

Not TRUTH but "RELEVANCE"

being the whole of Chapter I of *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis written in 1941

NOTE TO NEW READERS

- Beware: in this document, *Satan is named Our Father Below and Christ The Enemy.*
- *The "letters" are from a senior devil called Screwtape to his nephew, a junior devil, Wormtongue.*
- It is the Devils handbook to get human beings to reject God, choose sin and go to Hell.
- *The Screwtape Letters* is famous for its Christian spirituality and practical psychology.
- C.S. Lewis never attempts to prove his assertions, but expects his readers to judge their truth from their own experience of life.
- A great multitude of readers bless his name for the enlightenment he has given them.
- Written during World War II, what is printed below accurately describes our situation in the 21st century, with its substitution of thinking in slogans and chanting them to replace rational thinking and debate. Now read on.

MY DEAR WORMWOOD

I note what you say about guiding your patient's reading and taking care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle naive? It sounds as if you supposed that argument was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches. That might have been so if he had lived a few centuries earlier.

At that time the humans still knew pretty well when a thing was proved and when it was not, and if it was proved they really believed it.

They still connected thinking with doing and were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning. But what with the weekly press and other such weapons we have largely altered that. Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head.

He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false", but as "academic" or "practical", "outworn" or "contemporary", "conventional" or "ruthless".

Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is *true* ! Make him think it is strong, or stark,

or courageous -- that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about.

The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy's own ground. He can argue too, whereas in really practical propaganda of the kind I am suggesting He has been shown for centuries to be greatly the inferior of Our Father Below. By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result ? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences.

Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real".

Remember, he is not, like you, a pure spirit. Never having been a human (Oh that abominable advantage of the Enemy's !) you don't realise how enslaved they are to the pressure of the ordinary.

I once had a patient, a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way. The Enemy, of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my twenty years' work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not such a fool. I stuck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch. The Enemy presumably made the counter-suggestion (you know how one can never *quite* overhear what He says to them ?) that this was more important than lunch. At least I think that must have been His line for when I said "Quite. In fact much *too* important to tackle at the end of a morning", the patient brightened up considerably; and by the time I had added "Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind", he was already half way to the door. Once he was in the street

the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, what ever he odd ideas come into a man's head shut up alone with his books, a healthy dose of "real life" (by which I meant the bus and the newsboy) was enough to show him, that "al that sort of thing" just couldn't be true He knew he'd had a narrow escape and in later years was fond of talking about "that inarticulate sense for actuality which is our ultimate safeguard against the aberrations of mere logic". He is now safe in Our Father's house.

You begin to see the point ? Thanks to processes which we set at work in them centuries ago, they find it all but impossible to believe in the unfamiliar while the familiar is before their eyes. Keep pressing home on him the ordinariness of things. Above all, do not attempt to use science (I mean, the real sciences) as a defence against Christianity. They will positively encourage him to think about realities he can't touch and see. There have been sad cases among the modern physicists. If he must dabble in science, keep him on economics and sociology; don't let him get away from that invaluable "real life". But the best of all is to let him read no science but to give him a grand general idea that he knows it all and that everything he happens to have picked up in casual talk and reading is "the results of modern investigation". Do remember you are there to fuddle him. From the way some of you young fiends talk, anyone would suppose it was our job to *teach* !

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

The above is a continuation of HO n. 194 *Brave New Church with Big Sister's 2020-2022*

SCRIPTURAL "PUT DOWN" of the Trendies

- * Who is this that wrappeth up windy words in unskilful sentences ? Job 38:2 and 16:3 DRV
- * Futile words! Lying visions! Empty dreams! Misleading nonsense! Zechariah 10:2 JB
- * "I have been a lying spirit into the mouths of all their prophets." 1 Kings 22:22

Dealing with Atheists

Here's the alphabet, some letters underlined:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Next, I pull out the underlined letters and re-arrange them to be the name of a place:

F A U L C O N B R I D G E

which is quite a special word, being so big and with no letter repeated, and this leaves 13 letters, and still in their alphabetical order:

H J K M P Q S T V W X Y Z

Now if I told you that I'd simply tossed the original 26 letters high up in the air and half of them fell down and made that big word, and the other half fell down in alphabetical order, would you believe me ? Of course you wouldn't. You'd say I a liar, or playing a joke, or working some trickery.

Yet you ask, why do you say that?

The probability of 26 separate letters falling down on a flat surface in any unique order is $26 \times 25 \times 24 \times \dots \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$. It's called factorial 26 and written as $26!$ You do it on your calculator by pressing ! and it gives, in scientific notation, 4.0329138×10^{26} to be multiplied by 10 raised to the power of 26.

10^{26} means 1 with 26 zeroes after it, i.e. 100,000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, which means the odds are infinitesimal, one chance in 403,291,380, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000.

But that's not all. It's far less than that !

Those letters had to fall by chance with all the letters the right way up, so we have to half the odds of getting our particular sequence of letters.

As for forming two parallel straight lines instead of 26 broken bits of crockery, it makes even more totally impossible that the pattern of letters I've written down could ever happen by chance.

Yet I wrote them down just from my memory and understanding. Me! that you say is a grandson over many generations from an amoeba. If you say that, I dismiss your assertion (not you yourself) as BLATHER, BLETHER, BILGE, BOVRIL and BUNKHUM.

That's why I'm not an atheist. And if you think about it, you can't be either. Here you are, able to think and choose and talk and do things, and learn about how wonderful your innards are, both your body and your soul -- of yes, you've got a soul whether you like it or not, that can do things mere material thing cannot do. Whenever you share an idea with someone, your knowledge does not diminish and you might even be morally richer.

Good & evil act causally on other people's souls & bodies. Without God, conscience, ideas of good & evil, you'll live as a moral cripple.

Father James Tierney