

**SAINTE
VINCENT DE PAUL
CORRESPONDENCE**

VOLUME I

Reproduction of a painting which had once belonged to Queen Anne of Austria and then to the Hôtel des Invalides. It is now in the possession of the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission, 95 rue de Sèvres, Paris. In the opinion of experts, this portrait was painted in the time of Saint Vincent de Paul by an artist who had the Saint before him.

**SAINT
VINCENT DE PAUL**

**CORRESPONDENCE
CONFERENCES, DOCUMENTS**

I

**CORRESPONDENCE
VOLUME I (1607 - 1639)**

NEWLY TRANSLATED, EDITED, AND ANNOTATED
FROM THE 1920 EDITION
OF
PIERRE COSTE, C.M.

TO
VERY REVEREND JAMES W. RICHARDSON, C.M.

WHO AS SUPERIOR GENERAL
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
AND
OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY
INITIATED AND ENCOURAGED
THIS WORK

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

OF FATHER COSTE'S WORKS

Some three years before the death of Saint Vincent, on the 15th of August 1657, Brother Ducournau, who had been Saint Vincent's faithful and hardworking secretary for close on twenty years, wrote a short memorandum on the importance of preserving in writing what he calls "the holy discourses of Monsieur Vincent." Brother Ducournau was looking to the future and he set out not only arguments for but the rebuttals of the arguments against preserving what Saint Vincent had said.

"It is important, it would seem, for the Company in the future to possess an exact collection of the holy discourses of M. Vincent and to preserve them, for the following reasons:

1st. The best bequest of fathers is the good advice and instructions they leave their children.

2nd. In the world, men take great care to have an inventory made out, and possession taken, of a perishable heritage. . . .

3rd. . . . those who waste a splendid, entailed estate do an irreparable injury to their successors. . . .

4th. If the works he has accomplished are works of God, as they seem to be, God must have bestowed His Spirit on them in order to accomplish and maintain them; consequently, the advice and instruction employed to that end should be regarded as divine, and collected as a heavenly manna, whose various flavors attracted so many different sorts of persons of both sexes and of every rank in life, who have associated themselves in various ways, on behalf of so many different enterprises, and who have been supported by his guidance. . . ."

(Chollier: Ms. account of Brother Ducournau, pp. 151 ff.)

Brother Ducournau must be vigorously clapping his hands--if applause is allowed in heaven--to manifest his approval and satisfaction at the work which has been done in publishing in the English language an official translation of the entire works of Saint Vincent. Congratulations are certainly in order to a host of people who over the years have asked for and encouraged the publication of these volumes. Our most generous tribute of praise and gratitude must be offered to those who have laboured to present us with this English translation of "the holy discourses of M. Vincent."

It is now some sixty years since Father Pierre Coste, C.M., critically edited the correspondence, conferences, and writings of Saint Vincent. It was Father Coste, too, who has written the three volume definitive biography of the Saint. Happily this biography has been translated into English by Father Joseph Leonard, C.M., who also succeeded in publishing a translation of the Conferences to the Daughters of Charity, as well as a volume of letters from the Saint's correspondence. To date, however, we in the English-speaking world have been without an official translation of the entirety of what Father Coste edited. This void, and it has been a keenly felt one, is now being filled. Hopefully within the next four years or so, all Saint Vincent's writings will be available to us in English. The work will go even beyond that of Father Coste, for the volumes which are

presently being prepared will contain some material of Saint Vincent which has come to light during the past forty years and was unavailable to Father Coste--furthermore, the original footnotes of the French edition have been revised and supplemented.

The Editorial Board has made a wise decision in commencing the project of translation with Saint Vincent's correspondence. His correspondence fills eight volumes of Father Coste's French edition. In these volumes, dare I say it, one finds Saint Vincent at his best. Someone once observed that it is better to write for oneself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self. Saint Vincent certainly did not write for the public. He wrote to individuals, addressing himself to their particular queries and needs. He wrote, as he counseled us to do, with God alone in view. For that reason, the letters of Saint Vincent are particularly valuable in revealing to us the depth of his insight into the human condition, the length of his patience, and the breadth of his love.

"Ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ" observed Saint Jerome. It could be said that to be unacquainted with the writings of Saint Vincent is to miss knowing him deeply. The writings of Saint Vincent are like a deep mine from which we can quarry strong rocks of wisdom upon which we can build our own lives and the lives of the poor of Jesus Christ. Let me echo that voice which Saint Augustine mysteriously heard saying: "Take up and read. . . take up and read."

RICHARD MCCULLEN, C.M.
Superior General

Rome, 9 November 1983

LETTER FROM FATHER VERDIER
Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission
To Pierre Coste, C.M.

Paris, February 17, 1920.

Father and very dear Confrere,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever.

You undertook and have just brought to a successful conclusion a fine and carefully done work which is destined to make Saint Vincent de Paul better known through the publications of his letters.

The first printed collection, going back to 1880, is nearly out of print; in addition, it has many gaps. Yours, which is more complete, will contain several hundred letters, unpublished or only partially known, which had escaped the research of your predecessor. You have added, and the innovation is fitting, letters received by the Saint.

Having recalled that immediately after his death the number of his letters was estimated at about 30,000, and that in the eighteenth century Collet had been able to consult almost 7,000, the editor of 1880 adds, not without some sadness: "Today we have only 2,500 of them; the others, alas, are lost forever or buried in private archives. However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way."

You were unwilling to make this resignation your own; and if it is true that fortune favors the daring, it is no less true that Providence rewards the persevering. You are an encouraging example of this fact. You searched diligently, for a long time and everywhere, even as far as America, and made invaluable discoveries; invaluable because of the intrinsic worth of many of them. These discoveries allowed you to complete letters of which we possessed only a part, to date others more accurately, and to correct the names of certain recipients which were doubtful until now or at times incorrect.

You knew how to seek and to find; you knew how to read so as to restore to us the text of Saint Vincent in its perfect integrity. It is truly the Saint still speaking and still repeating to us what he wished to say to his correspondents in the way and with the forms and expressions with which he wished to say it.

It gives me great pleasure to thank you for this work. The better great men are known, the more they are appreciated; and if they are truly great men, they are loved even more. Saint Vincent has a conspicuous place among these truly great men: The Church recognizes him and proclaims him one of her heroes; and his country, too, counts him among those of her children who bring her the most honor.

The reading of his letters, in which he paints his own portrait, will make him better known and, consequently, better loved. By knowing him better and loving him more, your readers, or rather his, will feel themselves grow better, not to mention the special pleasure that will be experienced by those lovers of things of the spirit, connoisseurs of the history and customs of the epoch in which the Saint lived.

Not only will the children of Saint Vincent de Paul's spiritual family, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, be in a position to enjoy this interest in edification and erudition; the great associations which lay claim to his name, the

Ladies of Charity, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, and still others, less known but no less attached to his name and his spirit, will likewise be able to relish it.

