

## CHAPTER II

### THE CITY AND THE PARISH

The parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile and its confraternities were part of a city undergoing extensive and sometimes violent change. The pressures of social and economic modernization were augmented by external conflicts in the fifteenth century. These followed the internal social struggle of the fourteenth century and culminated in the sack and occupation of the city by Charles the Rash in 1468. In a few years, however, the city was rebuilt and, under Erard de la Marck (1505-1538), entered a period of political modernization and economic growth. These circumstances form the background for the early modern confraternities.

As it emerged from the Middle Ages, the three great elements of Liège society were the ecclesiastical institutions, the union of nobility and patriciate, and the tradition of guild government. The early modern period follows the disasters of the fifteenth century with the growth and economic change of the reign of Erard. This chapter will review the main features of Liège society, and will examine in some detail the institution of the parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile and its history during this period. It is here that our examination of the interaction of parish and confraternity begins.

#### *The Legacy of Medieval Liège*

Liège is located on the Meuse river at the eastern end of the Walloon provinces of present-day Belgium. During the Middle Ages it was, as it is today, the largest city in Wallonia. While by the fifteenth century it possessed its own city government, it was never independent, but part of a territory ruled since 980 by its bishop as a prince of the Empire. The principality, including after 1366 the county of Looz, stretched up the Meuse from above Namur to below Maastricht, including among other cities Dinant, Huy, Saint-Trond, and Tongres. The diocese of Liège was much larger and extended from the Ardennes to Zeeland, including Louvain, Namur, and 's-Hertogenbosch. While most of the principality, like the capital city, spoke a Romance language, the northern portions, including the county of Looz, were predominantly Teutonic (Dutch)-speaking.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The material in the succeeding sections is based chiefly on Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, vol. 1, *Des origines au commencement du XIVe siècle*, Fifth ed. (Brussels: Maurice Lamertin, 1929); vol. 2, *Du commencement du XIVe siècle à la mort de Charles le Téméraire*, Third ed. (Brussels: Maurice Lamertin, 1922); vol. 3, *De la mort de Charles le Téméraire à l'arrivée du Duc d'Albe dans les Pays-Bas (1567)*, Third ed. (Brussels: Maurice Lamertin, 1923); Godefroid Kurth, *La Cité de Liège au moyen-âge*, 3 vols., (Brussels: Dewit, 1909-10); Félix Magnette, *Précis d'histoire liégeoise*, Third ed. (Liège: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1929); Jean Lejeune, *Liège et son pays: Naissance d'une patrie (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)* (Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1948); Fernand Vercauteren, *Luttes sociales à Liège: XIIIe et*

## Ecclesiastical Institutions

The ecclesiastical institutions of Liège were the original basis of its growth and remained the center of its life. Petrarch in the fourteenth century noted its fame for its clergy,<sup>2</sup> and Crespin's Protestant martyrology in the sixteenth calls it "the paradise of priests."<sup>3</sup> At the head of the church of Liège was the bishop, who was temporal ruler as well. Most later medieval prelates were more prince than bishop. Many never received major orders, and some, like John of Bavaria, resigned to marry and pursue secular careers. Most bishops left spiritual functions to their auxiliary bishops and vicars *in sacris*.

Next in power and prestige was the cathedral chapter of Saint-Lambert. The canons of this chapter elected and sometimes competed with the bishop. They regarded themselves as co-sovereigns in the principality, of which they formed the First Estate to the exclusion of other clergy. Membership in this chapter required either eight quarters of nobility or a university degree. Canons of Saint-Lambert, especially the noble canons, had little to do with the city and lived rather as *grands seigneurs*. The cathedral contained two other chapters without any political function, Saint-Materne and the Lesser Table (*Petite Table*), which were not so exclusive.

The canons of the seven collegial churches founded in the tenth and eleventh centuries formed the "secondary clergy" of the city. The chapters of these churches, in theory daughter churches of the cathedral, were in fact independent, although the nominal head of each had to be chosen from among the canons of Saint-Lambert.<sup>4</sup> The canons, all of them seculars, lived in their fine houses within the immunities of the church, with a corps of chaplains to assist in their services. All were, like the cathedral, exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, and posed an obstacle to attempts to reform the church of Liège in the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The provost of the cathedral exercised archidiaconal jurisdiction over the city, holding synods of the local clergy, controlling admission to benefices, and investigating religious irregularities among clergy and laity.<sup>6</sup> The chief ecclesiastical court was presided over by the *official* or ecclesiastical judge appointed by the bishop. This court had jurisdiction over cases involving clerics as well as certain kinds of cases involving laymen, especially in matters related to marriage and sexual offenses.<sup>7</sup>

Religious brotherhood in both regular and extraregular forms was widespread in Liège. Religious houses represented all the important orders of canons regular, monks, and friars. Before

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*XVIe siècles* (Brussels: La renaissance du livre, 1946); Paul Harsin, *Etudes critiques sur l'histoire de la principauté de Liège, 1477-1795* vol.1, *La Principauté de Liège à la fin du règne de Louis de Bourbon et sous celui de Jean de Hornes, 1477-1505* (Liège: Sciences et Lettres, 1957); vol. 2, *Le Règne d'Erard de la Marck, 1505-1538* (Liège: Sciences et Lettres, 1955); and Etienne Hélin, *La Population des paroisses liégeoises aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> "Vidi Leodium insignem clero locum"; quoted Kurth, 2:264.

<sup>3</sup> "La cité de Liege, proverbialement appelée Le paradis des Prestres"; Jean Crespin, *Histoire des vrayes Tesmoins de la verite de l'Evangile*. . . (Geneva, 1570; repr. Liège: Centre National de Recherches d'Histoire Religieuse, 1964), f. 617.

<sup>4</sup> Lejeune, *Liège et son pays*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> See Léon-Ernest Halkin, *Le Cardinal de la Marck, prince-évêque de Liège* (Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1930).

<sup>6</sup> See J. Absil, "L'Absentéisme du clergé paroissiale au diocèse de Liège" *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 52 (1962): 5-44; Halkin, *Le Cardinal*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>7</sup> Paulette Pieyns-Rigo, "La Jurisdiction episcopale dans la principauté de Liège" in *Sources de l'histoire religieuse de la Belgique: Moyen âge et temps modernes. Actes du colloque de Bruxelles, 30 novembre-2 décembre 1967* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1968), pp.187-204; Raoul Vandermade, "La Juriprudence pénale de l'Officialité liégeoise aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles" *Annuaire d'histoire liégeoise* 5 (1935): 575-639; Halkin, *Le Cardinal*, p. 64.

1540, however, the only houses for women were two Cistercian convents outside the city, which accepted only the daughters of noble and patrician families. This anomaly was to some extent redressed in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the foundation of several women's convents.<sup>8</sup> Lack of opportunities for regular convent life for women may have been the reason for the large number of beguines—women, often widows, living in religious communities without formal vows<sup>9</sup>—many of them concentrated in the large beguinage of Saint-Christophe just outside the city walls.<sup>10</sup> There was also at least one small beguinage in every parish; in general beguines were a normal part of church life in Liège.<sup>11</sup>

The most famous of the hospitals of Liège was the leper-hospital of Cornillon, which was the home of St. Juliana, whose visions inspired the establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi. Cornillon was organized as four religious communities, sick (men and women) and healthy (men and women). It was a foundation of the city government, which nominated its members. Other hospitals were managed either by extra-regular religious communities or by lay confraternities. The city also had a municipal foundation for poor relief, known as the *Pauvres-en-Ile* from the location of its headquarters.<sup>12</sup>

It was around the bishop and the great chapters that the city of Liège developed. Its original inhabitants were their servants and dependents. The churches were the original proprietors of the landed property in the city, and as such founded most of the parishes. While trade and manufacturing came to Liège later on, it was originally a center of ecclesiastical and civil administration, and this function established the social and economic pattern of the city.

## Nobles and Patricians

Lay society in Liège comprised the usual orders of nobles, patricians, and guildsmen. These divisions, however, were not hard and fast. Strong ties bound the nobility to the patriciate; if not united, the two groups were closely allied.

The original nobility of the city and principality of Liège were *ministeriales*, the lay servants of the early bishops.<sup>13</sup> They were soon joined by a group of patricians who in time fused with them. The patrician families—the *grands lignages*—shared power with the nobility as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Patrician wealth had originally come from three kinds of

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<sup>8</sup> For a list of both regular and extra-regular religious houses, see Appendix A; see also Lejeune, *Liège et son pays*, pp. 211-12, 215; Kurth, 2: 254-255; Hélin, pp. 392-93; on the foundation of some fifteenth-century houses, see Adrianus Staring, "The Carmelite Sisters in the Netherlands" *Carmelus* 10 (1963), fasc. 1, pp. 56-92; Léon-Ernest Halkin, "Les Frères de la Vie Commune de la maison Saint-Jérôme à Liège," *Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Liégeois* 65 (1945): 5-70; Hugolin Lippens, "La fondation du couvent des Observants à Liège (1487)," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 24(1931): 171-84; M. Hereswitha, "De Franciscanessen (1493) en de Sepulcrinessen (1496) in het klooster der Bons Enfants te Luik," *Franciscana* 21 (Sint-Truinden, 1966), no. 1-2, pp. 37-49.

<sup>9</sup> As noted by Kurth, 2: 255-256, who supposed that Liège was the place where the beguine movement started. This position has been largely abandoned; see Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954).

