

# Charity and Confessional Difference in Seventeenth-Century France: *The Maison de Charité* of Loudun, 1648–1685

EDWIN BEZZINA

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Continuing his promenade through the streets of Loudun, Vincent Patrix, the Catholic *bailli* of the city, accompanied by a group of Catholic magistrates, masons, a priest and a doctor, was not having very good luck finding a suitable location for a new *Maison de Charité*. Then, they stopped before the Protestant temple; exchanging a few words, they came to the conclusion that the large square in front of the temple would be an excellent location for the *Maison de Charité*. The Protestant community, however, did not share their enthusiasm. In fact, they protested shortly afterwards that this was but a poorly veiled attempt by the Catholic party to destroy their temple by placing a Catholic hospital with its Catholic chapel in front of it.<sup>1</sup>

That promenade took place on 13 April 1677, just over eight years before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Not suprisingly, the dispute it raised strongly reflects the confessional tension of the period. We will have further opportunity to examine the extended conflict that ensued, but as a preliminary observation the event provides a fascinating glimpse into how a local charitable institution developed into a source of conflict between Protestant and Catholic at the local level. In fact, similarities can be traced between this *Maison de Charité* and confraternities in seventeenth-century France, in that the *Maison* was directed by a co-operative effort between lay and ecclesiastical elites. More importantly, however, the hospital harboured a clear and undeniable link with the Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation.<sup>2</sup> Although potential for a bi-confessional

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- 1 The previous building, purchased in 1648, was no longer adequate, thus necessitating the construction of a new *Maison de Charité*. For a transcription of this promenade and the Protestant response, see the minutes for 12 avril 1677–21 juin 1677, Archives hospitalières de Loudun, (henceforth A.H. Loudun), A1 4ème liasse, 27ème pièce. The deliberations are also discussed and in a few instances cited in Roger Drouault's *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, pp. 75–80. As persecution of the Protestant minority increased, the location of a Protestant temple next to a Catholic ecclesiastical edifice became untenable (for reasons discussed below).
  - 2 It is often difficult to separate the work of confraternities and organizations like them from the study of Catholic charitable institutions because in many cases they were closely intertwined and they pursued the same goals (this is particularly true in the relationship between the Company of the Holy Sacrament and the Hôpital-Général in Paris). In Loudun, a precise link between its *Maison de Charité* and any confraternity in this city has yet to be uncovered. For French confraternities and similar institutions in the seventeenth century, see Marguerite Pecquet, "Des Compagnies de Pénitents à la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement," esp. pp. 30–36; Robert Sauzet, "Les confréries du

project may have existed during the gestation of the Maison, the hospital quickly evolved into a firmly Catholic institution with essentially no Protestant involvement, and this explains why it could later be used as a vehicle by elements of the Catholic party to undermine the Protestant presence in the city.

An acute agrarian crisis in the late 1640s had provided the necessary impetus for the founding of the Maison de Charité, as the flood of desperate vagabonds from the countryside into Loudun highlighted the total inadequacy of local charitable institutions to meet the needs of the wandering poor.<sup>3</sup> The driving force behind the project was Jehan Mignon, the influential doyen and canon of the

diocèse de Nîmes à la fin du XVIIe et au début du XVIIIe siècle," esp. pp. 197–198; Andrew E. Barnes, "The Transformation of Penitent Confraternities over the Ancien Régime," esp. pp. 127–130, 132–135; *The Social Dimension of Piety: Associative Life and Religious Change in the Penitent Confraternities of Marseille 1499–1792*, esp. pp. 19–25, 216–224.

On the relationship between French Hospitals and the Catholic Reformation, see Emanuel Chill, "Religion and Mendicity in Seventeenth-Century France," pp. 400–425; Daniel Hickey, *Local Hospitals in Ancien Régime France: Rationalization, Resistance, Renewal 1530–1789*, esp. pp. 7, 54–61, chapters 4 and 5; Marc Venard, "Les Oeuvres de Charité en Avignon à l'aube du XVIIe siècle," esp. pp. 135–139; R.P. Chalumeau, "L'Assistance aux Malades Pauvres au XVIIe siècle," esp. pp. 76–84; Colin Jones, *The Charitable Imperative: Hospitals and Nursing in Ancien Régime and Revolutionary France*, esp. pp. 34–40; Alain Tallon, *La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement (1629–1667): Spiritualité et société*, esp. pp. 55–58, 98–103; "Prière et Charité dans la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement (1629–1667)," esp. pp. 331–337; Peter J. Edwards, "An Aspect of the French Counter-Reform Movement: la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement," pp. 479–492; Martin Dinges, "Attitudes à l'égard de la pauvreté aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles à Bordeaux," pp. 359–374; Georges Viard, "Bureaux des pauvres et confréries de charité en Champagne méridionale (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)," pp. 317–330; see also the recent study by Jacques Depauw, *Spiritualité et Pauvreté à Paris au XVIIe siècle*.

- 3 Dupâquier has noted that the demographic and rural crisis of the Fronde (1649–1652) grew out of the depressed decade of the 1640s, marked by the debilitating effects of increased fiscal pressures, political unrest and epidemics. *Histoire de la population française*, tome 2, *De la Renaissance à 1789*, p. 203. In the diocese of Poitiers in which Loudun was situated, the bishop, having been informed that the existing charitable institutions were poorly maintained and their revenues diverted to questionable purposes, ordered a commission to suggest methods to improve poor relief in this diocese. Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, pp. 56–57. Reference to this agricultural crisis as the motive behind the Maison's establishment is made in the supplication to the king by the Catholic inhabitants of Loudun to obtain *lettres patentes* for the Maison de Charité (see Appendix). The existing Maison-Dieu had suffered terribly during the Wars of Religion and by 1648 was clearly incapable of alleviating the suffering of the poor; Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *Héraldique loudunaise*, pp. 184, 188. One other charitable institution, the *commanderie* of St. Jean de Jérusalem, was also ill-equipped to deal with the fallout from the rural crisis. This *commanderie* was connected to the Order of the Knights of Malta, *ibid.*, p. 158. See the visit conducted on the premises, 21 December 1648, minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, notaire royal à Loudun, Archives départementales de la Vienne (henceforth A.D. Vienne), E 4/53: 69. Its alms to the poor were eventually transferred to the Maison de Charité.

collegial church of Sainte-Croix, who was regarded by many as one of the individuals most instrumental in securing a death sentence for Urbain Grandier, a priest burned at the stake in 1634 on the false charge of witchcraft. On a more positive note, Mignon donated the 1,600 livres necessary for the initial Maison and left substantial legacies for its upkeep.<sup>4</sup>

According to the third article of the Maison's founding statutes (the *Règlement*), the hospital was to provide assistance for those who could not obtain any kind of aid from parents or relatives in this city.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the principal *raison d'être* of the Maison was to deal with the problem of mendicity and vagabondage. Certainly, no evidence exists in the available documentation to suggest that through this program the poor were to be forcefully rounded up by local police and "enfermés" in the Maison, where they could no longer trouble the *gens de bien*.<sup>6</sup>

In an article on the relationship between French Catholicism and mendicity in the seventeenth century, Emanuel Chill claims that the provincial *maisons de charité* sprang from the efforts of the Company of the Holy Sacrament.<sup>7</sup> This was a well-organized group of intensely committed Catholics devoted to a confessionally unified France, the purification of all Catholic believers, and the eradication of poverty. But did the Maison de Charité of Loudun emerge under the tutelage of such an organization? Since the mid-sixteenth century, there did exist in this city a confraternity of the Holy Sacrament attached to the parish church, St. Pierre du Marché,<sup>8</sup> but it had nothing in common with the Company that was founded in 1629. Nor does any reference to this larger body manifest itself in the Maison's

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4 Acquisition of a building for the Maison de Charité newly established in Loudun, le 6 avril 1648, A.H. Loudun, carton A1, 12ème liasse; *testament olographe* of Jehan Mignon, doyen of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix, counter-signed by René Gouin and Pierre Coustin, *notaires royaux* of Loudun, le 27 juin 1651, with several codicils A.H. Loudun, carton A1 2ème liasse; "Donation faite par Jehan Mignon au profit de la Maison de Charité, le 9 avril 1672," A.H. Loudun, carton A1 2ème liasse; "Inventaire après décès et partage de Jehan Mignon, doyen et chanoine de l'église Sainte-Croix de Loudun, le 1 octobre 1674," minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 317.

