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**An Aspect of the French Counter-Reform Movement:
*la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement***

In May 1664, the great comic playwright Molière was invited by Louis XIV to help organize the entertainment for a lavish celebration at Versailles. It was not the first time that the young king had shown his partiality for this author. During the preceding five years, he had been generous in rewarding Molière's company of actors for specific performances, and only one year before had entered the playwright's name on the list of state pensions. In the long and embittered battle occasioned by *L'Ecole des femmes*, Louis XIV had clearly sided with the author against his jealous literary competitors, and the king had firmly laid to rest a charge of incest against Molière by consenting to be godfather to his first son in February 1664. The author must have been quite surprised, then, at the Versailles festivities, when he was informed that his new production, *Le Tartuffe*, was being banned from public presentation by the king himself.

Le Tartuffe, an elaborate satire on religious hypocrisy, infuriated the *dévots* in Louis' court. They had already been angered by the deliberate double ententes and alleged improprieties of *L'Ecole des femmes*. Now, it seemed to them, the same irreverent author was directly making sport of Christian virtues and institutions. The *dévots* could not countenance such outrageous impiety. So vociferously did they react against the play, that they succeeded in prevailing upon the king to ban *Le Tartuffe* immediately.

Although it had been a long-established fact that the *dévo*t faction enjoyed the active support of such notables as Anne d'Autriche, the queen mother, and the Prince de Conti, the real extent of the faction's strength and organization was not known until the end of the nineteenth century. It was then that the discovery of a manuscript containing the history of a secret confraternity furnished historians with more than ample evidence of the existence of a militant arm of the *dévo*t faction.

Indeed, it was this secret Catholic lay society, *la Compagnie du Saint-sacrement*, which was at the heart of the conspiracy against *Tartuffe*.¹

At the time of the society's creation, little did its founder, Henri de Levis, duc de Ventadour, suspect how rapidly it would grow, nor how much political influence it would eventually come to wield. His intention at the outset was to establish a lay confraternity of Catholic action. Within the context of the social and religious climate of the times, this was not a novel idea. In fact, the seventeenth century was a period of great spiritual revival in France, as evidenced by the emergence of several notable spiritual leaders. Urgently needed reform within the Catholic Church had been legislated at the Council of Trent, but the task of implementing that legislation still remained. The laity by necessity took an extensive part in this renovation, for as Alfred Rebelliau points out, the bishops were for the most part unwilling or unable to carry out the program.² The government too, while verbally supporting the counter reform movement, did little to advance its realization. One response to the apparent apathy of official circles was the foundation of innumerable lay congregations and confraternities, for the most part organized and directed by the various religious orders.

In 1627 the Duc de Ventadour confided to two close friends, Père Philippe d'Angoumois, a Capucin, and the Abbé de Grignan, his plan to establish a lay confraternity of Catholic action. Immediate implementation was impossible, however, for Cardinal Richelieu's campaigns against the Huguenots were coming to a head, and Henri de Levis, in his capacity as *lieutenant-général du roi*, was called upon to serve with the king's forces in Languedoc. Upon his return to Paris late in 1629, he proceeded to organize a group of interested individuals. In addition to the two original associates, he was now joined by Henri de Pichéry, *maître d'hôtel ordinaire du roi*, and Père Suffren, a Jesuit and confessor to both King Louis XIII and Marie de Médicis, the queen mother. Through the influence of Pichéry and Suffren at court, the weekly meetings, held in the Capucin monastery on the faubourg Saint-Honoré, were attended by members of the nobility and hierarchy alike. New recruits included the Marquis d'Andelot and his brother Francis de Coligny, Zamet de Saint-Pierre, nephew of the bishop of Langres, Gédéon de Vic, *maréchal de camp*, Charles de Noailles, bishop of Saint-Flour, Jean Jaubert de Barrault, bishop of Bazas, the Comte de Brassac, ambassador to Rome, and Père Charles de Condren, who succeeded as General of the Oratory at the death of Cardinal Bérulle in 1629.

