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To Helli Koenigsberger, a great authority and a good friend

Emperor Charles V 1500–1558

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34. Stratenwerth, 'Aktenkundliche Aspekte', 66; Gorter-van Royen, *Maria*, 238, 270.
35. Fernandez Alvarez, *Carlos V, el César*, discusses the meetings *passim*.
36. J. Valdeon Baruque, 'The Monarchic State and Resistance in Spain', in P. Blickle, ed., *Resistance, Representation and Community* (Oxford, 1997), 72–6, 94–7, 103–7; R. García Carcel, *Las germanias de Valencia* (Barcelona, 1981).
37. Haliczer, *Comuneros*, 208–23.
38. Adriaen van der Goes, *Register van de saecken van den Lande van Hollandt 1544–1549* (The Hague, 1554), 624–46.
39. W. Blockmans, 'The Emperor's Subjects', in Soly, *Charles V*, 269–71.
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The image in balance

The creation of a classical hero

Charles' first journey to Italy in 1529 marked a break in his reign: his coronation as emperor confirmed his hegemony in Italy as much as it did his universal role as protector of Christianity and the Catholic Church. From then on the emperor impressed his own views on governmental policies more emphatically. At the same time his personal appearance underwent a metamorphosis: the long-haired, beardless German youth we see in all the pictures before 1529 followed the advice of his grand chancellor Gattinara, and on the way to his triumphant journey through Italy recreated himself as the incarnation of a Roman emperor. In 1528 his court chaplain, the Franciscan Antonio de Guevara, had written a biography of Marcus Aurelius, whom he recommended as an example for Charles to follow.

In Italy the enthusiasm for classical forms and languages was at its peak. In 1507 Pope Julius III had placed a magnificent ancient marble statue of Hercules and Telephos at the entrance to the courtyard in the Vatican, a few days after it had been unearthed in Rome's Campo dei Fiori. The bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius that stood opposite the church of St. John Lateran was copied several times, sometimes for members of the Gonzaga family, the marquises of Mantua.[1] In order to make a positive impression in such an environment Charles was forced to follow the Italian fashion.

Charles' cultural background was clearly rooted in the last flowering of the world of chivalry at the court of Burgundy. He celebrated his Joyous Entry into Valladolid in 1517 with a tournament, much to the consternation of the Castilians. In order 'to show the Spaniards how brave these gentlemen are', scions of the great families of Croy, Lannoy and Luxembourg appeared, flanked by thirty magnificently apparelled knights, 'each like a Saint George'.[2] As late as 1540 Charles ordered a Castilian translation of the allegorical romance of chivalry, *Le Chevalier délibéré*, written by Oliver de la Marche, chronicler to the court of Burgundy. During

the reception for Crown Prince Philip in 1549 the regent Mary had the guests at her castle of Binche take part in a spectacular entertainment inspired by a chivalric romance. The old culture had evidently not yet lost its charm for the courtiers.

Charles did not consider the world of chivalry purely as fiction and amusement, as his attachment to the princely code of honour shows. It compelled him to respect the safe-conduct he gave to Martin Luther, even after he had been sentenced by the Diet in 1521, and to treat his rival Francis I with all honour while he was his prisoner. He burst out in anger at Francis' 'cowardice and treachery' when he broke the promises made in January 1526 in the Treaty of Madrid. Like a true knight, Charles challenged him to a duel, a challenge he was to repeat on two later occasions. His rival, although taller and more powerfully built, was unwilling to become involved in such dangerous reminders of a bygone age.

Francis I took a much more lively interest than Charles in the cultural currents of his day. He had a new wing built on the Louvre and commissioned the building of the magnificent Renaissance palaces of Chambord and Fontainebleau. Following the Italian custom he had an art gallery built in these palaces where he insisted on showing his guests around himself and lecturing them on the exhibits. He was patron to a number of artists and scholars, founded the *Collège Royal* and was interested in learning for its own sake.[3]

There is no trace of such cultural leanings in Charles as a young man. The portraits we have of him from that period were the work of the court painters of the regent Margaret, Conrad Meit and Bernard van Orley, or of the court painters of Emperor Maximilian, such as Hans Weiditz. Van Orley made the first portrait study in which the new look can be seen; the portrait by Jan Cornelsz Vermeyen is the first in that style that has survived.[4]

Triumphal arches modelled on those of the Via Sacra in Rome, where the ancient Roman triumphs took place, greeted Charles on his arrival in Genoa on 12 August 1529. In the harbour, a copy of the single arch of Titus on the Forum Romanum had been constructed and decorated with the two-headed eagle that was the symbol of the imperial domination of the world. The cathedral was embellished with a copy of the arch of Septimius Severus with its three archways, crowned by Lady Justice.[5] These Genoese triumphal arches were the first in a whole series of copies made on the models of antiquity, and seen, for example, in 1535–36 during Charles' entries from Palermo to Lucca as conqueror of the Turks, and in 1549 in the towns of the Low Countries during his joint tour with Philip for the latter's inauguration as his successor.

