EMPEROR

A NEW LIFE OF CHARLES V

GEOFFREY
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PREFACE

Does the world really need another book about Charles V, ruler of Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, half of Italy, and much of central and south America? The emperor himself composed his memoirs; hundreds of biographies of him have appeared in dozens of languages; WorldCat lists over 500 books published so far this century with 'Charles V' in the title. Nevertheless, no work is ever perfect. The emperor composed his triumphalist autobiography in 1550, while at the height of his powers, and several of the 'lives' are partisan (even some nineteenth- and twentieth-century biographers used his achievements for ideological ends).

Charles's modern biographers belong to one of two tribes: those who complain that their subject left too few records to allow the reconstruction of an accurate portrait, and those who protest that he left too many. In 2003, Scott Dixon, a member of the first tribe, declared that 'Charles left us little trace in the records of what he was really like . . . Of the many thousands of letters dispatched from his desk, very few make any mention of personal details.' The following year, Harald Kleinschmidt made a similar claim: 'There is an abundance of texts bearing Charles's name. But he never saw most of these and among the minority of letters that he did write with his own hand are some which do not reflect his own thoughts but those of his advisers.'[1]

Karl Brandi, author of a two-volume biography of Charles, belonged to the second tribe. 'Not for many centuries,' he wrote in 1937, 'could any prince compare with him in the number of revealing documents which he left behind.' A few years later, Federico Chabod went even further and claimed that 'Charles V left us more holograph documents than any other ruler in History.' In 1966, Fernand Braudel argued that previous historians failed to reconstruct Charles's 'thoughts, his temperament and his character' mainly because the surviving sources are too abundant. 'Looking for the emperor's personality amid the mass of papers,' he concluded, 'is like looking for a needle in a haystack.' In 2002, Wim Blockmans concurred: 'The body

of source material' concerning the emperor 'is so massive, it is impossible to survey the whole of it'.[2]

Impossible? Certainly, the surviving sources are 'massive'. Charles signed his first letter at age four (Pl. 2), and by the time he died he had signed more than 100,000 documents in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Latin and Spanish, adding a holograph postscript to several of them. His holograph letters (those written entirely with his own hand in French, Spanish and occasionally German) cover thousands of folios. Charles's epistolary output survives in archives and libraries all over Europe, in part because he spent so much of his reign on the move. He spent almost half his life (over 10,000 days) in the Low Countries and almost one-third (over 6,500 days) in Spain; he spent more than 3,000 days in Germany and almost 1,000 in Italy. He visited France four times (195 days), and north Africa and England twice each (99 and 44 days respectively). He created a documentary trail in almost every place he went. He eludes historians only on the 260 days he spent at sea, travelling between his dominions.[3]

Although he never crossed the Atlantic, Charles also left a documentary mark on his American dominions. The viceroy of Mexico issued almost 1,500 orders in the emperor's name in 1542 and 1543 alone, many of them in response to a direct imperial order. Some of his warrants (*cédulas reales*) gained iconic status because they legalized new Mexica settlements (*altepetl*) and became coveted foundational documents of which copies were still made in the 1990s. Moreover, since 'in Pre-Hispanic Mexico, the founding of the various *altepetl* took place under the will and protection of the gods', Charles acquired an honoured place among the panoply of deities in several of the communities he founded.[4]

The emperor strove to achieve immortality in more conventional ways. He sat for portraits, sponsored histories, commissioned works of art, built palaces, and appeared in propaganda spectacles (notably urban 'entries': Pl. 7). Mass-produced images of him appeared on coins, medals, ceramics and even draughts counters (Pl. 30), as well as in books and broadsheets. Musicians composed works to celebrate his successes (the battle of Pavia; the imperial coronation) and sometimes his setbacks (the death of his wife). An international corps of poets, painters, sculptors, glaziers, printers, weavers, jewellers, historians, armourers and scribes strove to project an approved image. The emperor followed the advice of Baldassare Castiglione's study of etiquette, *The Courtier* (one of Charles's favourite books, published while the author was ambassador at the imperial court and translated into Spanish at Charles's command): he did everything – walking, riding, fighting, dancing, speaking – with one eye on his audience.[5] He would have been appalled that in the nine-

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teenth century the Spanish government opened his tomb and exposed his naked mummified corpse as a tourist attraction, and that some visitors made drawings while others took photographs (Pl. 39). One bribed a guard to detach the tip of one of his fingers as a souvenir – although this vandalism belatedly proved a boon because forensic examination of the detached digit, now kept in a special receptacle, provided two pieces of important medical evidence: the emperor had suffered from chronic gout, just as he always complained, and he was killed relatively swiftly by a double dose of malaria (Appendix II).

Arma virumque cano ('I sing of arms and a man'): in an important article about the perils associated with writing the life of the emperor, Heinrich Lutz used the opening words of Virgil's *Aeneid* (a text familiar to Charles) to underline the need for his biographers to focus on those matters that absorbed his time, energy and resources – above all on war and preparing for war, both because hostilities took up so much of Charles's reign and because contemporaries noted that he was 'happiest on campaign and with his army'. Lutz argued that other developments, even the Renaissance and the Reformation, should appear only as and when they mattered to Charles, and that they must always be viewed through his eyes.[6]

Bearing in mind Lutz's strictures, this biography deploys the available sources, from documents to digits, to illuminate three key issues:

- *How* Charles took the crucial decisions that created, preserved and expanded the world's first and most enduring transatlantic empire.
- *Whether* Charles's policy failures arose from structural faults or from personal shortcomings: could a monarch with superior political skills have done better, or had circumstances created a polity too big for its own good and impossible to defend? In modern parlance, does agent or structure explain the failure to pass on his empire intact?
- *What* was it like to be Charles? While writing about one of Charles's role models, Alexander the Great, Plutarch (one of Charles's favourite authors) noted that 'The most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men: sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations.' This biography draws on many such unscripted but revealing episodes.[7]

Inevitably, the available sources are uneven. Like every other human being, Charles slept, ate, drank and performed other bodily functions every day,

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but they left a documentary trace only when they caused a problem (he could not sleep; he vomited; he excreted 'hot piss'; the pain from his haemorrhoids 'made him cry like a baby'). He also spent part of every day at prayer, he regularly attended church services, and each Holy Week he secluded himself in a monastery where he refused to transact any public business – but historians have no idea what else he did at these quiet times unless something unusual happened (he fainted during a church service and lay unconscious for over an hour; he retired to pray or confess at an unusual time, such as just before or just after making an important decision).

Moreover, as Charles lamented in the confidential instructions he composed for his son and heir in 1543, some political decisions 'are so impenetrable and uncertain that I do not know how to describe them to you' because 'they are full of confusions and contradictions'.[8] He made at least one effort to clarify everything. In November 1552 his valet Guillaume van Male confided to a colleague that the emperor had just ordered him to:

> . . . close the doors to his chambers and made me promise to maintain the utmost secrecy about the things he was about to tell me . . . He held back nothing. I was stunned to learn what he told me. Even now I shudder when I think of it and would rather die than tell anybody but you. Now I can write freely because the emperor sleeps, it is the dead of night, and everyone else has left.

