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Trust in the Catholic Reformation. Genoa, 1594-1664

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6. Whom to trust? The establishment of the Lazarists in Genoa

In 1659, Cardinal Stefano Durazzo asked the Congregation of the Mission to hold spiritual exercises in two *maisons des filles* in Genoa.¹ Their Superior General, Vincent De Paul, instructed the Lazarists to clearly tell the archbishop their view on his request regarding the retreats for women. The task of preaching to girls was not in line with the Congregation's *règle et pratique*, since the Lazarists devoted themselves mainly to the instruction of male clergy. De Paul added in his letter that "if, after this [clarification], he desires that you go down that road, then you have to do it".² In a comment that was later erased, he even wrote: "because we have to follow his command [of the Cardinal] instead of our decisions".³

While De Paul clearly sought to avoid losing Durazzo's confidence, at the same time, the Superior General preferred to follow the Lazarists' usual methods of working. It was a dilemma that arose frequently when establishing the Congregation of the Mission, or any congregation, in a new area. The Superior General felt that it was through the Lazarists' authentic mission and way of life that they should win the trust of those who could offer the needed support. Still, the confidence of certain people, in this case the city's archbishop, was so important that some concessions might have to be made that altered this original mission. With every foundation, new religious orders also had to find local people they themselves could rely on. This chapter explores how such trust relationships were established and the ways in which those involved considered the best strategies to do so. It focuses particularly on experience and time as pivotal factors through which trust could become almost unconditional. By the time that the aforementioned request was made, in 1659, the

¹ An extended version of this chapter was published in: Thérèse Peeters, 'Whom to Trust? The Establishment of the Vincentians in Genoa, 1645–1660' 35 *Vincentian Heritage* 1 (2019) [ejournal].

² "si, après cela, elle désire que vous passiez par-dessus cela, il le faudra faire", Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2856, 30-06-1659.

³ "car nous devons plutôt suivre son commandement que notre résolution", *ibid.*

Lazarists' trust in their Genoese archbishop had become such that they followed his orders even though some went against their normal practices.

The Lazarists were conscious that trust from different sides was needed for a new establishment to become successful. The bishop of a given area should approve of their presence, trusting that it would benefit his policies; rich lay people and local clergy had to provide financial help and political support, trusting that it would be used wisely; and the diocesan priests should be cooperative, trusting the missionaries to preach in their rural parishes.⁴ The Lazarists thus had to find people to rely on. De Paul himself placed great importance on a strong financial base before he would let his missionaries establish themselves in a new area.⁵ Trust *in* this new congregation thus had to be complemented by trust *from* its members in the parties that could guarantee a lasting foundation. Conversely, when it became clear over time that a bishop was not honouring his commitments toward a Lazarist establishment, De Paul would recall his missionaries.⁶ In the previous chapter we saw that trust was necessary for a successful new initiative. In what follows, we will see that those involved in the settlement of an existing congregation in a new city were well aware of this necessity and carefully steered the relationships with those whose help they required. They consciously chose in what way they could best elicit trust, so as not to lose their particular religious identity.⁷

More than 150 letters between Vincent De Paul and his missionaries in Genoa have been preserved documenting the first years of the Lazarist establishment in Genoa (1645-1660); they reveal this awareness of the importance of trust for a new

⁴ Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 196–97, 206.

⁵ John Rybolt, 'Saint Vincent de Paul and Money', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 26, no. 1 (2005): 90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷ Whereas this chapter focuses on the Lazarists' own thoughts on how they were to approach the foundation of a new house in the initial period of the Congregation (when its founder was still alive and could set the standards), Séan Smith has researched how the Lazarists tried to stay loyal to the ideals of their founder *after* his death. He has focused in particular on the ways in which fealty to the French king threatened the loyalty to the Congregation's original mission: the Lazarists often had to give in to the commands of the Crown in order not to lose the king's favour. The related dilemma's that Smith describes somewhat reflect those that characterized the relation between Genoese Jesuits and their patrons (see chapter two). Cf.: Séan A. Smith, *Fealty and Fidelity the Lazarists of Bourbon France, 1660-1736* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

foundation.⁸ A large portion of the extant correspondence was written by De Paul himself who, as the leader of the rapidly expanding organisation, had to govern and support his followers. In his letters he advised them and instilled in them a sense of collegiality and discipline, a spirit of initiative and confidence, as Alison Forrester argues. To this, I would add that he also stressed the urgency of looking for trustworthy support and gave advice on how to win trust.⁹

The Lazarists and their mission

The Congregation of the Mission was one among the many (new) male orders and congregations that came to Genoa in the post-Tridentine period.¹⁰ Distrust toward the arrival of new orders was not unusual, nor was it limited to female orders. Despite their essential role in the Counter-Reformation effort, people in the crowded cities of Catholic Europe were not eager to accommodate too many new religious initiatives and provide them with space and income. Marie Juliette Marinus specifies that in around 1600 in Antwerp, the *invasion conventuelle* was met with suspicion by both common people and rival congregations: the higher the number of religious institutions in the city, the smaller the share in resources and space for each single initiative. Support came from individual nobles or notables who often had some specific interest in a certain order (family ties or otherwise), whereas the secular and ecclesiastical elite were divided. In order to enter the city, a congregation had to meet certain requirements: the bishop and the city's authorities had to give their consent. They could also stipulate restrictions on multiple issues: for example, the amount of alms that could be asked from the people, the services that they should offer, and the distance they should keep with regard to already existing ecclesiastical structures, primarily the parishes.¹¹ The Antwerp case shows that new religious orders needed to be willing to adapt, and to show that they were offering something new and indispensable to a city.

⁸ Pierre Coste, *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, 14 vols (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1900). Cited hereafter as *CED*.

⁹ Alison Forrester, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 27, no. 2 (2008): 7.

¹⁰ See chapter one.

¹¹ Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen*, 73.

In Genoa it was no different. The new religious orders were an indispensable instrument for the reform that the archbishops desired. These orders and congregations provided education and care, including spiritual care. They invited devotional and charitable groups to convene in their churches, founded confraternities, and published catechisms as well as educational books. Successive Genoese archbishops had to consider this, and yet they did not control these orders, because they did not fall completely under the archbishop's jurisdiction.¹² Since an archbishop could not count on the complete obedience of the religious orders – even new reforming ones – trust in and from these orders was essential to a successful reform policy.¹³

The Congregation of the Mission prospered in the Genoese diocese thanks to Cardinal Durazzo's support.¹⁴ The *École française* to which the Lazarists belonged was directed towards the goals of education and inner change and apparently this appealed to the Genoese archbishop.¹⁵ Their educational orientation responded to one of the most urgent problems in the Genoese Church: the poor instruction of its clerics, especially the secular clergy (both in the city and in the countryside).¹⁶ In chapter two we considered Durazzo's strategies to reform the seminary and the secular clergy at large. Part of the cardinal's effort was indeed to call upon the Lazarists. From 1649 onwards, they held monthly retreats, spiritual exercises and conferences for seminarians and ordained priests in their *Casa della Missione* in order to increase the educational level of the clergy.¹⁷ In the same chapter, we saw that the Lazarists' primary aim, that of carrying out missions among the rural poor, also

¹² Longo Timossi, 'I Teatini', 47.

¹³ The established religious orders were among the first to obstruct the increased concentration of power, as they were used to being exempt from episcopal authority and to obeying primarily the hierarchy of their own order. The new religious orders and other reforming initiatives were not different in this respect: all wanted to remain autonomous and to prevent the episcopal authority in Genoa from growing too strong. Zardin, 'Prerogative', 266–301.