<sup>10</sup> Hélin, p. 318; Madeleine Pissart, "L'Administration du béguinage Saint-Christophe à Liège" *Bulletin de la Société Royale "Le Vieux Liège"* 97 (1952): 113-30.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, in *Mort d'une hérésie: L'Eglise et les clercs face aux béguines et aux béghards du Rhin supérieur* (Paris-The Hague: Mouton, 1968), makes much of the persecution of beguines in several cities along the upper Rhine. Even there, except in Basel, this "persecution" seems to have been a transitory phenomenon. Certainly there was nothing comparable in Liège.

<sup>12</sup> Hélin, pp. 393-94; Robert Hankart, "L'Hospice de Cornillon à Liège," *La Vie Wallonne* 40 (1966) pp. 5-49, 93-134; 41 (1967), pp. 79-112; idem, "L'Hôpital de Saint-Michel dit des communs Pauvres-en-Ile à Liège: Histoire de ses origines (XIIIe-XVe siècles)" *Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Liégeois* 90 (1978): 157-195.

<sup>13</sup> Kurth, 1: 44-45; Lejeune, *Liège et son pays*, pp. 227-236, 337.

trade: cloth (the *halliers*), the sale of wine (the *viniers*), or banking (the *changeurs*). However, these successful merchants soon intermarried with noble families and acquired rural domains. In the end they became indistinguishable from the nobles. While on the level of the principality, it may be desirable to distinguish between these two groups, in the history of the city, nobility and patriciate were one in their interests and roles.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in the tenth century, the bishops chose *échevins* for the city from among the nobility. These *échevins* originally held, in Liège as in other cities of the Low Countries, both judicial and administrative authority over the lay inhabitants of the city. By the fifteenth century the *échevins* of Liège had given up their administrative functions. The court of *échevins* retained two important duties, however. First of all, it was the supreme court for the principality of Liège. In theory, it was only for the city that it was the court of first instance, but in fact its *rencharges* to the local courts of the countryside were responses to appeals in name only. Its sentences were unchangeable until 1524, when Erard de la Marck created the *Conseil Ordinaire* to hear civil appeals. Its other function was to register land deeds (*œuvres*), business contracts (*obligations*), marriage contracts (*convenances*), and wills. It was not required that most acts be registered with the *échevins* to be valid, and private courts of *tenants* and later notaries competed with the magistrates for this privilege. Many, however, registered their acts with the *échevins*, especially in preference to the private courts, because of the security and impartiality of a public body.<sup>15</sup>

The *échevins* and their chairman, the *grand maieur*, were appointed for life by the bishop from among the nobility and the original city patriciate which had fused with it. Many possessed fiefs and castles and often the titles of *chevalier* or *écuyer*; some, like the *échevin* and count palatine Tilman d'Heur, held more exalted titles from the Emperor.<sup>16</sup> In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the “legal nobility”—sons of good family holding degrees in law—increasingly joined the established feudal nobility in holding office. The office of *grand maieur* generally belonged to a powerful feudal noble. He was generally replaced in his functions by one of the other *échevins* or even by one of the principal clerks who formed the staff of the court as *maieur en féauté*.

## The Guilds

The city of Liège itself was governed by its guilds (*bons métiers*). Guild brotherhood was thus the basis of Liège society. There were thirty-two guilds, all equal politically.<sup>17</sup> Participation in city government was limited to the guilds, and in fact all male inhabitants were required to join a guild.<sup>18</sup> Membership in a guild, of course, did not imply that the member actually practiced that trade. In fact, it was possible and perhaps even common for a man to join several guilds.

The guilds had had exclusive control over the city government since the fourteenth century. Patricians and nobles, therefore, might be enrolled in guilds in order to hold city office. Thus there was no such thing, in a strict legal sense, as a patriciate, although we can profitably use the term for the descendants of the *grands lignages*, who held fiefs and provided members for the echevinate. All these social boundaries, however, were highly permeable to wealth.

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<sup>14</sup> Vercauteren, *Luttes sociales à Liège*, pp. 25-33; Kurth, 1: 92-109, 159-173.

<sup>15</sup> Camille de Borman, *Les Echevins de la souveraine justice de Liège*, vol. 1, *Moyen âge* (Liège: Grandmont-Donders, 1892), vol. 2, *Age moderne* (Liège: D. Cormaux, 1899); Georges Hansotte, “Décision juridique en matière civile, 16e-18e siècles” *La décision politique et juridique dans le passé et le présent* (Brussels: Archives Générales du Royaume, 1975), pp. 131-148.

<sup>16</sup> De Borman, 2:53.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix B for a list of the guilds.

<sup>18</sup> The requirement was renewed in the sixteenth century; see Eugène Buchin, *Le Règne d'Erard de la Marck* (Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1931), p. 119.

Political authority in the city belonged to the burgomasters and the Council. The two burgomasters<sup>19</sup>—usually nobles and patricians like the *échevins*—were chosen annually by a group of 32 electors, one from each guild, who were in turn chosen by the 22 commissioners (*commissaires*).<sup>20</sup> The prince appointed six commissioners and sixteen were elected by the wards (*vinâves*) of the city. In addition to their electoral functions, the commissioners were responsible for public order in their wards.

The city Council consisted of representatives from each of the 32 guilds. In the early sixteenth century, the Council had reduced its working membership to a committee that did most of the day-to-day business of the city. The full Council retained its authority, however, and on matters of great importance, the guilds themselves could be consulted.<sup>21</sup>

The guild representatives were called *jurés*. While each guild originally chose two *jurés*, after 1487 only one served on the Council at any one time. Originally associated with the guild governors in the administration of the guilds, by the sixteenth century they acted only on outside business, such as the acquisition of property. *Jurés* were chosen by the guild membership at the annual assemblies. They were sometimes noble, or more commonly trained lawyers, since there was no requirement, as in the case of guild governor, that they exercise the profession of their guild. This office, however, was not nearly so exclusive as the higher magistracies.<sup>22</sup>

City government also included various clerks and receivers, as well as several specialized boards. Among these were the official inspectors, or *voir-jurés*, who enforced regulations regarding coal mining (*voir-jurés de charbonnage*), building (*voir-jurés de cordeau*), and water use (*voir-jurés des eaux*). Certain officials, like the Four of the City (*Quatre de la Cité* or *Quatre de la Violette*), who assisted the burgomasters in police matters, were chosen annually by the guilds, each guild taking a turn in rotation.<sup>23</sup> The city raised money by excise taxes on wine, beer, coal, and cloth, and shared the toll of the Pont des Arches, the great bridge over the Meuse, with the prince. By the sixteenth century, all these taxes were farmed out to private individuals.<sup>24</sup>

Each guild was headed by two governors elected annually from among the masters actually exercising the trade. The guilds met, each in its own location, on the feast of St. James to elect the governors and *jurés*, and to hear the report of the *rentier* or chief accountant. It was through these assemblies that the guild masters, the political class of Liège, exercised their political rights.<sup>25</sup>

The annual assemblies were also the occasion for the reception of new members. There were two levels of membership in each guild. The first, conferring the full rights of citizenship in the city and the status of a master in the trade, involved the payment of the *grand rate*; the *compagnons* (non-masters exercising the trade; there was no distinction between apprentices and journeymen) paid the *petit rate*. For a foreigner or an outsider to the guild, the *grand rate* could be

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<sup>19</sup> The term *bourgmestre* came into use in the seventeenth century; the term in use before was *maître de la cité*. The translation “burgomaster” is used here in preference to “mayor” to avoid confusion with the *grand maieur*, chairman of the court of *échevins*, or the *maieurs* of local or private courts of *tenants*, whose functions were quite different from those of the burgomaster.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Abry, *Recueil héraldique des bourgmestres de l'ancien cité de Liège. . . depuis l'an 1200 jusques en 1720* Liège: J.-P. Gramme, 1720; Yves Moreau, *Les bourgmestres de Liège au XVIIIe siècle* (Kortrijk-Heuk: UGA, 1978), pp. 188-200.

<sup>21</sup> Buchin, p. 40; Harsin, 2:142-46.

<sup>22</sup> René Van Santbergen, *Les Bons Métiers des meuniers, des boulangers et des brasseurs de la cité de Liège* (Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1949), pp. 206-208.

<sup>23</sup> Kurth, 2:156, 3:276; Lejeune, *La Formation*, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107-110; Harsin, 2: 189-217.

<sup>25</sup> Van Santbergen, *Les Bons Métiers*, pp. 183-94; Edouard Poncelet, *Le Bon Métier des merciers de la cité de Liège* (Liège: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1908) pp. 51-55.

a considerable sum of money; a new master might mortgage a piece of property to the guild rather than pay a lump sum. One could, however, join a guild by *relief*, if one had a relative who had been a member, and pay considerably less: a tenth perhaps of the regular price or *acquêt*. Sons of masters, their sons-in-law, and the husbands of masters' widows were the commonest cases of joining by *relief*; but one could relieve membership in a guild (join by *relief*) by virtue of an uncle, a grandfather, or some even more distant relative.<sup>26</sup> In one case a coppersmith relieved membership in the drapers' guild by virtue of his wife's father and in the brewers' guild by virtue of her maternal grandfather.<sup>27</sup> One reason for joining several guilds may well have been that multiple membership left more options to one's children.