'It will take a long time to share all the details with you,' van Male continued tantalizingly, because the emperor had just 'told me everything that ever happened in his life', and 'even provided me with a handwritten paper that listed all his past misdeeds', including 'many things he should have handled differently, either because he forgot something or because he later made changes'. Unfortunately for historians, at this point sleep overcame van Male too, and he laid down his quill. If he committed 'all the details' to paper at some later date, then his letter (like the emperor's handwritten list of misdeeds) has perished.[9]

Nevertheless, enough sources have survived to resolve many of the 'confusions and contradictions' in Charles's life. Apart from the mountain of his own surviving correspondence, the emperor attracted the attention of a large number of people: friends and foes alike wrote more about him than about any of his contemporaries, even Martin Luther. From his birth until his abdication numerous foreign diplomats observed and reported his every action, word and gesture; and a dozen or more eyewitnesses described major

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public events (such as his coronation in Bologna in 1530 and his abdication in Brussels in 1555). Records multiplied whenever the emperor travelled by land – and over the course of his reign he stayed in over 1,000 different places, from Wittenberg to Seville and from London to Algiers (Map 1) – so that it is sometimes possible to reconstruct his movements hour by hour.[10] Charles was never alone. Courtiers and diplomats accompanied him on even his loneliest journeys, including his first weeks in Spain in 1517 when he hiked across the Picos de Europa to claim his inheritance, sleeping in hovels surrounded by livestock and beset by bears; and again during his flight across the Alps in 1552 to escape capture by his German subjects, when his staff had to commandeer emergency bed linen for him in remote villages. He was closely observed even after he retired to the small palace attached to the monastery at Yuste, in Spain's Gredos mountains. At least two monks kept a journal in which their august guest played a starring role; virtually every day his courtiers recorded what their master had said and done; and twenty eyewitnesses provided sworn testimony about what they had seen and heard as the emperor lay dying. Bizarrely, Charles's last days are the best-known period of his entire life.

'My God, how does one write a Biography? Tell me,' Virginia Woolf asked a friend (and fellow biographer) in 1938. 'How can one deal with facts – so many and so many and so many?'[11] Four centuries earlier the Spanish Humanist Juan Páez de Castro, whom Charles had commissioned to write 'the life of Your Majesty', wrestled with the same dilemma. Before he started work, Páez de Castro drew up an outline that explained to Charles how he planned to deal with 'so many facts'. First, he set out his own credentials: he claimed fluency in six languages (including Chaldean) and knowledge of law, natural history and mathematics. Next, 'since writing is not just the product of ingenuity or invention but also of work and effort to assemble the materials that will be written about, it is necessary to seek them out'; and so Páez de Castro planned to visit every place 'that has seen the banners of Your Majesty, in order to provide the lustre that I desire for this work'. At each location he would 'consult venerable and diligent people; read the inscriptions on public monuments and graves; dig into the old registers kept by notaries, where many things that make up history are found; and copy all previous histories, old and new, by good and bad authors'. Finally, 'it will be necessary to consult Your Majesty about many things, to find out the rationale' for controversial decisions. It was an excellent outline, but Charles died before Páez de Castro could interview him, and its author died before he had completed any part of his biography.[12]

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Map 1. Charles's 'Voyages', 1515–56

In his abdication speech in Brussels in 1555, Charles reminded his listeners that he had undertaken forty 'voyages' on their behalf. He would make one more, his last, to the convent of Yuste in Spain, making him the most-travelled monarch of early modern Europe.
Source: de Boom, 'Voyage', pull-out

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This volume presents Charles's life in four chronological sections separated by 'portraits' of how he appeared to his contemporaries at critical moments: in 1517, when he left the Netherlands for the first time; in 1532, when he reached full maturity; and in 1548, when he attained the height of his power. The only exception is a thematic chapter on 'The Taming of America'. Charles, the first European to rule significant parts of the Americas, developed a keen interest in the continent: although he focused primarily on how best to make the resources of the New World pay for his endeavours in the Old, the emperor also displayed lasting interest in its flora, its fauna and its people, both natives and newcomers. In particular, he sought to provide his native subjects with spiritual guidance and material security. He saw this as an issue that affected his 'royal conscience' because 'when he found out how all the native inhabitants of Hispaniola and Cuba, and the other [Caribbean] islands had died through being sent to the mines, he became convinced that he would go to Hell if he permitted the practice to continue'.[13] Few Netherlanders of his day cared about America – even Erasmus 'hardly let an allusion to the New World pass his pen' – and Charles was the only sixteenth-century ruler to make a principled stand for the rights of native Americans. His legislation 'long continued to be a powerful brake on the oppression of native Americans'. Charles's New World initiatives therefore merit detailed attention.[14]

Páez de Castro, too, intended to include Charles's New World achievements in his biography, but he planned to omit some other matters. Although he believed that historians should 'condemn and denigrate the bad, so that nothing similar should take place in future', as well as 'exalt and praise the good to encourage repetition', he distinguished between 'the details that are proper to history and those that, without compromising the truth, should remain in the author's inkwell'.[15] For better or worse, few details about the emperor remain in my own inkwell. On the personal level, I have exalted and praised his facility with languages (he eventually mastered Italian and Spanish as well as his native French, and could speak some Dutch and German); his prowess in marksmanship and horsemanship; and his personal courage when commanding troops under fire. He also knew how to foster loyalty and affection. According to a diplomat in 1531, Charles addressed a crowd 'in such a moving and gentle way that it almost made the audience weep' and by the time he had finished, his hearers 'were of one mind, as if they had become his slaves'; when he died, the sorrowing members of his entourage 'gave great cries, hit their faces and butted their heads on the walls'; and a few years later, Ferdinand told a confidant that 'I loved and revered the emperor as if he had been my father'.[16]

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As for 'condemning and denigrating the bad', I have documented how Charles falsely denied that he had approved in advance the attack on Rome and capture of Pope Clement in 1527; how he lied about the murder of two French diplomats, Fregoso and Rincón, in 1541; and how he reneged on a solemn promise to marry his son Philip to a Portuguese princess in 1553. In some cases, Charles vehemently, publicly and repeatedly denied that he had lied (as in 1527 and 1541); in other cases, he simply refused to discuss his reprehensible conduct (when a Portuguese envoy came to protest the repudiation of the princess in 1554, 'we told him what was necessary, without wishing to justify or discuss the matter further, because when these matters are past it is best to dissimulate').[17] Charles could also behave badly in private. When he discovered in 1517 that his older sister Eleanor was in love with a courtier he forced her to appear before a notary and make a formal deposition renouncing her lover and promising to obey her brother in all things; the following year he forced her to marry an uncle more than twice her age. In 1530 he ordered that Tadea, one of his three illegitimate daughters, should receive a permanent 'mark on her right leg below the knee' (at best a tattoo, at worst a brand mark); and three years later he negotiated a marriage contract between his 11-year-old niece Christina of Denmark and a man four times her age, with the right to consummate the union immediately. Most shameful of all, Charles abused his mother Queen Joanna. He kept her confined and under guard until her death in 1555, and for some years he surrounded her with a fictional world, full of fake facts (such as insisting long after the death of her father, King Ferdinand, that he still lived). Moreover, on his visits to Joanna, Charles plundered her tapestries, jewels, books, silver goods and even liturgical vestments, which he recycled as wedding gifts for his sister and his wife, filling the empty chests with bricks of equivalent weight, hoping that his mother would not notice that he had robbed her until after he left.

These are perplexing paradoxes, and I have tried to understand them by establishing *how* Charles came to act as he did, before studying *why*. This methodological decision has some important consequences. As Christopher Clark observed in the preface to *The sleepwalkers*, his breathtaking study of the origins of the First World War:

> Questions of why and how are logically inseparable, but they lead us in different directions. The question of *how* invites us to look closely at the sequences of interactions that produced certain outcomes. By contrast the question of *why* invites us to go in search of remote and categorical

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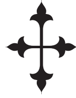
PART I



YOUNG CHARLES

'We are delighted that our grandson Charles takes so much pleasure in hunting, because otherwise one might think he was a bastard.'

Emperor Maximilian to Margaret of Austria,
28 February 1510

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— ONE —

FROM DUKE OF LUXEMBURG TO PRINCE OF CASTILE, 1500–8

THE DUKE OF LUXEMBURG

'We will begin with his lineage': with these words Pedro Mexía commenced his biography of Charles V, written in 1548, and his first chapter – entitled 'Of the exalted, excellent and undoubted genealogy and lineage of this great prince' – listed his subject's ancestors over the previous thousand years.[1] Mexía had correctly identified Charles's greatest initial asset – his exalted family – but hindsight led to some exaggeration. At the time of Charles's birth in 1500, his father Archduke Philip of Austria ruled only a few provinces in the Netherlands inherited from Philip's mother, Duchess Mary of Burgundy, albeit he was also heir to the distant lands in central Europe ruled by his father Maximilian, head of the House of Habsburg. Charles's mother Joanna initially had no parallel expectations, since she was the third child of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, both from the Spanish House of Trastámara and normally known as the Catholic Monarchs, a title bestowed upon them by a benevolent Spanish pope.