¹⁴ Who favoured the French spiritual revival of the first half of the seventeenth century. Longo, 'Alcuni aspetti', 120. For a portrait of Cardinal Durazzo: Alfonso, 'Aspetti'.

¹⁵ Châtellier, *La religion des pauvres*, 71–72.

¹⁶ Nuovo, 'La Chiesa genovese', 26–28. See chapter two.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

responded to a great need that was not yet sufficiently covered.¹⁸ When inviting the Lazarists, Cardinal Durazzo was probably looking for a relatively independent group that would readily obey his orders in these two areas.

The tactics and pragmatism that the Lazarists used to gain trust from different sides, particularly from the highest prelate in the area, were founded upon De Paul's acute understanding of human psychology and a pragmatic outlook on what was feasible as his congregation expanded.¹⁹ Alison Forrestal has recently offered an insightful overview of De Paul's strategies of furthering his Congregation in the French context.²⁰ Probably due to a lack of local sources (the archive of the house was lost during the revolutionary period) the Genoese establishment has not received much scholarly attention. Costanza Longo offered an important contribution, but her focus was primarily on the Lazarists' missionary efforts rather than on their strategies in establishing a new house in Genoa.²¹ This chapter instead considers the first fifteen years of the Congregation in Genoa, in order to analyze the different stages of trust needed for a successful foundation.

¹⁸ See, Alison Forrestal, 'Irish Entrants to the Congregation of the Mission, 1625-60: Prosopography and Sources', *Archivium Hibernicum* 62 (2009): 37. Cf. also: Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, 98. And: Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 64.

¹⁹ Cf. Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 7-8; For an example of De Paul's pragmatism regarding new foundations, see: Jose Roman, 'The Foundations of Saint Vincent de Paul', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 9, no. 2 (1988): 140-41.

²⁰ Forrestal, *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform*.

²¹ Costanza Longo, 'Carità ed evoluzione sociale: le missioni vincenziane nei territori della Repubblica di Genova', in *Culture parallele. Esperienze interdisciplinari di Ricerca, Università degli Studi di Genova* (Genoa: Brigati, 2002), 85-136; Longo, 'L'impegno missionario'; Stella, *La Congregazione*; Luigi Mezzadri, *Fra giansenisti e antigiansenisti: Vincent Depaul e la Congregazione della missione (1624-1737)*, Pubblicazioni del Centro di studi del pensiero filosofico del Cinquecento e del Seicento in relazione ai problemi della scienza, 10 (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1977); Luigi Mezzadri and Román José María, *The Vincentians, a General History of the Congregation of the Mission. 1. From the Foundation to the End of the Seventeenth Century, 1625-1697*, ed. Dunne Joseph, trans. Robert Cummings (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2009); Luigi Mezzadri, 'Le Missioni Popolari in Corsica', *Vincentiana* 28, no. 1 (1984): 63-77.

How to win trust?

Preliminary trust

The Congregation of the Mission first came to Italy to be near the heart of the Church. Being close to the Roman court made it easier to negotiate papal recognition of the Congregation, and support for its missionary work.²² Vincent De Paul even considered transferring the motherhouse there, but he gave up the idea because it met with opposition from the French court and the Gallican episcopacy, which opposed Rome's centralisation efforts. Nevertheless, the Lazarist way of working – their simple and effective missions among the rural poor in the papal states, and the retreats that were attended by both high and low clergy – became popular among the cardinals of the Roman curia, several of whom called upon them to preach in their own dioceses.²³

This also happened in the Genoese Republic, where the second house of the Lazarists was founded on the peninsula. At the invitation of Cardinal Durazzo, in August 1645, De Paul began to consider sending his brothers to the Republic.²⁴ According to Durazzo's letter, upon hearing that Bernard Codoing, a member of the Congregation, was passing through his diocese on his way from Rome back to Paris, he asked him to work for him. Apparently, Durazzo's high expectations were met. Durazzo informed De Paul that he had consented to Codoing's departure for Paris only because De Paul had sent other priests "to continue what he [Codoing] had started so positively".²⁵ Here we see the beginnings of a relationship built on trust. Because of an initial positive experience, the Genoese cardinal had the expectation that the Lazarists were able and willing to serve his reform efforts.

²² Mezzadri and María, *The Vincentians*, 243.

²³ Abelly, *The Life*, book 1, 258. Luigi Mezzadri, 'Le missioni popolari di Montecitorio (1642-1700)', in *Le missioni popolari della Congregazione della missione nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, ed. Luigi Mezzadri, vol. 1 (Rome: CLV, 1999), 417.

²⁴ According to Vincent de Paul's early biographer Abelly, this was because he heard about the work of the Lazarists in Savoye and Rome. Abelly, *The Life*, book 1, 233.

²⁵ "pour continuer ce qu'il a si heureusement commencé". Letter from Stefano Durazzo to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 769, August 1645.

The cardinal's positive expectations set the pace for the foundation of a new house. This was not unusual: bishops were often the principal "founders", or financial sponsors, of new Lazarist establishments.²⁶ The point of departure was Durazzo's intuition that the Lazarists' presence would benefit his diocese. This expectation of usefulness might be further explained by the favourable fact that, because the Lazarists were new to Italy, no records of failures or disobedience could discredit their reliability. At the same time, they had not yet been able to build a strong and widespread reputation that would favour their entrance into the city. Cardinal Durazzo thus provided the necessary preliminary trust to set up a house in this new area. Since the Lazarists were not yet entwined in the complicated structures of benefactors and loyalties to social and political elite, they were more readily available to him than some of the older, well-established orders.

De Paul understood that Durazzo's confidence was a crucial step forward in the settlement process. Indeed, the geographic spread of the Congregation of the Mission in its early development mainly followed the pastoral and financial interests of De Paul's most important friends, whether clerics or lay people, and De Paul certainly came to count Durazzo among them.²⁷ The superior repeatedly emphasised that his Congregation should not go anywhere without an explicit invitation. "Not hurrying ahead of providence" was one of De Paul's core principles.²⁸ Being invited meant that someone trusted the missionaries' skills to serve a given environment, and more importantly, that the *bienfaiteur* was prepared to endow the foundation financially. Moreover, it was De Paul's firm spiritual conviction that ideas from other people should be followed more readily because they were given by God: an invitation to settle in a new city, in his eyes, could be such a sign from above.²⁹ De Paul felt so strongly about the importance of this invitation 'from outside', that when

²⁶ Roman, 'The Foundations', 147–48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 138. See also: Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 62. In Turin an ecclesiastic asked the Congregation if they could ask for permission to open a house, but De Paul only wanted to go somewhere following an expressed request, and thus did not do anything.