No documents survive that permit us to estimate the relative size, or, indeed, wealth, of the guilds. We can, however, assume that those whose members' names occur most frequently in land-title transfers were the largest and the wealthiest. The smiths and the colliers, as we shall see, were coming into special prominence in the fifteenth century. Many of the brewers were also prosperous. The drapers' guild, which included the *halliers* or cloth merchants, and the coopers' guild, which included the *viniers* or wine merchants, each included its share of wealthy members. The tanners' guild, centered in the Outre-Meuse district, enjoyed a special prestige for its seniority among the guilds. The goldsmiths' guild, to which painters and glaziers also belonged,<sup>28</sup> and the mercers' guild, which included all manner of miscellaneous merchants from gunpowder-makers to confectioners, from milleners to bookbinders,<sup>29</sup> were also often prosperous. On the other hand, porters, fishmongers, and boatmen do not often appear in the documents.

## The Calamitous Fifteenth Century

The events of the fifteenth century form the immediate background to the period we are studying. First war, then economic change, affected the coherence of all social bonds. These events were in turn the result of the social and political situation of medieval Liège.

Pirenne and Kurth have called the government of Liège in the fourteenth century the purest democracy attempted in the Low Countries during the Middle Ages.<sup>30</sup> The Council of the City consisted of almost 200 members, elected equally from each of the thirty-two guilds. This equality among the guilds was one of the distinguishing features of the political system in Liège. No one guild or group of guilds predominated, as the coppersmiths did in Dinant or the weavers in Ghent.<sup>31</sup>

Equality was also the rule within the guilds. Journeymen and apprentices had the same vote as masters in the election of officers and in the consideration of matters before the Council. Guild meetings often turned into riots, as the younger and more radical members of the guilds demanded more liberties for the city and more concessions from the prince.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Van Santbergen, *Les Bons Métiers*, pp. 100-130; Poncelet, pp. 35-43.

<sup>27</sup> Jehan le Cock relieved the drapers' guild 17 August 1503 (Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Métiers [drapiers], reg. 166, f. 18) and the brewers' guild in 1511 (Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Métiers [brasseurs], reg. 25C, f. 29): he is called "potier de kevre" (coppersmith); he was governor of the smith's guild in 1528 (Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Echevins de Liège, Œuvres, reg. 108, f. 204); see Edouard Poncelet and Emile Fairon "Liste chronologique des actes concernant les métiers et confréries de la cité de Liège I: les fèvres" *Annuaire d'histoire liégeoise* 1 (1929-1937): 306-343.

<sup>28</sup> As well as embroiderers, engravers, saddlers, spurmakers, and swordsmiths. See Claude Gaier-Lhoest, *L'Industrie et la commerce des armes dans les anciennes principautés belges du XIIIe siècle à la fin du XVe siècle* (Paris-Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1973), p. 240.

<sup>29</sup> Poncelet, pp. 18-20.

<sup>30</sup> Pirenne, 2: 47; Kurth, 1: 288; but cf. Vercauteren, *Luttes sociales*, pp. 78-79, 86-87.

<sup>31</sup> Vercauteren, p. 97; Pirenne, 2: 47-48, 61.

<sup>32</sup> Vercauteren, pp. 100-102.

After a century of conflict, the guilds met their match in John of Bavaria, known later as “John the Pitiless,” prince-bishop from 1398 to 1417. At the battle of Othée in 1408, his troops massacred the guild militia and subjugated the city.<sup>33</sup> During the rest of his reign and during that of his immediate successor, the bishop controlled the city's institutions. When, in 1424, prince-bishop Jean de Heinsberg re-established the city government by the *Regiment de Heinsberg*, power was firmly in the hands of the guild masters and property holders.

The *Regiment de Heinsberg* reduced the size of the city Council and provided for the indirect election of burgomasters. Although the councillors were still representatives of the guilds, which were consulted on matters of great importance, direct participation of the people in city government had ended. Now only property holders who were also literate could hold office, and within the guilds, the right to vote was restricted to the masters.<sup>34</sup>

The political conflict, however, was not yet over; the most tragic chapter for Liège was yet to come. The ambitions of the house of Burgundy turned toward Liège; Jean de Heinsberg was forced to resign in 1455 to allow the nephew of Philip of Burgundy, Louis de Bourbon, to extend the Burgundian sphere of influence and the Burgundian style of government over the principality. The city resisted the new bishop. In 1460, the Liégeois moved to open rebellion, but they could not stand against Philip and his son Charles the Rash. They were defeated at Montenaeken in 1465, at Brusthem in 1467, and finally in 1468, the city itself was sacked.<sup>35</sup>

Charles desired nothing less than the complete destruction of Liège. His troops entered the city on 30 October to loot and pillage. Four days later they began to burn Liège to the ground. Thousands of citizens perished by the sword, by drowning, or of exposure as they fled to the countryside. Charles brought in workmen from neighboring cities to complete the work by destroying all the buildings, except the churches, and the major bridges. He annexed part of the city to his duchy of Brabant, and subjected the rest to harsh tribute. All the institutions of the city were abolished: guilds, Council, even the *échevins*, and the city was subjected to a governor chosen by the duke. The Liégeois who survived carried on such life as they could in cellars and shacks as they struggled to rebuild their city.

From 1468 to 1477 Liège lay under the domination of the Burgundians. Already, however, the city began to revive. Charles had left the cathedral, the collegials, and the houses of the canons standing, and around these the life of the city revived as it had originally grown. When he died in 1477, his daughter Mary renounced all claim to Liège, and the institutions of the city were restored as they had been before the sack. Slowly the houses that had been destroyed were rebuilt, although that process was not complete even fifty years later.<sup>36</sup>

The death of Charles the Rash did not end the wars of Liège. Between 1480 to 1492 the family of La Marck, covertly supported by Louis XI of France, revolted against the bishop. Guillaume de la Marck, who for a time became dictator of Liège, murdered Louis de Bourbon in 1482. Louis's successor, Jean de Hornes, captured Guillaume at Maastricht in 1485 and executed

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<sup>33</sup> Kurth, 3: 1-76; Magnette, pp. 186-144.

<sup>34</sup> Magnette, pp. 145-46; Kurth, 3: 94-95; Joseph Daris, *Histoire du diocèse et de la principauté de Liège pendant le XVe siècle* (Liège: Louis Demartean, 1887; repr. Brussels: Editions Culture et Civilisation, 1974), pp. 149-160.

<sup>35</sup> Pirenne, 2: 296-315; Kurth, 3: 137-339; Daris, pp. 317-489.

<sup>36</sup> Emile Fairon, “Notes sur la domination bourguignonne dans la principauté de Liège (1468-1476)” *Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Liégeoise*, 42 (1912): 1-89; Harsin, 1: 30-38; Magnette, pp. 166-167; Irène Vrancken-Pirson, “Démographie liégeoise du XVe siècle” *Bulletin de statistique* 37 (Brussels: Institut national de statistique, 1951): 599-600.

him after a summary trial. Several times during this conflict, the city was invaded or torn by rival factions.<sup>37</sup>

The treaty that ended the civil war contained a provision declaring the principality of Liège perpetually neutral. It was surrounded, however, by the Burgundian possessions of the house of Habsburg, and closely allied to them throughout most of the next century. The Habsburg-Valois wars occasionally brought troops into the outlying parts of the principality, although the city itself was spared.

## The Reign of Erard de la Marck

Erard de la Marck, the successor of Jean de Hornes as bishop from 1505 to 1538, is one of the few prince-bishops who is remembered in Liège with any admiration. His reputation may be more due to luck than to his own character, since he presided over a period of rebuilding and economic growth. He was the nephew of Guillaume de la Marck and originally an ally of the king of France. In 1518 he transferred his allegiance to the Habsburgs, who arranged for him to become a cardinal. With him, historians have observed, begins the modern history of Liège.<sup>38</sup>

While not all of the changes Liège experienced during the first four decades of the sixteenth century were owing to Erard's rule, he did make changes in the administration of the city and the principality that reflect the spirit of the times. Erard was an admirer of Renaissance learning: he corresponded with Erasmus and employed Jerome Aleander as his secretary. It should not be surprising, then, that he tried to bring Renaissance order to his government. He reformed the organs of justice, introducing courts superior both to the *échevins* and to the court of Twenty-Two, which corrected administrative abuses at the level of the principality. He also reformed the fiscal administration of his principality, streamlining and rationalizing along the lines of other Renaissance principalities.<sup>39</sup>

The influence of Renaissance ideas should not be overlooked. From his correspondence with Erasmus to his abolition of outdated institutions, from his building projects to his intrigues for the cardinal's hat, Erard presents a consistent portrait of the prince of his time. In the renewed state imagined by contemporary legists, the official organs of government, to administer justice properly, must be efficient and without competition.<sup>40</sup> Informal and temporary mechanisms had to be

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<sup>37</sup> Harsin, 1: 71-274; Daris, pp. 490-503, 555-610; Magnette, pp. 168-173; Pirenne, 3: 159-166. The events of this period were fictionalized by Sir Walter Scott in *Quentin Durward*. He took, as usual, considerable liberties with history. Not only did he place Louis's death in 1468 rather than 1482; he called Liège a city in Flanders and implied that its inhabitants spoke German. He portrayed accurately, however, the characters of Louis XI, Charles the Rash, and Louis de Bourbon: the first devious, the second implacable, the third weak and worldly, and none in the least concerned for the welfare of the people. He also accurately portrayed the combination of blind civic pride and base greed that characterized the citizens of Liège.

<sup>38</sup> Buchin, *Le Règne d'Erard de la Marck*; Halkin, *Le Cardinal de la Marck*; Harsin, vol. 2; Magnette, pp. 177-190; Jean Lejeune, *La Formation du capitalisme moderne dans la principauté de Liège au XVIe siècle* (Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1939).