Finally, the literary public itself will have every facility for becoming more intimately acquainted with this great man and this great Saint. Your work, in fact, while it brings about a happy contradiction to the preceding editor's discouraged regrets concerning the number of letters, also satisfies his desire to make this treasure public. "Such a work," he says speaking of his collection, "if it were made available to the public, could not fail to arouse the interest of its readers to whom it would offer a considerable number of documents as precious as they are edifying and almost all unpublished."

This wish is now fulfilled and well fulfilled, thanks to your publication.

All that remains is for me to wish your work the widest distribution, a wish that I make wholeheartedly as I await with entire confidence its realization.

Believe me always, Father and very dear Confrere, most devotedly yours in Our Lord.

F. VERDIER, C.M.
Superior General

INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH EDITION

Saint Vincent de Paul was a man of action. He also wrote a great deal. A man of action is, perforce, a man of relationships, and the more numerous the relationships are, the more abundant is the correspondence necessary to maintain them. It is estimated that more than thirty thousand letters were penned by the Saint or his secretaries. According to Collet,¹ there were still six or seven thousand of them in 1748. After more than three centuries, this treasure has been considerably impoverished. We would not be able to publish even eighteen hundred of them today if we were to adhere to letters for which we have the complete text.

Of all Vincent de Paul's correspondents, none was in more regular contact with him than Louise de Marillac. This collection contains about 400 letters from the Saint to his devout collaborator. The most favored after her is Firmin Get, Superior of the house in Marseilles, to whom 150 letters were written. Jean Martin, Superior in Turin, received about 130; Edmond Jolly, Superior in Rome, almost 120; Charles Ozenne, Superior in Warsaw, about 100; and Etienne Blatiron, Superior in Genoa, almost 80. Then come in order of number Bernard Codoing, Brother Jean Parre, Antoine Portail, Louis Rivet, Jacques Pesnelle, Marc Coglée, all members of the Congregation of the Mission. For several years the Saint made it a rule to write every week to the Superiors of the houses in Marseilles, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Warsaw, and others;² he was faithful to this even when he had nothing to say³ Therefore, in many cases, the dates of the letters we still have allow us to guess, almost with certainty, the dates of those that are lost. Except when illness prevented him from doing so, Vincent de Paul never stopped writing in his own hand to Louise de Marillac. Until 1645 he took care of all his correspondence himself. That year, overwhelmed with work, he took as his secretary his compatriot, Brother Bertrand Ducournau,⁴ who was educated, wrote well, loved the work, and joined boundless dedication to unerring judgment. The following year Brother Louis Robineau⁵ was appointed second secretary. The extant letters are almost all in the handwriting of Saint Vincent or of these two Brothers. The transcription of Circular Letters was entrusted to temporary secretaries.

The Saint sometimes says that he is dictating his letters.⁶ Was he in the habit of doing this, and did the word "dictate" have in his mind the absolute meaning we give it today? One cannot help but notice a considerable difference between the style of the letters written by his own hand and those simply bearing his signature. The former are more concise, more virile, more lively; they have more the stamp of the superior who holds authority and is conscious of his responsibility. We perceive more clearly in these letters the language of a man who speaks in his own name, and they are more interesting to read.

Once his letter was finished, Saint Vincent would reread it, make the corrections he thought necessary, sign it, and add whatever he had forgotten in a postscript. Then he folded it and applied the seal that can be seen at the beginning of this volume. The seal pictured the Savior evangelizing the poor. Around it, the words *Superior Generalis Congreg. Missionis* indicated on the outside the source of the letter. His many occupations left the Saint little time for his correspondence, so we find him making use even of free moments spent outside his house.⁷ He himself says in one of his letters that he was writing it out in the street.⁸ He often took time from his rest, and sometimes, overcome by fatigue, he would fall asleep while he was writing; the handwriting of several letters clearly shows the influence of sleep.⁹

Before 1639, the date always follows the signature except when there is no room at the bottom of the page;¹⁰ from 1640 on, it is always put at the top.¹¹ Letters to Louise de

Marillac are dated only when she is traveling or when the Saint himself is away from Paris. When the date is missing, it is often replaced by the day of the week.

The letters to the Missionaries and to the Sisters all begin with this greeting: "The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!", a quite sincere expression of the most intimate desire of his heart. Certain feast days suggested a different form at times: "May the Holy Passion of Our Savior urge us to do and to bear everything for His love!"¹² or: "May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit be impressed on your heart forever!"¹³

Saint Vincent appears to us in his letters as his biographers describe him: simple; good; humble; wise; practical; not losing sight of the most minute details of a business matter; his eyes always raised to God, his rule and his guide; grateful for benefits received; and full of respect for people holding high positions.

He goes straight to the point except when he has a reproach to make, for then he begins by humiliating himself.

When he quotes scripture, most often from memory, we must not look for completely faithful reproductions of the sacred text.

He knew how to give his sentences an original twist, for example: "M. Alméras no longer has a fever, nor have I any news to give you."¹⁴ Or he sets aside the serious tone to say a pleasant word: "I am indeed consoled," he writes to the Superior in Turin, "that Brother Desmottiers has made such progress in the language that he is able to say: *Signor, si*."¹⁵ After telling about the shipwreck of a vessel carrying some Missionaries who were being sent to Madagascar, the Saint adds that, having gotten into a small boat with provisions for three or four days, they arrived at Saint-Jean-de-Luz after two long weeks "in good health and with a good appetite."¹⁶

Although Saint Vincent was not much given to distractions, we find a few in his correspondence. One of his letters to Pierre Escart, Priest of the Mission, ends with the words, "who am, in His love, Madame, your most humble servant."¹⁷ This title of *Madame* he absentmindedly gives to Mademoiselle Le Gras on two occasions.¹⁸ Two letters were left unfinished without the Saint's noticing it.¹⁹ Here and there we find words repeated, left out,²⁰ or obviously incorrect.²¹ We have had to rectify several inaccurate dates in the originals.²² With regard to these distractions, which can easily be counted they are so rare, we must take the secretaries into account.

The letters of Saint Vincent merit publication as historical documents to provide information on the life of this great man who unquestionably holds first place in the history of charity, and must be ranked foremost among reformers of the French clergy. They also merit it because of their literary value, which places their author among the fine prose writers of the French language in the seventeenth century.

We still possess the originals of a good number of his letters, the majority divided into five collections or files.

Files of the Mission. -- The Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission possesses 305 originals,²³ 36 rough drafts, 10 facsimiles, and 42 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was much richer before the Revolution. The looting of Saint-Lazare in 1789, the dissolution of the Congregation in 1792, and gifts given too frequently have contributed to its impoverishment. All these letters, with the exception of seventeen, were published in 1880 along with the other letters of the Saint by the Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin.

