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## CLERICAL

# “POOH, POOH!” RHETORIC.

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Οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἡγεῖ δῆτα τὸ ψευδῆ λέγειν ;  
Οὐκ, εἰ τὸ σωζῆναι γε τὸ ψεῦδος φέρει.

*Philoctetes, 108-9.*

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## CLERICAL "POOH POOH!" RHETORIC.

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**I**T is much easier to be religious than to be moral. This is remarkably the case in countries where the Roman Catholic religion is that of the State. There every person is religious, but scarcely any one is moral. There religion is a respectable suit of clothes to be worn on great occasions and holy days; or, it is a passport which those who dislike being "spotted" carry with them to produce in case any one might question their orthodoxy. Religion—not morality—circulates through the blood of these people, through their families, their households, and the very atmosphere they breathe. Their religion may be blind admiration, or submission, or faith, or adoration, or even it may be persuasion; but it scarcely ever is a binding rule for their moral conduct. It has not the least necessary connection with any one moral virtue. The most hardened murderer, the most self-indulgent sensualist, the most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout,—as in the case of the notorious Francisco Pizarro. He may even avow publicly that he is rigidly devout and intensely pious without giving the least shock to public opinion. In short, the Roman Catholic Religion is witchcraft disguised. The Protestant Religion is witchcraft disguised to a certain extent.

Protestants do not allow themselves the *same* indulgence that Roman Catholics permit themselves. Protestants have less faith than Roman Catholics in

the efficacy of a death-bed repentance. Regarding the efficacy of the Sacraments there is a difference of opinion among Protestants. Moreover the oracle of Protestants is a dumb book called the Bible, whose want of speech causes almost endless diversities of opinion among those who consult it. These differences and difficulties necessarily promote the cause of morality. The accusation, that a man holds strange opinions in order to find arguments for whatever he has an inclination to do, is a reproach which must always sting a Protestant who leads an immoral life. Hence if a Protestant hold any peculiar opinion it is of almost infinite satisfaction to himself and advantage to his cause if he be able to point to a private life of dignified moral repute. Consequently the peoples among whom the Protestant religion prevails are much more moral than the peoples among whom the Roman Catholic religion is established by law.

Nevertheless, the Protestants allow themselves a certain amount of a certain kind of self-indulgence.

In the first place, they have their little allowance of witchcraft, namely, the laying on of hands—infant baptism—justification by faith—remission of sins—and the final perseverance of the saints.

Secondly, they have their little hard and fast lines of exclusiveness, as arranged among their various divisions of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, &c. &c.

Thirdly, Protestants permit and even applaud a certain amount of spiritual hatred, spiritual rancour, and spiritual denunciation. The *odium theologicum* is particularly gratifying to the Protestant intellect. At Exeter Hall, Belfast, or Glasgow, there could scarcely be any public matter that would be more likely to draw together a numerous audience than the announcement that an eloquent firebrand, on a certain time, and at a certain place, would denounce Mr. Gladstone and the Pope.

Fourthly (and principally), persistent and vociferous assertion, in opposition to facts, that the Bible has been written by men who were guided by divine grace, and that Protestantism is the only true religion on earth, are points that are almost universally acted on and applauded by Protestants. If such a course were adopted by Infidels it would be called "a system of enormous lying." But when that course is adopted for the preservation of Christianity it is considered not only justifiable but a bounden duty by almost all Protestants.

In Sophocles' "Philoctetes," 108-9, Neoptolemus says to Ulysses, "Dost thou, then, not think it base to tell a lie?" To this Ulysses answers: "No; at least not if the lie bring preservation." This doctrine is avowed by the Jesuits and practised by Protestants—especially by the clergy of the Established Church in England and of the disestablished church in Ireland.

In the days of David Hume, who flourished about A.D. 1750, the clergy of the day deemed it their duty to refute the arguments against miracles, against a particular Providence, and against a future life, contained in his "Inquiry concerning Human Understanding," published A.D. 1748. Not being able to refute him they wrote what they called Answers to him. He says "Answers by Reverends and Right Reverends came out two or three in a year, and I found, by Dr. Warburton's railing, that the books were beginning to be esteemed in good company." On the part of the clergy this was *decent*. It showed they thought they had something to defend besides their salaries. But the clergy of the present day have long ago lost the power of using their pens, or indeed of using any weapons requiring the aid of human intellect to wield them.

So, when the late Dr. Strauss published, A.D. 1837, his "Life of Jesus," the clergy were quite taken by

surprise. The idea that Jesus might not be a strictly historical character, and that the narratives contained in our Gospels might be, for the most part mythological, was quite new to our clergy. They had not as much as one argument to bring forward. They could use only exclamations, such as Oh!—Ah!—Such a thing to say!—Downright blasphemy!—Shocking!—Horrible!—&c. &c.

Not long after this, A.D. 1844, "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation" appeared. It found the clergy utterly unable to bring forward an argument against its statements and reasonings. The clergy had been better employed. They had been looking after rectories, archdeaconries, canonries, prebends' stalls, and deaneries, and the Presbyterian portion of them had been manufacturing bricks and getting leases of building ground. Nevertheless the clergy raised against the "Vestiges" an outcry that resounded through her Majesty's three kingdoms; but it was *vox et præterea nihil*.

Not long after this, A.D. 1860, "Essays and Reviews" made their appearance. Again the clergy were "unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek." Again the clergy raised an outcry, but it was as powerless as the "unearthly squeak" uttered by "the feeble forms of the deceased dead" fluttering around Ulysses in Hades.

