



The philosophical work of Jaime Balmes¹ at the University of Guatemala. 1855-1860

ARTEMIS TORRES VALENZUELA



In Spanish culture, the impulse of Jaime Balmes², Juan José Arbolí and the Dominican Ceferino González (1831-1892 author of a History of Philosophy) gave



¹ This article is part of the unpublished book: “*Los Conservadores ilustrados y la Ilustración conservadora. Anotaciones sobre la cultura ciudadana en la República de Guatemala: 1840-1870*”, by Artemis Torres Valenzuela. The content completes the works of the same author published in the Journals *Tradiciones de Guatemala* 67/2007, 68/2007 and 69/2008 editions of the *Centro de Estudios Folklóricos* of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. We consider opportune to indicate that the recovery of the Balmesian work is of significant importance for the influence that it exerted in the university environments of the Republic of Guatemala.

² Jaime Luciano Antonio Balmes Urpiá was born in Vich, Barcelona, Spain on August 28, 1810, son of Jaime Balmes, tanner and Teresa Urpiá. This religious, mathematician and philosopher studied in depth the works of Saint Thomas, Saint Augustine, Suarez, Bellarmine, Kant and Fichte among others, knowledge that allowed him to generate his own thought. He led a short but intense intellectual life, which was expressed in the foundation and direction of three important magazines: *La Civilización* (published in Barcelona 1841-1843), *La Sociedad* and *El Pensamiento de la Nación*. Author of innumerable works and writings, posthumous publishers organized a vol of the rites he left on his study table. In 1848 the Catholic Publishing House, on the occasion of the first centenary of his death, decided through the *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos* to incorporate a new critical edition of the complete works to the 1925 edition of the *Biblioteca de Balmes* (called Balmesiana) of Barcelona. In 1923 the Balmes Library was inaugurated in the same city, in the building of Durán y Bas Street, number 11, for some this enclosure more than a library is considered “a center of high religious studies” that adopted this name considering that in the modern age there did not exist in Spain more illustrious teacher

new vigor to scholasticism, which appeared connected to the thought of other philosophers, many of them Jesuit religious. The advent of modernity implied the recognition of modern problems that needed a theoretical renewal of the eternal philosophy of St. Thomas. Thus the efforts of Jesuit Father Matías Liberatore (1810- 1892) spreading the scholastic doctrines in works of his authorship: *Instituciones Philosophicae* (1840), *Del compuesto humano* and *Del conocimiento intelectual* and other periodical publications in the Italian Jesuit magazine, *La Civitta Católica* (1850). In the Italian particularity also stood out Luis Taparelli d Azeglio (Jesuita fallecido in 1862) autor de Ensayo teorico sobre derecho natural, Tomás Zigliara (Dominico 1833-1893) with the work *Summa Pholosophica*, whose content contributed to restore the scholasticism in the seminaries.

In the same academic tradition were the canon Cayetano Sanseverino (1811- 1865) who published in the periodical *La Ciencia y la Fe*. Joseph Prisco (Archbishop and Cardinal of Naples 1836-1923), Salvador Tálamo with his work *El aristolismo de la escolástica* (1876)³ In Germany, the Jesuit Kleutgen (1811-1883) published his work *La filosofía escolástica*, explained and diffused



in the personal formation and in the apologetic apostolate. Collected Works, Volume 1, 17, 18, 19. For further information on the biography of this author we suggest consulting: Balmes, Jaime. Biography and Epistolary. *Obras Completas*, Too 1, *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos*, Madrid: 1948 and *Las Efemérides Balmesianas* that chronologically highlight the most important events of his life. *Obras Completas*, Volume 8, Madrid: 1950.

³ Tredici, Jacinto. *Historia de la Filosofía*. Editorial Difusión, Buenos Aires: 1968, 265-267.

(1860- 1863) and Alberto Stoeck (1823-1895) with la Historia de la filosofía de la Edad Media. In France, the teaching of the new and vigorous scholastic tradition was re-established with figures such as *Condo Domet de vorges* (1829-1910). These efforts were joined by those of the Santa Sede, which at different times of the same century were expressed by Pius the fourth and Leo the eighth⁴.

In the fifties, defending the traditional scholastic ontology, Balmes revises and reflects on the basic principles of metaphysics from a gnoseological perspective, generating a conciliatory and permanent dialogue with modern philosophy⁵. This “modern” philosophy of Balmes encouraged the desire of some Guatemalan university professors for it to be written in Latin, one of them argued: “...There is news of having been translated into Latin the lessons of Balmes, and I will make every effort, so that for the next course, we can have here a sufficient number...”⁶ The work was adopted as a text and incorporated into the contents of Morals and Metaphysics, although it was left free for the professor, with the prior approval of the rector, the profesor could choose other others⁷.



4 Tredici, Jacinto. *Historia de la Filosofía*. Editorial Difusión, Buenos Aires: 1968, 267, 268, 269.

5 The influence of Balmesian thought had great importance in Latin America, from different thematic axes, works such as those of Pablo Mijangos y González in Mexico recover it in the juridical, Yamarilis Quevedo Parra through the renewal of ideas in the Universidad Zulia in Venezuela and Renato Alejandro Huerta through the study of philosophy in Chile.

6 Libro de Actas de Claustros (Pleno, de Conciliarios, de Hacienda 1851-1866). Universidad de Guatemala y Nacional y Pontificia, today Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Minutes of April 26, 1856, folio 48 returned.

The incorporation of new ideas in the National and Pontifical University of Guatemala was expressed in actions such as the necessary opening of the third philosophy class for which it was argued could be dictated by a prelate of the *Franciscana* order. To study the modern was appointed the Licentiate Mr. Damian Guerra who taught the subjects in Latin using the work of Father Balmes, the books of this author had arrived at the request of the Archbishop of the Holy Church of Guatemala in a considerable number of copies that would be sold at reasonable prices⁸.

There was no lack of adverse opinions from some members of the cloister who argued that the adoption of the work of Father Balmes poured back into the Latin language, probably could not have been translated with all the vigor and energy that his thought has in the language in which it was written and spoken in Guatemala. With this innovation -which was not an improvement for teaching- it was claimed that the youth would fall behind in all aspects, would not understand the sublime thoughts of the author as a philosopher, nor would they perceive the beauties of his style as a writer, nor would they learn Latin because it had to be studied in Latin authors⁹.



7 Libro de Actas de Claustros (Pleno, de Conciliarios, de Hacienda 1851-1866). Universidad de Guatemala y Nacional y Pontificia, nowadays Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Record of october 27, 1856 folio 57.

8 Libro de Actas de Claustros (Pleno, de Conciliarios, de Hacienda 1851-1866). Universidad de Guatemala y Nacional y Pontificia, nowadays Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Record of octubre 26, 1857 folios 65 vuelto y 66.

9 Libro de Actas de Claustros (Pleno, de Conciliarios, de Hacienda 1851-1866). Universidad de Guatemala y Nacional y Pontificia, nowadays Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Record of December 20, 1857, 70 vuelto.

Although the criticism was not directly to the work but to the language, the thought of this philosopher was welcomed and promoted in a historical context prior to the official consolidation of a liberal government that would raise the modern, would strengthen the idea of nation based on an economy of large-scale production with a view to export. The reading of these texts for some neo-scholastic, for others eclectic and for others more modern allows us to know and understand the direct link between what in traditional historiography we have called civilized conservative and modern liberal.

Each of Jaime Balmes' works had a transcendental impact on the theoretical understanding and practical action in the organization of the then nascent Republic of Guatemala. Because of their importance, the content of each text is briefly considered.

Filosofía Fundamental.