Files of the Daughters of Charity. -- The collection preserved at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity is made up almost entirely of letters to Louise de Marillac and to the

first Sisters of the Company. It comprises 275 originals, of which 22 eluded Father Pémartin's research.

Files of Turin. -- The Turin files were created at the time of the Revolution. The letters composing them were brought from Paris to the house of the Priests of the Mission in Turin by Carlo-Domenico Siccardi, Assistant of the Congregation, who had been entrusted with depositing them in a safe place. There are 346 of them: 324 originals, 11 rough drafts, and 11 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Twenty-four are unpublished. We find in this collection almost all the letters to Jean Martin.

Files of Cracow. -- On December 5, 1904, the originals of 167 letters addressed to the first Missionaries of Poland were brought to Father Józef Kiedrowski, Visitor of the Province of Poland and Superior of the house in Cracow. There were 150 of them from Saint Vincent, 1 from the Queen of Poland, 2 from René Alméras, 2 from Edmond Jolly, 2 from Jean Dehorgny, 2 from Thomas Berthe, etc. It is thought that these documents belonged to the Warsaw house before the dispersion of 1864, and that a Priest of the Mission had placed them in safekeeping with a Catholic family.²⁴ Father Pémartin was familiar with all but five of these letters.

Files of the Hains family. -- At the time of the dispersion of religious Congregations at the end of the eighteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Moissonnier, Superior of the house in Marseilles, took with him the letters of Saint Vincent preserved in the archives of that house. After his death (January 17, 1813), these letters went to M. Nodet, his heir, father-in-law of M. Hains, a merchant in Marseilles, who had 57 of them in 1886. The latter's daughter, a Daughter of Charity in Neuilly-sur-Seine, still had 42 of them until recently. She has just parted with them generously in order to give them to the Superior General of the Priests of the Mission. In the beginning, the files contained more than 150 letters. The ones that are left are almost all addressed to Firmin Get. Four of them are missing in the collection published in 1880.

The originals placed on sale by the Charavay firm of Paris would form an important collection by themselves alone if they were gathered together, because there are about ninety of them. We were able to copy some of them on the premises before they were sold, or trace them to collectors. The majority of these letters are known to us only through copies, through the work of Father Pémartin, or through the concise information given in catalogues.

The Sainte-Geneviève Library would have furnished us with ten originals if an unscrupulous hand had not gone off with them. There are at least copies of them left,²⁵ all transcribed--except for the letter to the Abbot of Grandmont--by Father Prévot, who wrote on the back of folio 2: "These letters from Blessed Vincent, written for the most part to the archivist of the Congregation of Sainte-Geneviève, are in a folio volume entitled on the back: *Lettres de prélats depuis l'an 1653 jusqu'en 1660*. The volume is bound with green sheepskin and contains some letters prior to 1653." The volume is still extant, but without the letters in question. Four of the originals have since been put up for sale by M. Charavay.

The old collections of Saint Vincent's letters have been of great use to us. We find in them a number of letters for which we no longer have the originals. Let us review the principal ones.

At the time of the process of beatification of Saint Vincent, several sessions were dedicated, as is customary, to the examination of his writings. The tribunal had 344 letters reviewed and kept 32, probably the most important, in order to add them to the dossier of the process. These 32 originals, all in the Saint's own handwriting, belonged to the house of Saint-Lazare. Experts were called in to ascertain their authenticity. A sworn copyist transcribed them into the volume of the official written records of the sessions. The copy

was compared to the original and the slight deviations that were discovered were noted in the margin. Therefore, these are authentic copies, of the same value as the originals. It is still possible today to see the perfect conformity of those letters whose originals have not been lost. Among these letters, 5 are unpublished; 20 were known to us only by fragments, which have usually been altered; and the other 7 give us a more authentic text than that published in 1880.

The Archives of the Mission possess two old registers of copies, which we shall call, in order to distinguish them, Register 1 and Register 2. Register 1 is bound with boards and measures 340 by 220 millimeters. These Italian words written on the first page tell us the number of letters it contained when it was complete: *Copie di lettere n^o cento Settantotto-178-scritte da San Vincenzo di Paoli portate da Parigi l'anno 1792*. The disappearance of the last page or pages has reduced the number to 174. The 175th letter begins at the end of the seventy-second page and was continued on the Seventy-third, which we no longer have.

A portrait of Saint Vincent, beneath which are written the words: *Sanctus Vincentius a Paulo, Congregationis Missionis et Puellarum Charitatis fundator*, was added at the beginning of the collection. The manuscript itself could well belong to the seventeenth century. The writing, though not beautiful, is legible. The letters are given in their entirety. The designations: "signed, not signed, holograph, handwritten rough draft," indicate that the copyist had before him the original documents themselves or copies of them. No letters to the Priests of the Mission are found in this collection. Four are addressed to the Queen of France, 3 to the Queen of Poland, 2 to the Pope, 2 to Mazarin, 1 to the Nuncio, 9 to cardinals,

23 to bishops, 7 to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, 1 to Turenne, 1 to Louise de Marillac, 5 to Daughters of Charity, 11 to Mademoiselle du Fay, 11 to Visitation nuns, 2 to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, 2 to Louis de Chandénier, etc. As far as can be judged from the 13 letters of the Register whose originals have come down to us, we can rely completely on the accuracy of the text. All but one of the letters in this collection appeared in 1880.

In the manuscript life of René Almérás, Saint Vincent's successor, we read: "It is impossible to express the care he took to follow step by step the mind of this first superior. Not satisfied with having brought to light his life, in which the qualities of his direction are described, he felt it his duty to search further among his letters where he has, as it were, engraved his spirit, his maxims, and his character on an infinity of subjects while speaking to all sorts of people. To this end, he had excerpts taken from them and had them bound in thirteen or fourteen quires. . . . And in order that those who would succeed him in the direction of the Company might also profit from these same letters and more easily draw from them the instructions they would need, a few months before his death²⁶ he had them arranged according to subject matter and transcribed accurately into large bound books as a precious treasure for the Company."