²⁹ "Si Mgr l'évêque de Bergame continue à nous demander des prêtres pour son diocèse, il faudra tâcher de lui en donner, puisqu'il a la pensée de les y fonder." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, nr 2411, 12-10-1657.

the bishop of Bergamo asked for missionaries, he wrote that if the prelate continued his request, the importance of the invitation would be thus demonstrated and consequently the Lazarists should try to go.³⁰

Essential as he found initiatives ‘from outside’, De Paul did not want to relinquish control over the foundation of a new house. A second maxim regarding the expansion of the Congregation was that only financially stable foundations should be accepted.³¹ De Paul wanted to be sure that the foundation contract, a necessary step for establishing a new house, suited the Congregation’s financial needs, as well as its habits and priorities.³² He hesitated at the contract for the Genoese foundation drawn up on the orders of Durazzo. In August 1646 De Paul noted there were “conditions that might alter the order of the company and could change its direction in that place”.³³

More than a year later these issues were settled to De Paul’s liking and he signed a contract in which Durazzo, together with two of his collaborators, Baliano Raggio and Giovanni Cristoforo Monsia³⁴, committed himself to offer a large amount of money for the establishment of a house. This financial support enabled the Lazarists to work according to their rule, with no need to ask for, nor accept, any kind of recompense for their preaching. In exchange for the financial support, De Paul had to promise to comply with the cardinal’s wishes in providing missionaries to undertake missions in the city and the surroundings of Genoa and to offer spiritual exercises for the Genoese clergy in their house at Durazzo’s request. Furthermore, the contract obliged the Superior General to always staff it with at least four priests that met with the cardinal’s liking.³⁵ The requirements of the contract were all in line with the objectives of the congregation. It allowed De Paul to approve an agreement

³⁰ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2411, 12-10-1657.

³¹ Roman, ‘The Foundations’, 139–40.

³² *Ibid.*, 153.

³³ “Il y a dans ce projet des conditions qui pourraient altérer l'ordre de la compagnie et peut-être le renverser en ce lieu-là.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Etienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 829, 2-8-1646.

³⁴ Giovanni Cristoforo Monsia would also supervise the building of the *Albergo dei Poveri*. De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 88–89.

³⁵ Luigi Alfonso, ‘La fondazione della “Casa della Missione” di Fassolo in Genova’, *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 12, no. 1 (1972): 132.

that would not threaten their *règle et pratique*. With the financial help of the cardinal and two of his main collaborators, the Lazarists thus settled in the *Casa della Missione* in Fassolo, where they continue to live even to the present day.³⁶

Safeguarding the authentic mission

Although necessary, the foundational contract was not sufficient for determining the success of a new house. The preliminary trust of the *bienfaiteurs* needed to be consolidated over the years. If trust is an expectation based on experience, it implies that for trust to grow, one should cultivate the initial practices that created it. This is what Vincent de Paul asked his missionaries to do in Genoa: to favour their own habits, rules and priorities over blind obedience to their prelate.

Upon their arrival, some years before the actual foundation, the missionaries had immediately started to travel the mountainous Ligurian countryside in order to preach in the villages. Responding to Durazzo's many requests, they apparently risked succumbing to fatigue under the huge workload. "I [...] have good hopes," De Paul wrote during those first months, "that your work will be tempered a bit, especially if Monsieur Blatiron [the superior in Genoa] describes to Monseigneur the Cardinal Archbishop the danger to which you are exposed by the continuous occupation to which he obliges you."³⁷ According to De Paul, the heavy burden of work was not only detrimental to their health, it also made them "contravene the usual practice of the company".³⁸ Indeed, he watched over both the well-being of his *confrères* and their faithfulness to their rules and practices. His appreciation for the cardinal's zeal did not imply unquestioned obedience. To the contrary, the cardinal was to be convinced of the Lazarists' own way of working: "I ask mister Blatiron to have him [Durazzo] understand this well, once and for all, because I hope that he

³⁶ Ibid., 134. Cf. Roman, 'The Foundations', 149.

³⁷ "que vos travaux se modéreront un peu, surtout si Monsieur Blatiron représente à Monseigneur le cardinal-archevêque le danger où il vous expose par la continuelle occupation à laquelle il vous oblige". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 859, 14-09-1646.

³⁸ "contrevenir à la pratique ordinaire de la compagnie", Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 859, 14-09-1646.

will take it into account”.³⁹ The prelate indeed changed his mind and gave the priests some respite between each mission.⁴⁰

The same defence of their own *pratique* occurred in the negotiations with the Marquis of Pianezza, who asked for the establishment of a house in Turin some years after the congregation had settled in Genoa. There were rumours that ‘His Highness’ envisioned a house of six missionaries who would offer their services to the city but not to the surrounding countryside. De Paul therefore ordered Blatiron, the superior of the Lazarists in Genoa, to travel to Turin and ask the surgeon of the marquis, Pietro Touvenot, a friend of the congregation, to pay the marquis a visit. Pietro was to “make him understand with all respect [...] the goal of our Institute, and that we cannot accept foundations but on the condition that we can do missions in the countryside [...]”.⁴¹ Changing the aims of the missionaries would not only be detrimental to De Paul’s own objectives, he added, but it would even go “against God’s plan for us”.⁴² This God-given mission was guarded vigilantly, not merely because divine plans ought to be followed, but also in order to preserve the authenticity of the congregation; to prevent its real charisma from being watered down and losing its original fervour, which apparently had appealed to most of the political and ecclesiastical elite of the Savoyard State.⁴³

Besides clarifying these customs to possible *bienfaiteurs*, another way to safeguard authenticity and to preserve the aims of the congregation, was to place internal obedience above all else. In 1647, De Paul recommended to the superior in Genoa to tell Cardinal Durazzo

that Messeigneurs the prelates are our masters in our exterior occupations and that we are obliged to follow them like the

³⁹ “Je prie ledit sieur Blatiron de lui bien faire entendre cela pour une bonne fois; car j’espère qu’il y aura égard”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 859, 14-09-1646.

⁴⁰ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 892, 23-11-1646.

⁴¹ “aller trouver et de lui faire entendre avec tout le respect [...] la fin de notre Institut, et comme nous ne pouvons pas prendre des fondations qu’à condition de faire des missions à la campagne [...]”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1822, 31-12-1654. Cf. Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 63.

⁴² “contre le dessein de Dieu sur nous”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1822, 31-12-1654.

⁴³ Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 63–64.

servants of the Gospel were obedient to their master; [...] and if we fail, they have the right to punish us [...]; but the spiritual and domestic direction belongs to the Superior General.⁴⁴

In De Paul's eyes, Cardinal Durazzo had apparently interfered too much in the internal affairs of the congregation. Although he did not doubt Durazzo's zeal and reform-mindedness, the success of the congregation was not to be sought in strict obedience to the cardinal, but in internal cohesion. They should not think, De Paul wrote about the Lazarists in Genoa, "that they are working at this saintly exercise just to please Monsieur the Cardinal."⁴⁵ Disagreeing with Durazzo about who was eligible to enter the congregation, it was the founder's firmest conviction that the results of sticking to their own *pratique* of allowing only those "who have given themselves to Our Lord in these efforts, and not clergy from the land, who have other pretensions",⁴⁶ would in the end also win over Durazzo. At least in theory, internal obedience thus came before the need to please external superiors.⁴⁷

Yet the obedience within the congregation was not a mere act of will: it was to flow from mutual trust between superiors and subordinates. We will encounter the same dynamic in the next chapter when zooming in on the experience of individual Jesuits in relation to their superiors. De Paul saw this mutual trust as essential in order that all members might be mentored and corrected properly.⁴⁸ Indeed, he recommended to the Genoese superior to use *douceur et support* in order to win over the heart of one of his disobedient *confrères*: "If you win his [heart], you will

⁴⁴ "que Mes. seigneurs les prélats sont nos maîtres pour tous nos emplois extérieurs et que nous sommes obligés de leur obéir, comme les serviteurs de l'Évangile obéissaient à leur maître; [...] et si nous manquons, ils ont droit de nous punir [...]; mais pour la direction spirituelle et domestique, elle est au supérieur général". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 912, 04-01-1647.