5 The document is transcribed in full in Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, pp. 59–61.

6 Such a callous attitude to the problem of poverty has been accentuated in the article by Emanuel Chill, particularly his analysis of the *Hôpital-Général* of Paris, an institution that was established through the efforts of the Company of the Holy Sacrament, "Religion and Mendicity in Seventeenth-Century France," esp. pp. 406–410. See also, Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, esp. pp. 56–91; Hickey's comments on Foucault, *Local Hospitals in Ancien Régime France*, p. 4; Jean-Pierre Gutton, "Enfermement et Charité dans la France de l'Ancien Régime," pp. 353–358; Jacques Depauw, *Spiritualité et pauvreté au XVIIe siècle*, pp. 5, 229–252.

7 Chill, "Religion and Mendicity in Seventeenth-Century France," p. 405.

8 In a bull granted by Pope Paul V, the confraternity was given the rare privilege of holding an annual procession of the Holy Sacrament in Loudun the last Sunday of August. Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *Héraldique loudunaise*, p. 122.

documents or in Mignon's testament and post-mortem inventory. Admittedly, in 1660, the Crown disbanded the Company of the Holy Sacrament and forced it underground, and this may have encouraged Mignon to hide any links between the Company and himself that could be documented and used against him.<sup>9</sup> As we shall see, the Company and the Maison's administrators shared many ideas and attitudes. However, no tangible link between the two can be traced.

However, we can be certain that throughout our period of study, the Maison was governed by a cooperative effort between lay and ecclesiastical elites right from its birth. Mignon himself, who was the spiritual director of the Maison at least up to 1672, was related to some of the most important Catholic families in this city.<sup>10</sup> One of the spiritual administrators who succeeded him, Paul Curieux, was curé of St. Pierre du Marché, the most important parish in Loudun, carrying with it one of the richest ecclesiastical benefices in the town. Likewise, the temporal administrators all occupied influential and even critical posts in the city's bureaucracy and court system. Of course, one might expect the administration of the Maison to be confided to men of power and influence;<sup>11</sup> but, by way of comparison, the *procureurs de la fabrique* of the two parishes of Loudun often enlisted artisans into their ranks.<sup>12</sup> One should also remember the critical role of another layperson, Marie Ravenel, widow of Michel Le Loup, sieur de la Haye: she was not only one of the most generous benefactors of the hospital, but she

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9 *Testament olographe* of Jehan Mignon, doyen of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix, counter-signed by René Gouin and Pierre Coustin, *notaires royaux* of Loudun, le 27 juin 1651, with several codicils, A.H. Loudun, carton A1 2ème liasse; "Inventaire après décès et partage de Jehan Mignon, doyen et chanoine de l'église Sainte-Croix de Loudun, le 1 octobre 1674," minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 317. Tallon, *La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, p. 31; Marcelle Formon, "La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement à Poitiers," pp. 526–543.

10 *Testament olographe* of Jehan Mignon, doyen of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix, counter-signed by René Gouin and Pierre Coustin, *notaires royaux* of Loudun, le 27 juin 1651, with several codicils, A.H. Loudun, carton A1 2ème liasse; "Donation faite par Jehan Mignon au profit de la Maison de Charité," le 9 avril 1672, A.H. Loudun, carton A1 2ème liasse; "Inventaire après décès et partage de Jehan Mignon, doyen et chanoine de l'église Sainte-Croix de Loudun, le 1 octobre 1674," minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 317.

11 These include councillors and advocates in the local *bailliage* (or royal court), some of the bailli's assistant lieutenants, a *procureur du roi* (or Crown prosecutor) in the Maréchaussée (an institution that dealt with public order), and a President of the Élection (a court with jurisdiction over direct and indirect taxes due to the Crown).

12 *Procureurs de la fabrique* or *marguilliers* took care of the material affairs of the parish, assisting the curé in the temporal administration of his parish. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Héraldique loudunaise*, p. 120. It is true, the majority of *marguilliers* were magistrates or at least merchants (particularly in the parish St. Pierre du Marché), but one finds from time to time artisans elected to such a post. See the actes in the minutes of René Douteau, le 1 juillet 1664, le 25 novembre 1678, le 18 et 19 août 1679 et le 12 février 1679, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 307, 321, 322.

also deployed her formidable energies to attract other important benefactors to the Maison and was directly involved in its administration.<sup>13</sup>

However, the impetus that gave rise to the Maison de Charité may not have emanated solely from the Catholic community. In a supplication addressed in 1670 to the king requesting *lettres patentes* to consolidate the establishment of the Maison (see Appendix),<sup>14</sup> reference is made to the general assembly of the habitants of Loudun of 1648 that had set in motion the founding of the Maison de Charité. The assembly included both Protestants and Catholics, two influential communities who together formulated the solution of establishing a local hospital. Yet, this supplication is a difficult document to evaluate. First of all, it was written well after the actual assembly; and in the deliberations of a separate meeting that took place around the same time to codify the logistics of the new Maison, only the signatures of Catholic magistrates are evident.<sup>15</sup> Still, the document may not be entirely unbelievable in its claim that Protestants participated in the early phase of the Maison. By the 1670s, the Maison had become an undeniably Catholic institution (for reasons discussed below); one cannot imagine why its administrators at that point would refer to a Protestant connection unless it were true. Why give credit to Protestants if the king had come to resent their presence? Furthermore, the initial statutes, admittedly written by three Catholic magistrates, do not exclude Protestants from the administration of the hospital. The only clear stipulation in this regard is that the bishop alone would choose the spiritual administrator and thus, presumably, a Catholic would always occupy this post.<sup>16</sup>

At least in the early stages, there may have been definite potential here for a bi-confessional project, much like the one established for the election of municipal officers in the town council or the collective reaction to the plague of 1632. It is a strategy not uncommon in confessionally mixed communities that, in order to prevent the re-ignition of religious conflict or to assure their mutual survival, cast agreements to ensure equal participation in various tasks of municipal administration.<sup>17</sup>

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13 On 20 May 1684, Marie Ravenal presented to the Maison an account of all the bequests to the hospital that she had played some role in acquiring, A.H. Loudun, carton E1 registre. Further evidence of her largesse is provided in the contract of acquisition of 20 January 1679, A.H. Loudun, E 16, copies de diverses pièces. See also Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, pp. 71–72.

14 According to the edict of December 1666, the founding of any charitable institution would first require letters of authorization (*lettres patentes*) from the king; those already in existence were required to solicit the Crown for such letters. Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 67.

15 Drouault provides the signatures for this *procès-verbal*, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 59 footnote 1. Cross-referencing with other documents has identified all the signatories as Catholic.

16 Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 59.