These excerpts were classified under fifteen headings:

1. Institution, perfection, government and works of the Congregation of the Mission in general

2. Orders and advices given to visitors and superiors

3. Admonitions, words of encouragement, and congratulations to individuals

4. Missions in Christian countries and among unbelievers

5. Seminaries and other functions of the Institute

6. Practice of certain virtues

7. Deceased members of the Company

8. Letters of consolation to lay people who were undergoing a trial

9. Gratitude to friends and benefactors
10. Advice given and good works suggested even to distinguished people of rank
11. Various business affairs
12. Struggle against Jansenism
13. Assistance of the poor
14. Direction of the Daughters of Charity
15. Direction of the Visitation nuns

Volume I is the only one we have. It covers merely the first three parts of this vast program. We shall call it Register 2. It is 370 millimeters high and 270 millimeters wide. It contains 350 pages and gives us 549 fragments, or rather 548, because one of them is a duplication. More than 100 of these fragments are from letters whose entire text we have elsewhere. With the exception of about 20, all are excerpts from letters addressed to members of the Congregation of the Mission. The handwriting is beautiful, regular, and can be read quite easily. The copyist never writes the word *Monsieur* at the beginning of the letters, nor the initial greeting customary with the Saint. He did not feel obliged to copy the original in a servile way. Ordinarily he arranges the first sentence of his excerpts in such a way as to remove any dependence on the part he omits. He modernizes the vocabulary and does away with lengthy sentences. However, his modifications are not of great consequence and, on the whole, his text is indeed that of the original. So that some idea of this may be grasped, here, from letter 91,²⁷ is the passage he altered the most:

Text of Register 2. -- *He* did me the honor of telling me that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, *with regard to this last point*, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I shall tell you, *Monsieur*, that I accept this most willingly, although having calculated the expense *on the present cost of living*, it will cost us more, and although the board payments even for the students are *eighty écus*.

Real text. -- *The above-mentioned Prior* did me the honor of telling me *yesterday evening* that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, *with regard to the last difficulty*, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I accept this most willingly, although I have calculated the expense *exactly from what it has cost us at present* and it will cost us more, and although even the students are paying *ninety écus*.

However insignificant these changes may be, it is to be regretted that the copyist made them. His excuse is that he was living in the seventeenth century which did not have, like the twentieth, a concern for meticulous accuracy. The majority of his contemporaries proved less scrupulous than he. We are borrowing eight unpublished fragments from Register 2.

Manuscript 1292 of the Municipal Library of Avignon is described as follows in the catalogue: "Eighteenth century, paper, 94 pages, 262 by 190 millimeters, bound in chamois leather." The title is: *Lettres choisies du Vénérable Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier Supérieur Général de la . . . Congrégation de la Mission*. These letters, or rather these excerpts from letters, 99 in all, to which are added as a supplement 10 other fragments, are arranged in 8 groups according to the instruction they contain:

1. Trust in God and abandonment to Providence
2. Perseverance in one's vocation
3. Regularity and perfection
4. Care of health and charity towards the neighbor

5. Care of the sick, mutual support and union
6. Courage to overcome one's own inclinations for the glory of God
7. Trust in God and mistrust of self
8. Prayer, gratitude

Almost all the fragments of the Avignon manuscript are in Register 2 and are found there with the same variants. Of the three fragments that are the exception, two are known from other sources. Therefore, we shall borrow from this manuscript only one excerpt, which has already been published in the 1880 collection.²⁸

The Avignon manuscript represents a collection of manuscripts in fairly general use in the houses of the Priests of the Mission before 1792. We still have two other examples of it left.

One of them is manuscript 20 of the Chamber of Deputies: eighteenth century, paper, 143 pages, 200 by 145 millimeters, bound in sheepskin. It has the same title, the same divisions, the same grouping of the letters, reduced here to 75. In addition, we find in it a copy of the alleged death sentence passed against Our Lord by Pilate and a supplement of 23 fragments, all relating to the Company of the Daughters of Charity, which are found only in this manuscript. Of these fragments, 5 have remained unpublished.

The other manuscript is at the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is bound in boards, belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century, and contains 74 fragments on 122 pages. It measures 217 by 150 millimeters. It stops at the sixth part, of which it gives only one letter, or rather, letter fragment. In short, it is an incomplete copy of the Avignon manuscript and has nothing special to offer.

Manuscript 869 of the Lyons Library bears the title *Livre contenant l'abrégé de la vie des prêtres, clercs et frères de la Congrégation de la Mission qui ont vécu et qui sont morts dans la pratique des vertus convenables à leur vocation*. In this collection, wherein we find the full-length accounts about René Alméras, Edmond Jolly, and Jean-Baptiste Anselme, Priests of the Mission, a place was assigned to the correspondence of Saint Vincent. The *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent* go from folio 168 to folio 196. They contain the eulogy of recently deceased Missionaries. Some of these fragments have not yet been published. They can also be found in the Library of the Calvet Museum in Avignon, in the Delandine manuscript 774, which reproduces the entire contents of the Lyons manuscript and several additional documents. Both manuscripts are from the eighteenth century. The one in Lyons is bound in parchment and consists of 286 pages measuring 260 by 90 millimeters.

The departmental archives of Vaucluse possess a quarto register of 37 pages, classified D 274, which contains 42 excerpts from letters of Saint Vincent, letters addressed for the most part to superiors in Rome. This manuscript contains nothing that we do not know from other sources.

The Marseilles manuscript, as we call it because of its title: *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent de Paul déposées dans les archives de la Mission de France à Marseille*, belongs to the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is a simple notebook of 17 pages on which have been transcribed in roughly chronological order, probably shortly after the publication of Father Pémartin's work, 64 generally short fragments of letters addressed mainly to Firmin Get. It was impossible for us to locate the document that the copyist had in hand. The conformity of the verified text with excerpts of letters for which we possess the original guarantees its overall accuracy. Twenty of these fragments will be published here for the first time.

The Daughters of Charity of the parish of Saint-Paul in Paris possessed until 1814 a folio collection of eighty-eight pages written in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was entitled: *Extraits de Lettres de feu Monsieur Vincent et feu Mademoiselle Le Gras*. The

letters of the Saint are represented by more than one hundred fragments, those of his spiritual daughter by only seven. The handwriting is not always the same; on page seven, we recognize that of Julienne Loret, one of the Foundress' principal collaborators. The excerpts are separated quite often by a small blank space or by a mere indentation. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other, and it could be that at one time or another, for lack of sufficient information, we have attached to one and the same letter extracts from different letters, or vice versa. In 1814 the manuscript was given to Dominique-François Hanon, Vicar General of the Congregation of the Mission. It has since gone to enrich the archives of the Sisters' Motherhouse. We shall borrow from it about forty excerpts.

In addition to the manuscript collections, there are printed ones and the old works that made extensive use of the Saint's correspondence. It is fitting to rank in first place the *Vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul*.^{f29} by Louis Abelly. A great number of Saint Vincent's letters are quoted or merely referred to by this first of his biographers. A few more than two hundred of them are mentioned, among which about one hundred appear in Father Pémartin's collection. Like most writers of his time, Abelly did not scruple touching up the texts he quoted under pretext of improving their style or making them clearer. Because the thought was respected, it was considered quite natural to remove the imperfections of an expression. Unfortunately, poor taste often rendered the expression more defective instead of improving it, and the thought, said to be untouched, suffered at times from these changes.

