

DISCOURSE ON RIDICULE

James Murray

Libros de Baubo



Estudios sobre la risa

James Murray

DISCOURSE ON RIDICULE



Libros de Baubo

Esta obra forma parte de la colección de estudios sobre la risa de la **Asociación de Estudios Literarios y de Cultura, A. C. (ADELyC)**, y puede descargarse gratuitamente en www.librosdebaubo.net.

Contacto: esteticasdelarisa@gmail.com

Este libro digital está bajo una licencia Creative Commons: BY-NC-SA. Para saber más de la licencia *Reconocimiento-NoComercial-CompartirIgual*, por favor visite:



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

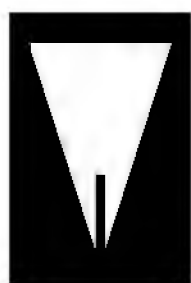
Diseño del logo interior de **Libros de Baubo**:
Adriana Ramírez de Alba

Título original de la obra digitalizada: *Lectures to Lords Spiritual: Or, An Advice to the Bishops, Concerning Religious Articles, Tithes, and Church Power. With a Discourse on Ridicule*

México: ADELyC, 2012.

Asociación de Estudios Literarios y de Cultura

Estudios sobre la risa



Biblioteca
Digital
Libros de
Baubo

La colección digital **Libros de Baubo** es coordinada por:

Silvia Alicia Manzanilla Sosa

Karla Marrufo

El Comité Editorial de la **ADELYC, A. C.** está integrado por los siguientes miembros del Consejo Directivo:

Karla Marrufo

Secretaria

Martha Elena Munguía Zatarain

Vicepresidenta

Silvia Alicia Manzanilla Sosa

Presidenta

DISCOURSE ON RIDICULE

Edición preparada por
Silvia Alicia Manzanilla Sosa y Karla Marrufo

LECTURES
TO
LORDS SPIRITUAL:
OR, AN
ADVICE TO THE BISHOPS,
CONCERNING
RELIGIOUS ARTICLES,
TITHES, AND CHURCH POWER.
WITH A
DISCOURSE ON RIDICULE.

By the Reverend Mr. J A. MURRAY,
Author of SERMONS to ASSES, &c.

I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
Rev. ii. 16.

L O N D O N:
Printed for the AUTHOR;
And Sold by WILL. HAY, Printer and Bookseller, at his
Shop next Door to the Exhibition-hall of the Society of
Artists of Great Britain, near Exeter 'Change, Strand.

MLCCLXXIV,

S E R M O N IX.

I KINGS xviii. 27.

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud : for he is a god ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

THE Prophet Elijah seems to have been very merry on this occasion, and makes very free with Baal and his Prophets. It appears manifest from this passage, that it is no crime for grave men to laugh upon proper occasions,

and apply ridicule to things that are ridiculous. Though Religion is one of the gravest things in the world, yet when it is founded upon absurdity, and composed of superstitious fopperies, it is nothing more than an object of ridicule. I wonder much when Dr. Brown was correcting Lord Shaftesbury, that he did not fall foul upon the Prophet Elijah ; for this farcastical Prophet has made as free with the religion of Baal, and his Prophets, as ever his Lordship did with the Parsons, and the Religion of the Church of England. Elijah not only laughed at the Priests, but even made free with their Deity, which some Persons may think looked very like profanity ; and to the Priests of Baal it would, no doubt, appear very profane. It was well for the prophet that he did not live in the days of the Star-chamber, nor resided within the reach of the inquisition, or they would soon have spoiled his mirth. It is a sad thing to laugh at

the Clergy, whatever Religion they are of; for it is always a sign of great infidelity, and shews that the Church is in danger. This Prophet of the Lord, in some countries, would have past for an infidel, and been stigmatized for a Deist. He ought to have taken his own way, but not to have ridiculed other people's God and Religion. It is a weak Religion that cannot endure the test of Ridicule.

