through rational thinking or through empirical evidence. The emerging universities of the young American nation, like Harvard University or Yale University, were seen as a paradigm for the fruitful harmony between religious and secular knowledge:

28 Rufus Anderson: "The Promised Advent of the Spirit," in: R. Pierce Beaver (Ed.): *To Advance the Gospel. Selections from the Writings of Rufus Anderson*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 1967, p. 47–58, quotation p. 57.

29 Al-Bustani, *Nafir Suriyya*, no. 6, Beirut 8 November 1860. The quotation contains several references to the Bible, including Isaiah 40,3.6; Isaiah 51,17; Isaiah 52,1.

30 Al-Bustani, *Nafir Suriyya*, No. 4, Beirut 25 October 1860.

31 Cf. chapter 1, p. 24.

> The Fathers of New England, in shaping the college studies for their youth, allowed a governing influence to the gospel ministry; and the event has proved that they acted wisely in so doing, for all the secular professions and pursuits. Our colleges have, in general, been nurseries of piety, as well as learning, and have carried the sympathies and prayers of the Christian community along with them from generation to generation.[32]

Such ideas may explain why the American missionaries did so much for the formation of knowledge in a situation where they could do so little for the transmission of their religious convictions.[33] They hoped for great change in the political arena of the world in the near future, and they considered education a way toward free insight, and, ultimately, a preparation for the light of truth almost as powerful as the preaching of the Gospel.

What they found in Syria upon their arrival was a system of religious communities to which people belonged by birth and by family, not by their own free choice, and a system of education that was accessible only to a limited segment of the male population, educating these men in the religious traditions and rites of their respective communities.

The new idea that the Americans introduced to Syria was the idea of access to knowledge independent of religious belonging. They thereby initiated a process that led, in the long run, to the establishment of secular institutions of knowledge. In the 1820s, the Americans began to establish schools. A new feature of these schools was that they accepted pupils from any religious denomination – and they also admitted girls right from the beginning.[34] Inspired by the Protestant schools, in 1863 Butrus al-Bustani established a school that provided an even more inclusive space between the different religious denominations of Lebanon.[35]

In the 1840s, the American missionaries became the first people in Syria to establish a scientific society, in cooperation with native Protestants. Again, from the beginning, this society was designed in such a way that access to it should be independent from religious belonging, and the meetings of the society were to be free from denominational dispute. However, this idea did not work at first. The society was perceived publically as Protestant, and in 1850, the Jesuits founded their own scientific society. In the long run, however, the idea of a secular scientific society was embraced in Syria, finding its first true manifestation in the Syrian Scientific Society, in which the multi-denominational body of teachers from the school run by Butrus al-Bustani played an important role.[36]

This attitude also applied to the establishment in the 1860s of the first academic institution at university level by the Protestants, which ultimately became

32 Printed letter from Rufus Anderson to the Syria Mission (March 18, 1862), included in a letter from Rufus Anderson to George Ford (March 24, 1862): ABC 2.1.1, vol. 28.

33 For a Lebanese assessment of the American missionaries' contribution to knowledge production, cf. Samir Khalaf: *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant. Ungodly Puritans, 1820–60*, London, 2012, p. 236–251.

34 For a detailed history of the school, cf. Abdul Latif Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800–1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work*, Oxford, 1966.

35 Cf. chapter 1, p. 37–38.

36 Cf. chapter 3, p. 138–139.

the first secular university in Syria: the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut began as the physical manifestation of the missionaries' idea that there is no divide between freedom of science and freedom of religion. Interestingly, from the beginning, the college was not designed to be an institution of the mission, but rather was established as an independent body under American and Ottoman law. Missionary Daniel Bliss, upon being elected the first president of the Syrian Protestant College, resigned from his employment with the ABCFM so as to be able to take on the new responsibility. After some moves back and forth, in 1920, the SPC clearly adopted a secular agenda of knowledge formation and changed its name to the "American University of Beirut."[37]

With respect to the origin of the knowledge transmitted in the schools and academic institutions of Syria, it turns out that the American missionaries from the very beginning brought with them the idea that the West is deeply indebted to the East. This idea can be traced back to a paper in the early 1820s signed by Rev. William Jenks (1778–1866) in his capacity as the chairperson of a commission that opted for the establishment of a printing press in the Mediterranean:

