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Discipline or Security? An analysis of the power mechanisms used to regulate the late medieval pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Grâce at Scheut near Brussels by Yvonne Yiu, University of Basel

On the eve of Pentecost 1449, a supernatural radiance was seen to emanate from Scheut by the people of Brussels. This triggered a spontaneous pilgrimage to the site. The ways in which the authorities dealt with the necessity of keeping control over a potentially disruptive mass movement like this are analysed using Michel Foucault's concepts of power. The ecclesiastical authorities attempted to implement juridico-disciplinary measures, largely to no avail, whereas the civic authorities developed a system of security which, as a strategy, proved to be successful.



Figure 1 Abraham Ortelius, Detail from *Brabantiae Descriptio*, in: *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Antwerp 1591. Repro-photo from Dieter R. Duncker and Helmut Weiss, *Le Duché de Brabant en Cartes et Gravures Anciennes* (Knokke, 1983), p. 17.

Inspired by the Holy Ghost, so the secretary of the city of Brussels at the time, Adriaen Dullaert, tells us, an elderly farmer called Peter of Asscha planted an oak tree at a place called Ten Schuete, a verdant spot overlooking Brussels on the road connecting the city with Ninove. **(fig. 1)** Some years later, desirous that the travellers resting there should direct their thoughts to the Virgin Mary, Peter bought a simple wooden statue of the Virgin for three silver pennies, and fastened it to the oak tree he had planted. **(fig. 2-3)**



Figure 2 *Statue of Notre-Dame de Grâce, Eglise Sts-Pierre-et-Guidon, Anderlecht (Brussels). Photo: author.*

Figure 3 *Statue of Notre-Dame de Grâce in its current architectural setting, Eglise Sts- Pierre-et-Guidon, Anderlecht (Brussels). Photo: author.*



The devotion in which this image was held became increasingly intense with the passing of time, “it happened that [in the night before] Pentecost, in the year of our Lord 1450, which was the year of the jubilee, a year of grace and reconciliation for sinners, [...] an extraordinary, as it were heavenly brightness was seen in the sky near that place.” The actual date of this vision was Pentecost 1449; however, from a psychological point of view, Dullaert is correct in placing the phenomenon in the context of the jubilee and its emphasis on redemption.¹ Dullaert goes on to relate that

[...] beholding this radiance, or rather at the behest of the Holy Spirit [...], the people of Brussels were inflamed by such fire of devotion that on that day of Pentecost a great multitude of men and women visited the statue of the Virgin Mary with immense devotion. And as common opinion then maintained, on the first day the number of visitors far surpassed ten thousand persons.

[...] On the following three days [crowds of people] continued [to visit the site] and news thereof reached not only the majority of the people of Brabant but also the people of other provinces and neighbouring countries, so that many men and women from these places made a pilgrimage to the image. And those who had visited the site said that after invoking the name of God and praying to the Virgin they had found relief and consolation with regard to their infirmities and pain as well as to worldly dangers and adversities.²

This description of the spontaneous pilgrimage that turned an insignificant wayside statue into a venerated cult image is found in Adriaen Dullaert's *Origo sive exordium monasterii nostrae Dominae de gratia, ordinis Carthusiensium juxta Bruxellam in Schute*. As the title implies, this text, written after 28 May 1471, is a narrative of the origin of the Carthusian monastery founded at Scheut in 1456 and called Notre-Dame de Grâce in honour of the statue.³ Dullaert was an eye-witness to many of the events he refers to and played a key role in the negotiations leading up to the foundation of the monastery. Thus, he is a very well informed but partial narrator. His *Origo* is the most important source on the pilgrimage to Scheut. (figs. 4-5) In 1480 Marcel Voet, the second prior at Scheut,

¹ Michel de Waha, "Aux Origines de la Chartreuse de Scheut: Pèlerinage 'populaire' et monastère 'patricien'," *Annales de la Société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles*, 55 (1978), pp. 5-26. See p. 7.

² Adriaen Dullaert, *Origo sive exordium monasterii nostrae Dominae de gratia, ordinis Carthusiensium juxta Bruxellam in Schute*, edited in: *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*, IV (1867), pp. 87-122. See pp. 88-90; quote p. 90, all translations my own. The relevant passages are reprinted in the appendix.

³ For the date of the manuscript, see p. 1388 in Micheline Soenen, *Chartreuse de Scheut, à Anderlecht*, in: *Monasticon Belge*, Vol. 4, *Province de Brabant*, Part 6 (Liège, 1972), pp. 1385-1427. The original manuscript is kept in Vienna, ÖNB *series nova* 12779. Otto Pächt and Dagmar Thoss, *Flämische Schule II*, 2 Vols. (Vienna, 1990), Vol. 1, pp. 45-49, fig. 42-25, Vol. 2, pl. 7-8, ill. 70-74. Three copies of the text exist: Den Haag, Fonds Gérard 71 C 9, ff. 23r-59v; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms. 1067; and Brussels, Archives de la ville, AVB 2649. The latter is a copy from the 17th century and is the text published in *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*.



Figure 4. *Dedication Miniature: Adriaen Dullaert and his wife Katharina Bojaerts kneel before the Coronation of the Virgin, Origo, ÖNB s.n. 12779, fol. 2v. Photo: after Otto Pächt and Dagmar Thoss, *Flämische Schule II* (Vienna, 1990), Vol. 2, pl. 7.*



Figure 5. Detail of the Statue of Notre-Dame de Grâce, Origo, ÖNB s.n. 12779, fol. 3r.
Photo: Otto Pächt & Dagmar Thoss, *Flämische Schule II* (Vienna, 1990), Vol. 2, pl. 8.

likewise wrote a text on the early history of the monastery. His *Liber fundationis* draws heavily on Dullaert's *Origo* but also makes use of documents conserved in the monastery, so that especially with regard to dates, he is more precise than Dullaert.⁴

⁴ Voet's *Liber* has come down to us in a transcription made by Jean Tourneur in 1558, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, Cabinet des Manuscrits 5764. J. van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale de*

In addition to these two narratives, a wealth of documents from the 15th century pertaining to the Carthusian monastery have survived the ravages of time.⁵ These rarely mention the pilgrims, however, for although the monastery owed its existence to the pilgrimage to Scheut, the Carthusians with their emphasis on solitude avoided contact with the laity. Indeed, the daily influx of pilgrims of both sexes and the noise they made was deemed an annoyance, and in 1477 the prior of the Grande Chartreuse and the General Chapter decreed that a wall should be built segregating the monks from the pilgrims, so that they would not be hindered in the performance of their liturgical duties.⁶

Thus, the pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Grâce is most tangible in its earliest phase, that is, in the years before the foundation of the monastery. The following discussion will therefore focus on this phase, or more precisely, on the very first year of the pilgrimage from Pentecost 1449 to the summer of 1450. Dullaert's *Origo* is the central source; Voet's *Liber* at times provides additional or corroborative material; and some of the events described have been collated with the relevant documents and charters.