⁴⁵ "qu'ils s'emploient à ce saint exercice pour complaire purement à Mgr. le cardinal." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 919, 28-02-1647.

⁴⁶ "qui se soient données à Notre-Seigneur en ces emplois, et non pas des ecclésiastiques du pays, qui ont d'autres prétentions." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 919, 28-02-1647.

⁴⁷ Such obedience was imperative because the structure of the Congregation of the Mission was strictly hierarchical. Alison Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul: The Principles and Practice of Government, 1625-60', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 29, no. 2 (2009): 52.

⁴⁸ Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 15.

have all satisfaction from him.”⁴⁹ He furthermore encouraged individual Lazarists to trust and obey their superiors, referring to this attitude as something that pleased God:

Our Lord approves of the trust you have in your Superior as the representative of His Divine Person; He will inspire him to say whatever is most appropriate for you.⁵⁰

Obtaining trust thus was a means to obtain obedience and without mutual trust the missions were destined to fail. Indeed, when a trust relationship seemed impossible because of insurmountable disagreement, De Paul ordered that the people involved be separated. This was the case in 1659 with Jacques Pesnelle and Jérôme Lejuge; the latter had to leave the house in Rome and come to Genoa.⁵¹

Preserving the characteristic features of the congregation by prioritising internal obedience over adhering to instructions from outside was not an end in itself. It was, among other things, a means to elicit and cultivate trust from these same people, in the early phase of a new foundation. This is not contradictory if one considers the Lazarists’ own confidence in what had incited their initial success, namely their usual way of life, work and mission, that they saw as willed by God. De Paul guarded over the missionary *élan* of his congregation because he saw it as divinely ordained, but also because it ‘worked’; it was successful in winning trust.

Demarcating trust

In order to maintain and increase any given trust in the Lazarist missionaries, the carefully guarded, trustworthy and consistent *règle et pratique* was to be associated wholly with the congregation itself. Successes were to be ascribed exclusively to its own merits. From the 1650s onward, word of the congregations’ successful work in Rome, Genoa and Turin spread throughout the peninsula. Several cardinals, prelates

⁴⁹ “Si vous gagnez le sien, vous aurez de lui toute satisfaction”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1070, 30-10-1648.

⁵⁰ Vincent de Paul to a Priest of the mission, 20 February 1650, Coste, Coste, *Correspondence, conferences, documents* (English translation) 3: 601 as cited in: Forrestal, ‘Principles’, 67.

⁵¹ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2857, 30-06-1659.

and wealthy laypeople asked for their help as the Lazarists' *bonne odeur* diffused.⁵² By the end of the seventeenth century, the Lazarists had founded houses in Naples, Perugia, Reggio Emilia, Pavia, Marcerata, Bastia and Ferrara. Their work attracted the attention of influential people, and invitations to offer the same services elsewhere followed suit.

As the Lazarists established a good name in Genoa and on the whole peninsula, it was imperative that this reputation be distinctive, and also distinguishable from other initiatives. In chapter two we saw that Cardinal Durazzo founded an elite group of Genoese clergy dedicated to preaching missions in the city similar to those preached by the Lazarists in the countryside. When, in an early phase, this group started to call themselves *i missionarii*, Étienne Blatiron personally lobbied the cardinal to have the name changed in order “to avert confusion of the same names and preclude the inconveniences that come with many people carrying the same name” (they were eventually called the *Congregazione delle Missioni Urbani di San Carlo Borromeo*).⁵³ The problem was not that the Lazarists had no trust in this new group: De Paul simply wished to protect the reputation of his own community from the actions of outsiders, over whom he had no say.⁵⁴

At the same time, those who did belong to the *petite compagnie* and were responsible for its good name were expected not only to obey their superiors but also to completely conform to the rule of the congregation. Commenting on one of the Genoese *confrères* who suggested the idea of following a retreat held by the Discalced Carmelites, De Paul wrote to Blatiron:

⁵² “Nos maisons d'Italie n'ont encore été en si bonne odeur qu'elles sont”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Barreau, *CED*, no. 1746, 19-06-1654. See also: Mezzadri and María, *The Vincentians*, 252.

⁵³ “pour empêcher la confusion des mêmes noms et prévenir les inconvénients qui arrivent de la multiplicité de ceux qui les portent”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1058, 15-08-1648.

⁵⁴ The Lazarists probably even collaborated with the urban missionaries. From a letter of Étienne Blatiron, it seems that the Lazarists preached the spiritual exercises to this group: “Nous attendons à ce soir six ou sept prêtres qui doivent venir commencer les exercices; ils ont dessein d'entreprendre une mission dans la ville, comme nous faisons aux champs. Je prie votre charité de recommander l'affaire à Dieu.” Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1618 (without date).

you did very well to dissuade him from it; and I pray you not to give in, not only in this matter, but in all the things that are not according to our habits, to prevent that anything be done beyond [our habits]. If anyone presses you too hard, as he does, ask him to be patient and tell him that you will write to the general of the company, and do so; and then, while waiting for the answer, time passes by and often the temptation disappears.⁵⁵

De Paul also promised to write to those brothers who tended towards following their own ideas, asking them to “abandon their singularities and adjust themselves to the common practices”.⁵⁶ If they continued their disobedience, they would not be allowed to return to the house: “because for the one that we will lose in order to maintain order, for the honour of God, his providence will give us two others”.⁵⁷ Those who desired to join the congregation were asked to conform completely to its rule and practices, and to demonstrate obedience. For De Paul, this obedience was entirely possible if one trusted in divine providence.⁵⁸

Trust in God’s plan, a principle known as *indifferentia*, was something which the founder always called upon his followers to cultivate and which he thought would nurture internal conformity.⁵⁹ This indifference would enable a Lazarist to obey whatever commands came from his superior (as representative of God’s will), and to accept success and failure as part of a divine plan.⁶⁰ The next chapter will elaborate on the close connection between on the one hand trust in God and the indifference that was to flow from it, and on the other hand, obedience to one’s superior that was

⁵⁵ “vous avez très bien fait de l'en divertir ; et je vous prie de tenir bon, non seulement en cela, mais en toutes les choses qui ne sont pas de nos usages, pour empêcher que rien se fasse au delà. Si quelqu'un vous presse trop, comme fait ledit sieur..., priez-le d'avoir patience et lui dites que [...], vous en écrirez au général de la compagnie, et le ferez en effet; et ainsi, en attendant la réponse, le temps s'écoule et souvent la tentation s'évanouit”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁵⁶ “Là-dessus j'écrirai à ces personnes pour les prier de se désister de leurs singularités et de s'ajuster aux pratiques communes” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁵⁷ “car pour un que nous perdrons pour maintenir l'ordre, à l'honneur de Dieu, sa providence nous en donnera deux”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁵⁸ Cf. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2729, 22-11-1658.

⁵⁹ See for example: Letter from Edme Jolly to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 2706, 05-11-1658.