This work -probably one of the best known in Guatemala- was of special interest particularly for philosophy professors in higher education centers, seminaries, colleges and pontifical universities who, considering that the guiding ideas of the universal order influence the progress and development of peoples, it was necessary to disseminate them among their disciples.

In opposition to unilateral empiricism (the subjective self) its content states that science should be built on the basis of objective principles, universal and necessary ideas of reason, that is to say that philosophy should

not begin by divinizing man's understanding and its conscience. In such a way that "Balmes teaches us to stay in the right middle, <<Neither voluntarism nor unilateral intellectualism>>"¹⁰.

Structured in ten books, *The Filosofía Fundamental* refers to the following titles: Of certainty, of sensations, extension and space, of ideas, idea of the entity, unity and number, time, the infinite, substance, and necessity and causality respectively.

The first addresses the importance and usefulness of questions about certainty, taking as a reference aspects of human reason, clarifies links and differences with respect to truth, both references in terms of God, man and the universe. In this regard, the text pointed out that "Philosophy must begin not by disputing about the fact of certainty, but by explaining it"¹¹ This philosophy starts from the outside inward, since truth emerges from an absolute being, infinite, origin and end of all truths, reason of all beings. To pretend otherwise would be to divinize human understanding¹².

Balmes places the idea of truth in two ways: real truths that correspond to the real, finite world, that which exists, observable, expresses a particular,



10 Balmes, Jaime. *Obras Completas*, Tomo 1. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, XXIII.

11 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 15.

12 Balmes, Jaime. *Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 46.

contingent fact, and ideal truths that refer to the logical world, of possibilities that are known by discourse¹³.

In his incursion into the facts he also emphasized human nature, the existence of internal phenomena which he explains in relation to God, author of all beings, infinite essence, ultimate reason, foundation of all possibility, light of all intelligences, divine light that exists in the soul, guiding it rightly.

In another order of ideas, the author refers, with a particular conception, to art, which he defines and questions as follows: “What is an art? Is it a set of rules for doing something well? And when is it more perfect? It is all the more so when it contains a greater number of cases in each rule, and, consequently, when the number of rules is less¹⁴”. In the specific case of architecture, he says: “Before those of architecture had been formulated, buildings had undoubtedly been constructed that were solid, beautiful and adapted to the use to which they were destined; but the great progress of intelligence in the construction of buildings consisted in finding what was common to those that were well constructed, in fixing the cause of solidity and beauty in themselves, passing from the individual to the universal, that is, forming general ideas of



13 Balmes, Jaime, *Filosofía fundamental*, Obras completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 41.

14 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, obras Completas, Tomo II Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 31.

solidity and beauty, applicable to a countless number of particular cases: simplifying¹⁵”. By focusing on absolute magnitudes, he establishes a relationship of agreement between art and science, reason and feeling, understanding and sense, explaining that in art, size has no real significance, but what is important is the relationship or proportion, since artistic thought does not refer directly to magnitude¹⁶.

The liberal and mechanical arts (useful and practical) summed up the advancement of intelligence, each work containing a multiplicity of ideas. The lovers of letters and the fine arts sought the idea of beauty in general by applying it to literary and artistic objects¹⁷.

Regarding the universal conception of time, he sees it as duration in relation to a thing that exists, the succession of changes between being and non-being, a world that transforms itself. The variations of time are explained through the past and future. The present state is the only absolute time that does not need to be related to be conceived, it is thought without links to the past and the future, the opposite happens with the past and the future that cannot be conceived without the present. *The past idea relative to the present*



15 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 31.

16 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 359.

17 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 31.

always refers to a present point, it indicates that it happened from a present and depending on the angles of reference that past (also, idea relative to the present) is what is to come, what is to be, what is hypothetical, what is possible. The present is the only real but passing thing, it does not need any relation, this is the moment of being, it is the present instant. Time is not the duration of the present but the past and the future, successive quantity, relation that is expressed in being and not being.

The idea of time is akin to that of space, considered as the place occupied by bodies or the relationship between two points or places. Time is a set of changes, a continuous succession of things, events or phenomena in all their generality, so that “When there are no bodies there is no space: when there are no things that follow one another there is no time¹⁸.”

Possibly one of the most controversial and welcomed topics in university classrooms was the one concerning the exact sciences and metaphysics. From clerical reflection and supported by books such as *Filosofía Fundamental*, the exact and natural sciences, promoted by modern liberal governments, reduced their study and understanding to the calculation of extension and movement, limiting themselves to the knowledge of a single aspect presented by experience, which placed them very far from metaphysics, which according to this conception knew



18 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 590.

things that were absolutely necessary¹⁹.

Filosofía Fundamental provides an idea of civilization that includes the subordination of other civilizations, so that peoples by themselves have not passed from one state to another (savages, barbarians, etc.). The European Christian civilization, for example, is explained in part related to the Roman civilization, the latter to the Greek civilization, preceded by the Egyptian and Eastern civilizations until reaching the genesis, in such a way that to know civilizations and the human spirit implies situating them not in isolation but as part of the history of mankind²⁰.

The harmony of the conservative conception is complemented by the existing universal moral order, based on the ideas of good and evil, which has existed and persisted in all times and in all societies, in their different stages: childhood, maturity and old age. This order governs the relations of man with God, of man with himself and of men with men through understanding, will, works and actions. Good is envisaged as that which is good, that is, that which is in conformity with reason, with the eternal law and pleasing to God; the opposite is evil, that which is bad, which is opposed to reason, contradicts the eternal law and is displeasing to God. The moral order is internal, opposite and complementary to the physical order; if it were to disappear, men would act like animals



19 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 384.

20 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 799,

and on the basis of their passions, natural instincts and speculations²¹. The necessary integrity between the moral order and the physical order explains how the former is transmitted through instruction and education and the latter manifests itself in concrete actions that make the real and concrete world possible.

Filosofía elemental.

From the publication of the *Filosofía Fundamental* came the work entitled *Filosofía elemental*, one of the reasons for its realization was to satisfy the public that at that time requested it and for whom its author began the translation into Latin, in addition to adapting it as a teaching book. In this regard, in his introduction Balmes stated: "I have tried, therefore, to reduce to brief and simple rules all that is required to think well; and I refrain from discussing difficult questions that young people cannot understand when they first step on the threshold of science²²."

The index of *Filosofía elemental* contemplated: Logic (understood as the teaching of the knowledge of truth), Ethics (contrary to an art that would be limited areglas, it was the science that has as its object the nature and origin of morality), other titles were: Metaphysics (study of the soul, of the self as a starting point), Aesthetics (science that deals with sensibility, completes the idea that knowledge is an internal reflection of the



21 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid:, 802-810.

22 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 7

corporeal product of incorporeal sensations, both experienced in the soul), Pure Ideology, General Grammar or Philosophy of Language, Psychology, Theodicy and History of Philosophy. It is important to point out that at the beginning of the work it was made clear that the purpose of logic was to teach how to know the truth, which was the reality that in turn was conceived in things (the thing itself) or in the understanding (knowledge)²³. Unlike thinking that, during these years, knowledge was limited to a late scholasticism that did not question or admit any truth other than religious truth, the work of Balmes opened spaces for reflection in the Guatemalan and Central American university environment when he affirmed that the immediate object of the five senses was to put us in contact or communication with the corporeal world and that in addition, it excited the spirit producing knowledge of incorporeal things. To the senses he added the faculties of the soul: external sensibility, imagination, internal sensibility or faculty of feeling and intelligence. In order to use the senses well, he provided a series of rules²⁴.

