

In the Service of God and France: The Syria Mission of the Lazarists in the Ottoman Empire*

Tanrının ve Fransa'nın Hizmetinde: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Lazaristlerin Suriye Misyonu

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Abstract

The missionary organization of the Congregation of the Mission, which is mostly known as the Lazarists, was created by Saint Vincent de Paul in 1625. Later, a women's branch called the Daughters of Charity was added to the Congregation. The Lazarists started their mission in the Ottoman Empire in 1783. In the beginning, their presence was quite humble, but this changed in the 19th century. The mission in the Ottoman Empire strengthened when the Daughters of Charity joined in 1839. One of the most successful mission of the Lazarists in the Empire was in Syria. The "civil war" of 1860, which mainly took place in the Mount Lebanon and Syria, made a deep impact on the Lazarists mission. Beirut became the center of the Syria mission. Increasing needs, changing demographic structure, and the intervention of the Great Powers to the region offered new opportunities for the Lazarist missions. The priests and the sisters engaged in the most needed fields in Syria and they had such establishments as schools,

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orphanages, ateliers and hospitals. They could reach the people and give them religious inculcation thanks to these establishments. Thus, they could fulfill their biblical mission of “serve to god”. On the other hand, the Lazarists had a strong French character and they played a significant role in the diffusion of the French culture and language so that they contributed to the increase of the French influence in Syria. Thus, they were also in the “service of France”. In this article, the missions of the Lazarist priests and the Daughter of Charity sisters in Syria, and the contribution of these missions to France’s prestige and influence will be evaluated.

Keywords: Lazarist, Missionary, Catholic, France, Syria

Özet

Congrégation de la Mission adıyla 1625 yılında Aziz Vincent de Paul tarafından kurulan misyoner teşkilatı daha çok Lazaristler olarak bilinmektedir. Daha sonra bu cemaate *Filles de la Charité* adıyla kadın kısmı da eklenmiştir. Lazaristler 1783 yılından itibaren Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda faaliyetlerine başladı. Başlangıçtaki mütevazı varlıkları 19. Yüzyılda daha da gelişti. 1839 yılında *Filles de la Charité* rahibelerinin de dahil olması Lazarist misyonunu güçlendirdi. Lazaristlerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndaki en başarılı misyonlarından birisi Suriye’deydi. 1860 yılında Cebel-i Lübnan ve Suriye’de yaşanan “iç savaş” diğer Katolik ve Protestan cemaatler gibi Lazaristlerin faaliyetlerini de derinden etkiledi. Beyrut, Suriye misyonunun merkezi haline geldi. Artan ihtiyaçlar, değişen demografik yapı ve Büyük Güçlerin bölgeye müdahalesi Lazaristler için yeni fırsatları beraberinde getirdi. Rahipler ve rahibeler okul, yetimhane, meslek atölyeleri, hastane gibi bölgede en fazla ihtiyaç duyulan alanlarda faaliyet gösterdi. Bu sayede, halka ulaşmak ve dini telkinde bulunmak da mümkündü. Böylece misyonerliğin temel amacı olan “Tanrı’ya hizmet” gerçekleşiyordu. Diğer taraftan, Lazaristlerin güçlü bir Fransız karakteri olması ve Fransız kültürünü ve dilini yayması, Fransa’nın Suriye’deki etkisinin artmasına katkı sağlıyorlardı. Bu yönüyle de “Fransa’ya hizmet” gerçekleşiyordu. Bu makale, Lazarist rahiplerin ve *Filles de la Charité* rahibelerinin Suriye’deki faaliyetlerini ve bu misyonların Fransa’nın etkisine ve itibarına olan katkılarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lazarist, Misyonerlik, Katolik, Fransa, Suriye

Introduction

The Congregation of the Mission, mostly known as the Lazarists, has been one of the most influential and active French missionary congregations for centuries¹. The congregation was founded by Vincent de Paul in 1625 thanks to a generous allocation of 45.000 Francs from a wealthy French family called Gondi. The Archbishop of Paris Jean-François de Gondi was also a member of the family and approved the new congregation on 24 April 1626. Later, the congregation received the royal recognition of the King Louis XIII of France in May 1627 and the Parliament ratified the decision on 4 April 1631. Finally, the Lazarists were officially approved by Pope Urban VIII with the Bull of *Salvatoris Nostris* on 12 January 1633². According to the bull, the Archbishopric of Paris was authorized to make all regulations and constitutions related to the Lazarists³. Thanks to this decision, the Lazarists could stay relatively remote from the direct influence of the Holy See and maintain their French character. At the beginning, the Lazarists worked for expanding their activities in Europe and they founded religious and charitable institutions in such states as Italy, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Prussia. Although there were participations of priests and missionaries to the congregation from different nations, the Frenchmen were the majority.

The Lazarist Mission in Syria

The expansion of the Lazarist missions to the outside of Europe in a large scale in the 18th century was closely related to the suppression of the Jesuit activities in Europe. When the Jesuits were suppressed by the Papal decree in 1773, the future of their establishments including the ones in the Ottoman Empire became a matter of discussion⁴. There were numerous Jesuit establishments in various parts of the Ottoman Empire like the Greek Islands, Thessalonica, Istanbul, Smyrna, Syria and Lebanon and they were being administered by the French Jesuits. François-Emmanuel Guignard, also known as le comte de Saint-Priest, the French Ambassador

¹ The original name of the congregation in French is “*La Congrégation de la Mission*” (Congregation of the Mission in English) abbreviated as CM. *Société des Prêtres de la Mission* is also used. However, the congregation is mostly known as *les Lazaristes* (the Lazarists in English) because the mission was started in the Priory of St. Lazare by Vincent de Paul and this place became the center of the congregation. The Vincentians derived from the founder is another usage to name the congregation in English.

² Carlo Braga, “The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission Historical Notes”, *Vincentiana* 44 no. 4 (2000): 1-7.

³ R. Chalumeau, “Lazarists.” *Catholicisme: Hier, Aujourd’hui, Demain*, Vol. 8 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1975): 114-115.

⁴ Jérôme Bocquet, *Missionnaire Français en terre d’Islam (Damas 1860-1914)* (Paris : Les Indes Savantes, 2005), 24.

at Istanbul, was aware of the importance of such establishments for the French influence in the Levant so that he insisted on keeping them at hand after the suppression. Thus, the French administration decided to replace the Jesuits in the Ottoman Empire with the other French missionaries and the Ottoman administration approved the replacement⁵.

Various options were taken into consideration to replace the Jesuits, but the attempts were vain at the beginning. In 1779, France decided to negotiate with the Lazarists on the matter. Consequently, Antoine Jacquier, the Superior of the Lazarists, accepted the establishment of a mission in the Near East in 1780 upon the guarantees of the French administration and the Holy See to support their activities. According to the decision taken by the Conseil d'état of France on 23 December 1780 and then approved by the King, all the churches and establishments of the Jesuits in the Ottoman Empire were transferred to the Lazarists. On the other hand, according to the agreement between France and the Ottoman Empire, the Lazarists were to operate within the privileges given by the imperial decree of Mehmet IV to the Jesuits in 1673. Also, the Holy See approved the transfer of the Jesuit properties to the Lazarists on 22 November 1782. Although their missions were closed and their properties were confiscated, the Jesuits were allowed to stay in their establishments and to participate into the Lazarist congregation if they desired to do so. Under such circumstances, seventeen Lazarist missionaries moved from France to the Ottoman Empire on January 1783⁶. Galata, Thessalonica, Santorini, and Smyrna missions attached to the Istanbul Apostolic Delegation and Antoura, Damascus, Tripoli, and Aleppo missions attached to the Syrian Apostolic Delegation, were the first Lazarist missions in the Ottoman Empire⁷.