> It is the diffusion of the light and influence of Divine Truth, by means of that wonder-working engine, the Press, among nations who were once flourishing in the profession of godliness and enjoyment of the ordinances of the Gospel… It is the restoration of that light and influence to the benighted regions, whence they first originated, and were given to the world – the repayment of a debt of eighteen, nay, of more than thirty centuries.[38]

Two decades later, the same Rev. William Jenks became one of the initiators of the American Oriental Society.[39] In this context, we find the same idea of the Oriental origin of knowledge, but now explicitly expanded to include scientific knowledge. As the American Oriental Society was intended to be an academic institution, it was in this case the reference to scientific knowledge that was considered evident, while the reference to religious knowledge was what needed further explanation. In an advertisement to the academic public, several reasons for the establishment of an American Oriental Society were listed, and the very first reason reads as follows:

> We are endeavoring to send back the light of true religion and science to the regions where it first dawned. We are trying to pay the great debt, which we, in common with Europe, owe to Asia. One of our Missionary Societies is, at this moment, employing on the continent of Asia and its islands, more than seventy collegially educated and ordained missionaries, who are opening the fountains of human knowledge as truly as they are the fountain of salvation. Some of them have mastered the language of China; others are skilled in the philosophy of the Hindoos; one has acquired an European reputation by his acquaintance with the difficult

37 Cf. chapter 1, p. 44.

38 "Arguments for the formation of a Printing Establishment in Western Asia" (undated): ABC 16.6, vol. 1. For the date of the document cf. chapter 3, p. 109.

39 See chapter 3, p. 107.

> Arabic, another has translated the Old Testament Scriptures into the Hebrew-Spanish dialect, in a manner that has drawn forth the recommendation of the most learned Rabbies.[40]

The American missionaries in Syria soon realized that in order to establish an Academic society for Syria, they had to include the native Syrian intellectual elite. This distinguished the Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences established in Beirut from the Asiatic Society, which was established earlier in Calcutta by the British, and which in the first generation of its deliberations only granted access to British and other European nationals.

The meetings of the Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences were held in the Arabic language, and both Syrian and American participants presented their papers in Arabic. In this context, Eli Smith, in his address as president of the society for the year 1852, said:

> As for your country, its long history, telling what has taken place in it, and studied with avidity by all who are religiously disposed, and who take pleasure in remarkable events, is engraven on her rocks and walls, and buried in her mountains and hills. As for your Arab ancestry, its literature is a connecting link between the ancient world, adorned with Roman and Grecian sciences, and the modern, adorned with the sciences of Europeans, and their thorough research; while within your borders are found books handed down to you from that obscure age, which throw light upon its strangely pleasing events. As for your language, although no works composed in it, which are extant, reach far back into antiquity, is it not found to be nearly related to the languages of certain other works which have come down to us from ancient times, and to which, therefore, some very subtle, linguistic investigations attach themselves, so that your language sometimes illustrates what is most obscure in these dead languages.[41]

In this book, an initial chapter will deal with the question of how a *third space* between the orders of knowledge was negotiated between Americans and Syrians, mainly looking at institutions of learning. Subsequent to this, the research will focus on four more specified case studies for the generation of transcultural knowledge: the formation of topographical knowledge in view of describing the geography of the lands of the Bible (chapter 2), the establishment of academic societies concerned with "the Orient" both east and west of the Atlantic Ocean (chapter 3), the merging of knowledge necessary to print an Arabic typeface that would please the aesthetic requirements of Arab readers (chapter 4), and the introduction of periodicals to Arab readers in Syria (chapter 5).

As we shall see, all the different stories are tightly interwoven, and a very small group of actors provided the means for the processes to develop in a transcultural way. It was for mainly biographical reasons in the life of one of these actors that Germany too came to play an important role in the epistemic entanglement sustained by the presence of American Protestant missionaries in Otto-

40 "Article X. Critical Notes. 1. Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. I. no. 1. Boston: Little & Brown. 1843. pp. 78," in: *The American Biblical Repository, Devoted to Biblical and General Literature, Theological Discussion, the History of Theological Opinions, etc.*, vol. 11 No. 21 (1844), p. 224.

41 "Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences – Annual Discourse of the President for the Year 1852," in: *JAOS* vol. 3 (1853), p. 480.