Even though the sudden appearance of a new local pilgrimage was not completely without precedent – Jacques Toussaert, who examined lay piety in late medieval Flandres, cites various examples⁷ – the events at Scheut were, none the less, a massive disruption of the normal order of things. Not surprisingly, a dominant theme in Dullaert's narrative, that represents the standpoint of those in power, is how to keep things under control. The *Origo* reflects a situation in which an unexpected mass movement within the lower classes – Dullaert speaks of *populus* and *vulgus*⁸ – was experienced as a threat to the social order. Although the pilgrims were seen as a possibly disruptive force, however, there was a keen awareness of the positive potential of their religious fervour, provided that it was channelled correctly.

But how could this outburst of collective devotion be integrated into more regulated structures? The series of lectures entitled *Security, Territory, Population* that Michel Foucault held at the Collège de France in 1978 provides a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of the power mechanisms that the civic and ecclesiastical authorities employed in their attempt to master the situation.⁹

Dullaert's account informs us that the views held by the civic authorities on how to regulate the spontaneous pilgrimage differed radically from those held by ecclesiastic officials. The two contrasting stances correspond to different concepts of power described by Foucault, one being based on the law and the mechanisms of discipline, the other on the system of security.¹⁰

According to Foucault, both discipline and the law structure reality by means of the

Bruxelles (Brussels, 1906), Vol. 4, p. 172, no. 3860. See also Soenen, pp. 1388, 1402-03; and Waha, pp. 4-5.

⁵ See Soenen, pp. 1385-87.

⁶ Archives Ecclésiastiques de Brabant, Chartrier, no. 11576, acte 626. Transcription of relevant passage in appendix.

⁷ Jacques Toussaert, *Le Sentiment religieux, la vie et la pratique religieuse des laïcs en Flandre maritime et au "West-Hoeck" de langue flamande aux XIVe, XVe et début du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1963), pp. 270-71.

⁸ Dullaert, pp. 90, 93; Waha, p. 10.

⁹ These lectures were published in October 2004 based on tape recordings and Foucault's notes. Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population, Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. by Michel Senellart (Paris, 2004).

¹⁰ Foucault, pp. 2-4, 7-8.

binary code “allowed/not allowed.” Within the two fields of the permitted and the prohibited, they specify exactly what is allowed and what is not allowed, or rather what is obligatory. In a negative form of thinking characteristic of legal codes, the law focuses on what must be forbidden, “order” being that which remains after one has succeeded in suppressing everything that is prohibited. By contrast, discipline is prescriptive. The mechanisms of discipline are aimed less at what should not be done than at what should be done. A good discipline, for example a monastic rule, tells one at every instant what one should do. Thus, within a disciplinary system, it is determined what one has to do, and by consequence, everything else, being undetermined, is forbidden.¹¹

As an event that is beyond the normal, the spontaneous pilgrimage to Scheut belongs to the category of the undetermined, and therefore, to an adherent of discipline, it is something that needs to be prohibited.

If we look at the reaction of John of Burgundy, the bishop of Cambrai, in whose diocese Scheut was located, it appears that his reasoning, as described by Adriaen Dullaert, worked very much along these lines. Dullaert relates that “murmurings” and “defamatory talk” about “the multitude of folk frequenting [Scheut], the great number of offerings, [and] the diverse miracles, or at least signs and wondrous occurrences” reached the bishop’s ears, as well as the rumour that the pilgrims were practicing idolatry as they were worshipping at an unconsecrated place.¹² By placing these utterings of discontent into the mouths of the people, Dullaert implies that the *populus* of Brussels was by no means unified in its support of the new cult. What appears to have disturbed the people most was the excessiveness of the goings-on at Scheut and their possible illegitimacy. In a paradoxical double movement, the people, by means of public protest, in itself an anti-disciplinary gesture, demanded that discipline be restored by the authorities.

John of Burgundy used this sentiment of discontent as an opportunity to take action against the new cult. Before describing the measures the bishop proposed to take, Dullaert reconstructs the ideological background that he assumes influenced the bishop’s thinking: “The good shepherd [...] probably could not tolerate the idolatry, especially as he should not tolerate it, seeing that it is written ‘Beware that you do not offer burnt offerings in every place that you see, but in all places which the Lord, your God, chooses, that is in the places consecrated to the Lord God.’”¹³ The text Dullaert quotes is based on Deuteronomy 12: 13-14 but is modified to suit the current situation, with the biblical specification that the place chosen by God will be in one of the Israelite tribes being replaced by the criterion of consecration.

As the above interpretation of the Scriptures assigns the cult at Scheut to the category of that which is “not allowed,” the logical consequence within the juridico-disciplinary system would be to intervene by administering punishment and implementing disciplinary measures. This is indeed exactly what the bishop proposed to do. Dullaert relates that John of Burgundy decided to “ride to Scheut at the head of a powerful equestrian force, to burn down the shelter [that the devout had built to protect the statue], to forbid the people to visit the site, to worship and to make offerings there and to speak

about miracles under pain of ecclesiastical punishment and censure, and thereby to completely eradicate the pilgrimage to Scheut.” Subsequently, he would transfer the image of the Virgin to the church of the nearby village of Anderlecht (**fig. 6**) in a procession and thus integrate the

¹¹ Foucault, pp. 47-48.

¹² Dullaert, p. 92.

¹³ Dullaert, p. 92.