The three dynasties shared a number of common denominators. Above all, they all practised a policy of matrimonial imperialism. Several generations of the Aragonese and Castilian branches of the Trastámara intermarried with the express intention of uniting the kingdoms; and they also intermarried with the House of Avis, which ruled Portugal, in the hope of uniting the peninsula. The dukes of Burgundy embraced matrimonial imperialism from the first (in 1369 the first duke married the heiress of the county of Flanders), and they acquired most of their other Netherlands territories through inheritance. Habsburg rulers contracted marriages both to add territories and to strengthen bonds between different branches of their dynasty, giving rise to a slogan that first became popular just after the union of Maximilian of Austria with Mary of Burgundy in 1477:

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Bella gerant alii; tu, felix Austria, nube
Nam quae Mars aliis, dat tibi regna Venus.
Others make war; you, happy Habsburgs, marry,
For the kingdoms Mars gives to others, Venus gives to you.[2]

Matrimonial imperialism nevertheless came at a cost. Polities created in this way were the antithesis of the modern state: dynastic loyalty was often their only common denominator, encouraging a ruler to see his dominions, however far-flung, as a personal possession, a patrimony, to be handed on to the next generation intact. In 1543, Charles assured his son, the future Philip II, that his principal goal would be 'to avoid leaving you less of an inheritance than the one I inherited'.[3]

Fear of France formed another common denominator between the three dynasties. Burgundy had signed anti-French treaties with Aragon in the 1470s, and a decade later Maximilian suggested the marriage of his only son with a Spanish princess; but negotiations languished until Charles VIII of France invaded Italy in 1494 and marched triumphantly to Naples to press his dynastic claims to the kingdom. The following year, Maximilian warned the Catholic Monarchs 'that once the king of France has gained Naples, he will want to occupy the other states of Italy'; and to persuade them 'that they should resist and attack the king of France' he proposed a double marriage: between his daughter Margaret and their heir, Prince John, and between his heir Philip and their younger daughter Joanna. The marriage contracts were signed in January 1495 and the Spanish princess reached Lier, near Antwerp, in October 1496, where the couple consummated their marriage. No one foresaw that their son would rule the greatest empire seen in a millennium (Fig. 1).[4]

The future Charles V first made his presence felt from the womb. In September 1499, Philip summoned 'a midwife from the city of Lille' to 'see and visit' Joanna; and four months later he sent a courier 'at the utmost speed, day and night, without sparing men or horses', to ask the abbot of a convent near Lille to lend its most precious relic, the 'ring of the Virgin' reputedly placed on Mary's finger by Joseph when they married, and said to 'bring solace to women in labour'. According to some accounts, the ring proved extremely effective: Joanna's labour began while she attended a ball in the palace of the counts of Flanders in Ghent, and she only got as far as the nearest latrine before giving birth to the future emperor. It was 24 February 1500, St Matthew's Day.[5]

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Figure 1: The genealogy of Charles V and his siblings

Bianca Maria Sforza 1472–1510 =(2) Maximilian I of Austria 1459–1519 =(1) Mary of Burgundy 1457–82

Germaine de Foix =(2) Ferdinand of Aragon 'the Catholic' 1452–1516 =(1) Isabella of Castile 'the Catholic' 1451–1504

Germaine de Foix – Juan 1509

Joanna of Castile 1479–1555 = Philip the Fair 1478–1506

Margaret of Austria 1480–1530 = John of Castile 1478–97

Manuel I of Portugal 1469–1521 =(1) Isabella 1470–98

Isabella
1470–98

John
of Castile
1478–97

Joanna
of Castile
1479–1555

María
1482–1517
= (2)
Manuel I
of Portugal
1469–1521

Katherine
of Aragon
1485–1536
= (1)
Arthur,
Prince of Wales
1486–1502
= (2)
Henry VIII
1491–1547

Eleanor
1498–1558
= (1)
Manuel I of Portugal
1469–1521
= (2)
Francis I of France
1494–1547

Charles V
see Fig. 3

Isabeau
1501–26
=
Christian II
of Denmark
1481–1559

Ferdinand I
1503–64
=
Anna
of Hungary
1503–47

Marie
(of Hungary)
1505–58
=
Louis II
of Hungary
1506–26

Catalina
1507–78
=
John III
of Portugal
1502–57

Juan
1497

Miguel
1498–1500

Isabella
of Portugal
1503–39
=
Charles V

Mary Tudor
1516–58

Carlos
1520–21

María of Portugal
1521–77

(father both Manuel)

Hans
1518–32

Dorothea
1520–80

Christina
1521–90

Elizabeth
1526–45

Maximilian II
1527–76

13 others

Most contemporary histories of Charles included his genealogy, and for good reason: a remarkable series of births, marriages and deaths united the possessions of four European dynasties under a single sceptre. None of Charles's grandparents desired this outcome, however, and it would have been undone had the unions between Princess Isabella and Manuel of Portugal, between Prince John of Spain and Margaret of Austria, or between Ferdinand of Aragon and Germaine de Foix, produced an heir that survived infancy.

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As soon as the citizens of Ghent heard news of the birth, according to the city's leading poet, an eyewitness:

> Great and small shouted 'Austria' and 'Burgundy'
> Throughout the whole city for three hours.
> Everyone ran about while shouting the good news
> Of [the birth of] a prince of peace.

Meanwhile Philip signed letters instructing the major towns of the Netherlands to arrange 'processions, fireworks and public games' to celebrate the birth of his heir, and summoned the leading clerics of his dominions to attend the child's baptism.[6] He also sent an express messenger to his sister Margaret, then returning from Spain, 'begging her to hasten back so that she could hold the child in her hands at the font during the baptism' and serve as godmother. As soon as Margaret arrived she pressured her brother to call the child Maximilian, after their father, but Philip chose the name of their grandfather, Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy – although he also conferred on his son the title 'duke of Luxemburg', a dignity held by several of Maximilian's ancestors.[7]

Charles's grandparents reacted in different ways. In Spain, 'when his grandmother Queen Isabella learned of his birth' on St Matthew's Day, 'remembering that Holy Scripture records that Jesus chose the Apostle Saint Matthew by chance, and understanding how much hope surrounded the birth of her grandson, who would inherit so many and such great kingdoms and lordships, she said: "Chance has fallen upon Matthew"'. In Germany, Maximilian declared himself 'entirely satisfied with the name' of the child 'on account of the affection I hold towards my dear lord and father-in-law, Duke Charles'.[8] Meanwhile, in Ghent, the magistrates prepared a series of triumphal arches representing the individual dominions that the infant would inherit from his father and grandfather, if he survived, while others represented the virtues of wisdom, justice and peace. On the evening of 7 March 1500 a long procession accompanied the infant over a special elevated walkway from the palace to the local parish church where his baptism would take place. Thousands of torches along the way 'turned night into day' (in the words of an awed chronicler) and allowed the vast crowd to watch as the officials and courtiers slowly passed by, culminating in Charles and his four godparents, each one destined to play a significant role in his early life: his great-grandmother Margaret of York, widow of Charles the Bold; his aunt Margaret of Austria; Charles de Croÿ, prince of Chimay, and Jean de Glymes, lord of Bergen, two of the foremost

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Netherlands nobles. No one could have overlooked the symbolism of this arrangement: Philip, who would normally have occupied pride of place in the procession, ceded it to his son, who thus entered his secular inheritance by receiving the homage of his future subjects at the same time that he became a member of the Christian Church through baptism.

