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## **Edwin Lewis Affair, 1882**

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the University Libraries, AUB  
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## Descriptive Summary

**Call No:** AA: 6.1

**Library Catalog ID:** [b20616417](#)

**Collection Title:** Edwin Lewis Affair, 1882.

**Collection Date:** 1882

**Abstract:** Edwin Lewis was a professor of chemistry, geology and physics at the Syrian Protestant College (1870-1882). In July 1882, Dr. Lewis delivered a Commencement speech in which he praised Darwin's scientific method and his theory of evolution; the speech sparked heated debates on campus regarding the theory of evolution, its relation to religion, Creationism, and the place of science in society. Eventually, and under pressure, Lewis resigned from his post. Many students protested and signed a petition in support of Lewis: as a result, the College expelled thirteen students, while several professors and members of the Board of Managers submitted their resignations in solidarity with Lewis and the expelled students.

**Language:** English and Arabic

## Administrative Information

**Source:** N/A

**Access Restriction:** The collection can be used within the premises of the Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Memorial Library, American University of Beirut.

**Photocopying Restriction:** No photocopying restriction except for fragile material.

**Preferred Citation:** Edwin Lewis Affair, 1882, AA:- Box no. – File no.-: title-, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

## Scope and Content

This collection contains materials that document the Edwin Lewis-Darwin Affair at the Syrian Protestant College in 1882, and the wave of protests and intense debates that followed between various groups at the University, including students, Faculty and Administration... The controversy, and the subsequent debate, were the first of their kind at an academic institution in the Arab region; Edwin Lewis' commencement speech, in which he praised Darwin's methods, sparked a serious discussion over the role of religion and science in modern societies in general, and in education in the Arab World in particular. The crisis also affected the choice of the language of instruction at the University. This collection includes documents related to biographical information about Lewis, articles authored by and about him, petitions, reports and photos compiled from different archival materials available at the Archives department at the American University of Beirut.

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged in four series:

- Series I:** Edwin Lewis: Biography, Articles and printed materials about the Edwin Lewis affair
- Series II:** The administration's reaction regarding the Edwin Lewis affair
- Series III:** The Faculty and Board of Manager's reaction to the Edwin Lewis affair

**Series IV:** Students' reaction to the Edwin Lewis affair

## Subject Headings

American University of Beirut -- Students -- History.  
Evolution -- Study and teaching -- Lebanon.  
Petitions -- Lebanon.  
Religion and Science.  
Religion and science -- Lebanon.  
Student movements -- Lebanon.  
Student strikes -- Lebanon -- Beirut -- History.  
Syrian Protestant College -- History.

## Container List

### Series I: Edwin Lewis: Biography and General Information

#### AUBites Section AA: 6.1.

#### Folder: Edwin Lewis.

File 1: Biography and articles about Edwin Lewis

- Folder 1:
  - Biography and Addresses
- Folder 2:
  - *Chemistry Textbook in Arabic Written by Dr. Lewis One Hundred Years Ago*, AUB Bulletin v.23, n.7, Monday January 12, 1981. (Two copies)
  - الزيباوي، محمود، مئوية شفيق جحا في الجامعة الأميركية: التدوين الموسيقي وتطريب الأذان في صناعة الألحان، جريدة النهار، April 24, 2012.
- Folder 3:
  - Haddad, Farid, *The Fossil Fish of the Lebanon*, Al-Kulliyah, 1990, 3&4, pp. 26-27.
  - Haddad, Farid, *Wages, Prices and Coinage of 100 Years Ago*, Al-Kulliyah, no.4, 1994, p.29.

File 2: Address, Reports, Articles

- Folder 1:
  - *Knowledge, Science and Wisdom*, address by Dr. Edwin Lewis, Commencement July 19, 1992.
- Folder 2:
  - Farag, Nadia. "The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of Al-Muqtataf." *Middle Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 1972): 73–83.
- Folder 3:
  - جرداق، منصور، أول ثورة مدرسية في العالم العربي، أوراق لبنانية، ١٩٥٦.
  - يزبك، يوسف إبراهيم، معركة الكفر بين المبشرين في الكلية الأميركية، ١٩٥٦.

