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## REVIEW ESSAY

## Taking religion seriously: New perspectives on religion in Puerto Rico

ANTHONY M. STEVENS-ARROYO

*Black Puerto Rican Identity and Religious Experience.*

By Samiri Hernández Hiraldo

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006.

320 pages; \$59.95 [cloth]

*Vírgenes, magos y escapularios: imagería, etnicidad  
y religiosidad popular en Puerto Rico*

(Second Edition).

Edited by Ángel G. Quintero Rivera

San Juan: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico  
y Centro de Investigaciones Académicas, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, 2003.

213 pages; \$30.00 [paper]

*Catolicismo y política en Puerto Rico: bajo España y  
Estados Unidos: Siglos XIX y XX*

By Samuel Silva Gotay.

Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005.

503 pages; \$24.95 [paper]

These are very different kinds of books, although all three are focused on religion among Puerto Ricans. The most ambitious is Samuel Silva Gotay's history of the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico from the Napoleonic Age until the 1930s. As Silva points out in the opening pages of his volume, the 19th century was a difficult one for Catholicism in general and Puerto Rican Catholics in particular. The attacks by Spain's secular and anticlerical liberal forces, he writes, drove the church's leadership toward reactionary postures and policies, such as the Syllabus of Errors from Pope Pius IX. The church in Puerto Rico had not yet overcome such buffeting from secular forces when in 1898 the US assumed control of the island. With the appointment of bishops from the US to lead Puerto Rican Catholics, says Silva, an already difficult situation was further complicated. From a myriad series of monographs, dissertations, church records, and scholarly articles, he has assembled a topical exploration of how the Catholicism in Puerto Rico reacted, first, to the turmoil of Spanish politics in the 19th century, and second, to the transition to US control in the first third of the 20th century. In each of four comprehensive chapters, he systematically explores topics such as Catholicism and the Spanish-American War, freedom of the press, religious tolerance, slavery, divorce, and separation of Church and State. This thematic approach has the virtue of coherence in developing a single issue through the different periods of history, with change in policy and personages, even if Silva is sometimes forced into repeating information already offered or to omitting relevant details more fully developed elsewhere in the volume.

This is not a religious book, but rather a book about religion. Early on, Silva focuses his study upon the interplay of politics and religion, avoiding the quicksand of taking sides about theological or doctrinal disputes. He has produced a sociological history of religious institutions in Puerto Rican history, offering a detailed panorama of how church and state play their roles. It is the second such work about Puerto Rico from this assiduous scholar, who is also author of a well-received book on Liberation Theology in all of Latin America (1981/1989). This new volume continues a track begun with his study of Protestantism in Puerto Rico (1997), and he has promised a final book in the Puerto Rican trilogy that will examine all the churches after the 1930s.

His historical method consists of describing policies of the Spanish state or the US government, the declarations emanating from Rome for the universal church, and the unfolding of these forces in Puerto Rico. This is no easy task. For one thing, issues related to religion are deeply held by believers so that even a balanced treatment of a dispute is likely to satisfy no one. Secondly, each of the forces impacting on Puerto Rico is itself diverse: the US government, for instance, is made up of Congress and the President, Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, etc. As a result, citing any one of the sources in isolation from others runs the risk of obscuring the dynamics underway. These premises are no less true for the Spanish government, the Vatican, and the bishops. Silva's narrative deftly includes each of such sources, listing as many salient factors as he can in constructing the sociological context for the events. These thorough explorations are accompanied with documented responses of Catholic leaders along with insightful commentary and citation of relevant documents.

Running across such an intellectual minefield is no exercise for the faint hearted. Professor Silva deserves praise for his boldness in pioneering a comprehensive treatment of the churches and politics and for placing most of the relevant materials

between the same two covers. As a writer sympathetic to the choices made in history by institutions of faith, Silva does not disparage Catholicism, although he is not shy about offering a critical perspective. For the most part, he is content to cite

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sources and documents that reveal the good, the bad, and the ugly of church involvement in politics. Thus, for instance, he juxtaposes the 1898 statement from US Army chaplain, Father Thomas Sherman, that religion on the island “is dead,” with the opinion of celebrated Jesuit historian, Fernando Picó that “popular religion was thriving” among Puerto Rican Catholics when the US invaded. The reader is likely to ask: “Which is it? Religion can’t be dead and thriving at the same time.” Here, as in other passages, Silva refrains from interrupting the narrative by imposing his own perspective.