Philip had good reasons for this innovation. Although he boasted many titles, his ancestors had acquired them piecemeal over the course of a century, mostly by marriage. As Rolf Strøm-Olsen has pointed out: 'Charles's baptism presented a rare opportunity for the Habsburg court to make supra-regional claims about its legitimacy, power and authority', giving the ceremony in Ghent 'in ritual terms, some of the significance of coronation ceremonies found elsewhere in Europe, ceremonies not available to the rulers of the Low Countries'.[9]

Nevertheless, Philip did not entirely trust the people of Ghent. Three weeks before the birth he ordered that thirty archers and twenty-five halberdiers should henceforth 'stand on duty from the time when the archduke arises, and then accompany him on his way to Mass'. They 'must not leave the palace' without express permission but instead 'secure and protect the person of the archduke' day and night.[10] These were not idle precautions. After the death of Mary of Burgundy in 1482, Ghent had refused to accept her husband Maximilian as regent of the Burgundian Netherlands and guardian of their infant children. Instead, its magistrates seized young Philip, holding him as a hostage, and created a council of regency 'to maintain the right of our lord, your son, whom we hold to be our prince and natural lord, and none other'.[11] In 1485, at the head of troops from his German and Austrian territories, Maximilian crushed the dissidents and liberated his son, whom he moved to the loyal city of Mechelen; but three years later his autocratic behaviour provoked first his own capture and imprisonment in Ghent, and then his expulsion from the Netherlands.

Revolt, factional strife, and war thus characterized Philip's minority, which lasted until his fifteenth birthday in 1493, prompting the new ruler to adopt a very different style of government from his father. As Philip declared in 1497: 'Ever since we came of age and received the allegiance of our lands, we have always had the earnest desire, wish and inclination to end the great disorders that have prevailed here because of past wars and divisions, both in our own household and elsewhere in our said lands, and instead to introduce order.'[12] A decade later the Venetian ambassador at the court of Burgundy, Vincenzo Quirino, deemed this policy a success. Philip, he wrote, was 'by nature good, generous, open, affable, kind and almost intimate with everyone', and 'he

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sought to uphold justice with all his might. He was pious and he kept his promises.' Nevertheless, Quirino added, 'although he quickly understood complex issues, he was slow to deal with them and irresolute in action. He referred everything to his council.' Quirino also noted that 'I have learned from experience that decision-making at this court is very variable and mutable', because 'often they decide one thing in the council, and then do something totally different'. Gutierre Gómez de Fuensalida, the Spanish ambassador, agreed: the archduke, he wrote, 'is very fickle, and everyone has the power to change his mind'. Maximilian once reproached his son for listening to 'traitors and disloyal advisers who put [false] ideas in your head in order to create divisions between you and me' and suggested that 'it is better for you that I should know about your plans before your ministers instead of being treated like a stranger'. Yet Maximilian's repeated demands that his son should follow his lead, above all in waging war on France, left Philip (in Quirino's words) 'torn between paternal affection and the esteem and trust he places in his ministers'. In short, 'He finds himself in a labyrinth.'[13]

Olivier de la Marche, a veteran courtier of the dukes of Burgundy who became Philip's preceptor, appeared to agree with these unfavourable analyses, because at the end of his *Memoirs*, completed just before his death in 1502, he called the archduke 'Philip-believe-what-you're-told [*Philippe-croy-conseil*]'.[14] Nevertheless La Marche's 'Introduction', written a decade earlier, had expressly warned his pupil not to follow the example of his headstrong father Maximilian. 'Let me tell you the truth,' he urged Philip: 'Never give your subjects power over you, but always ask for their advice and assistance in forming and sustaining your grand designs.' La Marche praised the archduke because, after a quarter-century of war and rebellion, 'by listening to advice, you put the country back on its feet': he had united and pacified his disparate holdings; he had ensured universal acceptance of Habsburg rule; and he had established a cohort of over thirty trusted councillors, many of whom would also advise his son, creating a crucial element of political stability and continuity that helped to prevent a recurrence of the domestic unrest that had followed the death of his predecessors.[15]

The young duke of Luxemburg knew nothing of this. The daily accounts of his household show that a few weeks after giving birth, 'the archduchess and her noble children' (Charles and his sister Eleanor, fifteen months his senior) left Ghent for Bruges and then Brussels. There Joanna fell seriously ill and 'for forty-nine days continuously' Liberal Trevisan, Philip's personal physician and a member of his council, joined the 'other doctors and surgeons tending our very dear and much loved wife, to cure her of an illness'.[16] Charles

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would not have noticed. A Spanish diplomat reported that the duke of Luxemburg and his sister 'were being raised together in their apartments and no one has been added to their list of servants', with one exception: Barbe Servels, who, as Charles recalled four decades later, 'served as my principal wet-nurse for nine months'. A native of Ghent, Barbe began to nurse her august charge from the outset and Charles remained devoted to her: he stood godfather to her son, in whose career he took a keen interest, and when she died in 1554 he ordered her to be buried in the cathedral of St Gudule in Brussels and commissioned a prominent epitaph in her honour.[17]

The reports of Ambassador Fuensalida to Ferdinand and Isabella provide the earliest descriptions of Charles and his sister. In August 1500, after his first visit, Fuensalida wrote what grandparents everywhere want to hear: at five months 'the duke of Luxemburg is so tall and strong that he seems like a boy one year old', while his sister Eleanor, aged almost two, 'is so lively and clever that she seems as developed as a child of five'. Naturally, 'they are the most beautiful children in the world'. By the time of his first birthday, Charles was 'already taking steps in a baby walker (*carretonçillo*)' and 'walks with as much confidence and strength as a three-year-old'; and by August 1501 he was 'the strongest child for his age that I have ever seen'.[18]

The interest of the Catholic Monarchs reflected, in part, acute anxiety about the future of their dynasty. In 1497 their heir and only son John had died, leaving his wife Margaret of Austria pregnant, but their child died almost immediately. This made Joanna's older sister Isabel heir to all the territories ruled by the Catholic Monarchs, but she too died in 1498, immediately after giving birth to a son – who followed her to the grave two years later. On 8 August 1500 a letter from the Catholic Monarchs reached Philip, 'announcing the death of the child, so that my lord was now prince'. Three days later, for the first time, Philip signed a letter *Yo el príncipe* ('I, the prince'), the official style used in Spain by the heir apparent.[19]

These events profoundly affected the infant duke of Luxemburg. In the long term, as the oldest son of Joanna and Philip he would eventually succeed his father in Spain as well as in the Netherlands and in Austria. In the short term, his parents abandoned him because although Spain had no coronation ceremony, each new heir to the throne needed to appear in person before the representative assembly (*Cortes*) of each constituent state (Castile, León and Granada together; Aragon, Valencia and Catalonia individually) in order to receive their allegiance. Initially, Philip exhibited little enthusiasm for his good fortune. He did not inform his subjects of his impending departure for Spain until December 1500, when he asked his

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Netherlands subjects to fund the costs of the voyage; and even then he suggested that he might travel alone. The archduke's ambiguity probably reflected both the fact that Joanna was pregnant with their third child, Isabeau (born in July 1501 and named after her grandmother, Isabella the Catholic), and also the hostility of his courtiers who, according to Fuensalida, 'would rather go to Hell than to Spain'. The new prince and princess did not begin their journey until October 1501, leaving their children under the care of Margaret of York in Mechelen (where Philip himself had grown up), assisted by a household of almost one hundred 'essential personnel'.[20] The children would not see their father again for two years, and their mother remained in Spain to give birth in March 1503 to another son, whom she named Ferdinand after her father. She did not return to the Netherlands until 1504.

