

Fr. Eugène Boré, C.M. (1809-1878)

Scholarship in the Service of the Faith

by Yves Danjou, C.M.

Province of Paris

On the subject of Fr. Eugène Boré, a historian observes that “he is one of the most astonishing figures among the sons of Monsieur Vincent.”¹ He recognized in Boré the one who developed the missionary method best adapted to Moslem countries in the Middle East. Eugène Boré, an excellent scholar and specialist in Oriental civilizations, discovered quite quickly that the promotion of education was the surest means to open Moslems to knowledge of the Christian religion, and at the same time it would raise the level of local Christians locked up by centuries of Islamic domination. He explained



this clearly: “School or teaching is the best preparation for the Gospel. It is only in this way that the truth can penetrate and infiltrate the old Moslem society. Although we limit ourselves to adorning and to cultivating spirit and heart without crossing the threshold of conscience, ideas and lights deposited with good example in young minds will bear their fruit later, and grace will be able to finish what knowledge has started.”²

¹ DANIEL-ROPS, *L'Eglise des Révolutions*, Fayard, Paris 1960, p. 778.

² LÉONCE DE LA RALLAYE, *Eugène Boré...*, Paris 1893, p. V. — Other biographies: [E. PÉMARTIN], *Eugène Boré... Notice biographique suivie d'extraits*

It is true that, in the romantic atmosphere of his time, Eugène Boré did not hesitate to exalt French culture as the best way of answering the human and Christian values that he wanted to spread. This patriotic core came to him from his family. He was born in Angers on 15 August 1809 to a mother who was very attached to ancestral values, and to a father who was a former military officer. The latter enlisted in 1792 in the army with the grade of lieutenant and took part in many campaigns, in particular on the Rhine and in Italy, before becoming a tax collector.

At his premature death in 1812, he left behind five children, of whom Eugène was the third. Although his deeply religious wife had only a modest income, she influenced her children profoundly. Eugène gained renown for his intellectual qualities while in high school in Angers and, in 1826, succeeded in winning a scholarship to enter the Collège Stanislas in Paris. While there, he found his full development, even winning the top prize in philosophy in a general competition. A little after, in June 1828, he had the sorrow of losing his mother. Her death affected him deeply but encouraged him to look for a teacher and friend, a person he would find in Félicité de Lamennais. This priest had already become famous through his book *Essai sur l'indifférence* [*Essay on Indifference*], which sought to reconcile science with faith, or rather, as he said himself, to bring science under the guidance of faith, the true sovereign of knowledge. To accomplish this, he would gather around himself a certain number of young persons in his manor at La Chesnaie in Brittany. Together with his other brother Léon, Eugène Boré was among his closest disciples, whose wish was to participate in Lamennais' work of moral and social regeneration. He did not regulate his intellectual labors well and received advice to moderate them.

On 3 January 1832, Lamennais wrote him: "My dear child, I received your fine letter with the pleasure arising from everything that comes from you. Now about your studies, I recommend that you take care of your health and your eyesight. It is not only a question of regulating your time, but of not exhausting your strength through excessive work. Be wary of any excess of this type. Nevertheless, if you can not neglect Syriac and Coptic at the same time, you will be doing well. For the rest, you are right to work particularly on Arabic, Sanskrit and Chinese." This letter shows the impetuosity with which Eugène Boré gave himself to the study of oriental languages without

de son journal et de sa correspondance, Paris 1879; Eugène Boré. *L'homme privé, l'homme public, les voyages, les œuvres, d'après un témoin de sa vie*, Lille (n.d.); GÉRARD VAN WINSEN, "La vie et les travaux d'Eugène Boré (1809-1878)," in *Nouvelle Revue de science missionnaire*, 34:2 (1978). These studies are inspired mainly from what is reported here and there in the *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*.

letting himself be distracted by the political and social upheavals that were shaking France in 1830. His efforts were rewarded. In 1833, he was received into the Asiatic Society of Paris. A year later, he was appointed a substitute professor of Armenian in the Collège de France, on the proposal of François-Pierre-Guillaume Guizot. He would often be helped by Guizot, the Minister of Public Education, since at the time he was organizing primary education in the belief that education was the antidote against revolutionary doctrines.