The *moment suprême*, of course, was the imperial coronation at Bologna on 24 February 1530, Charles' birthday. In the tradition of the Western empire that Charlemagne had restored in 800, Charles had been crowned king of the Langobards two days before. The grandeur of these events was immediately reproduced, thanks to the propagandist activities of the regent Margaret, in a series of 24 woodcuts with commentaries, which was published in Antwerp after a design by Robert Péril. Nicholas Hogenberg later made a series of 40 copper engravings based on these woodcuts, with only a short description in Latin. From the prints we can see that the procession passed under four Renaissance-style triumphal arches on its way from San Petronio's cathedral to the church of San Domenico. There were two baldequins: one protected the holy relics and was carried by 12 Roman patricians led by 12 prelates of the Holy See carrying torches. The other was held above the anointed heads of the universal rulers, Clement VII and, on his left, the emperor. This arrangement denied Charles that extra honour that Paul III would accord him at his entry into Rome in 1536, the place of honour at the right hand. The early enmity, the deep humiliation of his captivity and the Sack of Rome apparently still rankled with Clement, as this subtle symbolism made apparent.

The two rulers were preceded by groups spreading their banners in display and by four princes of the empire, each bearing a symbol of the imperial insignia: sceptre, sword, imperial orb; the empty hands of the fourth prince on the return journey showed that the emperor was wearing his crown. They were immediately followed by the emperor's principal chamberlain, Count Henry III of Nassau, and the pope's secretary and personal physician. In front of this group rode the herald, of whom the commentary said,

> The herald called Burgundy had two bags hanging from his saddle, filled with newly-minted gold and silver coins. On one side of the coins was the effigy of the Holy Majesty and the inscription *Carolus Quintus Imperator Augustus*, and on the other the two pillars and *Plus Oultre*. During the procession to and from the cathedral the herald used both hands to scatter the coins in all directions to the people in the street, crying out 'largesse, largesse', and the people shouted loudly back, '*imperio, imperio*', for the empire, long live the Catholic Emperor Charles.

The coins were an ancient way of proclaiming the generosity of the victor, but also a mass medium through which the new emperor could make himself known. The coronation attracted large numbers of Italian artists to the imperial court in the hope of obtaining commissions. The most famous among them was Parmigianino, of whose work the contemporary painter and art critic, Giorgio Vasari, said that it much pleased the emperor. 'He made a very large oil painting in which Fame placed a crown

of laurels on Caesar's head while a boy resembling the young Hercules presented him with the world.'[6]

In about 1530 a tapestry commissioned by Charles' brother-in-law, John III of Portugal, was woven to a design by Bernard van Orley or his workshop. It was entitled *Hercules Carries the Heavenly Spheres*.[7] The glorification of the emperor, associated with Hercules and his labours, was now taking place on an increasingly large scale.

The appeal of the new artistic style of the Renaissance lay in its form; its reference to classical antiquity fitted exceptionally well into the symbolism of the universal imperial role which those close to Charles propagated as fully as possible. The emblems and device of the emperor appeared everywhere on public buildings, such as the Bisagra gate in Toledo, the rood screen in the cathedral there and in the church at Vianen in the Netherlands, where Charles visited the Brederode family in 1540. The chimney piece in the offices of the *Vrije* (the free rural district) in Bruges shows the emperor and his dynasty carved in wood, in the town hall in Kampen in sandstone, while that of the town hall in Kortrijk uses heraldry to emphasise the firm ties between the local government and the higher authority. The emperor's triumphs were carved in wood in the choir stalls of the Great Church in Dordrecht at the time of the emperor's visit in 1540.[8] During his stay in 1531 the States General presented him with a magnificent series of seven tapestries depicting the battle of Pavia, from sketches by Bernard van Orley.[9] In the vast empire through which the emperor travelled, but where he was inevitably absent from most places, these visual means of propaganda formed a permanent reminder of his glory. The images represented him being helped by the local rulers, who thus strengthened their own position.