This work takes up in a more concrete way the ideas of space or place and the relation of time, thus exposing how space is associated with the things contained in it and time orders the events by choosing a very remarkable one



23 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 8.

24 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 10,12.

that becomes the link of another chain of events. In the social sphere this applies to the division of History into great epochs referring to the foundation or ruin of an empire or to other events considered important by their nature or results. The ordinary course of collective life can also be divided on the basis of events that deeply mark the spirits, for example the beginning or end of a war, a plague, the inauguration or death of a king, and on an even more precise (individual) level the death of a loved one, a change of social position, alterations within the family life, etc.²⁵. In this way the link of places, events, things and times are easily engraved and remain easily in the individual and collective memory.

The section on Ethics offered countless elements applicable to the understanding of social phenomena that undoubtedly influenced the so-called conservative culture. Contrary and at the same time complementary to the principles of reasoned morality, Balmes establishes the duties that men as rational natural creatures must fulfill, the first with God (love, veneration, gratitude, kindness, will linked to good, interior adoration, exterior adoration, living in religion for the search of divine justice and eternal happiness)²⁶. The second with oneself,



25 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 19,20.

26 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 134, 135.

acting with spontaneity, intelligence and freedom, contemplates - as a general law of the universe - manifestations such as love of self, the desire for happiness, the habit of work, life, health and hygiene. As for the duties directed to the understanding, they are related to the knowledge of truth. Lastly, those relating to the sensible order²⁷ which foster the development of the higher faculties: all these commitments must lead the spirit towards eternal perfection.

For reproduction, men are destined to live in society, they need to communicate with their fellow men, to develop morally and intellectually, their organization starts from the family environment (called by Balmes domestic society) where they also exercise duties and rights²⁸. Considering that unions form societies, the most natural, primary and indispensable for the preservation of the human race is the family unit, in which parents promote physical development together with moral and intellectual relations, forming rational creatures. Providence entrusts to this unity (built on the lasting bonds of marriage) the care of children, so that they may enter into the problems of the world. If the alliance does not last long, the order of the family and therefore of society will be altered.



27 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 134-147.

28 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 148-153.

In political states, in order to establish and maintain order in societies, the existence of an authority and a law that binds, enables and cohesion is indispensable. In the family society, for example, individual forces are dispersed, therefore there must be a paternal authority that exercises unity within it, this power is conceived as limits and must be exercised by the father. In this respect Balmes points out: "Before the society with the children there is that of husband and wife, between them there must be authority so that there is order. The weakness of the woman, the needs of her sex, her natural inclinations, the predominance in her of feeling over reflection, the same kind of means that nature has given her to acquire descendants, all this indicates that she was not born to command the male, whom nature has made reflective, less sensitive in heart, without the means and the arts of seduction, but with the air and strength to command. The authority of the family is found, then, in the male; that of the mother in his aid and replaces it when he is absent²⁹." A hierarchy of power is thus constructed in which the woman owes submission and obedience to her husband and the children to their parents, these domestic relations may also depend on the circumstances. The harmony of societies is built with the fulfillment of duties and obligations between parents and children, parents take care of their children when they are young and children take care of their parents when they are older, this sentimental filiation maintains and reproduces the order of societies. By nature



29 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo IM, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 151.

parents and children express love, obedience, tolerance, respect, veneration and patience.

By nature, political authority, the public power that preserves order among families, avoiding anarchy and the ruin of society, is erected over paternal authority (which reproduces and preserves family order). Transcending religious ideas regarding the origin, formation and organization of power, this philosophy explains that it responds to diverse human conditions and circumstances without ignoring that its moral value is based on the natural law from which it originates.

Filosofía Elemental provides a useful and important treatise on sociology, analyzing society from its starting point: the family, of which it affirms that independently of the family grouping (the domestic) and the social organization (the political) that make relationships possible, men have rights and duties that respond to their human essence, to their own bonds of humanity that manifest primarily to feelings and the heart more than to reason. The gathering of men in society brings great advantages to each one and consequently to civilizations. "Individual security is guaranteed against passions; the means for the preservation of life increase; the forces to dominate nature and make it contribute to the satisfaction of needs multiply ... the intellectual faculties are notably increased by all participating in the ideas of all³⁰." The eneficial association, indis-



30 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo HI. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 157, 158.

pensable for progress, is expressed in a space (place where they converge) and in a time (connecting the past, taking up what previous generations have contributed).

As part of the same order appears the public good understood in relation to the perfection of society and this to the perfection possessed by each of its members. The model of human perfection, along with knowledge and intelligence, includes morality and material well-being, since one would be useless if the other were lacking. Linked to the good arise the two functions of public power: to protect from evil and to promote the good, the latter is achieved because there are morality and religion that produce immense goods to society, avoid disasters, contribute to strengthen public authority making people docile and reasonable³¹. Religion as a divine and non-human element, covers the lack of knowledge because in itself it is consoling, kind, high in wisdom that tempers the passions raising sublime and eternal truths.

On the other hand, the ideas of order and freedom must be understood in human associations. To maintain order it is necessary to limit the freedom of each individual for the benefit of all, this is expressed most directly in relation to property which is understood as "...the belonging of an object to a subject secured by law."³² This property is linked to



31 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 162-174.

32 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 165.

property is linked to work. Societies governed by reason and not by passions or particular whims that generate arbitrariness or tyranny are regulated by civil law, taking up again the ideas of St. Thomas, which is defined as an ordering of reason, directed to the common good. These ideas are completed by the action of governing a State³³ that implies protecting the life and interests of the associates through its own means that are obtained through taxes. What is collected should not demand more than what is necessary and its distribution should be done with equity and justice.

History teaches that the episodes, calamities, triumphs, etc. are ephemeral moments that are part of a universal realization, since the life of humanity on earth is a necessary moment to then transit to another form, at the highest point of society is the Providence that links the earthly world with the celestial, the finite temporal with the infinite eternal. According to this logic, if life were to end with the very existence of the body, it would not be possible to understand that the present life is linked to the future life, the other life, in another world that by its nature experiences a different existence in the eternal destinies. A clear example indicates: "The Greek civilization spreads in the East, the lights spread, the peoples, put in contact, develop and acquire new life, it is true; but measure, if you can, the chain of misfortunes that this advance costs to humanity; go through the times of Philip, Alejandro and their successors



33 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Fundamental*, Obras Completas, Tomo IM, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 177-178.

until the Roman legions invade the East Rome gives unity to the world, contributes to its civilization, it is true; but while you contemplate this picture you see ten centuries of wars and disasters, rivers of tears and blood. The barbarians of the North come out of their forests, and their races, full of life, rejuvenate those of degenerate peoples; from those hordes will be formed in time the brilliant nations that cover the face of Europe, it is true; but before reaching this result another ten centuries of untold calamities will elapse. The Arabs dominate the South and transmit to the European civilization lights in the sciences and in the arts; but at what price does humanity buy them? With eight centuries of war. Civilization progresses; comes the century of discoveries; the eastern and western islands receive new life; but at what price? Fix, if you can, your eyes on the pictures of horror that history offers you. Europe reaches the sixteenth century; it is wise, cultured, rich, powerful; blood will continue to pour in

torrents, leading great armies Gonzalo de Cordova, Charles V, Gustavo, Louis XV, Napoleon And what about the future?"³⁴.

From a broader perspective, the existence of life through beings responds to the organization and hierarchy that classifies and places them on a scale that elevates them from the inferior to the intellectual. Those that make up the base are beings without consciousness of any kind (inorganic and vegetable), beings with subjective consciousness (animals whose sensations do not represent objects but manifestations such as hunger, thirst, heat, cold, pain, well-being, pleasure, etc.) and beings with representative consciousness of absolute facts in themselves, beings that experience and gather other beings as well as objects of the corporeal world. The following table presents the characteristics of beings with their corresponding affectivities or inclinations.