Figure 6. *Eglise Sts-Pierre-et-Guidon, Anderlecht (Brussels). Photo: author.*

cult in an existing ecclesiastical establishment.¹⁴

“The horses were already saddled and ready,” when, like a *deus ex machina*, John Ruldophi, the bishop’s official in Brussels, appeared and dissuaded the bishop from embarking on this highly confrontational course of action, pointing out that he would risk causing “tumult to break out amongst the people.”¹⁵

The abrupt and violent end of the pilgrimage having thus been averted, the strategy pursued by the civic authorities of Brussels in their attempt to regulate the new cult at Scheut could be pushed ahead. This strategy is congruent with what Foucault describes as a system of security. In contrast to discipline, a system of security does not view things in terms of what is forbidden and what is obligatory. Rather, it is the attempt to control things by working within their reality and by bringing the elements of this reality into play with each other. Instead of imposing foreign imperatives (“this must” or “this must not be done”) onto a phenomenon, a system of security responds to it in such a manner that the phenomenon is progressively brought within acceptable limits by the workings of the phenomenon itself.¹⁶

Whereas the bishop of Cambrai denied the Marian cult at Scheut the right to exist because it did not fit into his concept of reality, the civic authorities of Brussels accepted the reality of the spontaneous pilgrimage and tried to gain control over it by becoming an active participant in the events. In a tactic that could be called “infiltrational” as opposed to the confrontational one chosen by the bishop, the civic authorities created a framework through which they could influence the cult from within.

In a first step the civic authorities took over the administration of the large amounts of money, candles and animals that were offered to the Virgin by the multitude of suffering people who had been cured at Scheut. Dullaert informs us that the Ammannus of Brussels, that is, the Duke’s representative in the city government, and the Senate of Brussels “unanimously decreed [...] that two reputable laymen [...] should take custody of the donations and use them to build a chapel [at Scheut] in honour of God and the blessed Virgin Mary.”¹⁷

This was a very clever course of action, as it showed the city of Brussels to be in perfect alignment with the pilgrims’ spirit of devotion. In the very expression of their sympathy with the new cult, however, namely in the plan to construct a chapel, the civic authorities created a means by which they could institutionalize the pilgrimage. With the cult’s institutionalization the scope for unpredictable behaviour amongst the visitors of the site would be reduced and consequently the disruptive potential of the original spontaneous mass movement defused.

The wisdom of espousing such a system of security is neatly illustrated by the futility of another juridico-disciplinary procedure that was carried out shortly after John of Burgundy’s aborted attack on Scheut and somewhat before the construction of the chapel began. A commission of inquiry consisting of “deputies representing the bishop of Cambrai, the duke of Burgundy and the city of Brussels” was entrusted with the

¹⁴ Dullaert, p. 93.

¹⁵ Dullaert, p. 93.

¹⁶ Foucault, pp. 48, 68.

¹⁷ Dullaert, pp. 90-91.

examination of the validity of the miracles that had allegedly taken place at Scheut. “People of varying social positions from Brussels were diligently examined” regarding their experiences at the site of pilgrimage and the conclusion was reached that nothing had occurred at Scheut that “fulfilled the four conditions required by canon law in order to qualify as a miracle.”¹⁸

Although the inquiry’s result showed that from a juridical point of view, all the excitement about Scheut was completely unfounded, this interpretation of the facts missed the reality of the pilgrims completely. For them, the experiences themselves and not their assessment by canon law was relevant.

It seems reasonable to assume that the conclusion that the statue at Scheut was not miracle-working rendered the previously-voiced accusation of idolatry all the more serious and called for disciplinary action. Such a way of proceeding, however, had been abandoned only shortly before for fear of the people’s opposition. Dullaert does not mention any measures taken based on the results of the inquisition, and this does not appear to be an omission on his part. Rather, the commission’s work seems to have brought home the realization that, although the pilgrimage to Scheut could not be fitted into any category defined as legitimate by the law, its suppression carried too high a risk of social commotion. Thus, the juridico-disciplinary approach had no option other than to capitulate before the phenomenon.

Almost with a touch of satisfaction, Adriaen Dullaert, a partisan of the cult of Notre-Dame de Grâce, comments that following the commission’s meetings – one is tempted to say despite the commission’s meetings – “ever increasing numbers of pilgrims [...] from many different places travelled to [Scheut], made their vows there, [...] and were liberated from pain and illness.” These included “the blind, the lame, the deaf, those suffering from gout of the foot, lunatics, the obsessed, the insane, [...] those suffering from long illnesses, those contaminated by leprosy, those ailing from pleurisy [...]” His list goes on and on, mentioning at least another twenty illnesses and evils, the final impression being that any undesirable state of body or mind could be cured at Scheut.¹⁹

This is obviously hyperbolic, but there is no reason to doubt that the pilgrimage to the statue of the Virgin did indeed continue to flourish. With the votive gifts offered by the pilgrims accumulating, the necessity to dispose of the funds in a suitable way became increasingly pressing.

The Ammannus and Senate of Brussels decided to continue along the lines originally foreseen and to use the “donations [...] to honour God and the glorious Virgin Mary and to increase the worship of God” by “building a beautiful and notable chapel” at Scheut.²⁰ As already mentioned, with this course of action the civic authorities implemented a system of security. Instead of negating the supernatural character of the happenings at Scheut or forbidding the pilgrimage to the site, the civic authorities accepted that this was what the people wanted and believed in and, by entering into this reality, tried to influence the phenomenon to their advantage. This strategy was indeed largely successful.

The donations made by the pilgrims were used to purchase the necessary terrain, and construction began in the winter of 1449. Voet reports that Charles the Bold, the son and heir of Philip the Good, laid the foundation stone that bore his coat of arms on 21 February 1449 o.s. (1450 n.s.). On the same day, with the permission of the bishop of Cambrai, Mass was celebrated at Scheut for the first time.²¹ The bishop also granted the members of the court permission to celebrate Mass at the site of pilgrimage three times a week using a portable altar until the chapel

¹⁸ Dullaert, pp. 93-94.

¹⁹ Dullaert, p. 96.

²⁰ Dullaert, p. 98.

²¹ Voet, fol. 14v-15r. Transcription of relevant passage in appendix.

was completed and consecrated.²² On 16 April 1450 the archbishop of Reims visited Scheut in person, heard Mass there, and granted 40 days indulgence to those who visited the chapel on certain specified dates and made a contribution towards its building and maintenance costs.²³ By Ascension 1450, work on the roof was underway and in the course of the year, the chapel was largely completed (**fig. 7-8**).²⁴

Dullaert informs us that the chapel was richly decorated with stained glass windows depicting various saints, as well as the donors and their arms. The most important window, situated immediately behind the altar dedicated to the Virgin, was donated by Charles the Bold, who held Notre-Dame de Grâce in special reverence throughout his life. The windows flanking it were given by important representatives of the Duke, the one to the south by John of Edingen, the Ammannus of Brussels, and the one to the north by Monfrandus Alaert, the Procurator General of Flanders. The next adjacent ones were donated by nobles from the Duke's court and those further down the building by citizens of Brussels, including Adriaen Dullaert.²⁵ The position of the windows thus reflects the social status of the donors.