<sup>39</sup> Pirenne, 3: 164; Buchin, pp. 41-72; Harsin, 2: 148-63; on Erard's connection with Aleander and Erasmus, see also Halkin, *Le Cardinal*, esp. pp. 115-17.

<sup>40</sup> The humanists shared this ideal of a "revivified Christian community" with Biel and the later nominalists; see Steven W. Rowan, "Ulrich Zasius and the Baptism of Jewish Children," *Sixteenth Century Journal* v. 4, no. 2 (October 1975): 3-25, esp. pp. 24-25. On the Renaissance state in general, see Federico Chabod, "Y a-t-il un Etat de la Renaissance?" *Actes du Colloque sur la Renaissance organisé par la Société d'Histoire Moderne* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958) pp. 57-74; J. Vincens Vives, "The Administrative Structure of the State," in *Government in Reformation Europe 1520-1560*, ed. Henry J. Cohn (London: Macmillan, 1971) pp. 58-87; Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 89-106; William Farr Church, *Constitutional Thought in*



replaced by formal, official, and predictable ones, which guaranteed peace and stability. In Liège this development clearly complements the rise of trade and manufacture. Earlier prince-bishops had been given to lust and violence; Erard's fault was avarice. Mary of Hungary referred to him as "that troublesome grocer":<sup>41</sup> but if he was a grocer, Erard ruled a city of grocers.

### ***Economy and Society under Erard de la Marck***

For nearly a hundred years after 1492, Liège was free from international conflict and from internal strife. The economic movements begun in the late fourteenth century flourished in the sixteenth, as Liège experienced a "proto-industrial revolution," leading to an economy which Jean Lejeune has not hesitated to call capitalist.<sup>42</sup> This growth accompanied the repopulation and rebuilding of the city following the Burgundian sack and occupation.

Later generations of Liège folklore would turn the sixteenth century into a golden age; this was doubtless an exaggeration.<sup>43</sup> From the perspective of the middle of the seventeenth century, however, when stagnation had set in after the earlier boom and the impoverished Grignoux fought the wealthy Chiroux in the streets of the city, it must have seemed a relative paradise. Certainly it was the most peaceful century Liège knew from the high Middle Ages to the Revolution. For one thing, the sack had broken the fighting spirit of the perennial Liège mob; peace could not but look precious after the horrors the city had endured. Furthermore, much of the population consisted of immigrants, who had not yet formed hard social lines, so that there was opportunity for many. Certainly there must have been tensions and conflicts in the society, but they were in general individual rather than wholesale. The only major disturbance of Erard's reign was not a struggle between factions in the city or between city and prince. The "mutiny of the Rivageois" of 1531 was a revolt of the inhabitants of the villages to the west of Liège, occasioned by disputes over legal jurisdiction and several years of bad harvests. The guilds, the nobility, and the prince united against this threat.<sup>44</sup>

### **Population**

While we cannot directly determine the population of Liège in the years following the Burgundian occupation, we can arrive at an indirect figure. One estimate places the number of houses within the city walls at about 2,300 in the second half of the fifteenth century. If the proportions suggested by Etienne Hélin for 1650 were in effect 150 years earlier, the population of Liège must have been about 15,000.<sup>45</sup>

Some earlier historians have overestimated the effect of the sack of 1468 on the population of Liège. Certainly the destruction was great, and a mortality figure in the thousands is not unreasonable, especially if the effects of the following winter, which many spent in the open

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*Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941; repr. New York: Octagon Books, 1969), pp. 52-56; on the Low Countries in particular, see Pirenne, 3: 207-208.

<sup>41</sup> "Ce dangereux espicier"; quoted in Magnette, p. 180 n. 1; Halkin, *Le Cardinal*, p. 216.

<sup>42</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 9-12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321

<sup>44</sup> Harsin, 2: 178-88.

<sup>45</sup> Vrancken-Pirson, p. 600; Etienne Hélin, *La Population des paroisses liégeoises aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1959). Hélin (p. 381) gives a 1650 population of between 30,558 and 36,342 in 5007-5027 houses (some containing more than one household), including civic and religious buildings. The same proportions for the late fifteenth century give a population between 13,981 and 16,694.

country or in unroofed ruins, are taken into account.<sup>46</sup> According to a map established by Irène Vrancken-Pirson from property records, while some sections of the city experienced a destruction of 80 percent or more, in other sections, the destruction was much lighter.<sup>47</sup> The areas spared tended to be those containing ecclesiastical establishments and the large houses of canons; the overall level of destruction was about 60 percent. On the basis of this evidence, one might argue that the total destruction recorded by the chroniclers is exaggerated, though not greatly so.<sup>48</sup>

The Burgundian sack stunned, but did not kill, the process of economic growth in Liège. The population was reinforced in the sixteenth century by immigrants from the duchy of Brabant and from the county of Looz, part of the domains of the prince-bishop. This migration, which had begun in the fifteenth century, gained new force in the sixteenth as it helped repopulate the shattered city.<sup>49</sup> With the coming of peace, the economy also rebounded, based largely on the new industries of coal and iron.

## Industry

By the end of the fourteenth century Liège was already a center of coal mining. Visitors to Liège in the sixteenth century remarked on the use of the mineral. Liège was one of the first places where coal furnished the fuel for domestic heating as well as for certain industries, notably brewing.<sup>50</sup> Coal also passed down the Meuse in barges to be exported to cities along the North Sea and the English Channel. Such records as are still extant bear witness to a production which, though small by modern standards, is remarkable for its time.<sup>51</sup> Today the mines are mostly worked out; but the flat-topped hills of overgrown mine tailings, which are an inescapable feature of the skyline of Liège, attest to the antiquity of the industry.

The making of iron and steel also began early in Liège. From the tenth century, the Meuse valley harbored an extensive metals industry based on abundant supplies of ore.<sup>52</sup> In the sixteenth century, the forges of Liège itself were only part of an industry that stretched out into the countryside, where the needed ore and charcoal could be found, and exported products down the river to Holland.<sup>53</sup>

The two specialties of this industry were nails and armaments. The former were produced in small factories, both urban and rural, while production of the latter was concentrated in the capital.<sup>54</sup> The reputation of Liège as a center of arms production predated the age of firearms, but

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<sup>46</sup> The records of the tax on rebuilding imposed by Charles the Rash mention only 288 houses standing in 1470. While this does testify to the savagery of the Duke's treatment of Liège, it is not a reliable demographic source. Many houses of canons and other ecclesiastics, not mentioned in the records, were certainly still standing, and many people were doubtless living in cellars and shacks. For a discussion of this tax and other Burgundian measures, see Fairon, "Notes." The list is preserved in the Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels, Chambre des Comptes nos. 24410-24416; a manuscript copy by Fairon, dated 14 January 1927, entitled "Liste des habitants de la cité, des faubourgs, et de la banlieu de Liège. . .1470-1476" is to be found in Archives de l'Etat, Liège, LG. G. 46.

<sup>47</sup> The map can be found in Théodore Gobert, *Liège à travers les âges. Les Rues de Liège*, Third ed. (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1975), vol. 1, fig. 42-43.

<sup>48</sup> Vrancken-Pirson, pp. 599-600.

<sup>49</sup> Harsin, 1: 336-37

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-157; cf. William Rees, *Industry before the Industrial Revolution*, 2 vols. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1968), 1: 293-97.

<sup>51</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 130-133.

<sup>52</sup> J. A. Van Houtte, *An Economic History of the Low Countries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), pp. 37-39.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-157; Pirenne, 2: 288-290.

<sup>54</sup> Georges Hansotte, *La Clouterie liégeoise et la question ouvrière en XVIIIe siècle* (Brussels: Librairie Encyclopédique, 1972), pp. 1-6.

grew with their use to remain to this day of international importance.<sup>55</sup> Using sulfur and saltpeter from mines in the principality, the industrialists of Liège made powder as well as guns and bullets. The wars of the late sixteenth century enriched them as they sold not only to the Catholic side but to the Protestants as well.<sup>56</sup>

Jean Lejeune refers to the economy of Liège in the sixteenth century as a capitalist economy in the process of formation. If this is so we should look for a leading position to be given to the investment of capital. As we shall see, this was not lacking in Liège. This investment in turn would lead to changed relations between capitalist and worker, and among the capitalists themselves. The development in Liège of capitalist industries in the fields of coal, iron, and armaments brought about significant changes in the social relations which had characterized medieval Liège. Naturally, the guilds of colliers and smiths were the most affected, but they were not the only ones.

## Social Relations

During the turbulent period of “Liège democracy” the thirty-two guilds were all equal in political power, and within the guilds the masters shared power with the non-masters. Soon, however, the masters were able to deprive the *compagnons* (journeymen and apprentices) of the vote. By the *Regiment de Heinsberg* of 1424, the guilds had become corporations of masters, although not all masters were employers nor all employers masters. Still, within most guilds, competition was kept in check and the share of the industry of each guild master was small. Vercauteren describes this situation as “a democracy of small burghers, small bosses, and small businessmen.”<sup>57</sup>

In the colliers' guild, this concentration of power in the hands of the masters took a turn more typical of capitalism. By the fifteenth century, the master colliers were no longer miners at all, but mine owners. They were in fact simply capitalists. The simple miners, the “*varlets*,” could only become masters if they managed to buy in; at the same time, so could anyone else with enough money to invest.<sup>58</sup>

Early capitalism took a different turn for the smiths' guild. This guild included all workers in nonprecious metals: smelters, nailers, tinkers, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, locksmiths, iron-founders, arms-makers, just to begin the list. The guild was divided into “members” (*membres*), each comprising a particular sub-trade, each with its own regulations and requirements for mastership.<sup>59</sup> In iron-working especially, the industrial development of Liège and its region brought prosperity to the guild. The effect, however, was not at first concentration but dispersion. “Factories”—actually large workshops for nail-making—only grew up toward the end of the century. Until then, only in some mining and smelting operations did capital assume the importance it had so early in the coal-mining industry.<sup>60</sup>

While at first industrial development did not entail for the smiths a shift from the workshop to the factory or a concentration of power in the hands of a few masters, it did lead to greater competition, another characteristic of capitalist economies. While other guilds, by repeated limits

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<sup>55</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 180-187; Gaier-Lhoest, pp. 149-152.