These sycophant Prophets of Baal had got into favour with Ahab and his Queen, and thought every thing became them. The Prophets of the Lord were slain, and banished, because they would not flatter the Courtiers, and the Ministers of Ahab. None durst appear in behalf of the true Religion, except Elijah, who was a person of an intrepid disposition, and seems also to have been a man of humour. Let none of the Patrons of Dulness and Superstition exclaim against

treating Religious Subjects in a pleasant and humorous manner, when we have such a good pattern for the practice. The Prophet here has set us a fine example for the practice of ridicule with regard to Religious Subjects, and Religious Persons.

Here it may be necessary to consider the nature of this Ridicule, which the Prophet Elijah practised against the Prophets of Baal ; and, secondly, to enquire, Whether or not it is the test of truth, or how far it tends to discover falsehood.

1. The nature of this Ridicule will more easily be investigated by considering the objects thereof.—And there are three things in the text which the Prophet brings to the standard of Ridicule. The object of that new national worship, Baal ;—the worship itself ;—the

worshippers, the prophets of Baal;—and the manner of their worship.

The object of that new national worship, *Baal*. *He is a god*; or, as the Hebrew reads, *Seeing he is a god, cry aloud*. There is more meant than meets the ear in these words. The Prophet was not so rude and unmannerly as to tell these Clergymen that Baal was a Dæmon, though he plainly means as much; nor does he affirm that he was a true Deity; for then he would have told a falsehood:—but argues upon their own principles, and addresses them upon that supposition which their practice suggested. *Seeing he is a god*, and you consider him as *such*, try your influence with him, and make him prove his Divinity. This is most terribly severe, and yet incomparably delicate. The actions which Elijah attributes to this false object of worship carries the degree of ridicule to the highest point. *Perhaps he is talk-*

ing,—and cannot hear you through the hurry of conversation. To suppose a Deity so embarrassed with conversation, as not to hear the prayers of his Ambassadors, is to make him a perfect Dæmon. This is a *curious Climax* which the Prophet uses. He begins with one of those common actions which hinders men from attending to petitions, the *noise* and *hurry* of conversation, and hereby brings Baal down to the level of a finite creature ;—yea, he makes him an *impertinent babbler*, who when he was engaged in one subject, could take notice of nothing else.—But he adds, *or, he is pursuing*.—Intent upon a victory, and must have his attention called off from so serious an action before he will hear you. Elijah makes *Baal truly Heathen* ; he gives him the character of *Mars*, the *God of War*, whom the Heathens brought in for their assistance in time of battle. Those Prophets must have been very stupid not to perceive when their God was treated like

a devil; for this farcaſtical Prophet undeifies him altogether. *Or he is in a journey.*—Now he is diveſted of both *Omnifcience* and *Omnipreſence*. The Prophet poſitively hints that he could not be everywhere; when he was purſuing, and in a journey, he could not hear the prayers of his Prophets.—This was bringing him down very low; but he adds, *or peradventure he ſleepeth, and muſt be awaked*. Now his *godſhip* is in a *doſe*, and taking a nap. The images are naturally introduced; for firſt, he is conſidered as talking extravagantly,—then purſuing,—afterwards in a journey,—and at laſt, he falls aſleep.

Elijah could not have more ſeverely fatirized the Deity of theſe Prophets, ſuppoſing he had expreſsly given him all the bad epithets in the Hebrew language. The falſe prophets could not decently be offended at him for treating their God in this manner; for their own

behaviour suggested the ideas which he expresses. Besides, as this was a comparative trial between the God of Israel and this false Deity, the event was most likely to try the force of the ridicule; and the experiment, which was now begun, would in all probability determine what was truth or falsehood in the matter in controversy. The man who laughs at an absurd character, even suppose it should be annexed to a Deity, does not ridicule a Divine Name, but ridicules the imaginary fancies of superstitious minds. It would be no reflection upon the character of God Almighty, for a Christian to laugh at a *god* made of a wafer, though a good Catholick might account it profane. It is impossible for any person who has the least risibility to be grave in treating such unnatural and absurd opinions. If any grave man should solemnly tell me, that the God of the Universe took pleasure in a Christian's flogging himself for his

finds, I could not help smiling at him ; but if he told me further, that it was essential to his ideas of his character, I should certainly laugh very heartily at both him and the Deity which he worshipped.—And I should certainly do no more than the Prophet Elijah did in the case before us.