It is conspicuous that, once the sources turn to the building history of the chapel, the anonymous Masses, whose collective desire to worship at Scheut had given birth to the pilgrimage, more or less disappear from the narrative. Indeed, with the construction of the chapel the people who had up to now played a major role in shaping the course of events were effectively, as well as symbolically, disempowered. The original act of foundation by the farmer Peter of Asscha, who affixed the image of the Virgin to a tree at Scheut, was eclipsed by a second act of foundation, the laying of the first stone of the chapel by Charles the Bold, Count of Charolais. And, highly illustrative of the appropriation of the cult of Notre-Dame de Grâce through those in power, the new chapel was built around the tree-trunk bearing the statue of the Virgin,²⁶ the physical incorporation of the statue into an ecclesiastical building visualizing the ideological integration of the cult into the church.

This movement of appropriation was accompanied by gestures of exclusion.

Permission to celebrate Mass at Scheut was granted solely to members of the court, and through the donor windows the courtly and civic elite underscore that it is they, and not the people, who have a privileged relationship to Notre-Dame de Grâce.

The indulgence granted by the archbishop of Reims (**fig. 9**) serves to exemplify the disempowerment of the pilgrims through the cult's institutionalization. Whereas previously they had prayed to the Virgin in the open country and had been granted what they wished for without the mediation of the church, they must now enter the chapel to worship, that is, an architectural space clearly codified as belonging to the ecclesiastical sphere of power. The indulgence invited them to model their wishes on concepts defined by the church, and if they desired to receive the remission of punishment for their sins promised by the archbishop, they needed to comply with the requirements stipulated by him. Confronted by such compelling manifestations of ecclesiastical power, it seems that the pilgrims, lured rather than coerced, abandoned their self-defined search for spiritual and physical relief in favour of the way of salvation proposed by the authorities.

²² Voet, fol. 14v-15r.

²³ Voet, fol. 15r. Indulgence: AEB, Chartrier, no. 11569, acte 304. Transcription in appendix.

²⁴ Dullaert, p. 100; Voet fol. 15.

²⁵ Dullaert, pp. 98-100.

²⁶ Voet, fol. 14v-15r; cp. Jozef Calbrecht, *Geschiedenis van het genadeoord van O. L. Vrouw van Gratie te Scheut* (Mechelen, 1938), p. 19.



Figure 7. *Chapel of Notre-Dame de Grâce, exterior. The transept and other buildings are later additions. The entire complex was demolished c. 1980. Photo: postcard printed before 1938.*



Figure 8. Chapel of Notre-Dame de Grâce, interior. Photo: postcard printed before 1938.

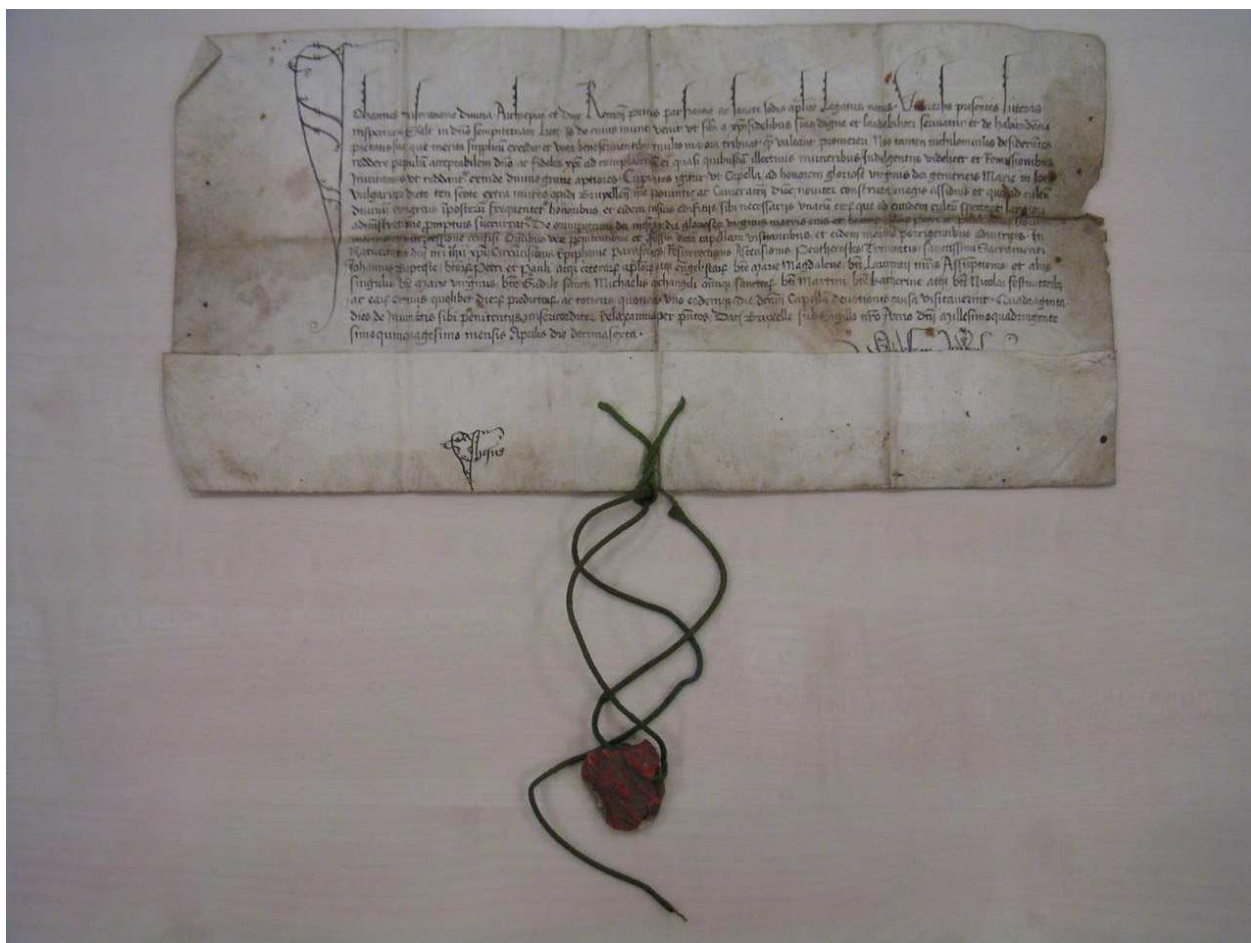


Figure 9. Indulgence granted by the Archbishop of Reims, 16 April 1450, AEB, Chartrier, no. 11569, acte 304. Photo: author.

