

The Perception of Sainthood in Seventeenth-Century France

Janis M. Gibbs

In July 1715, a commission of inquiry, under the authority of the Bishop of Autun and the direction of the Benedictine prior Dom de Bansière, met in Paray-le-Monial, France, to take evidence for the first stage of a sainthood procedure.¹ The subject of the hearing was the late Sister Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, a member of the community of Visitandine nuns at Paray-le-Monial from 1671 until her death in 1690. Marguerite-Marie had, during her life, acquired a reputation for sanctity which since her death had been augmented by stories of petitioners who credited her intercession for miraculous cures of otherwise incurable illnesses. The commission considered evidence including an autobiography (*Autobiographie*) and a series of letters and devotional materials written by Marguerite-Marie, a biography written by two of the sisters shortly after her death (*Vie des Contemporaines*), and the testimony of a series of witnesses who either had known her or had been the beneficiaries of miracles performed after prayers seeking her intercession. The 1715 commission of inquiry was not empowered to confer beatification or sainthood; its task was to preserve evidence of "all that which might concern the life, the virtues, the actions, heroic deeds and miracles of the said Venerable sister, for fear that, by the passage of time, the eye witnesses should come to die and the testimony to disappear."²

The materials studied by the commission provide a valuable source for the analysis of the perception of sanctity in late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century France. Sisters Françoise-Rosalie Verchère and Péronne-Rosalie de Farges, authors of the *Vie des Contemporaines*, had served as novices under Marguerite-Marie's direction. They had lived with her, studied with her, talked with her, and observed her spiritual practices for years. They wrote about her life and her religious experiences in order to

Janis M. Gibbs is a first-year graduate student in the history department. She received a B.A. from the College of William and Mary and a J.D. from the University of Chicago. She wrote this paper for Professor H.C.E. Midelfort's seminar in Reformation history. She gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the members of the seminar in the preparation of this paper.

preserve the memory of a woman considered saintly by the community in which she lived. They may also have written with the idea of providing support for canonization proceedings; to some extent, therefore, their account may be colored by an attempt to conform with the juridical requirements of sainthood. While they were not impartial reporters, neither were they canon lawyers writing a canonization brief. Their account included the things they found special, different, or noteworthy about Marguerite-Marie.

Marguerite-Marie wrote the *Autobiographie* at the direction of her confessor. As did the *contemporaines*, she included details about her life before entering the convent and descriptions of her devotions. Unlike the *contemporaines*, she wrote extensively about her visions and her experiences of direct communication with God. Her work conveyed a sense of what it felt like to try to answer the promptings of the spirit and to live a holy life.

The witnesses who testified at the hearing included twenty nuns, three priests, and eight lay witnesses, including the convent's doctor, Marguerite-Marie's brother, a female laborer, a fourteen-year-old girl, an older woman (given the title of "Demoiselle" in the proceedings), a merchant's wife, a soldier, and a lawyer. All of the witnesses either knew Marguerite-Marie, had heard stories about her, or had experienced miracles attributed to her intercession. Their testimony, which may have been influenced, to some extent, by the clerics holding the hearings, emphasized the external manifestations of sainthood, including miracles and devotional practices.

These documents provide distinctive perspectives on the seventeenth-century perception of sanctity. In any analysis of sainthood, such perceptions are at the heart of the belief in the cult of the saints. The story of an Italian peasant who met St. Francis of Assisi on the road one day expressed the principle well. The peasant admonished the saint: "You must take great pains to be as good as all people think you are, for many have great faith in you. . . . I warn you, do not be different from what people hope you are."³ The peasant understood that sainthood was in the eye of the believer.

Pierre Delooz, a sociologist who has studied the process of canonization, develops this principle at greater length. Delooz argues that "sociology has access to sanctity only *as recollected by others*."⁴ This proposition is partly accurate. In any given case, we may know that a person was considered to be a saint because he or she was canonized by the church, because some devotee wrote the saint's life story, or because of the existence of a shrine, a relic, or a body of literature or legend surrounding the martyrdom of the saint or the miracles performed by the saint. We may know that a person had a reputation for sanctity because of unusual piety or austerity, or because he or she received visions or verbal messages from God, if someone has taken the time and trouble to make a record of the piety, the austerity, or the visions. Delooz points out that "one is never a saint *except for other people*."⁵ Different types of observers might hold different ideas about the nature of sainthood. The

study of the ideas people had about the saintliness of the saints may provide the key to understanding the veneration of the saints.

Delooz, however, overlooks the fact that knowledge also comes from the writings of the practitioners: saints themselves. In keeping with proper saintly humility, the men and women acclaimed as saints may not have considered themselves to be so. They often, however, considered themselves to be attempting to live a holy life. The writings of a saint might reveal just what the saint thought he or she was doing while the rest of the world thought he or she was being saintly. A comparison between the writings of a saint and writings about a saint may provide contrasting images of saintly behavior and aspirations.

Over time, the perception of saintly behavior changed. The early cult of the saints was largely based upon veneration of the bodies of martyrs. The emphasis changed in the early medieval years to members of religious orders. Since the saintliness of a monk or a nun was generally not demonstrated in a manner as definitive as martyrdom, the church developed mechanisms for recognizing sainthood. Control of canonization shifted gradually from local Christian communities to bishops and synods until, in 1234, the papacy gained final control over the canonization process. The Congregation of Rites began to determine the validity of claims of sainthood in 1587.⁶ With the centralization and bureaucratization of the canonization process, political influence became a factor in canonization. Religious orders had the resources to press the cases of their founders and members; local dioceses had "favorite sons" and the resources to encourage candidacies; popes canonized members of royal or politically important families as political gifts.⁷ The first requirement, though, before political clout, was the perception of sanctity at the local level, by people who had known the prospective saint or by people who had access to the grave or to relics of the person. What behavior did people at the local level find to be indicative of sanctity? Did the perception vary by social status or by lay/clerical distinctions? Did the ecclesiastical requirements of canonization bear any similarity to the concerns of the local congregations? Did the perception of sanctity in seventeenth-century France have any distinguishing characteristics?

