
PROBLEMS

Bringing in the Sheaves: Managing Church Property in Southern France, 1560-1590

Gerard T. Moran *

Amsterdam

INTRODUCTION

The work of historians of the early modern period in France has in the past made frequent and imaginative use of ecclesiastical records to illuminate many aspects of economic, social and mental life.¹ Not only was the Catholic Church a spiritual force which affected Frenchmen and women of the Old Regime religiously and emotionally through its teachings and ritual, it was also a social and economic power of consequence. The Church as landowner, lord of the manor, holder of all sorts of seigniorial rights and dues, and above all as collector of tithes influenced the lives of virtually everyone. It maintained complex and profound relations with all layers of society, from the peasant obliged to pay the proverbial tenth sheaf to the local pastor or cathedral chapter

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¹ E. LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans de Languedoc*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966); J. GOY AND E. LE ROY LADURIE, eds., *Les fluctuations du produit de la dîme* (Paris-The Hague, 1972); *idem*, "La dîme et le reste, XIVe-XVIIIe siècle", *Revue Historique* 160 (1978), 123-142; J. JACQUART, *La crise rurale en l'Ile de France, 1550-1670* (Paris, 1974); G. FRÉCHE, *Toulouse et la région Midi-Pyrénées au siècle des lumières* (Paris, 1974). The major archival source for this article is Archives Départementales de l'Hérault (hereafter ADH), G series (secular clergy), especially G 2398-2416, the account books of the Cathedral Chapter St. Pierre of Montpellier, c. 1564-1590. For this period, see also G. MORAN, "The Catholic Church and the Protestant Party in Languedoc during the Wars of Religion, 1559-1598", (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1978).

or lease a plot of Church land to farm, to the bourgeoisie and nobles anxious to participate in the exploitation of ecclesiastical wealth.

Recent historiographical attention has been focused on the use of documents concerned with this wealth to establish long-run indices of the movement of clerical revenue and if possible of the agricultural production on which it depended. This perspective has yielded intriguing, if at times controversial, results. On the other hand, it risks overlooking the intricate composition of the ecclesiastical patrimony to begin with and the mechanisms and groups involved in its management. For that purpose, studies of shorter stretches of time with a more local scope are needed. In the following, I propose to analyze the possessions and clientele of the Cathedral Chapter of Montpellier during three decades of the late sixteenth century. Particular heed will be paid first to the composition and then to the different practices used to manage the canons' property. In this way, such matters can be elucidated as the extent of a monetary economy in the region, the use of credit, speculation on prices, and the risks incurred and benefits hoped for in exploiting the Church's wealth. An analysis of the social relations discernible in these business activities will flow from this initial exposition.

I

Types and value of the Chapter's possessions

The Cathedral Chapter of Montpellier possessed a variety of lands, rights and rents in and outside the diocese of Montpellier which furnished it with an income. Table 1 shows how the Chapter's possessions break down in terms of their type and annual money revenue produced. Approximately two-thirds of the canons' patrimony (45 of 64 items) consisted of their "benefices" or "priors". The benefice was a package composed of the tithes, rights of usage of forests, meadows, etc., plots of land, quit-rents (*cens*), and mutation fees (*lods et ventes*) which belonged to a particular parish or locality (*terroir*) over which the Chapter exercised control as patron and collective curate (*curé primitif*). Another ten items are the benefice-seigneuries or simple seigneuries of which the Chapter was lord. Finally, a further nine possessions included various tolls, fishing rights and houses (the latter counted as one item in the table).

The exact proportions of the different components of the benefice are very difficult to establish because it was nearly always leased out to a *fermier* as a block. It is generally assumed, however, that the tithe was far and away the most important revenue-producing element of the benefice.² While it is con-

² LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 281, 477; II, 853-854. J. Goy and A-L. Head-König follow Le Roy Ladurie on this point in their "Une expérience: les revenus décimaux en France méditerranéenne, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle" in GOY AND LE ROY LADURIE, eds., *Les fluctuations*, pp. 255-272. For them, the "quasi-totality" of the Chapter

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF CHAPTER'S WORTH (c. 1564-66)

	Benefices	Seigneuries	Other	Total
(Livres)				
— 100	7	3	5	16
100-299	16	1	4	20
300-499	8	1	0	9
500-999	11	2	0	13
1,000 +	3	3	0	6
Total	45 (70.3%)	10 (15.6%)	9 (14.1%)	64 (100%)

venient to accept this notion for purpose of discussion, it is necessary to bear in mind that other types of revenue within the benefice complex were, at times, of significant size. Though the leasing of benefices as units prevents generalizations about the proportions of the component revenues, some cases do furnish suggestive data.

The benefice of Saumane, for example, commanded a price of 120 livres per annum in the 1570's but we know from a note written in the canons' account books in 1578 that 20 livres of this sum came from "usages" attached to the priory.³ The other 100 livres may very well have had tithes as their source,

St. Pierre of Montpellier's revenues were "décimal", p. 258. Yet the articles of J-P. Desaive and M. Baulant in the same volume show the difficulties involved in unravelling the tithes from other sorts of ecclesiastical revenues. As Goy and Le Roy Ladurie recognize in their introduction to *Les fluctuations*, the tithes was often mixed in with other types of "rentes foncières" owed to the clergy, p. 11. This was the case in Lyonnais, A-L. HEAD-KÖNIG, "Rente foncière et dîmes dans le Lyonnais aux XVIIe et XVIIIe, leur concordance", in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 153-164. Some of her attempts at breaking down these rentes show, however, that the "noble" part of the revenue was 18-36% of the total and 80% in one parish, p. 156, n. 2.

³ ADH, G 2405, 2406. The rentier in 1574 leased Saumane for 120 livres per year. In 1578 another contract called for 100 per year with the proviso that if the *usages* did not remain up for sale (which they did not), he would pay an additional 20 l. per annum to the canons. Incidentally this underlines once again another danger in using falls or rises in the price of leases as an indicator of agricultural production. On the various methodological problems involved, see the critique by GEORGES FRÊCHE in *Les fluctuations*, "Dîme et production agricole: remarques méthodologiques à propos de la région toulousaine", pp. 214-244.

but even if this were so, 16.66% of the revenue of the benefice was non-tithe. Similarly, the large priory of Villeneuve-les-Maguelone (which the canons occasionally used as a refuge during periods of Protestant insurgence or plague in Montpellier) disguised several different types of revenue under the generic heading "benefice". In 1558 Villeneuve rented for 1,200 livres, in 1565 for 1,000 livres and 200 measures (*setiers*)⁴ of wheat (*blé touzelle*), but it is only in the 1580's that we catch a glimpse of the several facets of this income. Then the "benefice" was divided into the "lands", the tithes and the mill. The tithes (*dîmerie* in the text) were rented at 160 livres and 101 setiers of wheat in 1583. With the "lands joined" after three years the price rose to 700 livres plus 200 setiers wheat and the following year (1587) with the mill included the contract called for payment of 800 livres and 200 setiers wheat. Thus the mill alone was worth 100 livres a year and the lands of the benefice contributed 540 livres and 99 setiers, clearly far more than the tithes.⁵ Here, at any rate, an assumption of the preponderance of tithes in ecclesiastical income is definitely misplaced.⁶

A comparable problem exists with relation to the Chapter's possessions known as "seigneuries and benefices". In this case we are often denied knowledge of the relative value of revenues from the seigneurie itself (quit-rents, the reserve, woods, etc.) and those from the benefice (e.g. tithes) because they were commonly farmed out together. In a small number of instances, however, a solution can be found to this puzzle. When the canons sold the seigneurie of Aires and Cabrilhac in the Cévennes in 1578 they continued to obtain 40 livres a year from the benefice. Benefice and seigneurie together had fetched 230 livres in 1565 and 200 in 1570.⁷ In this example, therefore, the directly seignorial revenues were four or more times as important as the tithes, even if we suppose that all 40 livres represented tithes in the first place. The castle, appurtenances and benefice of Rouet brought 500 livres in a 1563 lease, but the benefice alone in 1587 after the sale of the manor only reaped 100 livres, again a four to one ratio in favour of the seignorial income. The benefice and seigneurie of Prades-sur-Lez generated between 360 and 370 livres a year income in the 1560's before

⁴ The volume of the *setier* and *muid* varied from place to place: the "measure of Montpellier" was 48.92 liters per setier; that of nearby Béziers was 66 liters per setier and 660 liters per muid; that of Narbonne 70.6 liters and 625 liters respectively. See LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, II, 819, n. 1, 832, 833, n. 1, 844, 864, n. 1.

⁵ ADH, G 2399, 2409, 2414.

⁶ Working on the Midi-Pyrénées region, Georges Frêche found that the tithe contributed 3/4 to 4/5 of total receipts of the Chapter St. Sernin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Authors of the period estimated the tithe's share in ecclesiastical revenues at 50 to 60%. At Pamiers it was as high as 90%, at Castres 75%. He notes that these figures were much higher than elsewhere. See *Toulouse et la région Midi-Pyrénées*, pp. 530-531.