It is important to remember that the pilgrims, even if they appear as a cohesive group in the sources, were not an organized entity but a randomly constituted group of constantly changing composition. Consequently, it is more likely than not that they were unaware of this process of disempowerment. Indeed, it could well be that the pilgrims welcomed the construction of the chapel and the granting of indulgences as an enhancement of the site. In any case, it appears that the system of security instituted by the city of Brussels led to the best-case scenario in which the possible causers of unrest unwittingly accepted their disempowerment with thanks. Both Dullaert and Voet relate that in the four years following the completion of the chapel, Notre-Dame de Grâce continued to attract the devotion of pilgrims. The gifts they brought not only covered the costs of the building but were so abundant that it was possible to purchase additional land and hereditary annuities, as well as to build a six to seven-foot high wall around the terrain on which the chapel was situated.²⁷

Thus, within the first five years of the pilgrimage's existence, the authorities

²⁷ Dullaert, p. 101; Voet, fol. 15r.

succeeded in converting a chaotic outburst of collective devotion into a well-managed local cult that was financially profitable and enriched the religious topography of Brussels and its surroundings.

Appendix: Excerpts from the sources

16 April 1450: Indulgence granted by the archbishop of Reims, AEB, Chartier, no. 11569, acte 304. My transcription.

Johannes miseratione divina. Archiep[iscop]us et dux Remen[sis] primus par Frantie ac Sancte Sedis ap[osto]lice Legatus natus. V[er]uerlis presentes litteras / inspecturis Sa[an]t[is] in d[omi]no sempiternam Licet [...] de cuius mune[...] venit ut sibi a chr[ist]ifidelibus sive digne et laudabiliter serviatur et de habunda[n]tia / pietatis sue que merita supplicu[m] excedit et vota beneservientibu[...] multo maiora tribuat q[uam] valeant promereri Nos tamen nichilominus desidera[n]tes / reddere populu[m] acceptabilem d[omi]no ac fideles chr[ist]i ad complaceri[...] ei quasi quibusda[m] illectuus muneribus Indulgentiis videlicet et Remissionibus / invitamus ut reddant. [...] exinde divine gratie aptiores. Cupi[...]tes igitur ut Capella ad honorem gloriose virginis dei genitricis Marie in loco / vulgariter dicto ten scote extra muros opidi Bruxellen[sis] n[ost]re provincie ac Cameracen[sis] dioc[esis] noviter constructa magis assidius et quoad cultu[m] / divinu[m] cong[regat]i[n]s i[n] posteru[m] frequentet [...] honoribus et eidem insuis edificat[i]o[n]ib[us] sibi necessariis unaru[m] eor[um]que ad eundem cultu[m] spectant largiori / admi[n]istratione p[ro]mptius succurrat [...]. De omnipotente dei misericordia glorioseq[ue] virginis martris eius et beator[um] ap[osto]lor[um] petri et pauli om[n]iq[ue] s[an]c[t]orum / mer[...] et [...]ressione confisi Om[n]ibus vere penitentibus et [con]fessis dicta capellam visitantibus et eidem manus porrigentibus adiutires. In / Nativitatis d[omi]ni n[ost]ri i[e]h[esu]s chr[ist]i Circu[m]cisionis Epiphanie Parasa[...]es Resurrectionis Ascensionis Penthecostes Trinitatis Sanctissimi Sacramenti / Johannis [...]ptiste b[ea]tor[um] Petri et Pauli atq[ue] ceteror[um] ap[osto]lor[um] atq[ue] e[va]ngelistar[um] b[ea]te Marie Magdalene b[ea]ti Laurentii m[at]ris Assu[m]ptionis et aliis / singulis b[ea]te marie virginis b[ea]te Gudile sancti Michaelis archangeli om[n]iq[ue] sanctor[um] b[ea]ti Martini b[ea]te Katherine atq[ue] b[ea]ti Nicolai festivitatib[us] / ac ear[um] Octuus quolibet dier[um] predictor[um] ac totiens quotiens uno eodem[...] die d[i]c[t]am Capella[m] devotionis causa visitaverint. Quadraginta. / dies de In[...]stis sibi penitentiis misericorditer relaxamus per p[ro]p[ri]os Dat[...] Bruxelles sub Sigillo n[ost]ro Anno d[omi]ni millesimoquadringente / simoquinquagesimo mensis Aprilis die decimasexta.

1477: Passage from a letter by the Prior of the Grand Chartreuse, AEB, Chartier, no. 11576, acte 626. My transcription.

[...] s[ed] ne impedire[n]t vel minuere[n]t devotione[m] ta[m] nobit[...] q[uam] [cu]iu[svis] p[ro]p[ri]or[um] in magna multitudine cu[m] devotis oblationib[us] illic cotidie [con]flue[n]tib[us] auc[torita]te qua sup[er]a. Decreveru[n]t fieri unu[m] muru[m] intra d[i]c[t]am capella[m] p[er]m[an]ente [con]tinuitate ta[m] in fundame[n]tis q[uam] in muris ac tecto eiusd[em] capella ut sup[er]ior pars orie[n]talis in q[uam] est ymago b[ea]te virgi[n]is cu[m] suo altari esset p[ro] ingressu peregrinor[um] utriusq[ue] sexu[s] illic cotidie [con]flu[ent]iu[m] alia v[er]o pars vers[us] occidentem esset p[ro] sup[er]iori p[ar]te chori mo[n]achor[um] usq[ue] gradu[m] altaris. Et novu[m] edificiu[m] appositu[m] ess[et] pro choro psalteriu[m] infra gradu[m] altaris p[ro]ut

adhuc ad oculu[m] pat[et]. Et ut [con]ve[n]t[us] ess[et] custodit[us] ne p[o]p[u]lus illic advenie[n]s h[abe]ret ingressu[m] ad mo[na]chos nec e[con]v[er]so mo[na]chi ad peregrinos nec rumor p[o]p[u]li illic aflue[n]t[i]s ip[s]os fr[atr]es in p[er]solut[i]o[n]e divinar[um] laudu[m] quo[modo]libet impediret. [...]