From the French perspective, the Lazarists' placement in the Ottoman Empire instead of the Jesuits was particularly important. In contrast to the mixed international character of the Jesuits, the Lazarists had a predominantly French character. All the administrators and most of the missionaries in the Lazarist missions in the Ottoman Empire were Frenchmen. Thanks to this French character, the Lazarists did not only enjoy traditional French protection on Catholicism but also received required political and financial support of the French

⁵ F. Charles-Roux, *France et Chrétiens d'Orient* (Paris: Flammarion, 1939), 84.

⁶ Bocquet, *Missionnaire Français en terre d'Islam*, 24. According to a catalogue prepared by the congregation, the Lazarist mission started in Istanbul in 1782. Other early missions in the Ottoman Empire were Thessalonica (1783), Santorini (1783), Aleppo (1783), Naxos (1784), Antoura (1784), Damascus (1784), Tripoli (1784), Smyrna (1787). (S.N), *Catalogue des Maisons et du Personnel de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 103me Année, 82me Fascicule, (Unpublished), 1955.

⁷ Oscar Werner, *Atlas des Missions Catholiques* (Translated by Valérien Groffier) (Lyon : Bureaux des Missions Catholiques, 1886), 19-25.

administration to pursue their activities⁸. This was also heralding a new epoch concerning the role of the French administration on the missionary activities. Hereafter, France followed a stronger protection over the missionaries who had stronger “French” character.

According to the statement of Étienne, the Superior General of the Lazarists, the French government’s sole intention by sending the Lazarists was not to fill the gap of the Jesuits. The Lazarists were expected to focus on the establishment of “the elements of civilization”. For this purpose, the French administration asked them to establish schools everywhere and to propagate the French as much as possible. The Lazarists tried to respond to the demand of France and they opened numerous schools in the Levant. The Europeans in the Levant and native Christians including “heretics” showed interest in the Lazarist schools⁹. Many young people received education from these schools by learning the French language and culture.

Soon after the arrival of the Lazarists in the Ottoman Empire, France was shaken by the French Revolution in 1789. The Lazarists were influenced by the interventions of the French revolutionary administrations like the other Catholic congregations. Because of anti-clerical movements, their properties in France were confiscated and plundered. The Lazarist missions in the Ottoman Empire also suffered from the shortage of financial and human sources. The Lazarist establishments had to cease their activities¹⁰. Owing to ongoing problems with the revolutionary administration, the Lazarists tried to get the Austrian protection, but the response of France was to appoint an administrator to control their establishments. All these caused a serious quarrel between France and Austria on the matter in the 1790s.¹¹ Later, the French-Ottoman relations highly deteriorated when the former invaded Egypt in 1798 under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte. The belligerency continued until 1802 when the Ottoman and the French administrations signed the Treaty of Paris. The second article of the treaty concluded that all the treaties or capitulations before the war between two powers shall be renewed in all their particulars¹². The Treaty of Paris did not explicitly mention the religious protection or the establishments of missionaries, but the renewal of all previous capitulations

⁸ Roux, *France et Chrétiens d'Orient*, 7.

⁹ “Rapport sur les Missions des Lazaristes et des Filles de la Charité dans le Levant, présenté par M. Etienne, supérieur général, à MM. Les Membres de L’Œuvre des Ecoles d’Orient.” *Bulletin de l’Œuvre des Ecoles d’Orient* (hereafter *Bulletin de l’OEO*), no. 1 (Novembre 1857) : 1.

¹⁰ Bocquet, *Missionnaire Français en terre d’Islam*, 25.

¹¹ Roux, *France et Chrétiens d'Orient*, 96-97.

¹² The Article 2 of the Treaty of Paris concluded that “*Les traités ou capitulations qui, avant l’époque de la guerre, déterminaient entre respectivement les rapports de toute de espèce qui existaient entre les deux Puissances, sont en entier renouvelés...*” Paul Dislere & R. De Mouy, *Droits et Devoirs des Français dans la Pays d’Orient et d’Extreme-Orient* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1893), 333.

obviously brought these conclusions. Napoleon Bonaparte sought the ways of reviving the French influence in the Ottoman Empire in any case and ordered Guillaume Brune, ambassador at Istanbul between 1802 and 1804, on 18 October 1802 as follows:

The intention of the Government is that the ambassador at Istanbul should reestablish the French supremacy by using all means in this capital that it has been continuing for two hundred years...he should take all hospices; all Christians of Syria and Armenia, and especially all caravans visiting the Holy Places under his protection¹³.

Napoleon Bonaparte was clearly interested in the possible benefits of the French missions. He instructed Jean-Etienne Portalis, the Councilor of State, to submit a report about possible contributions of the missionaries to the French interests. Portalis submitted the report on 7 November 1802 and he stated that missionaries were contributing to both civilization and France and they should be supported by the Republic. Also, he suggested the revival of two congregations surpassed by the Revolution which were the Lazarists and Paris Foreign Missions (*Les Missions Étrangères de Paris*)¹⁴.

After his coronation as the emperor in 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte began to loosen the pressure on the Church and congregations. Missionaries were allowed to return to Paris in 1806. Also, the French government set an allocation for supporting missionaries. The Lazarists in the Ottoman Empire were one of the congregations supported by the French government. In 1806, Napoleon Bonaparte approved an allocation of 12.000 francs to the Lazarists in the Ottoman Empire. When the Lazarists were banned once again in France in 1809 due to the political disagreements between France and the Holy See, Napoleon Bonaparte did not want the Lazarist missions in the Levant to be affected by the ban¹⁵. Napoleon administration instructed the French ambassadors at Istanbul for the continuation of the Lazarist activities and the protection of their properties in the Levant¹⁶. The protection over the Lazarists was, above all, a political and diplomatic necessity for France to maintain her influence in the Levant.

The restrictions over the Lazarists were completely removed in France in 1815 after the restoration of the monarchy. Hereafter, an era of revival for the French missions began and the Lazarists benefited from the revival like the other congregations. The Revolution of 1830 in France and Louis Philippe's accession to the French throne caused the rise of a fear among the Lazarists concerning the prohibition of their activities again but this did not happen. King Louis

¹³ George Outrey, *Etude Pratique sur Protection Religieux de la France en Orient* (Constantinople, 1898), 33-34.

¹⁴ Roux, *France et Chrétiens d'Orient*, 109-110.

¹⁵ Eugene Veillot, *L'Eglise, La France et le Schisme en Orient* (Paris: Louis Vivés, 1855), 111.

¹⁶ Outrey, *Etude Pratique sur Protection de France*, 22-23; "Rapport sur les Missions des Lazaristes." *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 1 (Novembre 1857) : 2.

Philippe regarded the Lazarists as “an arm of French influence in the East” and supported them¹⁷.

By the 1830s, the number of French missionary establishments in the Ottoman Empire considerably increased and the field of activities varied. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the missionaries mostly run churches, monasteries, and guest houses for the Christian pilgrims. However, by the 1830s, they began to open more schools, charitable establishments, hospitals, dispensaries, and alms houses in Syria. The main reason for such a shift was the increasing influence of the Protestant missionaries in the region in the 1820s. Protestants were more concerned with the basic needs of people like education and healthcare rather than founding religious establishments so that their activities attracted the attention of local people. The Catholic missionaries tried to challenge them by doing similar works¹⁸.