⁷ ADH, G 2399, 2403, 2406.

the alienation of the seigneurie. Thereafter, the benefice was leased for 215 livres, which indicates that in this case the "beneficial" revenues of the unit were somewhat more valuable than the "seigneurial".⁸ Finally, the "tower, woods, and lands" of Aresquiers were put out on farm in 1564 for 60 livres. Five years later the Chapter sold the seigneurie and gave the purchaser an option to collect the tithes (specifically called such and described as "of little value") for ten years at 65 livres per year — a nearly equal balance between the two sorts of revenue, both of relatively feeble importance.⁹

On the other hand, we have little idea from the canons' records of the composition of enormous revenue units such as the "*place* and *seigneurie*" of Maurin, whose reserve has been put at 360 hectares.¹⁰ It was also a former priory of Maguelone (before 1536 the seat of the bishopric and hence was comprised as well of tithes and other sorts of rights. Altogether it supplied the Chapter with 1,000 livres and 1,000 setiers of wheat a year in income. Similarly, the elements of the "benefice, tower, and jurisdiction of Pérols", south of Montpellier, elude us, as do those of another large benefice-seigneurie. Grabels, north of Montpellier. What percentage did tithes, the arable of the manorial reserve (*domaine proche*), rights of jurisdiction, etc. form of the income of these complexes? A benefice by benefice or seigneurie by seigneurie study of the Chapter's possessions would perhaps reveal the answer, but until such research is carried out we would be wise to eschew too easy generalizations about the predominance of the tithe component in southern French ecclesiastical income.

Whether the Chapter's income was primarily "decimal" or not, it was distributed over units of unequal size and value. Three of the benefices and three of the "seigneuries" were at or above the 1,000 livres per annum level and therefore account for a good 30% of the Chapter's 20,000+ livres yearly income. A further 13 benefices and seigneuries fall within the 500—999 livres range. Thus under 30% of the units produced well in excess of 50% of the canons' income. A middle to lower group of benefices (24 of 64) were nonetheless significant sources of funds for the Chapter. At the bottom of the scale a number of tiny benefices, such as La Bruyère (10 livres) and St. Julien des Points (60), *dîmeries* such as Notre-Dame des Tables (40), Montaud (90) and Boutonnet (54), and seigneuries like Cassanas (26) rounded off the benefice and seigneurie elements of the canons' property.

The "other" category in our table is basically a pot pourri of rights and "*pensions*" of small value. The waters and *mas* of Maguelone, the "fisheries" (*pêcheries*) of Jonc and Mouresc and the "beaches" of Salvian Salvanel were, as their names imply, areas in the coastal ponds along the Mediterranean in which

⁸ ADH, G 2398, 2402, 2406, 2408.

⁹ ADH, G 2399, 2402.

¹⁰ LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans de Languedoc*, 1, 289.

the Chapter enjoyed fishing rights. The passage and "grau" of Mclgueil (today Mauguio) was a waterway toll, while the "foundation of the late M. Tournaye" was a meadow. The "pension" of Launac was owed to the Chapter by the religious order of St. Jean of Jerusalem for the tithes of a *mas* located near the village of Fabrègues, while the community of St. Pons de Malcoz paid the canons an annual "pension" of 40 livres for a royal foundation in its church.

In addition to these diverse types of revenue, I have included the Chapter's 15 houses in Montpellier as one unit. Renting for from three to thirty livres per year to artisans, innkeepers, and others, these buildings were worth 151 livres per year according to a note in the canons' accounts for 1566-67. In the uprising of the city's Huguenots in 1567, however, five of these tenements were destroyed, forcing a canon to record in the books for 1567-68 the necessity to board up the ruins to avoid attracting squatters and to prevent detritus from piling up. Yet the Chapter continued to carry these buildings in its accounts, as it would also do with the remaining houses sold in 1579, in order no doubt to display its intention to repair or repurchase its property at some more favourable future date.¹¹

The schema of Table 1 does not take account of several other sorts of revenue of varying degrees of importance. These revenues were listed in a section called pensions which was always appended to the very end of the receipts half of the account books. Some of this income was directly connected to the leases of the benefices and seigneuries. As mentioned above, the "place and seigneurie" of Maurin was leased in money and in kind and formed by far the biggest single item of the "pensions in wheat" (*blé*) -- 1,000 setiers in 1564, for example. The renters of a number of other benefices or seigneuries also owed payments in kind of wheat, barley, oats, wine, fish, oil, etc., although as we shall see this type of mixed contract was much less frequent at Montpellier than the straight cash contract.¹² Other pensions in kind were in effect quit-rents such as that owed by "President" (of the Cour des Aides) Cézelli for a *mas* at Roussan (5 setiers wheat and 5 barley) or by the "Maître des Portes" and Pierre Focard for the *mas* they shared at Mézouls (5 setiers wheat each). In all, pensions in wheat came to 1,260 setiers in 1564-65 and 1,471.75 for 1565-66. Barley (28 s. — 1564-65), oats (25 s. — 1564-65) and wine (21 muids — 1564-65) were insignificant.

¹¹ ADH, G 2400, 2401, 2403, 2406, 2408, etc. The same practice was observed with the seigneuries which the canons sold in the course of the civil wars. In the following discussion I have not, however, included the houses because they were a completely negligible and/or nonexistent source of income during this period.

¹² ADH, G 2398. Examples for 1564 include, besides Maurin, Moutaubérou: 100 setiers wheat and 9 muids wine; Montels: 40 s. wheat, 20 s. barley and 12 muids wine; Soricch: 30 s. wheat; Baillargues: 25 s. wheat; St. Firmin: 25 s. wheat, 25 s. oats and a "gerbière" of straw.

Thus with the major exception of wheat, the Chapter's income in kind was quite small.¹³

Money "pensions" were also negligible. The priors or curés of four benefices (over two of which the Chapter was not *curé primitif*) or the fermiers of those benefices were obliged to pay sums of from 4 to 16 livres a year, no doubt in recognition of some manorial or ecclesiastical right left undisclosed by the accounts. There were as well two *obits* (foundations for masses for the repose of a deceased person's soul) of two and one livre and further pensions "owed by reason of the benefice of Grabels" whose monetary value was trivial (23 livres owed by 16 benefices whose fermiers were compelled by contract to pay). If we disregard certain payments of a casual and sporadic nature (such as debts incurred by individuals to the Chapter or accords concluded with individual canons for the possession of benefices in exchange for a yearly premium to the Chapter), these money pensions totaled a meagre 76 livres per annum.¹⁴

The most important sources of wealth for the Chapter of Montpellier were, therefore, its benefices and seigneuries. The benefices were both more numerous and more valuable than the seigneuries, which probably indicates that the Chapter drew more of its income from its role as *décimateur* (tither) than from its position as lord, yet as we have seen caution must still be urged here on account of the difficulties manifest in dividing the benefice, seigneurie and seigneurie-benefice into their component elements. At any rate, the dominance of the biggest revenue-producing units, whatever their make-up, over the smaller ones is clear.

Geographic Distribution of Wealth

To present an image of how the canons' possessions were distributed geographically, I constructed Table 2 which compares the worth of benefices, seigneuries and other properties (considered together as revenue-producing units) with their distance from Montpellier. The table shows that 37.5% of all units lay within a ten kilometre radius of Montpellier (a brisk walk or cart

¹³ ADH, G 2398. Other payments in kind appear now and then in the books. For example, 200 "white fish" and 200 eels were due from the rentier of the "waters and mas of Maguelone" in 1565-66 (G 2399) and 23 "charges" of olive oil from the rentiers of three benefices in the following year (G 2400). The tithe of salt of La Porquière was four "escopolades" (?) per year (G 2405) but it appears never to have been paid in our period. It is interesting to compare the Montpellier chapter with that of nearby Béziers which received more of its income in kind. There, for example, 7 of 22 contracts made in 1566 called for payment in grains. See ADH, G 147; also LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, II, 832-848 for tithes collected in kind at Béziers, Agde and Narbonne. For tithes collected in kind in the Alsace, see B. VEYRASSAT-HERREN, "Dîmes alsaciennes," in *Les fluctuations*, p. 85. We will return to this issue, see note 27 below.

¹⁴ ADH, G 2399.

trip of about two hours),¹⁵ while 67.2% can be found within 20 kilometres of the town's center.

TABLE 2
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION BY WORTH OF CHAPTER'S POSSESSIONS

	Within 10 km	Between 10-20 km	Beyond 20 km	Total
(Livres)				
-- 100	5	8	4	17
100-299	7	3	8	19*
300-399	3	5	1	9
500-999	5	2	6	13
1,000 +	4	1	1	6 8
Total	24 (37.5%)	19 (29.7%)	20 (31.3%)	64 (98.5%)*

* (I was unable to locate the foundation of M. Tournaye).

This still leaves 20 units (31.3%) more than 20 kilometres from the canons' seat. It is perhaps more significant that four of the six largest benefices or seigneuries are, figuratively speaking within the shadow of the town walls, and five of six within 20 kilometres. The one exception, the "chateau, seigneuric, and priory" of Ambialet was, on the other hand, half the province away in the outskirts of Albi.

Of the possessions worth between 500 and 1,000 livres almost half were farther from Montpellier than 20 kilometres. Sauvian (800) was in the vicinity of Béziers; St. Laurent de Lanuéjols (720) and St. Julien du Tourmel (600) were in the Cévennes and Meynes and Clausonne (600) near the Rhone in the diocese of Arles. The Cévennes benefices, (of which there were ten), were frequently inaccessible during the Wars of Religion, but nearness to Montpellier was no guarantee of the uninterrupted collection of revenues. In the years 1562-63, 1567 and again in the 1580's the units in the immediate neighborhood of the city suffered the confiscations of the Protestant party and noble chieftains like Chatillon.¹⁶ Naturally, in normal times proximity to the canons' place of residence could serve to ensure a smoother management of their

¹⁵ P. GOUBERT, *L'ancien régime*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969), I, 59 on speeds of travel which were lamentably slow — 4 to 5 km per hour.