17 Statutes for the election of *élus*, *échevins* and *syndics*, in each number for each religion, mars 1624, Archives municipales de Loudun (henceforth A.M. Loudun), AA3, 2ème pièce; documents concerning the plague in Loudun of 1632, A.M. Loudun, BB30. For

Yet, the Maison de Charité of Loudun evolved along a different path. In his response to the request to authorize the Maison (dated 28 December 1648), Henri Louis Chasteigner de la Roche-posay, bishop of Poitiers, granted his permission, but only on condition that (1) a Protestant could not hold the office of temporal administrator; (2) the Protestant community could not play any role in the election of the spiritual administrator; and (3) the examination of the Maison's accounts would take place in the presence of a Catholic ecclesiastic, either the bishop, the two curés of the city or the doyen of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix.<sup>18</sup> Of course, Protestants could still be admitted as patients, but here the motive was not only to provide humanitarian aid with no questions asked, but also to encourage Huguenots to convert to Catholicism through the exemplary manifestation of Catholic charity.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, under the aegis of an active Counter-Reformation bishop, the Maison developed more as a uniquely Catholic institution.<sup>20</sup>

It did this by forging ties with some of the major Catholic institutions in Loudun. The closest link was struck with the collegial church of Sainte-Croix, where Mignon exercised his role as doyen. Moreover, both the first house purchased for the Maison as well as the second location chosen in 1677 were located in the fief of this collegial church. We know this because the Protestant families who had inherited these houses had been compelled beforehand to pay *rentes* to the Sainte-Croix.<sup>21</sup> The administrators also linked the hospital to the

examples elsewhere in France during the early modern period see Olivier Christin, *La Paix de Religion: L'autonomisation de la raison politique au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 83–87, 122–134; Michel Cassan, *Le Temps des Guerres de religion: Le cas du Limousin (vers 1530–vers 1630)*, pp. 343–344; Michelle Gabrielle Formon, “Un Évêque de la Contre-Réforme: La Roche-posay et le Diocèse de Poitiers 1612–1651,” p. 240. The Protestants and Catholics of Annonay outdid them all, making arrangements to hold their services in the same church! Christin, *ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

18 Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 62. These conditions were reiterated in the confirmation by La Roche-posay's successor of the *lettres patentes* of the king, 15 September 1671, A.H. Loudun, A1 4<sup>ème</sup> liasse, 23<sup>ème</sup> pièce.

19 That this was at least an ideal to be followed is found in the supplication by the Catholics of Loudun to the king to grant them the necessary *lettres patentes* (see Appendix).

20 La Roche-posay's emendations to the Maison's statutes may also have been motivated by a desire to balance the expanding role of secular governments in charitable institutions with the active participation of the Catholic Church. Right through the tenure of his episcopate, the bishop struggled to maintain the church's pre-eminence in this sphere of activity, Formon, “Un Évêque de la Contre-Réforme: La Roche-posay et le Diocèse de Poitiers 1612–1651,” pp. 85–99; on the bishop's struggle against Protestantism, pp. 231–297bis. The changes made to the initial *Règlement* are reiterated in the confirmation made by La Roche-posay's successor of the *lettres patentes* granted by the king, the confirmation is dated the 15 September 1671, A.H. Loudun, carton A1, 12<sup>ème</sup> liasse. See also Drouault's discussion of the first confirmation, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 62.

21 Acquisition of a building for the Maison de Charité newly established in Loudun, le 6 avril 1648, A.H. Loudun, carton A1, 12<sup>ème</sup> liasse; cession made by the demoiselles

main Catholic parish, St. Pierre du Marché, as the two managed after some difficulty to agree that the dead of the Maison would be buried in the cemetery of that parish. Moreover, one of Mignon's successors, Curieux, was parish priest of the Marché.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, according to the Maison's register of receipts, the *commanderie* of St. Jean de Jérusalem and the Jesuit priory of Notre-Dame-du-Château were obliged to pay to the Maison large *rentes* of 200 livres and 50 livres respectively.<sup>23</sup> This can be easily explained: the first and second articles of the *Règlement* transferred to the Maison all the funds initially donated for charitable purposes to the other Catholic ecclesiastical institutions, and thus the *rentes* were subrogated to this new hospital.<sup>24</sup> Later, a substantial contract of *rente* for the impressive sum of 2,000 livres would be passed with the convent of the Visitandines, to pay for the upkeep of the Filles de la Charité de St. Vincent who were to work in the Maison de Charité in the early 1680s.<sup>25</sup>

More importantly, the Maison enlisted almost all its personnel from the Catholic community. In addition to the temporal administrators mentioned above, the Maison commissioned certain individuals to perform some specific task, like assessing the soundness of the building in order to obtain the *lettres patentes* or acting as their representative in litigation before the courts. Cross-referencing with other documents such as the Catholic baptismal registers of Loudun has proven conclusively that they were all Catholic.<sup>26</sup>

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Marthe et Jeanne Champion to Michel Tan, master apothecary of Saumur, le 14 avril 1668, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 17ème pièce. A complicated set of *partages* (distributions of family patrimony among heirs) sheds light on these particular *rentes*. A.H. Loudun, carton B2 6ème liasse.

22 Drouault correctly remarks that a standard procedure was set by 1681 whereby the *curés* of the two parishes of Loudun, St. Pierre du Marché and St. Pierre du Martray, alternated as spiritual administrator of the Maison, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 107, footnote 1. For the link with the parish St. Pierre du Marché, see the "inventaire des titres de la Maison de Charité," A.H. Loudun, carton D, 2ème liasse, and also Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 62.

23 "Registre de receptes 1662–1671," A.H. Loudun, E 21.

24 "Règlement de la Maison de Charité," transcribed in Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 59.

25 For the contract with the Visitation, see the "Inventaire des titres de la Maison de Charité," A.H. Loudun, carton D, 2ème liasse, the "Chapitre des dettes actives rendus par Marie Ravenel," A.H. Loudun, carton E1, "Registre de receptes 1662–1671," but also the two contracts passed by René Douteau, le 30 décembre 1681 et le 2 février 1682, minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 324 et 325.

26 There are two possible exceptions to this. First, Pierre Gaultier, master apothecary, may well have been Protestant, according to the choice of baptism of his children. Fiches de Denis Vatinel (henceforth FDV) 3G5 Pierre Gaultier; FDV3G13 Pierre Gaultier. Second, the Protestant doctor Fanton referred to by Drouault could very well have been Mathieu Fanton, docteur en médecine, for he had an undoubtedly Protestant testament and was buried in the Protestant cemetery. FDV1F6 Mathieu Fanton; "Testament de Mathieu Fanton docteur en médecine, 21 août 1661," minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 82; "Testament de Jeanne Guérin, veuve de maître



Particularly worthy of note, the Maison's administrators insisted on hiring Catholic notaries to formulate contracts for them. Here, we are offered a window into the administrators' own confessional sentiments, for Protestant notaries doing work for Catholic clients or even Catholic religious institutions were not at all rare occurrences during this period. Catholic notaries likewise worked with Protestant clients. Clearly, commercial relations often encouraged people to cross confessional lines. Even the Protestant notary Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, who loved to mock the Catholic Church in his minutes by referring to it as the "église romaine" or "église catholique romaine", expressed no reservations about doing business for them. Out of 158 marriage contracts composed by Aubéry between 1648 and 1669, 118 of the marriages were to take place in a Catholic Church (and thus at least one if not both of the *futurs conjoints* were Catholic), 33 in the Protestant church (and thus at least one if not both were Protestant). The remaining 17 contracts are vague in this respect. Aubéry also prepared numerous contracts for the *commanderie* of St. Jean de Jérusalem. Similarly, the 135 marriage contracts of the Catholic René Douteau for the period 1662-1685 contain 127 Catholic contracts, 5 Protestant contracts and 3 vague ones.<sup>27</sup>

Without any doubt, however, the Maison de Charité could not completely isolate itself from the Protestant community. Various forms of business transactions unfolded between the Maison and individual Protestants. For example, the man who sold Mignon the first house for the Maison de Charité was the merchant Isaac Regnier, who could very well have been Protestant, as the baptisms and marriage contracts of his children would suggest.<sup>28</sup> One also finds several cases

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Mathieu Fanton, docteur en médecine, 1666," minutes de Thomas Aubéry le jeune, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 95. Admittedly, the prospect of tax exemptions may have encouraged Gaultier and Fanton to put aside their confessional reservations and thus work for the Catholic hospital. Still, it is noteworthy that the administrators were willing to accept Protestants as part of their medical staff.

