

HUMOUR, ENTERTAINMENT, RIDICULE - AND FAITH

Apologetika

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לְשִׂחֹק אָמַרְתִּי מִהוֹלָל וּלְשִׂמְחָה מִהֲזֵה עֲשָׂה	Ecc 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"
טוֹב לָלֶכֶת אֶל־בֵּית־אֶבֶל מִלָּכֶת אֶל־בֵּית מִשְׂתֵּה בְּאֲשֶׁר הוּא סוֹף כָּל־הָאָדָם וְהַחַי יִתֵּן אֶל־לְבוֹ טוֹב כְּעֵס מִשְׂחָק כִּי־בָרַע פָּנִים יֵשֵׁב לֵב יֵלֵב חֲכָמִים בְּבֵית אֶבֶל וְלֵב כְּסִילִים בְּבֵית שִׂמְחָה	Ecc 7:2-4 It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. ³ Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. ⁴ The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.
שִׂמְחָה בְּחַוּר בְּיַלְדוּתְךָ וַיִּשְׂבֶּךְ לִבְךָ בַּיָּמִים בְּחַוּרוֹתְךָ וְהִלַּךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לִבְךָ וּבְמַרְאֵי עֵינֶיךָ וְדַע כִּי עַל־כָּל־אֵלֶּה יָבִיאֲךָ הָאֱלֹהִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט	Ecc 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.
לֵב שִׂמְחָה יֵשֵׁב גְּהֵה וְרוּחַ נִכְאָה תִּנְבֹּשׁ־גְּהֵם	Pr 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
ἐλεύσονται ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν [ἐν] ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαίτται κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι	2Pt 3:3 ...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires

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0. INTRODUCTION

- Ridicule is a weapon often used against religion and faith. In Christian life, it is important to both understand how and where we can use it – but especially how we can defend our faith against it.
- To understand ridicule, it is useful to begin with *humour*...

0.1. WHAT IS HUMOUR?

- L. hūmōrem, more properly ūmōr-em fluid, moisture
[*Oxford Dictionary*] 7. a. That quality of action, speech, or writing, which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun. 7.b The faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject. – Distinguished from wit as being less purely intellectual, and as having a sympathetic quality in virtue of which it often becomes allied to pathos.

- [Douglas Harper, 2001]:

device	HUMOR	WIT	SATIRE	SARCASM	INVECTIVE	IRONY	CYNICISM	SARDONIC
motive/aim	discovery	throwing light	amendment	inflicting pain	discredit	exclusiveness	self-justification	self-relief
province	human nature	words & ideas	morals & manners	faults & foibles	misconduct	statement of facts	morals	adversity
method/means	observation	surprise	accentuation	inversion	direct statement	mystification	exposure of nakedness	pessimism
audience	the sympathetic	the intelligent	the self-satisfied	victim & bystander	the public	an inner circle	the respectable	the self

- [*Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*] ...humor seems to represent a curious mixture of the base, ugly, and aggressive aspects of human nature with the sublime, innocent, and joyful.

0.2. HUMOUR IN PHILOSOPHY

- Theories of Humour:
 - (1) Tension relief theories. (FREUD)
 - (2) Superiority theories. (HOBBS)
 - (4) Incongruity theories. (PASCAL, KANT)

0.3. HUMOUR AND MEDICINE

[*Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*] Evidence has also accumulated suggesting that laughter has important physiological effects on the body, protecting organs such as the heart from the effects of stress and possibly stimulating the production of endogenous analgesic substances (endorphins) in the brain.

1. HUMOUR AS A GIFT OF GOD

1.1. THE BIBLE

- Prophets → puns
- Job → "...s vami umrie múdrost!" (12,2), "...zvierat sa opýtaj!" (12,7), "...potom, ked dohovorím, potom sa posmievaj!" (21,4), "všetci ste len takí sužujúci potešovatelja. Ci už bude koniec reciam do vetra, alebo co ta dráždi, že sa ozývaš?" (16,2-3) alebo: "Akože ma chcete potešiť nezmyslami?" (21,34), je niekoľko príkladov irónie z Jóbových úst. Jasný výsmech môžeme cítiť z jeho slov: "Ako si len pomohol tomu, kto nemá síl! Rameno bezmocného si ratoval! Ako si len poradil nemúdre mu a prejavil naozaj veľkú chápvosť! (26, 2-3)

1.2. PARADOXES OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

- **Gn 21:6** And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me. (וְהַחֲמֹר שָׂרָה צָחַק עֲשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כָּל-הַשְּׂמֵעַ יִצְחָק-לִי)

1.3. FOR HEALING

- **Pr 17:22** A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

1.4. THE HUMOUR OF CHRIST

- No rigidity; no pretension; no dignified robes...

- [TRUEBLOOD] The recognition that Christ understood and demonstrated humor helps us to see a greater profundity in the dictum that it is impossible to enter the Kingdom except as we become **little children** (Mark 10:15).

[TRUEBLOOD] Christ's characteristic humor depends, for the most part, upon a combination of ideas rather than upon a combination of words. This is why the particular language, be it Aramaic or some other, makes no crucial difference. The swallowing of the camel is funny in any language. (*The Humor of Christ*, p. 34)

1.5. FOR TEACHING/LEARNING

- Witty sayings → memorizing with the help of emotion - laughter
- [TRUEBLOOD] "Sober prose, as everyone knows, is hard to memorize or to repeat with any accuracy, whereas poetry, or the scintillating epigram, can be repeated with remarkable ease and faithfulness."

