Spring 1984

Eugène Boré and the Vincentian Missions in the Near East

Stafford Poole C.M.

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol5/iss1/2

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Vincentian Journals and Publications at Via Sapientiae. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vincentian Heritage Journal by an authorized editor of Via Sapientiae. For more information, please contact wsulliv6@depaul.edu, c.mcclure@depaul.edu.
Eugène Boré and the Vincentian Missions in the Near East*

Stafford Poole, C.M.

Western Europeans have always been fascinated by the East but rarely more so than in the nineteenth century. A combination of factors quickened this interest and inaugurated decades of exploration, investigation, exploitation, and conversion. Archeology, linguistics, renewed interest in ancient history, biblical studies, economic expansion, political domination, exoticism, and arm-chair adventure—all were factors in this new pull to the east. Explorers and travelers, often subsidized by learned societies, visited these strange lands and published accounts that were eagerly devoured in the drawing-rooms of France and England. In politics and foreign policy the “Eastern Question” came to play a major and sometimes dominant role.

In that same century the Roman Catholic Church, which in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars was undergoing a long period of reconstruction, centralization, and expansion, caught the fever and extended its missionary activities to the orient in a special way. The Chinese missions came to dominate Catholic thought, but the period was also characterized by a deep interest in and zeal for the Near East. It is against this background that one can best view the life and work of Eugène Boré, the scholar, missionary, priest, educator, linguist and explorer who played a vital role in shaping French attitudes and policies toward the Christians of the Ottoman Empire.

Eugène Boré was born on August 15, 1809, at Angers, France.

*This article is reprinted with the permission of the editor of Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft.
in Anjou, of a large and very Catholic family. His father, a
former imperial army officer, died when the boy was
young and left the family in somewhat straitened circum-
stances. In his youth Eugène attended boarding and
preparatory schools in his home town. He showed an
extraordinary aptitude for study, especially foreign lan-
guages to which he devoted himself with enthusiasm.
Because of his family's poverty he had to turn to other
quarters for financial assistance for his higher education.
He sought out Msgr. Frayssinous (1765-1841) who in 1822
had become the Grand Master of the University, the
centralized organization of public instruction founded by
Napoleon. Bore explained his needs in a series of elegant
and faultless Latin verses which so impressed the Grand
Master that the young student was awarded a much needed
scholarship.

In 1826 he entered the Collège Stanislas, a school that
had recently been reestablished by the Bourbon govern-
ment and whose instructors came from the University. In

---

1 On the life of Boré, see the following: Léonce de la Rallaye,
Eugène Boré et les origines de la question d'Orient (Paris, 1894);
"Notes sur la vie de M. Bore," Annales de la Congrégation de la
Mission, XLIII (1878), pp. 352-646; 521-78; XLIV (1879), pp.
8-103. These notes have been collected in Eugène Boré: XVe
Supérieur Général de la Congrégation de la Mission: notice bio-
graphique suivie d'extraits de son journal et de sa correspondance
(Paris, 1879); Eugène Boré: l'homme privé, l'homme public, les
voyages, les oeuvres, de après un témoin de sa vie avec des nombreux
extraits des souvenirs personnels de Boré (Lille, Grammont, un-
dated); Gerard van Winsen, C.M., "La vie et les travaux d'Eugène
Boré (1809-1878)," Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire, 34,
(1978), no. 2, pp. 81-91. Another basic work for the journeys that
Boré made is Eugène Boré, Correspondance et Mémoires d'un

2 Denis, Comte de Frayssinous (1765-1841) was a prominent,
if reactionary figure of the Bourbon restoration. He was minister of
public instruction from 1824 to 1828 and was forced to live in exile
for some years after the July Revolution. As Minister of Cults he had
been involved in the tortuous business of the restoration of the
Congregation of the Mission. Cf. [Stafford Poole, C.M.] A History
of the Congregation of the Mission, 125-1843 (Santa Barbara, 1973),
pp. 391-394, 396.
that same year he bested the future poet Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) in the competitive examinations for all the lycées and colleges of France — Musset took a second prize at the Collège Henri IV. Bore then undertook the study of law but found it unsuited to his temperament. He quickly returned to his first love, oriental languages, and undertook their study at the Collège de France.

In 1892 Bore encountered the first of two major influences in his life. This was the Abbé Felicité de Lammenais (1782-1854), the man who was to have the most profound and lasting influence on him both personally and intellectually. Lammenais was then at the height of his reputation as the key figure in the rebuilding of the Catholic Church in France after the Bourbon restoration.³ He was regarded by his disciples as a new "Father of the Church." Eugène and his brother Léon both became his followers and, when not attending school, lived at the Abbé's retreat, school, and country home at La Chenaie in Brittany. Eugène became not only a disciple but one of Lammenais's closest friends. In fact, the latter's affection and emotional attachment to his "cher Eugène," usually couched in terms of a father-son relationship, seems at times rather excessive. There exist some sixty-three letters from Lammenais to Bore.⁴ The disciple's name does not usually appear in biographies or histories of Lammenais, at least those in English. This may be because he did not attain the eminence of a Lacordaire or a Gerbet, or because so much of his work was done outside of France, or because their complete correspondence has not been available to historians. Yet of all the Abbé's followers,


⁴Rallaye, Bore, p. 17.
Eugène was the one who was personally the closest to him and remained loyal for the longest time.

In the chaos that followed the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon, the Church in France was still trying to rebuild its organizational life. Traditional methods of priestly formation and Catholic education in general had all but disappeared. In the aftermath people were searching for new approaches to religion. The Age of Reason had suffered a permanent setback in the Terror and the twenty years of war that followed the Revolution. A new way had been shown in 1802 by the publication of Chateaubriand’s *Le génie du Christianisme*. Lammenais appeared later on the scene and electrified France with his thought and writing style. “What was most vital in French Catholic thinking in the early years of the century was . . . its free-lance apologetic, shaped with an eye to contemporary needs and conditions.”5 “This is a book that will waken the dead,” said Frayssinous after reading one of Lammenais’s works. One reason why Lammenais and his school could forget “free-lance” apologetics was that they did not belong to the pre-revolutionary system of priestly and intellectual formation. Lammenais was ordained to the priesthood without ever having attended a seminary and his education in theology was largely that of an autodidact. His great disciple Lacordaire was largely self-taught and Boré himself, when he came to embrace the priesthood, had only a few years of systematic theology, largely studied in private. Unfortunately, what was gained in flexibility was often lost to instability and lack of organic continuity.

The center of Lammenais’s work was at La Chenaie. There he gathered his followers into a quasi-monastic routine and shared with them his vision of the future of the Church in France.

---

5 Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, p. 18.
[There] were to be found such men as Gousset, Donnet, Gerbet, Salinis, Lacordaire and Gueranger, the future bishops, preachers, apologists, and historians. Most of the men who were to count in the life of the Church in France in the next thirty years had known that white house with its pointed roof, set among the great trees in a little clearing in the firs, and lying a little back from the road between Dinan and Combourg. They had lived there in an atmosphere formed by youth’s shared dreams.⁶

What were these shared dreams as expounded by the new “Father of the Church?” The most important, almost all of which were shared by Boré throughout his life, were the following: the necessity of authority as the basis for certitude in religion; the place of theology in the hierarchy of the sciences; the implications of religion for politics; the condemnation of religious indifference; the freedom of the Church; the need for an educated clergy; the establishment of episcopal synods, parochial missions, and Christian schools for the poor. Lammenais, like Boré after him, saw the disruption of the Catholic religion as the disruption of society. And so “Lammenais’s sovereign idea or ideal was the social regeneration of France, and indeed, of Europe, through the renaissance of Catholicism.”⁷ It was a program that was particularly attractive to romantic young Catholics of the early nineteenth century. The gains of the Revolution should be united with and leavened by Christianity.⁸

It was from Lammenais, then, that Boré acquired most of the fixed principles that almost unchanged dominated the rest of his life. Foremost among these were (1) the

---

⁶Dansette, Religious History, I, p. 213. On the Mennaisian school, see Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, pp. 78-85.

⁷Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 64. A.R. Vidler, Prophecy and Papacy: a study of Lammenais, the Church, and Revolution (1954), p. 10.