During his first two visits to Italy Charles' artistic taste received a powerful impulse from his friendship with Federigo Gonzaga, the marquis of Mantua. Charles made him a duke and appointed his brother Ferrante viceroy of Sicily and governor of Milan. It was Federigo Gonzaga who introduced Titian, the already renowned Venetian painter, to Charles. It was not until his second visit in 1532 that this led to real recognition, when Titian made a copy of the portrait of Charles standing with a greyhound, painted by Ferdinand's court painter, Jacob Seisenegger. Charles found the superior expressiveness of Titian's work so convincing that from 1547, when he commissioned a whole series of portraits of members of his family, he loaded him with commissions and heaped honours upon him. Charles' visits to Mantua brought him face to face with the daring frescoes of Giulo Romano and his school in the newly finished Palazzo Te. Gonzaga's passion for Arab thoroughbreds was

evident in a series of paintings in the palace. The deities of antiquity were depicted in frankly erotic poses: Eros and Psyche, and also Charles' favourites, Hercules and Jupiter. Shortly before Charles' visit in 1532 the *Battle of the Titans* was completed, an astonishing panoramic mural in a chamber without any corners. The work could be interpreted as an allegory of the wars between Charles and Francis I: an eagle sat enthroned at the top.

Charles' triumphal journey through Sicily and Italy in 1535–36 provoked competition between succeeding towns with all the previous ones, and between the artists. The entries in Messina, Rome and Florence were reported in print. His victory over the Muslims was the theme of his welcome everywhere. Nine years after the Sack of Rome the entry into Rome was still a delicate matter. The accession of Paul III as pope eased the situation and Charles was able to hold a triumph in the classical manner. With a retinue of veterans of the expedition to Tunis, he rode the length of the Via Sacra, which was specially cleared of some churches and other buildings which had been in the way. Subjects from antiquity and references to Charles' five Habsburg predecessors as Roman king or emperor formed the dramatic theme of the reception. Charles was compared to classical and mythological heroes, giving a Roman aura to his image. In Siena he was depicted mounted on a gilded horse, three provinces at his feet. This was set on a float that was drawn through the town during the procession.

In Florence, where Alexander de Medici was to be married to Charles' daughter Margaret, Giorgio Vasari was responsible for 'magnificent and grandiose decorations to receive the emperor with suitable splendour'. The victory over the Muslims was illustrated in painted scenes, a tableau vivant showed the 'conqueror of Africa'. On the Trinity bridge the Rhine and Danube rivers were depicted in ceramics, Hercules fought the Hydra, Peace reigned. Because of the haste the equestrian statue of Charles was not completed in time, so that the inscription, 'To the most triumphant emperor Charles Augustus', had to serve for the horse alone. Alexander had good reason for this commission for he had the emperor to thank for his restoration to power.

The journey of Charles and Philip through the Low Countries in 1549 provided a good opportunity for all the towns to show their devotion to the dynasty. Here, too, every town vied in its efforts to outdo the others, and all in the new Renaissance style. Ghent was anxious to erase the memory of its subjection nine years earlier and constructed a series of triumphal arches decorated with Charles' emblems, each one depicting a father and son from history or mythology. Philip of Macedonia, count Philip of Alsace and

Charlemagne were dug from the past to make the association even more direct.[10] The metropolis of Antwerp surpassed all the other towns. The town clerk, Graphaeus, himself took charge of the printed report in which he proudly stated that 1726 local artists and craftsmen had worked on the decorations for the triumphal arches and stages. The organisation was in the hands of the painter, Pieter Coecke, who had just published a translation of Vitruvius' classic *Rules of Architecture*. 5,296 people took part in the procession; Graphaeus was obviously extremely precise, a sign of his professionalism. The town presented itself as an obedient maiden, entreating clemency from the new ruler. No fewer than eight historical Philips were exhibited here. Of all the presentations of the foreign trading nations that of the Spaniards aroused the most attention: behind two giant pillars seven great Spanish rulers stood face to face with the seven Virtues in a perspectival gallery. A triumphal arch was decorated with Charles' victories and surmounted with the Roman Temple of Janus, to convey the desire for a lasting peace.[11] In Dordrecht the imperial party was similarly welcomed by the States of Holland with decorations, performances and gifts. Commemorative medals were struck. Elsewhere in the north, however, everything was rather more restrained.[12]

In the meantime Charles had been working hard on his self-glorification. On his expedition to Tunis he was accompanied by the painters Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and Pieter Coecke, and Maarten van Heemskerck who made drawings. Their sketches formed the basis for the series of tapestries, commissioned in 1540 but not woven in Brussels till about 1554, and for the engravings of the Twelve Triumphs of the emperor, which Van Heemskerck published in 1555–56 on Philips' initiative.[13] The emperor's speeches were printed and the government arranged for the distribution of hundreds of pamphlets supporting its viewpoint.