In one sense, this is a wise strategy for an outsider to Catholicism. Silva Gotay is not now and never has been a Catholic. Such distance shields him from ecclesiastical pressures, allowing him to write critically of popes and bishops without fear of accusations of disloyalty. At the same time, his tone is respectful and even compassionate toward leaders who are attempting to do the best they can with the poor hand they have been dealt. In fact, when Catholics have been critical of their own church in Puerto Rico, they have tended to be far more angry about the institution than Silva.

The core arguments of the book are solidly based. It is certain that opposition to the anticlerical liberals under Spain painted the 19th-century Catholic Church of Puerto Rico into a reactionary corner, where it opposed republican government and the separation of Church and State. Silva adds that Catholic clerics in Puerto Rico (which is not the same as “Puerto Rican clerics”) often proved antagonistic to the stirrings of independence and political autonomy, even bemoaning the abolition of slavery. (Indirectly Silva’s narrative helps clarify that Spain had a policy of repressing native Puerto Rican priests who sided with popular causes, although he does not examine this facet of Puerto Rican Catholicism.) When US rule began in 1898, Silva’s explanations connect the relative absence of a native Puerto Rican Catholic clergy to the actions of the institutional church. Instead of promoting native priests and bishops, says Silva, the Catholic Church supported the Americanization of Puerto Rico.

Silva produces documents from the Vatican, from US and Spanish bishops, from clergy, and even from the religious congregations of women who came as missionaries to the island in support of his premise of Americanization. Although differing in many respects from the Americanization promoted by US Protestantism in Puerto Rico, Catholicism, Silva maintains, also thwarted a distinctive Puerto Rican political identity. Moreover, he states that his research has demonstrated the emptiness of claims from some *independentista* quarters that Catholicism was “the bastion of Puerto Ricanness.” Such a claim, says Silva, is simply incorrect (p. 465).

Silva’s presentation of documents is commendable. It is worth recalling that this volume resulted from an extensive consultation process, including a major conference in which experts on Catholicism were invited by Silva in the name of the University of Puerto Rico. In searching for relevant documents he traveled to archives in New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Rome. Thus, he has produced a pioneering work that will be cited for years to come. Ironically, his academic role in unfolding the historical record for Catholicism is more clearly defined here than in his earlier publication on Protestantism. For example, in the earlier publication it was not always clear if he himself believed that Catholics were “forbidden to read the bible,” or if he was merely citing the Protestant cant against Catholicism that distorted the church’s position. In this second volume, Silva makes explicit what was implied in the earlier work, namely that the sources cited describe only an *interpretation* of Protestantism or Catholicism that is neither his own opinion nor the unvarnished reality (pp. 285–6). As suggested above, he sometimes juxtaposes two apparently contradictory versions of events or beliefs, leaving the task of evaluative judgment to others. This is a welcome technique that contextualizes the combative vitriol about the churches that had been unleashed habitually by both sides—a condition happily disappearing in contemporary Puerto Rico.

I would not want to characterize this book by Silva Gotay as perfect. Errors in spelling and mistakes in historical precision abound. The most illustrative of such inaccuracies is citing the US labor movement at “Nights of Labors” instead of “Knights of Labor” (p. 33) and telling us on page 234 that Father Perpiñá was “Chilean” only to find on the next page (235) that he is “Spanish.” The blame for such distractions belongs more with the editor than with the author: I do not consider them consequential. However, some inaccuracies are more than simple typographical mistakes. For instance, it appears that Silva is not aware that “Padre Omega” writing in *El Ideal Católico* (p. 279) is a pseudonym for Manuel Zeno Gandía. This is a relevant point since the book argues that Catholics writing for *El Ideal* impeded the realization of Puerto Rican identity. That Zeno Gandía was *both* a patriot *and* a contributor to this Catholic review would merit analysis because it adds to the complexity of an emerging Puerto Rican Catholic identity at a crucial time. Moreover, Silva’s classification of the socialist feminist leader, Luisa Capetillo, as a Catholic in the *jibara* tradition (pp. 399–400), does not resonate with what most scholars understand of either Capetillo or popular Catholic religiosity.