⁸Many of these ideas were shared at first by Jean-Baptiste Etienne, who was to be Boré’s friend and whom Boré succeeded as Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission.
concept of social regeneration through a renewed Catholicism. (2) The idea that separation from the authority of Rome inevitably resulted in social and intellectual deterioration — and in the case of the Armenians the loss of national independence as well. (3) Everything good in history came from Christianity. (4) Learning and science are the primary means for bringing men to the truth. (5) The right of freedom of religion was sacred and imprescriptable.

It was probably from Lammenais that Boré derived his rather confused or ambiguous idea of the relations between church and state or, perhaps better, of the function of the state in regard to religion. In his view the state should forego its Gallican pretensions and leave the church free to pursue its mission, which mission would inevitably redound to the good of the state. At the same time the state should be the patron and protector of the Christians and of religious establishments. Like Lammenais Boré disapproved of the Gallican domination of the church that was embodied in the Napoleonic concordat. Whereas Lammenais contrasted this with the freedom enjoyed by Jews and Protestants in France, Boré would contrast it with the freedom of public worship enjoyed by Catholics in Constantinople.

From this it can also be seen that Boré's inheritance from the Mennaisian school included a strong dose of French nationalism. He was an intense patriot who saw a special role for France in the Orient and did everything within his power to advance that role.

Because the theological orientation of La Chenaie strongly emphasized authority and was ultramontane, it was also very narrow. As a result Boré would remain throughout his life a theological conservative. However, it was also at La Chenaie that he received his greatest encouragement to study oriental languages and history. Lammenais himself had a respectable knowledge of languages and saw reunion with the separated churches of the
East as a key objective of revitalized Catholicism. He encouraged knowledge among his disciples and especially encouraged his "dear Eugène" to make this his life's work.\(^9\) This combination of learning with apologetics or missionary activity was to remain with Bœ through his life.

In general, then, it can be said that Eugène Bœ was a product of that French Catholicism that was reborn with the opening of the nineteenth century: romantic, nationalistic, visionary, ultramontane, somewhat narrow and rigid.

Nothing is known of Bœ's personal feelings and attitudes throughout the l'Avenir crisis and the gradual estrangement of his master from the Catholic Church. We do know, however, that he was still corresponding with Lammenais long after the latter had ceased to be a practicing Catholic — the last known letter was dated December 31, 1840, from Julfa, Persia.\(^1^0\) This continued attachment seems to have proved embarrassing to Bœ's official biographers who attributed it to his desire to bring back his erring master to the right path. This may well be true, but it is also true that Bœ — young, romantic, idealistic, and loyal — could not bring himself to abandon one he loved. He regarded both Lacordaire (who had left La Chenaie in the night, leaving only a note behind) and Gerbet as deserters — even Montalembert regarded Lacordaire's change of heart as "precipitate." Whereas in later life Bœ kept up a correspondence with Montalembert, whom he regarded as a friend, there is no evidence of any resumption of relations with Lacordaire.\(^1^1\)

While Lammenais was becoming involved in the l'Aveni-

---


\(^1^0\)The anonymous authors of the Notice biographique state on p. 5 that Bœ broke off correspondance with Lammenais in 1836 and then on pp. 75-78 they include the 1840 letter from Persia.

ir dispute and the crisis caused by Mirari Vos, Boré's career was advancing rapidly and happily. The Revolution of 1830, which Lammenais had both foreseen and welcomed, seems to have left little or no impression on Boré.\textsuperscript{12} However, the cholera epidemic of the following year did. He worked with the victims of the pestilence and though stricken himself, he recovered. In 1833 he was accepted as a member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and in the following year he was named substitute professor of Armenian at the Collège de France. He was also an early member of Frédéric Ozanam's Saint Vincent de Paul conferences. In December of 1834 he published in the \textit{Journal Asiatique} an analysis of the work \textit{The Lamp of the Sanctuary} by the thirteenth century Syrian bishop and scholar Bar Hebraeus (1226-1286).\textsuperscript{13}

Boré's reputation had grown to such an extent that in 1834-1835 the French government sent him to Venice to advance his knowledge of Armenian. It was in that city that he had his first contact with the Mekhitarists, an Armenian religious order dedicated to the reunion of the separated Armenian churches with Rome. The order originated in part from the work of Latin Catholic missionaries who had been laboring among separated Christians in the Ottoman Empire since the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{14} The missionary work was on the whole successful although it encountered heavy opposition from the Orthodox. A crucial figure in this endeavor was that of Peter Manuk or Manog, more commonly known by his religious name of Mekhitar (1676-1749). He was an Armenian monk who, in Boré's opinion, had been raised up by God for the cause of reunion. Through a chance

\textsuperscript{12}Boré: \textit{l'homme privé.} p. 21.
encounter with a Latin Catholic missionary he came to embrace Catholicism and made it his life's work to secure a reunion of the separated Armenian churches and Rome. In 1711 he founded a monastic order which eventually adopted the rule of Saint Benedict. Because of political and religious complications, Mekhitar was forced into exile in 1715 and went to Venice where he and his monks were given the use of the island of San Lazzaro by the Austrian Emperor. In 1772 the Mekhitarist Benedictines split into two separate communities, that of Venice and that of Vienna. It was the Mekhitarists of Venice whom Boré visited to sharpen his knowledge of Armenian language, literature, and history.

Boré's appetite for further travel had been whetted. He thought about journeying to Africa but that proved impossible. He combined a thirst for knowledge with a desire to spread Catholicism among the separated Christians of the Orient. "The definitive purpose of my labors," he wrote to his brother Léon, "as I have often told you, is the truth or the cause of the Catholic religion." His dreams were fulfilled in 1837 when François Guizot, the Minister of Public Instruction, and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres co-sponsored a journey to the Near East as far as Persia.

Boré's first stop was Vienna where he stayed with the Mekhitarists. Their convent was a world-famous center of Armenian letters and learning. There were thirty monks who supported themselves by operating eight different presses that published or could publish works in twenty-four European and oriental languages. Boré was always

---


16 Van Winsen, "La Vie," pp. 82-83. Rallaye, Boré, p. 54. François Guizot (1787-1874) came of Huguenot background. He was named Minister of Public Instruction in 1830 and Premier in 1847. He was sympathetic to the works of the Catholic Church and collaborated closely with Catholic leaders, including Father Etienne.
impressed by learning and especially admired the monks for their "insatiable thirst for knowledge." An unexpected illness caused him to spend an extra month in Vienna and this gave him a greater opportunity to assess the Austrian as well as the Mekhitarists scene. He was severely critical of the Austrian clergy for their lack of learning and their close dependence on the imperial government. He also felt that the lifestyle of many Austrian religious was too lavish.

At Trieste he drew up a report to the Académie on the Armenians of Vienna in which he included a brief history of the Mekhitarist movement. From Trieste he went to Greece where, like many a romantic before him, he was disappointed with the contemporary reality. The land of Pericles and Aristotle had indeed fallen on hard times and, as was usual with Boré, the blame was assigned to the religious separation from Rome.\(^{18}\)

Boré arrived in Constantinople in December of 1837. He was determined not to stay among the "Franks" as Europeans were called and so he arranged to board with an Armenian family. He noted that it took some courage for the family to accept him but that they did so in spite of the risks.\(^{19}\) His lodgings were congenial in spite of the winter's cold and he availed himself of the opportunity to perfect his spoken Armenian, a language somewhat different from the classical Armenian which was the prerogative of priests and scholars. A keen and often critical observer, he made numerous comments about the life of Armenians in the Ottoman capital. Whereas native Christians were bound by a nightly curfew, he was allowed to go out at night because he was French and was recognized as such by the hat that he wore. The family with whom he stayed was in general quite westernized, or at least tried to

---

\(^{17}\) This is summarized in Boré's report to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, from Vienna, in Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 63, 65.

\(^{18}\) Rallaye, Boré, p. 67.

\(^{19}\) Boré, Correspondance, I, p. 112.
be, but Boré noted that almost all Christians in the Ottoman Empire had absorbed the Moslem custom of isolating woman and girls. These were denied education and kept at a distance from men and the world. The need to advance the status of women, and especially to provide them with educational opportunities, became a fixed motive in Boré’s work. He was also fond of contrasting the enlightened position of women in Catholic countries with their repressed situation in Moslem lands.