¹⁶ MORAN, "The Catholic Church and the Protestant Party", pp. 301-356.

property. During our tumultuous period, however, Huguenot coups drove the ecclesiastics into exile in 1562-63, 1567, 1577-82 and when the contagion of plague at times rendered Montpellier insalubrious (e.g. 1588). In such periods the advantage of having important sources of revenue close to the city was not at all evident. Yet, on the other hand, the farther one ventured afield, the longer it took to reach Montpellier and the more uncertain and hazardous became the chances of exercising any kind of control over the property.

II

Types of Management

In the period under consideration, and indeed generally in Old Regime France, ecclesiastical property of all kinds was nearly always "farmed". In other words, it was let out on lease to a *fermier* or *rentier* (as they are usually referred to in southern French documents of the time) for a fixed price in money and/or kind, rather than managed directly (*tenu à la main*) by the ecclesiastics themselves. In the three decades I have studied there were only 2 or 3 instances of the canons of Montpellier undertaking the direct collection of rights, tithes or other revenues owed them.¹⁷ Standard operating procedure was rather to

¹⁷ Direct collection does not seem to have been practised much in Languedoc. The figures compiled by Le Roy Ladurie for Béziers, Narbonne and elsewhere show almost continuous *arrentement* in the Old Regime period, rarely interrupted by direct collection. See *Les paysans*, II, 832-848. For example, the "grande dîme" of Béziers was only collected directly once (in 1603) between 1560 and 1764, pp. 845-848. In the Auvergne, the trend was also toward nearly total *arrentement* of property and tithes. Almost nonexistent in the fifteenth century, it was very common by the eighteenth even for nearby *dîmeries*. Yet direct collection may be underestimated since it would not appear clearly in the sources available, anyway. See P. Charbonnier, "Les dîmes auvergnates du XVe au XVIIIe siècle," in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 180-213, esp. p. 187. He remarks that this type of management did not give results much better than leasing but brought headaches about fraud and additional costs, p. 189.

Opinion diverges on the Alsace. B. VEYRASSAT-HERREN, "Dîmes alsaciennes," in *Les fluctuations*, p. 84, notes that direct management was very rare in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. But J. Vogt writing in the same volume, "Pour une étude sociale de la dîme: esquisse de la tenure de la dîme en Alsace, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles," pp. 103-133, concludes from his sources that it was frequent but not consistent in this period. The peasantry was particularly hostile to direct collection, but tithers resorted to it in times of difficulty, often with speculation on price irregularities in mind., pp. 104, 111-122. In Spain, tithes were collected directly in old Castile but by *aferrnaje* in Andalusia, see P. PONSOT, "En Andalousie occidentale: les fluctuations de la production du blé sous l'Ancien Régime," in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 304-319, esp. p. 304.

conclude contracts of lease with intermediaries. This system of leasing or *arrentement* (i.e. *affermage*) will be the object of scrutiny of the bulk of this article.

Why did the canons choose to administer their patrimony in this manner instead of assuming its management directly? A number of factors entered into consideration. In the first place, as we have seen, that patrimony was both complex in terms of composition and relatively dispersed with regard to geographic location. The sheer number of units involved (63) as well as their diversity and their distances from Montpellier militated against "holding them in hand". It would have required the canons to be constantly on the go, traversing the diocese of Montpellier and indeed journeying into six other Languedocien or Provençal dioceses. The canons would have had to be on the spot personally or represented by employees whenever the harvests of various crops were underway in order to demand the tithe. Careful maintenance of accounts recording the many different quit-rents and their times of collection would have been indispensable, to say nothing of the need to follow closely all mutations of property in a given seigneuric or under the "direct" of a given benefice so as not to miss the opportunity of collecting *lods et ventes*. Direct working of the land would have transformed the canons into farmers (although it must not be thought they were uninterested in agriculture or above agricultural or semi-agricultural activities at times). In short, direct management demanded so great an investment of time and energy that it would have precluded most other occupations, whether strictly canonical or not. It was much simpler to entrust these tasks to others in order to be free to pursue careers in the Church, the courts or commerce. To be sure, individual canons as well as other clerics did function as revenue collectors, but there was very little question of the Chapter as a whole performing this role.

In the second place, the tithe in particular was a perennial source of contention. The tither was bound by various canonical obligations, such as the duties to provide for the performance of the liturgy, help with the upkeep of the parish church, and give alms to the poor. If the tithe-farmer side-stepped or repudiated his duties, the Chapter could always take refuge behind the fact that it had been ignorant of these transgressions. If the canons had managed their benefices directly and still were niggardly in the discharge of obligations incumbent upon them, they would have been more visible and subject to straightforward reproach.

But the weightiest reason for the system of *arrentement* was most likely the economic sense it made from the Chapter's perspective. The Chapter thereby avoided all the costs both in terms of money and of time, travel, etc. which direct management required and yet was assured of a regular income from the payments of its lease-holders.

This assurance rested, however, on the assumption of normal times and smooth and efficient operation of the *arrentement* system. In the period of the Wars of Religion this harmonious functioning was frequently missing for a

variety of reasons which I will touch upon. When that was the case the result was financial hardship for the Chapter.

Characteristics of the Arrentement System — Leasing a Benefice

The system began functioning when a benefice was leased to a fermier. The Chapter as collective owner was the ultimate lessor of its benefices, but this occurred in several ways. The most common was to conclude contracts with the prospective rentiers during an assembly of canons, described as forming "the soundest part" (*la plus saine partie*) of the Chapter, although the minimum attendance required is not specified. During such a meeting the Chapter's notary-secretary took down the details of the deal worked out, attested to by the canons and the rentier "there present". If for some reason, however, a sufficient number of canons could not be assembled, a few canons acting as deputies for the Chapter could and did make contracts with rentiers. In 1562 and 1563, very tense periods in Montpellier marked by Huguenot riots and violence against Catholic religious, big gatherings of canons were often difficult if not impossible. In July of 1562, for example, a rump group of canons proceeded to lease out the benefice of La Vêrune to a merchant of Montpellier, Danssargues, while noting in their deliberations that a number of their colleagues had sent their excuses, being unable to attend because they had gendarmes lodged in their dwellings. In August of the following year, the Chapter's secretary recorded the corporation was at less than full strength on account of "the notorious troubles". Nevertheless, the Chapter farmed out the castle and benefice of Rouet and Balmes during that time.¹⁸

Sometimes deputies of the Chapter journeyed to other cities to see to the *arrentement* of outlying benefices, or took advantage of other business which had called them from Montpellier to lease out an unrented possession. Thus the "castle, revenue and priory" of Ambialet in the diocese of Albi was let by three canons before a local notary at Ambialet to Antoine Nogarede of Durfort in 1565. The following year, two canons (one of whom had participated in the procedure in 1565) again acted as deputies for the Chapter by leasing the seigneurie (Ambialet) to two notaries of the region, using a notary of Albi to record the contract.¹⁹ But usually it was the rentier who came to the Chapter to do business, although from time to time the Chapter itself was forced to

¹⁸ ADH, G 1766, fols. 302, 312.

¹⁹ ADH, G 2399. See also the lease of the benefice of Notre Dame de la Serre (diocese of St. Pons) at Narbonne, 14 May 1563 by the bishop of Montpellier and four canons, G 2398; and that of St. Julien du Tournel (diocese of Mendes) at Génolhac by two canons, 24 August 1564, G 2398; also Notre Dame d'Adau (diocese of Arles) by one canon at Beaucaire, 8 July 1564, G 2398.

relocate to Frontignan or Villeneuve to escape disorder or pestilence at Montpellier.²⁰

Characteristics of the System — the Fermier's Obligations

The rentier obligated himself to the Chapter by notarial contract whether it was before a "general chapter" and the canons' own notary-secretary (in our period always a member of the Darles family which also counted two canons in the Chapter) or before the Chapter's deputies making use of another notary. This contract stipulated the rentier's duties which were fairly extensive.

He was, in the first place, required to have the "divine service" performed in the church of the benefice or seigneurie by "worthy and sufficient" priests at his own expense. In the second place, he had to provide sustenance for the "preachers" of the regular orders who visited the locality in Advent and Lent. Further, he owed hospitality to the canons "with their servants and horses" on the local patron saint's feast day, as well as to the bishop "with his people and mounts" whenever he toured the village (seldom, if ever in this period). The rentier was also held responsible for distributing "accustomed alms to the poor," paying any "pensions" due by the benefice, advancing money for the royal impositions on the clergy (*décimes*) with promise of reimbursement by the Chapter, and finally seeing to the transportation of any material necessary for repairs to the benefice's church or other buildings (while the Chapter provided the material itself and construction workers).²¹

These provisions of the contract, in particular, the requirements to hire priests, give alms and furnish transport for repair materials, signify that the Chapter shifted a great deal (indeed the essential elements) of its canonical responsibilities as benefice-holder onto the back of the rentier. How well the rentiers fulfilled these obligations remains difficult to determine, although complaints about their eagerness to take the tithe but evade the duty to provide priests to say mass appear now and then in the documents.²² The contract of *arrentement*

²⁰ ADH, G 1768, 18 Jan. 1578, 14 May 1579 assembled at Frontignan; 26 Sept. 1582 at Villeneuve; G 1769, 20 Dec. 1588 at Villeneuve. Cf. similar peregrinations of the Chapter St. Nazaire of Béziers in 1562-63, MORAN, "The Catholic Church," p. 272 and business meetings in Béziers in calmer times, ADH, G 68, fol. 7r, 17 Jan. 1596 or G 138, fol. 220v, 31 May 1550.