Be forewarned that although written straightforwardly, this text is a scholarly one. If a reader is unsure of who Fernando VII was or what he represented, is uncertain about the meaning of a Concordat, is unable to locate *La Gloriosa* in Spanish history, is ignorant of the functions of the Vatican Secretary of State, does not recognize the importance of Alfred Thayer Mahan—or all of the above—there will be a need for some homework. The writing style is precise and neutral—almost antiseptic. This form follows the book’s function, which is scholarly. My personal hope would be that subsequent editions will widen the ambit of the book’s appeal. For instance, we know a great deal about Bishop Ambrose Jones, but the reader will not be able to form a mental image of the prelate: Was he thin and tall? Short and portly? Beet-faced or callow? Why have the editors not included a single photograph or map? Worst of all, (might we call it “sinful?”), no index has been provided. The quality of this book deserves such editorial enhancements.

As is to be expected in a book of such grand scope, Silva knows some events better than others, lending a somewhat uneven treatment of historical situations

throughout the work. For instance, he fails to recognize the fingerprints of Jaime Balmes in the apologetics of the turn-of-the-century weekly, *El Ideal Católico*. Those of us born and baptized Catholics will recognize in the argumentation of this pro-Catholic publication certain positions first elaborated by Balmes in the 1840s. Discipleship in Puerto Rico was not unique since the erudite arguments of Balmes had been repeated for a half century by American Catholics such as Orestes Brownson, and by Irish rebels like Terrence McSwinnery, the imprisoned Mayor of Cork, before the Easter Rising of 1916. In Spain during the Generation of 1898 the novelist Galdos paints a caricature of a Balmes' disciple, thus witnessing to the ubiquity of the influence from the Catalan cleric in the Catholic conscience of the *Madre Patria*. Puerto Rican Catholics drank from these same intellectual fountains and Balmesian themes are frequent, most notably in the political thought of the Nationalist leader, Pedro Albizu Campos. I consider this a relevant point since Silva argues for *discontinuity* between the Hispanophiles of *El Ideal Católico* and Albizu, while the common thread of Balmes provides instead for *continuity*.

The observation above comes from my own research into Balmes and Albizu, and I am certain that experts on other points of Puerto Rican church history will make similar critical responses to the Silva's narrative. And although scholarly critique on specific issues is eminently constructive, it is more like rearranging furniture than constructing a building. No one can deny that the more significant task is in erecting a new edifice, because without a building there would be no place at all for the furniture. Thus, in a sense, virtually every section of Silva's book may suffer extensive renovation of interpretation and the foundations of the building will remain steady.

I would say that Professor Samuel Silva Gotay has done for the history of Puerto Rican Catholicism what in cultural studies Antonio Pedreira produced with *Insularismo*, René Marqués with *El puertorriqueño dócil*, and José Luis González with *El país de cuatro pisos*. I make these comparisons because, even if there is disagreement today about the premises of these classics, their imprint on intellectual discussion has extended beyond the generations. In a similar vein, I cannot conceive that any future histories of Puerto Rico for this period, whether written with a secular or religious perspective, can avoid citing Silva's seminal work. He has advanced history of religion in Puerto Rico beyond pious biographies of individuals or documentary study disconnected from social process. Silva has given us a view of the forest, which was often lost by those who looked only at the trees. The challenge to future historical scholarship on religion in Puerto Rico will be to provide better detail and sharper description of the markers on the trail without wandering off the map Silva has given us to understand Catholicism and politics in Puerto Rico.

A very different type of publication is found in Angel Quintero Rivera's new version of *Virgenes, magos y escapularios: imagería, etnicidad y religiosidad popular en Puerto Rico*. The first edition was published as a set of reactions to Quintero's 1998 expository essay on religion and Puerto Rican cultural identity. He had examined popular religiosity by testing the premise of José Luis González that there are various *pisos* or historically defined stages in the evolution of Puerto Rican identity. Quintero stretched the racial categories of González's cultural analysis to the religious field. In this way, Catholicism was cast as an institutionalized hierarchy of upper-class white people attempting to control the masses of lower-class people of color by imposing religious norms. Popular religiosity, in this view, became a form of resistance to imperialism. To make his case, Quintero drew upon his expert knowledge of Puerto Rican culture, from its linguistics to little-known facts about music, places,

flower and fauna. His essay, entitled "Vuelto, con mantilla, al primer piso / Sociología de los santos," consumes nearly half of both the first edition and this book.