<sup>56</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 187-95; idem, “Religion, morale et capitalisme dans la société liégeoise du XVIIe siècle,” *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 22 (1943): 109-154.

<sup>57</sup> “[U]ne démocratie de petits bourgeois, petits patrons et petits entrepreneurs” Vercauteren, pp. 104-105.

<sup>58</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 222-24.

<sup>59</sup> Georges Hansotte, *Règlements et privilèges des XXXII métiers de la cité de Liège*, fasc. 1, *Les Fèvres* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1950).

<sup>60</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 149-150; Hansotte, *La Clouterie*, pp. 10-11.

on production, strict requirements for mastership, and the exclusion of foreign workers, strove in vain to restrain competition, among the smiths' guild regulations became steadily less and less strict. The techniques of the time demanded skilled workers in small workshops; development provided sufficient demand that many masters could compete. As a large collection of skilled masters, each directing a small workshop in free competition with his neighbors, the smiths remained the defenders and beneficiaries of a free economic order.<sup>61</sup>

Of course it was not only the mine owners and the master smiths who benefited from economic development. Other new industries, such as the manufacture of powder and glass-making, enriched those who practiced them or invested in them. The canons and the great merchants preferred the traditional sources of wealth—land and cloth—especially now that the city and its region were at peace. Those whose guilds held them back from expansion or competition within their own professions found other means of enriching themselves. The brewers' guild, for example, forbade the brewing of more than a certain quantity of beer a week, so as to protect the poorer members from competition by the great.<sup>62</sup> Those who had extra profits, since they could not expand their breweries, sought other fields for investment. In addition to land, the traditional placement for wealth, many bought shares in coal mines. As *comparchionniers* of the masters of the mines, they received a share in the product, which they could use in their breweries.<sup>63</sup>

The numerous canons of the churches of Liège preferred to live on their prebends and to consume rather than to invest; if they invested at all it was in land. The professional administrators, lawyers, and bureaucrats who surrounded the great religious as well as the secular institutions of Liège were bolder, and many of them are to be found among the *comparchionniers* of the coal mines.<sup>64</sup>

As economic activity increased, and the institutions of government and justice became more professionalized, tax-farmers, notaries, lawyers, and administrators multiplied. By the mid-sixteenth century notaries were beginning to cut into the *échevins'* monopoly of the right to register land transfers. The same men who served as notaries often farmed tithes for the great churches or taxes for the city or the prince; they also filled offices related to the collection and administration of funds, variously called *compteur*, *receveur*, or *rentier*, for ecclesiastical or secular institutions.<sup>65</sup>

## Investment in Land

While tax- and tithe-farming, as well as investment in mining, attracted many investors in sixteenth-century Liège, real property remained the chief reservoir of capital. Wealthy individuals, and institutions as well, lent money on the security of land.

The normal means of investment in land was the purchase of *cens* and *rentes*. By these contracts, the buyer (or lender) bought from the seller (or borrower) the right to receive an income from a piece of property. With this right he bought title to a proportionate part of the property. In order to repay the loan, the seller redeemed the property, i.e. bought it back. Thus the *cens* was effectively payment of interest. Since it involved a transfer of title to property that was, in theory, definitive, it escaped the Church's ban on usury.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 220-22, 224-26.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 217; René Van Santbergen, *Règlements et privilèges des XXXII métiers de la cité de Liège*, fasc. 11, *Les Brasseurs* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1952).

<sup>63</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, p. 252.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 106-110, 258-60.

<sup>66</sup> See John T. Noonan, Jr., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 155-70, on the *census (cens)* contract, of which the *rente* is a case. On *rentes* in particular, see Raymond De Roover,

Cens were figured in money, of which several different systems might be in use at the same time.<sup>67</sup> *Rente* contracts were written for commodities, usually spelt, which were usually, at least in the case of urban property, converted into cash at the time of payment according to a price established by the city government. Both *cens* and *rentes* could be perpetual as well as redeemable. Perpetual *cens* and *rentes* formed most of the landed income of ecclesiastical institutions as well as of individuals. A redeemable *cens* or *rente* could become perpetual; the borrower or his family accepted additional cash from the lender (called *deniers de regrosse*) and renounced all right of redemption.

Liège was no exception to the prevailing inflation in Europe beginning in the late fifteenth century. The “price revolution” begins in Liège around 1510, after a brief decline in prices in the 1490s. On the basis of the exchange rates against certain foreign and Liégeois gold coins in common use in Liège, the Liège florin was worth about half its 1488 value in 1540. Between the same two years, the price of spelt increased more dramatically, the 1540 price being more than three times that in 1488.<sup>68</sup>

The effects of inflation upon interest rates can be debated; indeed, it appears to be paradoxical. In the case of *cens*, the prevailing return in the early sixteenth century was between 4 and 6 percent, with 5 percent being the commonest. New *cens* were continually being created on older property as the former *cens* lost their value to inflation. *Rentes*, being figured in commodities, were immune to inflation, and therefore ought to have brought a lower return. In fact, the evidence indicates that *rente* contracts were written for higher rates of interest than *cens* contracts. Using the price of spelt at the time the contract was written, *rentes* were set up at between 7 and 10 percent in the 1520s and 1530s, having probably been somewhat higher before that. Since grain prices in general rose, the actual return was greater.<sup>69</sup> There is no clear reason for this discrepancy, even considering that the borrowers and the lenders may have been unaware of the inflationary trend. Since the *rente* could only be redeemed at the initiative of the borrower, the higher interest rate may have served as an incentive to redeem.

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*Money, Banking and Credit in Mediaeval Bruges* (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1948), p. 147 n. 147. *Cens* and *rente* contracts of the type used in Liège had been regarded as licit by many moral theologians in the later Middle Ages, and were formally approved by Popes Calixtus III and Nicholas V in the fifteenth century; see Noonan, pp. 160-61; De Roover, *La Pensée économique des scholastiques: doctrines et méthodes* (Montréal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1970), p. 87. The permanent *census* was in fact the original form of the contract. The added provision for redemption—originally a concession to the seller's family—made it possible to use the contract as a loan.

<sup>67</sup> See Appendix C for the various systems of money used in Liège at this time.

<sup>68</sup> Emile Fairon, “Quelques effets de la crise monétaire à Liège” in *Mélanges offerts à Henri Pirenne*, 2 vols., (Brussels: Vroment, 1926) 1: 151-160; Marie-Louise Fanchamps, *Recherches statistiques sur le problème annonaire dans la principauté de Liège de 1457 à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1970), pp. 32-33, 55-193.

<sup>69</sup> The figures given here are based on the analysis of a sample of surviving acts by two independent lenders on land: Jehan de l'Angle, cleric, (Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Echevins de Liège, Œuvres, regs. 50, f. 163; 51, f. 164; 52, f. 14v; 53, ff. 242v-243; 54 f. 300 56, ff. 192v-193, 134v-138; 58, ff. 70, 295v; 60, f. 101; 61, ff. 17, 32; 62, ff. 26, 130; 63, f. 140; 64, ff. 13v-14v, 185, 222v-223v; 65, f. 172v; 66, ff. 81v-82, 269-270, 296v; 67, ff. 70, 294v, 306, 307; 68, ff. 12, 115, 232; 70, ff. 193, 353; 71, ff. 210v-211, 216, 263, 310v, 356; 72, ff. 134v-135; 73, ff. 6, 292v; 75, ff. 6, 7, 219; 76, ff. 293v-294, 322-223v; 77, ff. 18v, 270; 78, ff. 153v-154; 79, f. 33v; 80, ff. 211v-212; 83, f. 131; 85, f. 84; 89, ff. 221, 347v-348; 93, ff. 304v-305; 97, ff. 261, 378; 101, ff. 68, 231v; 109, f. 370; 113, ff. 9-10) and Collard delle Barbe d'Or (Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Echevins de Liège, Œuvres, regs. 50, f. 282; 57, f.321v; 58, f. 81; 63, ff. 271-272; 64, ff. 179v, 303v; 65, ff. 49, 88, 179v, 186v; 66, ff. 155, 205, 284; 67, ff. 84, 127, 266v-267; 68, ff. 72, 181; 69, ff. 16, 220v; 70, ff. 36, 58v, 145, 149v, 177v-178, 303; 71, f. 107v; 72, ff. 188, 251; 73, f. 174v; 74, f. 156v; 76, f. 103, 284v; 77, f. 148 175; 80, ff. 10v, 31, 32, 157v; 82, ff. 212, 239; 83, ff. 91v, 94; 85, f. 242,303v; 89, ff. 18, 94, 191v; 97, ff. 192v, 359; 109, f. 197v; 113, ff. 312, 381; 119, ff. 187, 283; 129, f. 329; 133, ff. 14v, 125).