Abelly replaces words, inserts brief commentaries, and modifies sentence constructions. Beneath his pen "reputation" becomes "repute";³⁰ "good men," "respectable men";³¹ "you have a thousand reasons," "you have every reason";³² "merry fellows," "those who would be too free";³³ and "devout," "flourishing in godliness."³⁴

Abelly likes to emphasize the pious tone of the Saint's expressions. Thus he writes: "these holy days" instead of "these days";³⁵ "the most Blessed Sacrament" instead of "the Blessed Sacrament."³⁶

Saint Vincent's conciseness sometimes seems to him an obstacle to clarity; Abelly remedies this by lengthening the sentence. Here are a few examples:

Real text. -- "Oh surely, that is an illusion!"³⁷

Abelly. -- "Oh! surely, if you were to think that way, you would be greatly mistaken and it would be sheer illusion."³⁸

Real text. -- "They will go to judgment day with their heads held high."³⁹

Abelly. -- "But with what holy confidence they will appear on judgment day after having performed so many holy works of charity!"⁴⁰

Real text. -- "Have pity on us."⁴¹

Abelly. -- "Therefore, have pity on us and come take us by the hand to draw us out of the evil state in which we are."⁴²

Often enough the language of Vincent de Paul is more clever, more lively, more French than that attributed to him by his biographer. The Saint writes to Louise de Marillac: "Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight since you have borne such a fruit!"⁴³ We do not understand why Abelly substituted for those words the following: "Oh! how you have appeared today in God's sight like a beautiful tree, since, through His grace, you have borne such fruit!"⁴⁴ Saint Vincent continues: "May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love!" Is that not better than: "I entreat Him, through His infinite goodness, to make of you forever a veritable tree of life which will produce fruits of true charity!" We read in a letter to François du Coudray: "Is everyone in good health? Is each one in good spirits?"⁴⁵ Abelly preferred: "Is each one in good health and really content?"⁴⁶

Some textual changes result from mistakes in reading. It is doubtless because he was not able to decipher Saint Vincent's handwriting that the first biographer read *songez* [dream] for *soyez* [be].⁴⁷

Among the thirty fragments, approximately, whose texts we have been able to check, there is not one given to us completely intact. Several are even almost unrecognizable⁴⁸ because they have undergone so many modifications.

In his *Vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, Pierre Collet also makes frequent use of the Saint's writings. He cites or makes reference to more than 250 letters. His quotations, less frequent and generally less extensive than those of Abelly, are almost all found in the first biographer, often enough with the same alterations.⁴⁹ When he has recourse directly to the original, it is not for the purpose of quoting it verbatim. Nevertheless, he is perhaps less free with the text than Abelly.

In 1834, Gossin, a lawyer at the royal court of Paris, published from the originals, in a book entitled *Saint Vincent de Paul peint par ses écrits*,⁵⁰ seventy-six letters of the Saint--the majority addressed to Louise de Marillac--and one petition to the Parlement. He retains the original spelling, places the dated letters in chronological order, and gives the names of those who own the manuscripts he used. Although quite incomplete, this work would be excellent if the author had been better able to read Saint Vincent's handwriting. The proper names in particular are completely changed. Who would recognize Goussault, Laurent, Souscarrières, de Herse, Mussot, Romilly, Fortia, de Brou, Pascal, Pillé, and d'Authier in the names Toustain, Lunveni, Souharries, Bierse, Mussut, Clomilly, Foren, Bron, Fasral, Filé and Autin? Who would not be surprised to read in the Saint's correspondence sentences such as this: *Faites. . . bien entendre. . . à votre tour que je suis en témoin de Notre-Seigneur*. [Make it quite clear in your turn that I am like a witness of Our Lord.]?⁵¹ Replace *tour* with *coeur*, *témoin* with *l'amour*, and you will have what the Saint wrote [Make it quite clear to your heart that I am, in the love of Our Lord. . .]. However numerous these reading errors may be, it is almost always easy for anyone who is familiar with Saint Vincent's style and history to reconstruct the true text. Gossin has done a fine and useful piece of work. Our collection is indebted to him for several letters which we have not found anywhere else.

Scarcely had he been elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission than Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne realized that it was his duty to place at the disposition of the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity the conferences and writings of Saint Vincent, so that, better instructed by this reading of their Holy Founder's teachings, they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his. In 1844 he had facsimiles made of a quarto collection of 585 pages: *Collection des conférences de saint Vincent, de plusieurs de ses lettres et de quelques conférences de M. Alméras*. All of these letters except one were selected from the Saint's correspondence with his Missionaries. There are seventy-one of them, arranged in no particular order. More often than not, they are only excerpts.

The following year, 126 letters, more or less complete, appeared in a work published in Paris under the title: *Conférences spirituelles tenues pour les Filles de la Charité par saint Vincent de Paul*⁵²

This publication was followed ten years later by the *Recueil des diverses Exhortations et Lettres de saint Vincent aux Missionnaires*, which contains facsimiles of nearly seven hundred letters or letter fragments. Here again the editor was not guided by any historical concern: no notes, no chronological order, a text quite frequently altered and therefore flawed, at times composite letters which appear unified but in reality are composed of sentences taken from different letters. A collection of this kind serves its purpose, but it could not be sufficient. The letters of Saint Vincent are not only food for piety; they are also

historical documents. Scholars were praying for a comprehensive compilation of complete letters, faithfully reproduced and classified in the only order suitable to history--chronological order.

A compatriot of the Saint, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin, Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, wished to undertake this work himself in spite of the numerous demands of his office. He collected 2039 letters⁵³ which fill four octavo volumes printed in Paris in 1880 by Pillet et Dumoulin.

The *Lettres de saint Vincent de Paul* enjoyed a well-deserved success among this great Saint's two religious families for whom the work was exclusively intended. It became known and desired by others, and it was in response to the many requests addressed to him that Father Pémartin chose 860 letters from among those he had just published and made them available to the public in 1882.⁵⁴

The 1880 work presupposes considerable research and indicates significant progress over previous collections. Nonetheless, it exhibits many lacunae and a great many inaccuracies.

The discovery of new documents makes it possible today to complete or correct letters taken from less complete or less reliable sources. The dates attributed by Father Pémartin to the undated letters of Saint Vincent are more often than not incorrect. In our time, it is required, and rightly so, that the dates, words and sentences added by the editor to incomplete texts taken from documents damaged by moths, humidity, or a tear be placed in brackets. In the 1880 collection nothing distinguishes them.

The annotation is not plentiful enough. The reader would like to know whether the text followed by the editor is an original, a draft, or a copy; and, when it is an original, whether the writing is the Saint's or that of his secretaries. It would be desirable to tell him, by indicating crossed-out words or by giving different drafts when any can be found, through what successive stages the Saint's thought or expression has passed. A word of explanation concerning the events or the individuals mentioned in the letters would help him to be better acquainted with the milieu in which Saint Vincent de Paul lived and, at times, to better understand the meaning of his sentence.