2. ENTERTAINMENT AS OVERDONE MIRTH

- Humour and laughter are addictive...

2.1. WHAT IS ENTERTAINMENT?

- [DYER *Only Entertainment*] ...entertainment is not so much a category of things as an attitude towards things. ... leisure should also be seen as the **creation of meaning** in a world in which work and the daily round are characterized by drudgery, insistence and meaninglessness.
- diversions in **courtly society** → a way of staving off days of boredom for a **leisured** class
- key figure: MOLIÈRE → lack of *edifying*, lack of *taste*, lack of *art* – defended by the PRINCIPLE OF PLEASURE, that is defined by 'the people'.
- "romantic" → beyond the limits of real life ⇒ the further from reality, the more entertaining...

2.2. TYPES OF ENTERTAINMENT

- → types of **imagined reality**
- [ZILLMANN&VORDERER] **Humor and Comedy** – Conflict and Suspense in Drama – Violence, Mayhem, and Horror – Sex – Affect-Talk – Children's Likes and Dislikes – Sports – Music – Video Games and the Pleasures of Control - The Respondent Gender Gap

2.3. ENTERTAINMENT AS A DRUG

[TOZER *The Root of the Righteous*,] A German philosopher many years ago said something to the effect that the more a man has in his own heart the less he will require from the outside; excessive need for support from without is proof of the bankruptcy of the inner man. If this is true (and I believe it is) then the present inordinate attachment to every form of entertainment is evidence that the inner life of modern man is in serious decline. The average man has no central core of moral assurance, no spring within his own breast, no inner strength to place him above the need for repeated psychological shots to give him the courage to go on living. He has become a parasite on the world, drawing his life from his environment, unable to live a day apart from the stimulation which society affords him.

...there are millions who cannot live without amusement; life without some form of entertainment for them is simply intolerable; they look forward to the blessed relief afforded by professional entertainers and other forms of psychological narcotics as a dope addict looks to his daily shot of heroin. Without them they could not summon courage to face existence.

Nejaký nemecký filozof pred mnohými rokmi povedal niečo v tom zmysle, že čím viac má človek vo svojom srdci, tým menej bude zvonku vyžadovať; nadmerná potreba podpory zvonku je dôkazom bankrotu vnútorného človeka. Ak je to pravda (a ja verím, že áno), potom súčasná nadmerná pripútanosť ku každej forme zábavy je dôkazom toho, že vnútorný život moderného človeka je na úpadku. Priemerný človek nemá žiadne ústredné jadro morálnej istoty, žiadnu pružinu vo vlastnej hrudi, žiadnu vnútornú silu, ktorá by ho postavila nad potrebu opakovaných psychologických injekcií, ktoré by mu dodali odvahu žiť ďalej. Stal sa parazitom na svete, čerpá svoj život zo svojho prostredia, nedokáže prežiť ani deň mimo stimulov, ktoré mu spoločnosť poskytuje....

...sú milióny takých, ktorí nemôžu žiť bez zábavy; život bez nejakej formy zábavy je pre nich jednoducho netolerovateľný; tešia sa na pozhnanú úľavu, ktorú poskytujú profesionálni zabávači a iné formy

psychologických narkotík tak, ako keď sa drogovovo závislý človek teší na svoju každodennú dávku heroínu. Bez nich by nemohli набраť odvahu postaviť sa zoči-voči existencii.

3. RIDICULE, A DEADLY WEAPON AGAINST FAITH

[CHAMBERS *God's Workmanship*] In our work for God we have on the one hand the enchanted but unchanged crowd, and on the other the indifferent crowd. Have you ever realised that God challenges the saints to a tremendous conflict, the conflict of believing the Gospel in the face of an indifferent world? It is easy to say we believe in God as long as we remain in the little world we choose to live in; but get out into the great world of facts, the noisy world where people are absolutely indifferent to you, where your message is nothing more than a crazy tale belonging to a bygone age, can you believe God there?

3.1. IN THE BIBLE

- **Psalm 2:4** the Lord holds them in derision (יִלְעַגְלֵמוֹ)
- Neh 4:3 (3:35) ...what they are building- if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!
- Luke 7:31-35 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another.

We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not weep.'

For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

3.2. HOW HUMOUR BECOMES RIDICULE

- In an inappropriate situation: Suffering; death; tragedy; eternal matters; emotional vulnerability...
- Through an inappropriate topic: Ridiculing family, fathers, religion (Calvin → Rabelais)
- With an inappropriate motive: To defame; harm; ostracize...

3.3. THE DEFENSE AGAINST RIDICULE

3.3.1. KNOW YOUR BIBLE!

- "living power" through the Holy Spirit ()
- [CHAMBERS *The Love of God*] The Bible does not deal with the domain of commonsense facts, we get at those by our senses; the Bible deals with the world of revelation facts which we only get at by faith in God.
- Seeing through cynicism

3.3.2. SEE THE INVISIBLE WORLD!

[Os GUINNESS *The Audience of One*] Leaders or panderers? Gyroscope or Gallup poll? Thermostat or thermometer? Only those who prac-' tice the presence of the Audience of One can hope to attain the former and escape the latter.

- Hope (Heb 12:2...)

3.3.3. BE READY TO SUFFER!

- **2Tim 3:12-13** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
- OPPORTUNITY ⇒ OPPOSITION (1Cor 16:9 ...a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries)

4. TO REMEMBER

- Humour is a gift from God so that we could see our existence also in its lighter dimensions.
- Entertainment is like eating or resting – we eat to live, not live to eat...
- Defense against ridicule may be more difficult than defense against other kinds of suffering.