After 28 May 1471: Adriaen Dullaert, *Origo sive exordium monasterii nostrae Dominae de gratia, ordinis Carthusiensium juxta Bruxellam in Schute*. Passages quoted after edition in: *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*, IV (1867), pp. 87-122.

(88) Imprimis igitur fuit, et verum est, quod in quodam loco, nuncupato *Ten Schuete*, extra muros Bruxellenses, et infra libertatem ejusdem oppidi, in parochia sancti Petri Anderlectensis sito, extitit quaedam amoena, viridis et parva planities, figurae triangularis, contigua viae ibidem publicae, in qua nihil seminari consuevit aut plantari, ex eo, quod ad illam planitiem conveniebant termini seu limites diversarum haereditatum circumjacentium, tribus piis locis spectantium, ut puta ecclesiae seu fabricae sancti Petri Anderlectensis, pauperibus hospitalis sancti Johannis Bruxellensis, et hospitali (89) pauperum virorum sancti Christophori, infra Bruxellam. Et apparuit locus iste in conspectu populi iter agentis tam ex situ quam ex aëre adeo amoenus, quod homines pedestres Bruxellam applicantes et labore itineris fatigati plerumque ad eandem planitiem requiem quaerere consueverunt.

Item, sancto Spiritu divinitus ordinante, venit in cor cujusdam Petri de Asscha, agricolae et ovium pastoris, aetatis lx annorum, in vicinio dicti locis commorantis, viri justus, timoratus et simplicis, quod in illo loco planitiei pro derelicto habito, et tamquam limitario a nemine possesso, et quasi ad usum transeuntium occupato, arborem quercus plantavit, ut sub frondibus illius viatores refrigerium a calore solis, et lassati ac itinere fatigati requiem invenirent. Quo sic facto, certisque annis jam effluxis, desiderans ex divina, ut praesumitur, inspiratione ac illustrati sui cordis devotione iste Petrus, quod iidem transeuntes et requiem ibi sumentes corda sua, fuis orationibus, ad beatam Virginem converterent Mariam, ac debitum ei exhiberent obsequium et honorem, emptam pro tribus denariis argenteis per eundem Petrum, prout idem Petrus mihi personaliter retulit, una simplici imagine beatae Mariae de ligno sculpta, atque in quadam capsula humili posita, affixit eandem dictus Petrus suae arbori quercus virescenti et crescenti supradictae. In cujus quidem arboris trunco, ramis jam abscissis, eadem imago adhuc hodie stat et requiescit. [...]

(89) Item hoc peracto, et postquam corda transeuntium viatorum (90) ac ibidem requiescentium devotionem ad eandem imaginem beatae Mariae Virginis quanto diutius tanto intensius sumere coeperant, accidit ipso die Pentecostes, anno Domini m iii^c l^o, qui fuit annus jubilaus, annus gratiae et reconciliationis peccatorum, ex certis signis ibidem visis, de quadam cereorum circa eandem arborem subterranea mirabili inventionem, ac certe mirabilis tamquam coelestis claritatis circa illum locum ejusdem festivitatis nocturna visione, quod populus Bruxellensis haec percipiens, adeo Spiritus sancti numine, ut opinor, in devotionem subito tractus, in tantum igne devotionis incendebatur, quod eodem die Pentecostes ex Bruxella magna multitudo hominum utriusque sexus eandem imaginem beatae Mariae Virginis cum ingenti devotione visitavit. Et, ut communis vulgi opinio tunc tenebat, fuit multitudo beatam Virginem in dicto loco illa prima die visitatum adeo copiosa, ut numerum decem millium personarum longe excessit.

Item, post haec et huiusmodi mirabili ac tamquam inspirata et devota tantae multitudinis hominum dictam imaginem accedentium visitatione seu concurrentia praedicta die Pentecostes, ut praemittitur, peracta, et tribus proximis diebus festivis sequentibus continuata, deducta est huiusmodi nova visitantium frequentatio ad notitiam non solum majoris partis populi patriae Brabantiae, verum etiam ad notitiam populi aliarum provinciarum et patriarum vicinarum, sic quod multi utriusque sexus et status homines de diversis partibus suas ad dictam imaginem venerunt peregrinationes, qui de suis infirmitatibus et doloribus ac mundanis periculis et adversitatibus post Divini Nominis invocationem et beatae Mariae Virginis deprecationem in dicto loco dixerunt se remedia et consolationes invenisse.

Item, cum multitudo languentium praedictum locum continuo visitaret ac remedia inveniret, suasque oblationes gratuitas tam cereorum quam pecuniarum, jocalium et animalium ibidem offerre coepisset, et parvula domuncula pro custodia (91) imaginis, ac receptione et custodia earundem oblationum ibidem constituta esset, huiusmodi re per dominum Johannem de Edingen, dominum de Kestergat, ammannum Bruxellensem tunc scutiferum, postmodum vero militem, illustrissimi principis domini Philippi, Burgundiae ac Brabantiae ducis, atque comitis Flandriae, Hollandiae, etc., tunc regnantis, consiliarium Brabantiae ordinarium, ad notitiam consulatus Bruxellensis deducta, convenerunt iidem ammannus et senatus, et unanimiter ordinaverunt, jure communi ecclesiastico concordante, quod ex parte ducis et oppidi deputarentur duo viri laici boni testimonii, providi et idonei, qui sciant, velint et valeant locum ipsum et bona seu apportus utiliter regere et custodire, ac eadem ad constructionem capellae erigendae fideliter dispensare; et quod de eisdem oblationibus sic gratuite apportandis, de consilio eorumdem ammanique, ex parte domini ducis et oppidi disponderetur de eisdem ad Dei et beatae Mariae Virginis honorem, prout ipsis melius et salubrius videretur expedire, donec et quousque de consensu antistitis aliter desuper esset ordinatum, cum ad ejusdem Virginis honorem per christifideles eaedem oblationes gratuita ad eundem locum extiterant ordinatae et distinctae. Quod et ita factum est et executioni mandatum. Duo autem viri, qui onus hoc assumpserunt, fuerunt Johannes Cambier et Aegidius de Dielbeke, cives et incolae Bruxellenses, de officio fabrilis artis et de natione sancti Johannis. [...]