The goal of the organization was action, not contemplation or private devotion. The members wished to have an impact on contemporary society through the alleviation of social injustices and the enforcement of strict moral codes of conduct for society as a whole. The objectives were as wide as those of the universal church, as evidenced in this explicit formulation recorded by d'Argenson: "The underlying principle of the Company's activities is to undertake as much good as possible, and to eradicate as much evil as possible, at all times, in all places, and with respect to all persons. . . .The Company has no limits, bounds, nor restrictions but those that prudence and circumspection prove necessary in each project."³ As the society evolved and grew it was found that the successful accomplishment of specific goals often necessitated encroaching upon areas under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical hierarchy or civil magistrates. It would be unwise, the founders believed, for the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* to reveal itself as the principal author of its numerous and varied projects, for their sheer number and extent were a glaring de facto indictment of a failure to meet responsibility on the part of religious and legal authorities. It was felt that secrecy would insure the society's continued ability to act without the threat of an organized and public counter campaign which might divert its energies from the primary goals. Its method of operation, then, was through the efforts of individual members who organized and led public crusades in various matters of reform. The *Annales* are quite explicit in defining this method: "Since the Company takes no action in its own right, neither officially nor as a body, but only through its individual members, who turn to prelates, their officers and superiors in spiritual matters, and to the royal court and magistrates in temporal matters, it continues to maintain the secrecy which is its special characteristic."⁴

The spirit of the *Compagnie* took root and spread very quickly. In 1630, while still in its infancy, the society instituted a branch in the city of Lyon. Soon, affiliates began to spring up all over France; the Paris group acted as the mother house, directing and advising all the new branches. In 1645 there were twenty-five such affiliates, and by 1660 the number had grown to fifty-three. The governing body of each affiliate was called the *Comité central*. It was made up of a superior, who presided over the meetings, a director, usually a priest who guided spiritual matters, a secretary, and six counsellors who performed an advisory function. In spite of the expanding network of affiliates

throughout France, the size of the membership within each branch was carefully controlled and limited. The maintenance of secrecy demanded a very circumspect approach to potential members, and active recruiting was discouraged. The statutes of the Poitiers branch testify to the caution which was required:

You should observe a strict vigilance not to mention the Company in any way, not to your friends who are not members, nor those who are married to their wives, nor finally even to those whom you would judge to possess enough piety and moral integrity to deserve a proposal of membership. To these, you may only say that you know some people, without naming any one of them, who get together to perform charitable works, and if they feel inclined to join them, you may offer to introduce them.⁵

Acceptance of new members was restricted to the central committee, which screened all candidates very carefully. The directors informed themselves fully about the candidates' piety and character, and especially "...about their inclination toward the works the Company gives them and about their submissiveness."⁶ In order to limit the size of the *Compagnie*, it was decided in 1637 that the superior of each branch, during his three-month term of office, could receive no more than two new members. In this way the membership was not allowed to increase by more than eight a year.

As a consequence of the policy of secrecy, the statutes of the society were closely guarded. To avoid involuntary indiscretions, the *Compagnie* forbade the printing of its bylaws in 1634. This prohibition was reaffirmed in 1642, and the members were even forbidden to retain manuscript copies in their homes: "If some individual needed to read them for his own information, the Secretary would lend him a copy, after having asked the Superior's permission. But he was required to return it within a specific time limit."⁷ The register and important papers of the *Compagnie* were stored in a strongbox and confided to a member. To insure that, in the case of sudden death, they would not fall into alien hands, a short note was affixed to the box: "This chest, and everything within, belongs to Mr. X, who has the key, and who gave it to me to hold for him."⁸ Any of the members who wished to bequeath money to the society were required to write in their wills: "I desire that the sum of _____ be placed in the hands of Mr. X and Mr. Y, to be used for the charitable works that they are aware of, and without these men being required to give an accounting."⁹