The primary objective of the Lazarists like the other Catholic congregations in the region was to reach the Catholic population in Syria. The main Catholic religious groups in Syria were Maronites, Greek Melkites, Armenians, Assyrians (Syriacs), and Chaldeans, who were the members of the Eastern Catholic Churches (*rites-unis* or *rites-orientaux* in French). Although these people had their own church hierarchies, liturgies, and traditions, they were in communion with the Catholic Church so that they had to follow canonic laws of the Church. According to Apostolic Delegation of Syria¹⁹, the number of Catholic populations in Syria was around 247.000 in the mid-19th century. The Maronites were the most populous Catholic group in Syria with 200.000 people. The Greek Catholics (Melkites) were second with 32.000 people. The number of Catholic Armenians was 7.000, and the number of Catholic Assyrians was 5.000. In addition to Eastern Catholics, there were nearly 2.000 Latin Catholics in Syria²⁰. The Catholic missionaries including the Lazarists were mostly focusing on these people in their missions.

¹⁷ Charles A. Frazee, “Vincentian Missions in the Islamic World.” *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 5, no. 1 (1984): 13.

¹⁸ Serkan Gül, “Orta Doğu’da Protestan Misyonların Kurulması ve İlk Faaliyetleri.” *Yeni Türkiye*, 82 (2016): 774-780.

¹⁹ The Saint Siege was represented by bishops with the title of apostolic vicar in Syria. Although there had been some representatives of the popes in the region before, the seat of vicariate was absent at the beginning of the 19th century. The Vicariate Apostolic of Syria, Egypt, Arabia and Cyprus was recommenced in 1817. The vicar had the title of the Bishop of Aleppo. In addition to their quality to be representative of the popes, the apostolic vicars were also the head of Latin Catholics and the responsible of Catholic missions in their jurisdictional region. There were also three apostolic delegations namely Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt, under the authority of the Apostolic Vicar of Aleppo. The apostolic delegations were representatives of the Saint Siege for Eastern Catholics, and they were responsible with the surveillance of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

²⁰ Archives de l’œuvre Pontificales Missionnaires (OPM), E-14, no. E04416 (7 Décembre 1855). According to document, the Chaldeans population in the Apostolic Delegation of Syria was insignificant and they did not have any bishop or priest in the region. Also, the Catholic population was given as 32.000 for Mesopotamia and 8.000

The foundation of the Saint Joseph College²¹ (Antoura College) in 1834 was the greatest success of the Syrian mission of the Lazarists achieved thus far. The College is considered as the first significant step for the diffusion of the French culture in the Levant. Although the French political interests and influence had dated back in many centuries in Syria, the impact of France had remained insignificant in terms of culture and language until the 19th century. Italian was the *lingua franca* of the European languages in the Levant thanks to mainly long-standing commercial relations between Italian states and the region. Local people tended to learn Italian for practical concerns. Also, there had been a tradition of sending the young Maronites to Italy for education and they obviously knew Italian when they returned²².

At the beginning, the Saint Joseph College had been designed as a seminary to offer a higher education on theology for the Eastern Catholics. However, it was redesigned in the 1850s in the style of the colleges in France and it especially focused on the commerce education. Although another college was opened later in Damascus called Saint-Vincent College, the Saint Joseph College remained as the most prestigious Lazarist institution in the Levant.

The Daughters of Charity (*Filles de la Charité*) constituted another field of responsibility for the Lazarists. They had arrived in Beirut in 1847 and joined the missionary activities. The control and administration of the activities of the Daughters of Charity, who had many establishments, especially in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, were attached to the Lazarist mission.

The Civil War in 1860 that took place in the Mount Lebanon and Syria between the Druzes and Maronites deeply influenced the activities of the Lazarists in the region. The superior of the Lazarists in Syria was killed during the events. The mission buildings in Damascus were completely destructed and the missionaries of the town took refuge in Beirut. The developments were so severe that the Lazarists were about to end their missions in the region. However, the arrival of the French army with seven thousand soldiers under the command of General Haupoul made the continuation of the Lazarist presence possible in the region. Also, the Lazarists like other missionary congregations benefitted from the indemnity that the Ottoman administration accepted to pay because of the pressure of the Great Powers.

for Egypt. Two decades later, the number of Catholic populations in Syria was given as 350.000 in a document dated 1875. See, Archives de l'OPM, E-15 (Jésuites), no. E05214 (1875).

²¹ The original name of the school is *Collège Saint Joseph*, but the name of the school is mostly mentioned as the *Collège d'Antoura* in the French sources of the 19th century. This college should not be confused with the Jesuit institution of *l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beirut* which was established in 1875.

²² Khairallah T. Khairallah, *La Syrie: Territoire, Origines ethniques et politiques* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1912), 45-46.

By using this indemnity, the Lazarists reconstructed their building in Damascus and restarted their mission there in 1864²³. However, the importance of Damascus diminished, and Beirut became the center of the Lazarist mission in Syria after the Civil War. Two factors were particularly significant in strengthening of the Lazarist existence in Beirut. Firstly, an intense Christian migration to the town took place after 1860 and the Christian population highly increased in the town. Secondly, Beirut became a secure place for Christians and missionaries under the international surveillance. Still, Beirut was not the sole missionary station of the Syria Mission of Lazarists. At the beginning of 1860s, there were four stations of the Syria Mission: Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut and Tripoli. In addition to these missions, the Lazarists had the Saint Joseph College in the Mount Lebanon.

According to a document from the archives of the *Œuvre Pontificales Missionnaires*, the Beirut Mission, the center of the Lazarists in Syria, was in service with six priests and four frères in the amid of 1870s. This center also offered spiritual service to the Daughters of Charity missions which had forty-three sisters then. At that time, the Daughters of Charity were running an orphanage with two hundred and sixty girls, a hospital, a normal school, and a day school with eight hundred students. The Lazarist missionaries in Beirut were responsible for the control and spiritual guidance of these activities. Also, the missionaries held the responsibility of supervising the surrounding schools. All these responsibilities imposed a serious financial burden to the Beirut mission. The Lazarists depended on allocations from France to pursue their activities. They received an annual subsidy of 8000 francs from France; 4000 francs from the French government and 4000 francs from the *Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. In addition to these subsidies, they only had an income of 300 francs from their activities in Beirut²⁴.

Although offering mass education was a significant part of any missionary organization, the Lazarists could not achieve a noteworthy progress on the matter for a long time because of their other responsibilities. The new schools of the Lazarist missions were mostly opened in the 1880s. In his visit at Beirut in 1883, Antoine Fiat, the general superior of the Lazarists, suggested the missionaries to focus on educational activities. The establishment of new schools was regarded as the best way of reaching out the Christians in the region where the Protestant missionaries were progressively increasing their influence. The Lazarists opened three new schools in 1883 as an immediate response to the suggestion of Fiat. In a short time, ninety schools were opened in various regions attached to the Beirut and Sidon missions thanks to the

²³ Bocquet, *Missionnaire Français en terre d'Islam*, 29-32.

²⁴ Archives de l'OPM, E-15f (Lazaristes), no. E05278.

financial assistance of the French government and the Lazarist Congregation. By the end of 1884, the Lazarists had a hundred and ten schools in the region²⁵.

In 1895, the number of personnel at the headquarter in Beirut was nine; five priests and four frères. There were a hundred and twelve schools in the region under the control of the headquarter. The teachers working at these schools were mostly native Maronite Christians who had been educated at the Lazarist institutions. The Lazarists were providing financial support to the Christian villages for opening new schools and running previously opened schools. On the other hand, the Saint Joseph College was active in the Mount Lebanon with ten priests and nine frères in 1895. The College was in a continuous progress and had three hundred students at that time. Another mission center in Syria was in Tripoli and there were four priests and three frères in the center. The Tripoli mission, in addition to its missionary works in Tripoli, was also fulfilling the chaplaincy of the Daughters of Charity and missionaries in the Mount Lebanon. Two other missions of the Lazarists in Syria were in Akbés and in Damascus. There were two priests and two frères in Akbés and five priests and four frères in Damascus where the most significant institution was the Saint-Vincent College²⁶.