As María José Rodríguez-Salgado has pointed out:

> It was not unusual in this period for princes to be separated from their parents, to whom they were bound as much by political as by personal ties. We should not therefore expect aristocratic and princely dynasties of the time to be equipped with the emotional make-up of the contemporary bourgeois family. But even by the standards of the day, Charles had been born into an extraordinary and dysfunctional family.[21]

Fuensalida's letters to the Catholic Monarchs documented that dysfunction. He reported that during Joanna's absence in Spain, Philip 'had lots of fun' with his children 'and saw them many times', whereas after Joanna's return to the Netherlands she ignored them. In addition, Philip's infidelities caused such serious tensions between Charles's parents that in July 1504 Fuensalida (unfortunately for historians) dared not entrust details to paper but instead sent a special messenger to describe the discord to his sovereigns in person. The following month Philip visited Holland without his wife, and the ambassador noted with regret that 'Her Highness [Joanna] does not write to her husband and he does not write to her.' The archduke made an effort at reconciliation after he returned, bringing Charles and his sisters from Mechelen to Brussels to see their mother, 'thinking that if he brought them she would talk to them', but (according to Fuensalida) she 'did not seem to enjoy their company much'. Philip then tried another tactic: 'that night the prince slept in his wife's bedroom' (presumably the night that Joanna conceived another child, their daughter Marie). Relations between the couple soon deteriorated again. They regularly screamed at each other, and Joanna periodically

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retreated to her rooms and went on hunger strike; but after she grabbed a metal rod to beat the attendants appointed by her husband, Philip confined her to an apartment under guard. Obviously she could not be trusted with her children.[22]

In October 1504 another unexpected letter arrived from Spain: Ferdinand of Aragon announced that his wife Isabella seemed near to death. Therefore:

> The prince, my son, must immediately and secretly put his affairs there in order, so that everything is as it should be (although no one must know or understand why this is being done). He and the princess, my daughter, must also secretly prepare themselves so that if I should send a messenger they could leave at once and come here by sea with no delay.

Once again, Philip showed extreme reluctance to travel to Castile, complaining to Fuensalida that news of the queen's illness had 'come at a bad time', because he had just begun a war against Duke Charles of Guelders, a resolute and resourceful enemy of the dukes of Burgundy, 'and this is a major obstacle if I have to go to Spain: although Spain is of great importance, this is my real homeland and I must not lose it.' Even news of Isabella's death, which arrived in December 1504, failed to change Philip's mind: although he immediately styled himself 'king of Castile', he continued the war with Guelders until he had occupied most of the duchy – only to hand it back in return for a promise from Duke Charles that he would remain at peace while he went to Spain. The new king and queen of Castile finally set sail from Zealand in January 1506.[23]

THE UNIVERSAL HEIR

Although Charles never met his Spanish grandmother, her lavish obsequies in Brussels in January 1505 were probably the first public event he could remember. He, his sisters and their courtiers all wore special black coats and hoods lined with fur 'as mourning for the late queen of Spain', while they watched their parents kneel before the altar in the cathedral of St Gudule and listened to the magnificent 'Mass for Philip the Fair' by Josquin des Prés, the most famous composer of his day, composed for this occasion. After the service they heard the heralds proclaim the new 'king and queen of Castile, León and Granada, and prince and princess of Aragon and Sicily', and watched their parents solemnly process through the streets of Brussels, preceded by shields and banners 'on which all the king's titles were written, so

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that no one could plead ignorance'. Shortly afterwards, Charles and his siblings met their grandfather Maximilian for the first time, when he spent more than a month in the Netherlands, and they no doubt watched the numerous tournaments over which he presided 'in the great hall of the palace and in the park of Brussels', in one of which their father entered the lists with three of his courtiers, all dressed in yellow and red 'in the Spanish fashion'.[24]

The children likewise enjoyed the exotic animals imported by Philip from Spain – four camels, two pelicans, an ostrich and some guinea fowl, which joined the lions and bears kept in the palace gardens of Ghent and Brussels. Surviving sources record that Charles baited the lions with a stick, and fenced with the figures portrayed in the tapestries that decorated his apartments. He also pranced around on the hobby-horses given to him by Maximilian and by Count Palatine Frederick of Bavaria (both of whom would play an important role in his life); he drove his sisters around in a small cart drawn by ponies; and he organized his pages into armies of Christians and Turks, in which the duke of Luxemburg invariably commanded the former and invariably won.[25]

The children also learned to read and write. At first, Charles, Eleanor and Isabeau studied together under the direction of Juan de Anchieta, who served Joanna as both priest and composer – a common combination at the time, because musicians needed to write their own scores, and so were deft with a quill, while children normally learned elementary literacy by reciting and reading prayers. Indeed in April 1503 (when Eleanor was four and a half, Charles just over three, and Isabeau not yet two), Philip paid one of his chaplains who was also a copyist of musical manuscripts just over £2 'for a parchment book which he had illuminated, containing the gospels and prayers that were read' to the duke of Luxemburg and his sisters 'every day after they had heard Mass'. Seven months later, probably as a present for her fifth birthday, Philip gave Eleanor a 'book called "ABC", composed of large letters, with lots of pictures and some gold letters', which cost £12 – rather a lot for a child's primer, but a good investment because one year later she was able to send a letter written in her own hand to her grandfather Ferdinand.[26] Charles made slower progress. In January 1504, when a letter in Spanish went out in his name to his grandfather, asking 'Your Highness to excuse my discourtesy in not writing with my own hand' (reasonable enough for a boy not yet four), the prince could not even write his own name himself, instead copying the letters written on a separate sheet by Anchieta (Pl. 2).[27]

Anchieta returned to Spain and Luis Cabeza de Vaca, 'a Spaniard of noble blood who excelled in letters and good conduct', became preceptor to

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the royal children. He took immediate steps to create an environment more favourable to learning – a local carpenter supplied a special desk, with a cupboard for school supplies and seats, 'so that the prince and his sisters could go to school' – and for the next three years his three illustrious charges studied together (Pl. 1).[28] Still, Charles made slow progress. When, in September 1506, Maximilian expressed the desire that his grandson should learn some Dutch, his governor replied frostily: 'I will deal with your request once he can speak properly and has learned to read.' Perhaps illness delayed education, because in the course of 1505, a substantial quantity of 'drugs, medicine and spices' were 'delivered by order of the doctors to the prince and his sisters during their illnesses'. Isabeau suffered the worst, because she 'had an infection in her eyes' that obliged her parents to pay a master surgeon, who 'visited her every day for the nine months that she was ill'.[29]

In September 1505, just after the master surgeon had cured Isabeau, Joanna gave birth to Marie (named after her paternal grandmother), bringing the number of children in Mechelen to four; but this addition to Charles's family circle was balanced by losses. Margaret of Austria, his aunt and godmother, left to marry the duke of Savoy in 1501, while his great-grandmother and first governess, Margaret of York, died two years later. Although Charles was too young to be affected, he certainly noticed the departure of his parents. They visited Mechelen in November 1505, just before leaving for Zealand where Philip had assembled a fleet to take them back to Spain. Because unfavourable winds confined his fleet to port, Philip paid one last flying visit to his children in Mechelen in December, but it was the last time: he died in Spain less than a year later. Isabeau and Marie would never see him or their mother again, nor would they ever meet their youngest sister Catalina (born in spring 1507), because although Joanna survived until April 1555 she never left Spain, while Catalina, who outlived all of them (she died in 1578), never left the Iberian peninsula.