Peter Brown, in *The Cult of the Saints*, makes a persuasive argument that the development of veneration of saints as practiced in the Catholic church was a product of tension between the institutional church and the private devotional activities of rank and file believers. Brown specifically rejects the theory, which had been suggested by church writers as early as Augustine and Jerome, that the development of the cult of the saints was a "popular" or "vulgar" movement, produced by a mass influx of newly converted pagans in the fourth and fifth centuries.⁸ Brown, who studied the physical practice of veneration of dead bodies and bits thereof, and the metaphysical practice of depending on the spirits of dead people to intercede

with God for the benefit of the faithful, suggests that the dynamic accounting for the development of the cult of the saints was a power struggle between the public demands of the Christian community, as formulated by the institution of the church, and the demands of family piety, which had previously been private. The development of the cult of the saints was an attempt by the church, in the persons of the bishops, to control piety and patronage and to centralize them in ecclesiastical hands. This model is not a popular/elite model, as defined in terms of social class, but an institutional model. The result of the centralization was an increase in the power and the prestige of the church, since it gained control over physical access to relics and holy places, and became the custodian of the supernatural good will of the saints.⁹

Brown's conclusion that the church's drive for power and control over individual piety explains the development of the cult of the saints in late antiquity provides a tool for analyzing the perception of sanctity in seventeenth-century France. The records concerning the inquiry into the sanctity of Marguerite-Marie Alacoque can be divided into three categories: those concerning the perceptions of representatives of the church as an institution, such as the sisters in the convent of Paray-le-Monial; those concerning the perceptions of members of the church at large, such as the lay witnesses who testified at the hearing; and those concerning the perceptions of Marguerite-Marie herself. All three categories share the common themes of ecclesiastical control over individual spirituality and obedience to the institution of the church. Within the general themes of obedience and control, each of the categories has a different focus for its perception of sanctity.

On July 22, 1648, Marguerite-Marie Alacoque was born in the Charollais region of Burgundy, France. Her family was honorable and "fairly well provided with the goods of fortune, according to its condition."¹⁰ She was an extraordinary child who felt the call of the church at an early age. She had a taste for austerity, and she prayed for long hours on her knees. Even as a child, she developed a special devotion to the Eucharist. At the age of four, she followed the promptings of an inner voice and made a vow of chastity, without knowing what a vow was or even what chastity was.¹¹

When Marguerite-Marie was eight years old, her father died, and her mother placed her in a local convent to be educated. While there, she made her first communion and began to think of becoming a nun.

After my first communion, the Lord spread so much bitterness over all the little pleasures that children ordinarily take, that I could not taste them. When I wanted to take them with girls my own age, I always felt someone who called me within and urged me to retire to some small corner, not giving me any rest until I followed. It made me throw my face against the earth, to pray or to make genuflections, taking care not to be seen at all in my little devotions, because I would suffer a strange torment to be

discovered in these little practices. I had wished to do as the sisters did, because I believed them all to be holy [*saintes*]. I hoped that in imitating them I would become holy. From that time, God gave me the will to embrace that state. The desire was so great that I could breathe only for its sake, even though I did not find this monastery withdrawn enough. But not knowing of any other, I planned that I would stay here.¹²

Her plan to stay in the convent was disrupted after only two years, when she contracted a disease that made her unable to walk for four years. Her mother brought her home for a change of air, but human remedies failed to restore her health. "Someone" then made a vow to the Virgin, promising that if Marguerite-Marie were healed, she would be one of the Virgin's daughters one day.¹³ It is not clear from the history of the *contemporaines* whether Marguerite-Marie or her mother made the vow. In the *Autobiographie*, Marguerite-Marie wrote that she herself made the vow.¹⁴ Since the *contemporaines* had access to the *Autobiographie*, and their account conforms with it in most respects, their failure to identify the vow as Marguerite-Marie's may indicate that it was contrary to their concept of sanctity for a holy person afflicted with illness to pray for relief on her own behalf.

Both the accounts agree that the vow, regardless of its maker, was effective. Marguerite-Marie regained her health but did not immediately honor the vow; she continued to live with her mother. She practiced austerities, including sleeping on the bare floor, remaining in prayer all night, and refusing or simply failing to eat. She was not unfailingly good; she rebuked herself for dressing in disguise during carnival and for engaging in unspecified vanity.¹⁵

As time passed, she became torn between the demands of her family and the demands of God. Her mother and the men in her family pressed her to marry. She feared to leave her family, but she had a horror of involvement with the world. A demon tempted her to forego her religious aspirations, "suggesting again that the religious life would demand so great a faithfulness and holiness that it would be impossible for her to attain, that she would be damned . . .,"¹⁶ and she began to doubt herself. She saw visions of Jesus as he looked during his flagellation. She began to flagellate herself, in order to suffer with Jesus. Her desire to live the religious life returned. She read *The Life of the Saints* and sought to imitate them in order to become *sainte* herself.¹⁷

Finally, her family arranged for her to visit an Ursuline convent in Macon, where one of her cousins was a nun. While she was there, she heard a voice directing her to enter "Sainte-Marie." Later, she had a vision in which Saint François de Sales, the founder of the Visitandine order, called her his daughter.¹⁸ In spite of the opposition of her family, she was directed by a vision of the Virgin to go to the Visitandine convent at Paray-le-Monial. During the spring or summer of 1671, at the age of twenty-three, she entered the

convent of the Visitation of Sainte-Marie at Paray-le-Monial, where she spent the rest of her life.¹⁹

These details of Marguerite-Marie's life before her profession are found mainly in the *Vie des Contemporaines*, although many of the details are corroborated in the *Autobiographie*. The story is steeped in hagiographic convention. Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, in their quantitative study of sainthood between 1000 and 1700, found that saintly children frequently made vows of chastity at early ages. Religious vocation was often a product of childish purity and simplicity, or of payment for miraculous healing, or of family pressure to marry.²⁰ In the account of Marguerite-Marie's life by the *contemporaines*, all three motivations appear. There is a tension, which Weinstein and Bell argue is common, between the external demands of Marguerite-Marie's filial duty and the internal demands of her saintly consciousness. This tension recurs in her life in the monastery, with demands of the order replacing the demands of the parent.

The factual accuracy of the details reported by the *contemporaines*, who did not know Marguerite-Marie as a child, is questionable. To the extent that Marguerite-Marie included details of her childhood in the *Autobiographie*, there is some evidence that fact rather than hagiographical convention is at work. Nevertheless, Marguerite-Marie read the lives of the saints and probably had a good grasp of hagiographic convention. She may have cast her story in conventional hagiographic terms, since she was trying to live a holy life, as did the saints.

As Pierre Delooz points out, all saints' lives are composed of elements of reality and elements of construction. Reality is that which can be ascertained by recourse to historical data. Marguerite-Marie was born to the Alacoque family, and entered the convent at Paray-le-Monial in 1671. Construction is that which is believed or reported but cannot be verified, such as the story of Marguerite-Marie's precocious vow of chastity. According to Delooz, "All saints are more or less *constructed* in that, being necessarily saints *for other people*, they are remodelled in the collective representation which is made of them."²¹ The constructed details are no less important than the "real" details in an analysis of the perception of sanctity. In telling stories about the saints, the faithful, faced with a gap in their knowledge, filled in the blank with what they believed should have been there. People designed their saints in accordance with what they wanted their saints to be. These conventions reveal a great deal about the perception of sanctity.