In spite of the desire for secrecy, however, the founders recognized the need for royal approbation. If a group of nobles and clergy meeting in secret without the consent of the king and his minister, and conducting campaigns for social and moral reform, were to be uncovered, they might very well be considered subversives and rebels. The plan was therefore presented to Louis XIII soon after its inception. According to the *Annales*, both the king and his minister, Cardinal Richelieu, gave their seal of approval to the *Compagnie*, “. . . on the condition of being informed from time to time about what was taking place in their meetings.”¹⁰ Similarly, approval was sought from the highest ecclesiastical authority in France, the archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondy. The archbishop, however, was completely unreceptive to the idea, and remained adamant in his refusal to approve the *Compagnie*, even when presented with a letter from the king himself.¹¹ The request was temporarily tabled by the society’s leaders for fear of arousing undesirable publicity. But, during the thirty years of its existence, the group periodically sought the approval of the Church; they even petitioned Rome several times, always without success. Some of the affiliated societies in the provinces discovered another method of securing ecclesiastical approbation: “Thus in 1645 the members in Périgueux contrived to have their bishop approve the statutes of a Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament to serve as a cloak for the Company.”¹²

The membership of the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* was not drawn from any one particular class or profession. The Abbé du Ferrier describes it in this way: “It was composed of churchmen and laymen of all conditions: bishops, priests, princes, state counselors, parliamentarians, merchants, businessmen.”¹³ Among the more illustrious and influential members were a great many *gens de robe*, *d’église*, and *d’épée*. The *Annales* furnish us with many of their names, and Allier recapitulates the known adherents:

It included among its members several presidents of *Parlement*, Larcher de la Cour des Comptes, Jean-Antoine de Mesmes d’Irreval, Chrétien de Lamoignon and his son Guillaume, who would one day be first president. The *Grand’ Chambre* was represented in its ranks by Gaumont-Chavannes and Charles Guillon de Marmoussé; the *Chambre de Requêtes* by René de Voyer d’Argenson, the future historian of the society, Philibert Brandon, who was to become a bishop, Barillon de Morangis, Olivier Le Fèvre d’Ormesson; the *Chambre des Comptes* by Thomas Le Gauffre, who

would become a priest, Charles Loyseau and Christophe Leschassier; and the order of lawyers by du Plessis-Montbard, Poncet d'Albis and L'Hoste. It had agents in the Châtelet in the persons of Jean Pépin, counselor, and Jacques Autruy, commissioner. It reached into the king's councils through several persons already named, and with the father of the complier of the *Annales*, and his brother-in-law, Jean de Bernage, through Séguier de Saint-Firmin, Séraphin Mauroy, Jean de Garibal, Pierre de Bérulle, nephew of the Cardinal, René le Roux. It has as members three successive ambassadors from France to Rome, Jean de Brassac, the Comte de Noailles, and François de Fontenay-Mareuil. It had representatives at court through René de Vieux-Maisons d'Avolé, the Marquis de la Roche du Maine, Bertrand Drouard, gentleman of *Monsieur*, Hercule de Belloy, captain of the guard, the Duc de Liancourt, the Duc de Nemours, the Prince de Conti, the Marquis de Salignac-Fénelon, the Marquis de Laval, the Marquis de Saint-Mesme, the Comte d'Albon; Marshalls Schomberg and de la Meilleraye were also at its service.¹⁴

The clergy was also strongly represented by such influential leaders as Père de Condren, Vincent de Paul, Jean-Jacques Olier, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, as well as an impressive number of bishops. Hardouin de Péréfixe, the archbishop of Paris in the 1660's, was also a strong supporter of the *Compagnie* although he himself was probably not a member.