Simultaneously, Boré was publishing in the *Journal asiatique* various articles that were making him increasingly well known. His friend Louis Veuillot would later recall, in his *Derniers Mélanges*, the Boré of his youth: “a gentleman with a good figure and a fine face, at his ease with all sorts of people and who, since he never had anything to hide, was never bothered by speaking his mind. He was young and ardent as a soldier, but grave as a priest, and modest and meek like a Sister of Charity.”³ He never hid his Christian convictions, trying to go to daily Mass and resolving — these are his own words — to maintain modesty and simplicity always.

Since he was aware of social problems, he did not hesitate to visit the poor. When the Society of St. Vincent de Paul began to grow, he was one of its most active members. During the course of his visits of mercy, he was infected with cholera. In 1832, it claimed 18,000 victims in Paris out of a population of 800,000. When Frederick Ozanam questioned François Lallier about his vocation, the latter cited as an example their mutual friend Eugène Boré. “The courage to live alone in chastity? That’s the question. If you have this courage, chose the holy career of a priest, doctor, missionary, preacher, pilgrim of science and faith just like Eugène Boré.”⁴

Boré was henceforth known in university circles. At the end of 1835, he was put in charge of a literary mission in the monastery of the Mekhitarist Fathers, those Armenian monks who found refuge in 1717 on the island of San Lazzaro in Venice. He wrote at that time his first book, *Saint-Lazare ou histoire de la société religieuse arménienne de Méchtitar*. On his return to Paris, he stopped in Geneva where he met the pianist and composer Franz Liszt, a friend of Lamennais and completely occupied at the time with romantic adventures (it was only in 1858, after a retreat with the Vincentians at Montecitorio in Rome, that Liszt would become a cleric).

³ Quoted by GEORGES GOYAU, *L'Eglise en marche, études d'histoire missionnaire*, 1^{ère} série (Paris 1928), in an article on “Louis Veuillot et l'esprit missionnaire,” pp. 191-224.

⁴ GÉRARD CHOLVY, *Frédéric Ozanam. L'engagement d'un intellectuel catholique au XIX^e siècle*, Fayard, Paris 2003, p. 331.

The desire to study the Armenians and the Eastern Churches a bit better asserted itself and pushed Boré to leave for the Middle East. In a letter dated 27 November 1837 to his brother Léon he made known his deepest motivations: "The definitive goal of my works is the truth or the cause of the Catholic religion.... I am really traveling for God. I am going to visit the country that was the cradle of Christianity, to study the language they spoke there, and to examine its monuments to return strengthened with new knowledge and to lend my feeble support to those who are already in combat."

Nevertheless, he took the precaution of making this trip with the responsibility of a mission from the Ministry of Public Instruction and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, which gave him good access. He left in August 1837, and went first to Vienna where an illness surprised him. This was for him the occasion to perfect his Armenian through frequent visits to the Mekhitarist monastery there.⁵ Soon after, he went to Trieste to start for Constantinople, where he arrived 6 December 1837.

In this capital of the Ottoman Empire he lodged with an Armenian family. Not far away was the Vincentian residence of Saint-Benoît,⁶ where he became one of their most frequent guests. He became friends with the superior, Fr. Louis Florent Leleu. Thanks to these contacts, he was able to arrange for Fr. Felix Scafi, an Italian Vincentian, to accompany him in his trip to Persia.⁷ On 2 May 1839, the two travelers departed, escorted by some men from the region, since this journey was not without danger. At first they went along the coast of the Black Sea to arrive at the port of Samsun. Then they crossed the Pontic mountains and went to Tokat where they had the joy of encountering a small Catholic community. Then they continued to Erzurum, at the time one of the centers of Greater Armenia. Boré could not resist making a detour to Russia to visit Echmiadzin, residence of the Armenian Orthodox patriarch. Then he came back by Lake Van and at length reached Lake Urmia, at the northeast of which is Tauris (Tabriz). He settled in there on 6 November 1839.