During his stay in Constantinople Boré had frequent contact with Armenian clergy and scholars. Because of his intense religious devotion they nicknamed him devi or priest. Ever the scholar, he spent his time delving into every conceivable discipline: history, medicine, surveying, physics, astronomy (with a student of François Arago), and anything else that he thought would be useful for his journey into the interior. This included swordsmanship both for self-defense and also because he was a physical fitness enthusiast. By the time he left the capital he could also speak Turkish and Samaritan and had developed a certain skill in Turkish calligraphy. He also found time to write a detailed report on the Armenians of Constantinople.

During this time Boré allowed himself to be persuaded by persons unknown that reunion of the oriental churches with Rome could best be achieved if all the orientals were compelled to embrace the Latin rite. He went so far as to forward the suggestion to Rome but it was firmly rejected by Propaganda and the missionaries on the scene. Boré quickly saw the wisdom of the refusal. He also carried on some discrete proselytizing, a dangerous activity in the Empire, and made some individual converts among both Jews and Moslems. Most of these had to emigrate in order to practice their new faith.

20 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 71-72.
21 June 1, 1838, Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 154-171.
GREECE AND THE AEGEAN
It was in Constantinople that Boré encountered the second great influence in his life: the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. This group had been founded in France between 1617 and 1625 by Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1669). Although it had originally been intended for rural missions and the operation of diocesan seminaries, the Congregation (known as Lazarists in France and as Vincentians in the United States) had also undertaken some limited missionary work in Scotland, Ireland, and Madagascar. The Vincentians had also gone to North Africa in the lifetime of Saint Vincent but this had been to Christian captives.

The event that made foreign missionaries out of the Vincentians was the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. As the largest Congregation in France they fell heir, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to the works of the Society of Jesus. These included the mission and royal observatory in Peking as well as educational work and missions in the eastern Mediterranean: Naxos, Salonika, Santorini, Smyrna, and Monastir. In 1782 they established themselves at the mission and college of Saint Benoit in Constantinople, where they have remained to the present day.

From the beginning of their presence in the Ottoman capital the Vincentians had had a special concern for the Catholic Armenians. This was especially true of Father

---


24 Mission des Lazaristes, p. 54.
Bricet (or Brisset), a French Vincentian who in the early part of the nineteenth century had been regarded by Catholic Armenians as their father and liberator. In 1820 when there had been an abortive attempt to unite Catholic and Gregorian Armenians on terms that many Catholics considered unacceptable, Bricet had vigorously fought the agreement and secured the excommunication of seven Mekhitarists of the Venetian convent who were considered too accommodating. In the following year the outbreak of the Greek war for independence put further pressures on the Catholic Armenians who were suspected of being disloyal. They had often looked to the French as their special protectors. Non-Catholic Armenians accused them of selling out their nationality and claimed that they refused to become Catholic because it would mean ceasing to be Armenian. The situation was worsened when the French fleet participated in the Battle of Navarino in 1827 and the French openly espoused the Greek cause.

The consequence was the wholesale expulsion of Armenians from the capital and an accompanying persecution. Father Bricet stayed with them and often visited them disguised as a physician. And since Saint-Benoît had long enjoyed the privilege of extraterritoriality, many of the Armenians deposited their property with him for protection. Finally, in 1830, an agreement was reached, partly under French pressure, that gave the Armenians both religious freedom and independence of the Orthodox Patriarch. Saint Benoît, which together with its college had been closed during the height of the turmoil, was reopened at the European sector of Pera/Galata in 1831. Because of

---

28 Mission des Lazaristes, pp. 55-56.
the plague it was moved in the following year to San Stefano and then back to Galata. All of this instability had gravely harmed the mission and weakened its educational work, which had fallen into a state of advanced decay. However, with the grant of freedom to the Armenians, the Vincentians were freed to concentrate on the work of the college.29

The real turnabout for Saint-Benoît and its college came after Father Bricet had returned to France in 1837. Father Louis-Florent Leleu, who had arrived in 1835, became Superior in 1839 and directed the college until 1846. He almost immediately purchased a building at Bebek and moved the college there, thus separating it from the mission of Saint-Benoît. Because the Vincentians did not have the manpower to operate the college — and because he had not the time to recruit faculty — Leleu conceived the idea of staffing it with laymen. This was done from 1839 until 1842 but it did not succeed. Although the location at Bebek was attractive and healthy, it was also far-removed from Constantinople. In addition the tuition was too high for all but the rich. Eventually Leleu found it necessary to return the college to Vincentian control. As soon as this happened Guizot began to supply money by establishing six scholarships. From 1843 until 1848 it was known as the Collège Royale de Bebek.30

The college was a bastion of French culture and an outpost of French influence.31 At about the time that it had been reopened, the Sultan, Mahmoud II, had abolished the prohibition against a Moslem’s learning any language except Turkish, Arabic, or Persian. As a result many of the upper classes hastened to Bebek to learn French. The

29 *Mission des Lazaristes*, pp. 59, 64.


college was very much of a lyéee and offered a French education, with special emphasis on the French language. For centuries such an education had had a special prestige.

To be known as a Catholic was to be singled out as someone special in the Ottoman world . . . . To become a member of this elite, to converse with Frenchmen and Italians in their own language on topics unheard of in the narrow world of Turkish Constantinople, must have been a powerful incentive to turn to Catholicism.32

What Frazee said about the world of 1700 was even truer a century later. Boré's nationalism was thrilled with the work of the college. Writing to his friend, the publisher Eugène Taconet (December 26, 1837), he said, "With what joy I saw, while visiting it, that it was France which, from the point of view of enlightenment and efforts to spread civilization, held the very first rank above all other nations."33

The Vincentians had been interested in an Armenian mission for some time and were eager to help Boré with his projected journey inland. It was decided that one of the priests, Father Felix Scafi, should accompany him. Father Leleu used his good credit with the government (as perhaps also did the French ambassador) to secure a firman or decree that gave the two men a Turkish guide named Ali who also had authority to requisition supplies and lodgings from villages along the way. The small expedition left Constantinople on May 2, 1838. Boré himself, the young romantic not yet thirty, must have presented quite a sight, dressed in military uniform, carrying a saber, pistol, dagger, and hunting rifle, and sporting a fiercesome pair of moustaches.34

---

33 Boré, Correspondance, p. 101.
34 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 77, 79. Not much is known about Scafi. He worked in Constantinople and Persia and in 1846 was in America. Cf. Van Winsen, "La vie," p. 83, n. 4a. Another
Their route took them across ancient Bithynia along the Black Sea. They crossed the Çekerek River (the ancient Sangarios) and passed through the town of Amasya where they found that the Greeks and Armenians were so oppressed that they dared not speak to the strangers. From there they went to the ancient village of Zile. Boré, ever the romantic, wrote rhapsodic descriptions of the natural beauties along the way. He also had the opportunity to become more closely acquainted with both the Turkish character and the state of the Ottoman Empire. He considered the Turk to be fundamentally kind and benevolent. However, he was fatalistic and reluctant to change things. This and the obscurantist effects of Islam were holding back the material progress of the Empire. Wherever he went, Boré saw signs of economic decay, especially in agriculture.

From Zile they proceeded to Tokat where they found three hundred Catholic Armenian families who left a deep impression on Boré. These were regarded by both the Turks and the Gregorian Armenians as an elite, superior in every way to the others. Some of the Catholic priests had studied at the Propaganda in Rome. The expedition then continued to Erzincan (Erzingam), the second most important city in Armenia. This was the land that Boré called the classic land of Armenian Christianity. It was filled with memories of the early Armenian Christian heroes, especially Tigranics III, the first Christian king, and Saint Gregory the Illuminator (c. 240 – c. 332), the pioneer missionary bishop who had converted him. Boré

---

35 Rallaye, Boré, p. 94. It should be noted that Rallaye's geographical references are not exact.

36 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 81, 82-83, 86. Boré, Correspondance, I, p. 35.

