

Arab Authors

The last two chapters of the book discuss the way Arab authors in the nineteenth and early twentieth century responded to the intellectual and cultural challenge of the West. Hourani gives the example of Butrus al-Bustani, the editor of the first encyclopedia in modern Arab history, *Da'rat al-ma'arif*, and the example of another Lebanese Christian, Sulayman al-Bustani, the translator of Homer's Iliad. These two literary and intellectual efforts are important because

- 1) They highlight the contributions of Arab Christians to modern Arabic thought and life;
- 2) they prove the ability of the Arabic language, though having a rich poetic and stylistic tradition, to absorb new forms of literary expressions; and
- 3) demonstrate the need for the modern Arab intelligentsia to be open to the cultural tradition of the West and to assimilate as much as possible of Western intellectual achievements.

In sum, Albert Hourani's *Islam in European Thought* is a passionate and elegant piece of writing. It deserves to be read carefully and attentively.

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