

Beyond the Medieval:

THE MODERNITY OF THE THINKERS OF THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE *2nd SYMPOSIUM OF THE SPECIAL RESEARCH LINE IN CLASSICAL SPANISH THOUGHT*

Pamplona, September 25 and 26, 2008

We would like the modern spirit of Vitoria to preside over this Symposium. We recall that the triggering cause for the philosophical and legal affirmations of Vitoria was the discovery of the New World –with its new races and languages– which in turn provoked a revision of the basic anthropological and legal ideas of the medieval era. The effect of this new geographic knowledge – which broke down the narrow limits of the European view of the world– was so profound that it provoked the construction of an entirely new way of thinking about the world and the legal order which should govern it. This new vision was the work of Vitoria, who transformed the political conscience of Europe, overcoming many aspects of the medieval mentality and proposing a new *charta* of human rights and responsibilities, *qua* individual and social beings, which would be valid for all peoples, who would thus be integrated into a *universal community* (which Vitoria repeatedly called the “*Totus Orbis*”) as the natural home for man. This “universal community” was not, in Vitoria’s vision, a “society of nations,” which is a later intellectual development. This *universal community* is not a supranational state, created by men, but rather a perfect, self-sufficient community, able to demand rights for men when it is necessary to do so; this is because it is permanent, superior to and prior to all those peoples and nations which, at a given point in time, desire to unite together in order to form a confederation of nations. Before we are Spaniards or Germans, we are citizens of the world. The Spanish Golden Age was permeated by the spirit of Vitoria. We are, with Vitoria, of the modern world.

- 3) Originality in the philosophy of law, in topics relating to property and related rights, in particular intellectual property (Francisco Suárez, Antonio Pérez, Juan de Lugo, R. de Arriaga).
- 5) Originality in economic thought, concerning the market, charging of interest and economic institutions (Tomás de Mercado, Francisco García, Martín de Azpilcueta).
- 7) Originality in metaphysics, concerning essence and the act of being (Domingo Báñez, Pedro de Ledesma).
- 9) Originality in anthropology and the philosophy of religion (Bartolomé de Las Casas).

A final note: we can only overcome part of the Black Legend concerning Spain, if we are able demonstrate historical truth about this era. Medieval European thought ends with Vitoria. The prolongation of the so-called Scholastic method (in reality, Aristotelian) and the use of Latin (which was also used by Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schelling and Hegel) is only tangential to the truth about the fundamental events in the thought of the time, and continued (and will continue) to be working tools for all those who wish to use them, without any need to feel “medieval” for doing so.