The Prophet next ridicules the worshippers of Baal. They had called upon this idol from morning till noon, and they were still where they were. He had paid no attention to their prayers, nor shewed the smallest sign of regard to them. Elijah desires them to cry louder ; this implied that there was some defect in their performance. They worshipped their God as if he had been deaf ; and the Prophet makes merry with their absurd notion of being heard by their idol for their much speaking.

The Prophet's address to those superstitious Baalites is truly ironical and farcastic. *Cry aloud*, says he, when they were crying as loud as they were able, and cutting themselves with knives till the blood gushed out. There cannot be any thing more satirical than to desire a person to exert himself when he is at his *ne plus ultra*, and can do no more. One would have thought that Elijah might have paid some regard to the Prophets of Baal, and considered, that though they differed from him, they might mean well in their own way. Absurdity may be tolerated, and its votaries preserved from the influence of penal laws ; but it never can have the privilege of being free from the edge of ridicule. Even grave men must laugh at what is unnatural and absurd ; and they cannot help it, provided they have any humour in them at all. Elijah, as grave as he was, was obliged to laugh at those mad Prophets.

Their manner of worship was truly ridiculous ; their odd gesticulations, their jumping upon the altar, and cutting themselves with knives, and shouting like madmen, must have afforded a strange aspect. The men were called Prophets too,—and were a sort of apes of the servants of the Lord ; they were the Queen's Clergy, and the favourites of the Court. It was highly laughable to find that those Court Clergy should have so little influence over their Deity, and still more so for them to conceive that an idol could perform divine works.

The object of all this ridicule we find is absurdity ;—the absurdity of the object of worship ;—the worshippers ;—and their manner of worship.

Let us now see how far Ridicule is the test of truth.

When men make merry with truth, the laugh always goes against them.— Let us suppose that the Prophets of Baal had tried their Ridicule upon Elijah and the God of Israel, it would not have been long before their mirth would have been spoiled ; the trial would have decided the controversy, and the laugh gone upon the other side.

Though Ridicule is not the method to investigate truth ; yet it distinguishes it from falsehood upon trial, and he who attempts to render truth ridiculous, will at best but expose himself. The friends of error generally betray themselves by feeling pain, when the weapon of satire is employed against them ; whereas those who are conscious of the truth of their cause, remain easy, and perfectly composed when fools laugh at them. Truth is like beauty, it retorts Ridicule upon those who attempt to throw reproach upon it.

Upon the whole, we may see from the practice of Elijah, that it is lawful to treat Religious men and things with Ridicule when they deserve it; and that good humour and a grave character are not inconsistent with one another. Elijah was a grave man, and yet he makes use of good humour in the case before us, and applies Ridicule to a very grave subject.—Let none of their Reverences exclaim against the freedom which is used with the suspicious part of their character.—If there is nothing absurd about them, satire will not affect them.

F I N I S.

ÍNDICE

Portada original	9
Discourse on Ridicule	11

El punto de partida de *Discourse on Ridicule*, del reverendo James Murray (1840-1893), es el versículo 27 del capítulo XVIII del primer libro de Reyes, en donde el profeta Elías se burla de los de Baal porque, tras largas invocaciones, no reciben respuesta alguna de su dios. “Es una religión débil aquella que no es capaz de soportar la prueba del ridículo”, afirma Murray. Su afirmación regirá todo un debate sobre la pertinencia de la risa cuando se trata de poner a prueba cuestiones de error y verdad.

Apelando a cita bíblica, Murray da cuenta de los momentos propicios para lo que él llama “la práctica del ridículo”, y lo ejemplifica con los adoradores de Baal. Elías es presentado como el mejor ejemplo del hombre solemne, portador de la verdad; sin embargo, no se encuentra exento de la risa, sobre todo cuando la situación es tan absurda como la alabanza a un dios falso.

A través de la exhibición de una práctica pagana, Murray intenta señalar en sus lecciones que aun en la palabra sagrada y en los hombres abocados a ella hay cabida para la burla. Así lo afirma el reverendo hacia el final de su texto: “la verdad es como la belleza, replica con el ridículo a aquellos que pretenden cuestionarla”.