

TWO SENIOR DEMONS ARE ADDRESSING AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF DEMONS
(IN OTHER WORDS, THE AUDIENCE)

FIRST DEMON

Fellow-demons, I have called you together
because a very great emergency faces us all.

SECOND DEMON

The gates of hell are in a lock-down
situation, and we have a code red security
alert.

FIRST DEMON

Here's the problem. I'm sorry to have to tell
you, and I detest having to say the word I'm
about to use, but we have to face facts. Up on
earth, it's the Year of the - Bible.

SECOND DEMON

(recoiling in horror)

Bible. What a horrible word that is.

FIRST DEMON

And the worst of it is, there's going to be
quite a lot of publicity about this ghastly
book. We must brace ourselves. Some
people might even feel tempted to read it.

SECOND DEMON

(shuddering)

Hideous. Entirely the wrong sort of
temptation.

FIRST DEMON

And we've been doing so well, keeping the
Book tucked safely away in severe black
covers...

SECOND DEMON

With tiny print... in two columns... on flimsy
paper.

FIRST DEMON

And in Olde Englishe, which sounds
wonderfully forbidding. 'