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PREFACE

This dissertation is a study primarily of a single confraternity in a single parish over a period of about ninety years. Its aim, however, is to illuminate more generally the problems of brotherhood and community within the history of the Church, specifically during the critical period just before and at the beginning of the Reformation. The approach it takes to the problems under discussion owes much to the techniques of social history, indeed social science, but it is not an analysis of a society as such, but rather of the functioning of a religious group within that society. Social analysis is here at the service of religious questions, rather than vice versa. This is, in short, what one might call a “pastoral” approach to the history of religion. It is an underlying principle of this study that, while social and economic questions play an important role in the modes of religious expression and organization, the religious groups formed within society at one time or another are more than mere epiphenomena; they merit study in themselves.

That the objects of the present study are social forms and actions does not make it any less a history of religion. Both doctrine and sentiment, the traditional categories of religious history, will be generally taken for granted here. The teaching of the medieval Church on faith and morals is assumed as the standard toward which the faithful aspired. Nor is this a study of “devotion,” if by that we mean the inner thoughts and feelings of either clergy or laity. In general we can study only outward actions, so far as they are recorded. Indeed, as befits a study of brotherhood and community, we care chiefly for actions that have a social effect: rituals enacted in public, relationships among neighbors.

After all, we cannot know easily the private actions, much less the private thoughts, of men and women in any century, the more so the further away they are from us in time. Any that we do know are those of people who, by that very fact, are exceptional. Even when they are expressed, however, religious feelings must be framed in language which is determined to a great degree by social convention.¹ In fact the emotions themselves respond in ways that are programmed by the individual’s history of social contact. We can more easily see the conventions of the past, since they are not our own; but we too speak and feel according to social convention. The attempt to separate the “genuine” from the “conventional” in the expressions of our ancestors is generally fruitless, in part because the two categories are not exclusive, in part because we tend to call genuine what approaches most closely our own conventions.

On the other hand, concrete actions taken in society are by their very nature genuine. Something is always risked or expended. This may seem to reduce the great spiritual ideals of Christianity to something sordid and material, but the principle is traditional: “If you do not love your brother whom you can see, how can you love God whom you cannot see?” This Christian

¹ See Mary Douglas’s discussion of ritual in *Natural Symbols*, Second ed. (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973), pp. 19-58.

doctrine that relationships are central to religion accords with the teachings of social anthropology. As Mary Douglas reminds us:

The choices people make about how they deal with one another are the real material which concerns the student of comparative religion.²

Faith, hope, and love are perhaps nobler common possessions of the Christian community than time and money; but they are more amenable to dissimulation. If you give them away, it is said, you have more; but time and money, once spent, are gone. Therefore we can learn most about the religion of individuals or groups by seeing how they spend their time and their money.

In general, then, the problem of the history of the Christian community is to discover how in concrete actions the laity who formed the majority of members of the Christian Church expressed their religion. This involves an examination of how, in a given society at a given time, Christianity was lived out among the laity. The particular area this study will examine is that of brotherhood and community: how the confraternity or lay brotherhood functioned within the parish community as a concrete expression of Christianity at the local level.

To this end, this study will consider both the Christian tradition of brotherhood and the historic conditions of the surrounding society as background to a close study of our selected confraternity. We shall then examine the confraternity as an institution and its members as individuals, in order to show how the tradition was applied in one time and place. The first chapter presents the tradition, as well as the general problems of pastoral history that form the theme of this study. The second chapter discusses the history of Liège and the institutions, especially the religious institutions, that affected the lives of confraternity members. It also examines the workings of the parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile, the local community within which the confraternity operated. The third chapter takes up the specific confraternity, the Confraternity of Our Lady and the Blessed Sacrament, in its institutional form—its rule and activities—and how this form changed from its foundation to 1540. Chapter Four deals with the members of the confraternity in terms of their roles both in the surrounding society and in the confraternity itself. The final chapter discusses the implications of this examination first for the Reformation in Liège, and then for the more general problems of pastoral history adumbrated in the first chapter.