Before the sensation caused by the publication of "Essays and Reviews" had died away, Dr. Colenso, A.D. 1862, published the first volume of "The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined."

This was too much. All the interjections in the English language could not successfully resist this rush of learned and clever publications on behalf of the good old cause, "Truth *v.* Christianity." It was deemed necessary to do something. The stupid good people began to expect that the clergy would do something. The ignorant little curates began to expect that some powerful church dignitary would

come forth and refute Dr. Colenso. If there was any such churchman in existence he did not make his appearance. Mr. Speaker Denison suggested that all the eminent blockheads in the church of England should put their heads together and refute Dr. Colenso. This was received with applause by the stupid good people. And accordingly the Fathers of the Church were gathered together in Westminster Abbey amidst "the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious" witchcraft to refute Dr. Colenso. *They commenced by receiving the holy communion!* And if they ever shall arrive at a conclusion, it will be "a conclusion in which nothing is concluded."

In the meantime the expectation of the stupid good people was stretched to the utmost. They first uttered a cry for help, next a scream of anguish, then a howl of despair, and finally a wail of lamentation. This was too much. The clergy were at their wit's end—and they had not to go very far to reach it! Resort was had to the maxim of Ulysses, that "It is not base to tell a lie if the lie bring preservation."

So the clergy went among their flocks exclaiming "Pooh, Pooh!" and preserving an ostentatious silence on all matters of controversy.

Like all great and important doctrines, the profound reason and important theory contained in the exclamation "Pooh, Pooh!" have been gradually "developed."

When Dr. Colenso was in England during the year 1863 he wrote to a bishop asking for an explanation of certain statements he had made against Dr. Colenso. To this the bishop replied that he would not enter into a controversy "with one who has been so ably answered"—the bishop did not say *by whom*. This is the *suppressio veri* in the form of "Pooh! Pooh!"

At that time, 1863, a bishop was performing cer-



tain ceremonies of witchcraft, commonly called "confirmation," "ordination," "consecration," &c. &c., and when Dr. Colenso called on him to explain certain ungrounded assertions he had made relative to the futility of Dr. Colenso's arguments against the pretensions claimed for some parts of Holy Scripture to be regarded as written by aid of Divine inspiration, the bishop's reply was to the effect that he was too much occupied by his witchcraft to be able to waste time in defending Holy Scripture. This is the trick of *shirking* under the form of "Pooh, Pooh!"

A layman sent a copy of a tract published in Mr. Scott's series to a dignitary of the church of England, requesting him to refute it, "at which his nose was in great indignation." The dignitary returned the tract with a message, to the effect that he considered the act of sending him such a tract was "a personal insult." This is the stately professional dodge under the form of "Pooh, Pooh!"

Another layman sent a copy of another tract which appeared in Mr. Scott's series to a poor curate, requesting him to refute the arguments contained in it. The curate wrote back in reply that all the statements and arguments contained in that tract had been written and refuted many years ago. The layman wrote back to the curate requesting him to give the names of the books which the curate alleged had anticipated, and refuted the statements and arguments contained in the tract. To this the curate did not give any answer. This is *deliberate lying* for the Gospel's sake under the form of "Pooh, Pooh!"

A lay inquirer asked a dignitary to explain why there are so many contradictory statements in our New Testament regarding "justification by works," and "justification by faith?" The dignitary asked the layman had he read certain books. The layman answered in the negative. Thereupon the dignitary



named a number of books so numerous that it would require the time of five or six average human lives to peruse them, and the dignitary told the layman that the answer to the question would be found among those books. This is running away and taking refuge behind the petticoats of mother Church under the form of "Pooh, Pooh!"

Dr. Farrar lately published a 'Life of Christ' grounded on the old maxim of obstinate stupidity:—

Over and over again I repeat it,  
Time after time and day after day,  
Nothing while I live shall ever defeat it;  
For over and over the same I will say.

A favourable notice of this performance is given in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1875. The notice concludes thus:—"To fill the minds of those who read his pages with solemn and not ignoble thoughts, 'to add sunlight to daylight by making the happy happier, to encourage the toiler, to console the sorrowful, to point the weak to the one true source of moral strength'—these are the high ends to which he [Dr. Farrar] desires that his work may be blest, and we may safely promise him that he will not be disappointed." This is Peter driving a nail through the Moon, and Paddy clinching the nail on the other side, under the form of "Pooh, Pooh!"

Many other instances of clerical "Pooh, Pooh!" rhetoric could be given. But it is needless. What has been said is amply sufficient to enable the intelligent reader to detect clerical "Pooh, Pooh!" rhetoric under whatever guise it may lurk.

In his essay on *Miracles* David Hume says, "'Tis strange, a judicious reader is apt to say, upon the perusal of these wonderful histories, that such prodigious events never happen in our days. But 'tis nothing strange, I hope, that men should lie in all ages. You must surely have seen instances enow of that frailty.'

12      *Clerical "Pooh, Pooh!" Rhetoric.*

Recommending the clerics to study the works of David Hume, and learn honesty, we shall take leave of those holy men, expressing for them in English a wish which Demosthenes expressed in Greek for certain persons who "flourished" by dishonest means in his day:—

"If it be possible, inspire even in these men a better sense and feeling! But if they be indeed incurable, *destroy them by themselves* : exterminate them on land and sea."

KILFEREST,

*Feast of the Annunciation, 1875.*

