The Legacy of André Vauchez�
Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages

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It is the appearance of a translation entitled *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (trans. Jean Birrell [Cambridge, 1987]) which provides us the excuse this afternoon to consider the André Vauchez� masterwork and its legacy in shaping the hagiographic scholarship over the course of almost two decades. Vauchez originally published his *thèse d�état* in 1981. It became on its publication, and remains today, the benchmark for all study of hagiography and the cult of saints in the later middle ages. The book is a systematic examination of the records of the formal processes initiated for the canonization of saints between 1198 and 1431. Vauchez thus implicitly took up the challenge issued in 1965 by Frantisek Graus *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger: Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit* (Prague, 1965), that is to use neglected genres of hagiographic works as sources for the social history of western Christianity. Given the importance that has come to be accorded Graus� pioneering study among scholars�particularly Anglophone scholars�who examine hagiography more for social historical than for philological or theological reasons, it is natural to link the work of the French Catholic to that of the Czech Marxist. Our chair this afternoon, Richard Kieckhefer�himself one of the most distinguished Anglophone scholars of late medieval sanctity�made exactly that connection on the opening page (p. xix) of the foreword which he provided for the English translation. Vauchez himself invoked Graus on the first page of his own introduction, but in a much more limited manner, as one among a group of scholars of the Merovingian and Carolingian periods who have "made it possible to bring within the �territory of the historian� the *terra incognita* which the history of sanctity has long represented." (p. 1) It is telling, however, that Vauchez had already made a much more sweeping act of homage in a very different direction by opening his work with a quotation from a 1929 review of Hippolyte Delehaye�s *Sanctus: Essai sur le culte des saints dans l�Antiquité* (Brussels, 1927) authored by Marc Bloch (in *Revue de synthèse,* 47 [1929], p. 89*).* Vauchez thus managed simultaneously to pay tribute to both the Bollandistes and the *annalistes*. His entire *oeuvre*, from 1981 to the present, can be read as a respectful critique of the immense resources made available through the efforts of the former by a scholarly sensibility schooled in the methods of the latter.

The most important source material for Vauchez� study was found in the inquests conducted by ecclesiastical officials into the authorization of saints� cults, that is (to use a term which itself evolved from these very procedures) canonization. I would argue that the book�s most important theme is the relationship between the Roman curia and local officials. (This is said in respectful disagreement with Richard Kieckhefer who states in his foreword to this translation that the book "has as its central explicit focus the relationship between curial and lay perceptions of sainthood" [p. xix], which is a subtly, but importantly different matter). By reading this relationship, Vauchez expounded the ways in which Rome controlled�or at least attempted to control�the practices of western Christianity. Thus he persuasively elucidated the experiences of lay Christians through sources produced by clerics. But laypeople themselves (with the notable exception of those who became saints) always remained off center stage. Such, it would seem, is the fate of any study�or any careful study�based on hagiographic sources.

Vauchez did not, however, simply mine the records of canonization inquests as the basis for writing a history of various aspects of late medieval piety. Rather, he carefully interrogated the ways in which these sources themselves had been produced and how this "process"�with all the legal, institutional, and literary meaning which the word *processus* carried in medieval Latin�had in turn formed ideas about sanctity in the Christian west. Vauchez thus provided a history of an entire genre and its accompanying legal institutions, in addition to an analysis of the evidence which that literature provided. Although it runs a monumental 622 pages of text and notes in the original French edition (a mere 529 in the English translation), Vauchez managed to craft a work which was both elegant in its style and remarkably concise in its argumentation.

This book still reads with remarkable freshness and immediacy today. Only a few passages strike me as sounding dated or as having been made obsolete by subsequent scholarship. Notable in this (negative) sense are those relatively short passages in which Vauchez attempted to make arguments based on quantification, with reference to the work of Pitirim Sorokin (*Altruistic Love. A Study of American 'Good Neighbors' and Christian Saints* [Boston, 1950]) and of Pierre Delooz (*Sociologie et canonisation* [Collections scientifique de la faculté de Droit de l'Université de Liège, 30; La Haye, 1969]). Vauchez largely ignored the early versions of Michael Goodich�s relatively successful analysis of sanctity in the thirteenth century (which, although available in several articles, was only published in its final form in 1982 as *Vita perfecta: The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* [Monographien zür Geschichte des Mittelalters, 25; Stuttgart, 1982]). The perils of quantification in the study of sanctity were graphically demonstrated by Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell in their extremely ambitious, quite interesting, yet ultimately unsuccessful study entitled *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1500* (Chcicago, 1982). That is a work which enjoyed an enormous popularity for several years after its publication, but has in the past decade slowly passed from historiographic view. The problems of quantification in hagiographic studies are ones which we may well wish to address further in the discussion this afternoon. It will suffice for the moment to note that in the intervening years, Vauchez has himself become a vocal opponent of analysis based on the quantification of evidence derived from hagiographic sources.