The description of Marguerite-Marie's life in the cloister also fits certain common motifs of saints' lives. The *Vie des Contemporaines* contains a recitation of Marguerite-Marie's virtues: obedience to her superiors, whom she regarded as "holding the place of Jesus Christ on earth;" subjection and submission; judiciousness and wisdom; good spirits; natural sweetness; agreeable humor; and a charitable heart.²² She sought extraordinary penances

and mortifications, but was instructed by a vision of St. François de Sales that the truly religious spirit values obedience ahead of austerity.

Having asked [her mistress] to make certain extraordinary penitences, and wanting to extend it beyond that which had been prescribed for her, our saint Founder criticized her so strongly that she did not override [the criticism], the words of the great saint had rested so strongly in her spirit that she never forgot them: "do you think, my daughter," these were his words, "to be able to please God, overpassing the limits of obedience, which is the principal support of this Congregation, and not austerities?"²³

The conflict between obedience and individual devotion, including austerity, was a major theme in the story of Marguerite-Marie. She had a tendency to go beyond the prayers and mortifications which she had directed to perform; on these occasions she was taken to task by mystical voices. On one occasion, a voice told her not to go beyond the prayers that had been ordered: "That which you have done until now is for me, but that which you do now is for the demon." On another occasion, when she prayed without permission for souls in purgatory, they surrounded her in a vision, complaining that she was beating them. On both occasions, she stopped the excess devotion immediately.²⁴

Marguerite-Marie's devotions, visions, and mortifications were filled with images of food, drink, hunger and thirst. Early in her religious life, her superior ordered her to eat a piece of cheese, to which she had an aversion. For the sake of obedience and after much prayer, she managed to eat the cheese.²⁵ While serving in the infirmary, she mortified her "naturally delicate character" by swallowing the vomit of one of the patients, while praying to God to accept her devotion.²⁶ The night after she performed this mortification, she experienced the presence of Christ, who "held her for about two or three hours, her mouth attached to the wound in his sacred Side."²⁷ A concern for obedience tempered Marguerite-Marie's food mortification. When she attempted to eat the excrement of a dysenteric patient, she stopped before swallowing when Jesus reminded her that her duty of obedience to her superiors forbade her from eating anything without permission.²⁸

Caroline Walker Bynum, in analyzing the writings of female saints in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, found that food imagery was central to the spirituality of holy women. Visions of feeding on the wound of Christ, such as Marguerite-Marie experienced after eating vomit, were common images among the writings of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century saints. Inedia and the ingestion of non-food items were also relatively common practices among holy women. Bynum rejects the theory that the manipulation of food practices by religious women was an expression of contempt for or control over the dangerous female body. She argues that it was a positive spiritual image, evoking union with Christ and participation in his saving grace.

Women fast—and hunger becomes an image for excruciating, never satiated love of God. Women feed—and their bodies become an image of suffering poured out for others. Women eat—and whether they devour the filth of sick bodies or the blood and flesh of the eucharist, the foods are Christ's suffering and Christ's humanity, with which one must join before approaching triumph, glory or divinity.²⁹

In many ways, the use of food imagery in the *Vie des Contemporaines* and in the *Autobiographie* is consistent with Bynum's analysis. Marguerite-Marie was enormously interested in eucharistic devotion and sought the privilege of frequent communion. Her biographers recorded her spiritual needs in terms of hunger and thirst. Her ascetic practices included both inedia and the eating of strange foods. Her visions included feedings directly by Christ. She cast herself in the role of Christ, taking on suffering to relieve the pain and the sins of others. In one instance, she took on the migraine headaches which one of her superiors was suffering. The superior forbade her to continue, saying that Marguerite-Marie was being greedy and depriving others of the benefits of their own suffering. Chastened, Marguerite-Marie returned the headaches to the other woman.³⁰

The element of external control, however, which is central in the story of Marguerite-Marie, is not apparent in Bynum's examples. For Marguerite-Marie, asceticism which did not fall under the control of a spiritual advisor was unacceptable and perhaps was the work of a demon. In Marguerite-Marie's visions, Christ himself stressed the extreme importance of obedience to monastic superiors.

Nothing is comparable to the lack of obedience, whether it be to superiors or to the rules, and the least reply with evidence of repugnance to superiors is, to him, insupportable in the soul of a religious.³¹

The need for control over individual spirituality also colored Marguerite-Marie's own descriptions of her devotions. This need had two aspects in the *Autobiographie*. The most apparent aspect was her desire to be obedient in all things. While she focused her writings on her internal devotional experience and wrote less about the outward manifestations of piety and did the *contemporaines*, she was not an advocate of unrestricted spiritual individualism. She sought to reconcile the demands of the inner voices she heard with the requirements of obedience.

But as I hid nothing from my superior and my mistress, although often I did not understand what I said to them, and as they made me understand that these were extraordinary paths, which were not proper for daughters of Sainte-Marie, this distressed me greatly, and was the reason that I made no resistance to the leaving of this path. But it was in vain, because the spirit had already taken such an empire in mine that I could no longer enjoy it, not even my other interior powers, because I was so absorbed in it [the spirit]. I

made every effort to apply myself to following the method of prayer that I had been taught with other practices, but nothing would remain in my spirit.³²

Marguerite-Marie's concern with external approval for the devotions commanded by Jesus in visions was supported by Christ's statement that he demanded not only that she obey the direct commands of her superiors, but also that she not engage in any devotion he ordered without their consent.³³ In Marguerite-Marie's concept of holiness, earthly authorities passed judgment even on the direct command of God. Personal spirituality was subject to strong external control.

The second aspect of her concern with control was her worry about losing control in the intensity of her spiritual experience. She was reluctant to give in completely to her visions, even when submission to them was required by her superiors.

But how this sovereign spirit which operated and acted in me independently of myself, having taken an empire so absolute over all my being, spiritual and corporeal, that it was no longer in my power to excite in my heart any movement of joy or of sadness unless it pleased it, nor could the occupation of my spirit be other than that which it gave to it, which always held me in a strange fear of being deceived, whatever assurance I received to the contrary, even on the part of those who directed me, who were my superiors; . . . my sadness was that instead of taking me away from deception where I believed myself to be in fact, they drew me back there more than before, my confessors as well as others, while telling me to abandon myself to the power of the spirit, and to let it direct me without reservation; and when just the same it made me the plaything of a demon, as I had thought it, it was only necessary to allow myself to follow its movements.³⁴

Marguerite-Marie's superiors apparently wavered on the propriety of her visions, and instructed her both to give up extraordinary devotions and to abandon herself to her religious experiences. The impression Marguerite-Marie's writings give is that her religious experiences were frightening, both because she was unable to control them on demand and because submission to them required a loss of self-control.