According to a statistic of 1900, the Lazarists had three main mission centers, namely Istanbul, Smyrna, and Syria, in the Ottoman Empire. The number of missionaries was seventy-five, of which fifty were the French and the others were from different nationalities. The Syria mission had the lowest rate of missionary from the French nationality. The statistics were as follows:

Table 1: Lazarist Establishments and Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire (1900)²⁷

Mission	Number of Establishment	Lazarists Missionaries	
		French	Non-French
Turkey (Constantinople)	5	28	8
Asia Minor	1	11	3

²⁵ Pierre Corcket, *Les Lazarists et les Filles de la Charité au Proche-Orient 1783-1983* (Beyrouth: Achrafieh 1983), 262.

²⁶ Œuvres des Missionnaires en Syrie, *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, Tome 60 (1895), 407-411.

²⁷ Les Amis des Missions, *Les Missions Catholiques Françaises en 1900 et 1928* (Paris: Imprimerie de la Seine, N.D.), 13. In addition to the Constantinople, Smyrna and Syria missions, the Lazarists had a mission in Egypt with an establishment and five missionaries, three of them were French. This work does not include any explanation concerning the nationalities of the non-French missionaries.

(Smyrna)			
Syria	5	11	17
Total	11	50	28

The Table 1 gives the number of the Lazarist missionaries in the Syria mission as twenty-eight for the year of 1900. However, this number was given as thirty-seven at another statistic sent from the Lazarist mission in Syria to the *Œuvre Pontificales Missionnaires* in 1901. There is no certain explanation for the difference between the two statistics. Although it can be argued that nine new missionaries joined the Lazarist missions in Syria in one year, such an increase was not coherent with the general trend. Thus, if one of the statistics is accepted to be valid it should be the one that was sent from the Lazarist mission in Syria in 1901. The statistics of the Syria mission of Lazarists were as follows:

Table 2: Statistics of Syria Missions of Lazarists (1901)²⁸

Mission	Missionaries	Native Priests	Frères	Churches and Chapels	Schools	Students
Beirut	5	-	4	1	140	6000
Antoura	18	-	12	-	1 (College)	325
Tripoli	4	3	2	1	9	400
Damascus	7	3	4	-	1 (College)	260
Akbés	3	-	3	-	5	Not-given
Total	37	6	25	2	154 schools and 2 Colleges	6985

Several important points should be emphasized concerning the missions indicated in the Table 2. Although some of the one hundred and forty schools attached to the Beirut mission were located in Beirut, most of the schools were active in various regions, chiefly in the Mount Lebanon. These schools were run by either religious or lay teachers who were mostly graduated

²⁸ Archives de l'OPM, E-15f (Lazaristes), no. E05286.

from the Lazarists colleges or schools. The Lazarists missionaries in Beirut were responsible for the supervision and control of these schools. The Beirut mission of the Lazarists was also responsible for the administration of the Daughters of Charity mission in Beirut, which had numerous personnel and establishments. Besides, the Lazarist missionaries were conducting the sermons of the Eastern Catholics when they visited the Mount Lebanon. There was a small apostolic school attached to the College. Like the Beirut mission, the Tripoli mission had opened nine schools in the Mount Lebanon and held the administration of these schools. In addition to these activities, the missionaries were training the Maronite religious men in the Mount Lebanon. The number of the Maronite priests attending such trainings was one hundred and forty in 1899²⁹.

The activities of the Lazarists like the other French missionary congregations were in stagnation at the end of the 19th century. The basic reason for this was the political developments in France. At that time, the negative attitude of the French administration against the religious organizations and missionaries in France was extraordinarily strong. The situation of the Lazarists, who were highly dependent on the financial support from France to pursue their activities, became very fragile after the adoption of strict secular laws in 1901 in France. By these laws, all educational and financial activities of the congregations in France were banned by the French government³⁰. The religious organizations were devastated by another secular law in 1904 which also included strict stipulations and widely banned the activities of congregations in France. The number of missionaries, men and women, who had to leave France because of both laws is estimated to be nearly thirty thousand³¹.

It seemed inevitable for the French missionaries in all over the world to face with financial and personnel shortages. However, the Lazarists were less affected from the experienced problems compared to the other French congregations. The French governments again tended to make a distinction between the missionary activities in France and abroad. Although most of the Lazarist institutions in France was shut down by the government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed the French Consul at Damascus that France did not have any intention to end the Lazarist missions in the region. Moreover, the government continued to send allocations to the Lazarist missions without any reduction³². As it was stated by the

²⁹ Archives de l'OPM, E-15f (Lazaristes), no. E05286.

³⁰ For the impact of the laws on the religious congregations see. Léon Ledoux, *Les Congrégation Religieuses et La Loi du 1^{ER} Juillet 1901*, Thèse pour le Doctorat (Paris : Faculté de Droit de l'Université de Paris, 1904)

³¹ Patrick Cabanel, "Catholicisme et Laïcité, articles d'exportation dans la République coloniale", *Religion et Colonisation* (Editeurs: Dominique Borne & Benoit Falaize) (Paris: Les Edition de l'Atelier, 2009), 55-57.

³² Bocquet, *Missionnaire Français en terre d'Islam*, 158.

historian Anatole Leroy Beaulieu in 1903, missionaries were an “unpaid and passive instrument” of France, and they served in all over the world by propagating French spirit, ideas, language and literature. Thus, according to him, “anticlericalism was a national suicide for France”³³

Despite the efforts of the French administration to make a distinction between the activities of the French missionaries in France and abroad, the Lazarists were influenced by the existing stagnation of the missionary congregations. Even though they did not face with a serious decline in their activities, the Lazarists could not show an expansion and advancement as strong as the previous times. Another problem in the early 20th century was increasing Protestant influence in the Levant. The Lazarists openly stressed “deep crisis of faith” in recent years in Syria and Lebanon caused by active propaganda of British and American Protestant missionaries³⁴. Despite the experienced difficulties, the Lazarists were still active and influential in the region. The presence of the Lazarist missions in Syria including Palestine in 1911, prior to the World War I, were as follows:

Table 3: Statistics of Lazarist Missions in Syria and Palestine (including the Daughter of Charity) (1911)³⁵

Works	Numbers and Explanations
Lazarists Missionaries	52
Native Priests (secular)	26
Seminaries	1
Ecclesiastic Students	25
Frères	16
European Religious Women (Daughters of Charity)	252
Infants baptized <i>in articulo mortis</i>	200
Churches and Chapels	29
Schools	200
Students	13.675

³³ Cabanel, *Catholicisme et Laïcité*, 58.

³⁴ “Turquie d’Asie”, *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, Tome 77 (1912), 210.

³⁵ “Turquie d’Asie”, *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, Tome 77 (1912), 210.

Hospitals and Hospices	8
Colleges	2 with 600 students (College of Antoura and College of Saint Vincent in Damascus)
Teacher's Schools (girls)	1 with 45 students
Orphanage	10 with 896 children
Dispensaries	12 (Number of people assisted is 94.671)

As can be clearly seen from the statistics of 1911, there were two colleges and two hundred schools run by the Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity with thousands of students. Also, there were many churches, hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages under the control of the Lazarists. With all these schools and charitable establishments, the Lazarists were, as they had always been, an important part of the French missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire before the World War I. However, the Lazarist missions in the Ottoman Empire like the other French congregations were banned and their properties were confiscated with the outbreak of the War in 1914.