Acknowledging his own deficiencies in the study of religion, back in 1998 Quintero invited scholars—all of them experts in the field—to comment upon the premises in his treatment of religion and culture. Instead, the contributors focused on certain invalid notions promoted by Quintero. The Jesuit historian, Fernando Picó, felt obliged to contribute two articles in order to clarify a proper definition of popular religiosity in critique of Quintero's approach. Samuel Silva Gotay offered an essay on what should be the proper methodology in the study of religion, and Arcadio Díaz Quiñones looked retrospectively at the Puerto Rican interpretations of Spanish Catholicism. Somewhat less critical were articles on the use of *mantillas* by Nina Torres Vidal and María de Fátima Barceló Miller, as well as Ramón López's examination of religious artifacts and the introduction written by César A. Rey, then an education official for the Commonwealth. Jorge Duany provided an annotated and insightful bibliographical review of literature.

Although the criticism of Quintero Rivera's version of religion is civilized and delivered without venom, the book reflects the up-hill struggle for religion to be studied in its own right rather than as an appendix to culture. The freshness of the insights of the contributors in 1998 has not been

dimmed by the intervening years, and this second edition has added contributions by Doreen Colón Camacho and Irene Curbelo on the artistic imagery of the carved wooden *santos*. Quintero Rivera's new introduction amended some comments in his initial essay, and he added references to relevant new works. The second edition remains a collection of essays, however, and a reconciling overview of different slices of religious experience is still lacking. Nonetheless, each of the articles is like a precious jewel in its own right and provides the insights necessary to continue debates about the boundaries between Puerto Rican religious culture and cultural religion.

Perhaps most strikingly, the volume as now issued provides a treasure trove of illustrations of artifacts and pictures taken by the late Jack Delano. These pieces, many reproduced in full color, make this edition well worth the price of purchase. Much as in the book by Silva described above, this volume is an inescapable departure point for future reflection on popular religion in Puerto Rico.

The book, *Black Puerto Rican Identity*, by Samiri Hernández Hiraldo does double duty: it announces the emergence of a new and important scholarly voice on the anthropology of religion; and secondly, it provides the focused miniature portrait of religious experience among select congregations in a specific town. Published by the University Press of Florida in the series New Directions in Puerto Rican Studies, edited by Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, this book presages the new scholarship on

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religion so badly needed in Puerto Rican Studies. The author examines the different faith expressions in Loíza Aldea, a village enclave first settled by former African slaves. Without a whiff of pedantry, Hernández elegantly weaves history, politics, and ecclesiastical endeavors into a narrative that is preeminently about people of faith. This is not to suggest that the book is weak on theory: on the contrary, there is a judicious citing of key works about the anthropology of religion found in almost every chapter. However, the author subordinates theory to her interviews, and she is not afraid to gently distance the Puerto Rican experience from those in other places.

The now *de rigueur* practice of explaining one's own personal experience is mercifully confined mostly to one chapter at the beginning of the book. We are told of Hernández's own upbringing in the Baptist Church in Puerto Rico and her racial experiences as she moves from home to university to the US and back again to the island for her doctoral research. She clearly understands Protestantism in Puerto Rico, noting for instance that congregations that allow women to wear pants are "Neo-Pentecostal" and that Pentecostal women now have adopted the use of make-up in order not to be viewed as lesbians (pp. 203–5). Her informants open up to her because they see her as "a real Christian" (pp. 194–5), a confession that ought to permanently bury the theoretical notion that neutrality is the only role for effective participant observation. Yet, her chapters on Catholics in Loíza, including those in the Charismatic Movement, show the author as no less *simpática* to Catholics as to Protestants. She insightfully renders a realistic sketch of the clerical rivalries that are always part of life in a Catholic parish.

Hernández' work includes people of all faiths in Loíza Aldea: Protestants of historical denominations, *evangélicos*, Catholics, Pentecostals and Pentecostal "heretics" such as the Church of Living Waters (p. 144 ff.). She shows how all of these Christians are aware of the *espiritistas* and *santeros* in Loíza Aldea, who have created the image of *brujería* as a distinct dimension of being black in Puerto Rico. Hernández's chapter eight on hair and its anthropological meaning within religions is a gem that probably is worthy of inclusion in some future source book with excerpted readings on Puerto Rican religion. Her accounting of religious witnessing sorts through linguistic fashions and tropes of believers with an ease that might make Quintero Rivera envious.