Through the mechanisms of the sale of *cens* and *rentes*, capital flowed through the Liège economy. Unfortunately we do not know the purpose of most of these loans. Some are clearly for the purpose of paying the *grand rate* in a guild; others may have represented the purchase of tools for a trade or for building, or for some other purpose, such as investment in mining. Those who made such loans were often the same men as invested in new enterprises or farmed taxes, in addition to carrying on some other profession. They are to be distinguished from the “Lombards” or professional usurers, also active in Liège at this time.<sup>70</sup>

### ***The Parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile***

The parish of Saint-Martin, which will be the subject of our study, was one of the largest of the twenty-five parishes of Liège.<sup>71</sup> It was known as Saint-Martin-en-Ile to distinguish it from the collegial Saint-Martin-en-Mont. Its institutions and method of government were typical of parishes in medieval Liège.<sup>72</sup> If it had any unusual feature, it was the diversity of its community.

### **Situation**

The parish was founded in the late tenth century under bishop Eracle, to serve the lay community surrounding the collegial church of Saint-Paul, which was begun under Eracle and completed under his successor Notger. During their reigns the Ile district, originally a series of swampy islands, was drained and settled. Saint-Paul was the first collegial church built on the Ile, with the collegial Saint-Jean-Evangéliste and the abbey of Saint-Jacques following soon after.<sup>73</sup>

No trace remains today of the parish church beyond the name of the rue Saint-Martin-en-Ile, now a narrow alleyway between two modern department stores. The building stood in the shadow of its mother church, facing the square known then as “devant Saint Paul,” now Place Cathédrale. Behind the church was the tiny parish cemetery; behind that, the arm of the Meuse which divided the Ile from the central city. The little church was abandoned at the time of the French (and Liégeois) Revolution, and it soon fell into ruin. The Revolution destroyed most of the old parish churches of Liège, as well as the cathedral and the collegial church of Saint-Pierre.

The territory of the parish, though small, was the largest of the Ile district (see Figure 2:1). It comprised essentially the central slice of territory from east to west across the Ile. The principal traffic artery through the parish ran from the Pont d'Avroy in the west, along the rue du Pont d'Avroy through the Vinâve d'Ile, and across the Pont d'Ile into the central city. These streets, with the side streets of the rue du Pont d'Avroy and the Lulay (a small island; from *l'îlot*) des Fèvres which adjoined the Pont d'Ile formed one of the densely populated sections of the parish. The other, smaller concentration was to be found at the eastern end of the parish, along the streets known as Badastrée and Chodélistrée, and on the horn of the Ile, at the place called “au Treit.” This concentration followed the old road to the “transitus” or crossing of the Meuse. The rest of the parish, to the south and west of Saint-Paul, consisted of the great houses of the canons surrounding the square “derrière Saint-Paul” and proceeding down to the river opposite Avroy. The Pont d'Avroy put one of the gates of the city within the parish; during the sack of 1468, the area between the Pont d'Avroy and the Pont d'Ile suffered some of the worst damage. On the side

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<sup>70</sup> Lejeune, *La Formation*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>71</sup> See Appendix D for a list of the parishes of Liège.

<sup>72</sup> On the parishes of Liège in general, see Léon Lahaye, “Les Paroisses de Liège” *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois* 46 (1921): 1-208; see also Paul Adam, *La Vie paroissiale en France au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Sirey, 1964).

<sup>73</sup> This section is largely based on Léon Lahaye, “La Paroisse Saint-Martin-en-Ile à Liège” *Bulletin de la société d'art et d'histoire du diocèse de Liège* 25 (1934): 25-130, as corrected by evidence from the archives.

facing the center of the city, the ground was unstable and floods frequent. The houses on the small islands included in the parish and the church building itself suffered occasional inundation.

Hélin estimates the parish population in 1650 as between 2440 and 3080 persons.<sup>74</sup> If the population of the city as a whole was, as we have estimated, one-half its 1650 level at the end of the fifteenth century, the population of Saint-Martin-en-Ile would have been between 1200 and 1500. Economically, this population ranged in status from the canons of Saint-Paul to the miserable inhabitants of the swampy islands behind the parish church. A wide variety of trades could be found here. Several breweries functioned at the Pont d'Avroy where water was available for production and where the bridge traffic brought custom. The accounts of the beer *gabelle* for 1475-76 list five brewers giving Pont d'Avroy as their address.<sup>75</sup> At least two others were to be found at the east side of the Ile. There were also several mills in the parish, at least one on the Lulay des Fèvres, which had taken its name as one of the early centers of metalworking; the “smiths” still worked there as well as elsewhere in the parish. The population was far from homogeneous, and included samples of all occupations and classes, partly because it was so large, and partly because its location favored the establishment of all sorts of commerce.

The chapter of Saint-Paul had originally founded Saint-Martin-en-Ile, and they still retained the titular rectorate with its tithes. To govern the parish, they appointed a permanent vicar or *vestit*. The dean and chapter also appointed the incumbents of the other benefices within the church. The holders of these benefices, endowed altars carrying a certain requirement for saying Masses, are not necessarily the same as the parish chaplains, priests who assisted the vicar and were appointed by him and the churchwardens.

Many of the religious houses of the city were located in the Ile district. Several of these had a close connection with the parish life of Saint-Martin-en-Ile. Although neither was located in the parish itself, the Dominicans, located just to the north in the parish of Saint-Adalbert, and the Carmelites, just to the south in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-au-Treit, frequently provided preachers for the parish. The only two religious houses in the parish itself were fairly recent foundations. The Franciscan tertiary sisters known as the “Sœurs de Hasque,” who had a house on Chodélistrée, had come to Liège from Hasselt (“Hasque” in Walloon) in 1489, and moved into their location in the parish in 1497. They were even more outsiders in that they came from the Dutch-speaking portion of the principality, and seem not to have fit in well at first. In 1521, there was a dispute between them and the parish, which was settled in their favor by the chapter of Saint-Paul.<sup>76</sup>

The Brethren of the Common Life opened a school on the “îlot Hochet,” one of the small islands in the parish, in 1495. They had also come from Dutch-speaking regions, in this case 's-Hertogenbosch; their school and convent were handed over to the Jesuits in 1580.<sup>77</sup> Also located in the parish was the headquarters of the Pauvres de la Cité, known from their location as the “Pauvres en Ile”; this house in the Vinâve d'Ile, however, was neither a convent nor a hospital.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hélin, p. 234.

<sup>75</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Cité, reg. 161, f. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 50, f. 92v; see also Hereswitha, “De Franciscanessen.”

<sup>77</sup> See Halkin, “Les Frères de la Vie Commune.”

<sup>78</sup> See Hankart, “L'Hôpital de Saint-Michel.”

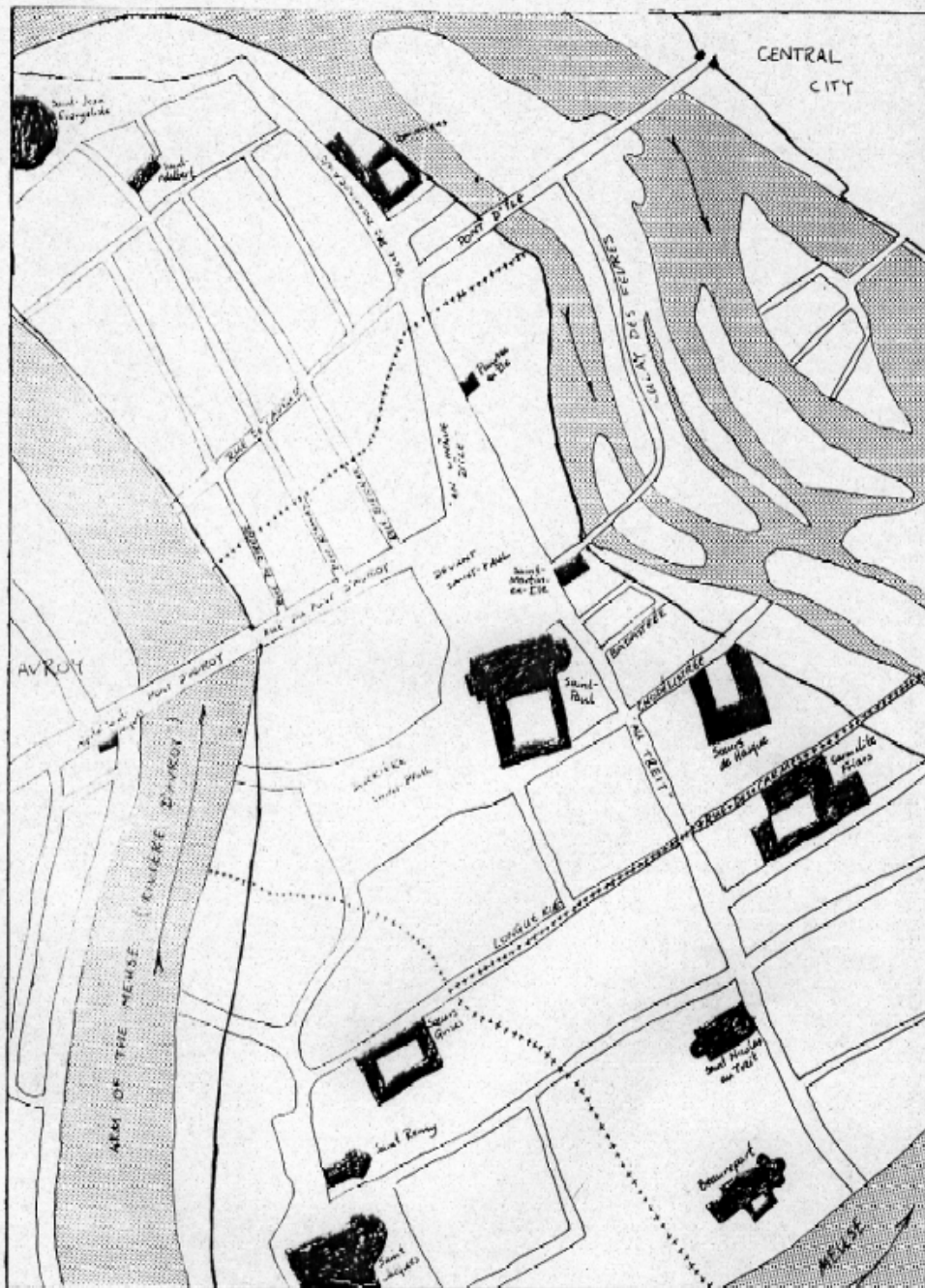


FIGURE 2.1 A MAP OF THE ILE DISTRICT

— CITY WALLS

.... PARISH BOUNDARIES



## Institutions

In addition to the vicar, the parish had a variety of clerics and lay people serving in various capacities. The parish clerk (*marlier*) was elected by the parishioners. Lahaye claims that this office was held by a priest; at the end of the fifteenth century, however, the parish clerk was a married man, probably in minor orders. His duties as parish clerk involved serving at mass, singing the responses, and caring for the sacred vessels.