⁵ In the year 2000, the two branches, of Venice and Vienna, joined together to found the Mekhitarist Order.

⁶ Fr. Arthur Droulez, C.M., composed a history of this house, limited today to a work of education, but he never had it printed. The only publication up to now is that of HASAN DILAN, *La mission du Lycée Saint-Benoît dans les relations turco-françaises*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2003.

⁷ E. BORÉ gathered his recollections into his *Correspondance et mémoires d'un voyageur en Orient*, 2 vols., Paris 1840. See STAFFORD POOLE, "Eugene Bore and the Vincentian Mission in the Near East," in *Vincentian Heritage* 5, 1 (1984) 59-102.

Next, despite strong opposition from Nestorian Christians and Protestants, Boré opened a school there, soon to be followed by four others. It was at this time that the painter Eugène Flandin, who was part of a delegation of the French embassy, met him. This is what he said of him:

At Tabriz we found several French who formed a small colony. Its leader was M. Eugène Boré, who moved to this city about a year before. After a long trip and research in the country of the Chaldeans, which had brought this scholarly explorer to the shore of Lake Urmia, he came to stay in the capital of Azerbaijan. All that M. Boré had seen along his route and all that he had gathered about the populations of these lands engendered in him the desire to bring to them the torch of civilization that he himself was holding in his capable hands. As a result, beginning in January 1839, he had prepared what he was calling a humanitarian university at Tabriz. The French language was to be its base, and he was hoping to use it to communicate European knowledge to the Persians. To attain the noble goal that he had proposed for himself, he excluded no one and called all religions, all the dissidents, to benefit from his teaching. At that point, it was not M. Boré's plan to engage in religious proselytizing. He was relying on education to destroy by itself the ignorance and prejudices of Islam, as well as the error or false teachings of schismatic Christians.⁸

Boré's zeal did not stop there. He asked Fr. Scafi to request missionaries from Paris. A little while later he opened at Djulfa, near Isfahan, another school. It was there that he received from Fr. Étienne, Procurator General of the Congregation of the Mission, a letter dated 14 April 1841, announcing the arrival of two Vincentians, Frs. Darnis and Guzel. This was the beginning of Vincentian work in Persia. At the same time, he confided to his personal diary, on 23 February 1841, his secret desire of advancing to the priesthood, as it was "the state most beautiful, most holy and most worthy of man on this earth."

In the meantime, honors were not lacking in recognition of his work and devotion. In 1841, he was named a chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. A short time later, while he was in Mosul, he received a letter from Guizot, the president of the Council, offering him the post of consul in Jerusalem. This proposition would not be confirmed, however, because of anticlerical opposition. Nonetheless, it moved

⁸ EUGÈNE FLANDIN, *Voyage en Perse*, vol. I, *Relation du voyage*, Paris 1851, pp. 15-16.

him to return to France. He used his stay in Europe to go to Rome where he was warmly welcomed by his friend, Théodore de Bussières, who was key in the conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne to Catholicism. Pope Gregory XVI received him several times and made him a Knight of St. Gregory the Great.

Despite all this, the East still attracted him. In July 1843, we find him in Constantinople. From here on, he would lodge with the Vincentians at Saint-Benoît, in the Galata quarter, where he could see, on the other side of the Golden Horn, the palace of the sultans. He actually preferred the Vincentian country house at Bebek, on the shores of the Bosphorus, some ten kilometers from the Ottoman capital. This property had a boarding school with about 50 students, and it was having a hard time adjusting to the lay director sent from Paris by Sr. Rosalie Rendu, a man lacking teaching skills despite his evident good will. Boré loved to substitute for absent professors and to deepen his knowledge of Greek, Turkish and Armenian. He kept frequenting his Armenian friends to such an extent that people took him, as he himself admitted, for an Armenian. He even wrote several books of an apologetical nature in their language and translated his friend Théodore's account of Ratisbonne's conversion.