The Saint Joseph College (Antoura College)

The Jesuit mission in Antoura had been created in 1651 when Sheik Abu Nevfel Khazen had invited the Jesuits to establish a mission for the Maronites. The Jesuits arrived in Antoura in 1656 and established the Saint Joseph convent³⁶. After the suppression of the Jesuits, the Lazarists took over their mission in Antoura in 1783.

The Lazarist had the idea of founding their college in Antoura in the 1830s when Syria was a focal point for missionary activities. Syria was under the occupation of Mehmet Ali Pasha, the Governor of Egypt, at that time. The Lazarists aimed at benefiting from the situation. Thus, they demanded permission from the Egyptian authorities for opening a college in Antoura and they received it in 1834. Next year, the College was open with three priests and twenty students³⁷.

³⁶ This convent is identified as the first French college in the Levant by Roux. See. Roux, *France et Chretien d'Orient*, 55.

³⁷ Jean-Baptiste Piolet, éditeur, *La France au Dehors: Les Missions Catholique Française au XIXe Siècle*, Vol. 1 (Paris : Armand Colin 1900), 307.

The establishment of the Saint Joseph College with the support and the promotion of France was connected to the political developments in the region. Syria was a scene of political struggle between the Great Powers because of the Ottoman-Egypt war and for France, the creation of such an institution meant the addition of cultural and religious influence to her political influence in the region. Also, the timing of the College's establishment was related to the arrival of the American Protestant missionaries to the region in 1830s. The Protestant missionaries were active in the region since the beginning of the 1830s and the establishment of the College could be considered as a response to their activities.

According to the report of the French Consul at Beirut, who visited the Saint Joseph College in 1861, the number of students was one hundred and forty at the College. Most of the students were attending to the College thanks to the financial support from the charitable organizations in France. *L'Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* was covering the expenses of seventy-nine students while eleven students were supported by the French government and three students by the *Comité de secours de Beyrouth*. The expenses of the other forty-seven students were covered by their families. At the time, the Ghazir College of the Jesuits had one hundred and fifty students. Ninety of them were supported by the *Oeuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* and five by the *Comité de secours de Français*³⁸. The two colleges had quite similar structures in terms of the number of students and financial support received from the French charitable organizations.

In addition to its rivals from different confessions, the Saint Joseph College was also in a "friendly" competition with the Ghazir College which was founded by the Jesuits in 1846. The Jesuits were known for their success in the field of education, and their college was also a successful initiative. The children of some European consuls, rich families, emirs and sheiks were among the students of the Ghazir College³⁹. The College's curriculum was completely consistent with the classical college system in France by 1864 so that the school was highly demanded by the Eastern Christians who sought for a distinguished education⁴⁰. The number of students at the Ghazir College was two hundred and thirty in 1869. In the seminary branch

³⁸ Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE), Correspondance Consulaire et Politique (Turquie-Beyrouth), Dépêche Politique No. 126 (Beyrouth, 15 Août 1861). In the report of the Consul, there was no indication that the French government was giving scholarships to the Ghazir College at that time. However, the Ghazir College also benefited from the scholarships of the government.

³⁹ "Résumé de la lettre envoyée par le Prêtre Jésuite Bourquenoud" *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Tome 32 (1860), 140-141.

⁴⁰ "Le Séminaire Oriental", *Les Jésuites en Syrie (1831-1931): Université Saint Joseph*, (Paris: Les Editions Dillen, 1931), 9.

of the College, there were Maronite, Greek, Armenian, Assyrian, Bulgarian, and Copt students, and their number was seventy. The secular college branch was also highly popular among the notable native families and European families in the region⁴¹.

Although there was a competition between the colleges of Ghazir and Antoura, the Jesuits considered the Lazarists' school as an ally in their struggle against Muslim, heretic and schismatic educational institutions in the region. Still, according to the Jesuit perceptions, the college of Lazarists did not meet the standards of colleges in Europe except the courses on commerce so that only the Ghazir College "was defending the cause of God and the Church by offering a secondary education in the level of the colleges in Europe"⁴². According to the French Consul at Beirut, the level of education at the College was inferior to the education given by the Jesuits. However, it was still good enough to meet the needs of the region. However, Father Saliège, the superior of the Saint Joseph College between 1879 and 1911, had assured Fiat, the Superior General of the Lazarists, that education given by the College was solid and serious and it had the distinguished characteristics of the classical French education⁴³.

At the end of the 19th Century, despite some weaknesses, the College was still one of the most significant French institution in the region with its nearly three hundred students from various places of the Levant. Most of the students were from Lebanon and Syria. Besides, there were students from Egypt, Cyprus and the Greek Island in the College⁴⁴. The number of students at the College was three hundred and fifty-three in 1914 on the eve of the World War I⁴⁵.

The Daughters of Charity (*Filles de la Charité*)

The Lazarist Congregation was founded in 1625 and approved by the Pope as a missionary congregation in 1633. Soon after, the idea of creating a charitable organization of women was on the agenda. The decision for the foundation of the Daughters of Charity⁴⁶ was taken on 29 November 1633 by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac with the primary aim of providing aid to the neediest people. Especially, meeting the needs of people from rural areas for food and healthcare was the primary objective of the congregation. The charitable works of

⁴¹ "Rapport du R.P. Canuti sur le Collège de Ghazir, *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no.60 (Novembre 1869) : 371-375.

⁴² *Le Séminaire Oriental*, 11.

⁴³ Georges Goyau, *La France Missionnaire dans les Cinq Parties du Monde*, Tome II (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1948), 127.

⁴⁴ "Lettre de M. Saliège a M.N., Assistant." *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Tome 63 (1898), 558-559.

⁴⁵ Frazee, *Vincentian Missions in the Islamic World*, 22.

⁴⁶ In French, the name of organization is *Les Filles de la Charité de Saint Vincent de Paul*, but mostly called as *Filles de la Charité*.

the Daughters of Charity, which had begun in France, progressed in time by spreading in various parts of Europe.

The activities of the Daughters of Charity in the Ottoman Empire began in December 1839 with the arrival of two sisters at Istanbul to open a school for girls. The next year the sisters went to Smyrna to open a school there. In 1842, the number of the sisters reached thirteen in Istanbul and eleven in Smyrna⁴⁷. When their activities reached a satisfactory level in Istanbul and Smyrna, the Daughters of Charity decided to create a new mission in Beirut. The existence of the Lazarists, who had previously settled in Beirut and had been improving their activities, was a facilitating factor for the arrival of the Daughters of Charity at Beirut. The Sister Gélas was the first person appointed to create the Beirut mission.

Sister Gélas was the leading personality on spreading the activities of the Daughters of Charity in Beirut and different parts of Lebanon and Syria. Her career in the Ottoman Empire had begun in Smyrna in 1840. Gélas had successfully established schools and dispensaries in Smyrna. Gélas' success was the main reason for her appointment as the founder of the Beirut mission of the Daughters of Charity. From her appointment to Beirut in 1847 to her decease in 1898, Gélas actively continued missionary activities and she was accepted as the founder of all the establishments of the Daughters of Charity in Syria and Lebanon⁴⁸.

The first establishment in Beirut under the supervision of Gélas was the charitable house of Beirut that was a humble building outside the center of the town. At the first year of the establishment, a day school for girls was opened and the mission of the Daughters of Charity began its mission with the educational activities. In 1848, an opportunity for the Daughters of Charity emerged to be active in the field of healthcare. As the sisters helped the victims of the plague epidemic in Beirut and its environs, they received the sympathy of the people in the region including Muslims. Hereafter they could pursue more freely their missionary works towards poor and ill people⁴⁹. After managing a certain institutionalization in Beirut, Gélas was appointed to create a house in Damascus like the one in Beirut. The mission in Damascus was active in 1854 and rapidly improved.