⁶⁰ Forrestal, ‘Principles’, 51.

to be based on interpersonal trust as well as indifference. In a conference on obedience, De Paul told his followers:

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us obedience by word and example. He wished to be submissive to the Most Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, and other people in positions of authority, whether good or disagreeable. For this reason, we should be completely obedient to every one of our Superiors, seeing the Lord in them and them in the Lord.⁶¹

Consequently, tendencies to walk different paths were met with strictness.⁶² Attentive to human psychology, De Paul believed that change only caused disorder. According to the superior, while people tended to think that changing the circumstances made them happier, it never did. Changes of vocation, in his view, only caused regret.⁶³ The superior's reaction to the desire of an unordained brother in Genoa to rise to the priesthood, causing agitation among other *confrères*, was consistent with this belief.⁶⁴ Some Lazarist brothers did become priests within the congregation, but this passage was to originate from indifference and not from dissatisfaction with one's original vocation of being a brother. When one of the *frères* indeed left the congregation in Genoa in order to become a priest, De Paul remarked that he was very sorry to lose this "poor brother", especially because

God gives grace in one condition that He refuses in another. A brother who will have the spirit of God dwelling in his spirit, will undoubtedly lose it, when he leaves [this condition]. God is not

⁶¹ Conference no. 222, 19-12-1659, Coste, *Correspondence, conferences, documents* [English translation], 12, p. 345.

⁶² "où Dieu l'ha mis", Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1403, 08-09-1651. See also: Thomas Davitt, 'Humanness in a Saint', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 6, no. 1 (1985): 46-47.

⁶³ Letter from Vincent de Paul to a brother of the house in Genoa, *CED*, no. 1537, 16-08-1652. Forrestal, 'Principles', 52.

⁶⁴ Blatiron had already complained that there were several uncooperative brothers in Genoa that tended to dress in the priestly black instead of the grey habits they should be wearing. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1403, 08-09-1651.

changeful; He wants everybody to stay in the state where he was put.⁶⁵

In De Paul's view, trust in divine providence came before obedience. Indifference originated from a trust that God made his will known through all circumstances, including the orders of superiors, and this was what formed obedience in his missionaries.

Apart from being convinced that this was how God wanted people to live their vocation, De Paul also thought that internal cohesion and order were so important that it was better for disobedient people to leave the Congregation altogether, rather than damage its reputation. A certain strictness in dealing with self-willed brothers would furthermore "give fear to the others so that they will not let themselves be carried away by such liberties".⁶⁶ The task of educating those *confrères* that "tend[ed] towards independence" was in the hands of the local superior and the visitor, who should act like fathers; with authority, but also with a willingness to convince them to change their minds.⁶⁷ Persuasion was preferable to giving orders, but the latter was at times indispensable.⁶⁸

Moreover, to avoid seeing the congregation's name damaged, De Paul would recall misbehaving brothers to Paris, as happened with Jacques Beure. This brother was meant to go to Genoa in 1658, but he was ordered to return to Paris on the advice of the superior in Turin, because, as De Paul wrote: "it takes only one missionary with a freedom similar to his to ruin the company's reputation".⁶⁹ If

⁶⁵ "Dieu donne grâce en une condition qu'il refuse dans une autre. Un frère qui aura l'esprit de Dieu demeurant dans la sienne, le perdra sans doute, s'il en sort. Dieu n'est pas changeant; il veut que chacun se tienne en l'état où il l'a mis". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1445, 19-01-1652.

⁶⁶ "et cette rigueur donnera de la crainte aux autres pour ne se laisser emporter à telles libertés". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁶⁷ "tend[ons] à l'indépendance". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2649, 30-08-1658. Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13. For a good example of Vincent de Paul trying to convince one of the *confrères* in Genoa to stick to his vocation, see: Letter from Vincent de Paul to one of the brothers in Genoa, *CED*, no. 1537, 16-08-1652.

⁶⁹ See letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2577, 03-05-1658; letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2616, 05-07-1658; and letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2629, 19-07-1658. "Il ne faut à un missionnaire qu'une liberté semblable à la sienne pour

particular actions threatened the good reputation of the Lazarists, damage was to be contained as much as possible. When a missionary in Genoa had pretended to be a doctor [of theology?] without actually being one, De Paul decided that he should be replaced, and, more importantly, that the superior in Genoa should pay Cardinal Durazzo a visit to explain to him that this priest would not remain in the Congregation of the Mission. The message was to be that deceit and lying were not in line with the Lazarists' way of life, but had been the individual choice of someone leaving the ship. Building and protecting a good reputation was not the final aim, which for De Paul was the glory of God, but it definitely was a means by which to foster the success of the Congregation.⁷⁰ The underlying realism was that the reputation built by a whole congregation could be ruined by individual members who did not act according to its rule. The trust won with great effort could vanish in a split second.

Just as people who refused to conform were expected to leave the congregation, so too were outsiders not allowed to stay within the community, unless they committed themselves and joined the Congregation. The danger that the line between outsiders and insiders would become blurred became an issue in Genoa when a member of the important Spinola family expressed his wish to live with the Lazarists without joining them (possibly because of advanced age). Paris ordered that he should be told *doucement* what the options were: either to join the congregation, or to remain outside and receive all possible "service and consolation", without living among the brothers.⁷¹ The superior's careful protection of the borders between the Congregation and its *pratique* on the one hand, and the outside world on the other, was driven by an awareness of the fragility of their hard-won reputation. Clearly demarcating the borders between the *petite compagnie* and demanding strict internal obedience and conformity to the rules was a way of building a good reputation, eliciting confidence and consolidating trust.

ruiner la compagnie de réputation et empêcher le fruit qu'elle peut faire de delà." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2637, 09-08-1658.

⁷⁰ Forrestal, 'Principles', 51.

⁷¹ The rule was simply "not to receive anyone in our houses to stay there freely" ("ne recevoir personne en nos maisons pour y demeurer libre"). Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2681, 15-10-1658.

Avoiding distrust, managing expectations

Trust increases when expectations are continually met. Besides clearly demarcating the borders of the group, in order to uphold trust, expectation should never reach beyond what somebody is able and willing to do. The Lazarists seem to have understood this well. Their general line of conduct was to always keep a low profile: humility was not only a core Christian virtue that De Paul held dear, but also a pragmatic strategy to avoid misunderstandings and to earn goodwill; in other words, to stimulate trust.⁷² Indeed, De Paul insisted that the promises they made, such as in the foundation contracts of new establishments, should always be adhered to.⁷³

A curious situation in which the Congregation ran the risk of not meeting its promises showcases De Paul's desire to keep a low profile. In 1658, the Superior General proved irritated when Jacques Pesnelle, superior of the Genoese house, promised Cardinal Durazzo that the cardinal's nephew while on his diplomatic mission to the court of France, could stay at Saint-Lazare, the motherhouse in Paris. The rules of the Congregation did not allow lay people to reside in their houses. More importantly, De Paul stressed, they were unable to receive this important guest at Saint-Lazare because all suitable rooms were occupied. "It is for this reason," De Paul replied to Pesnelle, "that it is appropriate that you make our goodwill and our impotence known to His Eminence as soon as possible, gently and deftly, so that this change of tune does not come as a surprise."⁷⁴ Wishing to keep Durazzo's trust, of which this request was certainly a sign, a diplomatic approach would need to cover the fact that the Lazarists actually were neither able nor all that willing to fulfill this promise. The solution was to tell Durazzo that his nephew could come provided that he brought only one servant and that he would be given a small room. Pesnelle was to make clear that it would be an honour for the congregation to receive the diplomat

⁷² Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 10.

⁷³ Roman, 'The Foundations', 143.