37 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 96-98.
and his companions made pilgrimages to the tomb of Saint Gregory and the other shrines and holy places of the region, an undertaking that was rendered perilous by the Kurds who were in a state of periodic revolt. He was unable to visit the Catholic Armenians because the majority had migrated to Russia at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish war.38

After that, the travelers proceeded to Erzerum in Little Armenia, which at the time was still unknown to Europeans. There, in the summer of 1838, Boré wrote a report on "The State of Catholicism in Armenia."39 In part it pursued a theme that was constant with him, i.e., that the ills of Armenia dated back to its separation from the Church of Rome. For this God had punished the Armenians with barbarian invasions and with the loss of political liberty. He regarded the Gregorian Armenian clergy as superior to the Greek Orthodox. Some were married and were mere functionaries who had the title of Derder. They performed the ordinary duties and had little or no influence with the people, who regarded them as equals. The spiritual leaders of the people were called Vartabed or doctor and their first rule was celibacy. No matter what the level, the dissident Armenian clergy had a fierce dislike for Catholics, especially the clergy, because of their superior education and intellectual level. Many Armenian Catholics had consciously and proudly adopted European ways and so were accused of abandoning their heritage.

As for Erzerum, Boré considered it the most important city in Armenia because of its strategic location at the borders of Russia, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire. After the 1827-1828 war between Russia and the Empire, most of the Armenian families had migrated to Russia. Only

38 Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 393-394-395. Rallaye, Boré, p. 100. Boré, Correspondance, II, pp. 4-33, has a long and meticulous account of his pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Gregory.

39 Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 393, 394-395. Rallaye, Boré, p. 100. Boré, Correspondance, II, pp. 4-33, has a long and meticulous account of his pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Gregory.
thirty-six out of an original four hundred and fifty Catholic families were left — the remnant of those who had been converted by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century. He wrote a complete account of the Catholics in the villages around the city and even gave histories of the principal families. He pleaded for help for the Catholic Armenians in the form of priests, and religious instruction, because those who had migrated to Russia were in danger of turning Orthodox. As he was to do so often, Boré raised the specter of Russian expansionism to goad the French into accepting their responsibilities in the orient. Again, French nationalism was to be combined with Christian zeal.

France is the temporal patron of Catholicism in the orient. Today there is more need than ever for its support. Besides, if the indefatigable charity of the French assists it with some of its gifts, it will redound to the lasting glory of our fatherland and a great good for the Catholic religion.

At the eastern extremity of Turkey, the travelers arrived at the ancient city of Amesserah (formerly Amestris) which had been named for the mother of Darius. As they had done elsewhere, Boré and Scafì searched for ancient inscriptions which they copied and translated. At Amesserah Boré’s patriotism was quickened on finding an ancient stone inscription which had been erected to the Emperor Severus by the Fourth Gallic Legion. “A Frenchman does not contemplate without pride, so far from his fatherland, an unexpected sign of the valor of his barbarian ancestors, a valor that is hereditary and, as it were, beyond loss, that they have transmitted so well to their children.

Boré was resolved to push on to the Armenian religious

40 Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 396, 398-399.
41 Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 401-402.
42 The Boré papers in ACM contain a booklet of these deciphered inscriptions.
43 Rallaye, Boré, p. 89.
capital of Etchmiadzin, situated in territory that had recently been annexed by Russia. However, he was forced to undergo an unspecified “rude quarantine” at Alexandronople, where he had arrived in September. When he reached Etchmiadzin he was disappointed for, in his opinion, the city had lost its past glory. He was equally disappointed with the city’s Gregorian monastery. It was an immense building with only a few monks. They lived in individual cells like Carthusians but, as he noted critically, they did not imitate the Carthusians’ habits of silence and solitude. His greatest disappointment was with the monastic library which contained only a few ancient documents. However, Father John, the librarian who was also a vartabed, was the first learned Gregorian clergyman he had met. Boré wrote a detailed description of the library holdings to the Académie in which he also claimed to have discovered the long-lost Aghovan alphabet.44

Boré called on the Catholicos, the Armenian Patriarch, at his summer home and was warmly received. He was appalled at how ignorant the Catholicos and his assistants were of the history and geography of the west, and even more so of its religious history. At Aghtamar he visited another dissident seat with its own Catholicos who had jurisdiction over a few villages in southeast Turkey. The library there was even more disappointing than that of Etchmiadzin and the monks even more ignorant. However, he was moved by signs of piety among the people, who were also very poor. Some said to him, “Our Church will perish for lack of a head to direct us. Ah, please ask our Holy Father in Rome to send us one.” When Bore knelt before the tomb of Saint Gregory of Nareg, the local people tearfully asked him when their hour of deliverance would come.45


45“Premier mémoire à MM. les membres du conseil central de
Boré blamed this situation, and even the loss of Armenian national independence, on the separation from the Catholic Church that had followed the Council of Chalcedon (451). The Gregorian Church had become intellectually isolated from the Christian mainstream and had wasted its time and resources in sterile disputes.\(^\text{46}\) He saw Catholicism as the means of social as well as spiritual regeneration. In an echo of his days with Lammenais, he wrote to his brother toward the end of 1838, "I have thrown at my feet all frivolous thoughts of the world . . . and I am firmly decided to work the rest of my days, according to my feeble means, to set in place some stones of the great edifice of social reconstruction which is being prepared . . . . Perhaps I would be useful to the Catholic Church, outside of which everything decays and declines, as I have seen so clearly in traversing these formerly orthodox countries."\(^\text{47}\) It was this idea of regeneration together with his confidence in the value of knowledge that led him to so many of his educational ventures.

After this the group crossed the frontier into Persian Armenia. Boré found the situation of the Catholic Armenians to be vastly better than it was in either Russia or the Ottoman Empire. In Part this was due to the religious indifference of the government. There was a saying that "in Persia the Armenians look like Persians and the Persians like Armenians."\(^\text{48}\) It was in this situation, so favorable to social regeneration, that Boré decided to found a college in the city of Tabriz.

Boré believed that his ideas on western education as a

\(^{46}\) Rallaye, \textit{Boré}, p. 104.


force for social renewal were shared by the orientals themselves. In his opinion they were playing the various western powers against each other in a bid for time until they could adopt enough western technology to stave off the march of imperialism. As usual he saw political advantages for France "because our nation, alone among all the nations of the globe, presents the distinctive character of an intimate unity which it owes to the conservation of its Catholic unity." That was a remarkable statement in the early years of the July Monarchy when Boré's own ventures, both in travel and education, were being financed by the Protestant Minister Of Public Instruction of an anti-clerical government. To further his ideas, Boré made two suggestions that were eventually adopted. One was that the French government should send a special embassy to Persia, the other was that the Vincentian Community should be entrusted with the direction of the college to be founded at Tabriz.49

Until the Vincentians could come, Boré decided to found and operate the college by himself. He would be the only instructor. There would be a number of subjects but French was to be paramount because by that means he could train a corps of interpreters for the French Vincentians. Scafi agreed to the plan and left for Europe, confident that he would be able to secure personnel. In Persia itself Boré had the powerful support of Quahrman-Mirza, the Shah's brother. An imperial decree gave permission for the college in the most flattering terms and a second decree granted freedom of conscience to all peoples in the Persian Empire. At the same time Boré wrote to Guizot to solicit financial help for the school.50

The college opened toward the end of 1839 and at first students had to be turned away. With the exception of a few Armenians, most of the pupils were Moslem. The

49 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 106, 108.
50 Boré, Correspondance, II, pp. 120-123.
curriculum included both French and physical exercise. The latter was a constant element in Bore's educational programs, not only because of his own personal vigor but because he believed that life in Moslem countries inevitably had a softening effect. The school was so successful that the mother of the hereditary prince of the Empire sent him there.51

In the meantime Father Scafì had been busy lobbying for the college in France and publicizing Boré's work. Preparations were made for publishing Boré's correspondence and reports, which appeared in 1840. The Vincentian Community at the time was suffering through an incompetent Superior General and the de facto leadership had fallen to the Secretary-General, Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne, who became a life-long supporter and friend of Boré. Scafì returned to Persia in January of 1840 as chaplain to the French embassy and with the news that the Vincentians would staff the college and that the French government would send instructors. In April of 1841 Father Etienne dispatched three Vincentians — Father Fornier (the Superior), Darnis, and Cluzel — together with 22,400 francs from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Thus, through the instrumentality of a zealous young layman, the Vincentians began a mission that has lasted to the present day.52

Before all this had come to pass, Boré, eager and restless as usual, had extended his efforts into other parts of Persia, viz., Azerbaijan and Chaldea (the ancient Babylonia). There he encountered opposition both from

51 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 110-111.