Documentation

This study is based primarily on documents from the Archives de l'Etat, Liège. Some of these documents relate directly to the parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile, and to the Confraternity of Our Lady and the Blessed Sacrament; they will be discussed at the appropriate places in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Many other documents have also been combed for further information about the individual confraternity members. These include the accounts of various ecclesiastical organizations, the surviving records of guilds, and the records of the city administration and courts. Many of these records have suffered from the ravages of time, not least from fire and water following the explosion of a German bomb in the storage depot for the archives in December 1944. This last misfortune destroyed or damaged many of the guild and city archives, and many records of the court of the *échevins*. Much of this body survived, however, and some of what was lost has been preserved through earlier transcriptions or references in the works of antiquaries and historians.

² Ibid., p. 151.

The *Fonds des Echevins* at the Archives de l'Etat, Liège, includes testaments and marriage contracts, business contracts, and land transfer records, as well as civil and criminal court records. The greatest surviving quantity of these are the *œuvres* or records of land transfers. Much of the information concerning the family relations, as well as the economic status of confraternity members has been drawn from these documents. However, the vast bulk of these records, and the repetitive nature of much of the information in them, made it necessary to analyze them by sample. In general, acts were selected for closer examination by means of the *embrevures* or indexes prepared by the clerks of the court contemporaneously with the documents or in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these indexes, acts are listed by the names of the principal parties; those of interest were those bearing the names of members of the confraternity. Even this technique, however, was excessively time-consuming for the registers from 1518 to 1540: some sixty in all. For this period, I took three samples of five registers each, spaced at equal intervals in time. When I had analyzed the acts concerning members of the confraternity, I verified that in fact the return of new information had sharply declined with each sample.³

It has not always been possible to cite in full the sources of each piece of information from the archives, although every attempt has been made to document fully any significant assertion. The Bibliography contains a complete list of all archival material used in this study.

Language and Nomenclature

Liège is located in Wallonia, the French-speaking portion of present-day Belgium, very near to both Dutch- and German-speaking lands. Since the Middle Ages, the population of the city has been Romance in speech, with the upper classes and the educated speaking French and the lower classes, until recently, speaking a local language or dialect, Walloon. Walloon, however, has never been a written language: its written form is the invention of antiquaries and dramatists of the eighteenth century. All vernacular records in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were kept in French, more or less pure according to the education of the writer, with a few local Walloon words added, especially terms relating to crafts and trades.

As far as possible, this study translates titles and terms into English equivalents. Names of churches, however, have been left in French, modernized according to the practice of Liège historians. Similarly, terms that have no clear English equivalent (e.g., *échevin*) or those whose English equivalent would be misleading (e.g., *hôpital*) are retained in the original. In any case, the French original is given when a specialized term is first mentioned. In quotations from the documents, abbreviations have been silently spelled out, using the French spelling found in the same or contemporary documents. Contrary to the practice of French and Belgian historians, accents have not usually been added.⁴

Personal names are even more troublesome. Keeping track of them is especially critical when we are talking about the members of the confraternity. The names of confraternity members have been taken from the annual membership lists, carefully compared with one another. In a few cases, it has been impossible to tell if two references are to the same or different individuals. Several different *compteurs* kept the records for the confraternity and they often referred to the same people by different names. Women especially cause confusion. Only outside documentation

³ I am indebted to Professor Etienne Hélin of the University of Liège for his help in developing this sampling technique.