There were a number of chroniclers in service at the court. Pedro Mexia wrote a humanistically coloured eulogy of Charles' reign up to 1530. The emperor took reporters with him on his major campaigns in Tunis and against the Schmalkaldic League, in the hope that their laudatory texts would enhance his eternal glory. His secretary, Johannes Secundus, died in 1536 before completing his epic poem in Latin on the Triumph of Tunis, but his chaplain, Juan Gines de Sepulveda, published *De Bello Africo*, 'The African War', in that same year. Another secretary, Antoine Perrenin, also wrote an account in French that was published in Latin after Charles' death. The most successful was Luis de Avila's narrative extolling the German campaign, which was published in Spanish under the title *Comentario de la guerra de Alemania*. Very soon translations appeared in French, Dutch, Latin and English. He modelled Charles on Julius Caesar, endowing him with fortitude and military talents, and showed him encouraging his troops and delivering speeches, but merciful towards those he conquered. The report by Charles' official historian, Barnabé de Busto, still remains unpublished in the library at the Escorial.[14] During a five-day boat journey down the Rhine from Cologne to Mainz in 1550 Charles began to dictate his memoires in French to his secretary, William of Male. This dry summary of journeys, events and illnesses was also intended as a sort of self-glorification, which he dedicated to his son.[15]

In 1547–48, at the zenith of his power, Charles was immortalised by Titian and the sculptors Leone and Pompeo Leoni, who also were given a number of commissions by members of his entourage. He had such confidence in these artists that he allowed them much artistic freedom knowing that they would fully express the essence of his own ideas. Related works showing the victory over the Protestants are laden with political propaganda: Titian's *Equestrian Portrait after the Battle of Mühlberg* and Leoni's *The Victory of the Fury*. Titian shows Charles in his richly decorated armour, galloping confidently on a thoroughbred across a peaceful landscape, dark clouds overhead. He holds the holy lance, symbol of his struggle as defender of Christendom, diagonally across the canvas. In Leoni's group, dating from 1551–53 but commissioned in 1549, the emperor is also holding the lance. With it he keeps the fallen and chained heretic in check. He wears the armour of a classical emperor, whose features and athletic figure he has also acquired. Without the armour he has the figure of a naked, ideally built Hercules. The glorification here is far removed from the reality: at the time when this masterpiece was created Charles was in the depths of a political, physical and mental crisis.

The association of the emperor with ancient heroes placed some of the images of him in an almost heathen context. The Latin form of address, *divus* (divine or sacred) acquired a broad rhetorical freedom in relation to the rules of the Church. On one gilded shield Charles was celebrated as a hero receiving a crown of laurels from an angel-like female figure. As captain of the Ship of State he was often represented in a similar manner.[16] In Van Heemskerck's engraving he is enthroned on a pedestal, elevated above all his enemies, including the pope. Unlike Francis I, Charles did not see art as an end in itself, but as a means of political propaganda or religious devotion.

In Titian's *Gloria*, dating from 1553–54, Charles has laid his crown aside, put on a hair shirt and left all worldly glory behind. He implores God for mercy for himself and his family. A striking aspect of the painting is that only the Virgin and a host of angels stand as mediators between them and the Holy Trinity: the allegorical figure for the Church is far below them.

Charles has clearly taken the consequences of his failures after 1551 and detached himself from the earthly glory that was so characteristic of the works commissioned before 1550. This was the painting that Charles had placed on the altar of the monastery church in Yuste so that he could see it from his deathbed. He felt at home among the austere Hieronymite monks of Yuste; the secular church had failed his trust.

Personality and fate

The dynastic calculations of his ancestors and pure chance had consorted to make Charles the heir to an immense number of kingdoms. The double marriage between the houses of Spain and Habsburg in 1496–97 was in no way intended to unite their territories in one person: the alliance was primarily to ward off the French invasion of Italy. Dynastic fate decided otherwise. In the sixteenth century nobody would have thought of questioning the divine will; a prince reigned by the grace of God. The chosen one had an honourable task to accept and fulfil. In the *Instructions* that Charles, with the help of Nicholas de Granvelle, drew up in January 1548 for his son, and which is also considered his political testament, he explained it thus: 'So many and such great kingdoms, states and domains, and so far apart, as God in His goodness has given me, and I shall give to you, if it pleases Him'.[17] The objective must be to avoid war, he suggests, but the evil intentions of jealous neighbours force you to protect your lands.

Philip conscientiously followed his father's instructions in both outline and details.[18] However, in two important respects, he chose a radically different approach, perhaps because of what he had seen happen to his father, for Charles had not mentioned them in his *Instructions*. Charles was an itinerant monarch in the Burgundian, indeed the medieval, tradition. He believed that he had to be in his territories as much as possible, to see things for himself and to make decisions in person. From 1535 the journeys became complicated because he led all the major military expeditions personally, and was thus campaigning for several months almost every year. He was exposed to fatigue, hardship, sickness and danger. In 1547 he was almost hit by a canon ball, an experience that had proved fatal to René of Chalon three years earlier at Saint-Dizier. Charles' was an onerous task, fulfilled increasingly in pain and with great effort, because of his ailments. From 1528 he noted his attacks of gout meticulously in his *Mémoires*. After 1543 he lost count of them somewhere between the tenth and eleventh attack, because they were occurring increasingly often and lasting longer. He prescribed a diet for himself and repeated it in 1547. During the Schmalkaldic War he had to rest his foot in a bandage when mounted on his horse; he was often forced to withdraw or to be moved in a litter. During the siege of Metz in the autumn of 1552 he was kept to his bed in the nearby town of Thionville. In 1554 he led his troops against the French attack on Artois from his litter and was laid low after that, unable to use his limbs.[19]

