Alison Forrestal

Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. x + 312. Hb, \$135.

Alison Forrestal accomplishes a remarkable feat in this monograph by transforming our understanding of one of the most important and well-studied figures in the French and European Catholic Reformations. In the past, scholars in their accounts of Vincent de Paul have tended to privilege his thought and the critical moments in his life. Forrestal shifts our focus to show how de Paul became a transformative force in France in no small part because of his long-term cultivation of social networks involving elite patrons (many of them female) and his remarkable organizational abilities. Only through this prism, she argues, can we understand the evolution of de Paul's vocation, mission, and spiritual thought. Thus, this study builds on and goes beyond the pioneering work of Barbara Diefendorf (*From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004]) on patronage networks of *dévot* circles in Paris, making an important contribution to our understanding of the flowering of the French Catholic Reformation. It also provides a model for the study of other spiritual figures of the period. Forrestal is in many ways uniquely well-positioned to analyze de Paul's thought and practice in this manner. Her training as a theologian gives her work a complexity and insight that is not usually a characteristic of historical studies of founders and their religious organizations.

Five thematic parts in a generally chronological sequence provide the monograph's structure. Part I: "Wealth and Resources" traces de Paul's early life in the southwest of France and his first years in Paris where he secured patronage from the Gondi family. Forrestal's main thrust and interest in this section is in how early patronage of de Paul and his first pastoral experiences as a rural parish priest, facilitated by his patrons, shaped his vocation and his vision of an organization dedicated to conducting missions in the countryside. Part II: "The Anatomy of Mission" traces de Paul's efforts to bring his group of secular priest-missionaries into being in a crowded world of missionary organizations including such religious orders as the Capuchins and the Jesuits, as well as the Oratorians—another group of secular priests founded in France by Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle. For Forrestal, three elements were key to the Lazarists' establishment and recognition by the papacy in 1633: endowment, structure, and ethos. De Paul's evolving spiritual vision and vocation are once again structured and shaped by this-worldly requirements to secure resources and oversee a growing missionary organization. Part III: "Expansion and Collaboration" explores the crucial period for the Lazarists (better known in the

English-speaking world as the Vincentians) that began in the mid-1630s and resulted in the expansion of their original mission to include clerical formation, and especially the oversight of seminaries. Forrestal once again examines how de Paul's development as a spiritual leader was shaped by this new focus on the training of secular priests, the pressures of cultivating patrons, and making necessary compromises to secure the founding of new seminaries. Part IV: "Engaging with Lay Mission" focuses primarily on de Paul's efforts to promote communal acts of piety among the laity, especially the Daughters of Charity, a confraternity that he established to promote female religious engagement. In this, Forrestal explores de Paul's personal and spiritual engagement with the initiatives of the Daughters which he viewed as another important component of pastoral care. This is discussed in the context of de Paul's activities in raising resources and promoting support for the Daughters among varied constituencies in France. Parts III and IV are critical to Forrestal's study because they establish how de Paul's worldly efforts to raise the resources and develop a missionary ethos for the Lazarists in turn impacted upon his own spiritual development. Part V examines de Paul's position by the 1640s at the center of the French reform movement. Forrestal's clear-eyed view of de Paul's actions on the royal Council of Ecclesiastical Affairs (commonly known as the Council of Conscience), reveals that de Paul's push for clerical reform and renewal coexisted with the worldly realities of appointments to major benefices in France. Far from being a naïve holy figure, De Paul, according to Forrestal, combined virtue with a strong dose of practicality in this arena. Part V also shows how de Paul came to oppose the emerging Jansenist movement, in no small part to protect his reputation and legacy as he sought to ensure that the Lazarists survived and thrived after his death. Perhaps the most striking theme in this final part of the book is how de Paul used networks of friends and patrons, built up over decades, to navigate the dangers of life at the center of a rapidly fragmenting reform movement in France after 1640.

Scholars of the Society of Jesus will find much of interest in this book. The Lazarists, like the Jesuits before them, were a corporation within the French church with novel characteristics that drew concerns from some French authorities, and both organizations saw their mission and purpose evolve significantly during their early years. Moreover, the Lazarists and the Jesuits were two of the most prominent promoters of confraternal organizations in the kingdom throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. These shared experiences warrant comparisons, and Forrestal at several points addresses these parallels and also how Jesuit spiritual thought and institutional organization influenced de Paul's thinking.

Forrestal's careful contextualization of the "great man" in his networks of relations and the realities of administration avoids many of the weaknesses of earlier studies of de Paul. However, the biographical focus also, by its nature, leaves the story of the Lazarist organization only partially told. Certainly de Paul's vision and decades of leadership until his death in 1660 are central to this story, but the development of the Lazarists after his death is a topic beyond the scope of Forrestal's book. This limitation is a small price to pay, given that Forrestal's focus on the life of de Paul allows her to explore how he was both a product of his times and relationships as well as a driving force in the French Catholic Reformation. It is this insight that makes this groundbreaking book so interesting.

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