⁴⁷ Frazee, *Vincentian Missions in the Islamic World*, 14-15.

⁴⁸ Corcket, *Les Lazaristes et les Filles de la Charité*, 100. When she died in 1898, a biography of Gélas appeared in the *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* which wrote that Gélas is known as “the pearl of the Orient” and she was the founder of all establishments of the Daughters of Charity in Syria. She had served for sixty-four years in the mission, of which fifty-one year had been in Syria. Gélas had also been decorated with the Légion d’honneur by the French government. She was described as “so French, so patriot and so Christian”. « Sœur Gélas, Fille de la Charité », *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Tome 63 (1898), 426-434.

⁴⁹ Piolet, *La France au Dehors*, 310.

Gélas had an intention to improve the works of the Daughters of Charity in Beirut and in the Mount Lebanon. For this purpose, she demanded a sum of 5000 Francs from the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* in 1857 to open a nursery and to develop the normal school. In her letter concerning the matter, Gélas also informed the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* about the recently established schools in Ghazir and Edhen that each school had nearly forty students. In addition to these establishments, the Daughters of Charity had four schools in Beirut, two in Ras-Beirut and one in Zouk, Adette and Bamedoun. According to the statement of Gélas, the young teachers at these schools were doing their best to educate the children, who received religious education according to their capacities. As an indication of the importance of religious education, Gélas said that “the children of these lands, which are not free from slavery yet, can only be saved with the light of Catholicism”⁵⁰.

While developing and increasing their institutions the Daughters of Charity were shocked by the civil war of 1860. Especially their establishment in Damascus, which had been founded in 1854, was deeply affected by the events. In 1860, the Damascus mission had several schools and an orphanage as well as a dispensary serving sixty thousand people annually. However, the attacks against the Christians in Damascus following the events in the Mount Lebanon lumbered the situation of the mission in Damascus. The mission of the Daughters of Charity in Damascus was demolished like some other missionary establishments during the events of July 1860⁵¹. The sisters had to desert Damascus for taking refuge to Beirut like missionaries from various congregations.

As Beirut was densely populated by the Christian refugees after the events of 1860, there were many missionary works to do for the Daughters of Charity. At the beginning, the sisters engaged in supplying food and giving healthcare services for the emigrants. The mission of the Daughters of Charity undertook the protection of four thousand poor and offered healthcare service to six hundred people at their dispensary. Also, a hundred and fifty children were placed at the orphanage of the sisters⁵². Most of the financial sources for these activities were obtained from donations from Europe. Especially, the *Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* strongly supported the works of the Daughters of Charity. The French Consulate General at Beirut and the French Marine Forces in the region also supported the works of the sisters. Fuad Pasha, who had been sent to the region by the Ottoman Government as the inspector, was one of the

⁵⁰ « Lettre de la Sœur Gélas à MM les Membres du comité de l'OEO. » *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 2 (Avril 1858), 19-21.

⁵¹ “Missions de Syrie.” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Tome 32 (1860), 416.

⁵² “Missions de Syrie.” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Tome 32 (1860), 418.

supporters of the Daughters of Charity. He had written a friendly letter to the sisters and donated a hundred lira to appreciate their works for the victims of the 1860 events⁵³.

According to Father Lavigerie, who was the superior of the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* and came from France to organize aids in Lebanon, the Daughters of Charity were successfully distributing the generous donations sent from Europe to the region. He observed that the establishments of the sisters were always full of people in need and the sisters were trying to meet their needs by providing food, medicine and clothes. Lavigerie asserted in his report that many people would die with their children without the efforts of the sisters so that he had given the sisters a considerable amount of money to contribute to their works⁵⁴.

The aids and activities of the Daughters of Charity were significant after the 1860 events and this strengthened the existing sympathy of people on them. Also, these events made serious impacts on the characteristics of the activities of the Daughters of Charity. Thousands of children had lost their families and turned to be orphans so that the sisters focused on opening orphanages. In 1861, the Saint-Charles Orphanage was founded with the contribution of the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* and it remained as the most important orphanage of the Daughters of Charity in the region. The number of children staying at the Saint-Charles was more than five hundred in 1861⁵⁵. There were nearly forty girls from the noble families of Lebanon at the orphanages of the Daughters of Charity and the responsibility of their education had been left to the sisters⁵⁶. Thirty of the girls were granted scholarship by the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* and they were sent to Deir-el-Kamar in the Mount Lebanon to receive religious education⁵⁷.

The number of children staying at the Saint-Charles Orphanage in Beirut was around two hundred and fifty in 1869. The Orphanage was not only interested in providing basic needs of children but also in giving religious education to them. At that time, activities of the Protestant missionaries were gaining impetus in the region and this was considered as a significant threat by Catholics. Struggling against the Protestant missionaries, who were opening orphanages and schools everywhere thanks to their pecuniary possibilities, was regarded as an important duty by the Daughters of Charity⁵⁸. During the following years, the

⁵³ Archives du MAE, Correspondance Consulaire et Politique (Turquie-Beyrouth), Dépêche Politique No. 39 (Beyrouth, 21 Juillet 1860)

⁵⁴ "Rapport de M. L'abbé Lavigerie." *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 11 (Avril 1861), 23.

⁵⁵ *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 12 (Juillet 1861), 29.

⁵⁶ "Les Orphelinats des filles par la Sœur Gélas", *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 15 (Mai 1862), 10.

⁵⁷ "Lettre de la Sœur Gélas à le Directeur général de l'OEO", *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 17 (Septembre 1862), 184-185.

⁵⁸ "L'orphelinat Saint-Charles à Beyrouth par Sœur Pesin", *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 61 (Janvier 1869), 24.

Daughters of Charity continued to open new orphanages in different parts of Lebanon and Syria. These orphanages mostly received girls, but they also had boys whose number was nearly a hundred and fifty at the end of 1870s. As a result of increasing number of boys, it was decided to open an independent orphanage for their accommodation. For this purpose, a vast terrain next to the Beirut mission of the Daughters of Charity was bought with the pecuniary support of the French Government, and the Saint-Joseph Orphanage was opened in 1881. In addition to guard children, this orphanage operated like a vocational school and boys were taught there such professions as tailoring, shoemaking, typography, book binding, carpentry, sculpture, lock smithery, weaver and bakery. Many boys were also sent to such French cities as Marseille, Lyon and Paris to specialize on these fields and they taught their learning to other boys at the ateliers when they returned.

The orphanages always remained an important element of the Daughters of Charity missions in the Levant. Raising and educating children according to the Catholic faith was a significant part of their mission. As the running orphanages was generally considered as a field of female missionaries this mission was pursued by the sisters under the supervision and control of the Lazarist missionaries. In addition to religious and basic education, children were trained in different professions at the orphanages⁵⁹.

Another field of mission that the sisters of the Daughters of Charity successfully pursued was healthcare service. The sisters had been offering healthcare to poor people since their arrival at Beirut and they increased these activities after 1860. In the early 1860s, they had created a humble dispensary with three beds, and they provided healthcare and pharmacy services in there. In her report, G elas stated that they had been highly appreciated by the Turks thanks to their works on healthcare. In order to increase their activities, G elas continued, the sisters had demanded to run the hospital of the town prison and this had been accepted by the Governor of Beirut. According to G elas' report, although the numbers would change according to seasons and epidemics, they were receiving patients numbering around a hundred and a hundred and fifty each day. The sisters were also visiting patients at home to offer them dispensary service. The demand for healthcare from the local people was increasing day by day, but the capacity of their dispensary was far from meeting the needs. Thus, G elas stressed the necessity for the aids from Europe to build a larger hospital and to gather all healthcare services there.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Corcket, *Les Lazaristes et les Filles de la Charit e*, 251.