He also often went to the farm known as Saint-Vincent d'Asie which the Vincentians had just acquired.⁹ He loved to go there to reflect, meditate and write different works. At his own expense he even built a house there where he would receive many catechumens to instruct them very discreetly in the Christian faith. His order of the day was nearly that of the Vincentians, with rising at 4:00, an hour for prayer, study in silence, reading at table: "We read the conferences of Lacordaire.... His genius is being revealed."

When he realized that Lamennais was drifting more and more from the Church, and after he left the Sainte-Pélagie prison, Boré invited him to join him.¹⁰ Lamennais refused and Boré had the sadness to see his friend and former teacher take refuge in a vague kind of deism and moralizing popular socialism. After he was ordained a priest, Boré would come to visit him Paris in 1850, but it was a last visit and a cold one.

⁹ The farm of Saint-Vincent d'Asie is a very large property situated on the Asiatic side, some 14 kilometers from the Bosphorus. Fr. Leleu wanted to establish there a small farming community, where orphans could be received, and Polish refugees later on. In fact, their installation was difficult and troubles swelled because of malaria and problems of communication. The property was sold in 1906. Today the village is called Polonezköy or the village of the Poles. We should note that in 1850 Lamartine dreamt of retiring not far from Ephesus on a farm offered by the sultan Abdül-Medjid.

¹⁰ GEORGES HOURDIN, *Lamennais. Prophète et combattant de la liberté*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris 1982, p. 348.

Despite these reverses, Eugène Boré kept questioning himself about his true vocation. During a retreat at Saint-Vincent d'Asie in November 1843, he penned these reflections: "I am here with Fr. Scafi, my director and friend.... May you be blessed, my God, for adding to all the graces that you unceasingly shower on me that of being able to remain several days occupied only with you.... In this absolute solitude, in the midst of a nature which is beginning to clothe itself with its annual winter mourning, dedicating myself to self-examination, nourished with meditations and pious readings, I am making my apprenticeship in the religious life for which you have been inspiring me in secret for several years." He was wondering whether he could truly be able to aspire to the priestly life. Fr. Leleu, superior of the Vincentian mission, thought, along with others, that as a layman Boré could accomplish much more good by being freer in his words and in his undertakings.

It is true that Fr. Leleu, who exercised a determining influence, had an attractive personality. He was priest of the Diocese of Amiens when he entered the Vincentians at age 31 to go quickly to the mission of Constantinople. Endowed with a lively spirit and speaking good Turkish, he quickly made his presence known and multiplied various initiatives. He was the one who purchased the house at Bebek to install the boarding school there in 1836, and later the property of Saint-Vincent d'Asie. In 1839, he brought the Daughters of Charity and, two years later, the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In 1841, he obtained from Guizot, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, a grant to open a press,¹¹ which would publish several of Boré's works. Leleu encouraged him to begin, on 6 March 1846, a conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the first in the Middle East. On 11 November 1846, he died suddenly, at age 46, on his return from a trip to Smyrna where, accompanied by Boré, he had opened a College of Propaganda Fide. An epitaph in the church of Saint-Benoît correctly recalls his memory in the place that he had renovated.

The death of Leleu, who Boré found, according to his own testimony, to be a model, support and guide, was the impulse that led him to decide to go on for the priesthood. Nevertheless, he took the time to go to the Holy Land that he had so long wished to visit. He had been traveling with Fr. Doumercq, the new Visitor, in his visits to the houses of Greece, and he took the occasion of his stopping in Athens to take a ship that brought him to Lebanon. At

¹¹ Boré wrote on 25 November 1843 to his friend Taconet, director of the newspaper *Univers*: "We have a press already installed and we are beginning our publications." This polyglot press already had Latin characters, but also typefaces in Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Bulgarian, and they were awaiting the arrival of others in Arabic and Persian. The list of published works is found in *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 69 (1904) 504-510.

the end of a memorable ride on horseback, he reached Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, 1847.