In its projects, the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* devoted much of its energy to charitable and philanthropic works, to the spiritual and physical assistance of the poor and needy. The members made regular visits to the *Hôtel-Dieu* and the prisons, and attempted to improve the tawdry physical conditions of these establishments. They labored tirelessly for the creation of a *Hôpital-Général* to provide care for the indigents of Paris, and finally succeeded in 1656. They also organized a *magasin-général* in Paris during the disorders of the *Fronde*s to keep the citizenry of the city and the peasants of the surrounding countryside from starvation. Over and above these works of charity aimed at the alleviation of physical miseries, the *Compagnie* sought to ameliorate the spiritual climate of society. Its members instituted a number of the first seminaries in France, and were particularly attentive to the need for priests in the foreign missions. The society also sponsored a number of projects aimed specifically at reforming public mores. Campaigns were directed against the celebrated *cause grasse* proclaimed in public at *Carnaval*. Other targets were pornography, prostitution, low-cut dresses in church, the use of churches as trysting places, gambling, and dueling. The last-named campaign was led by the Comte d'Albon and the Marquis de la Motte-Fénelon, uncle of the renowned writer.¹⁵

Perhaps the most disquieting activity of this secret society was the tenacious campaign it led against the policy of tolerance established by the Edict of Nantes. Members of the Protestant and Jewish faiths were subjected to continual harassment, and the *Compagnie* seized upon any incident which could be played up as an affront to the official state religion, or as a peril to the faith of one of its adherents. Such incidents served as pretexts for legal pursuits of individuals or groups of non-Catholics with the avowed aim of suppressing unorthodox beliefs. Père Rapin, in his *Mémoires*, ascribed to the *Compagnie* an important role in initiating the trend which led to the revocation of the Edict: "It was this illustrious company which first began to undermine the foundations of the *religion prétendue réformée* through the warnings and notes it issued to destroy it at the very time it was making its greatest efforts to establish itself, and also through the care the Company took to keep an eye on the enterprises of Protestants in those parts of the kingdom most infected by that heresy." ¹⁶

In 1646 the Bordeaux affiliate requested help from Paris in the destruction of the *Prêche d'Archiac* in Saint-Onge because it had been constructed after the Edict of Nantes. In 1648 the *Compagnie* obtained a decree from the *Parlement* of Bordeaux forbidding the Protestants in Limoges from assembling, on the pretext that there were only four Huguenot families in that city. The temple was subsequently leveled to the ground. In the same year, a temple in Arles was destroyed, as well as several in Metz, because the Edict allowed only three in that city. The intellectual and charitable centres of the Reformed Church were equally subject to the pursuit of the *Compagnie*. In 1645 the college at La Rochelle founded by Philippe Vincint was outlawed, and in 1653 the society worked for the suppression of a college proposed in Pavilly. Again in 1653, upon discovering the establishment of a Protestant hospital in Paris, the *Compagnie* saw to it that the attendants were dispersed, and the beds transported to the *Hôtel-Dieu*.

The society strove as well to reserve practice of professions and crafts for bonafide Catholics. In 1632, it succeeded in preventing the appointment of twenty-five young Protestants as *procureurs au Parlement de Paris*. In 1655, it led a battle to prevent Protestants from joining the *corps de médecins* in Rouen, and in 1659 petitioned the courts to stipulate that only Catholics be allowed to become master craftsmen. Members of the Jewish faith fared no better at the hands of the *Compagnie*. Beginning in 1632, the confreres made repeated efforts

to discover their clandestine meeting places, and succeeded a number of times in interrupting their assemblies and expelling them from Paris. These tactics failed in the long run, however, to suppress Jewish religious activity, and it was felt that more drastic measures were required. The *Annales* report that a campaign was instituted in 1649 "...to expel them entirely from the kingdom."¹⁷

