

## Preface

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Alberico Gentili, the Italian legal expert, was a victim of religious persecution in his own country so he seized the chance to emigrate to England. He quickly found employment with the new King, James I, and subsequently decided to examine the issue of the union between the two kingdoms brought together under the monarch's titles of James I of England and James VI of Scotland (1603). Gentili joined the illustrious group of authors whose opinion could be summed up in the following words: "disputemus hic nos quod tractant omnes nunc". They were all involved with finding the optimum formula for the structure of the union and Gentili contributed his experience and perspective to the debate with enormous commitment and urgency.

During these initial years of the seventeenth century, the Spanish Monarchy had already made enormous gains and managed to expand its empire and area of influence considerably. Spain was now perceived as a solid unit which occupied the entire Iberian Peninsula; the incorporation of Portugal twenty years previously undoubtedly contributed to this perception. An initial examination of the situation reveals how the British regarded Spain as an important reference whilst the Spaniards considered that the English and the Scots were just starting out on a long and difficult journey. The situations in each country were different. Whilst the new Scottish King of England confronted the problem of how to unite two separate entities, Philip III, whose predecessor, Philip II, had completed the process of Iberian unification in 1580, was struggling to keep a complex and clumsy framework in place. At the beginning of the eighteenth century a hundred years later, things had changed radically. England now aspired to occupy a dominant position in Europe. The comparisons between England and Spain and its still extensive and complex monarchy became even more relevant: England became the leading force behind the opposition to the Bourbons, especially when the War of Spanish Succession erupted on the Iberian Peninsula in 1704.

I spent part of the very warm summer of 2003 in Oxford looking at the ways in which European monarchies had been united and preserved intact. I was able to see the importance of the comparison between the Spanish and British monarchies; it enabled commentators to position events against a European backdrop, a fact that a wide range of authors have pointed out and accepted. The following year I was able to present a research project in which

I examined these issues in the context of the Spanish monarchy. The part of the project that looked at the events in Britain I had been studying became the proposal I presented for the annual post of Visiting Fellow at St Antony's College. The proposal was subsequently accepted and became a genuine study and research project, once more at Oxford.

John H. Elliott's interest and generosity and the enthusiastic reception he gave the idea enabled me to get the project under way rapidly and involve two great experts on the subject: John Robertson and Jenny Wormald. John Robertson had already made an important contribution to the field with his now classic *A Union for Empire. Political thought and the British Union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995); Jenny Wormald had contributed to some of the best works on the subject such as the one edited by Roger A. Mason, *Scots and Britons. Scottish political thought and the union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994) and Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill's publication, *The British Problem, 1534-1707. State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (London, 1996).

A number of interesting works on the subject have appeared in recent years especially because of the third centenary of the union of 1707. Nevertheless, there is still room for a comparative approach to the Spanish monarchy and the different ways in which its members were brought together, and related to each other, and the ideas they had on belonging to the whole. This is exactly what this volume proposes, as set out in the editor's opening chapter. James Casey, a historian of Spain, tackles the European context; while Pablo Fernández Albaladejo takes responsibility for the genuinely Spanish part of the book, which deals with the most significant symbolic aspects. The English-speaking public interested in this comparative approach, meanwhile, will want to read Xavier Gil Pujol's comments on the basic concept of loyalty. The Basque perspective, linked to the work of the Oxford Visiting Fellow is to be found in the insightful contributions of Jesús Astigarraga and José María Portillo. The former makes a comparison between the economic and tax systems of the Basque Country and Scotland, whilst the latter offers us a novel perspective on the significance of the Basque-influenced federalist proposals which surfaced in nineteenth-century Mexico.

The launch of the present project took place at the European Studies Centre at St Antony's College on the 11<sup>th</sup> March in 2006. The participants exchanged papers and points of view during the opening session, and there was a subsequent gathering at the seminar held in San Sebastián on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of November in 2008, followed by the compilation of the texts for final publication. The fact that Professor Elliott's name appears as editor is the logical consequence of his involvement both prior to, during and especially after the second seminar in the correction and preparation of the texts.

It is probably no coincidence that a number of the British academics who have contributed to this volume are Scots, English and Irish; that the introductory comments are made by an authority on the history of Spain, namely John Elliott, whose most recent major work is also a broad comparison of the Spanish and British empires; and that, amongst the Spanish contributors, two

or three are Basques, one is Catalan... all of them gathered under one roof at the European Studies Centre which specializes in the problems that the union of Europe creates for all of us at the present day.

Nowadays the union in question is European. In fact Europe has chosen the term “union” for its new political and legal framework. The above mentioned European Studies Centre is a venue for an ongoing series of seminars and debates on these problems and concerns; the Centre echoes to the voices of contributors with different native languages, origins, histories and visions for the future. When the first seminar was held in March of 2006 the centre was under the direction of Timothy Garton Ash, an English specialist in the unification of Germany and the inclusion of the former Eastern bloc nations in the European Union. A great part of the Centre’s activity revolves around the difficulties created by the idea, the desire or, in some cases, the dream, of being or remaining united. An extensive gathering of experts examine the issue from a diverse range of perspectives: the Mediterranean, the Balkans (in the broad sense) and, of course, the traditional British, French and German fields of enquiry.

The national units, kingdoms and smaller entities that we talked about at the seminars now confront new challenges and conditions that will determine their approach to the future. Albeit for different reasons, the component parts of the United Kingdom and Spain have existed together within a framework based on developing the potential of each of the members. Without touching on the issues and problems this process involves, highly significant terms such as “Devolution”, in the United Kingdom, or “A State of and for its Peoples” (Estado de las Autonomías) or “Autonomous Regions”, (Comunidades Autónomas) in Spain, have been used to describe it. Both cases have a number of important similarities: devolution or restoration of powers, together with the ensuing legal adjustments. In the case of Spain, the Constitution and the statutes of autonomy involve numerous mechanisms to achieve this. This book seeks to make a helpful contribution to a better understanding of the historical roots of these developments. Just as in times past, which are the focus of this work, both the national and European aspects of each case must be taken into consideration.

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