⁶⁰ "Rapport de la S eur G elas", *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 31 (Janvier 1865), 194-200.

The healthcare was a field of competition among missionaries from different faiths and congregations. However, this service was mostly provided in the rooms of the mission buildings rather than well-equipped hospitals. The Daughters of Charity had founded a modest hospital to strengthen their position in the competition. Yet, this hospital was insufficient to offer a proper service and the discontent concerning this fact was clearly expressed by Gélas. She reported that the hospital was being supported and protected by France so that it was known by the local people as a French establishment. Thus, inadequate condition of the hospital was defined by Gélas as a shame of France. On the other hand, the hospital of Protestants in Beirut run by the German sisters was superior to the hospital of the Daughters of Charity as “it was supported by all Protestant nations and the French Protestants”. Most of the patients had to be rejected by the Daughters of Charity because of the huge demand despite the limited capacity. In such cases, the rejected patients were heading to the hospital of Germans, and so the Daughters of Charity were missing the opportunity for reaching people to give religious inspiration and teaching. Gélas insistently stressed the importance of the French assistance to overcome such problems⁶¹.

The Daughters of Charity received the hospital that they desired after a painful process. Buying the land for the hospital and collecting the required money for the construction took many years. The required source was supplied by the French Government and the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient*. The construction was completed section by section, and the hospital was opened in 1885 with the name of Sacré-Coeur. This hospital was later organized as an independent establishment in 1890 attached to the Lazarist mission⁶².

In addition to their works in the fields of orphanage and healthcare, works on education was another significant field of mission for the Daughters of Charity. Throughout the years, they opened numerous schools in different regions of Lebanon and Syria. The priority of the schools was to raise the Catholic teachers who would go everywhere to educate the Christian children. For this purpose, the sisters had opened a normal school at the Beirut mission as soon as they arrived in Beirut. The main objective of the school was to raise female teachers who can teach in Arabic. The students at the normal school received an education in such academic subjects as reading, writing, catechism, history of the saints, mathematics, grammar and letter writing. Besides, they were also trained in tailoring, carpet making and embroidery⁶³.

⁶¹ “Rapport de la Sœur Gélas.” *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 78 (Septembre 1873), 182-183.

⁶² Corcket, *Les Lazaristes et les Filles de la Charité*, 263.

⁶³ “Rapport de la Sœur Gélas”, *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 31 (Mai 1865), 197.

As a matter of fact, the Daughters of Charity had to follow the steps of the Lazarist missionaries, who had similarly trained the talented young native students and sent them to teach in different regions of Lebanon. Firstly, the number of sisters was insufficient to reach everywhere in person to open schools. Secondly, they did not speak the language of local people. Thus, the Daughters of Charity inevitably relied on the new recruitments from the natives of the region. The students at the schools of the mission centers were supplying the main human source. The most successful students were selected and trained to be teachers. After completing their training, some students were appointed to the schools and orphanages at the mission centers while the others were sent to different regions to open new schools or to run the existing schools.

In his report to the *Œuvre des Ecoles d'Orient* dated 1857, Father Etienne, the Superior General of the Lazarists, had stressed that the schools founded by the Daughters of Charity had made very deep changes on the customs and behaviors of the people of the Levant. According to Etienne, these schools were shaping “the future families by raising the future mothers”. And this was making a serious impact on “the development of a new civilization and changing of ideas on the behalf of Catholicism”. Also, girls from different faiths received the same education and attended the same religious trainings and rituals with Catholics at the schools of the sisters so that “Catholicism was leaking to their hearts and placing in their customs and behaviors”⁶⁴.

Most of the schools of the Daughters of Charity were in Beirut and in the Mount Lebanon. At these schools, the students were taught basic reading-writing skills and religious subjects. The only school of the sisters that gave a more advanced education was the normal school in Beirut which was a boarding school and directly run by the sisters. In the beginning, the school only offered a basic education, but its curriculum and level were developed during the following years. According to the statistics of 1880, the number of boarding students at the school was sixty-five and its curriculum included such courses as French, Arabic, history, geography, arithmetic, and handcraft. In addition to these courses, the students could take elective courses such as music and drawing. The other schools run by the Daughters of Charity in the region were as follows:

⁶⁴ “Rapport sur les Missions des Lazaristes et des Filles de la Charité dans le Levant, présenté par M. Etienne, supérieur général, à MM. Les Membres de l'OEO”, *Bulletin de l'OEO*, no. 1 (Novembre 1857), 4.

Table 4: Schools of Daughters of Charity (1880)⁶⁵

Region	Schools
Beirut	Principle school with 689 students (not boarding)
	13 schools in different parts of Beirut with 600 students (not boarding)
Mount Lebanon	1 school in Zouk and 10 other schools in different localities.
Tripoli	1 school
Damascus	1 school

The activities of the sisters continuously developed, and they increased the number of people accessed by opening many schools, dispensaries, orphanages and ateliers in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and Tripoli by the end of 19th century. Thus, the Daughters of Charity became the most influential French congregation of women in Lebanon and Syria in terms of personnel and the number of people they reached. The Congregation was also seen as one of the most significant representatives of the French influence and prestige in the region. A detailed statistic of the Daughters of Charity missions in the region through the end of the 19th century was as follows:

Table 5: Establishments of Daughters of Charity (1895)⁶⁶

Charity	Numbers and Explanations
Beirut Main House (established in 1846)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 37 sisters; 924 students; teachers' school for villages of Mount Lebanon; 2 work rooms. - Many charity meetings for poor people. - Family visits at home. - Care for unattended children. - Help and remedy for 115.000 poor at dispensary.
Saint-Charles Orphanage in Beirut for girls (established in 1861)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14 sisters; 300 orphans. - Children over three years old accepted free of charge. - Children are taught such works as sewing, broidery and ironing etc.

⁶⁵ Archives du MAE, Correspondance Consulaire et Politique (Turquie-Beyrouth), Dépêche Politique No. 64 (Beyrouth, 10 Mars 1881)

⁶⁶ "Œuvres des Missionnaires en Syrie", *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, Tome 60, (1895), 412-422.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to director of the establishment, if they have enough place and sources, the number of children would be somewhere between 500 and 600.
Saint-Joseph Orphanage in Beirut for boys (established in 1881)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 sisters; 12 chiefs of atelier; 130 orphans. - It is the first orphanage for boys established by Catholic missionaries. In the absence of such a Catholic establishment, Catholic children had to attend the Protestant establishments. - Children are taught various professions at the ateliers of orphanage. Tailors are preparing costumes for the students of the Antoura College; Shoemakers are making production for all communities of Beirut; it is same for carpenters; Gardeners are producing vegetables for the establishment and are selling at the public market; Many of children are working at silk and cotton fabric.
Hospital in Beirut (established in 1885)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 sisters - Number of patients received by the hospital last year was 800. - Hospital is serving as a clinic for the Medical School of the Saint Joseph University. - Expenses are 12.000 francs which is higher than revenues. And the hospital's condition is inferior to the condition of the Protestant hospitals. - It is reported that 8000 francs received from the French government was cut.
Ras-Beirut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 sisters; 400 students; 2 work rooms; pharmacy; dispensary. - Family visits are made at home. - The quarter (of Ras-Beirut) is invaded by Protestants and freemasons. There are many Protestant schools, and their numbers are increasing. The schools of masons have nearly 400 students, and their income is 45000 francs. While the income of FC is reducing, their income is increasing each year.
Zouk- Mikael (a neighbor village of Antoura)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 sisters; 170 students; 48 unattended children; 15 old men; dispensary.
Broumana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 sisters; 40 unattended children; a school for girls of the village; a school for young girls working at filatures; a work room for women; pharmacy; dispensary. - Situation of FC is strong in Broumana. And they struggle against strong Protestant missionary activities.
Tripoli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 19 sisters; 600 students; orphanage; pharmacy, dispensary; hospital. - Family visits at home. - There is a filature within the orphanage.
Damascus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 sisters; 519 students; orphanage; hospital; 2 dispensaries. - Family visits at home. - One of the dispensaries received 80000 and the other received 64000 patients.