The *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, which F. Rabbe imputes as "...the quintessence of the spirit of intolerance and fanaticism ...,"¹⁸ throughout its thirty years of existence never relented from waging battle against what it considered to be outrages against the state religion. The influence and power the society had come to wield, as well as the effectiveness of its methods, are strongly hinted at in a pamphlet published in 1645. The author, Père Jean-Baptiste Noulleau, was exhorting the authorities to make use of the *Compagnie* in an intensive effort to apprehend and suppress blasphemers throughout the kingdom: "Look at all these congregations of the Most Blessed Sacrament, which will always be like infantry for the cause of Jesus Christ. Look to them. They will have a long reach, and the sovereign powers, secular as well as ecclesiastical, will grant them powerful authorizations."¹⁹ In the *Annales*, we find many examples of actions taken against individuals which offer supportive evidence of Noulleau's claims. In Rouen in 1644 the society helped a mother prevent her daughter from marrying a Protestant in his church. In 1646 it instigated a judgment against a noble for irreverences against the Blessed Sacrament. In 1649 it provoked the imprisonment of a deist in the Bastille, and provided funds for his sustenance to forestall a premature release. In 1657 it brought about the imprisonment of an English Quaker who had been proselytizing in Paris. In addition to these cases, the *Annales* report with a certain amount of satisfaction two instances in which it succeeded in assuring a sentence of execution on charges of blasphemy.²⁰

The attitude of the members of the society toward the projects they carried out was one of righteous self-assurance. Indeed, it was a confidence born of the conviction that they were chosen instruments of divine power. A statement by d'Argenson on the activities of the society readily betrays the prejudices of his viewpoint: "Since the Company had been formed by a stroke of divine Providence to be a perpetual surveillant of everything which took place and could contribute to the glory of God, it strove with all its strength to prevent every evil and to procure every good of which it was informed."²¹ It was an attitude

which, in the end, could only win for the *Compagnie* a host of enemies and breed dissension within its own ranks. Thus it was that during the decade of the 1650's while the society was at the apogee of its power and influence it began to experience widespread opposition and concerted attempts to discredit it with the authorities.

The first evidence of dissension to beset the organization was touched off by the Jansenist debates of the 1650's. The *Compagnie's* relations with the Jansenists had been friendly through the 1640's. By 1650 the membership included a number of Jansenists, among whom we find the Duc de Liancourt, whose disagreement with the Abbé Picoté in 1655 was the apparent proximate cause for the composition of Arnauld's *Lettre à un duc et pair de France*. The *Compagnie's* strong desire to be the true representative of orthodoxy, and the hope of avoiding a duplication within its ranks of the spirited public clamor aroused by the Jansenist controversy, persuaded the society's leaders to expel any member who refused to submit to the papal bulls on the subject. The result was a deep feeling of resentment and bitterness on the part of the members thus excluded, and they sought their revenge by denouncing the organization to Louis XIV's prime minister, Cardinal Mazarin.²²

A second event which proved to be disastrous for the society was its acceptance of the Prince de Conti as a member. The former libertine and *frondeur* underwent a spiritual conversion in 1656, and chose for his spiritual adviser the Abbé de Ciron, a member of the *Compagnie*. In 1657 he requested the assistance of the society in establishing a devout atmosphere in his territories in Languedoc, and soon became a member himself. When, in 1658, he was named governor of Guyenne, he instituted a program of forced moral reform in Bordeaux, using the *Compagnie* as an instrument of enforcement. However, when he had a young prostitute confined in the convent of Sainte-Madeleine against her will and without due process, outcries echoed within the *Parlement* of Bordeaux. The illegal imprisonment was attributed to a clandestine congregation, which the authorities named the *Invisibles*, and an order was issued immediately to forbid that society from assembling without legal approval.²³ The incident is reported in the *Annales* where we are informed that it was indeed the *Compagnie* that had been suppressed in Bordeaux.²⁴ Unfortunately for the society, Conti had been under the constant scrutiny of Mazarin since his complicity in the disorders of the *Fronde*, and his membership in a secret organization so vast as the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* could only draw the displeasure and suspicion of the cardinal.