⁷⁴ "C'est pourquoi, Monsieur il est à propos que vous fassiez connaître au plus tôt notre bonne volonté et notre impuissance à Son Éminence, et cela doucement et adroitement, en sorte que ce changement de parole ne le surprenne pas." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2720, 15-11-1658.

and a great occasion to show the respect and obedience they owed to Durazzo, adding that the Cardinal was “above any rule”.⁷⁵

The wish to maintain discretion is demonstrated again in the preparations for the foundation of a new house in Turin in 1655. In order to impress the Turin elite, Jean Martin, a member of the Genoese house who was to become the superior in Turin, had asked Durazzo for a recommendation. This troubled De Paul greatly because he wanted his missionaries to “dwell low and unknown, and not to give importance to appearance and esteem”.⁷⁶ He added:

a [good] reputation can harm them, not only by giving them reason for vanity, but also because if it values the fruits of their works at six, people will expect twelve, and, seeing that the effects do not correspond with the expectation, they lose their good opinion, and God allows this to happen especially when one looks for such a reputation; because anyone who exalts himself will be humbled.⁷⁷

“Humility is the gate through which to enter this [...] new foundation,” De Paul warned, offering the practical advice that the first two missionaries in Turin should start with small missions instead of big pretentious ones.⁷⁸

Another expectation that the Lazarists tried to avoid was that of having to open their books. “It is something that should be avoided above all else, as a very unwelcome subordination,” De Paul wrote when he heard of Durazzo’s request that

⁷⁵ “Enfin, Monsieur, témoignez à Son Éminence qu'elle est au-dessus de toute règle”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2720, 15-11-1658.

⁷⁶ “demeurer bas et inconnus, et non pas à paraître et à se faire estimer”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1972, 10-12-1655.

⁷⁷ “La réputation leur peut nuire, non seulement en leur donnant sujet de s'évanouir, mais en ce que, si elle met les fruits de leurs emplois à six degrés, on s'attendra qu'ils seront à douze, et, voyant que les effets ne correspondent pas à l'attente, on en perd la bonne opinion, et Dieu permet que cela arrive surtout quand on cherche cette réputation; car qui s'exalte sera humilié.” Ibid.

⁷⁸ “l'humilité est la porte par laquelle il doit entrer dans les exercices de cette nouvelle fondation, et non par celle de la réputation recherchée, qui est souvent nuisible, surtout quand le succès des emplois ne correspond pas à l'estime que le premier bruit en a fait concevoir.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1972, 10-12-1655.

See also: Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1977, 17-12-1655: “C'est dans la même vue que je l'ai prié de faire quelque petite mission, lui seul avec M. Ennery, pour le détourner d'en faire une qui éclate”.

missionaries render their accounts to him.⁷⁹ It was customary for religious orders to provide benefactors, whether it be the city authorities, the church authorities or others, with insight into their expenses in exchange for material support.⁸⁰ However, De Paul felt that financial assistance should be given with trust and acceptance of the missionaries' word, without concrete promises from the Lazarists. The founder's primary reason was that tracking all expenses, especially when travelling, was too troublesome. He feared missionaries would have to invent part of their accounts, "as some congregations do", and thereby run the risk of lying.⁸¹ Even though Durazzo and others had generously paid for the construction of a residence for the brothers, De Paul thought it unwise and unnecessary to give them concrete promises in return. As in Paris, where Archbishop Jean-François De Gondi eventually gave the house of Saint-Lazare to the Lazarists without demanding any accountability in return, so too in Genoa the benefactors were expected to give freely, otherwise the Lazarists were not to accept their help.⁸² In this, De Paul consciously broke with the habit of *les anciens religieux*, as he himself wrote.⁸³ By keeping expectations low, mistrust could be avoided. Demanding that all help be given freely without the prospect of control ensured this. Whatever successes would spring from the given trust would only enhance the good reputation of the Congregation, and no temporary setbacks would weaken it decisively.

When eager to preserve received trust, one should also show from time to time the willingness to act in accordance with expectations. Vincent De Paul therefore repeatedly asked his followers to thank the benefactors of the congregation on his behalf and emphasise his obedience to them.⁸⁴ Taking the lead himself, he wrote an almost sycophantic letter to a key benefactor of the congregation in Genoa, Cristoforo Monsia:

⁷⁹ C'est [...] ce qu'il faut éviter sur toutes les choses du monde, comme un sujétion très fâcheuse". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1254, 02-09-1650.

⁸⁰ Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen*, 73.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Letter from Vincent de Paul to Patrice Valois, *CED*, no. 1528, 25-07-1652.

⁸³ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1515, 05-07-1652.

⁸⁴ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1738, 08-05-1654.

The extreme kindness and goodness of heart of Your Lordship to the members of our congregation who are in Genoa makes it my duty to show you my gratitude [...] but as your charity exceeds all thanksgiving, I earnestly beg the great God to make up for my weakness.⁸⁵

Monsia eventually bequeathed his rich estate to the Lazarists, including the family chapel, leaving his family none too pleased.⁸⁶

The Lazarists used a similar approach with Emanuele Brignole, the rich nobleman whom we encountered in the previous chapter.⁸⁷ He annually donated a large sum of money to the Lazarists in Genoa, contributed to their house in Rome, and asked them to preach in his marquisate. This favour was met with gratitude and prayer, but no concrete offers of preaching.⁸⁸ Since the Lazarists had to prioritise Durazzo's orders, no promises were to be made without the archbishop's permission. This behaviour is in line with strategy to keep expectations low in order not to lose trust.

When possible, however, the Lazarists tried to accommodate the wishes of possible benefactors. This is clear, for example, in their approach to education in Genoa. On being asked whether the Genoese Lazarists should teach theology using the traditional, scholastic approach, De Paul advised them to investigate whether “that way of teaching is well seen over there, whether the Jesuits and other religious and seculars use it, and if many students attend”. It was important that this initiative would attract enough students.⁸⁹ Similarly, students' holidays were to be compared

⁸⁵ “Quum abundantiori quadam benevolentia et bonitate in congregationis nostrae alumnus Genuae manentes Dominationis Vestrae pectus exuberet, meum etiam vicissim illi gratiarum actiones debet infinitas [...] at quoniam vestra caritas est supra omne In gratiarum actionem, Deum optimum maximum enixe precor ut imbecillitatem meam suppleat.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Cristoforo Monsia, *CED*, no. 1416, 20-10-1651.

⁸⁶ Alfonso, ‘La fondazione’, 150.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 136; De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 58–59.

⁸⁸ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2989, 26-09-1657. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, no. 2837, 09-05-1659.

⁸⁹ “savoir en quelle estime est de delà cette façon d'enseigner, si elle est parmi les Jésuites et d'autres maisons religieuses et séculières, et si beaucoup d'écoliers y vont”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2901, 11-07-1659. De Paul later advised that the Lazarists to abandon the plan, since he had heard that the Genoese Jesuits did not teach the scholastic methods, which

with the other schools in Genoa. De Paul himself had previous bad experiences in allowing students too much spare time, and he wrote that pupils misbehaved during the holidays. The situation in Genoa, however, could be different. According to De Paul, the Lazarists' superior should adjust their programme based on how the Jesuits, Theatines and Oratorians dealt with the matter.⁹⁰ The Lazarist way of approaching these issues shows that while certain principles and practices were non-negotiable, others could be changed in order to meet local needs and make use of resources.⁹¹

The establishment of the Lazarists in Genoa required support from many sides to be successful.⁹² In showing gratitude for help given, presenting themselves as obedient to all reasonable requests, and avoiding unfulfillable promises, the Lazarists tried to gain trust from people whose support they required. Whenever possible, the Lazarists accommodated the wishes of the benefactors with the goal of winning over as much support as possible.