Beings ³⁵	Characteristics Perceptual order	Affective order or inclinations
Beings without consciousness of any kind	Inorganic and vegetable	
Beings with purely subjective consciousness	Animals whose sensations do not represent any object. They experience subjective phenomena for themselves and seek the object for pleasure or value.	Sensitive appetites limited to the present moment

34 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 189, 190.

35 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 241-242.

Beings with representative awareness	They possess sensations of absolute facts in themselves and of representative objects. They are directed by reason and morality	The will Conceive the existence of eternity
--------------------------------------	---	---

Other notions that had an impact on the social conception were those related to space, movement, cause and effect (transformations of being, non-being, intrinsic and extrinsic causes) and time, in the latter we find a richness applicable to social facts, be they events or simply phenomena. To know its content, let us begin by pointing out (differently from the previous ones) that the idea of time refers to succession, to the order of being and non-being, of changes, it is the perception of order, of change, of movement, it does not exist separately from things but linked to them. Time is in two ways: pure or empirical, which is relative to the general perception of a real or possible order of changes, it dispenses with all measurement and application to certain objects, it does not contemplate the before (past) or after (future), so that everything is present, its duration is necessary and eternal existence, "it is the perfect and simultaneous possession of an endless life"³⁶. The other classification of time is the empirical or experimental one that contains a measure applied to certain changes, in this idea three elements are conceived: the metaphysical conception (being and non-being), the mathematical (number that measures succession,



³⁶ Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 274.

change) and the observed fact (of nature). With this measure of the things that happen in nature we can know the changes in societies and understand the necessity of the past, present and future dimensions only in those contingent beings that with their existence do not exclude non-existence (God-individuals, individuals-God)³⁷.

Critical evaluations of the Balmesian philosophy with respect to the impulse of positivist science.

In *Filosofía Elemental* a critical stance against the positivist conception of science is proposed. For Balmes, science is the development of the first truths, product of intellectual activity, it is a certain knowledge of a set of secondary truths linked to the first ones. Accompanying other concepts such as: reasoning, demonstration, principles, axioms, maxims and postulates among others, the author explains how the purely ideal principles dispense with experience and therefore are subordinated to their ideas, to ideal conditions, here we find the mathematical and ontological ones that are distinguished by their certainties, demonstrations, clarity in their objects of



³⁷ Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo I, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 273-274,

study that are closer to the sensible and therefore oblige to concentrate on the region of pure understanding.

On the other hand, there are sciences whose object is reality; these need internal or external experience, they rely on the demonstration that manifests real truths and elaborate affirmations of facts using their own concepts such as the question or the problem. Here we find sciences such as Psychology, which studies the internal reality, and unlike the ideal sciences, in these there are elements such as: the difficulty of being certain of the experimental facts, the difficulty of applying with certainty the ideal principles to the observed facts and the variety of opinions that are found in them, in the Philosophy of Balmes this is the darkness that surrounds them, in the words of the writer: "Not all sciences should be treated with the same method: those who demand for everything demonstrations similar to mathematics manifest that they have no knowledge of the fundamental difference;. ... they lose sight of the real truths and only remember the ideal ones.... The same defect is committed by those who attempt to explain physical nature, the human heart, the laws of society, by mere theories: they adhere to an ideal order and forget that we are dealing with the real one; that we are seeking, not what is in our understanding, but in things themselves. Purely ideal truths suffice for purely ideal sciences; but in dealing with reality it is necessary to combine ideas with the observation of facts: only from this combination can the light spring forth to

guide us to the knowledge of real truths to link them, to subject them to general laws and form from them a true body of science³⁸."

A third position of science as to its existence, nature and limits is found in the mixed order that requires its own method, harmonizing the ideal with the real. In such a way that if a science is of the ideal order it will venture into the order of pure ideas and if it is real, into facts. Applying a pertinent example, the *Filosofía Elemental* includes: "One seeks what is the best government for a society, and discusses at length in the region of principles, forgetting the facts, an erroneous method; in dealing with practice it is necessary to stick to experience³⁹". Finally, the orders of ideas are in correspondence to two fundamental aspects: the extension linked to the natural sciences and that of being in relation to the principle of contradiction. Thus Balmes emphasizes that the method that defines the certainty of the sciences must be and is different, hence all efforts are vanity. His accurate criticism is directed more to a vulnerable point, the methodological process, than to the truths posed by the sciences.

History of Philosophy.

"The history of philosophy is the history the



38 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo II. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 287.

39 Balmes, Jaime. *Filosofía Elemental*, Obras Completas, Tomo III, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 288.

evolutions of the human spirit in its most active, most agitated, freest portion; there is not a single orbit, but many and very diverse and irregular; if one wants to give them too precise contours, there is a danger of disfiguring them; in objects that are expansive, indefinite, vague, to portray them loosely is to portray them truly.” J.B.

The Course in *Filosofía Elemental* is completed with a history of Philosophy that underlines the importance of its study, since according to the author’s considerations (which are confirmed throughout the content of the work), it is difficult to obtain a complete and precise idea of philosophy if one does not know its history and therefore it is not possible to understand history if one has not first studied philosophy; thus history is not the beginning, but the complement. Without neglecting the educational function, at the end the text provides the exposition of schools and philosophical traditions, exposing the features that define the thought of each civilization, in this way the author offers a journey through the following philosophies: India, China, Persia, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Ionians, Pythagoreans, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno of Elea, Leucippus and Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Sophists and Skeptics, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cynics, Pyrrhonians, Epicureans, Stoics, Cicero, Eclectics of Alexandria, Neoplatonists, Arabs and Jews, Gerbertus, Roscelin: Nominalism and Realism, St. Anselm, Abelard, St. Thomas Aquinas, Scholastic Philosophy, Roger Bacon, Descartes, Bacon de Verulam, Hobbes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Locke,

Berkeley, Vico, Leibniz, Buffier and the Scottish School, Hume, Condillac, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Jacobi, Lamennais, Cousin, Krause, among others.

El Criterio.

The content contemplates acting well in terms of the truth of things on the basis of the existence of God, hence its structure in three parts: The introduction provides profound reflections on thinking well in any order of things. It is followed by the speculative understanding that guides the intellectual activity, in this section we find considerations about the usefulness and necessity of History that, distinguishing the accurate in his speeches is a means to save time, although his interpretations also question elements of what today we call theory of history, such as the doubt that generates the narrative as to the background of the fact and its circumstances, the boundless enthusiasm, the admirations, blind faith and other expressions of the heart of man. Another significant element is constituted by the ten rules that Balmes establishes for the critical and reflective study of history⁴⁰.

In this same passage of the speculative understanding, the Philosophy of History⁴¹ is



⁴⁰ Balmes also refers to the reflective reading of history in *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Volume IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 441.

approached, making the opportune clarification that it is not the history of philosophy, since it prioritizes the history of the development of the universal lineage in terms of the system of names and dates. On the contrary, the philosophy of history recovers the spirit of an epoch, as its name indicates, it is a philosophy of history and frequently also of the historian, using its contributions it exposes and reflects on each one of the schools or philosophical traditions, it is suggested and proposed as a method for saving time and fatigue to look for the document, attend the scenes, observe the monuments, read the writers of the epoch that one intends to know, to find faithful knowledge that teaches and delights.