⁴ It is only in the last fifty years that the spelling of "Liège" with the grave accent has been universally accepted. Many earlier works use the spelling "Liége" with the acute accent. Except in the case of books printed before 1800, the accent has been silently modernized.

informs us that “the wife of Johannes Saverot” and “the wife of Johan de Fanchon” are the same woman. Men can be no less confusing, although they tend to have more clarifying references in other documents. A man might bear as a surname his father’s surname (any one of them), his father’s first name, his father-in-law’s surname, his occupation, his family’s village of origin, or the name of the house where he lived. His given name might be abbreviated into any of several forms. Johan the brewer (*bresseur*) living in the house called “Fleur de Lys” might be known as Johan (or Hanchot) le Bresseur or Johan (or Hanchot) delle Fleur de Lys, or some combination, as in “Johan dit Hanchot le Bresseur demorant al Fleur de Lys.” Since contemporaries also needed to identify the references of documents, there are enough full references of the last type to identify clearly all but a few men.⁵

Another problem arises from the habit of keeping the same given name within a family. Especially in the case of fathers and sons this causes confusion. If both are alive at one time, the documents usually distinguish the older and the younger. In widely separated references, however, it can be hard to tell which is referred to. In confraternity lists for any one year, these problems are not severe, since each member is mentioned only once. It is in the figures over several years that the reappearance of a familiar name may mean either a member returning after an absence or a son of the same name.

Liège historians tend to modernize historic given names, rendering “Jehan” or “Johan” as “Jean” and so on. In this study, on the other hand, one form for each individual has been adopted and used consistently. This has been drawn from some contemporary reference, and not modernized, except where the main source of knowledge concerning the individual has been one using modern spelling. Surnames are not modernized except sometimes to add apostrophes or where the surname involves a toponym. Names of public figures have been modernized and, if the whole name can be so treated (e.g., George of Austria), translated.

Liège Historiography

This study, especially the second chapter, has drawn heavily on the writings of earlier Liège historians. Unfortunately, Liège lacks a general critical history for the Middle Ages. The material on Liège in Pirenne’s *Histoire de Belgique* probably comes closest to meeting this need.⁶ The multi-volume histories of Joseph Daris and Godefroid Kurth, the former of the diocese and principality, the latter of the city, relied primarily upon chronicles rather than archival sources.⁷ The only one-volume history of Liège is a secondary-school text by F. Magnette, the *Précis d’histoire liégeoise*, first published in 1924;⁸ it is largely a summary of works published up until that time.

Certain periods of Liège history have received closer and more critical study. The sixteenth century has been particularly privileged. Léon-Ernest Halkin has written religious histories of

⁵ Some of the problems of method involved in studies of this type are discussed in the essays in Edward A. Wrigley, ed., *Identifying People in the Past* (London: Arnold, 1973), and in Alan Macfarlane, et al., *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁶ 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).

⁷ The volume of Daris’s work most useful in this study was the *Histoire du diocèse et de la principauté de Liège pendant le XVe siècle* (Liège: Louis Demarteau, 1887; repr. Brussels: Editions Culture et Civilisation, 1974). Kurth’s work is far superior; his major study is *La Cité de Liège au moyen-âge*, 3 vols. (Brussels: Dewit, 1909-1910).

⁸ F. Magnette, *Précis d’histoire liégeoise* Third ed. (Liège: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1929).

Liège from 1505 to 1564, as well as numerous articles on the Reformation period.⁹ Eugène Buchin's *Le Règne d'Erard de la Marck* discusses the political aspects of this prince's reign;¹⁰ Paul Harsin's work, especially his unfinished series of *Etudes Critiques* on early modern Liège, beginning in 1477, deals with both religious and political matters.¹¹ Jean Lejeune's *La Formation du capitalisme moderne* treats the economic history of this important period.¹²

Two works on the history of Liège in the Middle Ages, Lejeune's *La Naissance d'une patrie* and Fernand Vercauteren's *Luttes sociales à Liège* end before the battle of Othée in 1408,¹³ so that the most recent study of the history of fifteenth-century Liège is that of Pirenne. This is to be regretted, since the fascinating period between the defeat of the city by John the Piteless and its liberation after the death of Charles the Rash deserves closer attention. We must therefore rely for an overall study on Daris, Kurth, and Pirenne, aided only by Emile Fairon's work on the Burgundian period.¹⁴