Further public scandals in Normandy caused more undesirable publicity for the society. After riots against the Jansenists in Caen and Argentan were incited by a few fanatical members, a priest from Rouen, the Abbé du Four, authored a pamphlet which exposed the true name and clandestine activities of the *Compagnie*.²⁵ In Paris, additional details about the society's nature came to Mazarin's attention when he began to investigate the anti-duelist activities of the Marquis de la Motte-Fénelon. He found that not only were there affiliates in all the large cities of France, but also that a public satellite organization in Paris, meeting regularly at the *Hôtel-Dieu*, had been granted an annual subsidy of six thousand pounds by the Minister of Finance, Nicolas Fouquet.²⁶

Since 1658, the *Compagnie* had ordered restrictions on the nature and amount of correspondence between the Paris branch and provincial affiliates. On September 10, 1660, apprehensive because of the investigations ordered by Mazarin, the leaders sent the following letter to all affiliates:

We give you warning, for many reasons that cannot be expressed, to be more careful than ever in your services, at least until we advise differently: change the day and hour of your committee meetings, put the papers and registers in a safe place different from the usual; it is sufficient that the officers know where. Use only a loose sheet, delay the general assembly for two weeks, limit communications, suspend all correspondence, but increase your prayers and perseverance, *quia tempus visitationis*.²⁷

Further, on September 27, in an effort to control more rigidly the nature of the correspondence and to conceal all references to the *Compagnie* within it, eight new secretaries were appointed, among whom we find the celebrated Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.²⁸

These measures, however, were to no avail. Mazarin, fearful of a clerical *fronde*, had been frustrated by the apparent disunity of the various *dévot* factions. Here he had finally discovered an intricately organized society of *dévots*, and he was determined to move against it. The *Annales* report that on September 12, 1660, the cardinal made direct reference to the society in an audience with some bishops from the *Assemblée du Clergé*, declaring: "There were certain Confraternities and Companies of the Blessed Sacrament which were involved in serious intrigues and held correspondences on all sides, and that he would be very glad to know the whole truth about it."²⁹ The queen mother, Anne d'Autriche, came to the aid of the society, speaking to Mazarin in its

defence. She asserted that it was composed of virtuous men, all loyal to the king. In reply, the cardinal simply pointed out the numerous secret activities and correspondence of the group, and maintained that good politics could not tolerate such an organization.³⁰

The extent to which the *Compagnie* had been unveiled is made clear in a letter from Guy Patin to his friend Falconnet, dated September 28, 1660:

There were here [in Paris] certain people who held clandestine assemblies under the name of congregations of the Blessed Sacrament; these gentlemen involved themselves in various affairs, and never held their meetings in the same place twice; they stuck their noses into the running of noble households, they informed husbands of some of their wives' infidelities; . . . they put their hands into politics, and had a plan to establish the Inquisition in France, and to force the country to accept the reforms of the Council of Trent.³¹

In the face of such an organization, made up of so many powerful and influential nobles and clergymen, Mazarin had but one option, to ban the society completely. He ordered the *Parlement* to issue a formal proscription, and this was done on December 13, 1660. In spite of the fact that Guillaume de Lamoignon, a member of the society, was *premier président*, he could not prevent the passage of the prohibition. The *Annales* record his attempt, but the most he could accomplish was to prevent the explicit naming of the *Compagnie* within the body of the order. The parliamentary decree, however, leaves no doubt as to the group it meant to suppress. It states quite succinctly: "Many Assemblies, Congregations, and Communities have been meeting in several localities of this city, notably in the parishes of Saint-Eustache, Saint-Sulpice, the outlying districts of Saint-Jacques and Saint-Antoine, and especially in a place called Saint-Paul's Refuge, where a number of women and girls have been discovered held without any judicial order."³² The charge is the same as that which had caused the suppression of the Bordeaux affiliate two years previously, and at least three of the parishes mentioned are known to have sponsored confraternities directed by the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*.