The sisters of her convent seem to have shared Marguerite-Marie's concern for control over individual spirituality. Their concern with control, however, had an external rather than an internal focus. While one of Marguerite-Marie's major accomplishments was the beginning of the devotion to the sacred heart, which she attempted to institute after experiencing a vision in which God directed her to do so, the divine inspiration of the new devotion was not, at first, evident to the sisters of Paray-le-Monial. Marguerite-Marie first practiced the devotion to the sacred heart with the novices under her direction on St. Marguerite's day, July 20, 1685. The novices

[made] a small altar, to which they attached a small image of paper, colored with ink, where there was the representation of the divine Heart. . . . In the transports [of joy] where [Marguerite-Marie] appeared at that moment, she had wished that all the Community had come to make these devotions; she had invited them there. She began first to consecrate herself to the divine Heart. She wanted the novices to do the same, ordering them to write, each one, the consecration which she would make to herself, according to their [sic] attraction and following that to which Our Savior inspired them.³⁵

The devotion, in retrospect, seems to have been fairly innocuous. The older sisters, however, declined the invitation, and said that

it was not for the mistress of novices, and even less for little novices to establish novelties and rules in the rules themselves, citing the words of the constitution XVIII: 'that one does not take up prayers or offices at all, under any pretext'.³⁶

The hesitancy of the sisters of Paray-le-Monial over the beginning of a new devotion suggests that sainthood and divine inspiration were easier to recognize in hindsight. Hesitancy over new devotions was also an aspect of the primary importance of obedience in seventeenth-century piety and of the more general concern with centralized ecclesiastical control over individual and local spirituality. By the late seventeenth century, when the sisters of Paray-le-Monial wrote the *Vie des Contemporaines*, the image of a saintly life was one in which powerful tools of spirituality were subjected to the control of the church authorities, such as mothers superior and confessors. This control was especially important in the post-reformation church. The demands of individual piety were suspect. Devotion to conflicting individual interpretations of the requirements of faith had produced years of religious warfare.

Dominique Julia argues that the Catholic Reformation placed firm control of the mechanism of piety in the hands of the clergy. The imposition of this control extended to control over religious practices, as the church codified missals, rituals, and liturgies and enforced adherence to approved ceremonies as a means of avoiding heterodoxy.³⁷ Local movements provoked great suspicion without the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Congregation of Rites in Rome denied permission for the establishment of the devotion of the sacred heart in 1697, and subsequent attempts by the Jesuits to have the feast recognized failed in 1727 and 1729. The celebration of the feast was not approved until 1765, and then only for limited use.³⁸

The concern with avoiding heterodoxy and with maintaining obedience to ecclesiastical authority, even to the point of denying the promptings of individual mystical experience, was plain in the life of Marguerite-Marie. The sisters of Paray-le-Monial, writing to preserve the memory (and possibly to advance the canonization case) of one of their sisters who was reputed to be a saint during her lifetime, appeared to share the perspective of the church as

an institution. A saint was a person who obeyed. Marguerite-Marie, the *contemporaines* related, engaged in healing (of others) by prayer, prophesied, engaged in nocturnal devotions during which she did not change her position for hours, saw visions of Jesus, Mary, souls in purgatory, and other saints, was pursued by demons who pushed her down staircases, and suffered her own lengthy illnesses in stoic silence.³⁹ They emphasized that she did almost everything with the permission of her superiors. In the event she acted without permission, she was reprimanded, either by her superiors or directly by God. The common themes of sainthood, including visionary and mystical experiences, trouble with demons, miraculous healings, and personal illness, which seem to hold constant in the lives of saints over both time and place, are present in the life of Marguerite-Marie, but they are cast in the seventeenth-century mold of submission to authority.

Within the framework of a common interest in obedience and control, the different sources for the life and works of Marguerite-Marie provide different perspectives on her life and her saintliness. In general, Marguerite-Marie herself was most interested in the internal aspect of sanctity, including her visions and her direct relationship with God. She also wrote about external manifestations of piety, such as physical mortification and the manner in which she wished to pray. Her constant quest was to reconcile the demands of her inner voice with the requirements of obedience and conformity imposed on her by her superiors and confessors.

Marguerite-Marie's interest in her own internal spiritual state is evident in her description of an event also described by the *contemporaines*. Both the *Vie des Contemporaines* and the *Autobiographie* contain descriptions of Marguerite-Marie as a child, reading and seeking to emulate the (*Life of the Saints*). This was undoubtedly a pious image, worthy of any saint. Marguerite-Marie, however, also included a description of her spiritual state upon reading about saints.

And as I read no other books than the Life of Saints, I would say in opening it: "I must find myself one who is easy to imitate, so that I can do as she did, to become holy as she is. But that which disappointed me was to see that I had so offended my God, and I thought that the saints had not offended as I had, or that at least if one of them had, he had then always been in penitence: which gave me a great wish to do so; but my divine Master impressed in me such a great fear of following my own will that I thought that he would not agree at all to that which I could do, until I would do it by love and by obedience."⁴⁰

The *contemporaines* appear to have been interested mostly in reporting the external manifestations of Marguerite-Marie's piety. They provided greater detail about austerity and mortification than did Marguerite-Marie and wrote less about her internal spiritual struggles. The *contemporaines* also included some detail about Marguerite-Marie's internal spirituality and per-

sonal relationship with God; most of these sections appear to be paraphrases of sections of the *Autobiographie*. While the interest of the *contemporaines* was a mixture of internal and external manifestations of piety, they relied more heavily on the external manifestations.

The portrait of a mystical religious life as drawn by Marguerite-Marie in the *Autobiographie* is filled with doubt, pain, and misery. She was unable to follow the normal path of the spiritual life, much to the dismay of her superiors in the convent. Prior to her profession, to which she referred as her engagement ("fiançailles"), she was so overcome by her experience of the caresses of Jesus that she was "often beside herself, and they rendered her incapable of doing anything."⁴¹ This state of affairs troubled both Marguerite-Marie and the sisters of the Visitation, who rebuked her, "giving [her] to understand that this was not the spirit of the daughters of Sainte-Marie, who does not want anything extraordinary, and that if [she] did not stop all this, [she] would not be received."⁴²

Marguerite-Marie's extraordinary devotional practices continued to cause her trouble throughout her life. Her extreme asceticism was out of character for a Visitandine nun. The Visitandines followed the teachings of St. François de Sales, who taught that a holy life was accessible to anyone who truly sought it. The Visitandines followed a relatively relaxed rule; for example, they were not required to get up in the middle of the night to say the night office.⁴³ The dismay of her sisters at the intensity of her devotions is another example of the difficulty in perceiving sainthood when it is near at hand.