(92) Item tertio, cum apud dominum Johannem de Burgundia, episcopum Cameracensem, in Bruxella residentem, et alios homines, tam spirituales quam seculares, nescio tamen quo spiritu instigante, murmur invalesceret propter huiusmodi populi frequentantis multitudinem et oblationum copiosam receptionem, diversorum miraculorum, aut saltem signorum et prodigiorum exaltationem seu divulgationem, et potissime propter apparentem et praesumptam in huiusmodi loco nondum consecrato idololatriam, quam bonus pastor ante faciem in publico loco et profano sibi tam proximo verosimiliter pati non potuisset, prout nec de jure pati debuisset, fundatus ex textu decreti dicentis sic at litteram: “Scriptum est: Cave ne offeras holocausta tua in omni loco, quem videris; sed in omni loco, quem elegerit Dominus Deus tuus, hoc est in locis Domino Deo consecratis, seu tabernaculis divinis precibus et pontificibus delibatis;” accidit interea, quod idem (93) dominus episcopus intendens providere praescriptis diffamationi et susurratori populi, deliberavit ac in animo suo conclusit, quod ipse cum multitudine ac potentia equestrium praedictum locum personaliter accederet, atque praedictam domunculam igne concremaret, et accessum populi, adorationes et oblationes, ac

miraculorum vulgi denunciationes sub poenis ac censuris ecclesiasticis penitus inhiheret et interdiceret, eandem populi frequentationem funditus extirpando; ac tandem cum idem dominus episcopus adeo ferventer ejusdem loci destructionem ac enervationem in mente conceperat, sic quod omnes equi sui ecce jam parati et sellati extiterant animo et intentione equitandi ibidem in propria persona et praedictam suam voluntatem exequendi, ac imaginem beatae Marie adhuc in eadem arbore stantem cum processione ad matricem ecclesiam Anderlechtensem referendi, accessit subito eundem dominum episcopum, Spiritu sancto, ut praesumi potest, inspirante, venerabilis dominus et magister Johannes Rudolphi, alias Flamingi, utriusque juris doctor, pro tunc ejusdem domini episcopi officialis in Bruxella, canonicus Cameracensis, vir bonus et justus; et illius suusus consilio, ne forte tumultus fieret in populo, mansit idem dominus episcopus domi et praedictam domunculam cum imagine arbore inclusam dimisit incombustam et immotam.

Item, paulo post praescripta celebratae sunt in refectorio Carmelitarum Bruxellensium super inquisitione miraculorum tres solemnes congregationes deputatorum ex parte domini episcopi et domini ducis et oppidi Bruxellensis ordinatorum. (94) [...] Praedictis autem deputatis sic simul congregatis, convocati diligenter examinati fuerunt diversarum conditionum homines ex Bruxella, qui se dixerunt per vota peregrinationis in praedicto loco de suis infirmitatibus et languoribus remedia et consolationes recepisse ac invenisse.

Item, licet in veritate a nemine saltem sufficienter in eadem inquisitione inventum extiterit aliquod tale remedium, quod secundum rectam discretionem vocabuli proprie miraculum dici potuisset, aut pro miraculo publicari, cum illae quatuor conditiones ad verum miraculum de jure canonico requisitae nusquam in aliquo inventae fuerint, saltem sufficienter, attamen remedia quaedam exuberantia, nec non signa quaedam et prodigia ibidem in inquisitione illa audita et percepta fuerunt, quae tam ex fide credentis ac devotione cordis per gratiam ac beatae Virginis intercessionem quam per naturam dici poterant processisse. [...]

(96) Item post praetactas deputatorum congregationes continuantibus magis et magis populi diversarum patriarum peregrinantis devotione et frequentatione, perceptum est, prout hodiernis temporibus adhuc percipitur, multos diversis partibus peregrinantes, et vota sua ad hunc locum voventes, remedia, sanitatem et consolationes senisse et acceptasse, ac a suis doloribus et infirmitatibus liberatos fuisse, utpote caecos, claudos, surdos, podagricos, lunaticos, obsessos ac phreneticos, epaticos, longa infirmitate detentos, lepra contaminatos, pleureticos, lentericos, febricitantes, caput ac renes dolentes, squinanticos, pestilenticos, guerra, incendio, naufragio, submersione, partus et anhelitus difficultate, furto, rapina et undarum tempestate, sterilitate, spinteris inglutinatione, et animo propter adversas fortunas prostratos, aliisque diversis tam capitis et pectoris quam aliorum membrorum infirmitatibus et hujusmodi currentis mundi periculis oppressos, prout quisque indigentium postulavit. [...]

(97) Item, consideratis praedictis, et praehabita super his deli- (98) beratione matura, visum est praedictis dominis ammanno et senatui Bruxellensi, quod honestum et rationi congruum esset, quod praedictae oblationes tunc jam datae et aliae in posterum apportandae ad Dei et Virginis gloriosae Mariae honorem et ad divini cultus augmentum in illo loco deberent expendi et converti; et quod ad illum finem terrae necessariae de eadem pecunia deberent comparari, et una pulchra et notabilis capella in dicto loco construi et aedificari. Quod maximis sumptibus et expensis, Deo auxiliante, factum est

atque completum; cum huiusmodi capella de albis atque excisis lapidibus ibidem una cum spisso et rotundo muro longitudinis in sua rotunditate stadiorum de praedictis oblationibus sit constructa, habens tectum de petris coopertum ac pulchras, altas et latas fenestras vitreas artificiose cum imaginibus sanctorum et repraesentationibus ac armis donatorum depictas. Harum unam stantem retro altare beatae Virginis propriis expensis fieri fecit illustrissimus princeps ac dominus Carolus de Burgundia, comes Cadralesii et dominus de Bethunia, etc., filius unicus, herus et successor domini Philippi, ducis tunc regnantis. Secundam vero fenestram, proxime in latere partis meridionalis stantem, una cum tabula altaris vitrea seu vitrata, fieri fecit praedictus dominus Joannes de Adenghen, dominus de Kestergate, ammannus Bruxellensis, qui etiam postea quam plurima dona eidem loco sua diligentia tam a Ludovico, tunc Delphino, postmodum auxilio dicti Philippi ducis rege Franciae facto, quam ab eodem Philippo duce ac aliis utriusque sexus et status procuravit et impetravit. Tertiam vero fenestram illius lateris solvit dominus Joannes de Potires, dominus de Archi, miles et consiliarius et camerarius praedicti Philippi ducis. Quartam autem fenestram solvit et donavit quidam nobilis de Portugallia, de familia dominae Isabellae ducissae. Quintam autem fenestram ejusdem lateris meridionalis non minus artificiose et purchre depictam, pro nunc choro fratrum inclusam, solvit et donavit quidam no- (99) bilis et gratosus juvenis, moribus et statura formosus, Petrus de Villa, de territorio Pedismontium oriundus, filius Dominci.