The 1880 collection would have profited by being conceived according to a more comprehensive plan. There are letters of Saint Vincent whose text we do not know, but Abelly, Collet, or others give us a summary of their contents; why not mention them? Why not accompany the letters he wrote by those he received? The latter shed light on the former. Finally, research patiently pursued has brought about fruitful discoveries. Father Pémartin wrote in his preface: "However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way." A rash statement, for it is already possible to add several hundred unpublished letters to his collection.

A supplement to Saint Vincent's letters published in 1888 contains more than one hundred new ones.⁵⁵ A few unpublished letters, most often copied from the originals, appeared around 1889 in a facsimile collection composed exclusively of letters from the Saint to Louise de Marillac, about 318 in number.⁵⁶ Excerpts from letters, all taken from Father Pémartin's work and relating to the Foundress or the Sisters' works, are added as an appendix. Sister de Geoffre, a Daughter of Charity to whom this work was entrusted, worked at it intelligently and with a will, and it is but just to say that she accomplished it successfully.

After forty years, it seems the time has come to take up again the work of Father Pémartin in order to give it broader scope, more order, greater accuracy, and to adjust it to the requirements of modern criticism.

Keeping the spelling of the documents would have presented, it seems to us, more drawbacks than advantages. We have preferred to modernize it so as to facilitate the reading of the work for the public and to avoid the variety of spellings that exist between the letters written by Saint Vincent and by his secretaries, and between the originals and copies of them. About half the letters which form this collection are taken from copyists from the end of the seventeenth century or later. Why should we retain their spelling which is neither that of the original nor our own? For reasons of uniformity and clarity, the most recent editors of Bossuet's correspondence were led to lay aside the great orator's spelling; we shall imitate them.

The letters of Saint Vincent will be followed by his conferences, and the conferences by the principal documents relating to his life and his institutions. The work we are undertaking is considerable. We hope that it will be of assistance: first of all, to scholars who will find in these pages a great deal of new information; to the Saint's future biographers whom it will spare long and often futile research; and finally, to our readers, for Saint Vincent is one of those men whom we esteem and love more when we know them more intimately. Now, when we esteem him and love him, do we not already feel drawn to imitate him?

PIERRE COSTE, C.M.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In mid-December of 1973, Father James W. Richardson, C.M., the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, met with the Provincial Superiors or Visitors of the Congregation's Provinces in the United States and requested a new and complete translation into English of all the extant works of Saint Vincent, which, in effect, meant the translation into modern American English of the fourteen-volume work of Pierre Coste, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents* and a collection of 144 letters and two conference outlines unknown to Coste and published by André Dodin, C.M., in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20. Selected letters of Saint Vincent and his conferences to both the Daughters of Charity and the Priests of the Mission had been made available in English through the labors of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M.,¹ but the English-speaking world still awaited access to the entire wealth of material found in Coste's work.

In requesting this translation, Father Richardson was following a long-standing tradition of concern on the part of Vincentian Superiors to place the writings of their Holy Founder at the disposition of all the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity so that "they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his." It is hoped that the translation of this work, "rich in teaching, sparkling with humor, and without a single banal line--a unique thing in a collection of this kind"²--will now afford the English-speaking segment of the Double Family³ a broader and deeper understanding of the genius of Saint Vincent de Paul and will also be a means of introducing him to others who remain unaware of his spirituality and manifold works of charity.

The ultimate implementation of the Translation Project, as the undertaking became known, was entrusted to Father Cecil Parres, C.M., with Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M., designated as Editor-in-Chief. The provinces of the Daughters of Charity were immediately invited to participate in the work and Sister Eleanor McNabb, D.C., joined Fathers Parres and Dirvin to form the first Publishing Board. This group ably laid the groundwork and oversaw the first steps of the infant project, from the organization of the technical details to the gathering of funds. In 1975, Father James R. King, C.M., was appointed Executive Assistant to Father Dirvin and has, since that time, contributed a variety of expertise to the work.

From 1974 to 1980, the translation, as projected in its initial stages, underwent several changes both with regard to the scope of the endeavor and the method of accomplishing it. The initiators of the work envisaged only a simple rendering into English of Coste's work and that of Dodin. They intended an entirely fresh edition translated from the original with no dependence on any previous publication. Volunteer translators recruited from the Double Family were to produce an exact translation of the original with a special review board checking the translation for accuracy. Editorial teams would then couch the text in modern American English while striving to preserve the style and flavor of the original correspondent. The Editorial Board directing the project would make the final review and determination of the manuscript for publication.

In 1976, after two years of organizing, recruiting volunteer translators and editors, and establishing a sufficient financial footing, the Editorial Board decided to publish first of all the work of Dodin, *Mission et Charité*. Several reasons prompted this decision: 1.) the material had not been previously translated; 2.) the volume was short and could be done more quickly than the others; 3.) the amount assigned to any one translator would be small; 4.) it was hoped that participants in the project might feel a sense of achievement in the early stages of the work; and 5.) it was hoped that the appearance of this first volume would encourage interest in the project among members of the Double Family of Saint Vincent.

Therefore, in the Fall of 1976, about forty translators throughout the United States received as their first assignment several letters from *Mission et Charité* and the work began in earnest. The publication date set for this section was 1977.

Meanwhile, comments, suggestions, and events were paving the way for major changes in the original plan. The advisability of translating the more than fifty-year old Coste edition without updating the scholarship was called into question. Writings found even more recently than those published in *Mission et Charité* had come to light as well as more complete or more correct versions of letters already appearing in Coste. It was suggested that the letters appearing in Dodin's work be placed chronologically within the existing volumes of Coste and not be isolated in a separate volume. At the same time, Sister Helen Marie Law, D.C.,⁴ had been invited to join the Project. By July of 1976, Sister had already translated on her own the majority of Coste's first eight volumes and the question arose of how best to use her work.

Each of these elements was discussed and carefully considered. As early as May 1976, steps were taken to obtain editors capable of updating the scholarship of the Coste edition. In October 1977, a Priest of the Mission, Father John W. Carven, agreed to serve in this capacity and in May 1978 he was specifically assigned to the work.

At a meeting on March 26, 1977, the Editorial Board agreed, as part of the general editing process, to follow the recommendation concerning the insertion of Dodin's material within the chronology of Coste's volumes. However, the members still felt that there were advantages to publishing an inexpensive but attractive translation of the Dodin volume. It was not until October of the same year that the focus shifted to publishing several of Coste's volumes, primarily because of the great cost reduction, and no further mention was made of printing *Mission et Charité* as an isolated volume.

Although the original conception of the Project envisioned a totally new translation done by recruited volunteers, the Editorial Board decided in 1977 to use Sister Helen Marie Law's³ work as the basic translation for Coste's volumes. Her work was judged highly accurate, although certainly susceptible to editing. Use would also be made, especially to clarify difficult passages, of the translation of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M. The Board then decided to enlist the services of a full-time French language scholar to review and, where necessary, to emend Sister's entire work. In 1978, a Daughter of Charity, Sister John Marie Poole, was assigned to carry out this service, part-time at first and then full time.