The official prohibition did not succeed in completely dismantling the secret society. All general meetings and covert projects were cancelled, but the officers, along with a handful of the most trusted members, continued to meet and direct the activities of its legally established satellite organizations. Within a week of the death of Cardinal Mazarin

in March 1661, they began to plan the rebuilding and restoration of the *Compagnie*. By the spring of 1664, the Paris branch was firmly re-entrenched and had even begun to re-establish contact with the provincial affiliates.³³

Consequently, when Molière first produced *Le Tartuffe* in May 1664, the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* was once again in a position to make its influence felt. It has been argued that Molière had ample reason to detest the *Compagnie*, having run afoul of it earlier in his life.³⁴ Historians point out that the financial disasters attendant upon his first stay in the capital, in 1643, might very well have been precipitated by the efforts of Monsieur Olier, curé de Saint-Sulpice and member of the *Compagnie*, who was conducting a campaign against the moral turpitude of the theatre in the very section of Paris where Molière established his troop. They also point out that during Molière's travels in the provinces, from 1646 to 1658, the secret society was at its apex, creating affiliates throughout France, thus providing the possibility of conflict over the question of theatre, a social phenomenon much opposed by the church. In addition, after the Prince de Conti's conversion by a member of the *Compagnie* in 1656, he withdrew the protection and financial support offered to Molière's troop since 1652. Finally, members of the society were undoubtedly among the *dévots* who publicly decried *L'Ecole des femmes*. While each of these cases represents a potential point of contact between Molière and the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, there exists no real evidence to show that the author had any extensive knowledge of its nature and range of activities. There is certainly no basis for claiming that the *Compagnie* was the immediate target of the satire. The *dévo*t faction had many branches and representatives, and *Tartuffe* is equally applicable to many of them.

The role of the *Compagnie* in the suppression of *Tartuffe*, on the other hand, is indisputable. The affair is too well documented to necessitate its repetition here.³⁵ Suffice it to point out that the *Annales* themselves record the successful attempt, and that the principal opponents were members or supporters of the society.³⁶ Even after the final dismantling of the *Compagnie* in 1665, because of renewed pressure from the authorities, individual former members like Guillaume de Lamoignon still retained enough influence and support to maintain the ban against the play. It was only in 1669, five years after its premiere, that Louis XIV finally agreed to permit the public staging of *Tartuffe*. The spirit of the *Compagnie* no longer held sway. Many of its most influential members

and supporters had passed away, and the others no longer had the benefit of regular meetings and strong leaders to bring them together in common cause. In Paris only the charitable institutions founded by the *Compagnie* continued to live on, with the *Séminaire des Missions Étrangères* preserving the registers, minutes, and important papers. In the provinces, individual affiliates continued to meet, in some cases for a very long time.³⁷ But as a powerful, national organization made up of interacting branches and governed by a common philosophy and policy, the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* had come to its end.