Ab alia autem parte lateris occidentalis in choro Nostrae Dominae stant duae aliae fenestrae, earundem longitudinis et latitudinis, quarum unam, videlicet proximiorum fenestrae dicti domini Caroli, solvit et donavit quidam civis Gandensis, nominatus magister Monfrandus Alaert, meus dilectus in Studio Parisiensi anno mccccxxiv in collegio *Ave Maria* scholasticus, sodalis et commensalis, ac, tempore donationis, praedicti domini Philippi ducis in suo comitatu Flandriae procurator generalis, qui etiam certa alia clenodia et praetiosa ornamenta altaris serica et purpurea eidem capellae donavit. Aliam autem et septimam fenestram solverunt et donaverunt Guilhelmus de Pape, nobilis, et Joannes Blankaert, mercator, cives et incolae Bruxellenses.

In choro autem fratrum, partim ex choro beatae Mariae sumpto, sunt factae in latere meridionali tres fenestrae vitreae, aequales forma, et longitudine, et latitudine cum repraesentationibus personarum donatricum. Quarum primam versus altare solvit domicella Maria de Vorda, relicta quondam Guilhelmi de Mazenzele, senioris apothecarii super Galo..., avia uxoris meae. Secundam autem fenestram, proxime stantem, fieri fecimus et solvimus Catharina Bogaerts, mea conthoralis, et ego. Tertiam autem fenestram fieri fecit et solvit domicella Margareta de Mazenseele, mater uxoris meae. A latere autem opposito a parte occidentali factae sunt etiam in eodem choro duae fenestrae vitreae, aequalis formae, donatae et solutae per Johannem de Lovanio et Johannem Mosselman, carnifices, et Judocum Simonis, clericum guldae.

Octavam quoque fenestram vitream et rotundam stantem super januam, qua ex navi ecclesiae chorum intratur fratrum, fieri fecit et solvit Johannes Cambier, de arte fabрили, civis et incola Bruxellensis, ac oeconomus dictae capellae, vir pru- (100) dens, litteratus et astrologus. Quae omnia suprascripta nominaliter ad memoriam revoco, ut Dei cultores dicti loci, praesentes et futuri, tanto ferventius pro animabus praenominatarum personarum ac benefactorum, tam vivorum quam defunctorum, sic Dominum Deum ac

beatam Virginem, matrem suam gloriosam, dignentur et valeant exorare. Quae omnia hic memorata apud Deum in libro vitae inveniuntur inscripta. [...]

(101) Item praescripta capella, ut praescribitur, aedificata, cooperta et jam ad Dei ac beatae Virginis Mariae honorem consummata, atque hominum peregrinantium spatio jam fere quatuor annorum devotione continuata, et comparatis ex supercrescente apportu circumcirca certis terris, juxta eandem capellam jacentibus, nec non uno hereditario censu sex florenorum renensium et et duorum petrorum aureorum; [...]

1480: Marcel Voet, *Liber Foundationis*, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, Cabinet des Manuscrits 5764, passages from fol. 14v-15r. My transcription.

(fol. 14v) Anno igitur supradicto [1449] o[mn]ibus necessariis ad dictum opus preparatis et habita prius a diocesano et duce philippo [...] cplo[?], ac parochia anderlectensi licentia, ut oportet ut retulit Herman[n]us supradictus metuendus du[ci]s Karolus der[.]erl[.]iis p[ro]ut unicus heres et filius eiusdem ducis Philippi p[ro]festo cathedre[?] die sabbati in ieiunio primaru[m] lapidem suis armis insigni, tum huius capelle posuit. Et eodem die de consensu Epi[scopus] cameracensis prima[m] missam in parva domu[n]cula ibi stante ut p[er]missu[m] est celebrari fecit, et deinceps idem Episcopus licentia[m] dedit quod ex tunc illi de curia principis in eadem (fol. 15r) celebrare possent per se, aut per aliu[m] donec capella que desuper construebatur esset perfecta et consecrata. Et ex tunc ceperunt ibidem misse celebrari. Eadem autem estate subsequente muri capelle, usq[ue] ad tectum imponendu[m] fueru[n]t erect[.] et ibitunc opus dimissum.

Aide literam de licentia Ep[iscop]i cameracensis et quod in capella super altare portabile possit celebrari ter in ebdomada in [...] libro stz[?] de literis huius modi. Anno L Junii xxvii^a.

Item vide literam de petia terre super qua[m] capella efundata in [...] libro de literis hereditatu[m] anno L.

Item post hec in aprili du[m]odo construeretur capella venit huc in propria persona ad visitandum n[ost]ram D[omi]nam de gra[tia] et ad audiendu[m] missam Jo[ann]es Archiepiscopus remensis qui con tulit certis diebus per annu[m]. et quoties quis uno die ex devotio[n]e dictam capellam visitarverit et ad ip[s]ius edificiu[m] eleemosinam tribuerit xl dies indulgentiaru[m]. Vide literam seu copiam eius in [...] libro de huiusmodi anno m.cccc.[...] [...] xvi^a aprilis ante pasca.

Item anno m cccc l in p[ro]festo ascensionis d[omi]ni du[m]modo dicta capella cooperiretur s[ed] accidit quidam casus lamentabilis de quo q[ui]a satis declaratur in libro de origine hui[us] dom[us] ideo hic silendum puto qui vel maligno sp[irit]u cooperante aliasae negligentia an indiscreta custodia evenisse putatur eodem [...] anno ip[s]a capella in exterioribus p[er]fecta fuerat.

Predicta itaq[ue] capella edificata et cooperta ad dei et n[ost]re D[omi]ne de gra[tia] honorem completa et fere spatio quatuor annoru[m] ho[mo]m[?] illuc peregrina[n]tium devotione continuata ex apportu supercrescenti ultra exposita p[ro] edificiis quasdam terras circa eandem capellam iacentis emerunt de quibus vide copias l[ite]ra[rum] in [...] libro de heriditatibus anno[rum] m.cccc.liii. et mcccc.liiii et una[m] blaiam corona[m] unde vide literas ibidem anno[rum] m cccc xlvi et m. cccc. xlix [...] alia ut p[er] [...] ibidem de quibus aliqua f[ueru]nt quitata. Quibus terris circa capellam eandem in modu[m] cimiterii

murus ad altitudinem vi vel vii pedum constructus fuit pro levi structura facienda ad expertandum pro magis competenti in futurum facienda.