Speaking of an invitation delivered to her to become "*pastor*" (pp. 203–4), she is told she cannot be called "*pastora*" because that word is not in the bible, but nonetheless the church will allow her to do all the work that this role implies. On the other hand, she reports considerable innovation in the roles offered Catholic women and also in their reconceptualization of the example of Mary. With these and other citations, she discredits the reigning supposition that women everywhere have more freedom in evangelical churches than in Catholicism. Moreover, I was edified to see her attribute conversions from Catholicism partly to Pentecostalism's more lenient teaching on birth control and divorce (p. 202).

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Her basic finding is that family ties are more important to believers than denominational links. Apparently, virtually all people of faith in Loíza today are related to someone of another denomination. Families negotiate these differences

with their own interpretation of doctrine. Small Protestant congregations are susceptible to allegations of nepotism, since membership is often realized only among kin. The preaching of a "gospel of prosperity" is looked askance by many, but is an important reason for membership growth, especially on the part of the Church of Living Waters. Catholicism is concerned and often perplexed about the fluidity of what is merely cultural and what is traditional religion. Yet against the background of their Africanness, these inhabitants of Loíza manage to find in the practice of religion the motivations necessary to affirm a unique racial dimension to their ethnic identity both in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora of the States.

No reader of these works can walk away untouched by a conviction that great skill is necessary to unwrap Puerto Rican culture and its religious elements. Gone are the days when a 700-page volume on the Latino "condition" without a single entry for church or religion can be credibly received in academia. There is too much evidence offered in just these three books—without including other worthwhile publications—for religion to be trivialized in Puerto Rican social, political, and cultural expression.

It might be objected that however valuable the religion might be, it demands a specialization few academics possess. But does this pardon the avoidance of religion? In answering that question, we can recall how in the past twenty years, serious works have been required to include feminist and queer perspectives. Omitting religion would constitute a double standard in our studies of the Puerto Rican reality and would neglect the faith dimension professed by more than 90 percent of our people.

Based on the books reviewed here, however, I think one conclusion is inescapable: Academics need to contextualize religion. Silva Gotay smartly provides an example for how to trace religious trends through the intricacies of historical, political, and social trends. Under the thunderstorms of such influences, religion provides both reactionary and reactive responses. As purveyors of utopia and persuaders for peace, religion usually presents itself as a moderating "third way" between conflictive alternatives. As Silva shows on more than one issue, politicking takes place within various church factions, while leadership searches for the most pragmatic course. Fight Liberalism? Join Liberalism? Derive a moderate half-measure claiming the best of Liberalism for the church but avoid its excesses? In all cases, advocates speak the jargon of biblical citations and theological discourse. Even if a scholar is unfamiliar with some of the religious subtleties, humility will serve competence by juxtaposing the evidence provided by research. One can take refuge in Silva's technique and defer final interpretation while still citing the relevant documents.

Several issues emerge here to guide future social science as it encounters religion. First, pronouncements by ecclesiastics ought not be attributed the same ecclesiastical value. In Catholicism, papal decrees (bulls), encyclicals, pastoral instructions, and allocutions all carry different value, just as in the political world one distinguishes between actual legislation, State of the Union addresses, and campaign speeches. One ought also to pay attention to conflicts between local authorities and the universal church. For example, Silva Gotay (pp. 90–6) notes that the statements of Gregory XVI against slavery were not promulgated in Puerto Rico. The conclusion is that while the 19th-century Catholic Church was officially for the end of the slave trade, papal teaching was thwarted in Puerto Rico, where slavery was essential to the sugar economy. A true scholar recognizes that things may go in the opposite direction, i.e., the local authorities can be more progressive than higher-ups.

In most cases, there is no single Catholic position on most political issues. The historian needs to look at not only some eventual pronouncement, but at contexts of the theological tug-of-war leading up to it.

Second, political terminology like “liberal” and “conservative” is not generally applicable to ecclesiastical policies. The ideology of the church does not derive from secular politics but from faith dynamics. Silva provides an example of this “transpolitical” approach when he notes that the US bishops in Puerto Rico after 1898 were characterized by a progressive economic policy based on Catholic social teaching, even when other actions identified them with Americanization. Third, the 19th and 20th centuries hold a different role for the Catholic Church than the role played out in the first 300 years of Puerto Rican history. While the church was a dominant institution for almost two centuries of the colonial society, Catholicism was *not* in a commanding political or social position for most of the 19th century—even if it was the religion of the majority. Hence, histories of Puerto Rico must be nuanced in terms of periods and trends. Fourth, when consulting previous histories—even those considered classics—one needs to exercise what Paul Ricoeur has called “the hermeneutics of suspicion.” Just as we automatically filter history books according to our current understanding of gender bias, we need to exercise a similar vigilance when citing older histories of church and religion in Puerto Rico. Hernández, for instance, finds evidence that Catholicism is not more antagonistic to women than Pentecostalism, even though many previous studies accept the premise that Protestantism is liberating to women and Catholicism is not.