52 Rallaye, Boré, p. 122. Van Winsen, "La vie," p. 83. Etienne wrote from Paris, April 14, 1841, of the departure of the missionaries and the money. Notice biographique, pp. 81-83. Father Cluzel later became Prefect Apostolic of Persia. On June 6, 1859, he wrote to Father Salvayre, the Procurator General of the Vincentian Community at Paris, from Kosrova, and made the astounding statement that at the time there were no Vincentian colleges in Persia. Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission, XXIV, pp. 287-303.
the local Nestorian bishops and from American Protestant missionaries. Boré’s efforts to found a school at Urmia in Azerbaijan under Catholic auspices caused him to be summoned before a local tribunal. However, the local Moslems, whose interest in western education transcended religious differences, united with the Catholics to defend him. This and the fact that the Shah’s uncle sat at his side throughout the trial guaranteed a favorable outcome. Boré founded four schools in the south before returning to his original establishment at Tabriz. 53

He arrived in time to greet the French embassy and was so filled with nationalist fervor that he went to meet it with a tricolor cockade in his hat. He accompanied the embassy to Isfahan. The new Ambassador, the Comte de Sarcey, almost immediately provoked a diplomatic incident by refusing to remove his shoes for an audience with the Shah. The difficulty was settled when it was pointed out that the King of France had once permitted a Persian ambassador to keep his hat on during an audience. As a result of the embassy, the Shah issued an new edict of religious toleration for Christians. At the end of 1841 Guizot named Boré a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and in the following year the Pope named him a Knight of the Golden Militia. In addition he was also awarded the Order of the Lion and Sun of Persia. 54 They were signs of the significant achievements of a young man not yet thirty-three years old.

Unfortunately not all was tranquil. In 1841 the Gregorian Armenians of Julfa, realizing that the school Boré founded there was proselytizing their children, created disturbances in the city. The Russian ambassador to Persia intervened with the Shah to put a stop to them. Why a Russian ambassador would favor the work of a French Catholic who had the reputation for being anti-

54 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 126, 128, 129, 133.
Russian is not clear.\textsuperscript{55}

After all these notable accomplishments, Béré returned to Constantinople toward the end of 1841 or the beginning of 1842. However, the fever was still on him and so in 1842 he founded a day school at Galata which he directed personally for eighteen months. After his return to Europe it was closed.\textsuperscript{56} While he was in Constantinople Guizot offered him the post of French Consul at Jerusalem. On the advice of his Vincentian friends he was prepared to accept the offer but a combination of anti-clerical feeling and governmental fear of offending Russia caused it to be withdrawn. Boré was well known as a fervent Catholic, clerical, and Turkophile. Despite this his stock with Guizot and the government remained high. Yet by this time Boré's thoughts were beginning to move in a completely different direction. On December 2, 1842, at Constantinople, he made a private vow of celibacy.\textsuperscript{57}

By early 1843 he was back in France but did not stay long. Before the year was out he was traveling first class at government expense to Rome. There he had a private audience with Pope Gregory XVI who made him both a Knight of Saint Gregory and a Knight of Saint Sylvester. He also discouraged Boré's idea of becoming a priest, telling him, as had Leleu, that he could do more for the Church as a layman. While in Rome Boré also became very close to the DeBussière family, an attachment that was to remain throughout his life. He corresponded with them constantly and their villa outside of Rome was a welcome refuge. It was a friendship that gave him great support throughout his life.\textsuperscript{58}

Boré left Rome for Constantinople in July of 1843. On his arrival he substituted for a vacationing Vincentian at the college of Bebek. About the year 1845 he was living in

\textsuperscript{55} Van Winsen, "La vie," p. 84. Rallaye, Béré, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{56} Mission des Lazaristes. p. 60.
\textsuperscript{57} Rallaye, Béré, pp. 131-132, 134.
\textsuperscript{58} Rallaye, Béré, p. 17.
a private home with an Armenian priest. Although there is uncertainty about who founded it, there was at this time a press at the mission of Saint-Benoît, founded with money supplied by Guizot, which published a weekly bulletin in Turkish and Armenian. Béré was the editor until Leleu’s death in 1846. During this time he published biographies of Photius and Michael Cerularius and translated Maistre’s Letter to a Russian Princess and Fleury’s Histoire Sainte into Armenian. Boré’s sister, to whom he was very close, died in the same year as Leleu and that may have contributed to his growing determination to become a priest.

The schools founded by Boré in Persia — at Tabriz, Julfa, Urmia, and Kosrova — continued their work with funds secretly supplied by the French government under Guizot. Boré kept up a constant barrage of propaganda in France, principally through anonymous columns contributed to L’Univers whose editor, Louis Veuillot, and publisher, Eugène Taconet, were close personal friends. When L’Univers was closed by the Napoleonic police in 1860, Boré continued the agitation in the pages of Le Monde. His sometimes blunt criticisms of France’s cautious policies in the Orient caused his subsidies to be threatened but he always seems to have recovered. He was a born propagandist and a gifted writer who, in modern terms, knew how to use the media. “The Eastern Question definitely has its interest. It is a question of saving a vast part of the Church menaced by a terrible enemy [i.e., Russia]. The French press is the only weapon with which we can combat it and I have decided to use it.”

---

59 Ibid.
60 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 151, 154-155.
61 Van Winsen, “La vie,” p. 84.
62 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 154-155.
63 To Eugène [Taconet], from Saint Benoît, January 27, 1845 Boré, Correspondance, II, pp. 212-213.
In the meantime the French government continued its benevolence. In 1847 Borable was sent on a fact-finding mission through Asia Minor — the Greek Islands, Lebanon, and the Holy Land. Although the mission was beset by many difficulties, not the least being the failure of promised funds to arrive, Boré was able to set out in August for Smyrna and after that for Santorini and Syra. In October he was in Athens where, with typical energy, he set about the establishment of a college to teach modern Greeks their ancestral language and history — and thus perhaps carry on the work of social regeneration for them. He then went to Lebanon in company with the Superior of the Vincentian mission in Egypt. Lebanon at the time was sunk in a protracted civil war arising from the hostility of Maronites and Druses and Boré sent a report on the situation to the French government while at the same time he kept up a steady stream of articles to L'Univers. In December of 1847 Boré was in the Holy Land. In Jerusalem in February of 1848 he heard of the overthrow of the July Monarchy and the exile of Louis Philippe. For Boré personally this meant that his patron and clandestine financial backer, François Guizot, was out of power. Although it is impossible to say how this immediately influenced his decision, it may have played a part in turning his mind toward a more purely religious role.

It was during his stay in the Holy Land that Boré wrote one of his most influential pamphlets, Mémoire sur les Lieux Saints. It was an exhaustive study of French claims to patronage over Latin Christians and the shrines in the Ottoman Empire and an appeal to French nationalism to counterbalance the growing influence of Russia. In the quaint phrasing of the official biography of Boré, “Serious

---

64 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 165-166.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
minds had for some time been occupied with the all important question of the Holy Places. Everywhere was denounced the effrontery of Russia, seeking to dispossess France of her ancient protectorate and to substitute the Muscovite influence."67 Although the matter has not been carefully studied, the reactions of contemporaries seem to indicate that Boré's book helped to form French popular attitudes toward the question of the Holy Places and consequently helped to lay the psychological foundation for the Crimean War.68

Boré returned to Constantinople in time to assist with the mission of Cardinal Ferrieri who had been sent by Pius IX to visit the Patriarch and to enter into dialogue with Armenian Christians. The visit was welcomed by the Sultan, Abdulmecid, who was anxious to counterbalance Russian influence among the subject nationalities. However, the mission came to naught and Boré returned to his educational work.69

Around 1850 he founded a boarding school at Galata/Pera for Europeans which soon came to have eighty or ninety students. How long the school functioned is unknown because Boré now found himself more and more drawn toward the priesthood. He began the study of systematic theology with Father Gamba, the assistant Superior of the Vincentian house in Constantinople. His entire course of theological study lasted eighteen months. In the course of little over six weeks he was ordained to all the preliminary orders and the priesthood. After his ordination he went to Paris where he entered the internal seminary of the Vincentian Community, the equivalent of a novitiate in religious orders. He made his vows on January 29, 1851.70