The testimony of the witnesses at the 1715 hearings concerning the sanctity of Marguerite-Marie indicated that the representatives of the church as an institution were, for the most part, interested in external manifestations of piety, with some ancillary interest in Marguerite-Marie's internal spiritual life. The nuns and priests who testified admired Marguerite-Marie's obedience to her superiors in all things. Sister Jeanne-Anne Françoise Chalon, a nun in the Visitandine convent at Paray-le-Monial, testified that Marguerite-Marie

practiced a blind obedience to her superiors and to the rules; that she had all the pains in the world upon going into the parlor; that one day, being there to speak to someone, the deponent, who found herself in [Marguerite-Marie's] way, said to her, "Mother, here is a lady who would very much like to wish you good evening," to which the Venerable Sister replied, "I have had permission to speak to the person whom I have just left, my dear, nothing must be done, neither in secret nor in public, without permission," refusing to speak a single word to her.⁴⁴

The nuns who testified were also very interested in Marguerite-Marie's prayer practices. Seven of them mentioned that she frequently prayed on her knees for many hours at a stretch, without moving a muscle. Sister

Françoise-Marguerite d'Athose testified that

she had seen the said Sister Alacoque, many years, especially on feast days and Sundays, spend all day before the holy Sacrament, and that she had the custom of spending all the holy Thursday night, until Friday, from seven o'clock in the evening until the next morning, at the same hour, on her knees, immobile, in a meditation so great that all the Community was surprised that she could remain so long in the same position, in light of her constitution, which was not the strongest.⁴⁵

The religious witnesses also placed emphasis on the veneration accorded to Marguerite-Marie by the lay populace. Three of the nuns and two of the priests testified that they observed people reaching through the convent's grille to touch the body of the saint.

[Sister Anne-Alexis de Mareschale] adds that she noticed the eagerness of the public who came to the grille of the choir to see, they said, the *Saint of Sainte-Marie* who was dead, and who begged the Sisters who sang the psalms to touch their rosaries, books of hours, and other things to the body, exposed according to custom, of the said Sister Alacoque, which the said deponent herself had touched.⁴⁶

Sister Catherine-Augustine Marest reported that "*les seculiers*" passed by the grille and threw her their rosaries, books of hours, and tokens to touch the body, and that the crowd was so large that she and the other sisters together could not satisfy the demands to touch the body with tokens.⁴⁷

The demand for items which had touched the body of the saint was related to the major element in the secular perception of sanctity: miracles. Of the seven lay people who testified at the hearing, all but Jean-Chrysostome Alacoque, Marguerite-Marie's brother, testified about miracles which they had experienced or about which they had heard. Most of the miracles were cures. Reine Jandot, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a laborer, testified that she was healed of an incurable paralysis which had lasted two years. The cure occurred after Reine's family heard of a "a nun who had died in the odor of sanctity . . . to whom people from all parts had recourse in illness." They sent a friend to say a novena in the chapel at Paray-le-Monial and promised to take Reine herself there to give thanks after she was cured. She began to feel better when the novena was started and was completely cured by the time it was over. She and her family attributed the cure to the intercession of Marguerite-Marie.⁴⁸

Catherine Petit, a laborer, was a woman of great faith and equally great infirmity; she was cured three times through the intercession of Marguerite-Marie. The first two cures, which took place in about 1699 and 1705, were of an unspecified serious and violent disease which caused the doctors to despair. The third cure, in 1714, was of dropsy. Each cure was effected after

Catherine arranged for a mass and a novena to be said in the chapel of the Sacred Heart in Bois-Sainte-Marie, her home town. These cures are noteworthy because they were made without direct recourse to the chapel at Paray-le-Monial or to the relics of Marguerite-Marie.⁴⁹

The lay perception of sanctity as a source of miracles is a perception that stretches across time. Weinstein and Bell, in their statistical study of the components of sainthood, found that miracle-working was the third most common component of saintly reputation for adult saints, martyrs excluded.⁵⁰ The interest of both the lay and the religious witnesses in miracles may also have been a part of a peculiarly seventeenth-century attitude toward miracles. Jean de Viguier, citing the work of Rene Taverneaux, found that miracles were frequent in seventeenth-century France, and agreed with Taverneaux's assertion that the miracle in seventeenth-century life "was not an exceptional or isolated act, but was integral to the web of civilization; men lived in a veritable miraculous climate."⁵¹ Louis Chatellier suggests that "baroque miracles," or miracles which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are unique because they were an accepted part of every day life. In his study of Strasbourg and the outlying areas in the Rhine valley, he found records of hundreds of miracles between 1651 and 1765. He suggests that the large scale acceptance of miracles meant that miracles were not marvels, but almost expected manifestations of the power of God, which could happen for any good Catholic who executed the correct gestures of piety.⁵² While a study of documents relating to one saint over a short period of time can hardly corroborate or contradict Chatellier's theory, the overwhelming lay interest in miracles does suggest a general acceptance of the miraculous. The story of Catherine Petit, who was cured three times after reciting the same series of devotions, also suggests that Chatellier may be correct in his theory about the ready availability of miracles to Catholics who knew the right prayers. Piety as well as sanctity may have been judged by lay people in terms of its external appearances.

The sources concerning Marguerite-Marie have limitations. They reflect the attitudes within the institutional church more than they do the attitudes of lay believers. Among the small sample of lay witnesses, children, laborers, merchants, small town bourgeoisie, and professional people were included, but the number of witnesses is too small to allow any analysis of class differences in attitudes toward sanctity. There is no indication of the social standing of the nuns prior to their profession, although there appears to have been a good rate of literacy among them, since they wrote biographies and letters. The institutional structure of the model I suggest may be a function of the sources, rather than a reflection of reality. A larger study, involving more saints and more witnesses, could provide additional data on the question of the importance of class in the perception of sanctity.

The fact that Marguerite-Marie was a cloistered nun also limits the

general applicability of the study. The overwhelming interest of lay people in miracles, almost to the exclusion of other attributes of sanctity, could be a result of lack of opportunity to observe. Laymen rarely had the chance to observe cloistered nuns at their devotions. Different lay interests could appear if a study included non-cloistered saints. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century, nuns were more likely to be canonized than almost any other category of saints.⁵³ While it is dangerous to generalize from only one example, Marguerite-Marie was, at least, a member of the largest class of seventeenth-century saints.