Some studies of more specific problems have also been useful. Both collections of documents and extended studies on the guilds of Liège have been published by Fairon, Edouard Poncelet, René Van Santbergen, and Georges Hansotte.¹⁵ The latter's work on the smiths of Liège and its region is particularly careful, critical, and illuminating.¹⁶ Etienne Hélin's work on the population and urban geography of Liège, although its documentation does not begin until the very end of the sixteenth century, is both perceptive and complete in its picture of the preindustrial city.¹⁷ Finally, Myron Gutmann's work on rural economic and demographic history of the Mosan region, while it begins in the seventeenth century, is the only work in English on Liège, and it helps to untangle the agricultural history of the region.¹⁸

⁹ Léon-Ernest Halkin, *Le Cardinal de la Marck, prince- évêque de Liège* (Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1930); *Histoire religieuse des règnes de Corneille de Berghes et de Georges d'Autriche, princes-évêques de Liège (1538-1557)* (Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1936).

¹⁰ Eugène Buchin, *Le Règne d'Erard de la Marck* (Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1931).

¹¹ Paul Harsin, *Etudes critiques sur l'histoire de la principauté de Liège, 1477-1795*. Vol. 1, *La Principauté de Liège a 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).

¹² Jean Lejeune, *La Formation du capitalisme moderne dans la principauté de Liège au XVI^e siècle* (Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1939); see also his article, "Religion, morale et capitalisme dans la société liégeoise du XVII^e siècle" *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 22 (1943), pp. 109-154.

¹³ Jean Lejeune, *Liège et son pays: Naissance d'une patrie (XIII^e-XIV^e siècles)* (Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1948). Fernand Vercauteren, *Luttes sociales à Liège: XIII^e et XVI^e siècles* (Brussels: La renaissance du livre, 1946).

¹⁴ Emile Fairon, "Notes sur la domination bourguignonne dans la principauté de Liège (1468-1476)" *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois* 42 (1912) pp. 1-89.

¹⁵ Edouard Poncelet and Emile Fairon, "Liste chronologique des actes concernant les métiers et confréries de la cité de Liège" *Annuaire d'histoire liégeoise* 1ff. (see the Bibliography); Edouard Poncelet, *Le Bon Métier des merciers de la cité de Liège* (Liège: Vaillant-Carmanne, 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); see also the fascicles edited by Hansotte and Van Santbergen in *Règlements et privilèges des XXXII métiers de la cité de Liège* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1949-1958).

¹⁶ Georges Hansotte, *La Clouterie liégeoise et la question ouvrière en XVIII^e siècle* (Brussels: Librairie Encyclopédique, 1972).

¹⁷ Etienne Hélin, *La Population des paroisses liégeoises aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1959); *Le Paysage urbain de Liège avant la révolution industrielle* (Liège: Commission communale pour l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1963).

¹⁸ Myron P. Gutmann, *War and Rural Life in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

The parishes of Liège, and specifically Saint-Martin-en-Ile, have already had a historian in Léon Lahaye.¹⁹ His articles, while they are useful, need to be corrected and completed. They provide an institutional review of the parish system in general and of the parishes he studied (Saint-Martin-en-Ile and Saint-Jean-Baptiste) in particular, and they correct the traditions preserved in the chronicles by reference to the archives. However, they suffer from a superficial approach and a certain carelessness with the sources. Therefore the discussion of Saint-Martin-en-Ile in the second chapter, while beginning with Lahaye's work, is based chiefly on the documents preserved in the archives.

¹⁹ Léon Lahaye, "Les Paroisses de Liège" *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois* 46 (1921): 183-198; "La Paroisse Saint-Martin-en-Ile à Liège" *Bulletin de la société d'art et d'histoire du diocèse de Liège* 25 (1934): 95-130; "La Paroisse Saint-Jean-Baptiste à Liège" *Bulletin de la société d'art et d'histoire du diocèse de Liège* 22(1930): 1-51.