- Folder 4:
  - Dr. Lewis' resignation as reported by Dr. Daniel Bliss in "Annual Reports of the Board of Managers of the Syrian Protestant College," 1883, pp.69-76; and as it appears in the "Minutes of General Faculty, 1867-1887."
- Folder 5:
  - Dr. Lewis' address, Al-Muqtataf, July 18, 1882 (Arabic copy).
  - Responses to Dr. Lewis' address, Al-Muqtataf, 1882-1883 (In Arabic).
- Folder 6:
  - جها، شفيق، أزمة السنة ١٨٨٢ وخطاب ادوين لويس في الكلية السورية، ١٩٦٧.

### File 3: Books and articles on the Edwin Lewis Affair, Correspondence

- Folder 1:
  - Leavitt, Donald M. "Darwinism in the Arab World: The Lewis Affair at the Syrian Protestant College." *The Muslim World* 71, no. 2 (April 1, 1981): 85-98.
- Folder 2:
  - Haddad, Farid. "Darwin et la crise de 1882 dans l'enseignement au Liban." (Source and date unknown)
- Folder 3:
  - Letter from the President of AUB Frederic P. Herder to Shafik Jaha, October 18, 1991, thanking him for the Publication of his book "Darwin and the Crisis of 1882."
- Folder 4:
  - الخطيب، أحمد شفيق، "تأثير أزمة الأستاذ لويس في إختيار لغة التدريس"، ألمعاجم المتعددة الثنائية، ١٩٩٢.
- Folder 5:
  - Duplicate articles from File 2
- Folder 6:
  - Shatila, Talal, *1882-1982: A Centennial of the Darwin Crisis*, Medicus, Spring, 1982.
  - *The Issue of Edwin Lewis*, an article translated by Olga Hajjar. (Provenance and date unknown)
- Folder 7:
  - صفحات من مذكرات جرجي زيدان، الأبحاث (الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت)، السنة ٢٠، العدد ٤ (كانون الأول ١٩٦٧)، ص ٣٢٣-٣٥٥.
  - A copy of: Juhā, S., & Khal, H. (2004). *Darwin and the crisis of 1882 in the medical department: And the first student protest in the Arab world in the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut)*. Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut Press.
  - Miscellaneous duplicates

## Series II: Administration's Reaction

### Daniel Bliss Section: AA: 2.3.1

- Box 9: File 4: Correspondence with various coordinates, 1882-1888; Correspondence with Richard W. Brigstocke concerning his resignation as a consequence of Darwin Issue 3 March 1883.

- Box 11: File 8: Letters from Mrs. Harvey Porter, SPC, to Mrs. John Crawford, Irish Presbyterian Mission Damascus on the Edwin Lewis issue, December 4, 1882-November 6, 1884.
- Box 11: File 13: رسائل الى دانيال بلس من الدكتور بشارة زلزل
- Box 12: Diaries and Autographs, 1852-1913 -- Diaries: 1882 (Wednesday July 18, 1882)

### **Series III: Faculty and Board of Managers Reaction**

#### **Minutes Section: AA: 2.1.1; AA: 2.1.2; AA: 3.4.2**

- Minutes of the Board of Trustees: AA: 2.1.0, Box3: Book II 1875-1895, P. 52, Dr. Lewis' Letter to the Board, December 1882.
- Minutes of the Board of Managers: AA: 2.1.2: Box 1, Record of the Board of Managers of the Syrian Protestant College:
  - o P. 156: Resignation of Dr. Lewis, Acceptance.
  - o P. 170: Acceptance of Resignation of Cornelius Van Dyck, Richard Brigstocke, James Nixon and John Dickson.
- Minutes of the Faculty: AA: 3.4.2: Box1: File: 1867-1887; P. 415(Resignation of Dr. Lewis); Pp. 420-422 (Communication from the board of Managers, Resignation of Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck, 40 students suspended).

#### **Annual Reports Section: CAP**

- Annual Report 1866/67-1901/02 p. 69. A Statement by the President of the Board of Managers 1883; P. 247: Knowledge, Science and Wisdom Dr. Edwin Lewis Address.
- Correspondence of Syrian Protestant College Section: AA: 2.2
  - o Box1: File1: Letters by William Van Dyck 1880, 1881-1882, 1884 (Resignation Letter, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1882).
  - o Box1: File2: Letters from Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck 1869, 1880-1882 (Resignation Letter, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1882).