²¹ ADH, G 1766, fols. 48v-52v, 345v-347v and *passim*.

²² MORAN, "The Catholic Church," pp. 295-296. Hostility to the tithe was widespread in Languedoc as we know from LE ROY LADURIE's, *Les paysans*. See also J. GOY and E. LE ROY LADURIE, "Première esquisse d'une conjoncture du produit décimal et domanial: fin du Moyen Age - XVIIIe," in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 334-374, for further considerations on this theme. Cf. CHARBONNIER, "Les dîmes auvergnates," p. 183. According to this author, the peasants of Auvergne saw the tithe as just another seigneurial charge, not as a religious tax where willingness to pay could fluctuate

demonstrates that the canons were by far more concerned with the business rather than the spiritual management of the localities under their control.

III

In the period from 1564 to 1590 the Chapter's treasurers recorded 405 contracts of lease in their books. A graphic picture of the Chapter's business dealings in these turbulent years emerges from a study of their features.

New Contracts and Renewals

The first distinction to make, regarding these contracts is that they were for the most part either new or renewals. Table 3 shows that 325 (80.2%) new contracts were taken out in this period, while 75 (18.5%) renewals of contracts were made. Five contracts did not really lend themselves to either classification; two involved what I call "standing" contracts, namely, the obligations of the community of St. Pons de Malcoz and of the order of St. Jean of Jerusalem for the *mas* of Launac, while three concerned rentiers substituting someone else in their place or subletting.

TABLE 3

TYPE OF CONTRACT				
New	Renewals	Standing	Other	Total
325	75	2	3	405

The preponderance of new contracts suggests two contradictory processes—either stiff competition among prospective rentiers for leases or such difficulties in turning a profit from a lease that the rentiers gladly let them lapse at their expiration. In the former instance, however, one would expect lease prices to rise and we know that this did not happen in the period under study — prices for *all* categories of possessions whether benefices or seigneuries stagnated.²³ The second hypothesis thus seems more likely, but still leaves us with 75 renewals by rentiers who must not have experienced such discouraging tenures that it soured their taste for revenue or actual farming.²⁴

with sentiment. Auvergne was outside the zone of big conflict over the tithe in the sixteenth century precisely because of its seigneurial nature there, p. 184.

²³ LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 383 and MORAN, "The Catholic Church," pp. 301-356.

²⁴ Jacquart remarks on the stability of certain leases for large farms belonging to

Length of Contract

Another important feature of the *arrentement* system is a clear preference for contracts of intermediate length (between three and five years). Table 4 demonstrates that the bulk of the contracts (331) were concluded for such terms with the three year contract forming the single largest category.

TABLE 4

LENGTH OF CONTRACT (YEARS)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	16	Other	?	Total
4	2	161	83	87	41	8	1	5	1	1	1	8	2	405

If we were to include the 41 six year leases the vast majority of contracts would be accounted for.²⁵ This tendency toward intermediate length contracts no doubt served the needs of both Chapter and rentiers. The Chapter received an income from the benefice for several years without having to worry about it, but yet was not tied to the same rentier at the same price for too long. This arrangement permitted upward price adjustments at the contract's expiration if the market and circumstances were favourable. The rentier, on the other hand, did not bind himself to the results of one harvest — a hit-or-miss proposition — but spread his risk over a longer period.²⁶

ecclesiastics in the Hurepoix in the pre-Wars of Religion period. The same names recur for the same farm generation after generation, *La crise rurale*, p. 153. See also LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 301-302 for the same phenomenon.

²⁵ Around Beaune, on the other hand, leases for several years were rare before 1760, see A. SILBERT, "La production des céréales à Beaune d'après les dîmes, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle," in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 134-152, p. 139. Similarly, the tithes collected by Protestant Geneva were leased annually by auction between 1540 and 1780 in June or July for the grains and September for wine, A.-L. HEAD-KÖNIG AND B. VEYRASSAT-HERREN, "Les revenus décimaux à Genève de 1540 à 1783: premiers résultats," in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 165-179, p. 171. In Auvergne, an annual *accense* by auction was common, Charbonnier, p. 187. But in the Toulousain of the eighteenth century longer contracts (up to nine years) were the rule, FRÊCHE, *Toulouse*, pp. 534-535. Finally, we should observe that the switch to short leases "often characteristic of periods of crisis, at least in regions of long contracts" noted by GOY AND LE ROY LADURIE, "Première esquisse," p. 340, did not occur at Montpellier during the Wars of Religion. We will discuss why shortly.

²⁶ Such contracts for a period of several years necessitated careful calculation on the fermier's part, taking account of the competition, prospects for the harvests based on preceding years and for the sale of the produce. See GOY AND HEAD-KÖNIG, *Une expérience*, p. 256; also GOY AND LE ROY LADURIE, *Première esquisse*, p. 335.

Mode of Payment

Table 5 displays the marked proclivity for cash contracts and the infinitesimally small number of purely "in kind" contracts.

MEANS OF PAYMENT

TABLE 5

Money	Mixed	Kind	Other	Total
314	75	6	10	405

Fully 77.5% called for monetary payments to be made, while only 6 were due exclusively in natural products. Even those leases which I have listed as "mixed" reveal a strong metallic tint to their complexion on closer inspection. Aside from Maurin, and at times one or two other benefices or seigneuries, the quantities of grain or other produce involved are tiny compared to the cash sums demanded. Indeed, the, in kind, obligations of several of these mixed contracts were only of symbolic importance. St. Julien des Points in the Cévennes, for example, owed a *quintal* of dried prunes, a sack of "white chestnuts" and a sack of other nuts each year at Christmas, but one can assume that the 70 livres this benefice rented for in 1581 were of more significance (at least financially) to the canons.²⁷

In addition to the three categories, money, mixed, and in kind, I found a number best described as "free", where nothing was charged the lessee as a means of repaying him for money the Chapter owed him. Then there were others called *à relever* where the rentier undertook to repair something during his lease in lieu of actually handing over a quantity of cash or produce to the canons.

Why payment most often took the form of money is not entirely clear, although the Chapter's need to maintain a certain level of cash liquidity to meet its expenses probably goes a long way toward explaining the phenomenon.

²⁷ In the Alsace studied by Veyrassat-Herren, however, the tithes "were reckoned in grain," "Dîmes alsaciennes," p. 85. In the same province Vogt found that many leases were in grain because the peasantry preferred it so and the *décimateurs* were anxious to avoid contention, p. 106. In Auvergne, the feeble monetary circulation meant that almost all tithes on grain were collected in kind from the fermiers down to the Revolution, CHARBONNIER, "Les dîmes auvergnates," p. 190. Cf. also the tithes of Béziers studied by Le Roy Ladurie, note 13 above. The Montpellier area was thus integrated into a monetary economy at a comparatively early date, unlike some other regions. Money contracts were also common in the Lyonnais, as one might expect, HEAD-KÖNIG, *Rente foncière et dîmes dans le Lyonnais*, p. 153.

Had the Canons demanded more payments in kind, however, they might have profited from rising prices on the commodities markets. This would, of course, have entailed becoming grain speculators, keeping big stocks, watching the market and deciding whether to withhold or sell — a process which the Montpellier canons, in any case, were unwilling or unable to engage in on a large scale.

Frequency of Payment

The data in Table 6 support the hypothesis of a need for cash liquidity. The table shows the frequency of lease payments and the clear dominance of one rhythm (quarterly) in 240 (59.3%) of the total contracts. Bi-yearly or annual instalments were far less important. In addition, the 41 contracts under the "other" category contain some whose payment instalments were at least in

TABLE 6

1/4	1/3	1/2	1	Other	?	Total
240	15	61	34	41	14	405

part quarterly. Contracts which called for remitting the first year's price in one lump sum and then acquitting the remaining years by quarters or every four months have been placed in this category. Also, mixed contracts which required that the cash obligation be met quarterly (or in another rhythm) while the grain, wine or oil was handed over at one fixed date fall under this rubric. But even extracting these various arrangements as I have done still leaves us with a majority of quarterly instalment contracts.²⁸

This situation bespeaks, on the one hand, a desire for a smooth flow of

²⁸ There is a further aspect of this question of time of payment which I would like to evoke in passing. Two ways of recording dates coexist in the canons' books of the period which I call "traditional" and "modern". The traditional approach consisted of requiring payment on certain feast days such as St. Luke, the Annunciation, St. John the Baptist, Michaelmas, Mary-Magdalen, Christmas, Easter, etc. This served as a reminder of how important a role these and other feasts played in the calendar of an overwhelmingly agricultural society. What I like to see as evidence of a more modern way of doing business and bookkeeping was to call for payment on the first, fifteenth or last day of the month (whether quarterly or not) or at times, quarterly, annually, etc. on the day the contract was signed. On this subject, see my "Conceptions of Time in Early Modern France: an approach to the history of collective mentalities", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12 (1981).

income over the course of the year. This wish was only logical when one considers that the Chapter's expenses did not fall due only after the harvest with its payments of tithes, seigneurial rights, etc. On the other hand, this process of instalment payments on leases required the rentiers to maintain some amount of cash reserves, not only to be able to make their payments on time, but also in order to advance money for the *décimes* and cover other expenses of the benefice such as the salary of the "worthy and sufficient" priest the rentier was supposed to hire. These capital requirements made revenue-farming largely the preserve of men of substance, as we shall see.²⁹

The relation between the date on which the contract was concluded and the date on which it took effect is of interest for the light it can shed on speculation, business confidence or wariness in the *arrentement* process. Table 7 depicts this relation in three major categories. In the first place, there are "advanced" contracts whose date of conclusion is more than a week before the time when they actually commenced. More than half (51.36%) of the contract summaries I studied were of this sort, many of them in fact arranged months in advance of their effective dates. By way of contrast, contracts made within a week before or after their starting date only represented 12.34% (52) of those I reviewed. Finally retroactive contracts, as the name suggests, covered periods more than a week before the actual signing, beginning in the past and using that past date as the starting point of the three, four, or whatever year term of agreement.³⁰

²⁹ Actually, matters were more complicated than this schema implies since the rentiers did not always make their payments directly into the coffers or hands of the Chapter's treasurer. It was common practice to assign the rentier to fulfill some of the Chapter's obligations. The best example was the process of *décime* (royal impositions on the clergy) collection in which the rentier handed over the amount due for the *décimes* of the benefice to the *décime* collector, receiving a receipt which he in turn deposited with the Chapter's treasurer who then recorded the rentier "held in account" (*tenu en compte*) for that sum, in other words, paid up for a portion of his lease. See ALDH, G 2398-2416 *passim*, for more examples.