68 Rallaye, Boré, p. 168.
69 Rallaye, Boré, p. 172.
At the urgings of his Superiors he attempted to resume contact with Lammenais for the purpose of bringing his former master back to the Catholic Church. The attempt failed. Early in 1851 Boré accompanied his friend, Father Etienne, now Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, on a fact-finding journey to Algiers. While there he established a catechumenate for Moslems who converted to Christianity, a work that was eventually taken over by the diocese.\(^{71}\)

Boré returned to Constantinople in May of 1851. He returned not only as a priest but also as the Vincentian Superior of Saint-Benoît and Bebek, the Provincial of the Constantinople province with authority over the Vincentian houses in the eastern Mediterranean, the spiritual director of the Daughters of Charity in the region, and Prefect Apostolic of all the Vincentian missions.\(^{72}\) It was a heavy combination of duties and titles, especially for a man who had been a priest and a member of the Vincentian Community for little more than a year. One obvious reason for this deluge of responsibilities was the great friendship and admiration that Etienne had for Boré. The two men were in many ways alike. Both were strong French nationalists, both had been influenced in their youth by the hope of uniting the gains of the French Revolution with the leaven of Christianity, both were theological conservatives and ultramontanes, and both were authoritarian personalities who were supremely confident of the correctness of their views. Etienne lacked the intellect, experience, and breadth of scholarship that saved Boré from the sort of sterile authoritarianism that characterized the Superior General.

Etienne remained a long-time defender of Boré against the inevitable criticism of the latter’s administration. The appointment of Boré to such positions of responsibility so soon after his entrance into the Community seems

\(^{71}\) Rallaye, *Boré*, p. 176.

precipitate. Nor does it seem to have been well received by all the Vincentians in Turkey. Boré compounded the problem by his autocratic ways and impatience with those who did not share his experience and ideas. He also chafed under the excessive centralization that characterized Etienne's administration and the failure to Paris to comprehend the problems of Constantinople. "Unfortunately the use of this language [Turkish] is still too imperfect and too rare in the mission of Constantinople, at Galata and Bebek, where one lives more in France than in Turkey." "We who are on the scene and can judge a little and evaluate things, we have to submit ourselves at every instant to orders that are at cross purposes and even contradict each other. None of that serves to affirm the works, to give confidence to the missions, nor to edify the public in our regard." Etienne had his own complaints about Boré. On February 27, 1852, he wrote, "The consoling details that you give me make me hope that the college will revive but it is altogether necessary to reduce its debt. It is generally believed that you are not occupied enough with this question of administration and that your spirit dislikes descending to detail." He also had to guide Boré in his offices as Superior and Provincial because, like the recent novice he was, he was excessively demanding and unbending. Father Arthur Droulez, C.M., wrote, "Ordinarily so sensitive in personal relations, he is too rigid in the exercise of his authority. He offends the Sisters, whose director he is, he does not preserve the prestige necessary for Superiors." And Etienne wrote to him on October 13, 1863:

You are loved, you are esteemed, you are respected as a missionary. You are surrounded by the same sentiments as superior of the house but the feelings are no longer the

---

74 ACM, Lettres de M. Etienne, VIII, J. 13.
75 Droulez, "Le College," p. 117.
same when you are viewed as the administrator of the province. There you are no longer paternal or cordial. You seem to hold to your own ideas, to want to impose them, with the result that, for the sake of peace, people are silent and do not dare to make any observation to you. Your authority is submitted to but it is not liked. That is your situation as far as I can define it according to what I have seen and heard.  

It should be noted that many persons would have made the same observation about Etienne himself.

These problems were still in the future for the most part. Boré had the worry of the province and of the college at Bebek. He took over as Superior on May 25, 1851. He always loved the college as "the apple of his eye." Unfortunately it was in debt to the tune of 49,000 francs and the teaching staff was small. While Etienne worried about the debt, Boré, the eternal optimist, set about building up the college. He wrote textbooks for the students, dressed them in military uniforms and gave them military drill, and even established a volunteer fire department. As in his other schools he laid heavy stress on physical exercise, in this case including medicine ball exercises. "Since the customs and climate of the Levant favor softness and indolence, we have thought to find a preservative and remedy for this vice in gymnastics."  

By 1855 the college had 120 students, of whom three were Moslems. Because of his duties as Provincial, which included the supervision of the Vincentian houses in Santorini, Naxos, Salonika, Monastir, and Smyrna, Boré had to be absent from the college with excessive frequency. At the same time he kept up an extensive correspondence with the Prefect of Propaganda, the

76 ACM, Lettres de M. Etienne, VIII, J, 14.
77 Droulez, "Le collège," p. 118.
78 Rallaye, Boré, p. 177.
Ecoles d’Orient, with Montalembert, and, of course, with Etienne.\(^8\)

It was to the latter that he wrote an extensive report that summarized his basic ideas about the Turks and their Empire. They were, he said, a courageous, open, and loyal people. However, they were sunk in languor and their empire was disintegrating because they lacked a principle of authentic life, viz., a religious one. Their virtues were mainly private and domestic and everything was family-centered. Real charity in the western sense was foreign to them. There was no spirit of organization for the common good. Boré saw the root of most of these problems in their false religion and the corrupting influence of the Koran. The solution was the separation of church and state, an evil in Christian lands but a necessity in the Ottoman Empire. Only by such separation could there be a real fatherland for the thirty-three subject nationalities. This would also require that the civil law be the same for all. In this the Catholic clergy had a special role. They conducted schools and hospitals. The Armenian clergy, hampered by Moslem fanaticism, had had to let foreign missionaries, especially those protected by treaties, take their place. He was referring, of course, to the French. Boré also believed that the work of the Daughters of Charity in the Empire would gradually help to raise the status of women, another of his favorite topics. Their clinics were breaking down prejudice in this regard. The two at Galat were treating 100,000 persons a year, of whom only a small fraction were Catholics — the rest were Jews, Greeks, Armenians and Moslems.

He was forced to admit that it was all a dream. The Empire was fragmenting and being dismembered. Events were going in the direction opposite to his hopes. The only way that the Empire could avoid final decay was by the

adoption of western principles and Christianity.81

The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 was welcomed by Boré who saw it as a chance to "avenge the Catholic name" and halt the spread of Russian-sponsered schism.82 It also offered him new challenges and crises. As the spiritual director of the Daughters of Charity (who because of their distinctive headdress were known among the Moslems as "the swallows of Allah"), he was necessarily involved in their hospital work. On November 2, 1854, Etienne wrote to Boré to ask for help for the army even if it meant closing the college. Boré answered, "Up to now we have not been able to bring ourselves to this measure, which would deprive of the benefits of education a class of society that has the most need of them. The college of Bebek cannot be equated with the schools. It occupies six confrères as it continues to develop. I would never dare on my own account to take it on myself to halt or to turn back this work."83

Nevertheless school was suspended and Boré and his assistant, Father Reguier, went to minister to the soldiers who were under the care of the Daughters of Charity during the terrible winter of 1854-1855. Boré also had to survive another cholera epidemic. The sick and wounded were transferred to Constantinople where eventually there were some fourteen French military hospitals and Boré returned with them. Named chief chaplain of the French forces, he gave an example of dedication in his ministry.84

The Crimean War both helped and hindered the college at Bebek. It gave an impulse to the study of French and so

81 Summarized in Rallaye, Boré, pp. 179-185.
82 Rallaye, Boré, p. ii.
83 Droulez, "Le collège," p. 120.
84 Rallaye, Boré, p. 193. It is well known that Florence Nightingale derived some of her ideas on nursing from the Daughters of Charity. At one point she had an interview with Father Etienne in Paris. He assured her that although she might imitate the externals of the Daughters of Charity, she would never be able to capture their spirit because true charity existed only in the Catholic Church.
helped to attract many students who were not Catholic: Greeks, some Jews, more Moslems than before, but especially many Bulgarians. However, it also contributed to the weakening of the academic program because many were coming simply to learn French, not to complete the program of studies. Also the college was chronically short of personnel. Further, the Catholic clergy and laity of Constantinople resented the admission of the heterodox as boarding students and carried their opposition so far as to denounce Boré to Rome. He was widely regarded as being pro-Turkish. Nothing seems to have come of these efforts.