But let us return to the overall success of Vauchez� book. One matter which Vauchez brought into clear focus for historians of hagiography, and of medieval Christianity more generally, was that Christian sanctity was a social construction. The ecclesiastical hierarchy controlled the means through which a dead person came to be granted formal recognition as a saint among communities of living Christians. The power that came from such formal recognition of sainthood was exploited by members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who served as the "impressarios" of the cult of saints. There was also an historical evolution of those processes of recognition. The very existence of such procedures implies that sanctity remains one of those�to use the words of the philosopher John Searle�"objective facts in the world that are only facts by human agreement" and which in turn become the "building blocks" of a constructed social reality (*The Social Construction of Reality* [New York, 1995], p. 1). For the historian, rather than the theologian, there can be no absolute essence to the ideals of sanctity. Indeed the very ideals according to which official judgments about sainthood were made themselves developed and mutated. Martyrdom was a virtually necessary component of sanctity in the second century, only to be replaced by the ideals of asceticism and later poverty in centuries dominated by monks and mendicant friars. Such collective ideals permeated contemporary descriptions of, as well as expectations for, individual saints. Medieval Christian hagiography was thus in one sense nothing more and nothing less than the construction of the templates of sanctity.

At the heart of Vauchez� enterprise is the means by which the formal designation of sainthood was constructed out of a variety of ideals of sanctity. In these matters, English is a richer and more subtle language than French, having two distinct terms. Both ideas are, of course, expressed in French simply as *sainteté*. The translator of Vauchez� book, Jean Birrell, is exactly on target with his rendering of *sainteté* in the title as "sainthood." Throughout the work he intelligently chooses between the two possibilities. It should be noted in passing that, despite this success, there are some distinct problems with the translation. Most significant of these�as Colin Morris has recently pointed out in his review published in a recent *Times Literary Supplement* (April 10, 1991)�is the rendering of *mentalité commune* as "popular mind." But that is another matter which we may wish to address in the discussion.

I wish, for the few minutes remaining to me, to focus on the historical development of the formal means by which the western Church publically recognized sainthood. In the opening section of his book, Vauchez provided a clear sketch of that history, from the public acclamation of certain martyrs in the early church, through the requirement of episcopal approval for the translation of saints� relics and thus of the inauguration of public cults which was laid down at a number councils of the late antique and Carolingian periods, to the full flowering of papal canonization. What interests Vauchez in this story is the development of the papal reservation of the right of canonization. The first bull of canonization was issued by John XV for Bishop Ulric of Augsburg in 993, but it took some two centuries for this process to become widespread. Indeed, as Vauchez himself puts it (p. 24), it was only "During the second half of the twelfth century [that] papal canonization began to compete with episcopal translation and then to surpass it." The canonization *processus* or inquest developed as the support for papal declarations of

sainthood only slowly over the course of the twelfth century. The pontificate of Innocent III proved in this, as in so many matters, the decisive period in the institutionalization of papal perogatives. And so, the "late middle ages" of Vauchez� rigorous study begin in 1198. Episcopal authorization of sainthood and cults, of course, continued throughout the late middle ages, as the opposing force in the dialectical play between the Roman and the local. Vauchez significantly realized in 1981 a fact that all too many scholars still ignore: there was no single form of sainthood. Rather there were many way�local and curial, popular and official�in which the holy dead could come to be recognized as saints. Moreover, this multiplicity is not at all accurately reflected in the formal distinction, made increasingly rigid through the later middle ages, between *sancti* and *beati*. It is this very multiplicity of meaning not just to sanctity, but to sainthood which makes any quantified analysis of material related to saints and hagiography problematic, because the scholar is often threatened with comparing incomparable data, that is in essence comparing apples and oranges. Having recognized this historical formation of different categores of sainthood, Vauchez went on, with a few exceptions noted above, to make careful and sound generalizations about the polysemous meanings of sanctity. Just because sainthood is a socially constructed and historically unstable category, or rather set of categories, does not mean that the scholar has to go so far as, say, Aviad Kleinberg who in *Prophets in their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1992), after a rather gratuitous and not wholly accurate critique of Vauchez� work, eschewed generalization in favor of thick description and individual saintly figures and their local circumstances.