This table gives a good summary of the activities of the Daughter of Charity missions at the last decade of the 19th century. As can be seen, the sisters were focusing on the basic needs of the region, namely education and healthcare. Thus, they could reach every segments of the society. This was creating a proper environment for them to make simultaneously both charitable works and religious propaganda, which were the basis of missionary activities.

Schools, orphanages, and ateliers for children were the most widespread charitable works. The sisters were completely interested in girls at their orphanages and schools with the only exception of the Orphanage of Saint-Joseph where the sisters also received boys. In addition to basic education, religious and vocational educations occupied a considerable place at the schools of the sisters. The main aim of the orphanages and schools was to raise children according to the Catholic faith. Also, children were trained in such fields as sewing, handcraft and weaving.

Healthcare service was one of the key activities that enabled the Daughters of Charity to reach all social groups in the region. The sisters offered healthcare to thousands of people at their dispensaries and they distributed them medicaments so that they could reach the people in need from different faiths. They also visited the houses of people who could not come to dispensaries. In the light of these statistics, it can be confidently said that the Daughters of Charity had a strongly established mission in Syria with one hundred and thirty-five sisters and many establishments.

Conclusion

The 19th century can be described as the golden age of missionaries. Imperialism spread all over the world in the century and missionaries also got the chance of spreading their missions in different parts of the world. Although the concept of missionary had a past lasting to the earliest times of Christianity, now a new understanding was in effect. All available instruments were used by the imperial powers to gain advantage in the endless imperial struggle for supremacy in the world. Political, economic, and military capabilities were always on the table as the hard power. However, some other instruments were also needed by the powers to be permanent in wherever they went. Thus, religious and cultural efficiency emerged as an integral part of imperialism. In other words, these were the soft power of imperialism. At this moment, the powers realized better the responsibility that missionaries could possibly assume. Thus, missionaries would be functional in the imperial struggle. They were expected to diffuse language and culture of their countries. In return, missionaries, who were eager to go every part of the world with a religious zeal, could obtain political protection and financial support that they needed in their missions.

The French missionaries were the most active of all the Catholic missionaries. At the end of the 19th century, they constituted nearly three-quarters of all missionaries from the

Catholic faith. The French missionaries were everywhere that France went, and they became the chief propagator of the French language and culture. In this respect, they played a significant role in “civilizing mission” which was a concept widely used for legitimization of imperialism. Jules Ferry, a notable French politician in the 19th century, openly declared in 1885 his opinion on the matter when he said that “the superior races have a mission for civilizing the inferior races”⁶⁷.

The rhetoric of “civilizing mission” (*mission civilisatrice*) was widely used by the Third Republic for the colonial expansion. The most significant element of this mission was obviously the French schools in different parts of the world. These schools, religious or secular, played a significant role in propagation of the French language and culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. The French schools were well-established in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the Middle East. To illustrate, “by 1914 France had enrolled over 100.000 students in the more than five hundred schools she had in the Levant”, and the French schools constituted nearly forty percent of all foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire⁶⁸. The support of the French governments can also be described as a “cultural investment”, and the French missionaries including the Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity were supported by France to strengthen the French influence in the Levant⁶⁹.

In France, “functionality” of missionaries often became a matter of discussion. There were several regime changes in France beginning from the French Revolution, and the debates over missionaries were constantly repeated in each change. The concerns over secularism, which especially arose during the republican periods, were compelling for missionaries in France. Still, the French governments tended to make a distinction on missionary existence in France and abroad. Although some strict bans and limitations were occasionally introduced on the congregations in France, the governments continued to offer political and financial support for their foreign missions. As it was once expressed that “secularism was not a product of exportation”⁷⁰ for France, and it would be meaningless to put aside the valuable service offered by missionaries.

⁶⁷ Bocquet, *Missionnaire Français en terre d'Islam*, 121.

⁶⁸ Mathew Burrows, “Mission Civilisatrice: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914.” *The Historical Journal*, 29/1 (March, 1986), 109-110.

⁶⁹ John P. Spagnolo, “The Definition of a Style of Imperialism: The International Politics of the French Educational Investment in Ottoman Beirut.” *The Historical Studies* 8, no. 4 (Autumn, 1974), 568.

⁷⁰ Cabanel, *Catholicisme et Laïcité*, 57. The phrase that says “secularism is not a product of exportation” (*La laïcité n'est pas un produit d'exportation*) is generally attributed to the French statesman Gambetta. However, according to Cabanel, this phrase was delivered by Paul Bert, a French politician and scientist, in 1885.

The Lazarists were one of the most effective French missionary congregations and they also had a solid French character from the beginning. Although the congregation had many adherents from various nationalities, the Lazarists kept its character to a large extent. Thus, their missions were supported by the French governments in different parts of the world. The Ottoman Empire was one of the mission fields for the Lazarists, who had taken over the Jesuit establishments in 1783. However, the Lazarist missions in the Ottoman lands flourished in the 19th century, and they remained as one of the leading Catholic congregations.

The Lazarist mission in Syria was one of the earliest and the most prolific of all missions in the Ottoman Empire. Following the humble steps at the beginning, the mission began to exhibit considerable results in 1830s. The Lazarists established the Saint Joseph College (Antoura) in 1834. The college has become a significant institution of learning from its foundation to the present, and it has left a mark in the cultural life of Syria and then Lebanon. Numerous politicians including three presidents of Lebanon, academics, intellectuals, artists, and businessmen have been among the alumni of the college. The Saint Joseph was also the first French medium college in Syria, and it considerably contributed to diffusion of French language and culture.

The missions of the Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity strengthened in Syria after the civil war in 1860. There were deep political, administrative, and demographic changes in Syria after the civil war. All these changes offered new opportunities and fields of activity for missionaries. Increasing European political and military influence in the region provided an effective protection for missionaries from all confessions. The Lazarists vastly benefitted from the French protection. Their activities were focused on the most needed fields, namely education and healthcare. The orphanages were also important establishments because there were many Christian orphans in the region after the civil war. The Lazarists increased their activities among such members of the Eastern Churches as Maronites, Greek Catholics, Armenian Catholics, Assyrians, and Chaldeans. In addition to their own schools, the Lazarists also supported and supervised the schools of these communities.

The Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity carried out their missions in the name of god and the Church according to the missionary understanding. There is no reason to suspect the sincerity of missionaries on this matter. They were spending all their life away from home mostly in a condition of poverty, and even at the risk of life. Serving under such conditions was clearly related to dedication for a cause. On the other hand, the Lazarists were also in the service of France as well as the Church. It is nevertheless difficult to measure what extent their service

to France was voluntarily or compulsory. The Lazarists, like the other congregations, needed a political protection to freely carry on their missions in the Ottoman Empire. Without such a protection, it would not be possible to extend their activities and establish so many institutions in an Islamic state. Although the Ottoman administration was always suspicious and alert about the activities of French missionaries, it could not mostly interfere them because of the French protection. Moreover, the Lazarists depended on financial support of the French governments to improve their missions. Thus, it was seemingly an obligation for the Lazarists to serve France, and they, as it was often stressed by the French authorities, were successful in their service.

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