The parish also had a beguinage located next to the church building, which at least in the seventeenth century was known as the “béguinage de Hermée.”<sup>79</sup> Little record remains of the beguines. We do not know how many there were, how they were chosen, or what duties, if any, they performed; on one occasion, it is indicated that one took up a collection, which appears to have been a customary duty.<sup>80</sup>

One benefice existed in the parish which was not under the control of the chapter of Saint-Paul: a chantry in a private chapel, located in a house called “Neufchâteau” in the rue Biernar. Lahaye claims that this mass, founded under the will of Piron de Vledermale and his wife in 1486, was celebrated by an appointee of the vicar, but the records of the provost of Liège, as well as the provisions of the will itself, reveal that he was appointed by the proprietor of the house, which was then in the hands of the family of Piron's son-in-law, Cornelis de Lyns.<sup>81</sup>

The chief lay officials of the parish were the churchwardens (*mambours*) elected by the heads of households in the parish. They were responsible for the finances of the parish, and with the vicar they appointed the chaplains. Other officers of the parish, who received salaries, included the *compteur* who kept the books and collected payments due; the sexton (*fossier*) who was also elected by the parish; a *mambour*<sup>82</sup> or attorney who represented the parish in lawsuits; and a laundress (*boweresse*) who washed the altar linens.

In property transactions the churchwardens were aided by a *cour des tenants*, a group of substantial men of the parish before whom all reliefs and transfers of property held from the parish were approved and witnessed.<sup>83</sup> In dealing with outside institutions, such as in an appearance before the *échevins*, the churchwardens, the *compteur*, and sometimes a professional attorney represented the parish.

The finances of the parish were assured by the income from real property, in the form of *cens* and *rentes*.<sup>84</sup> Some of this went directly to the pastor, the chaplains, or the parish clerk. The

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<sup>79</sup> Hélin, p. 211.

<sup>80</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 45, f. 101.

<sup>81</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Prévôté, reg. 29, f. 330; Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Convenances et Testaments, reg. 20, f. 317; cf. Lahaye, “La Paroisse Saint-Martin-en-Ile,” pp. 115-116.

<sup>82</sup> The word *mambour* means “guardian”; while in parish usage it generally means “churchwarden,” it could also be used in one of its more general senses to mean a retained attorney at law (in full *mambour en justice*). The accounts of the parish usually do not call this man a *mambour* directly, but refer to paying someone “pour sa mambournie.”

<sup>83</sup> The use of *tenants* was not limited to the parishes; it was an integral part of the legal system. Any institution, for that matter any private individual who owned property, had to be able to “hold court” in order to receive reliefs of property, the payments made by a new tenant after inheritance or purchase (see Kurth, 3: 382). Most private persons “borrowed” an already existing court, or acted before the court of the *échevins*, but the endowed ecclesiastical institutions of Liège had permanent courts of *tenants* who received a salary for their services. The courts resembled in form and in function the court of *échevins*; they not only recorded property transfers and reliefs, they originally could hear lawsuits relating to property held under them. This latter function, however, had largely passed to the *échevins* by the fifteenth century.

<sup>84</sup> These were permanent *cens* and *rentes*, representing titles to property usually bequeathed or donated to the parish. The title deeds to these *cens* and *rentes* were the same in form as the redeemable contracts discussed above, except that they were not redeemable, i.e., they were gifts rather than loans.

rest usually formed three funds of which the churchwardens had charge: the general fund or *luminaire*, the mass fund, and the poor fund. Out of the *luminaire* came all the payments for the upkeep of the church building, the altar linens and other supplies, especially candles, from which it took its name, and other administrative expenses. The mass fund paid for the anniversary masses out of money left by various parishioners. The poor fund took in and distributed money destined for the poor, usually as distributions of food or other necessities. These funds were the responsibility of the churchwardens, who designated an accountant (*compteur*) to collect and keep track of them.

On special occasions a preacher would be hired to give a sermon. This was, as far as we can tell, always a mendicant friar, almost always from one of the two houses in the neighborhood, the Dominicans or the Carmelites. He was paid by a collection (*queste*) taken up at the time of the sermon, sometimes augmented by a payment from parish funds. Two occasions when we know that a preacher was usually present are the anniversary of the dedication of the church, which fell in the spring, and the feast of St. Martin; these are the occasions, at least, when payment to a preacher most commonly shows up in the accounts.<sup>85</sup>

On these occasions also, the vicar, the chaplains, the preacher, the parish clerk, the churchwardens, and other parishioners would gather for dinner at the vicarage or at one of the churchwardens' houses. Dinners also accompanied the rendering of accounts in the fall and the election of chaplains in the spring. Feasts of this kind were a normal part of parish life. An eighteenth-century legal handbook for Liège, discussing the office of churchwarden, notes that it is forbidden on the occasion of the approval of accounts to drink at parish expense, a rule never observed at Saint-Martin-en-Ile.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, any contract was the occasion at least to drink wine; for important occasions a full meal was in order. When the parish lost its case against the “Sœurs de Hasque,” for example, the agreement terminating the dispute involved a dinner for the vicar and churchwardens and the leading nuns of the convent, for which the parish, as losers, had to pay.<sup>87</sup>

From the notations in the accounts regarding these feasts, we know the names of some of those present. Besides the clergy, the churchwardens, and the *tenants*, who are often indicated by title rather than by name, there are the names of a few laymen. These names tend to recur, leading one to suspect that besides the “officers” there was a group of lay leaders who were most closely involved with the operation of the parish. We find the same men present at the signing of contracts or at significant purchases, or helping with the distribution of poor relief. How many were in this group is impossible to say. For dinners, as on the anniversary of the dedication, the account usually notes the presence of some but ends, “and many parishioners.” There appears to have been an informal network of the most substantial, active men of the parish.

## The Parish from 1450 to 1538

Between 1450 and 1538, Saint-Martin had eight vicars (*vestits*), five of whom served in person. If to have the official pastor in residence is fortunate, Saint-Martin was blessed throughout

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<sup>85</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 44, ff. 313v, 314.

<sup>86</sup> “Il est défendu, lorsqu'on rend les comptes, de boire aux dépens de la fabrique.” Dominique Sohet, *Institutions de droit, ou sommaire de jurisprudence canonique, civile, féodale et criminelle pour les pays de Liège, de Luxembourg, Namur et autres* (Bouillon: A. Foissy, 1772), p. 110.

<sup>87</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 50, f. 92v. This custom also prevailed in secular affairs, for example at the conclusion of a dispute between the cities of Liège and Huy; see Harsin, 2: 178.

most of this period, at least sixty-one of eighty-eight years. Unfortunately we know little of these vicars besides their names.<sup>88</sup>

*Jehan del Seny* served from 1426 to 1459. He was dean of the Confraternity of Thirty Priests, which assembled all the pastors of Liège, in 1446 and 1447. He ended his days, some time before 1470, as a canon and cantor of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix.<sup>89</sup>

*Jehan Thomas* succeeded him in 1460 and served until his death in 1475.

He was in turn succeeded by a cleric known to us as *Henricus de Puteo*,<sup>90</sup> who may never have set foot in the parish. He was not a priest but a student of theology at Louvain. In his place he appointed a priest called the “lieutenant de vestit.” *Lynar Fachin*,<sup>91</sup> who had been a chaplain under Jehan Thomas, held this office until he died in 1482. At this point, the accounts reveal, the churchwardens sent one of the chaplains to 's-Hertoghenbosch to assure the appointment of a replacement. The vicar then appointed Gilles le Damoiseau<sup>92</sup> who served until 1486 and was succeeded by Johan Hanuton.<sup>93</sup>

*Nicolas Jandelette* (or Gondelet), also called Cloes de Builhon, served as resident vicar until his death in December 1520. We know little of his origins, except that his mother lived in the parish.<sup>94</sup> He was appointed by papal provision rather than by the dean and chapter, and had to fight a lawsuit to take possession finally in 1492, after which he had to pay a pension of 20 florins a year to a certain Johannes Billiton.<sup>95</sup>

*Nicolas (Cloes) Jamart* succeeded Jandelette in 1522, after litigation that left the office vacant for over a year. Jamart, whose uncle had been vicar of the neighboring parish of Saint-Adalbert, had been rector in the village of Jeneffe before coming to Saint-Martin.<sup>96</sup>

*Jacques Alberti* succeeded briefly in 1530, but he died almost at once.