He remained several months in Palestine to study carefully the question of the holy places. He noted, as well, the increasing influence of the Russians over the numerous Orthodox churches, thereby calling into question the rights of the Latins which had been established for a long time. He drew up on this point his *Mémoire sur les lieux saints* which, through the help of Montalembert, he brought before the French National Assembly.¹² He did not hide, moreover, his esteem for the Turks nor his attachment to the Ottoman Empire. To those who reproached him for it, he would answer that this was the only way to keep the Russians from dominating the Middle East under the guise of Orthodoxy.

Nevertheless, interest was growing elsewhere. On 24 February 1848, Louis Philippe was forced to abdicate, and the people noisily demanded the proclamation of a Republic. On 25 June, Denis Affre, Archbishop of Paris, fell under bullets while seeking to appease the insurgents. Boré was shaken. For him, "the cause of the evil is the lack of Catholic thought." Calm would only return with the election, as President of the Republic, of Prince Charles Louis Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon, who would do all in his power to have himself proclaimed emperor on 2 December 1852.

When Boré returned to Constantinople, then, he decided to make a definite step in his life. He finished his studies in theology with the help of Fr. Gamba, superior of Saint-Benoît from 1851 to 1860, and he petitioned Fr. Étienne, Superior General since 1843, to receive him into the Congregation of the Mission. On 28 January 1849, he began his Internal Seminary in the house, while waiting for someone to be found to replace him as director of the school at Bebek. His advancement to the priesthood would take place at the same time and quite rapidly, since within a few months he would receive the different orders leading to the priesthood, which he received on 7 April 1850 at the hands of Bishop Hillereau, Latin Bishop of Constantinople.

Following his ordination, Boré went to Paris to complete his Internal Seminary. He was happy to be there, as he commented: "Retired in a kind of cell improvised with curtains, I had to resist an evil trait of nature which loves neither isolation nor meditation." On 29 January 1851, he took his vows and was moved to recall that ten years previously at Isfahan, he had promised to give himself to God.

¹² "His reports concerning Russian trampling on the Holy Places are at the origin of the demands leading to the Crimean War" (*Grand Larousse encyclopédique*, 1960, article, "Boré").

At that time, he accompanied Fr. Étienne on his visit to the Vincentian houses in Algeria. While there, he launched the idea of a catechumenate for Moslems as he had done in Saint-Vincent d'Asie, an idea taken up by Fr. Girard, superior of the major seminary of Kouba. On Boré's return to Europe, he went to Constantinople to be named shortly afterward the director of the school at Bebek.

At age 42 he was full of energy. He reserved for himself the classes of religious instruction, philosophy, history and geography. He composed, for the use of his students, a little guide to French pronunciation. His stay in France had given him other ideas. For example, he introduced to the school drill exercises, giving his students a uniform made of a military tunic, belt and helmet. His confreres gave him effective help, such as Fr. Régnier, superior of Saint-Benoît following Fr. Gamba, and whose meteorological observations kept from 1848 to 1853 at Bebek served for the climatological study of the Bosporus.¹³

Amid all this, Étienne did not forget him. He named him Visitor of the province in a letter dated 6 September 1851 in which he told him: "I am fulfilling a wish that I had formed as soon as I learned of your decision to enter the Company. You know my heart, my dear Monsieur Boré, you know what place you occupy there. You can therefore count on my complete dedication.... A fine future is reserved for you, I have no doubt." Fr. Boré had plenty to do, since he was also receiving the responsibility for the Daughters of Charity and remained in charge of Bebek. He had to make yearly visits of the Vincentian houses in his jurisdiction, such as Smyrna, Santorin (Thira), Naxos, Thessalonica and Monastir (Bitola).

His zeal was soon able to be deployed even more with the Crimean War (1854-1856). He did not disguise his wish for this war. In his opinion, it was the occasion for France to reassume its protectorate over the East for the good of the Catholic Church, and to favor the return of the Orthodox Churches to Rome. In 1853, Russia claimed the right of official protection over the Orthodox of the Ottoman Empire, something that would let it intervene in Turkish affairs at the least provocation. In the face of the sultan's refusal, the Russians invaded the Moldo-Walachian principalities along the Danube. In March 1854, they even crossed the Danube, thus pushing France and England to declare war against Russia.