This existence of campaigns and journeys endangered the very running of government, every aspect of which, and at all times, Charles was so anxious to keep in his own hands. Even in respect of his most trusted governors, his sister Mary and brother Ferdinand, he kept the power of decision-making for himself. This style of government delayed the making of decisions in every corner of his *imperium*. Could he have approached this in a different way? The other great monarchs of his time, Henry VIII, Francis I and Sultan Sulaimān, also led their own armies; they saw it as a matter of personal honour as well as a method of motivation and rapid strategic decision-making. All three of them also had permanent residences housing a permanent apparatus of government. Charles did not have this at the central level, only in the capitals of the various parts of the empire, and not at all in the German Empire. Philip II, however, decided to govern his vast empire from his desk and audience chambers in the Escorial, and to leave the conduct of wars to his generals. He was no longer concerned with the problematic German Empire, on which Charles had spent so much energy. But this had been Charles' own choice, a choice that was different in the first half of his reign from the choice in the second. His (missionary) zeal as leader of Christendom and defender of the Catholic Church explains his enormous personal dedication to the crusades against Muslims and heretics. Early in 1536, and on numerous occasions thereafter, he marched against France in person.

The Holy Roman Empire was the heart of the difference between Charles' *imperium* and that of his son. He had not inherited this empire, although four Habsburgs had sat on its throne, three immediately before him. In his abdication speech in 1555 Charles justified his pursuit of this crown, 'not for his own sake, but for the defence of his lands, in particular the Low Countries'. This rationale lay behind the imperial rights to sovereignty over north and central Italy, which formed important legal grounds for opposing French expansion. The power of France and the Turkish advance constituted the two greatest military challenges to Charles' *imperium*. In such a situation the combination of the French and Roman crowns – there were no other real contenders – would have considerably weakened the whole complex of Habsburg territories. For Flanders and Artois Charles would have been the vassal of Francis I as king of France, while for the rest of the Low Countries and imperial Habsburg domains he

would have been the vassal of Francis as Roman king. The cohesion of French and German lands would have been an enormous obstacle to communications between Charles' territories in the Low Countries, Spain and southern Italy. In 1519, to preclude this option was more than just a matter of honour for the Habsburgs; it was an urgent strategic choice.

Charles' election as emperor had the support of the great banking houses of Augsburg and Genoa. Their reasons for the choice must have been based on the expectation of greater protection for their operations in an extended Habsburg empire. It is well known that Charles regularly supported the Fuggers against the powers in the Diet that opposed the monopolists. The exploitation of the mines, especially the copper mines, remained firmly in their hands. Antwerp was their most important outlet, which they served from Slovakia via Cracow, Danzig and the sea route. The unity of political authority within the sphere of their influence, and good relations with Denmark, were therefore clearly very precious to them.[20] The Genoese saw the advantages of political union with Naples and Sicily, their grain suppliers, and with their trading partners in Spain and the Low Countries. In time, the political switch of this trading republic to Charles in 1528 would also be motivated by the possibility of extending its contacts with Milan and south Germany, both now under imperial authority. The loss of its entry to the annual fairs in Lyons was relatively unimportant. In this way all the financial centres of Europe's burgeoning world economy fell under Charles' control, a situation which, in the beginning, seemed to be advantageous to all concerned. The Fuggers, Spinolas, Schetz and other major financiers and merchants received interest on their capital and – more importantly – permits to operate, commercial privileges and protection.

'The primary and most solid basis of your good government is still to tune your existence and property to God's boundless goodness and to subordinate your desires and actions to His will.' In his *Instructions* of 1548 Charles also reminded Philip that his first duty was the defence of the Catholic faith. But, he continued,

> Concerning the present pope, Paul III, you know how he has behaved towards me and how badly he fulfilled his responsibilities in the last war [against the Protestants] . . . Nevertheless, you must behave towards future popes with the humility befitting a good son of the Church, so that they have no just cause to be displeased with you; all this, of course, without surrendering any of the rights, interests, general good and peace of your kingdoms'.[21]

Charles indeed conducted himself with remarkable respect towards successive popes, even when they apparently failed to share his concern for

the fate of Christendom. In the middle of the war against the Schmalkaldic League Paul III suddenly withdrew his troops from Germany. Even before that he and his predecessor Clement VII had shown little interest in the expansion of the Reformation. Charles tried to stave off the greater danger of the Turkish attacks on the Empire with the indispensable military support of the Protestants, given in exchange for temporary concessions in religious matters. He consistently stressed that these were emergency measures taken in anticipation of the resolutions that a general council would make on all the religious questions.