While the documents concerning the sanctity of Marguerite-Marie suggest the obedience and control were notable elements of the perception of sanctity in the seventeenth century, obedience is also a common characteristic in writings about Christian monastic life as early as the desert fathers of the fourth century and the Rule of St. Benedict in the sixth century. A comparison of saints lives over a longer time period could help to determine whether obedience, and more particularly external control over individual spirituality, provided a significantly different focus for seventeenth-century perceptions of sanctity. A comparison of monastic and non-monastic saints' lives could determine whether, over time, there is a saintly motif of obedience or control, beyond the monastic convention.

Finally, the juridical bias of the canonization process may have influenced the recorded attributes of sanctity. The church insisted on orthodoxy in writings, evidence of heroic virtues, including faith, hope, charity, fortitude, justice, prudence, and temperance, miracles and, for a saint in religious orders, poverty, chastity and obedience. Martyrdom was optional.⁵⁴ The need to establish the virtues and the miracles may have dictated that was recorded about the saint. This may or may not have reduced the tendency of the source to reflect actual opinions about the qualities of sanctity. The degree of the distortion depends upon the extent to which the juridical requirements of sanctity reflected beliefs and practices concerning sanctity outside the Curia. A comparison of the legends and miracles attributed to officially canonized saints with the legends and miracles attributed to saints of local repute might shed light on the extent to which the canonization process shapes the perception of sanctity.

The *Life and Works of Marguerite-Marie Alacoque* indicate that the perception of sanctity in seventeenth-century France had a major theme: control. Marguerite-Marie demonstrated control over her spirituality and over her life through obedience to authority, physical austerity and rigid adherence to prayer rituals. The church controlled Marguerite-Marie's spirituality by enforcing her submission and obedience to her superiors and to her confessors. In turn, the saint, through miraculous interventions, helped lay people to control otherwise inexplicable crises in their lives. The control over the saints by the church helped produce control by the church over the laity.

The focus of the perception of sanctity was linked to the theme of control. For the saint herself, the focus was the reconciliation of the demands of internal spirituality and the requirement of obedience. For the members of the church as an institution, the focus was the virtue of obedience itself, along with adherence to strict standards of austerity and demonstration of outward forms of piety, all with the permission of the superiors. For the lay population, the focus was the performance of miracles on demand. Marguerite-Marie Alacoque lived up to the expectations of sanctity in all categories. She was holy, as people expected a saint to be holy. She was, therefore, recognized, albeit unofficially, as a saint in her lifetime, and was canonized after her death.⁵⁵

ENDNOTES

1. François-Léon Gauthey, ed., *Vie et œuvres de Sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Poussielgue, 1920), I:445-456.

2. Gauthey, I:446. "... dresser des procès-verbaux, en forme juridique, de tout ce qui peut concerner la vie, les vertus, les actions héroïques et miracles de ladite Vénérable Sœur, de peur que, par le laps des temps, les témoins oculaires ne vinssent à mourir et les témoignages à dépérir." The English translation, and all subsequent translations from the French, are mine.

3. Stephen Wilson, ed., *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 40, citing *St. Francis of Assisi, The Legends and the Lauds*, Otto Karrer, ed., (London, 1947) and the *Fioretti*, without specifying the edition.

4. Pierre Delooz, "Towards a Sociological Study of Canonized Sainthood," in *Saints and Their Cults*, Wilson, ed., 189-216, 194, emphasis in original.

5. Delooz, 194, emphasis in original.

6. Wilson, 5-6.

7. Delooz, 199-201.

8. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 28.

9. Brown, 124.

10. Sister Françoise-Rosalie Verchère and Sister Péronne-Rosalie de Farges, "Vie des Contemporaines," *Vie et œuvres de Sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, Gauthey, ed. I:53-54. "... d'une honorable famille et assez bien partagée des biens de fortune selon sa condition."

11. Verchère and de Farges, I:55. "Dès ce bas âge, ne sachant ce que c'était que vertu et dévotion, elle se sentait pressée continuellement de dire ces paroles: 'Mon Dieu, je vous consacre ma pureté et vous fais vœu de perpétuelle chasteté'. Elle le fit entre les deux elevations de la sainte messe, que pour l'ordinaire elle entendait les genoux nus en terre, quelque froid qu'il fit. Ce cher enfant ne comprenait pas ce qu'elle avait dit et ce que c'était que de vœu, non plus que celui de chasteté."

12. Verchère and de Farges, I:58. "Après ma première communion, le Seigneur répandit tant d'amertumes sur tous les petits plaisirs que les enfants prennent ordinairement, que je ne les pouvais goûter. Lorsque je voulais en prendre avec les filles de mon âge, je sentais toujours quelqu'un qui m'appelait intérieurement et me pressait pour me retirer dans quelque petit coin, ne me donnant point de repos que je ne l'eusse suivi. Il me faisait prosterner la face contre terre pour prier ou faire des genuflexions, observant de n'être point vue dans mes petites dévotions, car je souffrais un étrange tourment d'être rencontrée en ces petites pratiques. J'aurais souhaité de

faire comme les religieuses, car je les croyais toutes des saintes, et j'espérais qu'en les imitant je la deviendrais. Dieu me donna dès lors la volonté d'embrasser cet état. Le désir en fut si grand que je ne respirais plus que pour cela, quoique je ne trouvais pas ce monastère assez retiré. Mais n'en connaissant point d'autre, je me figurais que je devais y rester."

13. Verchère and de Farges, I:58. "On la voua à la Sainte Vierge, lui promettant que si elle guérissait, elle serait un jour une des ses filles."

14. Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, "Autobiographie," *Vie et œuvres de Sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, Gauthey, ed., II:13. "Je n'eus pas plus tôt fait ce vœu, que je reçus la guérison. . . ."

15. Verchère and de Farges, I:60. "Elle faisait le sujet de sa douleur de deux fautes qu'elle estimait des crimes: l'une de s'être déguisé au temps du carnaval, par une vaine complaisance, et l'autre de s'être servie des ajustements de vanité par le même motif. Depuis l'âge de dix à douze ans, elle coucha ordinairement sur la dure, passant une grande partie de la nuit en prière, au plus fort en hiver. Elle commença dès ce temps à passer les jours sans manger, se servant de toutes sortes d'instruments de mortification pour mater son petit corps; et il aurait été difficile que dans la religion elle eût ajouté quelque chose aux austérités qu'elle pratiquait dans le monde."

16. Verchère and de Farges, I:67. "Son ennemi lui suggérant encore que la vie religieuse demandait une si grande fidélité et sainteté qu'il lui serait impossible d'y atteindre, qu'elle s'y damnerait. . . ."