27 Catholic notaries always referred to their church as "notre mère sainte église catholique apostolique et romaine", "église catholique apostolique et romaine" or at the very least "religion C.A.R.". By omitting the word "apostolique", Aubéry was implying that the Catholic Church was not the pure church, the church of the apostles, thus echoing Protestant polemic of the time. Minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 57-86; minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne E4/53: 304-328. The lower incidence of confessional interaction in Douteau's contracts can perhaps be explained by the later period in which they were written. Philip Benedict has found for the city of Montpellier that such transactions between notaries and clients of different faiths tended to become less common as state persecution of the Protestant minority increased. Benedict, "Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555-1685," p. 89. In any case, our sample does demonstrate some degree of willingness among both notaries to work with clients of a different confession.

28 Despite this evidence, it is still possible that Regnier renounced the religion of his birth sometime between the Protestant baptism of his last child in 1628 and the year that he sold the house to the Maison de Charité in 1648, but it is likely that he was still Protestant at this time. FDV4R3 Isaac Regnier; minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, notaire royal à



in which Protestants paid *rentes* to the Maison de Charité. For example, the Protestant successors of Pierre Champion inherited some property in the *métairie* of Silly in 1662 and found themselves obliged to make their payments to this Catholic hospital (something that they seemed reluctant to do, in view of the litigation that followed).<sup>29</sup> Consider another example: the administrators' purchase in 1662 of the *métairie* of Seneuil carried with it *rentes* due to the seigneur of Preaux. According to the Maison's register of receipts, the seigneur's *fermier* (revenue collector) was maître Barateau, sieur de Panthenay, almost certainly the Protestant Louis Barateau when cross-referenced with other documents.<sup>30</sup> In general, however, these business links with Protestants were often not a matter of deliberate choice on the part of the Maison's administrators. One should remember, for example, that Regnier's house was located in the fief of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix and thus the administrator's contract with Regnier may have been motivated by a desire to consolidate the link between the Maison and this church.

That the Maison de Charité emerged as a charitable institution of the Catholic Church is supported by the total lack of Protestant bequests to this hospital. Out of 344 available testaments for the period 1648-1685 (of which 40 are Protestant) not one *sou* was given by a Protestant testator to the Maison.<sup>31</sup> It is not difficult

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Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 68, 83.

29 Their Protestant father, Pierre Champion, had inherited property in the *métairie* of Silly, in 1641, before the establishment of the Maison de Charité. Somehow, the *rente* that he owed because of those lands must have been subrogated to the Maison de Charité, and thus according to the temporal administrators, his heirs would be obliged to pay it. These same heirs contested the validity of such a *rente*, compelling the temporal administrators to conclude an out-of-court settlement before the notary Thomas Aubéry le jeune to force them to pay the said *rentes*. This probably also explains why the administrators requested copies of the partages of the three successions, which outline the property involved and to whom *rentes* were due by virtue of the possession of such property. A.H. Loudun, carton B2 6ème liasse. "Transaction entre la Maison de Charité et les héritiers de Pierre Champion, procureur aux sièges royaux de Loudun, le 6 novembre 1669," minutes de Thomas Aubéry le jeune, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 100. A *métairie* is a system of agriculture by which the land is worked by one or more *métayers*, but the land is owned by someone else (roughly the equivalent of share-cropping). Michel Lachiver, *Dictionnaire du monde rural: les mots du passé*, p. 1127.

30 "Registre de receptes, 1662-1671," A.H. Loudun, E 21; FDV2B5 Louis Barateau; "Transaction entre les héritiers de deffunt Jehan Marchand, le 18 septembre, 1664," minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 86. Again, we hesitate to declare that Louis Barateau was definitely Protestant at the time that he was collecting money from the Maison (in 1662), because the definite proof of his Protestantism lies in the baptism of his last child in the Protestant church in 1658. It is not clear how exactly the Maison came to pay dues to a Protestant *fermier* but there may be a link with the yearly alms received from the *commanderie* and the *chapelle du Légat*, both of which harboured links with the same seigneurie of Preaux.

31 This study of testaments was compiled from all the available notarial minutes for the period 1648 to 1685 for Loudun as well as a small group of testaments found in the

to imagine why. Charity in this period of religious difference was not at all a confessionally neutral concept. While Erasmus once may have sought a common ground between Protestants and Catholics partially through an emphasis on leading a moral life and giving to those in need,<sup>32</sup> the act of giving in itself was so welded to irreconcilable theological differences that it could not possibly represent a field where both confessions could work towards a common goal. Of course, both shared a sincere desire to help the poor and perhaps even a fear of what would happen if they did not, but for those of the Reformed faith, giving had absolutely no impact on the justification of the believer before God. A person's fate had already been predetermined and nothing that one does in this world could change it. In this framework, the elect made charitable donations because the impetus was already there to do so. In Catholic belief, by contrast, charity was not only a means by which one could merit justification, but also a vehicle to include the entire community in praying for the benefactor after he/she passed away. Catholic bequests were often given with elaborate requests for masses, candles and requiems, to be performed in the parish church or in one of the convents.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the dead were cared for by the living.

On a less theoretical level, Protestants must have been unwilling to leave legacies to the Maison because it was intricately connected with the Catholic Church and even functioned to further the program of the Catholic restoration. Not only was there a Catholic chapel in the Maison, but this project was also often

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Archives hospitalières. The confessional allegiance of each testament was determined by a study of the testament's preamble (generally, the invocation of the Virgin Mary and the saints betrays a Catholic preamble) but also the stipulations for the burial of the testator (requests for masses for one's soul could be requested only by a Catholic, at least in theory). Studying the preamble alone is not a reliable indicator, given that it was in the vast majority of cases a formula written down by the notary. A.D. Vienne, minutes of the following *notaires royaux* of Loudun: minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, E 4/53: 69–90; Thomas Aubéry le jeune, E 4/53: 109–124; René Douteau, E 4/53: 306–328; Jean Huger, E 4/53: 394, 396–401; Mathieu Huger, E 4/53: 395; René Confex, E 4/55: 44–58; Prégent Bureau, E 4/53: 175–178; Pierre Fouscher, E 4/1: 92. A.H. Loudun, carton C. See also, Pierre Chaunu, *La mort à Paris: 16e, 17e, 18e siècles*, pp. 259–260; Christian Chêne, "Testaments, fortunes et religions: La pratique testamentaire à Ganges de la fin du XVIIe siècle au début du XVIIIe siècle," pp. 208–214.

32 Joseph Lecler, S.J., *Histoire de la tolérance au siècle de la Réforme*, pp. 133–149.

33 According to some historians, the poor were perceived by many Catholics as "intercessors" between God and the believer, because the poor offered the charitable Catholic the opportunity to work towards his/her own salvation. Martin Dingès, "Attitude à l'égard de la pauvreté aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles à Bordeaux," p. 366; Georges Viard, "Bureaux des pauvres et confréries de Charité en Champagne méridionale," p. 319. On the involvement by the community in praying for the dead, see Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort*, 141–200. On other comparisons made between Protestant and Catholic testamentary behaviour and attitudes towards poor relief in seventeenth-century France, see Kathryn Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600–1814*, pp. 147–148; Wilma J. Pugh, *Catholics, Protestants and Testamentary Charity in Seventeenth-Century Lyon and Nîmes*, pp. 479–504; Chêne, "Testaments, fortunes et religions," pp. 211–212.

viewed by many as a way to lead the recalcitrant back into the arms of Mother Church. Indeed, while seventeenth-century Catholic charitable institutions could not legally withhold assistance to Protestants in need, they could not divorce spiritual from material aid. In their view, it would be absolutely pointless to give a deprived individual food, medicine and shelter if the patient's soul were left unattended.<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, the request to the king for the necessary *lettres patentes* boasts of the effectiveness of the Maison in converting Protestants through the work of the spiritual administrator and simply by the example of Catholic charity (see Appendix). Admittedly, perhaps those who wrote this request exaggerated the proselytizing value of the hospital to a king who himself was embarking on a program to impose religious homogeneity on his kingdom.