*Antoine de Hertoghe*, 1530-1533, a canon of Saint-Paul, did not serve in person.

*Charles de la Tour*, de Hertoghe's successor, a canon of Saint-Jean-Evangéliste, did not serve either.

These vicars were assisted—and sometimes replaced—by a series of chaplains, varying in number from none in the immediate aftermath of the sack, to three or four (besides the lieutenant) in the 1480s, to as many as nine in the 1520s and '30s.<sup>97</sup> They received fixed salaries from the mass fund (*membre des messes*) in return for saying anniversary masses established by bequests from the parishioners, plus various occasional fees. Of these chaplains two had the special jobs of acting as deacon and subdeacon at masses on major feasts. These jobs, also called “evangeliaire” and “epistolaire,” could be held by different chaplains in different years.

From 1475 to at least 1525, the parish clerk at Saint-Martin was not a priest, as Lahaye claims, but Godefrin Vaillant, a married man.<sup>98</sup> As a married cleric in minor orders, working in the

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<sup>88</sup> The list of pastors is given in Lahaye, *La paroisse Saint-Martin-en-Ile*, pp. 95-101.

<sup>89</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 5, f. 32.

<sup>90</sup> Lahaye, *La Paroisse Saint-Martin-en-Ile*, p. 98, calls him “Pierre” but cf. Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Prévôté, reg. 26, f. 130.

<sup>91</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 44, f. 21.

<sup>92</sup> Lahaye, *ibid.*, cf. Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 125, f. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 44, f. 320.

<sup>94</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 127, f. 26.

<sup>95</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Prévôté, reg. 34, f. 22v; but he was recognized in the parish in 1490: see Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 45, f. 33v.

<sup>96</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Echevins de Liège, Œuvres, reg. 53, ff. 306v-307.

<sup>97</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 50, f. 153.

<sup>98</sup> His predecessor, Anthone de Bealmon, who also served as receiver (*compteur*), was probably not a priest either; he is never given the title “Messire” which is always used for priests. Neither is his successor, a certain Thiry.

service of the Church, he formed with his family a social bridge to the lay community. His wife served as laundress (*boweresse*) for the church, and his son Jehan was for several years a chaplain.<sup>99</sup> Young “Messire Jehan” probably lived with his parents, as his father collected the salaries due to all three.

The Vaillant family was not the only one to include priests serving in the parish. Gerar de Scagier, a chaplain from 1513 to his death a few years later, was the son of long-time churchwarden Baldwin de Scagier.<sup>100</sup> Marck de Hoyoul, another chaplain, was the son of Servais de Hoyoul and the brother of Jehan de Hoyoul, two lawyers living in the parish.<sup>101</sup>

The events immediately following the sack of Liège show the lay leadership in action. The sack had greatly upset the life of the parish. The church itself was plundered, in spite of Charles's orders to spare all churches, the population was scattered, and the property on which the parish depended for its income was destroyed.<sup>102</sup> The payments due became almost entirely uncollectible. In the year 1464-65, the receiver was able to collect 56 percent of the *rentes* in spelt owing to the parish, counting old debts. For the three years from All Saints 1466 to All Saints 1469, three years of war and destruction which are figured together in the record, he was only able to collect 19 percent.<sup>103</sup>

The church building itself suffered. Profaned by the troops, it had to be reconciled and reconsecrated by the auxiliary bishop before it could even be used.<sup>104</sup> The accounts mention ornaments, vessels, vestments, and liturgical books which had to be recovered or replaced. In 1513 the parishioners were still rebuilding, this time the tower. How much of this incessant building was due to the deprivations of the Burgundians and how much to the instability of the land on which the church was built is not clear from the record.

Shortly after the feast of St. Martin, 1472, the vicar and churchwardens met over dinner and made an agreement concerning the effects of the “devastation et rwin[sic] des guerres et arsin” in the parish. The problem was that a great many testaments had provided that anniversary masses be celebrated by worthy chaplains, but the destruction of the city had made this difficult. The vessels of the church are lost, say the churchwardens; some are broken, some stolen and profaned; we lack linens and service books; and the chaplains have deserted us, since the property from which our income is derived is burned and the land is not being worked. Moreover, the vicar has similarly suffered a reduction in income. Therefore, the churchwardens, Piron le Berwier and Wilhem de Horion, instead of hiring chaplains, transferred four masses a week, with their income of twenty *muids* of spelt a year, from the budget of the mass fund to the vicar until such time as the vicar no longer had need of them.<sup>105</sup>

By 1474, conditions had improved somewhat. The churchwardens note in their register that the vicar now has so many masses to say that he needs a chaplain. The mass fund, however, is still

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<sup>99</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 46, ff. 37v, 86v.

<sup>100</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 50, f. 39.

<sup>101</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 51, f. 166v; cf. Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Convenances et Testaments, ff. 29-30v. Other identifications are less certain: a Messire Jehan de Bealmon, chaplain in the 1520s, may have been the son of the former parish clerk and receiver Anthonne de Bealmon; the chaplain Jerome Fabri may have been related to the churchwarden Johannes Fabri; Johan Hannuton, who served as lieutenant to the vicar in 1488, may have been a member of the family of Hannoton who owned a brewery in the Vinâve d'Ile.

<sup>102</sup> Charles was excommunicated for this flagrant violation of the Church's immunity. In reparation, he presented a gold reliquary to Saint-Lambert, which is still part of the treasure of the cathedral of Liège. See Kurth, 3: 350.

<sup>103</sup> Archives de l'Etat, Liège, Saint-Martin-en-Ile, reg. 41., ff. 11v-15.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., f. 25v.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., f. 64.

encumbered with bad debts, there are not enough linens, and there are “aultres indigenches apparentes.” They conclude with a statement directed to their pastor, Jehan Thomas:

And we hope that you will behave as a good pastor ought to do, and take counsel and example from Master Tristan, former vicar of Saint-Nicolas, from the vicar of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and from many other good rectors and pastors who put more into their church than they take out.<sup>106</sup>

“Who put more into their church than they take out”: this is what the lay leaders of a fifteenth-century parish wanted from their pastor. The parish was a community in which the members worked out their salvation by prayer and good works; its traditions were a heritage uniting them with former generations of whose legacy of prayer and charity they were the custodians. The material resources of the parish were the means by which this working-out was to be achieved. In his office as pastor, the priest's first responsibility was to guard this heritage. Thus he swore on taking over his duties to guard faithfully the rights of the parish, that is, its titles to property. The people demanded of him, not perfection of life, not brilliant preaching—these jobs could be done by specialists—but that he preside responsibly over the heritage which they and their forebears had dedicated to God for the salvation of their souls. In this task he had the aid of the churchwardens, who would do everything in their power to make sure he kept this trust; but he still had the power either to dissipate the community's resources or to concentrate them, to add to them himself, and to encourage others to do so. It was this power—a power clearly understood by contemporaries—that distinguished the pastor from an ordinary priest.

The parish in medieval Liège was a community within which the laity were not merely passive spectators, but active participants with significant responsibility. In every parish the elected representatives of the laymen of the parish controlled the resources that paid for all its activities, from the candles at mass to poor relief. Nor must we forget that without lay initiative the mass foundations, the anniversaries, and indeed in some cases the parishes themselves, would not have existed. The purpose of this study is to show how this role of the laity worked out in practice.

The parish as an institution was, after all, inseparable from the community that composed it. We may view the world of the parish as a series of concentric circles. The largest touched the court of Rome, where a cleric like Nicolas Jandelette might receive letters of provision. But the effect of the grand affairs of the world on the inner circles was minimal. Even the next circle, encompassing the famous clergy of Liège, among whom the dean and chapter of Saint-Paul stood closest to Saint-Martin, only affected the parish through the center circle, the families of the Vinâve d'Ile and the rue du Pont d'Avroy. Only the vicar entered the institutional life of the parish without their consent; if he resided, he had to work closely with them, and if not, his replacement was a lowly chaplain—perhaps even a member of one of these families—still less able to oppose the inner circle of householders, even if he wished.

Louis Binz, in his study of the diocese of Geneva in the fifteenth century, argues that the absenteeism of rectors, so decried by contemporaries and historians alike, made little difference in pastoral practice. His analysis of visitation records, showing that the resident titularies of benefices and the replacements of non-residents had similar degrees of education, morality, and solicitude for

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<sup>106</sup> “Et esperons que en fereis com ung boen pasteur et en doit fair et predereis conseil et exemple a maistre Tristan jadis vestit de Sain Nicolay a vestis de Sain Jehan Baptiste et a plusieurs aultres boens cureis et pasteurs qui plus mettent a leur engleise que ilh ny prentent.” *Ibid.*, f. 87.

their work, supports this argument.<sup>107</sup> A look at the functioning of the parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile demonstrates another reason. So little depended on the rector; so much on the laity. No doubt in rural parishes, where the economic and political authority as well as the collation of the parish church might be concentrated in the hands of some local feudatory as whose agent the rector acted, the opportunities for neglect or abuse were enlarged. In a city, however, where wealth was more diffuse and the centers of power several, the laity whom the parish served could make sure that it worked for them.

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<sup>107</sup> Louis Binz, *Vie religieuse et réforme ecclésiastique dans le diocèse de Genève*, vol. 1 (Geneva: Alex. Julien, 1973).