The third part corresponds to the practical understanding, contrary to the speculative understanding that observes and contemplates the truth, this one applies it, directs the actions of men in the attainment of a moral end: God and the means to achieve it. *El Criterio* is a work that taught and teaches good thinking, the theoretical speculation that seeks the truth and the practical understanding that guides its application.

El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo

This work, which was appropriate and necessary for the time, not only justified the civilizing action of the church but also legitimized its power, in the contradiction of the liberal actions or modern revolutions against the conservative ones. Its voluminous

content structured in seventy-three chapters with an average of more than seven hundred and sixty-eight pages seeks to vindicate the Catholic Church from the attacks of the reformers and to demonstrate its effective influence in the progress of civilization. With the concepts and definitions of his time, he exposes the good deeds in favor of freedom, civilization and the advancement of peoples and explains how Protestantism deviated the course of this Christian advancement.

Its contents include important fragments of documents and original works, many of them written in Latin. The ideas and thoughts expressed show a deep knowledge and mastery of countless important authors, among them ancient classical philosophers, theologians and modern and contemporary medieval philosophers. One cannot omit the repeated and constant dialogue that the author makes by refuting and examining in detail many of the theses and lessons written by M. Guizot in his masterful work *General History of European Civilization*. This book undoubtedly had a great impact on Latin American, Central American and Guatemalan liberal groups⁴².

The different editions began in 1841, it was quickly translated into French and a few years later (after the author's death), into English.



41 Balmes, Jaime. *El Criterio*. Obras Completas, Tomo III. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 686.

42 Regarding this work, for the case of Guatemala we suggest consulting: Torres Valenzuela, Artemis. *El Pensamiento Positivista en la Historia de Guatemala* (1871-1900). Escuela de Historia, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Caudal, S.A. Guatemala: 2000, 234- 241.

The distribution and sales opened markets not only in Spain but also in cities such as Paris, Louvain, Rome, Parma, Manila and Chile, among others.

Identifying Protestantism as an event of modern history, a phenomenon that appeared and spread rapidly in the midst of civilized (European) nations, noisy, booming, violent and seductive, conceited in its considerations, transcendental. Welcomed by the crowd, spread and driven by powerful -and in many cases emerging- social sectors. Diffuse in its doctrines, it moves away from the truth, it is erected on fluctuating, dissolving, transitory, vague and erroneous elements. In this regard, Balmes affirmed: “Looking at Protestantism as a whole, one only discovers in it a formless group of innumerable sects, all discordant among themselves and agreeing on only one point: *protesting against the authority of the Church*⁴³”.

Protestantism was one more expression of the heresies, which were part of the history of the church. In all times, epochs and centuries there had been groups or sects opposed to the authority of the Church, in many cases they converted and assumed as dogmas the opinions of their founders without applying to them the method of doubt, as they did with the Christian faith. However, as in all ages, there have been privileged understandings (participants of the highest philosophy) that have correctly guided human understanding.



43 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 19.

In the dynamics of Protestantism versus Catholicism we find an important social theory, and that is that societies in their progress along the path of civilization go through different stages, in those closest to their childhood and adolescence where the human lineage is simpler, there is no place for pride and vanity, so its inhabitants naturally assume the true origin, destiny, authority and principle of truth, God. On the contrary, in the following stages, the advances of material civilization (erudite culture, libraries, infrastructural development, communication routes) are experienced more in those moments when the individuals, believing themselves to be knowers of all truth and possessors of science, dominate their spirits, filling themselves with egos and vanity. It is in these “more advanced” phases and stages where the great need for the knowledge of the authentic Christian truth is manifested.

The content of this masterful work made special reference to technological development, as well as a reflection on the smallness of things and material objects with respect to the eternal and infinite human spirit, thus stating: “The human spirit feels too big to limit itself to small objects; it knows that it can soar even higher than a balloon filled with steam. Consider what is happening with regard to industrial progress. These smoking machines that leave our ports with the speed of an arrow to cross the immensity of the seas; those others that cross the plains, that penetrate the heart of the mountains, that realize to our eyes what would have seemed a dream to our ancestors; those others that communicate movement to

colossal factories, and that, like the action of a magician, make countless instruments play to elaborate with unspeakable precision the most exquisite products; all this, however great, however admirable it may be, no longer amazes us, no longer calls our attention more vividly than the generality of the objects that surround us. Man feels that he is still greater than those machines, than those artifacts; his heart is an abyss that is filled with nothing; give him the whole world and the emptiness will be the same. The depth is unfathomable; the soul created in the image and likeness of God cannot be satisfied except with the possession of God⁴⁴."

In the face of the advances of the modern world, the stable Catholic religion remained absolute and intact in the face of all those things of the earthly, boisterous and corrupt material world that agitated it, intentionally trying to provoke uprisings and upheavals in human spirits, conceiving men as simple machines for the production and accumulation of wealth. In his economic reflections and social analysis, Balmes pointed out the unjust differences that divided the immense masses living in misery, deprived of instruction and moral education, from the wealthy classes formed by a group of families that, according to his interpretations, having emerged from obscurity and poverty, were marching rapidly towards their perdition. A comparative



44 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos. Madrid: 1949, 484-485,

appreciation with past times pointed out: "...Gone are those times when opulent families strove hard to found some lasting establishment that would testify to their generosity and perpetuate the fame of their name; hospitals and other charitable houses do not come out of the coffers of the bankers, as they came out of the old castles, abbeys and churches. It must be confessed, sad as it is; the well-to-do classes in present-day society do not fulfill the destiny that is theirs; the poor must respect the property of the rich, but the rich in their turn are obliged to succor the misfortune of the poor: so God has established it⁴⁵."

Undoubtedly, this avant-garde work meant for a sector of the Guatemalan university faculty a necessary reference for the understanding and analysis of the changes that were being experienced in the altered social order, a variation that responded to the economic changes that were manifested in the new daily life. These similar modifications in other civilizations are summarized by Balmes in the following paragraph: "... the difficulty lies in making the unfortunate father of a family understand that, chained all day to a hard job, immersed in a thankless and unhealthy atmosphere, or buried in the bowels of the earth digging a mine, he can barely earn the necessary sustenance for himself and his children; and that at night, on entering his filthy room, instead of rest and



45 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 487.

relief, he finds the cries of his wife and children asking him for a morsel of bread⁴⁶". Throughout the text it is concluded that the discrepancies of the differentiated social groups can be modified with the moral formation of the individual, of the families and of the society, since the material achievements instead of generating distances and differences, should unite humanity by putting the resources at the disposal of the immortal spirits.

Contrary to the doctrines of the moderns (Rousseau), the explanation of the origin of society and power was studied in the doctrines of theologians (among them St. Thomas Aquinas). On the assumption that the soul governed the body, social and political animals living in community needed each other, each specializing in his own knowledge. From the nature of their gathering arose the leaders or rulers who, on the basis of human natural law (coming from reason) and divine law (arising from grace), were committed to guide the achievement of the common good. In this respect it was asserted: "...in every gathering of men there must be a director, for without him disorder and even the dispersion of the multitude is inevitable; therefore in every society there must be a leader⁴⁷." In this order arises the idea of the faithful with respect to the infidels that for many years was applied to justify the actions of the "civilized" over the "barbarians", thus similar to the natural things



46 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 490.

47 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 514,

where the superior things moved the inferior ones, in the human world the superior ones moved the inferior ones by means of the will, the reason and the authority ordained by God. For the preservation of human society, the inferiors owed obedience to the superiors and were subject to them. Finally, the origin of power was widely discussed between God and men.