Whom to trust?

So far, we have examined the Lazarists' approach toward eliciting and maintaining trust without forfeiting their original mission. However, to fully grasp the importance of trust in the establishment of a new house, it is necessary to understand its role in relation to obedience, a core value in Lazarist spirituality and considered by De Paul as the way to happiness.⁹³ The Lazarists' relationship with Cardinal Durazzo clearly demonstrates how trust interplayed with obedience. From the first contacts between

made it unlikely that many students would be attracted by it. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2942, 15-08-1659.

⁹⁰ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2963, 05-09-1659.

⁹¹ Forrestal, 'Principles', 63.

⁹² In an earlier phase of the Lazarist presence in Genoa, several wealthy Genoese had already shown their trust in this new community. The missionaries cherished their favours and tried to accommodate the wishes of their most important benefactors: at the request of the *Messieurs de Gênes*, Blatiron was sent back to Genoa after a period of absence. Similarly, in Turin De Paul tried to make sure that the new house would be sufficiently staffed, both to help the superior, Jean Martin, and please Martin's benefactors. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1380, 14-07-1651; letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1985, 31-12-1655. Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 63–66.

⁹³ Conference by Vincent de Paul, 2-12-1657, *CED* vol. 10, p. 389.

the Congregation and this prelate, obedience to the archbishop was a virtue that was professed continuously and persuasively. Indeed, according to the congregation's rule, the Lazarists should "humbly and consistently obey the most reverend Bishops of the dioceses where the congregation has houses".⁹⁴ However, this rule was not practised without reserve. Besides the necessity to *win* trust, there was a need to find out whom to trust, and thus whom to obey. It took time for the Vincentians to grow in confidence that Cardinal Durazzo's policy and orders were in their favour. This gradual development eventually also diminished their reservations when it came to complete obedience. By examining the relationship between trust and obedience, we start to understand better what obedience, a value that was central to early modern Catholicism, meant in concrete terms in the life of seventeenth-century religious people (a theme that will be deepened in the next chapter). Simplistic evaluations of the unwillingness to reform from above can be refined if we consider that obedience from the lower echelons of the Church always necessitated trust, and trust never came about mechanically.

What made the Lazarists trust their archbishop?

A prime reason for the Lazarists' trust in the archbishop was first of all his concrete material support. The many tasks that he gave the congregation were not without recompense. Drawing on his own network, Durazzo found people willing to help the Congregation financially, setting an example himself by donating large sums, first for the establishment in Genoa, and later for a house in Rome (which he arranged in 1659, and towards which he contributed generously).⁹⁵ Durazzo even managed to convince "some of his cardinal friends" to do the same for the Roman foundation.⁹⁶ Unsurprisingly, he was at the centre of the Lazarists' gratitude: "Prostrated in spirit at the sacred feet of His Eminency, De Paul wrote in 1651, I most humbly ask your

⁹⁴ Conference no. 222, 19-12-1659, Coste [ENG], Coste, *Correspondence, conferences, documents* (English translation), 12, p. 346.

⁹⁵ *Annali della Missione. S. Vincenzo de' Paoli. Raccolta Trimestrale* (Piacenza: Collegio Alberoni, 1925), 8.

⁹⁶ "quelques cardinaux de ses amis". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, no. 2806, 04-04-1659. Mezzadri and María, *The Vincentians*, 246.

forgiveness for renewing so belatedly this token of my perfect gratitude for the great benefits that you bestow on the missionaries”.⁹⁷ De Paul also repeatedly prompted his followers to show the same gratitude. Especially towards the end of his life, he reminded them to act according to the will of God in “renewing often our most humble thanks” to their prelate.⁹⁸

That Durazzo, in his turn, revealed much affection for and affinity with the Lazarists’ spirituality, also gave them confidence. Étienne Blatiron’s admiration for the archbishop greatly increased when Durazzo attended the spiritual exercises of the missionaries, adapting to their usages and wishing to be treated like the others, despite his status and older age.⁹⁹ This behaviour elicited trust. Expressing his gratitude, De Paul wrote to Durazzo: “No other prelate has made known to us the supreme charity of God better than you.”¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Durazzo honoured the Lazarists with frequent visits to their house in Rome. De Paul even mused that they were “the object of all his kindness” and that Durazzo “seem[ed] to have no other commitment”.¹⁰¹

The Lazarists’ confidence must have also been enhanced by the fact that Durazzo continued to support them even though their arrival in the city met with some opposition from the Genoese senate. The senators communicated to the cardinal that

if he wishes to introduce [...] the Congregation of the Missionary Priests then the senate maintains that this should be done by

⁹⁷ “Animo provolutus ad sacros pede Eminentiae Suae humillime ab ea veniam peto quod, tanto post tempore, perfectae gratitudinis meae summorum in missionaries suos beneficiorum, quibus eos jugiter cumulat, testimonia renovo”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Stefano Durazzo, *CED*, no. 1402, 09-1651.

⁹⁸ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2649, 30-08-1658. See e.g. also: Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2900, 11-07-1659. “Assurez bien Son Éminence et de nos prières pour sa conservation, tant importante à l’Eglise, et de notre parfaite reconnaissance pour ses grands et innombrables bienfaits.”

⁹⁹ Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1150, 11-1649.

¹⁰⁰ Jamais prélat ne nous a mieux fait connaître la suprême charité de Dieu que la vôtre”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Stefano Durazzo, *CED*, no. 2975, 12-09-1659.

¹⁰¹ “nous sommes l’objet de toutes ses bontés”, Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2960, 05-09-1659. “qui semble n’avoir d’autre application”, Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 3006 17-10-1659.

means of religious [who are] citizens or subjects [of the Republic], [and] that he, therefore, should dismiss the Frenchmen or of whatever other nation they might be who are in Genoa in order to found the said congregation.¹⁰²

Durazzo dismissed this order claiming that it might have originated “from some kind of persecution of regular priests” and that following the order would have as a consequence that “the great good that they have started would be hindered by diabolical suggestions”.¹⁰³ Durazzo’s words point at his conviction that the senate’s opposition might be rooted in an aversion against the arrival of new religious congregations and not primarily in their political resistance against French influence, as their own letter suggested. Whatever may have caused the senate’s resistance, Durazzo’s support in spite of it must have convinced the Lazarists that he indeed found their work to be a “great good”.

Near the end of his life, De Paul’s esteem for Durazzo grew to such an extent that he identified obedience to Durazzo with obedience to God:

We have to receive the opinion of Monseigneur Cardinal Durazzo as orders from heaven, and do everything he commands without hesitation. The benevolence with which he honours the congregation is a great blessing [...], through which God often allows us to feel the effects of his adorable goodness.¹⁰⁴

Alluding to trust in God and trust in His servant Durazzo as one and the same thing, De Paul also wrote that all would turn out well if his missionaries only followed what

¹⁰² “se desidera entrudure (com’ha fatto rapresentare) la Congregatione de’ Preti missionarij il serenissimo senato ha per accertato che si facci col mezo di Religiosi Cittadini, ò sudditi, che perciò si contenti licenziare li francesi, o d’altra natione che siano li quali si trouano a Genua per instituire detta congregatione” ASG, AS, Jurisdictionalium 1075, no. 57.