By October 1977, the concept of the simple translation had expanded to the creation of a totally new edition based on a thorough revision of Sister Helen Marie Law's translation. The work would represent as complete a canon as possible of Saint Vincent's writings and, for that purpose, a serious effort would be made to seek out unpublished documents from any source available. The material found in *Mission et Charité* and the *Annales*, as well as any new items discovered would be inserted chronologically within the volumes of Coste. And, finally, a history scholar would update all the information contained in the footnotes and final index. Two further decisions in 1980 provided each volume with a biographical index which incorporated terms and places, thereby making each volume self-contained.

Optimism seemed in order as the Project proceeded through 1978 and into 1979 with one person working full time on the translation and another, on a part-time basis, reviewing the footnotes. However, the euphoria was short-lived: as 1979 moved into 1980, neither member of the work force was able to devote full-time attention to the Project. This lack of consistent application to the task, the consequent slowdown of the work, and the enormity of the undertaking as envisioned in 1977 brought about a revision of the Project goals. On May 13, 1980, the Vincentian Provincials altered the 1977 decision and decided to follow through with a full English translation of only the letters, that is, of the first eight volumes of Coste

including the new material found in Dodin and other sources and with updated annotation. Upon completion of the letters, a further determination would be made concerning the six remaining volumes.

In 1980, Father Carven and Sister John Marie Poole, who had been working on the translation since 1978, were both assigned full time to the Project. Once again the work progressed and the prospects for publication appeared hopeful. During the next four years, the Project passed through various high and low periods. An unforeseen change of personnel slowed down the work considerably, as did the necessity of fully developing and refining the detailed aspects of the editing process, which at this point in time had never gone beyond the first check for accuracy.

Now, at last, in 1984, we are able to offer the first volume of this new edition of Saint Vincent's letters to the English-speaking world. To the 416 letters which appeared in Coste's original volume I, we have added twenty-six letters, three of which have never before been published.⁵ Twenty-four letters from *Mission et Charité* have been inserted: nineteen are completely new to the volume⁶ and the other five provide more complete and/or more correct versions of letters already in Coste.⁷ Three letters, also new to volume I, have been drawn from Coste's supplements in volumes VIII⁸ and XIII,⁹ which also offered more complete and correct versions of three other letters.¹⁰ One letter was discovered in the *Annales*¹¹ and another¹² in an article concerning the adoption of an Apostolic Visitor in the Visitation Community. Research to date has uncovered ten more unpublished letters and approximately seven documents which will be inserted chronologically in the appropriate volumes in addition to the remaining 117 items in *Mission et Charité* and the other twenty-six letters published by Coste in his supplements. It is hoped that still more of Saint Vincent's writings will be found as work on the Project progresses so that the present edition will truly represent the most complete collection of the Saint's work ever published.

Besides the letters newly inserted in volume I, seventeen letters have been relocated within the volume,¹³ either because of corrections given by Coste himself in his volumes VIII and XIII or due to discoveries permitting more accurate dating. In such cases, the original number of the letter has been left with the title of the letter and an indication has been given as to its new placement. The citation found at the new location gives the rationale for the change that has been made.

In placing new letters within the volume or changing the placement of letters we have relied on Coste's corrections given in volumes VIII and XIII, the listings found in the *Annales*,¹⁴ the dates on recently discovered letters or, in the absence of a date, on internal evidence. To facilitate research in Coste's work, we have chosen to keep the letter numbers of the original volumes and to indicate material newly added or relocated within each volume by adding a, b, c, etc., to the number of the preceding item. We have also decided to adhere to the span of years assigned by Coste for each volume.

In some cases, the finding of an original has enabled us to join fragments formerly considered separate letters. Such combined letters have been assigned a single number followed by a letter to differentiate the whole from the segments as published in the original Coste volume. Where variations of a single letter exists, only the most correct version has been included in the volume. Likewise, although Coste chose to publish letters originally written in Latin both in that language and in French, the present edition bears only the English translation of the original Latin.

Three different types of letters are presented in these volumes: letters *from* Saint Vincent, letters *to* Saint Vincent and, at times, mere summaries of letters where the existence of a letter is known but no text is available. The letters written by Saint Vincent appear in

regular type, while those addressed to him are printed in italics. Smaller type has been used to differentiate the summaries.

As Coste states in his introduction, almost all the letters we now possess are either in Saint Vincent's handwriting or in that of one of his secretaries. The term *original autograph* found in the citation of a letter indicates that the manuscript was written entirely in the Saint's hand. If the citation uses the term *signed letter*, the manuscript was written by a secretary and signed by the Saint. For some letters only a facsimile, a handwritten copy, a photocopy, or a photograph is known. Such indications are given in the citation of the letters for which this information is available.

The citations usually state as well the actual location of the manuscript or copy used for the present edition. Great care has been taken to verify these locations where possible. Letters drawn from other publications and those belonging to special collections, private or museum, have not been checked due to the near impossibility of such a task. However, an attempt has been made to verify all letters belonging to private houses of the Daughters of Charity, the Priests of the Mission, other Religious houses, churches, and various religious institutions. In volume I, the whereabouts of fifty-nine letters have been checked and the citations corrected where necessary. As a rule, no explanation has been given concerning these changes--the present location has merely been inserted. In the process of checking these locations and in the search for unpublished letters, we have at times been fortunate enough to locate the originals of letters for which only copies were known formerly. In these instances as well no mention has been made of the correction--the citation simply states that the manuscript is an original.

We have updated as well the department names given in the footnotes. Several departments have had name changes since the time of Coste, while two others have been subdivided.¹⁵

Although the Project has undergone many delays, each has contributed in some way to the overall quality of the work. The appearance, in 1983, of the revised edition of Saint Louise de Marillac's writings¹⁶ has permitted us to check her letters to Saint Vincent and her spiritual writings for any corrections which may have come to light. We have also adjusted all the footnote references to the appropriate indication as given in the new edition.

In any work of translation the question of style invariably arises, so it was not strange that we should be faced with the problem. Should we smooth out clumsy or elliptical phrasing in the interest of producing a more "readable" translation or should we preserve the roughness and stylistic crudities of the original in order to reflect the flavor and spontaneous quality of Saint Vincent's expression, supplying explanations where needed to make the sense clear? As our response to this question, we have attempted to make our translation as "readable" as possible while adhering closely to the style of each correspondent. For that purpose we have made an effort to give as literal a meaning as we could to the expressions used, while still adapting them to modern terminology. We have tried to reproduce even the grammatical constructions used by each correspondent unless the true meaning of the sentence would suffer thereby. Very long sentences have been shortened and short phrases joined together to render thoughts more readily intelligible, though still preserving the sense of the original. The vocabulary and expression has deliberately been kept simple. Saint Vincent's love for and practice of simplicity are no secret to anyone familiar with his life; therefore, it was judged fitting to follow his own simplicity in the choice of words and style unless he himself opted for more elegant forms.

