

Charles V Confirms the Privileges of his Subjects, 1515

Introduction: When Charles V came of age in 1515 and began his personal rule, he confirmed with a personal oath, as was customary, to maintain the privileges of his subjects during his entry into the city of Leuven in the Province of Brabant. Below is his 'Joyous Entry,' or *Blijde inkomst*, translated by Herbert H. Rowen, *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times: A Documentary History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 12-16.

Charles, by the grace of God Prince of Spain, the Two Sicilies, Jerusalem, etc., Archduke of Austria, duke of Burgundy, Lorraine, Brabant, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Limburg, Luxemburg, and Gelderland, count of Flanders, Habsburg, Tyrol, Artois, Burgundy, the Palatinate of Hainaut, landgrave of Alsace, Margrave of Burgau and of the Holy Empire, count of Holland, Zeeland, Phiret, Kieburg, Namur, and Zutphen, lord of Friesland, Upper Windischermark, Portenau, Salins, and Malines.

To all men present and future, greetings. For as it is proper and fitting for the prince and sovereign of a land to give and bestow the grace and gift of right and privileges to his good subjects and people, and mindful of the many and great services, the affection and the loyalty which our good people, the subjects in our lands of Brabant, Limburg, and our other lands Beyond the Maas [Meuse] often gave to our forefathers, the dukes and duchesses of Brabant, of blessed memory, such as good men owe to their rightful rulers, and confident that they will continue to give the same to us, we have granted, given, and affirmed in this Entry and reception in these aforesaid lands, and do grant, give, and affirm those privileges, points, and confirmations of rights as follow below, promising and taking an oath for ourselves, our heirs, and descendants, to maintain them and to have them maintained firmly and without interruption forever.

I.

Item, firstly, that we will be good judges and true lords over them and permit no violence or arbitrary action to be done to them in any way, and that we will not do or permit anything to be done to them outside the courts and the laws, but will treat all our prelates, houses of God, barons, nobles, good people and subjects of our cities, jurisdictions and lands of Brabant and Beyond the Maas in all things through the courts and according to the rights of the cities and the

benches which have authority over them, and that these judges in our aforesaid lands must hold their sessions without any delay on any pretext of commission or omission, provided that these aforesaid judges may put off trials in lordships one time but no more. . . .

III.

Item, that as duke of Brabant and Limburg we shall never enter into any obligation affecting the lordship of these lands, wage war or raise loans, directly or indirectly, except with the counsel, will, and consent of our cities and the country of Brabant. And we shall not give our pledge or seal to any other acts by which our countries, boundaries, or cities, or any of their inhabitants, or any of their rights, liberties, or privileges might be injured or diminished or our countries and our subjects harmed in any way.

IV.

Item, that we accept the title and arms of Lorraine, Brabant, Limburg and of Margrave of the Holy Empire as established, and that we shall have a seal made and engraved in accordance with the aforesaid title and arms, with signs clearly distinguishing it from our other seals; and we may not change this seal nor give permission for a new seal to be engraved on the same model, except for good reason and with the consent of the three estates of our land of Brabant. This seal must always remain within this our land of Brabant, and never be taken away, and it shall be used to seal all acts concerning our lands of Brabant and Beyond the Maas, or their inhabitants, but for no other purpose. Also, letters concerning these matters shall be written by any of our secretaries assigned to Brabantine affairs and shall be signed by four members of our Council of Brabant.

V.

Item, that during our absences we shall appoint seven worthy persons, one of whom shall be the chancellor or keeper of the seals, a native of our aforesaid country of Brabant and competent in three languages, to wit: Latin, French, and Dutch, whose duty it shall be to guard our aforesaid seal. Four of them shall be native resident property owners in our aforesaid country of Brabant, or possessors of a peerage in this our country in their own right or through marriage. The remaining two to represent us in our Council are to be selected at our pleasure, provided that they know the Dutch language. We undertake to commit the government of our aforesaid country in our absence to these seven. And when we are in our aforesaid countries of Brabant or Beyond the

Maas, we shall conduct all our affairs concerning these countries of ours with the counsel of our aforesaid Council of Brabant. And all who are to be councilors and secretaries to us or to our successors, before binding themselves in their conciliar or other office by the usual homage, fealty, and reverence to us or our successors, must pledge and promise to our three Estates, representing the whole country, that they will never use these offices to write, witness, or seal letters by which any of our country's cities, castles, people, revenues or lordships, on water or land, lying either on this or on the other side of the Maas, would be disturbed, mortgaged, sold, alienated, diminished, burdened, or in any way encumbered, surrendered or ceded in any manner, except by consent of the aforesaid three Estates. And should it nevertheless be discovered that any of our aforesaid councilors, keepers of the seal or secretaries, in Council, office, or service has been guilty of error or misconduct, we shall correct him in accordance with the counsel of the nobles and good cities of our aforesaid country of Brabant, or of the majority of them.

LXIV.

Item, we further have confirmed and ratified and do confirm and ratify all other prelates, cloisters, houses of God, barons, knights, cities, franchises, and all our other subjects and good people of our lands of Brabant and Beyond the Maas in all their rights, liberties, privileges, charters, customs, usages and practices, which they now possess and were given and granted under seal by our forefathers, the dukes and duchesses, and also those which they have followed, practiced and continued, in particular the additional letter granted by the aforesaid late duke Philip, our great-great-grandfather, to the aforementioned three Estates at the time of his Entry, as well as two other letters granted them by our said great-great-grandfather, one of the date of September 20, 1450, and the other of November 21, 1457, and promise them jointly and separately to hold and keep these for ever, for ourselves and our heirs and successors, without violating them or doing or permitting anything to be done against them in any way, and further declare for ourselves, our heirs and descendants, that we shall never allege or permit to be alleged that we are not bound to maintain the aforesaid liberties, rights, privileges, charters, customs, usages, and practices which we here in general have confirmed and ratified, on the grounds that we did not specifically and individually give, grant, or promise the previous points and articles, and we do not wish that they shall suffer or meet any harm, hindrance, or prejudice

on this account. And because we intend and desire that all these aforesaid points, articles, gifts , promises, confirmations, and assurances shall continue to be observed strictly and without interruption for all time, we have therefore promised in good faith and sworn upon the Holy Bible to the prelates, cloisters and houses of God, barons, knights, cities, and franchises, and all our other good people and subjects of our aforesaid lands of Brabant and Beyond the Maas, and their heirs and descendants, that we, our heirs and successors, shall forever stand firmly by them and never do anything or permit anything to be done against them in any manner. And should it happen that we, our heirs or successors, should by our own action or that of others violate them in whole or in part, in any manner whatsoever, we consent and concede to our aforesaid prelates, barons, knights, cities, franchises and to all our other subjects aforesaid, that they need not do us, our heirs or successors any services, nor obey us in any other things we might need or which we might request of them, until such time as we shall have corrected the mistaken course hitherto pursued toward them, and have completely abandoned and reversed it; and for this purpose we will decree and declare that all officers installed in their offices in a way contrary to the Entry of our aforementioned great-great-grandfather Duke Philip shall be dismissed immediately; and further that for the future, too, any innovation contrary to established custom which might be attempted shall be null and void, nor shall it be upheld in the future. All this is granted without guile.

To the contractual and perpetual establishment of these things, we have had our seal appended hereto. Given in our city of Louvain, January 23, in the year of Our Lord 1515 according to the style of writing of our court of Brabant.