The civil state of individuals grouped in societies needed a political form of government to direct it, in this respect there were three powers that disputed the command and direction: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. These forms of power differed in their origin, nature and object. The conception of monarchy varied according to the particular practices and circumstances, although in general it was understood from the Balmesian philosophy as "the supreme command of society placed in the hands of a single man, obliged, however, to exercise it in accordance with reason and justice⁴⁸". Questions such as the powers of the monarch to legislate alone, without consulting the general assemblies representing the people, were a manifestation of consensuses and descents between supports and rejections.

The constant attacks, threats, disturbances and revolts of liberal groups made the monarchy a necessity for some towns, hence



48 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 634,

it is not surprising how in Guatemala the figure of General Rafael Carrera theoretically materialized this form of state for himself, contrary to what was the practice, the consultation to perpetuity in office, demonstrated -to a certain extent that this was the option that offered security and welfare. However, for Balmes, the position of the Church and the clergy, which were related to all social classes, did not have an exclusive predilection for any of the political systems⁴⁹. In the nascent Republic, decades later with the liberal triumph of Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios, modernity and Protestantism were erected and justified with the separation of Church and State.

Experience led to think that the form of a government should harmonize discrepant and antagonistic groups that made up society. Such was the case of the aristocratic form⁵⁰ which, as representative of privileged groups, harmonized the interests of the nobility and the clergy (whose greatness and power lay in religious, stable and eternal ideas). Finally, the changing definition of democracy was not ruled out, which benefited from Catholicism, which brought about popular prosperity. For the historical course of Europe two



49 As for the monarchy, it was said that it had nothing to fear from the clergy, since the ministers of the Church regarded power as descended from heaven. Similarly, the aristocracy had nothing to fear as long as it was limited to a reasonable circle. Democracy, understood as the generality of the people, could not be divorced either, since the majorities supported the clergy because they owed them advancement, inspirations, happiness, teachings, their civil improvements, the achievement of political influence, the purity of their faith and all their culture. Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catalocismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 684.

50 Balmes, Jaime. *El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*. Obras Completas, Tomo IV, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 639-640.

types of democracy were known, one generous, just, noble, with a spirit of independence, promoted reasonable freedom, recognized the authority that worked in function of laws favorable to the nations and shared a high concept of the dignity of man. The other democracy denied all authority and tended to destroy it. The ultimate origin of both emanated from the heart of man, noble or perverse.

El Potestantismo comparado con el Catalocismo, contributed, associated with the development of understanding, a particular periodization with respect to European history, recognizing the differences between the various nations that make it up and explaining how societies have had different evolutionary phases that with different meanings were directed to the same point: Christian civilization. They begin with the period of infancy characterized in a general way because at this time the imagination unfolds first with poetry before the understanding (ancient peoples) while in Europe the understanding developed first and then the imagination with dialectics and metaphysics. In the children peoples the sensations abound and the ideas are scarce, they think little, the nature has more presence and influence in its inhabitants, its language is picturesque and poetic, the passions, affections and abundant feelings are not refined, they are violent and energetic peoples whose understanding looks for the pure and simple truth. Things of lesser importance surprise and are admired because they shock the senses, stimulate the imagination and excite the faculties, men are more exposed to

influence of objects, they depend mostly on real external things, they first feel and imagine and then understand and think. Undoubtedly this work was a direct response to texts such as that of M. Guizot, which, opposed to the principles of Christianity, promoted modernity with its components: science and progress. This initial period -only of some societies like the ancient ones- was associated in America and in Guatemala to the "pre-Hispanic" peoples, this explains that in the best of the cases, they were conceived as simple groups of scarce development and therefore, little significant in the history of the Republic or their existence was denied since the history began with the Christian civilization of the colonial period. Finally, not a few texts and articles of the time affirmed how, like European history, national history had reached important achievements thanks to the Christian religion that triumphantly withstood in Europe the direct attacks of the Protestants and in the Republic of Guatemala the abates and obstacles of the liberal sectors. For the Christians (conservatives) the true and only philosophy of the human lineage was religion, optimal and maximum God. For the moderns (liberals) reason, man and positivist science.

**History in Balmesian philosophy
Historical sciences, historical criticism,
sources and philosophy of history, social
sciences, sociology and political science.**

History is understood from two aspects: the first one, criticism, which is known as the method for understanding the truth of the facts, followed by the philosophical aspect,

which refers to the way to understand the meaning of the facts and the laws that arise from them for human life⁵¹. Historical criticism refers to the veracity and objectivity of the facts (which to a large extent have been part of the historian's work) while the philosophical aspect provides the explanation and deduction of the sequential path of the facts in themselves and in relation to others, as well as the foundations, theories or scientific predictions that arise from that very real movement (which must have been in the mid-nineteenth century (the time of Balmes) the scientific work of the modern historian).

History moved between two forms, currents or schools, the historical-philosophical one that referred to great studies, broad in their contents, universal syntheses, transcendental characteristics that defined the epochs and the nature of civilizations. It exemplifies this current of the History of the European civilization of Guizot. On the other hand, the historical-poetic school founded and promoted by the literary romanticism that was current in Europe, had the purpose of creating non-historical poets and generating novels rather than historical discourses⁵². These schools differed in that the former promoted generalizing intelligence that omitted important details and the latter



51 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo I, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 167.

52 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 303-305.

privileged sentiment, expressing it in a beautiful and artistic way. Balmes reconciled both currents by promoting balance and maturity in his historical writings, fundamentally in his book *El protestantismo comparado con el catolicismo*.

As for the social sciences referring to social facts, it considers them (in those “modern” times) limited, when it incorporates the theoretical explanation of philosophers who deduce the laws of society without confronting them with the facts. In this way it is considered that the relationship between reality and theory should prioritize the former and not vice versa. With these principles he seeks to approach true history, making incursions into the figure of the historian as a means of knowledge, questioning and doubting the truths he puts forward, arguing that “When such certainty is not reached, prudence comes in doubting, in reserving oneself, in setting limits to affirmations⁵³”.

In the 19th century, narratives contained in books, travel experiences and newspaper publications were incorporated into the discourse and knowledge of history. These sources were studied by Balmes, who indicated that in travel accounts a distinction should be made between the description of what was observed and the news or reflections incorporated by the writer. He adds that the distance from the place of the event, the part added by the traveler, his

interests, the rapid and ephemeral character with which he stops at some main points, the limitations of the language, the tendency to describe the picturesque and extravagant, can have repercussions in omitting the normal life of the town visited⁵⁴,

Regarding periodicals, he notes the difference between the content of the text and the writer’s commentary, although he warns of the (disoriented) understanding that the reader can provide. Regarding this in the work of Balmes it was stated: “...the eagerness to look for facts rather than words or ideas, came to seem like a mania. He distrusted a question until he came to put himself in intimate contact with the reality of things⁵⁵”.

From the reflection of the knowledge of historical facts, we move on to the essence of these facts, to the essential sources, affirming that superficial events such as the upheaval of governments, wars, the rise and fall of empires are largely explained by political or social causes without delving into the deeper natural and simple ones⁵⁶.

As far as the philosophy of history is concerned, it is considered as the comprehension of the spirit of an epoch, the obtaining of clear and exact ideas of its character, the incursion into the causes of the



54 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 168.

55 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 169,

56 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 169.