Allied troops, assembled in Varna, decided to attack Sebastopol, the main stronghold of the Crimean peninsula, and home of the Russian fleet that controlled the Black Sea. Losses were enormous, more because of epidemics, like cholera or typhus, than from

¹³ A. VQUESNEL, *Voyage dans la Turquie d'Europe. Description physique et géologique de la Thrace*, Paris 1868, vol. II, pp. 20-50.

combat. Out of 95,000 French deaths, 75,000 were caused by disease. Hospitals multiplied to care for them. The Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, under Fr. Boré's leadership, multiplied their charitable actions and were unreservedly devoted to the sick. To help them, Fr. Étienne sent 255 sisters from France. When Piedmont entered the war on the side of the allies in January 1855, Fr. Marcantonio Durando, whose brother Giovanni took part in the war as a general, sent another 25 sisters from Italy. As for the missionaries, 14 saw service as chaplains.¹⁴

The Treaty of Paris, signed on 5 July 1856, put a stop to the war. The losses were serious: more than 30 sisters and five Vincentian priests lost their lives. Nonetheless, their devotion was repaid. The sultan revised the imperial charter to stipulate the equality of Moslem and non-Moslem subjects in the empire. He also offered to the Daughters of Charity a large property north of Constantinople for the building the Hôpital de La Paix, still in use. We should note that the Crimean War was the occasion to establish teams of nurses formed on the English side by Florence Nightingale and on the Russian side by the Grand-Duchess Helena, both fervent admirers of the Daughters of Charity.¹⁵ The organization of these nurses led to the foundation of the Red Cross in 1863.

Boré's activity was overwhelming. It is difficult to follow him in all that he was doing. In 1855, he lodged for a while, in one of the buildings of Saint-Benoît, the Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who had been part of the group of friends at La Chesnaie and who had come to Constantinople to take part in the struggle against the Russians. But his spirit was especially engrossed with the Bulgarian Orthodox who found it increasingly difficult to support the authority of the Greek bishops on whom they depended, but who did not respect their national identity. One of his confreres, Fr. Faveyrial,¹⁶ did not hesitate to claim in his *Histoire de l'Albanie* that many Albanians went over to Islam to escape the greed and hellenizing pressure of these bishops.

¹⁴ Personal note: my family has memories of a Daughter of Charity, Sabine Bridoux, called Sr. Xavier (1821-1882), decorated with the Légion d'Honneur by General Mac Mahon during the siege of Sebastopol. She was the sister of my great-great-grandfather on my mother's side. It should not be forgotten, however, that Fr. Étienne was opposed to any honorary distinctions, as he recalled in a letter to Boré dated 18 December 1852.

¹⁵ *Vie de M. Étienne, XIV^e Supérieur Général*, par un prêtre de la Mission, Paris 1881, pp. 372-386.

¹⁶ JEAN-ARNAULT DÉRENS, "Jean-Claude Faveyrial (1817-1893), lazariste amoureux de la "Turquie d'Europe," in *Peuples du monde*, n. 360 (September 2002) 33-35.

Fr. Boré was kept informed of this feeling thanks to the Vincentians of Thessalonica who told him of the desire of certain Bulgarian Orthodox villages that wished to go over to Catholicism. He took part personally on several occasions to gain the freedom, thanks to his friendly relations with Ali Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, of several unjustly imprisoned Bulgarians. More especially, he welcomed to Bebek, Dragan Tsankof, an ardent patriot completely devoted to the political and religious emancipation of Bulgaria. Despite the opposition of the Greek patriarchate, he put at Tsankof's disposition the press of Saint-Benoît, which allowed him, in 1859, to print a weekly newspaper in Bulgarian, called *Bulgaria*.

It was at this moment that a Bulgarian delegation, in the name of 3,000 fellow Christians and supported by Fr. Boré, officially requested their attachment to the Catholic Church, through the help of Bishop Brunoni, Vicar Apostolic of Constantinople. At the head of this group was an archimandrite, Josif Sokolski who, despite his 72 years, was chosen as the head of this nascent community of United Bulgarians. Boré served as translator and accompanied him to Rome, where Pius IX consecrated him bishop on 14 April 1861.