Boré’s standing with the Turks was very high. He had strong personal influence with Mehmet Ali, the Sultan’s brother-in-law whom he had befriended during a period of disgrace. He also acted as an unofficial ombudsman for the non-Turkish minorities. His influence was such that he succeeded in having a church built in Constantinople for the Catholic Armenians. However, in the period following the Crimean War, Boré’s attention turned more and more toward the Bulgarians.

It had long been his belief that the nationalism of the subject peoples and their hostility to control from Constantinople would weaken their allegiance to the Patriarch and pave the way for reunion with Rome. Events in Bulgaria seemed to be fulfilling this hope. There was a growing movement toward a Roman Catholicism with its proper Bulgarian rite. Under Boré the college at Bebek became a center of efforts to secure a Bulgarian reunion with Rome. He himself learned Bulgarian and for years there was a Sunday Mass in Bulgarian at Saint-Benoît. In 1858 he helped Dragan Tsankov found the journal Bulgaria

---

86 Rallaye, *Boré*, pp. 204, 216.
which had its center at the college. Again, Boré saw this as a means of social regeneration — the spirit of Lammenais lived on. Tsankov, a Bulgarian leader, converted to Catholicism and became a teacher at the college. In 1859 Boré journeyed to Kilkis in Macedonia where ten thousand Orthodox had expressed a desire to unite with Rome and he became a member of the Committee of Bulgarian Union which was established to help the converts. In 1861 he established a Bulgarian seminary at the college. 88

Boré was often optimistic about reunion but he was not necessarily naive. In 1861 he was asked to act as interpreter at Rome in the affair of Josif Sokolski, a Bulgarian Orthodox who had become Catholic and had been invited to become bishop of the Bulgarian Catholic Community by Pius IX. Many, including Boré, considered the move premature. Sokolski seemed too ambitious, even to the point of asking to be made a patriarch. (Pius IX supposedly replied, “When you have half a million Bulgarians reunited with Rome, I will give you a patriarch.”) Boré translated the ordination ceremony into Bulgarian and acted as interpreter during it. However, his worst fears were confirmed when in 1886 Sokolski disappeared into Russia and apparently reembraced Orthodoxy. Boré did not know that Sokolski had been kidnapped. 89

In the meantime the college at Bebek was experiencing a number of difficulties, caused in part by Boré’s frequent absences. Late 1859 seems to have been a time of special crisis. Boré went to Smyrna to make a visitation of the Vincentian College there and for reasons now obscure

88 *Mission des Lazaristes*. pp. 141-144, 123. Cahiers des Conseils du College de Bebek, ACM, XXXIV, no. 50. Van Winsen, “La vie,” p. 86. Professor Frazee gives the date for the foundation of the journal as 1855. It should be noted that the Vincentian sources tend to give all the credit for this to Boré. Some also list the location of the uniates as Kuckuk.

removed the Superior, Father Fougeray, who was sent back to Constantinople, ostensibly for reasons of health. Etienne thereupon ordered Boré himself to direct the Smyrna college for the rest of the academic year. In addition, a number of deaths and transfers seriously undermined the work at Bebek. In 1860 there was a panic among Ottoman Catholics caused by the massacre of Maronite Christians in Lebanon and Syria. Because of this and because of hostile gestures by the Russian ambassador, Boré suspended classes — an act that contributed even more to the general panic. The college was not reopened until April of 1861 but then with only twenty-five students. However, even before the reopening Boré had departed for Rome for the Sokolski ordination. During the summer of 1861 he was in Paris for the Vincentian General Assembly and did not return to Constantinople until the end of the year. In December of the following year he went to Smyrna for the cornerstone laying of the cathedral, after which he made a visitation of Syra, Naxos, and Santorini. He did not return to Constantinople until April of 1863. Some time between then and the end of the year Father Etienne came to Constantinople to survey the situation personally and spent six days in the city. According to some he found that the college had fallen into disrepute.  

In 1864 came more problems. By this time both the parents and the Vincentians at the college were voicing numerous complaints about Boré's prolonged absences. Father Antoine Alléon wrote to Paris that Boré "destroys these works and mismanages the college." Then in the same year the Jesuits opened a college at Constantinople

---

90 *Mission des Lazaristes*, p. 112. Droulez, "Le collège," pp. 124-125. Report by Father Nicholas Murat, from Bebek, October 15, 1863, *Annales de la Congregation de la Mission*, XXIX, pp. 139-140. Father Murat, a Greek from Santorini, believed that the college had a great future and that it was especially influential among the Bulgarians.

which began to attract the sons of the elite. At the same time Father Cor, who had substituted for Boré as Superior of the college, was transferred to Smyrna. His absence was felt all the more because his mild and winning ways contrasted so strongly with Boré's authoritarian ones. More competition came when the French government attempted to open a school in Constantinople — it eventually became the Lycée Imperial de Galata-Serai. In 1865 came another cholera epidemic which amounted almost to a deathblow to the college, which was returned to the mission of Saint-Benoît. 92

In September of 1865 Etienne summoned Boré to Paris for a retreat and consultation. He informed him that he had no intention of changing him and Boré returned to Constantinople. However, because of numerous complaints Etienne was compelled to send two special commissioners or extraordinary visitors, Fathers Mailly and Devin, to conduct an investigation of the situation. This time the pressures were too great and in 1866 Boré was recalled to Paris and informed that this time the recall was permanent. Father Devin replaced him as Provincial. Boré accepted the transfer with great equanimity. On August 25, 1866, he wrote to an unnamed Daughter of Charity:

Your prediction of 1860 that you made to me at Smyrna has come true. Our Most Honored Father [Etienne] has called me to Paris and at his first interview told me that he wished me to stay. I immediately offered my sacrifice to Our Lord whose adorable image is presented to me by the crucifix in my room and I felt not only calm in myself but peace and contentment.

He then added somewhat enigmatically:

For ten years I had always to fight against the direction of our sisters at Galata, which I did not think, from the temporal point of view, healthy for the mission. I would have too many proofs of this to cite and events have only justified my fears. Our own house at Galata is sunk in an

abyss of debts that grow larger every day.93

Etienne, for his part, soon found it necessary to placate the Vatican, which did not look kindly on the removal of a Prefect Apostolic without its permission.94

The rest of Bore's life was spent in and around Paris. For a variety of reasons — his own estimation of Bore's abilities, his friendship with him, the soothing of Roman indignation over the transfer — Father Etienne appointed Bore as Secretary General of the Vincentian Community, an ostensible promotion. At the same time he was named chaplain of some of the local houses of the Daughters of Charity. He made a tour of Russian Poland and gave a mission in Cracow.95 In 1870 there was an attempt to have him named professor of Hebrew at the College de France but nothing came of it.96 The Franco-Prussian War found him at Cachan, near Arcueil, where he took refuge from the siege of Paris. During the Commune he was twice arrested and narrowly escaped with his life. After the war he returned to Cachan where, in 1874, he fell seriously ill. Shortly after he recovered, Etienne died. He had been Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity for thirty-one years.97

According to the Vincentian Constitutions, the Superior General left behind him the name of the man he considered most suitable as interim Vicar until a new Superior General could be elected. In this case it was tantamount to anointing a successor. Etienne had named Bore and Bore acted as the Secretary General of the General Assembly of September, 1874, that elected him Superior General.98

93Bore papers, uncatalogued, ACM.
95Rallaye, Bore, p. 225.
96Letter of the superior of the seminary of Soissons to the Minister of Public Education, March 16, 1870, in the Bore papers, uncatalogued, ACM.
97Rallaye, Bore, p. 228.
98Rallaye, Bore, p. 232.
Bore's generalate was brief and comparatively uneventful. In 1875 he made a formal visit to England, Ireland, and Scotland, the last two places having been the scenes of some of the Vincentians' earliest labors in the seventeenth century. In the middle of the night of May 1/2, 1878, he was struck with what the physicians diagnosed as "suffocating catarrh." He died on May 3. One of his last official acts during his illness was to sign an order sending a Vincentian missionary to Persia.  

* * * * *

Eugène Boré was very much a man of his century. There is no way that he can be removed from the milieu of nineteenth century French Catholicism. Once this is accepted, it is easier to assess his contributions and limitations. In the first part of his life, up to the time of the Crimean War, his primary interest and emphasis was the reunion of the Gregorian Armenian church and Rome. In the latter part of his life his attention turned more toward the Bulgarians. However, in both cases, his approach was the same. His ideas seem to have changed little throughout his life and what applies to one question applies to all.