¹⁰³ “Ha egli [i.e. Cardinal Durazzo] deto, che seconderà sempre li gusti e desiderij del Serenissimo Senato, dubita però di qualche persecutione de’ Regolari, e stima, che il bene grande, che si è cominciato a far in questa pratica venghi attrauersato da suggestioni diaboliche, conuende lui che si tratta di persone d’ogni bontà di uita, hà poi concluso che seruirà le SS serenissime.”, 24-07-1645. ASG, AS, Jurisdictionalium 1075, no. 57.

¹⁰⁴ “Nous devons recevoir les avis de Monseigneur le cardinal Durazzo comme des ordres du ciel, et faire, sans hésiter, tout ce qu’il commande. La bienveillance dont il honore la compagnie est une grande bénédiction pour elle, par laquelle Dieu nous fait souvent ressentir les effets de son adorable bonté”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2878, 20-06-1659.

was repeated by “his saintly Monseigneur the Cardinal”; namely that one only has to strive for the glory of God.¹⁰⁵ The saintliness of the cardinal became a recurring theme in the correspondence between Genoa and Paris.¹⁰⁶ Blatiron even delighted his Superior General with a portrait of the Genoese prelate, in the hope that the image of this saintly helper would comfort him.¹⁰⁷

Trust turned into obedience

This reverence for Cardinal Durazzo and trust in his orders contrasts with De Paul’s cautious attitude at the beginning of the Lazarist establishment in Genoa. As discussed previously, the Superior General had been suspicious that any meddling by the cardinal might alter the Lazarists’ *règle et pratique*. It took several year’s worth of accumulated experience before he began to instruct his followers to obey Durazzo in a broad variety of matters. For example, the cardinal’s change of topic when Blatiron hinted at sending some missionaries from Genoa to staff the new house in Turin in 1656 was enough for De Paul to conclude that this initiative would not please him and therefore the plan should be dismissed.¹⁰⁸

This obedient attitude is even more apparent in De Paul’s reaction that same year to the decision that the superior in Genoa took at the suggestion of the cardinal, namely to appoint a procurator to deal with the Lazarists’ worldly affairs in Genoa: “I appreciate it all the more,” he wrote, because the decision was taken “on the advice of the oracle, Monseigneur the Cardinal, whose lights and sentiments are from God and always tend towards him.”¹⁰⁹ On other occasions, certain initiatives seemed

¹⁰⁵ “son saint Mgr le cardinal”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2805, 04-04-1659.

¹⁰⁶ In recounting Durazzo’s assistance lobbying the Roman court for approval of indulgences and the congregation’s vows, De Paul wrote that he was touched and that he prayed to “Our Lord that he may keep and sanctify more and more this great and saintly prelate!”. (“je prie bien Notre-Seigneur qu’il conserve et sanctifie de plus en plus ce grand et saint prélat”) Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1787, 23-10-1654. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1947 (without date).

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1787, 23-10-1654.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1999, 28-01-1656.

¹⁰⁹ “je l’approuve d’autant plus que c’est par l’avis de l’oracle, Monseigneur le cardinal, de qui les lumières et les sentiments sont de Dieu et tendent toujours à lui.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 2155, 13-10-1656. The procurator was probably Baliano Raggio a close

agreeable to De Paul simply because they were backed by the cardinal.¹¹⁰ When, again in 1656, the Lazarists were offered a house by a “venerable priest”, De Paul desired to know Durazzo’s thoughts because, in his view, Durazzo would advise “according to the light of the same spirit and Christian maxims according to which we must behave”.¹¹¹ His conviction had grown in time that the aims, policies, and interests of the cardinal were aligned with those of the congregation.

This convergence of interests also explains why what had started as formal obedience became genuine, complete trust. Even in deciding whether to assist those Genoese stricken in the plague epidemic of 1657-58, which would be accepting an almost certain death, the Lazarists relied fully on the judgment of the cardinal. He decided to keep them out of danger to assist him should he fall ill himself.¹¹² Nevertheless, eventually seven of the nine Lazarist priests died, including the Superior Blatiron.¹¹³

Trust was developed over the years because the Lazarists saw that Durazzo’s interests were similar to theirs, as demonstrated in his material support and spiritual affinity. In time, it gave substance to an otherwise somewhat hollow declaration of obedience. Complete obedience and gratitude were indeed the fruit of this growing trust.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

When a religious order arrived in a new region, it normally faced a dilemma. It could either attempt to obtain the trust of the local people by pleasing certain groups or patrons, answering their needs irrespective of the order’s original mission, or stick to

friend of Durazzo and the same noble ecclesiastic that had helped to fund the Lazarist establishment in Genoa. Cf. Alfonso, ‘La fondazione’, 135.

¹¹⁰ E.g. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2763, 27-12-1658.

¹¹¹ “selon les lumières de ce meme esprit et les maximes chrétiennes par lesquelles nous nous devons conduire”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 2098, 14-07-1656.

¹¹² See e.g. the letters 2111, 2121, 2130, 2188, 2467 in *CED*.

¹¹³ Stella, *La Congregazione*, 33.

¹¹⁴ It is not surprising that Durazzo was finally honoured with the erection of his bust in the Lazarist buildings in Fassolo. The inscription on the bust reads: “Stephano Cardinali Duratio Archiepiscopo vigilantissimo quod Domum hanc aedificaverit Romanam auxerit Bastiensem promoverit totam Congregationem perpetua charitate delixerit anno 1657”. Musso, *Il Cardinale*, 160.

its own ethos and attempt to gain trust by strictly adhering to the order's authentic directives. A middle path was often preferred. When the Lazarists came to Genoa, they needed to offer something new in order to gain enough support. The missionaries were able to achieve this by sticking to De Paul's original mission: the education of the secular clergy and missions to the countryside. Indeed, these were the activities that Cardinal Durazzo had envisioned for the Lazarists in his diocese. Such initial trust was essential for an order that did not have a bad record in the area, but also could not fall back on a long, trustworthy history. Durazzo's invitation was therefore readily accepted, but on the conditions that financial stability would be guaranteed, and that missionaries would be allowed to maintain their common practices.

This preliminary trust, however, was only the beginning. By choosing to adhere to the rule of internal obedience above all else, the Lazarists' authentic mission could be preserved. Thus, an attachment to their own *pratique* was preferred above pleasing benefactors as a means to win trust. Such confidence in their own mission is understandable considering that it was this original ethos that had earned the congregation initial trust from people whose support they needed. Once this trust was obtained, the Lazarists protected their good reputation by ensuring they were distinguishable from others, that internal and external boundaries were clear, and that conformity was observed by all members of the congregation. Conformity was to be the fruit of obedience, which, according to De Paul, was born from an attitude of indifference. Indifference, in turn, originated from complete trust in God. Lazarists who did not conform were sent back to Paris or even dismissed from the company if they were obstinately disobedient. Finally, reputational damage was limited by avoiding unrealistic expectations from their work.

Yet the Lazarists themselves also needed to find out whom they could trust. This is made clear from their relationship with Cardinal Durazzo. From the beginning, the Lazarists in Genoa showed obedience to the archbishop. However, this outward obedience only became total in time, not because the rule of the congregation demanded it, but because of a growing trust in the cardinal. It was only after seeing that Durazzo's interests truly corresponded with theirs that genuine trust could arise. For a new congregation to flourish, trust *in* this group from multiple

levels of society was as important as trust *from* the congregation itself in those who should support it.