The policy was risky, for a number of reasons. First, it made Charles' position in Germany dependent on the pope. Secondly, because the Turkish attacks were primarily directed towards Hungary and Austria, Habsburg dynastic interests were more at stake than those of the empire as a whole, so that all sorts of opposing forces could be played off against the emperor. Thirdly, the emperor created a double reality, and thus legal uncertainty, in the Empire, particularly when he made separate, secret agreements with the Protestants and Catholics, which diverged from the views of the Reformation expressed officially in the Diet. Fourthly, the uncertain situation dragged on for many years because the council did not meet until December 1545. It then quickly made decisions that were unacceptable to the Protestants, and was relocated by the Curia to Bologna, contravening Charles' pledge that it should take place within the Empire. The hopes that Charles had cherished for 20 years, and which he had zealously advocated to the popes and in his treaties with Francis I, were dashed in 1547, just when he managed to get the Protestants under military control. He had counted on taking the wind out of Protestant sails by introducing reforms within the Church which would remove the abuses. The attitude of Clement VII and Paul III, the cardinals and council fathers caused the diplomatic approach to the problem, for which he had striven for so long, to disintegrate. All the religious discussions between theologians, all the political concessions made 'to avoid a greater evil', all the compromises, and thus every hope of a solution that would be acceptable to the Protestants, in short Charles' entire religious policy since 1530, had been in vain.

Whatever reasons the Church may have had – fear of Charles' hegemony or of criticism of the conduct of the clergy – it is obvious that, first through its indecisiveness and then through its lack of concern, it severely weakened the position of the emperor. In September 1544, in the Peace of Crépy, Charles had ceded to Francis all the conquests made that year in exchange for his support for the council, a crusade against the Turks and for abandoning his support of the Protestants. For the sake of peace he had even

suggested handing over the duchy of Milan to Francis' youngest son. He had shown clearly how seriously he took his role as protector of the Church and Christianity, and how much he was prepared to sacrifice for it. The grandiose vision dissipated in three years with the deaths of Charles of Orleans and Francis I, the bellicose attitude of the latter's successor, Henry II, and the deadlock over the council.

Had Charles put too much faith in the single option? Did he not appear more Catholic than successive popes, firmer of principle, more idealistic, and perhaps more naive than other rulers? Should he not have realised earlier that his own powerful position in Europe forced his opponents to be pragmatic, even to make common cause with the Turks and Protestants? Should he not have understood that in the uppermost hierarchy of the Church there were many who stood to lose by a council, and were therefore radically opposed to it? Should he not have known that southern Europe was far less bothered by the movement for Reformation and saw little danger in it, perhaps even perceived it as a means of putting pressure on the emperor? Surely he must have realised that the de facto toleration of the Reformation existing in many parts of Germany after Luther's excommunication in 1521, together with the enormous influence of printed propaganda and the powerful attraction of the spoken word, slowly but surely served to increase the numbers of its supporters. The emperor showed little concern for the German problems before 1530, and few of his advisors kept him informed about them. Charles' position was already out of date in 1530 when he opened the first serious negotiations over religious matters in the Diet.

During the discussions, which went on until 1548 under his leadership, Charles was clearly ready to compromise. Even the Diet's decision of 1548, however, was just an Interim, pending the decisions of the council, which by then had been adjourned. Charles' conscience troubled him as soon as the fundamental rights of the Church came under discussion. On the other hand, 31 years after Luther's Theses, the Protestants were unwilling to relinquish what they had achieved. It is amazing that Charles could not see this and, as we see from the advice he gave Philip in 1548 to show towards the pope the 'submissiveness that befits a good son of the Church', that he clung so stubbornly to that illusory trump card, the general council.

Charles was certainly very devout, but he was not especially interested in matters of dogma. He had not a glimmer of understanding for the motives of the reformers, apart from the abuses of the clergy. Does this explain his unwavering adherence to the doctrinal authority of the pope? His decision to concentrate his policies on the patronage of the Church received little support, indeed it aroused determined opposition. This was

felt most keenly in the German Empire where the crumbled structures of government made it easier for the Reformation to take root in certain areas than in the Low Countries, which were governed directly in his name. Turkish attacks on the Habsburg lands in particular again put the emperor in the position of having to ask the Diet for help. Of all his crowns, it was that of the Holy Roman Empire – the only one that he had not inherited but had fought to acquire – which brought him the highest prestige but the least power and the most problems. Although he stayed away from Spain after 1543 to deal with the situation in Germany, he was not really able to get it under control. The pact he made with Albrecht Alcibiades of Brandenburg, the Protestant peace-breaker, which enabled him to assemble enough troops against Metz, evidences his lack of power and contributed to his loss of credibility as emperor. Ultimately, it was in the German Empire that Charles' policy radically failed.