NOTES

1. The basic document for a study of the *Compagnie* is a history compiled in the 1690's with an eye to reviving the secret society: René II de Paulmy de Voyer d'Argenson, *Les Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, ed. Dom Henri Beauchet-Filleau (Marseille, 1900), subsequently referred to as *Annales*. D'Argenson's history is not comprehensive, for he cites only those details which he believes demonstrate the worth and value of the society.
2. "Un épisode de l'histoire religieuse du XVIIe siècle, II," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, IV (1903), 541.
3. *Annales*, p. 196. This and all other translations are my own.
4. *Annales*, p. 197.
5. *Annales*, p. 289.
6. *Annales*, p. 272.
7. *Annales*, p. 50.
8. *Annales*, p. 256.
9. *Annales*, p. 181.
10. *Annales*, p. 22. This approval is also attested to by Père René Rapin. See *Mémoires du P. René Rapin*, ed. Léon Aubineau (Paris, 1865, II, 327).
11. The text of this letter is recorded in the *Annales* (p. 22): "Monsr. l'Archevesque de Paris, la connoissance que des plus qualifiez, des plus fidelles et des plus pieux de nos sujetz m'ont donnée du dessein qu'ilz avoient de s'assembler en secret pour procurer la gloire de Dieu, le soulagement des pauvres, et le bien de mon estat, m'oblige de vous faire cette lettre pour vous dire qu'après avoir examiné leur projet et fait examiner par les personnes de ma plus grande confiance, Je n'y ay trouvé que de l'avantage pour mon Royaume. Ainsy Je leur ay permis de s'assembler, sous le nom de la compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, à la charge que quelqu'un d'entre eux qui me sera connu, m'informerá de temps à autre de ce qui s'y passera de plus important. Vous me ferez donc chose agréable de donner votre bénédiction à cette assemblée, et de l'approuver en ce qui dépend de vous. A Saint-Germain en Laye, le 27e may 1631."
12. Raoul Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement de l'Autel: la cabale des dévots, 1627-1666* (Paris, 1902), p. 31.
13. *Mémoires de du Ferrier*, cited by Allier, p. 38.
14. Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement*, p. 40.
15. See *Annales*, pp. 139, 171, 258, 263. Also compare with Mlle de Montpensier, *Les Mémoires de Mlle de Montpensier, fille de Gaston d'Orléans, frère de Louis XIII, Roi de France* (Maestricht, 1776), III, 268, where she reports the results of a duel between the Comte de Brassac and a gentleman named Aubigeon: "On informa de ce combat, & d'Aubigeon fut condamné, & ainsi obligé de se retirer. Mrs. de Fénelon & d'Albon allèrent solliciter ses juges contre lui de porte en porte, & ils disoient: Nous sollicitons un exemple pour la gloire de Dieu; ils en furent extrêmement blâmés, & on s'étonna que des Gentilshommes de qualité insultassent ainsi à un malheureux."

16. Rapin, *Mémoires*, II, 329.
17. *Annales*, p. 33.
18. "Une société secrète catholique au XVIIe siècle," *Revue Historique*, LXXI (1899), 250.
19. Jean-Baptiste Noulleau, *Conjuration contre les blasphémateurs* (Paris, 1645), no pagination; citation found in section entitled "Remonstrance à tous les peuples de Frances, section VII."
20. See *Annales*, pp. 47, 219-220.
21. *Annales*, p. 189.
22. See Rapin, *Mémoires*, II, 331.
23. See Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement*, p. 335.
24. *Annales*, p. 179.
25. *Mémoire pour faire connaître l'esprit et la conduite de la Compagnie établie en la ville de Caen et appelée l'Ermitage* (n.p., 1660).
26. See *Annales*, pp. 258, 261.
27. *Annales*, p. 260.
28. *Annales*, p. 209.
29. *Annales*, p. 261.
30. *Annales*, p. 205.
31. *Lettres choisies de feu Mr Guy Patin* (Paris, 1692), I, 490.
32. *Annales*, p. 280.
33. Documents discovered in Grenoble by Raoul Allier substantiate this conclusion: "M. le supérieur a fait la lecture d'une lettre de M. Josse, intendant de la maison de Mgr. le prince de Conti, du 17 juin, 1664, par laquelle on a appris le rétablissement de la Compagnie de Paris, et comme ils se remettent dans les exercices ordinaires" ("Procès verbaux de Grenoble," cited by Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement*, p. 411).
34. See Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement*, and Francis Bauman, *Tartuffe et ses avatars* (Paris, 1925).
35. See Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement*, pp. 384-410, Bauman, *Tartuffe et ses avatars*, and Antoine Adam, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIe siècle*, III (Paris, 1952), 293-297. For a treatment in English, see Emmanuel Chill, "Tartuffe, Religion, and Courtly Culture," *French Historical Studies*, III (1963), 151-183.
36. *Annales*, pp. 231-232.
37. For an indication of some continuing activities of affiliates, see Wilma Pugh, "Social Welfare and the Edict of Nantes: Lyon and Nîmes," *French Historical Studies*, VIII (1974), 349-376.