### **Series IV: Students' Reaction**

- **Faculty Minutes Section: AA: 3.4.2:**
  - o Box1: 1867-1887, pp. 424-425 (Petition of Medical students, Apology of the suspended students to the Board of.
- **Students 1880s-1890s Section: AA: 4.3.1**
  - o Box1: File3: Dr. Edwin Lewis case: Several student petitions sent to the board of managers including their apology (1882).
  - o Box2: An oversize student petition to the Board of Managers explaining the reason for their actions and protests in light of the Lewis affair, and an apology by some students on verso.

## Related Material

### Articles

- [“Academic Year launched “. \*AUB Bulletin Today\*, vol.1, no.1, November \(1999\):1](#)
- [Khoury, Philip. “Leadership in the New Technological Ages”. \*AUB Bulletin\*, fall 1999: 24, 21](#)
- Al-Kulliyah: No: 4, 1994, PP. 28-29.
- المقتطف: الجزء الثاني - الجزء التاسع السنة السابعة ١٨٨٢
- اوراق لبنانية - يوسف ابراهيم يزبك المجلد ٢ الجزء الحادي عشر - تشرين الثاني ١٩٦٥
- ازمة السنة ١٨٨٢ وخطاب ادوين لويس في الكلية السورية
- Allan, Michael, ed. “CRITIQUE.” In *In the Shadow of World Literature*, 94–114. Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt. Princeton University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1xshm.10>.
- Di-Capua, Yoav. “Marwa Elshakry. Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950.” *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 5 (December 2014): 1818–19. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/119.5.1818>.
- Elshakry, Marwa. “The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism in Late Ottoman Beirut.” *Past & Present*, no. 196 (2007): 173–214.
- Elshakry, Marwa S. “Knowledge in Motion: The Cultural Politics of Modern Science Translations in Arabic.” *Isis* 99, no. 4 (December 2008): 701–30. <https://doi.org/10.1086/595767>.
- Farag, Nadia. “The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of Al-Muqtataf.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 1972): 73–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263207208700195>.
- Kelsay, John. “Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950 by Marwa Elshakry.” *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 90, no. 1 (March 2015): 72–73. <https://doi.org/10.1086/679767>.
- Leavitt, Donald M. “Darwinism in the Arab World: The Lewis Affair at the Syrian Protestant College\*.” *The Muslim World* 71, no. 2 (April 1, 1981): 85–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1981.tb03430.x>.
- Norris, Jacob. “Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950.” *Annals of Science* 73, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 333–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00033790.2016.1158864>.

### Books

- Allan, M. (2016). *In the Shadow of World Literature*. Princeton University Press.
- Anderson, B. S. (2012). *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education*. University Of Texas Press.
- Elshakry, M. (2016). *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950*. Paperback edition. Chicago London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jiha, S. (2004). *Darwinism and the Crisis of 1882 in the Medical Department*. Beirut: American Univ. of Beirut Press.
- Penrose, S. B. L. (2011). *That They May Have Life The Story Of The American University Of Beirut 1866 1941*. Nabu Public Domain Reprints. Nabu Press.

- Rabah, M. (2009). *A CAMPUS AT WAR: Student Politics at the American University of Beirut 1967-1975*. Beirut: Dar Nelson.

- خوري، غادة. *خطب الأحتفالات السنوية للمدرسة الكلية السورية الأنجيلية*. الجامعة الاميركية في بيروت، ١٩٩٢.

## Photographs

- Original faculty of the Syrian Protestant College, 1870-1874], [Ph-AUB: 1870\(2\):1-4:31](#)
- Faculty and staff, 1901-1902, Ph: SPC-AUB: 1901-1902(1):1-7:32
- Faculty and staff, 1901-1902, Ph: SPC-AUB: 1901-1902(2):1-4:32
- SPC American Staff, 1903, Ph: SPC-AUB: 1903(4):1-2:33
- The stereoscopic views include Preparatory students, College Hall, Daniel Bliss at Marquand House, Dodge Hall and Medical Building, Ph:SPC-AUB:1882(01):1-9:31