Although of course the new king and queen of Castile did not realize that they would never return to the Netherlands, the normal risks and perils of travel in early modern Europe led them to take appropriate precautions. In June 1505, Philip met both his father and his sister in the expectation (according to Ambassador Quirino) that Margaret, once again a widow, would 'govern the Netherlands while [Philip] was in Spain; but they could not reach an agreement, and so she returned to Savoy.' Instead Philip named Guillaume of Croÿ, Baron Chièvres and head of his treasury, as regent and commander-in-chief during his absence with full powers to take military, judicial and administrative decisions, as well as 'to make treaties, alliances and

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agreements' with foreign powers, 'and in general to do or cause to be done each and all the things that we ourselves would and could do'. Philip also named the prince of Chimay, Chièvres's cousin (and Charles's godfather), to be guardian of his children, assisted by Henri de Witthem, lord of Beersel, with instructions that the prince and his sisters 'must be carefully protected and also taught good behaviour and all manner of knowledge'.[30]

Finally, Philip made a will that revealed profound uncertainty concerning the future of his dominions. He decreed that if he died in Spain, he must be buried in Granada beside his mother-in-law Isabella, whereas if death overtook him in or near the Netherlands, he wanted to be interred in Bruges beside his mother Mary; 'but if the duchy of Burgundy should be in our hands' at the time of his death, 'I wish to be buried in the Charterhouse of Dijon, alongside the dukes of Burgundy, my predecessors.' Philip's will also directed that each of his young daughters must be well and honourably maintained, in keeping with their status, 'at the expense of my oldest son', and that when they married each should 'receive a dowry of 200,000 gold crowns' – a wholly unrealistic provision, since each dowry far exceeded his annual revenues from the Netherlands. Most perplexing of all, he named his male children jointly as 'universal heirs to all my kingdoms, duchies, counties, lands, lordships and other possessions', directing that 'I wish each of them to inherit and succeed to the various parts and portions according to the customs and usages of the places where my said possessions are and may be situated'.[31]

Evidently, Philip envisaged a partition of the immense but awkward inheritance created by the marriages and deaths of his Trastámara relatives (a prudent move contemplated by his successors on several occasions), but few at the time considered this a likely outcome. Henry VII of England predicted that Charles 'will be the sovereign of all and will be able to rule the world'; while Ambassador Quirino declared that since Charles was now the universal heir to 'all the Netherlands, and will succeed his mother [Joanna] as ruler of Castile when she dies, and his grandfather as Archduke of Austria, he will be a great lord'. However, the ambassador added ominously, although Charles was 'a handsome and happy child, in all his deeds he showed himself wilful and cruel, like old Duke Charles [the Bold] of Burgundy'.[32]

'A HANDSOME AND HAPPY CHILD'

For some time, the future of the 'handsome and happy child' hung in the balance. Philip took more than 400 courtiers, over 100 guards and some

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2,000 German troops with him to Spain, and his sudden death there in September 1506 left them all destitute. 'There was not a man among us who had a penny,' one of them later complained, adding that 'by the time the king died, he had spent all his own money'. Since no one in Spain would help them, and 'fearing that an order would be issued preventing them from returning to our own country', the desperate courtiers immediately seized as much of the late king's goods as they could, starting with his jewels, gold and silver, 'selling everything for far less than it was worth'. Later, they 'sold their own clothes, their horses, and their other precious possessions in return for bread' and a passage home. The Burgundian survivors henceforth harboured a deep resentment towards Spain.[33]

News of Philip's death arrived in the Netherlands while Chièvres was absent from Mechelen, directing operations against the duke of Guelders who, encouraged by Louis XII of France, had resumed hostilities. The rest of the regency council panicked because (as one of them put it) 'we do not yet know how the news will be received by either the subjects or by the neighbouring friends and enemies'. They feared domestic disorders similar to those that followed the death of Philip's grandfather Charles the Bold in 1477 and his mother Mary in 1482; while although the king of France sent letters 'full of fine words as usual, it would be very dangerous to place much trust in them'. In addition, the regents observed ominously, Philip had died so suddenly that 'we did not even know he was ill', leaving Joanna in Spain and Charles too young to rule.[34] With some trepidation, they therefore summoned delegates from the representative assembly of each of his Netherlands provinces to convene as the States-General.

Philip had convened the States-General twenty-five times during his decade of personal rule, to discuss matters of peace and war as well as his demands for new taxes. Delegations from the four largest and richest provinces (Brabant, Flanders, Hainaut and Holland) almost always attended the States-General, normally joined by those from Artois, French-Flanders, Mechelen, Namur and Zealand, and occasionally by those from Limburg and Luxemburg. On each occasion the various delegations discussed the matters referred to them in three separate 'estates': prelates, nobles and towns. The same was true of the assembly that gathered in Mechelen on 15 October 1506 'to meet our revered lord, the archduke, prince of Castile, and to see if they will (as we hope) agree to offer advice on affairs here'.[35]

Philip's consensual style of government at home and abroad now paid dividends. Every community in the Netherlands gave vent to 'the greatest sorrow and lamentation you ever saw' on learning of his death, while both

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Henry VII and Louis XII offered their protection to the young prince. Indeed, for the rest of his reign Louis respected the neutrality of all Charles's possessions (though he continued to provide clandestine aid to the duke of Guelders). Some of the regents (notably those with lands in the southern provinces, like Chièvres) favoured placing the Netherlands under French protection; but others, mostly those with estates in the maritime provinces (like Bergen), favoured an alliance with England. The States-General, however, deemed that Maximilian could best guarantee their future, and sent a delegation that included both Chièvres and Bergen to invite him to serve as guardian of his grandchildren and as regent.[36]

Maximilian had anticipated this decision: as soon as he heard of his son's death, he commanded the council of regency 'to continue to govern our Netherlands, as our late said son ordered you to do, in the name of ourselves and our very dear son Archduke Charles' until he could return to take charge, 'which will be in two to three weeks'. No doubt realizing that this timetable was totally unrealistic, he also summoned his daughter Margaret to join him.[37]

The archduchess, now aged twenty-seven, had led an eventful life. In 1483, aged three, she went to France as the fiancée of Charles VIII and spent the next eight years at the French court, until the king brutally repudiated her and married another. After living for two years with her grandmother in Mechelen, Margaret went to Spain to marry Prince John, but he died after only six months, and in 1500 she returned to Mechelen. Eighteen months later she left for Savoy to marry Duke Philibert, with whom she lived happily until he too died young in 1504. Margaret now concentrated on constructing the magnificent mausoleum for Philibert that still stands at Brou, in south-east France, and apart from a brief journey in 1505 to discuss with her father and brother the possibility of serving as regent of the Netherlands, she remained in Savoy until Maximilian summoned her the following year. The two spent several months together, apparently discussing how best to cope with the emergency caused by Philip's unexpected death, until in March 1507 Maximilian signed letters patent formally accepting:

> The tutorship, guardianship, government and administration of our most dear and beloved [grand]children, Charles, prince of Castile, Ferdinand, archduke of Austria, and their sisters Eleanor, Isabeau, Marie and Catalina, all minors, as well as all their possessions, lands and lordships, as we are competent and entitled to do by right and by reason as their grandparent and their closest relative.

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Since he could not yet exercise these powers in person, he appointed Margaret as his 'procurator' to receive an oath of obedience 'from our territories and lordships in the Netherlands', and he sent commissioners to swear an oath before the States-General by which he agreed to act 'irrevocably' as sole tutor and regent for Charles 'until the end of his minority'.[38]

This constituted a power grab of breathtaking proportions. Chièvres and his colleagues had governed the Netherlands successfully for eighteen months with minimal supervision: now Maximilian unilaterally dismissed them and claimed complete authority over the Low Countries and his grandchildren at Mechelen. He also claimed authority over the other territories left by his son and over his other grandchildren, Ferdinand and Catalina, both of whom lived in Spain. Since the emperor had no authority in Spain, Charles's inheritance in effect remained partitioned, much as his father had envisaged in his will: Joanna's father King Ferdinand did his best to control Castile (as well as Aragon and Sicily, of which he was sovereign, and Naples, which his troops had recently wrested from the French), and he raised his younger grandson and namesake as a Spanish prince, while Maximilian struggled to control the Netherlands and to make sure that Charles grew up as a Burgundian prince.