Was it even conceivable that a Habsburg could handle German relationships in any other way? Ferdinand proved that there was indeed another path, based on accepting the reality of the Reformation, and he chose to keep his distance from Rome. He did not worry about being crowned by the pope and he enjoyed the respect of the Protestants. Because he did not have a voice in Italy (a disappointment to him), he did not have to concern himself with the delicate situation there, and above all, he did not have to make concessions to the pope. In 1551, when Ferdinand embarked on his own course, free of Charles, he was much more familiar with the situation in Germany where he had his own power base (Charles was dependent on Spain to pay for his sojourns in Germany, or else he had to stay with the Fuggers) and he did not cling so tightly to outmoded principles.

On his mission as a knight of Christ, Charles plunged into an almost unending series of wars after 1535, mobilising ever larger armies. This brought him success in restraining France, the greatest state in western Europe. When peace was finally made in 1559 it was clear that the Habsburgs had defeated French attempts to conquer land in the Low Countries, Italy and Navarre. But the cost had been enormous: vastly increased taxation, an intolerably high national debt, economic upheaval, exorbitant rates of interest, immense material damage and countless human lives. The economic growth, the increase in population and the plundering of the colonies were all used for destructive purposes. The capitalists, whose credit had enabled Charles to be elected emperor in 1519 and still continued to finance him, found themselves on the brink of bankruptcy in 1550, but there was no way back. The only limit to the escalation of the wars seemed to be the mutual exhaustion of the warring parties. To his own subjects, Charles' reign brought not only the proliferation of taxes but also

repression of the social movements of peasants and craftsmen, in favour of the aristocracy and urban oligarchies. Religious repression became acute in the 1540s, particularly in the Low Countries.

At times Charles considered giving greater independence to those parts of his empire that were difficult to defend. In his *Instructions* of 1548 he considered transferring the Low Countries to his daughter Mary, who was married to Maximilian, Ferdinand's eldest son. He thought that in this way the region, which was so vulnerable to invasion and foreign influences and so difficult to govern from Spain, could be more closely linked to Germany.[22] Prophetic words, but everything would turn out differently to what he then thought. Much to Charles' displeasure it was Maximilian, not Philip, who would succeed Ferdinand as Roman king, and the dynasty would split into an Austrian and a Spanish branch. Earlier, in 1536 and again in 1544, Charles had offered the Low Countries or the duchy of Milan to the youngest son of Francis I, should he marry Mary or one of Ferdinand's daughters. The impossibility of defending the Low Countries from Spain became apparent during the 80 Years' War. In 1598 Philip opted for the formula of greater independence for the region, with yet another marriage of Habsburg cousins, that of his daughter Isabella to archduke Albert, the youngest son of Maximilian.

The split that took place after Charles' abdication, between the Holy Roman Empire on one hand and Spain, the Italian lands, the Low Countries and the colonies on the other, was the last thing that Charles had envisaged. The fact that it did happen, so much against his own wishes, was a painful reminder of how little feeling he had for the opinions and relationships of power within Germany. Even more fundamentally, it exposed the impossibility of controlling the *imperium* as he had governed it for 35 years.

In 1519 the great international bankers had given their support to the formation of an extensive political unit. After this one experiment reality showed how wrong they had been, even though the only alternative available at the time was probably even less attractive. Charles' *imperium* could not function as a political system: it was too widespread and aroused too much opposition, from inside and out. Charles' own choices contributed to this lack of control: his sense of mission, his obstinacy, his feeling of honour and his royal disdain for the social and economic cost of his policies. The structure was an impossible result of the dynastic game. The person who came to stand at its head lacked the distance and flexibility necessary to take control of the very diverse interests and situations.

This policy produced different results in the different regions. From 1529 Charles' supremacy in Italy brought greater peace there than the land had seen for centuries. On the other hand, if the Habsburgs had restricted

themselves to Naples and Sicily then the French would probably have taken control of the north and central regions, with the exception of Venice and the Papal States. In the long term, would this not have resulted in a more stable balance of power in Europe and caused less of a titanic struggle? The massive drain of wealth from Spain to be used for imperial purposes elsewhere in Europe certainly did not help the development of the land. In fact, together with the strengthening of the aristocracy, it produced precisely the opposite effect. In Germany, Charles' religious policy, at first ambiguous and later harsh, was the direct cause of a polarisation that under a less dogmatic emperor – Elector Frederick the Wise had been Pope Leo's candidate – could perhaps have been avoided. All political issues were tied to religious questions during Charles' reign so that all the central institutions of the Empire – Diet, College of Electors, *Reichskammergericht*, imperial taxation, the Imperial Circles – reached a deadlock, and the Empire as such lost its meaning.