There remains a problem, however. We simply do not understand sufficiently the varied procedures for the authorization of sainthood during the centuries before 1100 or how papal canonization came to challenge those procedures during the twelfth century. Vauchez� forty-nine pages on the development down to 1198 of what he calls "la discipline du culte des saints" (here I do not think the English translation of "the control of the cult of saints" quite catches the Foucauldian ring of the original) remains today the only general treatment of the subject published since Eric Kemp�s *Canonisation and Authority in the Western Church* (Oxford, 1948). Moreover, both Vauzhez and Kemp�s treatments of the subject are marred by the teleological assumption implicit in their very terminology�indeed implicit in the terminology which we all share�that the procedures for the official recognition of sainthood would develop into those of papal canonization.

The term *canonizare* first appeared, with reference to sainthood, in the second quarter of the eleventh century, but it did not become remotely common until the twelfth century. That much is common knowledge. What is less recognized is the specificity of the term. I have done a relatively thorough search for uses of the term down through the thirteenth century. It was only used in reference to the papacy, as when Abbot Ulric around 1123 described Conrad of Constance as *canonizanda cum sedis apostolicae praesertim crebris jam dudum interpellassem litteris* (*Vita s. Conradi* in MGH, SS, 4:430). I would argue that the term "papal canonization" is in effect a pleonasm. Its etymology would seem not to have been the registering of a dead holy person *in catalogo sanctorum*, but rather a declaration of a person�s sainthood *apud canones* by the pope or curia. In 1139 Osbern of Clare apparently saw canonization and the catalogue of saints as two separate

categories when he wrote that Edward the Confessor was *canonizatum in catalogo sanctorum a Romana secum curia* (*Epistolae* [Oxford, 1929], no. 19). My point is that papal canonization did not develop out of episcopal procedures for recognizing sainthood. Rather papal canonization was a separate legal and conceptual category which was developed separately. We threaten to misread episcopal procedures when we describe them anachronistically and teleogically in terms of canonization.

I would argue that the papacy did not develop canonization as a substitute for episcopal procedures. Rather canonization represented a curial attempt to deal with and control a relatively new and expanding problem. It has often been remarked, *inter alia* by Vauchez himself, that the procedures of canonization tended to follow relatively quickly on the demise of the holy person in question. There is strong evidence for more than sixty cases in which the papacy issued a bull or otherwise authorized a cult between the original bull for Ulric in 993 and the end of the papacy of Alexander IV in 1261. Only three of those cases involved saints who lived before the year 1000. The first was the canonization in 1165 of the emperor Charlemagne by the anti-pope Paschal III at the request of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The second occurred in 1172 when Cardinal Hyacinth, a papal legate, confirmed the the cult of Rosendo of Mondonedo (d. 977). The third dates to the following year and the same legatine mission, when Hyacinth examined and then authorized the translation of the newly discovered relics of the allegedly ancient martyrs Claudius, Lupercus, and Victoricus in Léon. Hyacinth later confirmed both actions with formal bulls after he rose to the papal throne as Celestin III. The fourth was the canonization in 1233 of Bishop Virgil of Salzburg (d. 784) by Pope Gregory IX. It is clear that, particularly outside the mind Celestin III, that canonization was associated with the authorization of cults for saints of relatively modern vintage.

Let us remind ourselves that the recognition of such saints of modern vintage was a change from previous practice which itself evolved over these same centuries. To be sure, in early Christianity and in the barbarian kingdoms it was common to recognize recently-dead holy persons as saints. As Pierre Riché and others have pointed out, however, in the Carolingian empire it was exceedingly unusual to allow such cults, except on the missionary fringes of the Empire, where the cults of recent martyrs such as Boniface were not only allowed but encouraged. The Carolingian hierarchy, both secular and ecclesiastical, did not want to encourage any sort of charismatic authority in living holy people which might serve as a challenge to their own power. That same hierarchy clearly asserted its right to control the cults of any and all saints. There is surprisingly little reference to the cult of saints in the voluminous surviving Carolingian religious legislation. That is because the Carolingian idea of authority in these matters was so consistent and simple.