53 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 167.



facts and the pointing out of its results. The philosophy of history frequently emerges as the philosophy of the historian, tending to incorporate subjectivity in history, this does not imply that the historian appears as a fatalist or contemplator but as an intervener who with love and interest recognizes a higher force. In this way the philosophy of history has as its first cause, "...the ultimate reason, the supreme law ... is the providence of God. Everything that, looking at men and things, remains obscure and insufficient, when looking at the action of God, becomes clear and justified⁵⁷" and from a broader perspective, as the same author says: "Indeed, the ultimate conclusion of the philosophy of history must be to find a worthy meaning for the totality of human life. Religion gives us this meaning, because it considers this whole world as a preparation for a better one, both governed by the loving providence of the infinite Being, outside of religion, neither in things nor in persons would we find anything that could satisfy either our intelligence or our heart⁵⁸".

As for the moral, social and exact sciences, it differentiates between the former by indicating that the former are less certain and conceive more of blunders, while the latter warn the observer of the probabilities of obscurity, confusion and error. However, the most elaborated conception of society was



57 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo I, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 169.

58 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo I, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 170.

expressed through the articles (which for many gave rise to a kind of fundamental sociology) published in the publication entitled Civilization - a word that preceded the modern, which acquired its own semantics and synthesized society⁵⁹. The theoretical composition was summarized in three basic ideas that were linked at the same time, complemented and analyzed separately, the maximum point of civilization (which pursues human perfection) would be achieved when the greatest possible intelligence, morality and welfare were reached, this would be the measure of progress or backwardness of the peoples. In the case of the Republic of Guatemala, these three elements were the basis for the policies of the so-called conservative government; intelligence was cultivated in public education, which was accompanied by religion, and welfare was promoted by the government, which was more comprehensive.

Referring to intelligence, it analyzes this capacity in relation to the different groups that make up societies, thus explaining how the high intelligences (aristocracy) not always identified with religion or high science could disagree with the subordinate groups (democracies) and vice versa, to this is added morality together with religion that must accompany intelligence in the same way that wisdom must accompany the wise. Another contribution is made with the coexistence of two societies, the civil one that watches over temporal happiness and the religious one that has as its objective the eternal end of man, and although both cannot oppose or interfere with each other neither can they



59 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo I, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 172,

remain indifferent. The application of these ideas clarifies the state-church relationship in Guatemala, which experienced more than an influence, a consolidated union that transcended from politics to concrete actions.

Conservative social dynamics included welfare, an idea that preceded progress. It understood, among other meanings, how the material and moral condition linked to happiness could be achieved if wealth (civilizing) promoted instruction, morality and welfare in the people. Observing and comparing the accelerated economic and political changes and the technological advances of other civilizations, among which the French one stands out, Balmes indicated: "The advance of machinery is demanding greater establishments every day; these bring the accumulation of wealth; the accumulation results in the misery of the greatest number; it is impossible to stop humanity in its race; where are we going to end up? The understanding is overwhelmed and the heart is grieved; how is the problem to be solved? Is it that Providence has reserved for the future some fortunate future, but that Adam's offspring will not reach it until after many sufferings, as has so often happened⁶⁰? If the wealth of the peoples did not promote the three fundamental axes that linked society, progress, material progress



60 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 174.

and all that this implied, civilizations would be threatened with tragedy, backwardness and misery.

In the understanding of society there was no lack of political science, whose methodological and content beginning is in the experience of J. Balmes, through the observation and interpretation that he carried out in his hometown *Vich*, then in his *Catalan* region and later in his homeland, Spain. First he clarifies the causes of the present, finding them in the past, providing a retrospective study of social and political events such as the revolution, defined in relation to the Spanish experience - in his opinion sterile because it was not national, that is, popular - conceived as a movement consisting of the following phases: origin, progress and decadence, and fruitful only for the experiences it brought⁶¹.

Although he did not define the conception of himself or the political leaders on the basis of the Spanish monarchy, Balmes made the following characterization of these characters: orderly, courageous men, of extraordinary natural qualities, with ideals of government, of firm character, of elevated views, with the capacity to prevent revolutions and to direct them, knowledgeable of their time, of the circumstances surrounding them, careful of political passions and personal ambitions⁶². In



61 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 179.

62 Balmes, Jaime. *Biografía y Epistolario*. Obras Completas, Tomo 1, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1948, 180-182.

this logic, he included the Spanish people, arguing that by dividing the population in terms of geographical occupation, those who lived in the cities and capitals were invaded by foreign culture that was not civilization, and the majorities centered in rural areas still preserved and reproduced religious morals, since illiteracy prevented them from reading "bad" literature. Finally, the peoples had to be characterized by their heroic virtues, purity of ideals, beliefs, customs, integrity and work.

Estudios Apologéticos, Letters to a Sceptic, Estudios Sociales and Del Clero Católico de Cataluña.

Volume V of the Complete Works of Balmes, published by the *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos*, gathers the texts of the title that identifies this section. The first one summarizes in a simple and clear style (suitable for the understanding of children) the fundamentals of the Holy Catholic Religion and, without discarding the usefulness and benefit for adults, includes reflections and reasoning.

Letters to a Sceptic, is a work whose beginning is located in the magazine *La Sociedad*, each publication expressed a "deep understanding of the spiritual problems that torment the spirit of the skeptic, an exquisite art of solving them by closing all the exits, an inexhaustible patience to follow him in his disordered and confused doubts and a loving severity to make him feel that it is not science or enlightenment what is butterflyed by his ideas, but superficiality, ignorance and presumption⁶³". Among the



63 Balmes, Jaime. *Estudios Apologéticos, Cartas a un*

topics addressed were: skepticism, the existence of God, the philosophy of the future, the blood of the martyrs, social transitions, tolerance, French and German spiritualists, the pantheism of German philosophy, humility, those who live outside the Church, purgatory, the cult of the saints, the love of truth and faith, among others. Being one more apology to the Catholic religion, this publication was used to educate the reading public with a philosophical foundation and literary epistolary expression.

The accelerated material transformations and the political events that convulsed the 19th century, made Balmes speak out through brief articles that appeared in the magazines *La Civilization* edited by its owner Mr- Antonio Brusi and *La Sociedad* (both predecessors of the weekly *El Pensamiento de la Nación*)⁶⁴. Some of the topics covered were: the press, opinion, primary education, courage, socialist doctrines, work organization, the French



escéptico, *Estudios Sociales, Del Clero Católico de Cataluña*. Obras Completas, Tomo V, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 16.

64 *La Sociedad* was a religious, philosophical, political and literary magazine. It's content, the following fragment provides ideas: "In the society of our fathers, faith dominated, in ours reason prevails; in the former, religion was like the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites in the darkness of the night, in the latter it is like the mysterious blandon that gives off its tranquil glow in the retreat of the sanctuary. Before, magnificent churches were built, sumptuous monasteries, now gigantic factories; before, towering towers were erected for the sonorous tolling, announcement of the sacrifice and prayer, now black pipes that spew puffs of smoke rise up in a hurry. We do not accept all that is new, but neither do we pretend to evoke all that is ancient, that, despite our clamors, Peter the Hermit, with his legions of crusaders, would not rise from his tomb." Balmes Jaime. *Estudios apologéticos, Cartas a un escéptico, Estudios Sociales, Del Clero Católico de Cataluña*. Obras Completas, Tomo V, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 454,

Revolution, civilization from which a fundamental sociology⁶⁵ based on man and his three needs: intelligence, morality and welfare. From these works emerged the contents of Social Studies.

From the texts discussed here we can interpret

that the History of the nascent Republic of Guatemala could have been interpreted with the temporal schematic criterion, whose thematic axis was centered on the culture of civilization that was synonymous with religion. An exercise of adaptation is presented in the following table.