17. Verchère and de Farges, I:69-70. "Comme elle ne lisait presque d'autres livres que la *Vie des Saintes*, elle disait en elle-même: 'Il faut en chercher une qui soit aisée à imiter, afin que je devienne sainte.' "

18. Verchère and de Farges, I:73.

19. Verchère and de Farges, I:77.

20. Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19-92.

21. Delooz, 195, emphasis in original.

22. Verchère and de Farges, I:79.

23. Verchère and de Farges, I:80. "Lui ayant demandé de faire quelques pénitences extraordinaires, et voulant 'étendre au delà de ce qu'on lui avait prescrit, notre saint Fondateur la reprit si fortement qu'elle ne passa pas outre, les paroles de ce grand saint lui étant restées si fort imprimées dans l'esprit, qu'elle ne les a jamais oubliées: 'Penses-tu, ma fille,' ce sont ses paroles, 'pouvoir plaire à Dieu, outrepassant les limites de l'obéissance, qui est le principal soutien de cette congregation et non les austerités?' "

24. Verchère and de Farges, I:121. "Une fois, ayant fini un *Ave maris stella* de discipline que l'on lui avait ordonné, voulant poursuivre, il lui fut dit: 'Ce que tu as fait jusqu'ici est pour moi, mais ce que tu fais maintenant est pour le démon;' ce qui la fit cesser à l'instant. Une autre fois qu'elle en faisait une pour les âmes du purgatoire, sans permission, elles l'environnèrent, se plaignant qu'elle frappait sur elles; ce qui la fit résoudre de mourir plutôt que d'outrepasser les limites de l'obéissance."

25. Verchère and de Farges, I:82-83.

26. Verchère and de Farges, I:156. "Elle était naturellement délicate et la moindre malpropreté lui faisait soulever la cœur. Malgré cela, une fois qu'elle nettoyait le vomissement d'une malade, pour se surmonter, elle y voulut mettre la langue et en avaler, disant en elle-même: 'si j'avais mille corps, ô mon Dieu! et mille vies, mille amours, je les immolerais pour vous être asservie.' "

27. Verchère and de Farges, I:156.

28. Verchère and de Farges, I:156. "Une autre fois, sentant son cœur se soulever en servant une malade qui avait la dysenterie, elle en fut intérieurement reprise; et, pour réparer sa faute, allant vider le bassin, elle trempa sa langue dedans et en remplit sa bouche, et l'aurait avalé s'il ne lui avait mis devant les yeux l'obéissance qui ne permet pas de manger rien sans permission."

29. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1987), 186, 218.

30. "Procédure de 1715," *Vie et œuvres de Sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, Gauthey, ed., testimony of Sister Catherine-Augustine Marest, I:514. "Dit encore la déposante avoir appris de ladite Servante de Dieu qu'elle avait demandé à Dieu que la migraine que sa supérieure souffrait assez ordinairement, lui affivât plutôt a elle-même, parce-que, disait-elle, sa supérieure était nécessaire et non pas elle. Qu'en effet la supérieure en fut délivrée pendant trois mois et qu'elle en souffrit toute la douleur; ce que ladite supérieure s'ayant appris, dit à ladite Vénérable Sœur: 'Ma chère Sœur, s'il y a de l'avantage à souffrir, comme nous n'en doutons pas, j'en veux profiter aussi bien que vous.' Et quelque temps après, ladite supérieure ressentit son mal comme auparavant, et ladite Vénérable Sœur en fut délivrée."

31. Alacoque, II:68. ". . . néanmoins, rien n'est comparable au manquement d'obéissance, soit aux supérieurs, ou aux règles; et la moindre réplique avec témoignage de répugnance aux supérieurs, lui est insupportable dans une âme religieuse."

32. Alacoque, II:64. "Mais comme je ne cachais rien à ma supérieure et maîtresse, quoique souvent je ne comprenais ce que je leur disais, et comme elles m'eurent fait connaître que cela était des voies extraordinaires qui n'étaient propres aux filles de Sainte-Marie, cela m'affligea fort, et fut cause qu'il n'y a sorte de résistances que je n'aie [faites] pour me retirer de cette voie. Mais c'était en vain, car cet esprit avait déjà pris un tel empire sur le mien que je n'en pouvais plus jouir, non plus que de mes autres puissances intérieures, que je sentais toutes absorbées dans lui. Je faisais tous mes efforts pour m'appliquer à suivre la méthode d'oraison que qu'on m'enseignait avec les autres pratiques; mais rien ne demeurait dans mon esprit."

33. Alacoque, II:65.

34. Alacoque, II:78. "Mais comme cet esprit souverain qui opérait et agissait en moi indépendamment de moi-même, avait pris un empire si absolu sur tout mon être spirituel et même corporel, qu'il n'était plus en mon pouvoir d'exciter en mon cœur aucun mouvement de joie ou de tristesse que comme il lui plaisait, non plus que d'occupation à mon esprit qui n'en pouvait prendre d'autre que celle qu'il lui donnait, ce qui m'a toujours tenue dans une étrange crainte d'être trompée, quelque assurance que j'aie pu recevoir du contraire, tant de sa part que des personnes qui me conduisaient, qui étaient mes supérieurs; . . . Et ma douleur était qu'au lieu de me retirer de la tromperie où je croyais d'être effectivement, ils m'y renfonçaient encore plus avant, tant mes confesseurs que les autres, en me disant de m'abandonner à la puissance de cet esprit, et sans réserve m'y laisser conduire; et que quand même il me rendrait un jouet du démon, comme je le pensais, il ne fallait pas laisser que de suivre ses mouvements."

35. Verchère and de Farges, I:215. "[F]aisant un petit autel, sur lequel elles attachèrent une petite image de papier, crayonnée avec de l'encre, où était la représentation de ce divin Cœur. . . . Dans ces transports où elle parut à ce moment, elle aurait souhaité que toute la Communauté fût venue lui rendre ses devoirs; elle l'y aurait invitée. Elle commença la première à se consacrer à ce divin Cœur. Elle voulut que les novices fissent de même, leur ordonnant d'écrire, chacune, la consécration qu'elle ferait d'elle-même, selon leur attrait, et suivant ce que Notre-Seigneur leur inspirerait."

36. Verchère and de Farges, I:215. ". . . ce n'était pas à leur maîtresse et encore moins à des petites novices à établir des nouveautés et des règles dans les règles mêmes, citant ces paroles de la constitution XVIII: 'que l'on ne se chargera point de prières ou offices, sous quel prétexte que ce soit'."

37. Dominique Julia, "Discipline ecclésiastique et culture paysanne aux XVII^e and XVIII^e siècles," *La Religion Populaire*, Guy de Boscq, Bernard Plongeron, and Daniel Robert, eds., (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979), 199-209, 202.