³⁰ It should be pointed out here that the great variation in the times contracts were concluded and when they were to begin differs markedly from the situation of certain tithes (e.g. Béziers) studied by Le Roy Ladurie where the contracts were made in the week before the harvest and only for that particular harvest. The tendency of Montpellier's canons to lease out their benefices and seigneuries as packages for terms of several years explains this discrepancy. It also means that being a revenue farmer for the Montpellier chapter represented a longer-term speculative venture and more financial involvement with the benefice, i.e. costs were incurred over and above those necessary for gathering and transporting the sheaves as I indicated above. Le Roy Ladurie himself points to this changeover to longer-term leases in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries when only properties or tithes close to Béziers, for example, were let out in kind to furnish victuals for the canons' table, *Les paysans*, pp. 172-174, 227-228. In short, he recognizes the growing "capitalist" and "speculative" features of revenue

TABLE 7

WHEN CONTRACTS WERE SIGNED
RELATIVE TO WHEN THEY TOOK EFFECT

Within week before or after effective date	More than week in advance	More than week afterwards
52 (12.84%)	208 (51.36%)	115 (28.4%)
Not applicable	Unknown	Total
14 (3.45%)	16 (3.95%)	405

Advanced contracts can be viewed from several perspectives and naturally a great deal depends on just *how far* in advance they were made.

One could argue that a rentier well-informed of how planting proceeded, what the local people were saying about the possibilities of a good crop, the likelihood of military operations in the vicinity, the extent of Protestant or anti-tithe sentiment in a given area and not least of all, the trend of grain and other commodity prices, might not be risking too much by signing a contract to collect the revenues of a particular area a few weeks or even months in advance. On the other hand, trying to corner part of the "commodity futures" of a given locality months, sometimes a year or more ahead of time seems to indicate either unruffled confidence in the future, or a certain recklessness. But on reflection it was precisely the nature of the times, coupled with the canons' policy of making accords with rentiers in difficulty which led bolder men to speculate in a field that could prove profitable if collection went smoothly. For lease prices remained low while grain prices climbed.³¹

farming. But he generally still insists on what he calls insignificant or at any rate low profits (p. 221 - 11-15% ca. 1478-1499; p. 288 - 10% with one year leases: "frais et profits minimes"). On other occasions, he says that the profit (with shorter-term leases) consisted of leftover straw (p. 384 and II, 844). But the involvement of the notables of Montpellier and elsewhere in such a derisory process seems unlikely if there were not more to be gained from revenue farming. Both JACQUART, *La crise rurale*, pp. 385-386 for the early seventeenth century and Frêche, *Toulouse*, p. 534 for the eighteenth have shown that substantially more could be at stake. Note, however, that Head-König and Veyrassat-Herren estimate that profit at Geneva was low, often indeed consisting of straw, "Les revenus décimaux à Genève," p. 171.

³¹ LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 232, 383 and II, 819. In this work, the author emphasized in particular the decline of decimal revenues, but in *Les fluctuations du produit de la dîme* attention is also paid to the decline in all manner of ecclesiastical reve-

Retroactive contracts seem more comprehensible to us as we view the period as a whole and note the many junctures at which war, weather, resistance to the tithe and so forth, intervened either to decrease production in general or the share of the ecclesiastics and their rentiers. A rentier may well have wished to assure himself that at least the first year of his lease would proceed without too many rough spots. Hence he waited to evaluate information bearing on harvests and the social, psychological and military situation before binding himself by contract. The fact remains, of course, that even with a three year contract signed retroactively for a year, he was still committing himself to two years of uncertainty.

Thus, a "typical" contract of lease for an ecclesiastical benefice or seigneurie of the Chapter of Montpellier in these years would have the following features. In the first instance, it would be a new contract for the rentier (not necessarily the first time he was involved in farming a benefice or seigneurie, but the first time he had leased the benefice in question). He had probably signed the contract within a few weeks before or after its effective date and had bound himself for a period of three years during which he would make payments in money four times per year to the canons' treasurer. The deal was more than likely settled

nucs, such as those from seigneuries and *domaines*, see p. 350. For Montpellier, this overall stagnation is easy to establish. Thus, not only benefices (often hastily assumed to be entirely decimal), but also seigneuries or farms like Maurin suffer. This biggest of all the canons' revenue units rented for 1,000 livres-1,000 setiers wheat in 1559 and for exactly the same price over twenty years later in 1579 (ADH, G 2398, 2408). The "benefice, tower and jurisdiction" of Pérols rented for the following prices in this period: 1564 - 950 l.; 1570 - 950 l.; 1576 - 950 l.; 1582 - 1,000 l. and 12.5 muids wine; 1588 - 1,050 l. and 8.5 muids (G 2398, 2403, 2405, 2408, 2415).

The Chapter had to make deals with its rentiers time and again in this period. For example, in 1584 the Chapter reached accords with the rentiers of 26 benefices or seigneuries, dismissing 8,901 livres worth of debts on leases. A further 6,602 livres was dropped in 1585 and 1,380 in 1586. See MORAN, "The Catholic Church", p. 327.

Such speculation and rebates occurred in other regions and periods as well. In Geneva, the *Chambre des Comptes* was stingy with the sums rebated (HEAD-KÖNIG and VEYRASSAT-HERREN, "Les revenus décimaux à Genève," pp. 174-175). "Rabais" for storm damage were common in Auvergne, Charbonnier, p. 188, while the fermiers of the Order of Malta speculated on making profits in poor crop years from the interplay of prices, G. GAGNAUX, "Les rentes seigneuriales et domaniales dans les Commanderies de l'Ordre de Malte de la langue de Provence, XVII^e et XVIII^e," in *Les fluctuations*, pp. 273-293 and received discounts in periods of war (e.g. the Camisard trouble in 1703), pp. 274, 286. Speculation was familiar in Alsace, too, Vogt, pp. 111-117. The ecclesiastics of the Hurepoix made concessions to attract rentiers in bad times, JACQUART, *La crise rurale*, pp. 263-265. Finally, big time speculators commonly operated in the Haut Languedoc in the late eighteenth century, FRÊCHE, *Toulouse*, p. 532, and rebates were also given for a variety of reasons at least as far back as the sixteenth century, p. 545.

at Montpellier before a gathering of canons and recorded by the Chapter's own secretary, the notary Antoine Darles or later, his son Jean. That was the typical or at least a common form of contract. Now we must address the question whether there was a "typical" rentier.

IV

The Fermiers

There were a total of 287 persons involved in the 405 contract summaries studied (two collective rentiers have been eliminated). Occupational data was available for 219 of them and places of residence for all but 14. This information is assembled in Table 8 which readily establishes a number of interesting facts.

TABLE 8

RENTIERS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND RESIDENCE

	Montpellier	Large Towns	Small Towns	Villages	?	Total	%
Merchants-Bourgeois	48	9	9	16	0	82	27.6
Nobles	4	3	2	26	1	36	12.1
Clergy	20	4	1	5	5	35	11.8
Robe	6	1	3	1	0	11	3.7
Captains (nob.)	2	0	0	4		4	
Captains (non-nob.)	2	0	1	6		9	4.4
Artisans	11	0	0	0	0	11	3.7
Notaries	4	0	0	2	0	6	2.0
Laboureurs	8	0	0	1	0	9	3.0
Unknown	7	0	9	60	2	78	26.3
Others	8	0	0	2	6	16	5.4
Total	120	17	25	121	14	297	100.0

First, it is important to note that merchants and other "middle-class" elements of the Third Estate form the single largest group of known rentiers. Men clearly designated as merchants or allotted titles of respect such as *sire* or *maître* or the juridical title *bourgeois* account for 27.6% of all fermiers.³² Within

³² In a look at the years 1550-1559, Le Roy Ladurie found 50 fermiers for whom he gave the following incomplete breakdown: "15 ecclesiastics, 4 greffiers or notaries, 10 merchants, 3 laboureurs, 1 artisan, 1 noble, 1 bourgeois, etc.," *Les paysans*, I, 375 and n. 1. But he seems to have counted into the next decade to arrive at this figure

this body commercial elements from Montpellier (48) and several other large towns such as Nîmes, Béziers and Agde (9) make up a definite majority, but notables from smaller towns and villages contribute a not unimportant 25 men (30.5% of this category). The latter sort, especially from rural districts, may very well have combined some strictly agricultural activities with trading in grain and other products, revenue farming, usury, and the lowest echelons of seigneurial or royal administration (several are referred to as *baillie* i.e. bailiff, in the texts).