On the other hand, it also appears that at least Mignon's attitudes towards the Protestant presence in France were similar in many ways to those of Louis XIV. Judging by the list of contracts in his post-mortem inventory, Mignon avoided conducting business with the Protestants of Loudun. But also, consider the unique and revealing preamble in Mignon's testament, written by his own hand,

I implore this same Holy Trinity to look kindly on me and at the hour of my death to watch over me and grant me the remission of my sins and entry into Heaven hoping that by the faith that it has given and merited for me through our saviour Jesus Christ, that I declare to remain always willingly in the holy Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church, outside of which all hope for salvation is vain ...<sup>35</sup>

It is rare to find a testament exhibiting such a firm statement of Catholic primacy, even if religious pluralism represented the sentiments of only a few voices in the wilderness during this period. Moreover, in another part of the document, Mignon links the material assistance of the poor with their spiritual well-being.

It is also plausible that a distrust of the people who ran the hospital discouraged Protestant support. Jehan Mignon, along with Pierre Menuau and Louis Moussault, had worked actively to achieve the destruction of Urbain Grandier, a

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34 The link between spiritual and material aid lay behind the charitable impulses of many confraternities and even the Company of the Holy Sacrament. See Viard, "Bureaux des pauvres et confréries de charité en Champagne méridionale," p. 320; Tallon, "Prière et Charité dans la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement," p. 335; Wilma J. Pugh, "Social Welfare and the Edict of Nantes," pp. 357, 368–369. For similar attitudes evident in the Maison de Charité of Loudun, see the supplication to the Parlement of Paris concerning the testament of Cecille Genebault, presented in 1661. A.H. Loudun, carton B9, 12ème liasse.

35 *Testament olographe* of Jehan Mignon, doyen of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix, counter-signed by René Gouin and Pierre Coustin, *notaires royaux* of Loudun, le 27 juin 1651, with several codicils, A.H. Loudun, carton A1, 2ème liasse. Mignon confirmed his testament on 9 April, 1672. Minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 315. Mignon's testament is particularly valuable because it is a *testament olographe*, meaning that it was he who wrote it and then later had it approved by two notaries. Without the initial intervention of any notary, the preamble in this testament represents a clear reflection of Mignon's personal religious sentiments.

priest who was actually defended by members of the Protestant community. Admittedly, Mignon's role is not absolutely clear in this celebrated affair: while many ascribed to him a central role in destroying Grandier, it is unlikely that he orchestrated the false demonic possessions of the Ursuline nuns who accused Grandier, as the Protestant Nicolas Aubin later claimed. At times, however, the canon's conduct in the matter was dubious at best.<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, our analysis is hindered by the fact that little documentation exhibiting the Protestant perspective on the Maison still exists. Regardless of this, it is clear that the charitable impetus of this community went through different channels, specifically that of the Consistory (a body of elders, deacons and pastors who watched over the Reformed community). Part of the role of the Consistory was to distribute charity to those of the Reformed faith. And even though the consistorial register for most of the seventeenth century can no longer be found, other documents prove that at least some Protestants were using this body as their own charitable institution.<sup>37</sup> Six Protestant testaments make special provisions for a certain sum of money to be given to the Consistory which in turn would be distributed to the poor. Financing of the Maison de Charité must therefore have been an entirely Catholic enterprise.

Then, should not one expect a large number of Catholic testamentary bequests to the Maison de Charité? The evidence is not overwhelming. Examining the available testaments in the notarial and hospital archives, it would be meaningless to attempt comparisons between, for example, gender and testator or profession and testator, at least from a statistical point of view. Correlations

36 The thought of Protestants rushing to the aid of a Catholic priest may seem odd, but in fact Grandier nurtured good relations with the Protestant community and even wrote a treatise against the celibacy of priests that incorporated some Protestant ideas on the subject. *Traicté du Célibat des prestres par Urbain Grandier*. The Protestant procureur Pierre Champion wrote a treatise in defense of the embattled priest. *Discours sur l'histoire de la diablerie de Loudun*.... Even the Protestant pastor, Daniel Couppé, wrote against the trial; in his *Traité de miracles*, he makes a clear allusion to the unjust proceedings against Grandier. M. Carbonnier, "Magie et hérésie, ou l'amalgame dans le procès d'Urbain Grandier," p. 63. On Mignon's role, see Robert Rapley, *A Case of Witchcraft: The Trial of Urbain Grandier*, pp. 102–108; Nicolas Aubin, *Histoire des Diables de Loudun ou De La Possession des Religieuses Ursulines et de la condamnation et du supplice d'Urbain Grandier Curé de la même ville*, p. 27.

37 Archives Nationales TT 256 (232): Registre du consistoire de Loudun (1589–1602) (thanks are extended to pasteur Vatinel for lending me his microfilmed copy of this important document). As Crown persecution escalated, the Consistory became less able to fulfill its more controversial role as a guardian of morals, but its charitable activities remained relatively untouched until 1683, the year in which the Crown enacted legislation on the matter. Benoist, *Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes*, tome III partie III, Recueil d'édits, déclarations, arrêts, requêtes, mémoires et autres pièces authentiques, pour servir de preuve aux faits rapportez dans la troisième partie de l'Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes, pp. 149–150, 155–156. Pierre Bernard, *L'explication de l'edit de Nantes*..., pp. 448–450. For Loudun, see documents concernant les biens du consistoire des réformés de Loudun, A.H. Loudun, A1.

cannot be drawn between profession and legacy because there are too many different professions represented in the sample and too few in each category. Moreover, precise comparisons cannot be made about the relative value of each legacy because a *rente annuelle* of 15 livres cannot be compared to a lump donation or to the remainder of a testator's unappreciated personal goods.<sup>38</sup> However, two observations can be made. First, all the bequests to the Maison were made by Catholics, and this underscores the character of the Maison de Charité as a uniquely Catholic charitable institution. Second, the available evidence does not provide a complete picture because there are significant gaps in the documentation of the Maison. Undeniably, the study of Loudun's notarial minutes demonstrates that many of the testamentary bequests are not to be found in the archives of the Maison de Charité.<sup>39</sup> Hence, this does not exclude the possibility that somewhere in one of the gaps, there might have been evidence to reveal a Protestant bequest to the Maison. But it is unlikely.

Apparently, out of the 216 Catholic testaments, only 29 contained bequests to the Maison. Even with the additional nine testamentary bequests culled from other sources, this hardly presents a picture of Catholics rushing to the aid of the poor. Still, one should not necessarily conclude that the Catholics of Loudun did not participate in their small hospital through acts of charity. In essence, testaments may not necessarily be the best place to gauge the charitable inclinations of the Catholic community towards the Maison. With few exceptions, these are documents written for a testator on the brink of death, "au lit malade", often displaying an anxiety about what lay beyond, hence the elaborate stipulations for masses and candles. Some of the testaments with bequests to the Maison do request masses in the chapel and prayers from the poor,<sup>40</sup> but such stipulations are few and far between (six in total), even in the testaments that ordered masses in the other Catholic churches of Loudun. The most common scenario in these particular testamentary bequests is a request for masses in one of the convents or parishes and then a less sizeable donation to the Maison de Charité.

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38 A *rente* and a stock of personal belongings can each be assigned a set value through the use of experts, as is found in such documents as post-mortem inventories. However, almost without exception, this was not undertaken in the testaments available for Loudun.

39 Many of the testaments in the "unclear" category betray a Protestant preamble but a confessionally vague set of burial instructions. Many of these particular testators were probably Protestant (perhaps as state persecution of the Huguenot minority escalated, many Protestants became reticent about proclaiming their religious identity in public documents). However, one should hesitate before assigning them definitely to the Protestant camp, given the issue of notarial filters in testament preambles.