Charles' government can probably be seen as least negative in the Low Countries. Although the tax burden, the creaming off of the capital market, economic disruption and religious and political repression were very much felt and led to uprisings, Charles' actions brought about the political unity of the XVII Provinces. The pacification of the larger area brought economic advantages, probably felt most strongly in Holland and the IJssel region. Moreover, there is the question of whether another ruler, with fewer resources than Charles, could have defended the region against French expansion, and how much damage that would have inflicted.

By dint of incredible personal efforts Charles tried to fulfil his mission. More power was centred in his hands for nearly forty years than any other European ruler has held for a similar length of time. In later life he himself said that he had brought his subjects more war than peace, that he had demanded heavy sacrifices of them, that he could not prevent the split of his dynasty and his empire and that he was unable to preserve the unity of the Catholic Church. Had he been catching at shadows for all those years? So much power in the hands of just one person, however well advised, certainly led to aberrations. The single-minded pursuit of the unity of his dynasty through the systematic marriages of nieces and nephews was the most destructive of these. This one person was only a moderately talented man, weighed down by ailments, with an unshakeable vision of his onerous task. He saw his own failures clearly and took the extremely unusual step of abdicating.

Notes:

1. *Hoch Renaissance im Vatikan: Kunst und Kultuur im Rom der Päpste 1503–1534*, exh. cat. (Bonn, 1998), no. 217, *Carolus*, exh: cat. (Ghent, 1999), no. 146.

2. Brandi, *Kaiser Karl V*, 71.
3. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, 398–477.
4. Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris, and Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten in Brussels, respectively.
5. *Maria van Hongarije*, exh. cat.(Utrecht, 's-Hertogenbosch, Zwolle, 1993), no. 196.
6. A. Chastel, 'Les Entrées de Charles Quint en Italie', in G. Jacquot, ed., *Fêtes et cérémonies au temps de Charles Quint* (Paris, 1960), 197–206.
7. Madrid, Palacio Real.
8. B. van den Boogert, 'De triomfen van de keizer', *Maria van Hongarije*, 225–33.
9. Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, 424 x 886 cm; *Napoli*, exh.cat.(Bonn, 1996), no. 19.
10. M. Lageirse, 'La Joyeuse Entrée du Prince Philippe à Gand en 1549', Jacquot, *Fêtes et cérémonies*, 297–306.
11. A. Corbet, 'L'Entrée du Prince Philippe à Anvers en 1549', *ibid.*, 307–10; E. J. Roobaert, 'De seer wonderlijcke schoone triumphelijcke incompst van den hooghmogenden Prince Philips . . . in de stadt van Antwerpen . . . Anno 1549 . . . ', *Bulletin der Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten*, 9 (1960), 37–73; W. Eisler, 'Celestial Harmonies and Habsburg Rule: Levels of Meaning in a Triumphal Arch for Philip II in Antwerp, 1549', in B. Wisch and S. Munshower, eds, *'All the World's a Stage': Art and Pageantry in the Renaissance and Baroque* (Philadelphia, 1990), 332–56; W. Kuyper, *The Triumphant Entry of Renaissance Architecture into the Netherlands* (Alphen aan den Rijn, 1994); M. A. Meadow, 'Ritual and Civic Identity in Philip II's 1549 Antwerp "Blijde Incompst" ', *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art*, 49 (1998), 37–67.
12. J. G. Smit, *Vorst en Onderdaan. Studies over Holland en Zeeland in de late middeleeuwen* (Leuven, 1995), 252–8.
13. Madrid, Palacio Real. *Der Kriegszug Kaiser Karls V gegen Tunis: Kartons und Tapisserien*, ed. W. Seipel (Milan and Vienna, 2000).
14. P. Burke, 'Presenting and Re-presenting Charles V', in Soly, *Charles V*, 434–5.
15. Baron de Reiffenberg, *Lettres sur la vie intérieure de l'Empereur Çharles Quint de Guillaume de Male* (Brussels, 1843).
16. Madrid, Real Armería, Palacio Real (*c.*1535–40).
17. Fernandez Alvarez, *Corpus documental*, II, 569–611, especially 572–3.
18. Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, 77–92.
19. A compilation of the references to gout attacks can be found in J.-P. Soisson, *Charles Quint* (Paris, 2000), 367–70.
20. H. Kellenbenz, 'Das Römisch-Deutsche Reich im Rahmen der wirtschafts- und finanzpolitischen Erwägungen Karls V. im Spannungsfeld imperialer und dynastischer Interessen', in Lutz, *Das römisch-deutsche Reich*, 44–9.
21. Fernandez Alvarez, *Corpus documental*, II, 575–7.
22. *Ibid.*, 592.

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