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Walter of Birbech

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Walter of Birbech (* ca. 1154 – † ca. 1222)

1. Names variants: Gautier, W. of Bierbeek, Bierbeke, Bierbacensis, Bierbact, Bierbach

2. Places: Birbech, Himmerod, Akkon

3. Biography: W. was a knight with great devotion to Mary. She is said to have rewarded him by winning a tournament in his place while he prayed to her in a chapel. W. joined Himmerod around 1182 after his return from a crusade to Akkon. W. was said to be able to turn water into wine and to heal the ill by bidding Mary to intercede. He was also known for his generosity; he once gave his boots to a passing beggar. W. was a friend of Caesarius of Heisterbach for whose *Dialogus Miraculorum* W. functioned as an oral source. When W. died, his shoes were given to a poor student, a knight, and other ill people to heal them.

4. Cultus:

a. Relics: Public worship in the Church of St Hilarius in Bierbeek, Belgium. Allegedly, W.'s shoes were exhibited on an altar in a chapel blessed by W.. The location of this chapel is unknown.

b. Liturgical commemoration: 22 Jan (CHALEMOT), 27 Jan (BEER)

c. Patronage: A bell is named after him in St. Hilarius Church in Bierbeek, Belgium.

d. Attributes: –

5. Fontes: AS, *Januarii* 2, Antwerp 1643, 447–50; BHL 8794–8795; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* 7,38, 1416–1439; regarding the friendship between W. and Caesarius see: B. P. MCGUIRE, *Written sources and Cistercian inspiration in Caesarius of Heisterbach*, in: ACi 35 (1979), 240–243 with further references.

6. Literature: A. KAUFMANN, *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein insbesondere das Alte Erzbistum Köln* 47, 1888, 152; A. ZIMMERMANN, *Kalendarium Benedictinum* 1, 1933, 117; C. CHALEMOT, *Kurze Lebens Verfassung der Heiligen und Seeligen auch Berühmbten Männer deß Heiligen Cistercienser Ordens*, 1686, 33; C. HENRIQUEZ, *Menologium Cisterciense*, 1731, 15; F. De REIFFENBERG, *Annuaire de la bibliotheque royale de Belgique* 7, 1846, 107–110; F. R. de PASCUAL, *Nuevo Menologio Cisterciense*, 2019, 40–41; LThK 2nd ed. 10, 946–947; L. BEER, *Heiligenlegende für alle Tage des Jahres* 2nd ed. 1, 1929, 85–87; P. M. GLONING, *Der sel. Walther von Birbach*, in: CistC 9, 1897, 170–174; S. LENSSEN, *Hagiologium Cisterciense* 1, 1948, 289–291; U. CHEVALIER, *Répertoire des sources historiques du Moyen Âge – Biobibliographie* 2nd ed. 1, 1905, 1669; 'Walterus de Birbaco', in: *Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters*, <https://www.geschichtsquellen.de/autor/5101>.

7. Illustrations: Print, in: CistC 9, 1897, 171 – Walter receiving the cross from Maria via a priest, subtitle: *Der sel. Walther von Birbach*; Print by Kölnsperger, Verlag Josef Habbel, Regensburg, in: L. BEER, *Heiligenlegende für alle Tage des Jahres* 2nd ed. 1, 1929, 88 – Walter praying to Mary in front of her window image; Colourful Window Image in St. Hilarius Church in Bierbeek, right transept – Bearded Walter kneeling in front of a statue of Mary, praying; Memorial Stone in St. Hilarius Church Bierbeek, 1998, Engraving: *Zalige Walter Van Bierbeek – Ridder-monnik van Maria 1165 Bierbeek – 1222 Himmerod*.