The children at Mechelen learned of their bereavement in October 1506 when their governor informed them that their father was dead. 'They showed the grief appropriate to their age, and perhaps even more so', Maximilian learned, and 'they said that they were lucky to have a loyal parent like you'. Charles now referred to the emperor as 'my grandfather and father'.[39] Although Maximilian did not visit them again for another two years, Margaret arrived in Mechelen in April 1507 and started to take care of her nephew and nieces. The children warmed to her immediately: when she left shortly afterwards to carry out her political duties, they burst into tears (according to an eyewitness) because 'they would no longer see their aunt and godmother – or more accurately their new mother'.[40]

ARCHDUCHESS MARGARET OF AUSTRIA, DOWAGER DUCHESS OF SAVOY

When Margaret returned to Mechelen two months later, she arranged solemn obsequies for her late brother in the cathedral of St Rombout, in which Charles appeared for the first time as a ruler. First she withdrew from the library of the dukes of Burgundy a magnificent illuminated manuscript prayer book, bound in black velvet and displaying the arms of Charles the

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Bold, and presented it to his young namesake, no doubt so that he could use it during the service. Next she arranged for Charles to lead a solemn procession 'mounted on a small horse' and 'flanked on both sides by the archers of his bodyguard'. After Mass the principal herald shouted 'Long live Charles, by the grace of God archduke of Austria and prince of Spain'. The other heralds present then called out in turn his numerous other titles – duke of Brabant, count of Flanders and so on – after which Charles received the sword of justice 'in his tiny hands, and holding it with the point upright he went to the altar', where he briefly prayed before leading the procession back to the palace. There 'the noble young prince dubbed a new knight for the first time', thus demonstrating to everyone his new status. This detailed account of Charles's first public appearance as a ruler, written by Margaret's official chronicler Jean Lemaire des Belges, ended with the pious wish: 'May God grant that he may henceforth do as much as Charlemagne to defend public affairs and Christendom!'[41]

The events of the following day cruelly revealed the hollowness of such grandiose visions. Margaret had ordered the States-General to reassemble 'in the great chamber of the prince's residence, still draped in black', and there they listened as the chancellor requested new taxes to fund an effective defence against Guelders, to discharge the debts of the late king, and to 'pay for the household of My Lord and his sisters'. Margaret made a brief speech of support before turning to Charles to ask: ' "Isn't that true, nephew?" And then my lord Archduke, aware of his princely responsibilities despite his young age, begged the deputies for their consent by making a short speech that was better understood by watching his facial expressions than by listening to the sound of his boyish voice.' He spoke and gestured in vain: the assembly refused to vote any new taxes. Charles learned for the first time that paying for his enterprises required careful preparation.[42]

A few weeks later, Margaret introduced her nephew to the warriors who would absorb almost all the taxes provided by his subjects over the next half-century. She summoned her leading army officers to the great hall of the palace and pointed to Charles, saying: 'My lords: here is the person for whom you fight. He will never waver. Serve him!' The following day she and her nephew stood at the window while 500 cavalry troopers rode by the palace 'with banners unfurled and trumpets sounding' to defend the Netherlands against Guelders.[43]

When Maximilian named Margaret as his 'procurator' in 1507, he purchased for her a complex of buildings in Mechelen just across the street from the 'Keizershof' where his grandchildren lived. Soon refurbished, and

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known as the 'Hof van Savoy', it became Margaret's headquarters until her death in 1530. According to the account books of her household, more than 150 people sat down there to eat lunch every day, including visitors from all over Europe whom the archduchess wanted her nephew and nieces to meet. Some came from ruling families, like Count Palatine Frederick of Bavaria; others were related to Charles's ministers, like young Guillaume of Croÿ, Chièvres's nephew; but most came from less exalted families. One of them was Anne Boleyn, daughter of an English diplomat who desired her to become fluent in French. When she arrived in Mechelen in 1513, Margaret told Anne's father that 'I find her so refined and pleasant, despite her young age, that I am more indebted to you for having sent her than you are to me'. Anne stayed for over a year, learning the French that would later captivate Henry VIII and make her queen of England.[44]

Margaret's court soon became the foremost cultural centre in northern Europe. Her library contained almost 400 bound volumes, many of them exquisite illustrated manuscripts; she employed Bernard van Orley and Jan Vermeyen as her resident painters, and Peter de Pannemaker as her personal tapestry-maker; she also entertained the famous artists of her day, including Albrecht Dürer who in 1521 praised her paintings 'and many other costly things and a precious library'.[45] By the time of her death, the archduchess owned over 100 tapestries, over 50 sculptures and almost 200 paintings (including works by the finest Netherlands artists: Rogier van der Weyden, Hieronymus Bosch, Hans Memling and Jan van Eyck); and she took a keen personal interest in her possessions. She ordered a new hinge for van Eyck's great 'Arnolfini wedding' triptych, so that the wings would close properly; she summoned the celebrated painter Jan Gossaert to carry out expert restoration on her most valuable canvases; and an inventory of her possessions contains corrections and annotations written in her own hand that reveal her personal involvement in creating the collection. In the words of Dagmar Eichberger, who has studied Margaret's collections extensively, the archduchess 'could pride herself on having a comprehensive portrait gallery in her dining hall, a collection of ethnographic artefacts from the New World in her library, a painting gallery in her stately bedroom, and a beautiful array of small objects, scientifica and exotica in her two collection cabinets'. Margaret's example would inspire her young charges, each of whom later displayed exquisite artistic taste.[46]

Charles and his sisters became the family that Margaret had never previously enjoyed – and for the rest of their lives they would address their letters to 'Madame my aunt and my dear mother'; declare that 'the affection

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I bear you is not only that of a nephew towards his aunt but that of a good son to his true and loving mother'; and sign them 'your humble niece and daughter' (or 'your humble son and nephew').[47] Margaret's surviving correspondence makes it easy to understand why the children adored her. When in 1507 Maximilian appointed a replacement for Friar Jean de Witte as confessor to his grandchildren, Margaret requested an exemption for Eleanor. Charles and his younger sisters, she reported, 'do not yet have great need' of spiritual direction, 'except to lead and encourage them to obey the commandments of God and his Holy Church', but Eleanor (then nine years old) 'already has a good understanding of good and bad conduct' and, since she liked Friar Jean, Margaret asked her father to leave him in post. Four years later, on hearing that their governor 'had forbidden the young ladies to dance', she informed him that 'this causes them much tedium and sorrow. Therefore, taking pity on them, I think that they should be allowed to dance just as before.' She taught her nieces sewing, needlework and the art of making preserves; and in 1514, when it seemed that Mary Tudor (sister of Henry VIII and also an orphan) would marry Charles and move to the Netherlands, Margaret sent her a pattern 'of the clothes that ladies here usually wear, so that it will be easier for you to dress in the local style when you get here.'[48] What mother could have done more? Long after her charges departed, Margaret served as a clearing house for family news. When in 1518 she received a letter from Charles in Spain, she immediately wrote to inform his sister Marie, then in Hungary, that 'every day he takes part in jousts and tournaments, and I bet he often wishes that you and I were there with him to enjoy ourselves'. Above all, as Annemarie Jordan Gschwend has noted, Margaret trained all members of the next generation 'to respect and serve the dynasty they were born into, instilling in her young protégés one principle they would honor their entire lives: a deep loyalty to the Habsburg house'.[49]

PROTECTING THE HEIR

The plethora of premature deaths among the Habsburg, Burgundian and Trastámara dynasties no doubt explains the obsessive anxiety concerning the health of Charles and his sisters. In 1508, when Maximilian returned to the Netherlands and suggested that 'for his recreation' his grandson should travel with him between Mechelen, Lier and Antwerp, a radius of no more than 18 kilometres, the prince of Chimay lodged a formal protest because of 'the young age of my lord, who is vulnerable and delicate'. If the emperor nevertheless insisted, Chimay continued, then after every day on the road