The beginning of this little community was difficult. Sokolski disappeared mysteriously on a Russian ship, and his successors had a difficult time taking over. Nevertheless, the Bulgarian Catholic Church gradually grew in strength, thanks in particular to the Bulgarian seminary at Zeitenlik, a suburb of Thessalonica. Boré blessed it in 1864 accompanied by his confrere, Fr. Bonetti, future Vicar Apostolic of Macedonia. One of the graduates of this seminary was Fr. Dimitri Bogdanoff (1894-1984), a Vincentian, who was the last archimandrite to serve the little church of Bulgarian Catholics in Istanbul. The conclusion of this effort of evangelization fell to Fr. d'Alzon, Superior General of the Assumptionists, who confided to Propaganda Fide that "the Lazarist method... was truly the best to bring these people to the true faith."¹⁷

Dragan Tsankof continued to live at Bebek where he gave lessons in Bulgarian. For Fr. Boré, this was an important element in making Catholic doctrine known to Tsankof's former fellow Christians. The favorable treatment he received, however, was not to everyone's liking. At the same time, Boré was reproached for his frequent and prolonged absences from Bebek, which was being felt in the declining success of the students. In fact, he was much taken up by

¹⁷ IVAN SOFRANOV, *Histoire du mouvement bulgare vers l'Eglise catholique au XIX^e siècle*, Desclée, Paris 1960, p. 208. See also YVES DANJOU, "L'œuvre des Lazaristes dans les Balkans," in *Vincentiana* 38:4-5 (1994) and STAFFORD POOLE, "Eugene Bore and the Bulgarian Catholic Movement," in *Vincentian Heritage*, 16:2 (1995) 193-207.

Bulgarian matters. He spent several weeks in Macedonia, visiting the Bulgarian villages desirous of becoming Catholic. He also took some time to found the mission of Monastir (today called Bitola). He regularly paid rapid visits to the islands of Naxos and Santorin to see his confreres. In April 1864, he went to France to attend the inauguration of the Berceau of Saint Vincent de Paul.

All this moving about was in the order of things, but his trips kept Fr. Boré from following closely matters at home. In addition, his whole character led him to take decisions that drew criticism. In April 1866, the Superior General sent two representatives to take stock of things. At the conclusion of their visits, in a heavy-handed decision, the school at Bebek was transferred to Saint-Benoît and Fr. Boré was summoned to Paris. In a letter of 27 September 1866, Fr. Étienne had to explain the matter to Rome in succinct but precise terms: "Although Fr. Boré, the Prefect Apostolic, brings together the most eminent qualities and an exalted virtue, he lacked tact and appreciation in the direction of people."

His departure for Paris was for Boré a genuine rupture in relation to the mission where he had ardently been invested intellectually and morally and had exercised a spirit of remarkable faith. Faithful to himself, however, he accepted his change with profound obedience, and offered no criticism of a decision that seemed to him to lack proper motives. In any case, the Superior General, Jean-Baptiste Étienne, kept confidence in him by soon naming him Secretary General of the Congregation. He faithfully assumed his new role, taking it as a duty to answer swiftly all the letters he received. He kept his missionary spirit alive whenever he had the occasion to preach, and he also became the procurator of the missions. He admired the extraordinary influence of the Miraculous Medal, by then internationally known. It seems quite likely that he was the author, in 1873, of the biography of the confessor of St. Catherine Labouré, *Vie, vertus et mort de M. Jean-Marie Aladel*, which contains interesting information about the visions at the rue du Bac.¹⁸

For his part, he remained faithful to visiting the houses of the Daughters of Charity, whose Director he became after his arrival in Paris. He often went to the house of Arcueil-Cachan where his goodness impressed the sick and elderly he found there. He stayed in this house in 1870 when the Prussians were besieging Paris. He did not spare his own pain to comfort the persons in the house as well as the soldiers who had established a first-aid station there. Sometime later, while the revolutionary Commune was imposed on

¹⁸ R. LAURENTIN, *Vie de Catherine Labouré. Preuves*, vol. II, DDB, Paris 1980, pp. 581-582.