SOME IDEAS OF BALMESIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA⁶⁶ 1850-1870

Colonial Period	Liberal period
<p>Linear temporality 1524-1821 Peaceful civilization is pursued.</p> <p>Society advances with the union of intelligence and morality: religion, law of universal gravitation.</p> <p>There is balance and harmony in the moral world and the physical world.</p> <p>The wise generator of thoughts is moral.</p> <p>Contrary to universal history, this epoch is not average but initial, since previous temporality is unknown in a civilized cultural conception.</p> <p>Necessary imposition of the ecclesiastical authoritarian hierarchy, principle of all religion, of all civilization. State-Church union. Concordat of 1852</p>	<p>Debatable initial temporality with different probabilities: 1821, 1871.</p> <p>In search of the convulsed modernity.</p> <p>Society progresses with intelligence separated from morality. Harmful, disastrous, irreligious misguided philosophy.</p> <p>There is an imbalance between the physical and moral world: the discourse of science.</p> <p>Science versus religion</p> <p>Wisdom and the wise are immoral.</p> <p>Separation of the Church from the State.</p> <p>Expulsion of the Jesuit order.</p>

65 Balmes, Jaime. *Estudios Apologéticos, Cartas a un escéptico, Estudios Sociales, Del Clero Católico de Cataluña*. Obras Completas, Tomo V, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 451.

66 Balmes, Jaime. *Estudios Sociales* en Obras Completas, Tomo V, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 451-502.

<p>Knowledge and know-how concentrated in certain ecclesiastical sectors.</p> <p>Society is governed to a large extent by experience</p> <p>The more education, the less crime (Example: France 1834-1838). Instruction generates good, cultivates the virtue of the heart. It deepens the theory.</p> <p>Actions of the clergy in the foundation of the eternal basis of the people: Christian morality. Religious Instruction, Instruction by and of religious.</p> <p>Extraordinary men arise, high intelligences, endowed by Providence for the realization of great destinies. Rafael Carrera Turcios, the enlightened one.</p> <p>The prudent man of this time is perfectly inserted in society, he knows about freedom and explains its concept</p> <p>Society acts inspired by the search for religious truth.</p>	<p>Time of commercial and <i>industrial development</i>: beer, textiles, cement.</p> <p>Influence of new ideas: from Enlightenment to positivism.</p> <p>Society is governed to a large extent by science.</p> <p>The more education, the more crime (e.g. France 1834-1838). Instruction generates evil, promotes the pleasure of the body, memory and talent, forgets the sublime virtues of faith, hope and charity. It deepens the experience.</p> <p>Public instruction opens according to the market of the capitalist world: mass education: secular, free and compulsory.</p> <p>The emergence of men endowed by reason to guide the people: Independence heroes, presidential figures such as General Justo Rufino Barrios, José María Reyna Barrios, Manuel Estrada Cabrera and Jorge Ubico Castañeda, among others.</p> <p>Entry of Protestant sects.</p> <p>Permanence of the true truth: Christian religion and doctrine.</p>
--	--

Criticizing positivist history (at that time in great ascendancy and ascendancy), Balmes, an expositor of high scholasticism, indicated: "It is good to describe the changes of

governments and dynasties, the vicissitudes of wars, the plans and projects of famous men who have had an influence on society; but let us be sure that none of this is enough

to understand in depth the history of a people and the true character of its civilization. It is necessary to know in what state were their agriculture, industry and commerce, what were their ordinary foods, what were their clothes, what was their habitation, and the infinity of indispensable details to paint us faithfully how they spent their life that people that we propose to study⁶⁷.

In this sociological understanding the presence of evil was inherent to the people and was expressed in the eternal discrepancy of the existence of men in disproportion to the means of subsistence, in the face of this the Christian religion promoted *social regeneration* by establishing centers of charity, seeking to smooth relations between rich and poor, big and small, abolishing slavery, cushioning miseries, diminishing ignorance and in broader terms improving the lot of the larger classes working for the few.

The **Social Science** for the study and understanding of the collectivity starts from the social order understood as the internal organization that contemplates ideas, customs, habits, institutions independent from the government, etc. It also includes the political order, its government (organization of public power), the administrative order as the form in which it is exercised over the same functions. These orders, based on religion, are



67 Balmes, Jaime. *Estudios Apologéticos, Cartas a un escéptico, Estudios Sociales, Del Clero Católico de Cataluña*. Obras Completas, Tomo V, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 484.

founded on morality, hence their stability is concentrated more in the social than in the political and administrative. On this basis are established the *material order* understood as everything that directly or indirectly is destined to the satisfaction of the needs of the body and the senses (agriculture, commerce, industry), *the moral order*: opposed to the intellectual, social order. It refers to good or bad habits. *The intellectual order*, i.e. human knowledge and the religious order, Christianity.

The perfect understanding of civilized society does not differ in its totality from modern society, what for the former is material order for the latter is material progress, the moral order is equivalent to reasoned morality, the intellectual order to human knowledge and science. The religious order to positivist thought and the great social order to the consolidation of certain conservative groups in power and the incorporation of new liberal sectors with a political and administrative order independent of the Church.

The advance of society towards civilization and the establishment of its order could deviate if it moved away from Christian principles, this would lead social science, likewise, to confuse its path, heading towards confusing points. On the contrary, the natural sciences, especially mathematics (strongly promoted by the liberal societies in the Guatemalan nation officially from 1871 onwards) were considered to advance, advance and progress unequivocally guided

by the method of observation, description and experience.

Science and society

Theoretically, during the 19th century, the concepts of society, politics and science, which usually appeared to be separate, were linked. Knowledge was promoted and possessed hermetically by a small number of privileged sectors that remained on the margins of the rest of society. Later, with the application of science to the interpretation of European societies, especially England, Germany, Italy, Ireland and France, the latter contributed useful elements in its transformation, for example, it was considered that the relationship between philosophy and politics damaged both, since politics -action, practice and judgment-participated in the theoretical abstraction making ideal systems take over the government, philosophy -more abstract and conscientious- was resented by the narrowness of practice. The language between science and society increased with the emergence and generalization of the printing press, which somehow brought society and knowledge closer together.

As a result of the new needs of the time, an important opening arose that made knowledge in general -and not only that contributed by science- to be acquired simultaneously, thus overcoming the ideas that explained how the faculties of the human spirit were exercised and developed in isolation without contact between men. In this regard it was stated: "What is verified among educated men also descends to the rudiments of education; a child learns many things at

once, and, far from limiting himself to catechism and Latin, he studies geography, history, literature, poetry, ideology, and receives news of everything in tiny enciclopedias."⁶⁸ Transcending the single conception of the predominance of religious beliefs and moral maxims, a harmonious, conciliatory understanding was proposed, a polytechnical formation in which the former (conservatives) would understand the new society and the latter (liberals) would know the old society.

These ideas of application and rapprochement of science to society and of society to science became more important in the Republic of Guatemala from the 1850s onwards. Undoubtedly, this proposal for the articulation of science, knowledge and learning was gaining ground as liberal principles and postures advanced and were accepted. While it is true that public instruction contemplated religion, catechism and Latin with similar importance, little by little it was extended to other social disciplines such as history or practices such as surveying (verify). With the triumph of the Liberal Reform, society was officially opened to science, especially with the modern impulse of secular, free and compulsory education.



68 Balmes, Jaime. Estudios Apologéticos, Cartas a un escéptico, Estudios Sociales, Del Clero Católico de Cataluña. Obras Completas, Tomo V, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1949, 510.

Acknowledgement.

I would like to thank the following professionals for their contributions to this work: Aída Chavarría de Calderón, Gutberto Chocón, Luis Fernando Urquizú, Celso A. Lara Figueroa, Amanda López (Director of the Historical Archive of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala) and the support of Marta Elena Casaús Arzu's research group.