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the prince must 'stay put for a whole day, so that he will have two consecutive nights in which to rest and recover'. Six months later, it was Maximilian's turn to be over-protective. He learned that Liberal Trevisan, the Venetian physician who had attended Joanna 'for forty-nine days continuously' after her son's birth, planned to present Charles with a dog: 'Be on your guard against this,' he instructed Margaret, and keep both the dog and the doctor at bay 'during the current state of war that exists between us and the Venetians'. Shortly afterwards, he instructed her to expel Trevisan from the Netherlands 'because of our suspicions about him: since he is a Venetian we do not wish him to attend our grandson Charles any more.'[50] Margaret shared these fears. A few weeks later she insisted that her charges 'must reside [in Mechelen] permanently, without leaving the city until I get back there', because 'these days one does not know whom one can trust'. She also obsessed about their health because (as she once confided to Maximilian) 'even the slightest illness in people of such importance causes concern'. Thus when news arrived that the prince's sisters in Mechelen had contracted smallpox, she kept Charles in Brussels 'because the doctors say this illness is contagious, and that my nephew may catch it' (he caught it anyway, and was incapacitated by the agonizing and dangerous disease for over a month).[51]

Margaret's obsessions apparently did not extend to her nephew's education. The surviving evidence of Charles's early literacy suggests a very slow learner. 'At the age of seven', according to a courtier, Charles 'wanted to learn and understand Latin letters', but a surviving Spanish letter from 1508 contained only twelve words in his own hand and his signature as prince of Castile, while another in French ended with three words in his own hand and his signature as duke of Burgundy – and in both cases, although now eight, Charles still wrote each character separately and made no break between words (Pl. 3).[52]

His script would always remain poor. In 1532, on receiving a set of holograph instructions, his sister Marie complained that 'if I may say so, one or two words are so badly written that I was not able to read them, and I do not know if I managed to divine them correctly'. The description by a modern historian of the mature handwriting of their older sister Eleanor, taught by the same preceptors (Anchieta and Cabeza de Vaca), will sound depressingly familiar to all who have struggled with the emperor's calligraphy. Eleanor:

> Normally joined together as many characters of a single word, and even of several words, as possible, as if trying to commit as many letters as possible to paper without lifting her hand. She never hesitated to leave

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> erased words or to use every known abbreviation . . . She never really used punctuation, although she sometimes indicated the end of a sentence with an oblique stroke . . . She preferred efficiency to legibility.[53]

Charles and his siblings nevertheless came into contact at Mechelen with many cultivated men and women and their work. The accounts of the treasurer-general of the Netherlands recorded a payment of £10 in October 1504 'to Brother Erasmus of Rotterdam, a friar of the Augustinian Order, as a one-time gift from My Lord as charity to help support him at college in Leuven, where he is studying' (almost certainly a reward for the *Panegyric* on Philip's 'voyage to Spain and successful return home', delivered at court the previous January). Erasmus claimed that he also received an invitation to serve as Charles's tutor and although he turned it down, he dedicated two of his books to the prince and corresponded regularly with both ministers and courtiers.[54] The court also patronized musicians, artists and craftsmen. In 1504, Charles's father paid £15 to a bookbinder for 'making wooden covers for five large books, and for repairing and re-gilding several other works'; and £36 to 'Jeronymus van Aeken, called Bosch' for 'a very large painting measuring nine feet high and eleven feet wide which will show the Last Judgement, that is to say Heaven and Hell, which My Lord has ordered him to paint'. The following year, Philip paid £23 to 'a man who played a strange Spanish instrument, and to a young girl from Lombardy' who 'played several songs and performed acrobatics for him while he dined', as well as £25 to a painter who presented him with 'a picture of a naked woman' (payments that put the gift of £10 to Brother Erasmus of Rotterdam in perspective).[55]

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Just before his eighth birthday, Charles exchanged marriage vows – and not for the first time. In 1501 his father's diplomats had signed a treaty that betrothed him to Claude, daughter of Louis XII of France; but despite renewing that agreement on three separate occasions, Louis had no intention of honouring it, having already promised that his daughter would marry the heir presumptive to his crown: Francis, duke of Angoulême. As soon as the deception became public knowledge, Maximilian (in his capacity as tutor and guardian of his grandson) opened negotiations for Charles to marry Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry VII, and in December 1507, Bergen went to England as Charles's proxy and placed a wedding ring on the princess's finger,

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after which the couple exchanged their vows. A triumphalist English tract celebrated 'the most noble aliaunce and gretest mariage of all Christendome, considering the sundry and manyfolde regions and countrayes that the sayde yonge prynce . . . shal enherite', and Charles signed obsequious letters to 'the princess of Castile' (as she became known), whom he addressed as 'your devoted husband and companion' (see Pl. 3). The letters patent creating a separate household for Charles's sisters instructed their treasurer to include 'our very dear and beloved spouse, Mary of England'.[56]

Although Charles never consummated the 'gretest mariage of all Christendome', he gained one immediate advantage: Henry VII made his new son-in-law a member of the exclusive Order of the Garter. In February 1509, in the presence of Maximilian, 'the English ambassadors presented the archduke with the insignia of the Order, which he received solemnly, dressed in a purple coat made of velvet with a scarlet hood' and (tactfully) the cross of St George on his shoulder. A week of celebrations followed, including jousts in the marketplace of Brussels in which Maximilian took part, watched from the balcony of the city hall by his admiring grandchildren.[57]

Just before he left the Netherlands in spring 1509, Maximilian made two important innovations that affected Charles. First, he created a separate household for the prince, with up to twelve pages (who would later become squires and then knights) and between six and eight other young noble companions ('enfants d'honneur'), as well as a host of other attendants. Second, he conferred on Margaret the title 'regent and governor' of the Habsburg Netherlands and authorized her to preside over a Privy Council composed of twelve Knights of the Golden Fleece (Burgundy's exclusive chivalric order) who must accompany her at all times.[58]

According to the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, these changes meant that 'never had a governess enjoyed such freedom of action'. Nevertheless, Margaret had hoped for far more: she urged her father to confer on her 'the same full authority that [he] exercises, without exception', and to grant that 'she alone can exercise [his] authority', but Maximilian insisted on retaining for himself control over finance, war, peace and patronage. 'Since I am guardian and grandfather of my [grand]children,' he chided her, 'it seems to me that I should retain some powers, both to supervise you and to maintain my reputation', and his correspondence with his daughter offers countless examples of decisions taken despite her opposition.[59] Above all, Margaret wanted to marginalize Chièvres, still in charge of the treasury. When the prince of Chimay wished to resign his position as First Chamberlain of the prince in favour of his cousin Chièvres, Margaret asked her father to appoint

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Bergen instead. But Maximilian ignored her plea: Chièvres began to draw salary as First Chamberlain on 27 April 1509. He now became the prince's constant companion: the household accounts of that year record the purchase of matching fabrics 'for the coverlet of the bed of my lord [Charles] and the bed of my lord of Chièvres, his governor'; and when Charles later decreed changes for the household of his brother Ferdinand, he ordered that a confidant 'should always sleep in his bedroom as M. de Chièvres does in ours, so that when he wakes up he might have someone to talk with, if he wishes'.[60]

Although Maximilian prevailed on this important issue, he too had hoped for wider powers. In 1508 he announced to an assembly of the Knights of the Golden Fleece 'his intention of joining together his possessions, and unifying them into a single kingdom, to be called "Burgundy and Austria" for better defence against common enemies'. Although this initiative failed, two years later he announced his intention of taking Charles with him to Austria and 'immediately afterwards making him king of *Austrasia*' – a title virtually unknown since the days of Charlemagne – and in preparation, his advisers drew up 'Instructions for the household of the future king of Austrasia'. Once again, the initiative failed.[61] Meanwhile Chièvres strove to improve relations between the Burgundian Netherlands and France, while Margaret worked hard to strengthen links with England and Spain. In 1508 she informed King Ferdinand (her former father-in-law) that little Charles, 'despite his young age, on his own initiative asks about your health every single day and regards you (together with the emperor) as his true father who will, he knows, protect him from his enemies'. Henceforth these four powerful figures – Margaret, Maximilian, Ferdinand and Chièvres – competed ruthlessly for the heart and mind of the orphan prince.[62]

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