40 For example, Louis Bontemps, priest, left a legacy of all his personal possessions and property on condition that a Requiem mass be celebrated each week in the Maison's chapel for his soul and those of a few close family members. "Testament de Louis Bontemps, le 12 juin 1662," minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 305. Similarly, demoiselle Jacqueline Gervais left a legacy to the Maison of 50 livres in return for eight masses. "Testament de Jacqueline Gervais, le 9 novembre 1685," minutes de René Confex, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E4/55: 58.

One explanation presents itself: the Maison's chapel was far less equipped to meet the spiritual needs of a deceased soul than the two local parishes or the Capuchin, Carmelite and Cordelier religious houses. At least two of the Maison's spiritual administrators were already attached to another church (Mignon was the doyen of the collegial church of Sainte-Croix, while Curieux was the curé of the important parish of St. Pierre du Marché). By contrast, each of the three convents were staffed with at least five resident priests<sup>41</sup> and the testator could request to be buried in the convent church, thus in close proximity to praying believers. On the other hand, the deceased from the Maison had to settle for the less attractive option of burial in the cemetery of St. Pierre du Marché.

This does not necessarily mean that the typical dying Catholic testator cared only about his/her own spiritual welfare and balked at the suggestion of leaving money for the poor. In a confessionally divided kingdom, it is possible that the Catholic testator believed that the more traditional venues for testamentary bequests would better serve the interests of the Catholic church and the Catholic cause in France. Processions, high masses, requiems all offered great potential for public ritual, particularly valuable in a city with such a prominent Protestant population.

Furthermore, besides testamentary bequests, the Catholic community channeled their charitable energies towards the Maison in a variety of other ways. Elizabeth Mesmin made a substantial donation to the Maison in return for lodging there. Jehan Moreau, outraged by the disobedience of his daughter, transferred her portion of his succession to the Maison.<sup>42</sup> What is important in all of this, however, is how starkly the confessional composition of bequests to the Maison mirror the Catholicity of this small hospital.

Thus the stage was set for the conflict of 1677-79. The Maison had come a long way since its precarious beginnings. It had developed a sound material base, particularly through its *métairie* of Seneuil and a host of other *fermes*<sup>43</sup> and *rentes*, secured letters of authorisation from the king and managed to attract some

41 "Accord entre les révérends pères Cordeliers de Loudun et Abraham Gaultier, écuyer sieur de Villeneuve, le 2 septembre 1677," minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 320; "Transaction entre les religieux pères Carmes de Loudun et les humbles et dévotes dames de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie de Loudun, le 6 mai 1679," minutes de René Douteau, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 322. Auguste-Louis Lerosey has discovered that in 1698 the convents of the Capuchins and the Carmelites harboured respectively 14 and 11 reverend fathers. *Loudun: Histoire civile et religieuse*, pp. 303, 309.

42 Inventaire des titres, A.H. Loudun, carton D, liasse 2ème; Bequest made by demoiselle Elizabeth Mesmin, le 23 juin 1684, A.H. Loudun, E 16, copies de diverses pièces; act of disinheritance of Judith Moreau by her father Jehan Moreau, *procureur aux sièges royaux de Loudun*, le 29 octobre 1650, minutes de Thomas Aubéry l'aîné, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 71.

43 A *ferme* represented an agreement by which a proprietor abandoned to a second party, for a set period and a set price, the use of a piece of land, a house, et cetera. Marcel Lachiver, *Dictionnaire du monde rural: les mots du passé*, p. 773.

important patrons. Members of the Catholic party could then conceivably use the Maison to undermine the Protestant presence in the city. This was made all the more possible because any hope for bi-confessional participation in the Maison had evaporated long before.

In essence, this dispute of the late 1670s is part of a broader context of confessional relations in Loudun and in the entire kingdom. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes has a long history, dating as far back as Louis XIV's assumption of direct rule in 1661, and arguably even earlier. Upon seizing the reins of government, the king launched an elaborate program to rescind the privileges granted to the Huguenots under the Edict of Nantes; many magistrates at the local level followed suit and in some cases even provided the initial impetus.<sup>44</sup>

In Loudun, as early as 1635 the Protestants were forced by the royal intendant Jean Martin de Laubardemont to relinquish ownership of their college to the Ursulines.<sup>45</sup> In another instance, Marc-Anthoine Naudin, the lawyer who represented the king's interests in the *bailliage*, contested the validity of the documentation that had allowed the construction of the temple inside the city walls. The Crown, still in a weak position in 1657, did not answer Naudin's claims with a favourable response.<sup>46</sup> Also, sometime before the conflict of 1677-1679, the syndic of the clergy of the Generality of Tours<sup>47</sup> protested to the royal government that the singing of psalms in the temple of Loudun interrupted Catholic religious services in the churches of the Capuchins, the Visitandines and the Carmelites, each located about two or three blocks away. While such an attempt to undermine Protestant religious practice had succeeded elsewhere, even the royal intendant in this case could not accept such a dubious argument and thus allowed the temple to stand.<sup>48</sup>

44 See Philip Benedict, "Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555-1685," pp. 81-82. Of course, this legislation was not always followed at the local level. Elisabeth Labrousse, *Essai sur la révocation de l'édit de Nantes: "Une foi, une loi, un roi?"*, p. 139; Benedict, *ibid.*, p. 84; see also, Van Deursen, *Professions et métiers interdits. Un aspect de l'histoire de la Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes*, pp. 322 and 348. Still, enough of the Crown efforts bore fruit to make life for the Protestant minority increasingly unstable.

45 In 1652, during the unstable period of the Fronde, when the Crown was in no position to persecute its Protestant minority, the Reformed Church of Loudun managed to receive the sum of 2000 livres for the sale of the college, by an accord passed on 2 February 1652, by Mathieu Alexandre, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, 2H5 (94). I am grateful to Mme Sylvette Noyelle for having provided me with her transcriptions of these documents.

46 M. Dumoustier de La Fond, *Essais sur l'histoire de la ville de Loudun*, première partie, pp. 145-146. Drouault also discusses this issue, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 74.

47 A generality, or *généralité*, was a large administrative and financial jurisdiction governed by an intendant. Michel Lachiver, *Dictionnaire du monde rural: les mots du passé*, p. 865.

48 This decision was noted by Gabriel Leclerc, *procureur des habitants réformés de Loudun*, and Paul Aubry, *avocat*, when the Protestants formed their opposition to the choice of the



But this argument was not an entirely useless strategy. The third general article of the Edict of Nantes (1598) stipulates that the Catholic mass was to be reintroduced and respected everywhere in the kingdom, particularly in those places where it had been interrupted during the religious wars of the sixteenth century, and that Catholics and their clergy could not be hindered in the celebration of their services.<sup>49</sup> Later, the meaning of this was extended to undermine the continued presence of a Reformed temple next to a Catholic ecclesiastical edifice in which the mass would be celebrated, on the grounds that the Protestant penchant for singing the psalms of the Old Testament would encumber the Catholic services next door. Successive *arrêts* were issued by the Parlement of Paris to discontinue Reformed worship in such a setting (for example, in Chef-Boutonne and in Melle in 1643). Certain *assemblées du clergé* also became involved.<sup>50</sup> Conceivably, the issue was not only one of noise, but also one of proximity, for during this time when confessional homogeneity was the ideal, to many people two opposing churches standing side-by-side must have looked profoundly ridiculous.