Nobles rank second in terms of rentiers of known status. Thirty-six men (12.1% of all rentiers) having or pretending to noble rank engaged in leasing in our period. Noble participation to this extent comes as something of a surprise since becoming a lease-holder of land or tithes was an act of *dérogance*, entailing at least temporary loss of nobility in the ancien régime.³³ Some were no doubt driven to this expedient in their struggle against declining incomes. Others were probably inclined to regard tithes or church property as their private preserve. Finally, still others may not have been noble sufficiently long enough to have suppressed their own or their fathers' money-making instincts. But whatever the reason, nobles openly leased the Chapter's benefices throughout our period, sometimes passing leases from father to son.³⁴ Thus

since my own check only revealed 25 men for these years, as follows: 8 ecclesiastics, 11 merchants or bourgeois, 2 *greffiers*, 1 notary, 1 labourer, 1 noble and 1 unknown. See ADH, G 1766. For Béziers in 1558, he found 6 priests among a further (undifferentiated) 21 rentiers, *Les paysans*, I, 376. For 1560, I count 24 *arrentements* at Béziers: 5 ecclesiastics, 3 merchants, 1 bourgeois, 1 notary, 1 master apothecary, 1 "fermier" and 12 unknowns, half of these listed as residing in small towns or villages such as Capestang and Servian, ADH, G 194. The clergy would seem to be overrepresented at Montpellier in these years compared with the following three decades, and the nobility underrepresented as we can see from Table 8. The civil wars could therefore have kept the clergy's subsequent participation down, while stimulating the nobility's.

³³ M. MARION, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, ed. 1968), p. 396; R. DOUCET, *Les institutions de la France au XVI^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1948), II, 489, is less clear. GOUBERT, *L'ancien régime*, I, 158 is also not clear on this subject. Marion states explicitly that leasing a tithe brought *dérogance*, while Doucet and Goubert only refer to the act of leasing land as being cause for *dérogance*. The *judge mage* of Montpellier, however, reported in 1573 that many nobles in the diocese were taking part in the *arrentement* process (either openly or through *prete-noms* in direct violation of the ordinances of the king, "Rapport sur l'état du diocèse de Montpellier adressé à M. de Fourquevaux par le juge mage de cette ville (Pierre de la Coste) en réponse aux lettres closes du roi (1573), pamphlet ed. C. Douais (Toulouse, 1891). Usurpations were also practised in Alsace, Vogt, p. 126. LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 289, notes that leasing a castle and domain could be worth "déchoir un peu" and cites examples of nobles doing this in 1504, 1513, 1552 and 1557.

³⁴ For example, noble Durand Bringuier, coseigneur of Liouc, held the lease of St. Laurent de Trèves in 1564 (ADH, G 2398), renewed it together with his son Jacques

although such activities were technically considered "dérobatif", there seems to have been little real social opprobrium attached to their performance. Facilities for tracking down and denouncing noble lease-holders were certainly inadequate in this period and benefice-farming nobles doubtless also enjoyed the complicity of their social inferiors in this regard.

Most of the nobles in question in our study seem to have come from the lesser provincial aristocracy — some of very old parentage such as François de Roquefeuil, seigneur of Viols and Londres, whose family dated back to at least the thirteenth century, others of more recent stock like the De la Croix barons of Castries, ennobled at the end of the fifteenth century. But lack of precise biographical and economic data precludes hard and fast judgments in many cases. Some, like Antoine de Saurin, seigneur of St. André de Valborgne in the Cévennes, were certainly influenced by Protestantism which recruited so much of the French lower nobility in these years,³⁵ while others remained loyal to the traditional religion. Those resident in Montpellier or the large towns were quite likely of more recent (no doubt commercial) origin. But, on the other hand, those not listed as urban dwellers (26 of 36) were probably prototypical *hobéreaux*, residing in their seigneuries until business or war necessitated travel.

It was far different with our next category: the clergy. In this case, Montpellier and a number of other large towns sheltered 68.5% of all clerical rentiers. The Cathedral Chapter, in particular, supplied a great many rentiers from its ranks; farming their own chapter's benefices was a common business activity of Montpellier's canons as private persons. The Chapter's grand archdeacon, Antoine de Nogaredo, for example, leased the castle and priory of Ambialet in the diocese of Albi for 18 consecutive years by two 9 year contracts between 1571 and 1590. His colleagues, Pierre Dominici, François and Tannequin de Lauzerlergue, Guillaume Darles, and Jean Plantade, among others, were not averse to following suit. Some rural priests who possessed sufficient capital, such as Antoine Mailé of Mireval, were able to imitate the urban ecclesiastics and participate in the *arrentement* process.

That the clergy and especially the better endowed urban upper clergy should take part in revenue farming is completely consonant with the worldly stereotype with which history has saddled them since those times. But such a picture, like all stereotypes, is unfair and to a great extent anachronistic — the offspring of later Protestant and Counter-Reformation Catholic points of view. To the canons and other ecclesiastics it was the most natural thing in the world to be involved not only in investing in agriculture, but also in the more active pursuits of collecting

in 1570. Meanwhile Jacques himself was lease-holder of St. Julien des Points in 1565 and again in 1575 (G 2398, 2405) as well as of Saumane in 1571 (G 2404) in which he had been preceded by his brother Jehan in 1568.

³⁵ Saurin was involved in buying church property and attended an assembly of Languedocien Protestants at Nîmes in 1569, MORAN, "The Catholic Church," p. 330.

tithes and seigneurial dues. Indeed, the canons of Narbonne, still "semi-peasants" in the sixteenth century, were not reluctant to thresh grain themselves and celebrate the completion of a harvest by jigging with the local countryfolk. The Church was a landed power and even its more bourgeois representatives knew the importance of the land and its products not only for subsistence, but also for a majority of commercial and industrial/craft activities. In earlier periods of scarce and insufficient monetary circulation, such as the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the churchmen of towns like Narbonne and Béziers had little choice but to manage the property and revenues which guaranteed their livelihood. The habit would persist for much of the early modern period, if not at the corporate level of the chapter, then at that of the individual canons. To be sure, the Council of Trent prohibited farming tithes or seigneurial rights and dues, but in the 1620's and later enterprising clerics could still build private fortunes from such pastimes. It would be a long time before the Counter-Reformation mentality with which we are familiar thoroughly permeated the clerical corps. In this regard, the absence of clergymen from the lists of rentiers in Albi and Toulouse in the late eighteenth century may be testimony to the slow but ultimately effective penetration of the Counter-Reformation.³⁶

The low participation of the "robe" in this type of investment is at first sight unexpected. For a city with two major sovereign courts (Cour des Aides and Chambre des Comptes) as well as a *présidial* (a subsidiary of the Seneschal of Carcassonne's court), six rentiers is an extremely low representation. And these men, as well as the five from other places of residence, were for the most part minor court officials — clerks, beadles and *controlleurs*. It is very difficult to say why this was so, given the interest in exploiting ecclesiastical property

³⁶ For Narbonne and Béziers and the agricultural activities of their canons over the centuries, see LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 309-310, 170, 288, 479-480. On Toulouse and Albi, see FRÊCHE, *Toulouse*, p. 529. A typical example of canons debating what to do with certain property and then bidding among themselves to be able to exploit it can be seen in ADH, G 68 fol. 7r, deliberations of the Chapter of Béziers, 17 Jan. 1596.

Counter-Reformation clerics were not opposed to better management of the "temporal," CHARBONNIER, "Les dîmes auvergnates," p. 184. They of course needed it collectively to finance spiritual activities. Those seeking to improve the Chapter, indeed the Church, as a collective entity would, however, find it necessary to remove ecclesiastics from the ambiguous role of revenue farmer. Although the figures are not extensive, the decline in the percentage of clerical rentiers from over 30% in the years 1550-1559 to 11.5% in the decades to 1590 may indicate some success for Protestant or Counter-Reformation activity aimed at this "abuse." See note 32 above.

When a canon or other ecclesiastic functioned as a rentier, the whole of the product of the Church's property stayed within the First Estate, LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 376. But this situation may not have been as advantageous as it first appears. For, the ecclesiastic out for his own interests was in a contradictory and potentially tension-provoking position vis à vis his corporation.

displayed by the other sectors of the elite, both urban and rural. It is always possible that the major officers of these courts (and their underlings) felt it to be below their dignity to farm revenues, although the nobility, on the other hand, clearly perceived little challenge to its status from such tasks. Or it may have been that the robe did not need this type of business to diversify or bolster its income. Perhaps it was simply that they had too little time to spare on the collection and marketing of tithes and seigneurial payments in kind. More sociological studies of revenue farmers will, however, be necessary before we know definitely whether this phenomenon and its causes were entirely Montpellierain or more widespread.³⁷

The category "captains" may be peculiar to the degeneration of the social order and the ensuing chaos produced by continuing civil war. I found absolutely no entries in the summaries for persons calling themselves or called captains before 1580. After that date they appear suddenly in the documents. Four of them were nobles, equally divided between residents of Montpellier and villages; the other nine were *roturiers* and six of these were village inhabitants. It is quite tempting to suppose that the civil wars allowed adventurous and ambitious spirits among the lower rural and urban orders, as well as among the nobility itself, the opportunity to establish themselves through a career of arms. Whatever booty they thus won could then be turned to profit-making activities like revenue farming, while the military expertise and bravado acquired in soldiering may have aided in convincing reluctant peasants to pay their tithes and fees without obstruction. Studies of more peaceful, less turbulent periods will show how persistent this phenomenon was.³⁸

There was but a handful of notaries involved as rentiers. Further, there were very few artisans, despite their numbers in Montpellier and other towns where they worked in craft-industries such as textiles and formed a major recruiting pool for Protestantism. Their absence is obviously connected to their economic position. In fact, among the eleven artisans at least five are "masters" (weavers, barrel makers, blacksmiths, etc.) who were no doubt at the top of their craft and perhaps small capitalists themselves. Two others, a miller and a baker, combined to lease one benefice, probably to secure a supply of grain for their enterprises.

