

*Habsburg England: Politics and Religion in the Reign of Philip I (1554-1558)*, Gonzalo Velasco Berenguer, (Leiden: Brill, 2023, pp. xviii + 364, €139)

The historical spotlight has favoured the reign of Mary I in recent years, with significant reassessments from John Edwards and, particularly notably, Judith Richards. The same cannot really be said of her husband, Philip of Spain, a man who has tended to be something of an 'off-stage' character in English accounts of the mid-sixteenth century. Gonzalo Velasco Berenguer's *Habsburg England: Politics and Religion in the Reign of Philip I (1554-1558)* is a welcome attempt to bring Philip centre-stage.

Velasco Berenguer sets out to explore the brief period when England was 'within the orbit of the Habsburgs as an integral part of the Spanish Monarchy' (p. 23) – that is, part of the Spanish empire. This naturally creates a focus on Habsburg sources. There are several areas in which they provide a useful corrective to the anglophone tradition, for example, pointing out that while Cardinal Pole is often quoted as objecting to Mary marrying Philip, it was more that he favoured her not marrying at all. Given the traditional emphasis on opposition to Mary's Spanish match, moreover, it is refreshing to hear how positively news of the marriage was received in the Habsburg empire.

Another impressive feature is the reassessment of Spanish influence on the burning of Protestants during the reign. Evidence here is slim but clear: Spanish theologians and friars were at the centre of the regime's campaign against heretics, which was itself part of a 'bigger-scale attempt to enforce the universality of Catholicism which transcended English borders' (p. 244).

Nevertheless, the stage on which Philip stands is rather imbalanced, and there are some aspects that niggle. Some long sentences and unusual turns of phrase make the book in places more difficult to read than it needs to be – a strong editorial hand here would have been welcome. Another is the sheer number of discursive footnotes. At times, the information they contain would be better in the main text, while at others, they shift significant but perhaps inconvenient details out of the direct line of sight. For example, Velasco Berenguer argues that Philip's select council had 'wider significance than hitherto believed' (p. 154). Although he notes that some of the assumptions about the Marian conciliar system have been challenged, only in the footnote does he acknowledge that Glyn Redworth argued convincingly for the effectiveness of the select council back in 1997 in his article for this journal, "'Matters Impertinent to Women': Male and Female Monarchy under Philip and Mary' (112, pp. 597-613). Without checking the footnote, one would believe that the discovery of its Castilian model was Velasco Berenguer's original contribution.

Velasco Berenguer also tends towards presenting large amounts of information without explaining their relevance. This can be seen in lists of people and of pensions, but the problem is particularly pronounced in chapter 5. Here the reader is treated to a detailed examination of Anglo-Spanish theological views on justification, the Eucharist and papal primacy which shows that English and Spanish Catholics thought about them in much the same way, but the author does little to explain why this matters. Indeed, it would be interesting to set this in the context of wider Catholic theology to see if there was anything

inherently Anglo-Spanish about it, or whether it simply reflected the main theological positions of the time.

Much is made of the claim that the arrangements for Philip and Mary's co-monarchy were based on both the marriage treaty of Ferdinand and Isabella and Charles V's response to the demands of the Comunero rebels in 1520-21. Berenguer points out that the Torsedillas rebels demanded that the officers of the royal household should be natural born subjects of Castille, thus requiring the ejection of the Flemish nobles who had been granted offices, and that this was reflected in Philip and Mary's marriage treaty. Likewise, he sees direct similarities between the English and Comunero demands that no foreigner be appointed to govern their respective realms in the monarch's absence. But it is difficult to imagine any province not wanting to protect influential positions for local men. Given the highly conservative nature of rebellion in the period, these concerns would surely have been reflected anywhere where territories faced incorporation through marriage. They are a sixteenth-century facet of apprehensions about foreign domination which date back to the medieval period, where similar worries plagued the proposed marriage of Margaret, Maid of Norway, and Edward I of England.

Velasco Berenguer sometimes takes his Spanish sources rather at face value. Philip appears as the prime mover, for example, in the reconciliation with Rome, while the picture of Philip after the wedding is one of a man keen to make accommodations in order not just to make the marriage work, but also to reassure his new English subjects. To some extent at least, one would expect those close to Philip to write positively about him, so more entwining of English and Spanish material would have painted a fuller picture.

This feeds into a bigger problem, however. Seeing England as part of the Habsburg empire certainly draws Philip out of the wings, and successfully demonstrates that England was but one part of a wider European stage. Nevertheless, placing Philip in the limelight in this way almost undermines another of Velasco Berenguer's major arguments: that Philip and Mary's was a co-monarchy. In his account, however, Mary is almost absent from the scene, and the significant challenges facing both the queen regnant who chose to marry and her husband are largely missing, especially after the chapters dealing with the marriage itself. These challenges are not to be underestimated.

There is absolutely no doubt about the amount of work that has gone into the production of this book, nor is there any doubt that a detailed examination of Philip and Mary as king and queen of England is long overdue. But while Velasco Berenguer has done an admirable job in rescuing Philip from playing a bit-part in the story, we still await someone to harmonise the two soloists into a duet.

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