The Protestants thus quickly recognized the *bailli's* choice of location as a second attempt at what the syndic had failed to achieve. Only this time, the argument would be much stronger because the Maison and its attendant chapel would be right in front of the temple. This choice of location was undoubtedly premeditated. In the *lettres du cachet* from the king, dated 17 January 1677, instructions were given to the intendant of the generality of Tours to ensure that in order to facilitate the establishment of the new hospital and remove any obstacles emanating from the Reformed community, several persons "de piété" would be appointed to carry out the task. On 5 April 1677, the intendant selected Patrix and Jean-Marie Leaud and then after these appointments, on 13 April, they along with a few other Catholics made their provocative promenade.<sup>51</sup> Everything depended on the sale of the property in the square, for if the Maison's administrators succeeded in acquiring it, members of the Catholic party would be free to construct the new Catholic hospital and then make a strong case to the Crown against the continued existence of the Reformed temple across the street.

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Maison's new location, transcribed in Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 77; see also Drouault's discussion on page 74.

49 Danièle Thomas, (éd.), *L'Édit de Nantes*, p. 34.

50 Jean Filleau, *Décisions catholiques...décision 28*, pp. 241–248. See also the comments on this issue by the Protestant historian Élie Benoist, *Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes, contenant les choses les plus remarquables qui se sont passées en France avant et après sa publication, à l'occasion de la diversité des Religions*, tome 3, partie I, pp. 371–372.

51 *Procès-verbaux* 12 avril – 1677–21 juin 1677, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 27ème pièce; Gabriel Leclerc claimed that, based on this document, the Catholic party of Loudun had suggested to the Crown that this would be a suitable way to finally remove the temple from Loudun, quoted in Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 77.

This issue escalated into a heated conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Loudun. It was not merely a coincidence that those who owned the houses in the chosen square were all Protestant.<sup>52</sup> Much more was clearly at stake. For this reason, the Protestants involved acted with their confessional community behind them. This is obvious in the long statement of opposition drafted by Gabriel Leclerc on behalf of the Protestant community and the Consistory. Leclerc argued that the choice of the square in front of the temple was not at all coincidental, given the obvious availability of more suitable locations elsewhere in the city.<sup>53</sup> In the administrators' rebuttals as well as in the bitter deliberations between the administrators and the Protestant proprietors, reference is often made to the opposition of the Protestants of Loudun as a whole, and even to their dislike for the Maison de Charité.<sup>54</sup>

It should come as no surprise that the Crown supported the Catholic cause in this dispute, for on 7 December 1678 the royal government gave Patrix a second commission. This time, he was instructed to put an end to the conflict and to facilitate the sale or expropriation of the property.<sup>55</sup> All litigation from both sides would be reviewed by him, even though the outcome had already been decided in advance.

But did the *bailli* and the temporal administrators act with the full support of the Catholic community? This is more difficult to determine, for the only Catho-

52 The Protestants in question were: Pierre Champion, sieur de Charrières, and his sister, Marthe Champion, wife of Pierre Cesvet, *archer*; Jeanne Sasserie, widow of Pierre Fournier, sieur de Fernault; Mademoiselle Renée Corbeau, widow of Jacques Du Chilleau, écuyer sieur de Beauregard, Isaac Boissier, apothecary in Saumur; Philippe Couppé, pasteur at St. Hilaire sur l'Autize. Despite her earlier allegiance to the Catholic religion, Renée Corbeau later returned to the religion of her birth. "Testament de Renée Corbeau, veuve de maître Étienne Fourreau, procureur aux sièges royaux de Loudun, le 21 octobre 1662," minutes de Jean Huger, notaire royal à Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 399; registres des mariages de Loudun, St. Pierre du Marché, acte du 17 février 1641, A.M. Loudun, GG14; FDV20C3 Louis Corbeau; FDV7F9 Étienne Fourreau.

53 Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, pp. 77–80.

54 Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 81; procès-verbaux, 12 avril 1677–21 juin 1677, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 27ème pièce; injunction made by the *bailli* of Loudun to those of the Reformed Religion of Loudun regarding the new hospital of the Maison de Charité, le 10 décembre 1678, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 33ème pièce; request by the inhabitants of Loudun to the intendant of Tours for a copy of the subdelegation concerning the *arrêt* of November, 1678, le 7 décembre 1678, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 32ème pièce.

55 *Arrêt* of the *Conseil d'état* granting authorisation to the temporal administrators of the Maison de Charité to purchase the houses and gardens for the new building, le 20 novembre 1678, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 31ème pièce; request by the inhabitants of Loudun to the intendant of Tours for a copy of the subdelegation concerning the *arrêt* of November, 1678, le 7 décembre 1678, A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 32ème pièce; injunction made by the *bailli* of Loudun to those of the Reformed Religion of Loudun regarding the new hospital of the Maison de Charité, le 10 décembre 1678. A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 33ème pièce.

lics that consistently appear in the documentation on the affair are the *bailli* and the *procureur du roi* along with the two temporal administrators, Guillaume Drouin and Louis Roy. And the only document that suggests the participation of the broader community is a request presented to the intendant of the generality of Tours for a copy of the commission of 20 November 1678. The document claims to have been prepared by the temporal administrators and the inhabitants of Loudun (presumably only the Catholics),<sup>56</sup> but the administrators alone signed it. Therefore, one cannot be certain if it is the product of a local assembly with many in attendance, because such a document would have included many more signatures and even the signatures of some city councillors and the city clerk or the *syndic des habitants*. By comparison, the legislation (albeit a copy of the original) to offer fiscal exemptions to various medical personnel who freely offered their services to the Maison, dated 9 April 1669, records 29 signatures, including three city councillors and the city clerk, undoubtedly the result of an assembly.<sup>57</sup>

Also curious is the lack of ecclesiastical involvement in the dispute. Of course, the spiritual administrator, Pierre Gambier, did march with Patrix and the others through the streets of Loudun to “choose” the new location, but he does not appear anywhere else in the documentation. One might argue that, in any case, clergymen would not have embroiled themselves in the dispute because such legal matters would have been more the responsibility of the two temporal administrators, who after all were trained legal professionals. However, a Catholic ecclesiastic did at times engage in confessional politics. For example, the Reverend Father Meynier, a Jesuit, presented elaborate arguments to the syndics of the three dioceses of Poitiers, Luçon and La Rochelle against the legality of the exercise of the Reformed faith in Loudun.<sup>58</sup>

We find also some degree of Catholic opposition in the donation made by Anne Gouin, herself a Catholic: she agrees to allow her donation of 900 livres to be used to purchase the property in the contested square, but in doing so she expresses a wish that the affair end peacefully, through God’s mercy and the charitable spirit of the *gens de bien*, “notwithstanding all the efforts undertaken by the enemies of the supposedly Reformed Religion”.<sup>59</sup> This, however, is the

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56 “Monsieur Tubeuf conseiller du roi en ses Conseils et maître des requetes ordinaires de son hostel commissaire de partie pour l’exécution des ordres de sa Majesté en la généralité de Tours....supplie les habitants de la ville de Loudun et les sieurs administrateurs de l’hospital de ladite ville,....” A.H. Loudun, A1 4ème liasse, 32ème pièce.

57 A.H. Loudun, E16, copies de diverses pièces. Similar examples can found in the Archives municipales for the same period regarding various issues.

58 Jean Filleau, *Décisions catholiques...*, pp. 838–839.

59 “[N]onobstant tous les efforts des ennemis de la R.P.R.” A.H. Loudun, E 16, copies de diverses pièces. The term “Religion prétenduë Réformée” (supposedly Reformed Religion) was a legal term referring to French Protestants; its use was required in all documentation, despite the opposition of the Protestants themselves, who considered the term to be derogatory. Anne Gouin’s use of it here was not intended to mock the Protestant religion but reflects the notary’s wish to conform to the dictates of normal notarial practice.

voice of just one person: we do not know if other Catholics in Loudun harboured the same sentiments.