Paris following this war, he gave proof of a special courage amid great danger. Twice he was arrested by the federated troops who then threatened him. People then begged him to take refuge in Versailles where the legitimate government was located, and he did so on 8 April 1871, barely escaping the death that befell several priests in Cachan.

When calm was restored, he returned to his usual activities, despite a sometimes chancy health. In fact, at the beginning of 1874, a grave and painful illness immobilized him for two months in the sisters' house at Cachan. Since his body was covered with sores and he had an intense fever, he prepared himself for death. However, at the end of a novena to the Sacred Heart, he recovered, contrary to all expectations. He returned to Paris to be present for the last hours of Fr. Étienne, who died 12 March 1874 after 30 years as Superior General.

The General Assembly that followed was very impressive. It brought together 85 members and, for the first time, all the missions were represented there, including those of China, Abyssinia and Persia. Fr. Boré, elected Secretary of the Assembly, was surprised to see his name come out of the ballot box. On 11 September, he was elected Superior General. In his Latin discourse closing the Assembly, he showed himself to be an ever-faithful observer of the holy Rules of the Congregation. The tone was given to which he would remain faithful, and which would be maintained by Fr. Fiat, the Assistant General who would become his successor.

Meanwhile, he had plenty of problems since Europe was being shaken by many political upheavals, whose price the Church and especially the religious congregations paid. When Fr. Boré wanted to travel to Rome to present his respects to Pope Pius IX, he discovered sadly that a number of Italian houses had been obliged to close, and that the Pope himself had been obliged to restrict himself to the confines of the Vatican. At the same time, the Vincentians were violently expelled from Germany, while in Austria new laws hostile to the Church were voted in.

Amid all this, Fr. Boré maintained his courage and rejoiced in the 260 persons who composed the Maison-Mère in 1875. After visiting Italy, he had the joy of traveling, along with Sr. Lequette, Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity, to Great Britain and Ireland, where he was warmly received. In France, he encouraged his confreres to go on pilgrimage to Montmartre, where the Basilica of the Sacred Heart was being built, recalling that St. Vincent and his first confreres had tried to go there to venerate the first martyrs of Paris. He also loved to refer to St. Vincent. He showed himself to be severe toward family visits, since they were opposed to Vincent's

spirit. He accepted the seminary of Troyes since this was the first seminary established by St. Vincent after that of Annecy.

He had a special joy in celebrating what was believed at the time to be the 300th anniversary of the birth of St. Vincent de Paul. On 24 April 1876, he went with a large concourse of people to the Berceau near Dax where, he wrote in a circular letter: "Vincent de Paul was born in a humble hamlet of the Landes, a blessed location, which the great heart of my venerable predecessor, Fr. Étienne, had nearly transfigured by bringing together so many examples of multiple works of charity around the monumental chapel, inaugurated by him with so much solemnity on 24 April 1864."

In the midst of all this, foreign lands still held their attraction for him. He was glad to visit Algeria, a country he first saw in 1851 in company with Étienne and where he made a great impression through his knowledge of Arabic. He visited with interest the three major seminaries of Algiers, Oran and Constantine, all Vincentian directed. Some while later he went through Belgium to visit Poland and Austria, a trip that brought him as much joy as admiration. This did not keep him from following the development of the Congregation in other parts of the world, as in the United States, in South America, in Ethiopia or in China.

However, after his travels to central Europe, he experienced a deep fatigue. During one night, he was overcome by a great weight that revealed pulmonary congestion. He was unable to improve. When Cardinal Guibert was informed, he came with his coadjutor, Bishop Richard, to visit the dying man. The cardinal said when he left: "This is how the saints die." One hour later, Eugène Boré breathed his last. It was 3 May 1878. A small cross was found on him, a distant souvenir of a dear friend, with this inscription: "In hoc signo vinces" (In this sign you will conquer). These words summarize perfectly his life and they express the missionary ideal that he always lived out.

(JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., translator)