To retain the French atmosphere of the work we have left certain terms and expressions in the original French. General terms of greeting such as *Monsieur, Madame,*

etc., have not been translated, nor have we attempted an English version for expressions such as *O mon Dieu!*, *O Jésus!* Landholding titles which often form part of a proper name--*Comte, Duc, Marquis*--have also been left in French. Other titles have been translated by the closest English equivalent possible. Proper names are given in the original language unless there is a familiar English form. This holds true for both people and places.

Therefore, *Sainte*

Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot de Chantal has been rendered as *Saint Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal*, whereas *Pierre Séguier* remains in French. For places, *Brittany* is used instead of *Bretagne*, while *Granada, Villeneuve*, and similar names remain in the original language. Proper foreign names within the text of the manuscripts have been left as written by the correspondents. However, the footnotes and index present the name in its original language form--*Alessandro Bichi* for *Alexandre Bichi*; *Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno* for *Jean-François Bagni*

An attempt has been made to standardize name variations appearing in the original manuscripts: *Gondi* is always used in this edition although the form *Gondy* is often seen in the manuscripts. We have, however, left the variations *Pollalion* and *Poulaillon*. Although the correct spelling is the former, Saint Vincent always wrote the latter.

We have also standardized the various forms of the phrase used by Saint Vincent after his signature: *unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission*. Throughout this edition the abbreviation *i.s.C.M.(indignus sacerdos Congregationis Missionis)* has been used.

The word *fille*, meaning girl, daughter, young woman, appears in many of the manuscripts. In the seventeenth century, this word also denoted a woman religious or nun. We have tried to adjust the meaning of *fille* to the context of the various letters and have sometimes rendered the word as *Sister* rather than *Daughter* when referring to a member of Saint Louise's nascent community.

Monetary terms--*livre, écu, etc.*--have not been translated for it would be difficult to assign them an equivalent value in modern currency. Several other words and phrases have likewise been left in French--*Parlement, Chambre des Comptes, collège*--since English has no corresponding institution. These terms have been explained in footnotes. For other words of foreign origin used in English and found in English dictionaries, no explanation has been given, for example, *faubourg*.

Saint Vincent often makes use of scriptural references which, however, are not always direct quotes. Where he has done so, the translation has been adjusted to flow with the meaning of the sentence. The scriptural quotations given in the footnotes are usually taken from the *New American Bible*, unless a passage cannot be found in that edition or a more suitable rendering of the phrase is found elsewhere. In such instances, the *Douay-Rheims Bible* has been used. In the case of the psalms, both versions have been cited because of the variations.

Coste almost always refers to Vincent de Paul as Saint Vincent or the Saint. In the present edition we have added this title to the names of Louise de Marillac and any other individual who has been canonized since Coste's time.

Generally speaking, in the titles of the letters, Coste gave the location of the addressee only when he was sure of it and when the locality was outside the then city of Paris. We have continued this practice and have attempted to make it more consistent. We have also followed Coste's custom of placing within brackets dates that are uncertain or conjectural. Brackets have also been used to indicate words either missing from the manuscript or inserted by the editors.

The capitalization forms of the original manuscripts have been adjusted to American usage as has the punctuation. Number forms--words versus figures--follow common American practice as well.

In addition to our goal of producing a smooth English translation which is faithful insofar as possible to the meaning and style of the original French, we have also purposed to present a work which is interesting and informative with regard to Saint Vincent, his correspondents, and his times. Both the scholar who may wish to use this work as a research tool and the ordinary reader who may be unfamiliar with the Double Family and the religio-political history of the period have been kept in mind. A great effort has been made to update, correct, and amplify Coste's footnote material. Irrelevant notes have been eliminated and new annotation added whenever this has been deemed necessary or helpful. In the case of new matter, no indication has been given to distinguish Coste's footnotes from the annotation added by our editor.

A biographical sketch of each personage has been supplied throughout the work the first time that he or she appears in a volume. To facilitate reference to this data and also to the explanations of terms and places given throughout the text an index has been added to each book. The index indicates the number of the letter to which the reader should refer for the information sought. A general index will also be provided as an appendix to the entire work.

All references in the indices and the footnotes have been given by citing the volume and the number of the item rather than the page. Since Coste's volume span and his numbering of items has been retained, this practice should facilitate research in both his edition and the present translation.

In order to enjoy these volumes more thoroughly, the reader would do well to keep in mind that, as now, so then, one correspondent did not spell out to the other details that were already known and understood by both. Reading these letters at a distance of some three hundred years will often arouse a curiosity which in many cases must remain unsatisfied. The allusions made will not always be clear, nor can they be. However, a familiarity beforehand with the life of Saint Vincent will greatly aid one's knowledge and understanding of the situations mentioned and the people involved. The three-volume definitive biography written by Coste¹⁷ provides extensive information, but many shorter versions of the Saint's life can be found. Placed against such a background, these writings take on still more a life of their own and make the Saint vividly present once again. The twinkle in his eyes and the smile or tenderness in his voice seep through the words and we meet the delightful, charming man known to his contemporaries. The severe, ascetic Saint takes on a new personality and somehow becomes more human.

This man of myriad occupations and enormous correspondence writes to Saint Louise and understandably so: "Last night I found this letter that I thought I had sent to you; I wrote it three days ago."¹⁸ And to one of his Missionaries, Robert de Sergis, he says: "I received your letter four days ago, but I lost it and cannot remember everything you wrote."

Women of our day will find delight in hearing him tell Saint Louise: "Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money;" and then ask, surely with a little bit of mischievousness: "Well now, is that not a consolation to you, Mademoiselle? After that, will you say that you are of no use to the world?"

The warmth and tenderness of his expression often take us by surprise. Saint Louise, his Missionaries, the friends who both supported him and enjoyed his spiritual guidance were often the recipients of his affectionate words. "You know how much my heart treasures your own. . .,"²¹ he writes to one of his Missionaries. And, to Saint Louise, both tenderly and

teasingly he remarks: "I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers, because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras, you put me in first place."

Saint Vincent writes as though he enjoys the task, giving unusual twists to his phrases and adapting his usual closing in an astonishing variety of forms: "I have never been more busy or more your servant, in the love of Our Lord".

The lyrical beauty of some passages changes his prose into exquisite poetry and we question our vision of a rough Gascon peasant: "Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally as well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose."²⁴

Let us not fail to seek the man beyond these words, the man of compassion, warmth, humor, savoir faire, authority, and, most of all, the mystic whose sanctity was carved amid the bustle and involvement of very human situations. He will give us hope that we, too, can find holiness in an ordinary, busy life. May this personal acquaintance with the real Vincent de Paul lead us to encounter the dynamic force behind his life, Jesus Christ, Who, for him, was all things.