Not surprisingly, the affair lasted about three years. The Protestant owners devised various obstacles to impede the expropriation of the property, claiming that they did not have total ownership of the property (and thus could not alienate it), contesting the experts' estimations, asking for more time in order to find alternative accommodation, opposing the terms of the sale, et cetera. Successive orders from the intendant and the *bailli*, however, wore down their resistance, so much so that only Marthe Champion held out to the last. Construction on the new Maison continued in a haphazard fashion through the late 1670s and early 1680s and was completed in 1683.<sup>60</sup>

Did the Catholic party of Loudun succeed in its broader goal of using the Maison de Charité to remove the Protestant temple? It is difficult to say with certainty. Perhaps the attempt to formulate a case before the Crown would have taken another two or three years, but in any case, by 1683 the continued viability of the Reformed Church in France was sinking quickly.<sup>61</sup> The temple did remain standing until the Revocation, for only as late as October 1685 were two companies of dragoons sent to dismantle it.<sup>62</sup>

Regardless, whether or not the temple was destroyed as a result of the construction of the Maison de Charité is barely a relevant question. What is important is that the Maison had so evolved into a firmly Catholic institution that it could be used to undermine Protestant worship in the city. This is not to devalue the important work that the Maison did in alleviating poverty, for to speak in relative terms, the Maison succeeded where former institutions had failed. Actually, the two goals of charity and confessional homogeneity were not at all mutually exclusive or incompatible during this period, despite their apparent differences. In essence, both formed part of the program of Catholic restoration in seventeenth-century France.

University of Toronto

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60 Drouault, *Recherches sur les Établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais*, p. 84.

61 Philip Benedict, "Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555–1685," p. 80.

62 M. Dumoustier de La Fond, *Essais sur l'histoire de la ville de loudun*, première partie, p. 150.

### Appendix

#### Supplication to the King by the Catholic Inhabitants of Loudun to obtain *lettres patentes* for the Maison de Charité A.H. Loudun, A 1 4ème liasse (le 4 mai 1670)

Tous les officiers et habitans catholiques de ceste ville de Lodun supplient et remonstrent tres humblement a vostre Majesté disans qu'en l'année xvi<sup>c</sup> quarante huict ayant veu dans le pays une disette et sterilité de fructz extraordinaire quy reduisoit une partye desditz habitans et de la campagne a des miseres et maladies incroyables Ils prirent resolution de faire un effort pour tascher de les soulager dans ce rencontre, Tant pour le spirituel, Que temporel a quoy ilz creurent ne pouvoir mieux ressuir Qu'en establisant audit Lodun un hospital, ou Maison de Charité a l'exemple des autres villes de vostre Royaume quy par ce moien simble y attira toutes les benedictions du ciel, et de faicte l'advocat et procureur de vostre Majesté au Bailliage dudit Lodun en ayant faictz la proposition en pleine assemblée elle fut generalmente receue de tous lesditz habitans mesme de ceux faisant profession de la Religion pretendue reformée, quy sont en grand nombre dans ladite ville, comme il en appert par le procez verbal quy fut faict lors de ladite assemblée pardevant le Bailly dudit lieu, sy bien quil fut arresté avec vostre permission et soubz le bon plaisir de vostre Majesté il seroit estably audit Lodun un hostel dieu ou Maison de Charité conforme a celle des autres villes de la france attendu qu'iceluy avoit qu'une aumosnerie dans lun des fauxbourgs, ou lon ne doit retirer et loger que les passans et vagabonds, espace de vingt quatre heures et comme lesditz habitans et particulièrement les catholiques nestoient pas beaucoup dans le pouvoir de trouver un fondz pour faire cet establisement maitre Jehan Mignon prebtre doyen des chanoines de l'eglise collegiale de Sainte-Croix dudit lieu auroit eu le zele et la charité d'offrir pour ce desseing une maison assez commode et spacieuse quil achepta et paya de ses propres deniers scituee dans ladite ville, ou lon commença soubz vostre autorité et avecq lagrerement du sieur Evesque de Poitiers quy en est diocésin dy recevoir et loger plusieurs pauvres Malades, quy en ont receu un tel soulagement ainsy que tous ceux quy y ont esté admis jusque a present Que sans ce secours plus de quinze cens desditz habitans et autres personnes du pays seroient mortes miserablement sans sacremens, outre ceux qui se sont convertis a la foy Catholique qu'on a receus dans cette maison et quy y ont esté s-[[paper damaged; could be secoué ou soigné]] pendant leurs maladies, tant par ledit Mignon qu'autres Ecclesiastiques quy les ont visitez lesquels leur sont redevables apres dieu de leur salut eternal de sorte que cette maison et ce quy navoit esté fondée du communement que par lassistance dudit Mignon, quy en a esté estably par ledit sieur Evesque de poitiers directeur spirituel en a en un sy grand soing quapres y avoir donne sa bibliotheque il a fait en sorte quelle a esté munye et assisté jusques a present, de Medecin, Apotiquaire et chirurgien n'ayant personne de pieté quy servent ladite maison de charité gratuitement aussy quil ny avoit pas de revenu suffisant pour cela, dans le [[damaged; dans le cas?]] que lesditz officiers seroient exempts, ou peu taxez aux Rolles de taille et du sel, comme cela se pratique a leur Esgard, dans les villes du Royaume et que mesmement le colon d'une mestairie qui a esté legué depuis peu a ladite maison de charité, par [[damaged; arrest?]] de vostre parlement de paris, de cens ou six vingt livres de rente quy faict une bonne partye du revenu de ladite maison sera aussy imposé esditz Rolles a une somme modique ce quy a esté ainsy accordé par lesditz habitans quy auraient consenti par acte d'une autre assemblée Que lesditz Medecin, Apotiquaire et Chirurgien fussent taxez et reduitz a ladvenir chascun a cen sols pour la taille et a ung boisseau de sel et ledit colon a dix livres de taille et a ung boisseau de sel attendu le bien et ladvantage que cet hospital et maison de charité apporte aux habitans laquelle quoy quelle ayt fort peu de revenu et neantmoins

par la conduite dudit Mignon et de celle de plusieurs personnes dhonneur et ce quy y donnent leurs soins une des plus necessaires [[problem with the photograph of the document]] en confirmant cet Establissement comme vous avez faict dans les autres lieux de ce royaume ou vous avez faict paroistre que les hospitaux et Maisons de charité ont tousiours esté soubz une particuliere protection de vostre Majesté cequy faict justement esperer aux supplians que vous avez non seulement la bonté d'avoir agreable celle quy a este establee audit Loudun, mais encores leur faire la grace de le maintenir et confirmer dans les privileges et immunités dont jouissent les autres hospitaux du Royaume, ensemble de la taxe et reduction que lesditz habitans ont accordées et consentye a lesgard des officiers quy servent ladite maison de charité sans recompence et ledit colon de la seule mestairye quy en despend comme aussy leur octroyer en faveur desditz pauvres et hostel dieu la remise et admortissement des droit quy vous est deub pour raison du lieu ou ledit hospital est estably ensemble de laditte mestairye appellé Seneuil et par ce moien Sire vous [[damaged]] avec plus d'abondance sur vostre sacrée et Royale personne toutes les graces et benedictions du ciel, Que vous souhaitent tres ardemment tous les officiers et habitans de vostreditte ville de loudun quy demanderont continuellement a dieu avec les pauvres malades de ladite Maison de charité quy sont les membres de Jesus christ quil vous recoive apres de longues et heureuses années dans ses tabernacles éternels quy ne peuvent manquer a vostre Majesté apres toutes vos belles et saintes actions et en leur faisant cette faveur a\ cette justice.

[signatures]: Patrix bailly de Loudunois, Roy lieutenant civil, Naudin advocat du Roy, Pasquer; Normandine eslu de ville, Clement, Normand, P. Laurant, P. Huet, Chevallier, C. Chauvet assesseur, J. Chevreau president, Philbert lieutenant criminel, G. Rogier, C. Aubineau, Diotte, Aubineau, Thibault, Briant, Petit.

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