



November 2017 – **ANY ONE AND EVERY ONE IS A TARGET**

In an essay titled “On the Transmission of Christianity,” originally published in 1946, C.S. Lewis considered some of the reasons why so many of the young people of that day were not Christians, with a particular focus on schools. An excerpt follows:

This very obvious fact — that each generation is taught by an earlier generation — must be kept very firmly in mind... No generation can bequeath to its successor what it has not got... if we are sceptical we shall teach only scepticism to our pupils, if fools only folly, if vulgar only vulgarity, if saints sanctity, if heroes heroism... We shall all admit that a man who knows no Greek himself cannot teach Greek to his form: but it is equally certain that a man whose mind was formed in a period of cynicism and disillusion, cannot teach hope or fortitude... A society which is predominantly Christian will propagate Christianity through its schools: one which is not, will not...

I do not draw from this moral that it is now our business to ‘get our teeth into the schools’. For one thing, I do not think we shall be allowed to. It is unlikely that in the next forty years England will have a government which would encourage or even tolerate any radically Christian elements in its State system of education. Where the tide flows towards increasing State control, Christianity, with its claims in one way personal and in the other way ecumenical and both ways antithetical to omniscient government, must always in fact (though not for a long time yet in words) be treated as an enemy. Like learning, like the family, like any ancient and liberal profession, like the common law, it gives the individual a standing ground against the State. Hence Rousseau, the father of the totalitarians, said wisely enough, from his own point of view, of Christianity, *Je ne connais rien de plus contraire a l'esprit social*.¹ In the second place, even if we were permitted to force a Christian curriculum on the existing schools with the existing teachers we should only be making masters hypocrites and hardening thereby the pupils’ hearts.

I am speaking, of course, of large schools on which a secular character is already stamped. If any man, in some little corner out of the reach of the omniscient, can make, or preserve a really Christian school, that is another matter. His duty is plain.

I do not, therefore, think that our hope of re-baptising England lies in trying to ‘get at’ the schools. Education is not *in that sense* a key position. To convert one’s adult neighbour and one’s adolescent neighbour (just free from school) is the practical thing. The cadet, the undergraduate, the young worker in the C.W.U.² are obvious targets: but any one and every one is a target. If you make the adults of today Christian, the children of tomorrow will receive a Christian education. What a society has, that, be sure, and nothing else, it will hand onto its young. The work is urgent, for men perish around us...³



While the secular institutions of our culture today will not, and generally cannot, transmit Christianity, those of us who are followers of Jesus can share the gospel with our neighbors, and indeed are called to do so. Is there anyone you would like to share Christ with today?

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20a (ESV)

¹ ‘I know nothing more opposed to the social spirit.’

² The Christian Workers Union (C.W.U.) was a fellowship of working men and women between ages of 16 and 30.

³ C.S. Lewis, “On the Transmission of Christianity”, in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 114, 116, 118-119.