38. Joseph de Guibert, S.J., *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*. William J. Young, S.J., trans., George E. Ganss, S.J., ed., (Chicago: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, The Loyola University Press, 1964), 395-402.

39. See, e.g., Verchère and de Farges, I:111 (vision of Christ and his wounds); I:128 and

passim, (suffering illness with patience); I:194 (nocturnal prayers); I:155 (demons pushing her down the staircase); I:240 (vision of St. Francis of Assisi); I:246 (healing of sister Françoise-Rosalie Verchère after prayer and the promise that Marguerite-Marie would be allowed to commune on the first Friday of each month); "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Jean-Chrysostome Alacoque, I: 496 (cure of other brother by prayer); "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Sister Anne Alexis de Mareschale (prediction of her own death), I:526.

40. Alacoque, II:43. "Et comme je ne lisais guère d'autre livre que la *Vie des Saintes*, je disais en l'ouvrant: il m'en faut chercher une bien aisée à imiter, afin que je puisse faire comme elle a fait, pour devenir sainte comme elle. Mais ce qui me désolait, c'était de voir que j'offensais tant mon Dieu, et je pensais que les saints ne l'avaient pas offensé comme moi, ou que du moins si quelqu'un l'avait fait, il avait ensuite toujours été dans la pénitence: ce que me donnait de grandes envies d'en faire; mais mon divin Maître imprimait en moi une si grande crainte de suivre ma propre volonté, que je pensais dès lors, que, quoi que je puisse faire, qu'il ne l'agrèrait point, que lorsque je le ferais par amour et par obéissance."

41. Alacoque, II:58. "Ensuite il me fit comprendre qu'à la façon des amants les plus passionnés, il ne me ferait goûter pendant ce temps que ce qu'il y avait de plus doux dans la suavité des caresses de son amour, qui, en effet, furent si excessives qu'elles me mettaient souvent toute hors de moi-même, et me rendaient incapable de pouvoir agir."

42. Alacoque, II:58. "Cela me jetait dans un si profond abîme de confusion que je n'osais pas paraître; de quoi l'on me reprit, en me faisant entendre que cela n'était pas l'esprit des filles [de] Sainte-Marie, qui ne voulait rien d'extraordinaire, et que si je me retirais de tout cela, qu'on ne me recevrait pas."

43. Jean de Viguier, "La femme et al religion en France, en milieu Catholique, au XVII^e siècle," *La femme a L'époque moderne (XVI^e siècle-XVIII^e siècle)*. Association des Historiens Modernistes de Universités, Bulletin No. 9, (Paris: Association des Historiens Modernistes des Universités, 1984), 29-44, 32-33.

44. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Sister Anne François Chalon, I:552-553. "Que la déposante a vu la Vénérable Sœur Alacoque practiquer une obéissance aveugle à ses supérieurs et à ses règles; qu'elle avait toutes les paines du monde à venir au parloir; qu'un jour, y étant pour parler à une personne, la déposante qui se trouva à son passage, lui dit: 'Ma Mère, voilà une demoiselle qui voudrait bien vous souhaiter le bon soir,' à qui la Vénérable Sœur répondit: 'J'ai bien eu permission pour parler à la personne que je viens de quitter; mais, ma chère, il ne faut rien faire, ni en secret, ni en publique, sans permission,' refusant de lui parler par ce seul motif." See also testimony of Sister Marie-Lazare Dusson of Paray-le-Monial for a reference to "obéissance aveugle." "Procédure de 1715," I:554.

45. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Françoise-Marguerite d'Athose, I:517. "... elle a vu ladite Sœur Alacoque, plusieurs années, passer presque toute la journée vers le saint Sacrement et qu'elle avait coutume de passer la nuit du jeudi saint au vendredi, dès les sept heures du soir, jusqu'au lendemain matin, même heure, à genoux, immobile, dans un recueillement si grand que toute la Communauté était surprise comme elle pouvait rester si longtemps dans la même situation, vu sa complexion qui n'était pas des plus fortes." See also testimony of Sister Rosalie Verchère, I:505; Sister Marie Emerentiane Rosselin, I:516; Sister Marie-Rosalie de Lyonne, I:530; Sister Claude Rosalie de Farges, I:538; Sister Marie Nicole de la Farge des Claires, I:549; and Sister Catherine Billet de St. Xavier, I:559.

46. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Sister Anne-Alexis de Mareschale, I:526. "Ajoute qu'elle remarqua l'empressement du public qui venait à la grille du chœur voir, disait-il, la *Sainte des Sainte-Marie* qui était morte, et qui priaient les Sœurs qui psalmodiaient de faire toucher leurs chapelets, heures et autres choses au corps, exposé selon l'usage, de ladite Sœur Alacoque, qui ladite déposante a fait toucher elle-même," emphasis in original.

47. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Sister Catherine-Augustine Marest, I:514-516. "Dit enfin la déposante que c'est elle-même à qui les séculiers faisaient passer par la grille et jetaient des chapelets, heures et gages, pour les faire toucher au corps exposé, selon usage, de la future

Vénérable Sœur Alacoque, avant que l'inhumer; et que la foule était si grande qu'elle ne suffisait pas, avec d'autres de ses Sœurs, à contenter la dévotion du public, qui criait hautement: 'Donnez-moi' ou 'faites toucher cela au corps de la bonne sainte'."

48. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Reine Jandot, I:504. See also the testimony of Michelle Chaserot, the wife of a merchant from Paray-le-Monial, whose three-year-old daughter was cured of paralysis after Michelle made a vow promising her daughter to the saint, asked the saint for intercession and cure, arranged for the saying of masses and novenas, and touched the child with a shirt, a bonnet, and a stocking which had touched the remains of the saint. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Michelle Chaserot, I:560.

49. "Procédure de 1715," testimony of Catherine Petit, I:497.

50. Weinstein and Bell, 136. The two most common components were mystic contemplation and visionary experience. Miracle-working was found at the same rate as struggles with demons and famous prophecies.

51. Jean de Viguierie, "Le miracle dans la France du XVII^e siècle," *XVII^e siècle*, 140:3, July-September 1983, 314-331, 314. Viguierie suggests, though, that the number of miracles reported tapered off dramatically after 1660.

52. Louis Chatellier, "Le miracle baroque," *Histoire des miracles*, Jean de Viguierie, ed., (Angers: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1983), 85-93, 86, 89-91.

53. R. Darricau, "La sainteté en France au XVII^e siècle," *Histoire et sainteté*, Jean de Viguierie, ed., (Angers: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1982), 65-94, 80-88.

54. Delooz, 202-212.

55. Marguerite-Marie was beatified on September 18, 1864, and canonized on May 13, 1920. Darricau, 89.