In the *Admonitio Generalis* of 789 (MGH, Concilia, 1:56), and five years later at the council of Frankfurt (MGH, Capitularia, 1:76), canons were issued which required that there must be a reliable textual guarantee for the sanctity of any person who recieved public veneration. While episcopal authority in these matters was implicit, it was not clarified until 811 when Charlemagne ordered that anyone who translated relics from one place to another must be able to satisfy the bishop as to their authenticity. Then at the

council of Mainz in 813 (MGH, Concilia, 2.1:272) it was ordered, "Henceforth let no one presume to move the bodies of saints from one place to another without the council of the prince or licence from a holy synod of bishops." At Mainz, the bishops also offered practical suggestions concerning the commemoration of saints. They offered a lengthy list of feasts pertaining to saints of universal importance (such as Stephen, Peter, and Paul) which ought to be observed everywhere; they further declared that the feasts of those "martyrs and confessors whose sacred bodies rest" in a given diocese ought to be observed in that region. Taken together these canons suggested two pairs of principles. First, they decreed that a bishop controlled the commemoration of saints in his diocese, but that regional synods and/or the king himself could share in the authorization of new cults. Secondly they established that, in addition to certain saints of universal importance, saints of more local significance ought to be commemorated in the dioceses which housed their shrines, but that the veneration of such local saints must be firmly grounded in textual guarantees.

There were, of course, many new cults of saints inaugurated over the course of the ninth, tenth and early eleventh century. These were not, however, the cults of new saints. They were by and large cults associated with newly translated or newly discovered relics of allegedly ancient saints. A survey of *translatio* and *inventio* accounts from these centuries indicates that the canon of the council of Mainz was followed with extraordinary consistency. When the relics of a saint named Celsus were discovered in 978 during the reconstruction of the church of St. Eucharius in Trier, Archbishop Egbert followed the guidelines laid down at Mainz. He used the meager funerary inscription on Celsus� sarcophagus as an authorizing text for the cult of this presumed ancient bishop of Trier and sought confirmation for his decision from his fellow bishops and his *princeps*, Otto II, at a council held in the imperial palace at Ingelheim. He also made a significant innovation, supplementing these traditional methods with an application of the ordeal by fire to authenticate the relics in question. This use of the ordeal, almost always performed under episcopal authority, became wide-spread over the next two centuries as a means of authenticating the newly-discovered relics of ancient saints. (For a full consideration, see my article, "Art and Artifice in Ottonian Trier," *Gesta*, 36 [1997], pp. 65-82.) Only a few decades after Egbert had undertaken the *inventio* of the relics of Celsus, bishop Liudolph of Augsburg decided to commence the veneration of one of *his* predeccessors in his episcopal see as a saint. What distinguished St. Ulric of Augsburg from St. Celsus of Trier was that he had died only a few years before. Like Egbert, Liudolph wished to follow the guidelines laid down in canon 51 of the council of Mainz, and therefore sought permission from his *princeps*. But Liudolph interpreted them in a different way, and petitioned Pope John XV for the first papal bull of canonization (Mansi 19:169-72). A similar papally approved canonization took place in Trier for a recently deceased holy man only a few decades later. By the time of Alexander III the cults of "modern" saints had become common, and with it papal canonization. papal canonization had middle of the thirteenth century, such a process had become the norm. Indeed Gratian had already inserted the above-mentioned canon from the council of Mainz in his *Decretum* on the assumption that the *princeps* in question was the pope, not the secular ruler as its authors had doubtless intended it to be and as Egbert had interpreted it to mean.

By the time of Alexander III, the use of the ordeal by fire to authenticate relics and thus authorize the cult of long dead saints had in essence been banned. Evidence as to why the ritual was abandoned may be found in a text from the English priory of Stone (*Historia fundationis prioratus Stonensis* in William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* [London, 1830], 6:226-30). It seems that doubts arose concerning the veneration of Wulfadus and Rufinus, two martyred members of an Anglo-Saxon royal family whose relics were enshrined at Stone. The monks sent one of their number, bearing the head of Wulfadus, to Rome to have both saints canonized (the term *canonizare* is used) by the pope. Having arrived at the curia, the English monk offered to subject the relic to the ordeal by fire, but the pontiff (who remains unnamed in this account) refused to permit such a ritual. He first objected, "You should not tempt the Lord, your God" (Mt 4:7) and then claimed that no sanction for an ordeal of any kind could be found in canon law, further noting that ordeals were "superstitious."

I would suggest that papal canonization developed first as a means of dealing with the relatively new (or renewed) problem posed by modern saints such as Ulric of Augsburg. It took centuries for canonization to be viewed, as it was by the monks of Stone and as it is still by modern scholars, as a norm for the authorization of sainthood. We know *that* the papacy in a sense triumphed through the imposition of canonization. And we know an enormous amount more about the construction of sanctity in the later middle ages because of André Vauchez� research into the records of canonization. But we still do not understand why the methods pioneered in the late tenth century by Liudolph of Augsburg rather than those developed by Egbert of Trier came to be dominant. That is a subject for further research.

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