The first thing that stands out is that in some areas he possessed a brilliance that bordered on genius. For oriental languages he had an aptitude that was almost supernatural. In all he spoke and wrote some twenty oriental languages and dialects, including Turkish, Armenian, Hebrew, Samaritan, and Arabic. He also mastered Latin, Greek, and Bulgarian. Some paragraphs of his personal journal were written in Spanish. His notes contain evidence of a study of Chinese — a comparison of Arabic and Chinese grammar! Some of his bibliographical notes included references to works in English but it is impossible to say how well he actually knew it.

99 Rallaye, Boré, pp. 253, 258.
Boré was an outstanding observer and commentator. His description of nineteenth century Armenia, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire are invaluable source materials for the modern researcher.

His was not a speculative mind. His knowledge of systematic theology was based on private study undertaken over a limited period of time. His theological outlook was conservative, in accord with the tendencies of the nineteenth century. He was totally unecumenical in the modern sense, especially toward Islam and American Protestantism. He believed that not only was Catholicism the truth in the religious sphere but that it was responsible for all that was good in western civilization — ultimately the only culture and civilization that he could personally accept. His knowledge and understanding of eastern cultures was profound and sympathetic but he was always convinced of the superiority of the west.

Boré had a deep and abiding faith in the power of knowledge and education. For him these were the primary means of uplifting the peoples of the Empire and reuniting them with Rome. His intentions in all his studies were religious and apologetic. He saw his educational work as a "scientific crusade." In his early years, when he was more idealistic and less experienced, he seems to have believed that exposure to the truth was in itself sufficient to bring about conversion. "Men who have been led astray by the false gleams of philosophy or who have become lost in the darkness of their ignorance, can be led back to religion only by the path of knowledge." Despite the buffetings that this idea suffered, he always viewed knowledge as a primary tool of the missionary enterprise. Although some of his educational ventures were short-lived, there is no doubt that he was the supreme example of the scholar-missionary.

He never lost the influence of Lammenais. There is little sign of growth or change from the concepts imbued at

100 Boré, Correspondance, I, p. 269.
La Chenaie. These included the idea of religious liberty, of the state as coadjutor of religion, and above all, the *idée fixe* of social regeneration through the power of Catholicism. Boré lived and died a romantic, French, Catholic nationalist of the nineteenth century.

His idea of social regeneration seemed especially applicable to the Ottoman Empire. Boré believed that the Empire had a useful social and political function and that it served the material good of the subject nationalities. However, it was being destroyed by its own inefficiency and its failure to keep abreast of western technology. Agriculture and the economy were dying and the Turkish race itself seemed to be in a state of decay. Boré blamed this on the obscurantist effects of Islam and believed that it was only through the acceptance of western ways and Christianity that the Empire could be saved. It is interesting that in some ways he anticipated the outlook and policies of Atatürk, including that of a religiously neutral Turkish state. He was definitely a Turkophile. He had great admiration and respect for the people. "We have been able to recognize all that there is of the noble and lofty in the character of the sons of Osman." Being a realist, he also saw that the decline of the Empire was irreversible. It was fragmenting and the western powers would profit by the fragmentation. He foresaw the rise of nationalism among the Empire's minorities and believed that the only good effect would be to weaken their allegiance to the patriarchate of Constantinople — something that he saw verified in the Bulgarian movement.

Boré's devotion to the people, history, and culture of Armenia was sincere and profound. He considered the Armenians to be a naturally good and virtuous people, almost instinctively religious, a people who would sacrifice everything for religious values. They have, he wrote, a character that is "mild, humane, and honest." However,

---

101 Boré, *Correspondance*, II, p. 34.
subjugation and the life of the bazaar had added something of the “supple and insinuating” to their character. They combined the spirit of the diplomat and the merchant. He spoke of them as calculating and referred to the “extreme love of money and profit, the dominant passion of the Armenian race.” During his first trip to the Orient, while still in Vienna, he wrote of them, “The distinctive genius of the Syrians and Armenians is to have been constantly passive and assimilative. There are some nations as there are some individuals, who seem destined by nature to transmit knowledge rather than add to it.”

He always viewed the Catholic Armenians as the elite of the nation. The Gregorian Church, because it had so early cut itself off from Rome and the west, had sunk into sterile theological squabbles and lost all sense of scholarship. It was a branch that had withered apart from the vine. The clergy was ignorant, without respect among the people, and controlled by the laity. The clergy, he wrote, “seems long ago to have abdicated the noble privilege of learning.” The Gregorian Church would never make progress until it had emancipated itself from lay control. The schism from Rome had weakened the fiber of the entire nation. “As soon as the doctrine of Eutyches and the principles of Monophysitism had altered the integrity of the faith, the entire nation was, as it were, struck by a sudden helplessness. It came to a stop on the road of civilization and lost its political independence.” Hence the Armenians were also a fit field for the Mennaisian social reconstruction that dominated Boré’s thinking. Yet

102 Boré, Correspondance, I, pp. 154, 260.

103 Report to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, from Vienna, October 26, 1837, in Boré, Correspondance, I, p. 15. This observation, like many of the others, was made before Boré had actually visited Armenia.

104 Boré, Correspondance, I, p. 155. It should be noted that Boré was equally critical of the Austrian Roman Catholic clergy for their ignorance.

105 “Les religieux Arméniens de Vienne,” from Trieste, No-
for all his nationalism, he was also convinced that Armenian renewal, whether political or religious, had to be a native thing, a genuinely Armenian phenomenon, not just a borrowing from the west. He was highly critical of European priests and missionaires who failed to understand this.

As has been stated more than once, Boré was a French nationalist. He saw an almost messianic role for France in the Near East and in the fateful “Eastern Question.” He could and did disagree vociferously with French policies, whether religious at home or foreign in the East. Despite this he always saw a special destiny for his native land in dealing with the questions of the East, whether it was that of the Holy Places or of the freedom of Armenian Christians or of education or of the use of French as a bridge between cultures. He did not seek mass conversion of Moslems but hoped that there would be an infiltration of Western and Christian values under and through European protection.

He constantly appealed to this nationalism when attempting to interest his countrymen in the Eastern Question. He consciously used the press as a means of reaching them. His scholarly reputation, the romantic nature of his early travels, and his appealing style, all gave great success to his early labors. Even more, he could and invariably did appeal to the specter of his bête-noir: Tsarist Russia. Russia loomed large as the villain in his world-view, relentless Muscovy embarked on an expansionist program, determined to spread its political influence and the power of Orthodoxy over the entire Middle East. He recognized the ambivalent attitude of the Ottomans toward the major powers and their desire to play them against each other. His reports and writings constantly invoked the Russian menace to convince French Catholics and nationalists of the need for action. France was, by ancient right, the temporal and political patron of Catholicism in the Orient

vember 16, 1837, in Boré, Correspondance, I, p. 52.
— and the French must never abandon those rights and must defend their co-religionists.

Although there is need for more research on the subject, it seems certain that Bore did have an effect on French public opinion, at least during the period of the July Monarchy and the first years of the Second Republic.

Interesting from the modern point of view was Boré’s concern for raising the status of women in the Ottoman Empire. He accused both Catholic and Gregorian Armenians, but especially the latter, of having absorbed too much of Moslem customs by segregating women and keeping them in a position of ignorance and inferiority. He believed that this situation could be rectified by education and by the works and example of the Daughters of Charity. Although he was certainly no feminist — that would have been too much to expect of a nineteenth century cleric — the very fact that he had this concern and publicized it must put him ahead of the vast majority of his contemporaries in the orient or out of it.

There is one tantalizing “if” in the life and career of Eugène Boré. His closest Vincentian friends and even Pope Gregory XVI had discouraged him from becoming a priest on the grounds that he could do more good as a layman. And it does seem that his early years were the more productive before he became mired in questions of administration. His was a restless, eager, romantic spirit, constantly on the move, ever seeking new horizons and teeming with new projects. It is quite possible that this spirit might have flourished more, with greater benefit to all, outside the priesthood.

From any point of view Boré was an extraordinary person. That he had his limitations is undeniable, yet even then he had few equals in his understanding of alien cultures. Eugène Boré devoted the best part of his life to being a bridge between east and west. Some of his works have survived to the present day, some have not, yet they are not so important as the example of the man himself.