Among the "others" I have, for example, incorporated six fishmongers although they could possibly have been subsumed under the merchants or in a separate listing. They were primarily interested in the Chapter's fishing rights for reasons similar to those which prompted the baker and miller to seek out grain supplies. They may well have done the fishing themselves (or with

³⁷ This social category is also absent from Frêche's eighteenth-century statistics, *Toulouse*, p. 529.

³⁸ GEORGES FRÊCHE, *ibid.*, found no captains among the fermiers of the archbishop of Albi.

their families) for the purpose of furnishing their fish stands or shops. Their inclusion among the merchant group would raise its percentage among all rentiers by two points, but lacking more information about them and the scope of their activities, I decided to follow the Chapter's secretary's practice which was not to call them merchants, but rather fishmongers (*poissoniers*).

A variety of other professions round out this rubric. There were several inn-keepers or proprietors of wine cellars, as well as a doctor of law, a "gardener", two "surgeons", one of whom was a master, and finally a *praticien*. Some of these could, of course, be used to create a category of liberal or intellectual professions, but its size would be quite small. This fact constitutes another unexpected feature of the rentier group at Montpellier, which was an intellectual center boasting a celebrated university with law and medical faculties. As with the robe, it seems that the nature of these professions made it either unnecessary or difficult for their members to engage in revenue farming.

We are now left with the tiny labourer group (3.0%) and the quite large body of rentiers whose occupations are not recorded in the canons' books. These people were overwhelmingly rural and their livelihood was almost certainly exclusively bound up with tilling the soil. The fact that eight of nine labourers lived in Montpellier in no way contradicts this observation given what we know about the rural character of significant minorities of the populations of Languedocien "cities".³⁹ Fortunately, we also know that 60 of the 78 "unknown" rentiers resided in villages.

This fact coupled with the lack of any mention of a trade, title, or status by the recording secretary (who probably took no trouble to write down what was self-evident from their appearance) strongly suggests their peasant social origin. Assuming for the sake of argument that all the unknown rentiers, including those from Montpellier and the small towns were indeed peasants, we reach a representation of close to 30% for this social category.

It remains difficult to determine which strata of the peasant mass were most significant in this thirty percent. Are we confronted here entirely or for the most part with rich peasants, *coqs de village*, who undertook revenue collection to broaden the range of their activities and income? Or are they less well-to-do men forced to try to lease the collection of tithes and rights (and of course the land of seigneuries or benefices) to supplement a meagre or uncertain family revenue? With the majority of lease prices over 100 livres per year in quarterly payments one would tend to suspect the former. But as we shall see in a minute, the support of "city" capital may have enabled lower echelons of the peasantry to engage in lease farming, even if only as front-men or collectors for their urban or rural elite patrons.⁴⁰

³⁹ LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 338, 343.

⁴⁰ Vogt points out that such big labourers in the eighteenth century had a lively interest in Alsatian tithes. It is difficult, however, to tell whether they were acting

In conclusion, our table allows us in the first place to demonstrate the predominance of the upper orders of society in the exploitation of the Church's wealth. The commercial community of Montpellier and other large towns, with assistance of the more rural elites of the same sort, displayed a deep-seated interest in the process of ecclesiastical revenue collection as a business activity. Considered together with the nobility, clergy and robe, the upper ranks of society contributed 55.2% of all rentiers. The peasantry, whose labour produced this ecclesiastical revenue to begin with, barely accounts for 30% of the fermiers (granting that all "unknowns" were actually peasants), although it is the most numerous social order. The feeble showing of the artisans, the other "popular" class, confirms this absorption by society's rulers of an important part of the rural surplus.

In the second place, the "city" tends to dominate the "country" in this process. Among the merchant-bourgeois group, Montpellier is of tremendous importance. The same can be said of the clerical order with its Montpellierain rentiers, virtually all of whom came from the Cathedral Chapter itself. Only the nobility among the elites provided more "country" than "city" elements to the body of rentiers. One could, of course, point to the near balance of country-city rentiers (121 vs. 137) to contradict this hypothesis and postulate a rural determination to keep the surplus in the countryside, perhaps under the leadership of the village notables. But these elites themselves, including the nobility, were often enough entangled with the urban upper classes in a financial network not apparent in the table.⁴¹

V

Behind the Arrentement System

Many of the *arrentements* to securing peasants were in fact cases of urban inhabitants backing or using rural rentiers. We can observe this relationship thanks to the addition by the Chapter's secretary at the foot of the contract summary of the names of the rentier's *caution* (or *pleige et principal payeur*). These were the men who stood as financial guarantors of the rentier's solvency and who in the event of his default on the contract could be held legally responsible for payment by the canons.⁴²

for themselves or as representatives of the community which wanted to retain control of its tithes. Often such men grouped together and one of their preoccupations in tithe farming was probably to keep the "little people" under their thumbs ("Pour une étude sociale," p. 127). On the other hand, in eighteenth-century Haut Languedoc peasants and artisans had been eliminated from the *arrentement* of all but the smallest tithes. The big merchants, *négociants* and *trafiquants* did, however, use peasants or artisans of the area to survey against fraud, FRÈCHE, *Toulouse*, p. 529.

⁴¹ Note similar interconnections in the Alsace of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, VOGT, "Pour une étude sociale," p. 129.

⁴² Not everyone had a guarantor as he should. We know this from notes appended

Thus merchants or bourgeois of Montpellier and elsewhere sought out peasants or were sought out by the latter for the purpose of financing leases on the clergy's benefices. We cannot really say which of these two possibilities was more prevalent, but that this type of operation worked both ways seems quite likely.⁴³

Naturally, these "city-country" combinations were not restricted only to merchants or bourgeois guaranteeing the peasant lease-holders. Members of the robe or nobility of Montpellier or urban centers also helped back inhabitants of rural areas.⁴⁴

These combinations in which city-oriented elites hovered in the background of transactions ostensibly undertaken by the lower rural orders far from exhaust the gamut of possibilities. But they do show how merchants and other members of the urban hierarchy not only could play direct roles in the *arrentement* process as rentiers, but also indirect ones as the source of advances or monetary guarantees for the peasants who actually participated. I have as well found other social arrays among the rentiers and their "pledges"

by the treasurer to the summaries of contracts which stated that the fermier "doibt pleiger," especially in the aftermath of the Protestant coup in 1567 when the Chapter was seeking to straighten out its accounts, ADH, G 2400. Such cautions were required elsewhere too. Geneva was quite strict about this (see HEAD-KÖNIG and VEYRASSAT-HERREN, "Les revenus décimaux à Genève," pp. 171-172. Cf. Vogt on the Alsace, pp. 127-129 and Jacquart on the Ile de France for the "monde clos" of guarantors, fermiers and ecclesiastics, *La crise rurale*, p. 153).

⁴³ ADH, G 2405, 2415, 2409, 2411 and 2414. For example, Jean Gal of Pompignan who leased the benefice of St. Denis in 1574 for 265 livres and 2 setiers of wheat had Jean Mazauric, bourgeois of Montpellier, (himself a rentier in other instances) as his guarantor. François Alicot, laboureur of Montpellier, received the backing of Sires David Verchant and Fulcrand Rat, bourgeois of the same city in 1588 for his lease of Castelnau for 3 years at 650 livres per annum. Jean Prierron of Baillargues was supported first by Montpellier merchant, Sire Bernard Mouret, in 1582 when the former leased the benefice of his village (i.e. Baillargues) and later by Sire Jean Bocaud, bourgeois of Montpellier, when he renewed the lease in 1585. A Narbonne merchant, Pierre Tripont, "cautioned" Pierre Bessoicyt of Cesserois in the diocese of St. Pons when he obtained the contract for Notre Dame de la Serre in the same diocese in 1588 for two years at 200 and 225 livres each year.