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as 'modernization'. //

Fifth, be wary of dichotomies like “medieval vs. Enlightenment,” “hierarchy vs. freedom of conscience,” “Puerto Ricanization vs. Americanization.” These terms are often confusing when used uncritically as labels. For instance, if speaking English constitutes Americanization, then must we consider all the Puerto Rican independentistas who speak English as more Americanized than statehooders who do not? If the separation of Church and State is Americanization, were the Spanish liberals of the 19th century “Americanizers”? “Americanization” is a cultural, political, and ideological affinity to US society, whose intention is to replicate these attributes in Puerto Rico. I suspect that much of what has been labeled “Americanization” in Puerto Rico is better described as “modernization.” Higher literacy, improved transportation, cleaner water, and technological innovation are hallmarks of modern society, but are not the exclusive property of the US, even if historically the US controlled their introduction into 20th-century Puerto Rico. In the future, it will be helpful to distinguish between policies intended to foster Americanization and those that resulted in Americanization. Thus, for instance, many of the Catholic schools in Puerto Rico were not intended to serve the upper classes by helping them learn English, although in fact Catholic schools generally produced these results. The distinction between intended and unintended results helps explain why Catholic sisters in Puerto Rico have been consciously rededicating themselves

to the poor. Such a perspective also frames the point made repeatedly by Silva Gotay that most bishops and priests (as also pastors and ministers) were continually striving to correct injustice and change attitudes: and I would add—*not because they were Americanizing, but because they were modernizing.*

Quintero Rivera stated that class and racial divisions in Puerto Rico produced conflicting religious experiences, and he was criticized by his colleagues for having succumbed to an overly generalized labeling. Silva also flirts with a similar simplification in his treatment of 19th-century Liberalism. A superficial reading of his book might conclude that Liberalism is always the rising force of history and all Catholic opposition to it is unenlightened. While in a given context this can be sustained, over the course of a century and a half, Liberalism grew many thorns and brambles. The Liberals of Spain such as Juan Prim y Prats and Antonio Cánovas del Castillo implemented extremist racial policies toward Puerto Rico. The Liberals who were Masons and Kardecian Spiritists cheered the confiscation of church properties, often enriching themselves by backdoor deals and political cronyism. The sterilization policies in Puerto Rico came from Liberals like Eleanor Roosevelt and Margaret Sanger. Moreover, in our own day the most exploitative economic policies are labeled “Neo-Liberalism.” Silva recognizes such variations of Liberalism, but his use of the label “Liberal” may leave some readers with a less nuanced understanding.

In a similar fashion, not everything labeled “medieval” is medieval. To use one example from the 19th century, Jaime Balmes argued that a strongly centralized federal government was unnecessary in Spain because the medieval institution of the guilds (*gremios*) could be formed with legal rights over trade, education, and judicial proceedings. Such bottom-up governance, argued the Catalan priest, would better respect local and cultural idiosyncrasy than the swollen central government proposed by Spanish Liberals. The logic of Balmes was not far from the classic anarchist theses elaborated by his contemporary, Proudhon, and later by Pi y Margall. Yet Balmes wrapped his proposal in the language of the guilds of the Middle Ages, much as was repeated later by Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*. Does the attempt to legitimize a substantially progressive proposal with a medieval pedigree make the proposal “medieval”? Or is this just one of the adjustments that need to be made when interpreting church documents?

Raising such questions in a review is not intended to diminish the contributions of these authors. The three books are pioneering as much for the changes they suggest in Puerto Rican social science and historiography as for their content. Each has demonstrated that we need to approach Puerto Rican religion in context. We can see in each a brighter future for unraveling the complex and fascinating subjects of our people, our culture, and our history.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Albizu’s cellmate at the Atlanta Prison, Juan Antonio Corretger, told me that Albizu had two books in jail that he was constantly reading and rereading. One was *De Legibus* by Francisco Suárez, SJ and the other *El Protestantismo* by Jaime Balmes. These books were among the personal effects remaining at the time of don Pedro’s death in 1965.