⁴⁴ ADH, G 2398, 2401, 2409 and 2405. The ennobled Protestant merchant, Louis de Buccelli, seigneur of La Maussion, acted as pledge for Pierre Girard of St. Georges d'Orques in late 1563 for the *arrentement* of Montaubérou. Similarly noble brothers Antoine and Vincent de Manni who may also have been Protestants and who inhabited Montpellier advanced 300 livres to Guirault Vidal, a laboureur residing in the city for the lease of St. George d'Orques in 1567. The receiver and paymaster of the *Généraux des Aides*, Guillaume Clausel, also backed a Montpellier laboureur, Etienne Vaisière, in 1583 for the benefice of Vendargues. A *huissier* at the *présidial* of Montpellier likewise stood behind two residents of Vic who farmed the benefice of Mireval-Vic and the seigneurie of Maureilhan in 1576 for 900 and 130 livres respectively.

which deserve mention. The rural nobility at times backed peasants but also merchants and were in turn themselves supported in other instances by merchants or other nobles.⁴⁵ Groups of merchants from Montpellier or other cities (intra-as well as inter-city groups) formed what may well have been consortia for leasing the benefices of the Chapter where one merchant assumed the active part of rentier while his *cautions* remained more silent partners.⁴⁶ As we mentioned earlier, certain "captains" appeared with connections to merchants suggesting that these men of war acted to facilitate collection. I have also found examples of an artisan with a merchant guarantor, of a small town merchant and a village inhabitant with a Montpellier butcher behind them and finally of exclusively rural combinations where the occupation of neither party is given but where both were most likely well-to-do peasants.⁴⁷

In addition to the various types of financial bonds between rentiers of different groups and/or their backers, and of course between the rentiers in general and the Chapter, some rentiers also had family ties with the canons as well as with each other and their pledges. In a relatively small urban community like Montpellier this comes as no surprise. The oligarchy which dominated the city regarded the Cathedral Chapter as an outlet for the career needs of younger sons and canonries at Montpellier were coveted.⁴⁸ Given this and the interest of this elite in the Church's property as one of its business activities, it is therefore not uncommon to discover that some rentiers were related to some canons, who were often rentiers themselves as well. To be sure, more research in notarial archives would no doubt not only confirm this discovery, but also increase the number of examples at our disposal. Nevertheless several of these groupings are obvious enough from the financial records of the Chapter alone to justify citing here.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ ADH, G 2398 (Pignan, 1563); G 2401 (Cournonterral, 1567); G 2405 (Saumane, 1574; St. Julien du Tournel, 1575; Notre Dame de Londres, 1576); G 2412 (Soriech, 1585); G 2413 (St. Julien du Tournel, 1586; Notre Dame de Londres, 1587); G 2416 (St. Mamert, 1587).

⁴⁶ ADH, G 2405 (Sauvian, 1574; Le Cailar, 1576); G 2406 (Novigens, 1579); G 2407 (Pérols, 1582); G 2410 (Meynes and Clausonne, 1584).

⁴⁷ ADH, G 2409 (Grabels, 1582 — captain with his brother as backer); G 2412 (Le Cailar, 1585 — captain with merchant backer); G 2409 (St. Julien du Tournel, 1582 — butcher as guarantor); G 2405 (Fabrègues, 1575 — artisan backed by merchant); G 2410 (St. Jean de Buègues, 1584 — two unknown rurals); G 2405 (Grabels, 1576 — rural backed by another rural called "sire").

⁴⁸ L. GUIRAUD, *Études sur la Réforme à Montpellier*, vols. 7, 8 of *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique de Montpellier* (Montpellier, 1918-19), I, 8-9.

⁴⁹ These cases are all extracted from the accounts in ADH, G 2398-2416. The Darles, for example, supplied the notary-secretary of the Chapter, Antoine and later Jean (also a rentier), merchant André (rentier) and canons Guillaume (rentier) and Pierre in our period. The De Lauzerlegues family was represented in the Chapter by François (rentier and treasurer at one point) and Tannequin (also a rentier and collector of the

The various social groups involved in the leasing of Church property were thus related in several different and at times unequal ways. At the upper levels a more mutual community of interest, based on the financial undertakings of groups of merchants sometimes strengthened by family ties with the Chapter, held sway. The relations between merchants and nobles may at times have been symbiotic and at others antagonistic when impoverished aristocrats had to rely on Montpellierain traders to back their lease-holding operations. The evidence suggests that the upper groups as a whole tended to dominate the lower, both in terms of the heavy direct involvement of the former in the *arrentement* process and their indirect role as backers of many of the peasants' leases. In either case the surplus produced in the countryside was drained away toward the upper groups and hence, in general, toward the city. The existence of intertwining family alliances of rentiers and canons raises the further possibility that some among the elite enjoyed more favoured positions than others or that factions of canons with their own clientele disputed the exploitation of the system with other factions or with the Chapter as a collectivity. But although we almost instinctively suspect some form of collusion and corruption here, hard proof eludes us.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Exploiting the patrimony of the Church was thus an important business activity for some in this period. We have seen its significance and some reasons for its attraction for diverse social groups. Economically, revenue farming in the Montpellier region was fully integrated into a system of monetary exchange, as it was not, in nearby Auvergne. The need of the revenue farmer to possess means of his own or at least to have access to credit marked him as a capitalist in one sense — he was a man seeking to profit from his investment. His

décimes of the diocese in the 1560's) and Jean, seigneur of Candillargues and magistrate at the Cour des Aides who was involved as a *caution* at one point. The brothers Etienne (merchant) and Jean (canon) Plantade were both rentiers of benefices. We should also mention the large group revolving around the alliance of Dommergues and Mazaurics—Jean Dommergue (archdeacon and a creditor of the Chapter, François Dommergue (merchant, rentier, *caution* and treasurer of the Chapter), his wife and heir Jeanne Mazauric (also a rentier), her brothers, the canon Jacques (rentier and for a time treasurer) and Jean, (bourgeois of the city, rentier and *caution*). Further, a Louise de Mazauric was the wife and later heir of Captain Gerard Guilhard (rentier, succeeded by his widow in that function, and their son Bernard de Guilhard, heir to the late captain and rentier in his own right). The seigneur de la Vérune, near Montpellier, Jacques Pellet had a relative Guillot, also referred to among his colleagues as Monsieur de la Vérune.

⁵⁰ In contrast, collusion seems to have been rare at Geneva, HEAD-KÖNIG and VEY-RASSAT-HERREN, "Les revenus décimaux à Genève," p. 172.

operations presupposed the existence of and his access to a market and called for a willingness to take risks, to speculate. He brought natural products to the market to turn them into money and let them circulate as commodities. Such activity expresses a different, a more modern mentality than that prevailing in the region in earlier periods.⁵¹ But in the sense of stimulating productivity in agriculture or other sectors, the exploitation of ecclesiastical wealth, and especially of the tithe, was regressive. Essentially, it taxed production and thus provided no incentive for the direct producer to invest in order to increase his productivity.⁵² The peasant rightly thought it foolish to labour for the profit of the middleman *fermier* and the tither or lord. The stake various powerful social groups had in the tithe and in ecclesiastical property in general thus assured the survival of economic structures which did not promote economic development based on an improved agriculture.

To be sure, some of the surplus siphoned from the peasantry may have found its way into productive investment. It would be revealing to study individual revenue farmers more closely to determine just what their profits were and how they spent them. But on the other hand, the "treason of the bourgeoisie" in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is well-known.⁵³ The "precapitalist temptations", as Robert Mandrou has aptly called them, were manifold and overpowering.⁵⁴

Yet it remains important to study such activities for the insight they give us not only into social relations, but also into the scale and growth of the early modern economy, whether it had "progressive" features or not. This study has shown the integration of the area around Montpellier into a monetary economy more similar to the Lyonnais than to Auvergne, for example. But at the same time it also indicates the relatively small scale of these operations. With two-thirds of the Chapter's benefices and seigneuries located quite close to Montpellier, its clientele and the market they serviced were still predominantly local affairs. We are still a long way from the situation described by Georges Frêche when big time speculators and merchants now called *trafiquants* and *négociants* scoured the province for tithe leases to secure grain for their large regional and even national or international consortia. By that period, clergy and nobility, and to some extent even local bourgeois-merchant groups so

⁵¹ LE ROY LADURIE, *Les paysans*, I, 172-174.

⁵² GAGNEAUX, "Les rentes seigneuriales," in *Les fluctuations*, p. 274; also I. WALTERSTEIN, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974), p. 101, n. 126, in which he cites G. ARDANT, *Théorie sociologique de l'impôt*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1965), I, 208.

⁵³ LE ROY LADURIE, I, 281. But see also the works of F. Braudel, P. Goubert, L. Febvre and others.

⁵⁴ R. MANDROU, *Introduction à la France moderne, 1500-1640: essai de psychologie historique* (Paris, 1961, ed. 1974), p. 208.

prominent in our story, have been removed or have themselves left the stage.⁵⁵

Moreover, the details and stipulations of the contracts recording these transactions instruct us on such matters as credit, liquidity, and the prevalence of risk taking. Similar studies of other regions and periods of time would teach us more about speculation: to what extent it is encouraged by war, for example, as in the period here reviewed.

Finally, we should not disregard the light the study of the Church's business practices helps focus on spiritual issues. The Church's patrimony was in theory there to permit the clergy to give more and better spiritual assistance to the faithful. When such assistance was lacking or inadequate as in our period, the temporal property came under attack and anticlericalism spread.⁵⁶ The Counter-Reformation tried to solve this problem not only by encouraging spiritual regeneration, but also by cleaning up the ecclesiastical business practices which were presented in this article.

⁵⁵ Frêche found that 59.5% of the fermiers of the archbishop of Albi in 1780 were "négociants" and 14.1% were "trafiquants"; for the Chapter St. Sernin of Toulouse (1767-1775) the figures were 22.7% and 5.3% respectively; a further 22.1% at Toulouse were described as merchants, *Toulouse*, p. 529.

⁵⁶ On this complex of problems, see V. CARRIÈRE, *Les épreuves de l'Eglise de France au XVI^e siècle* in vol. 3 of *Introduction aux études d'histoire ecclésiastique locales* (Paris, 1936).

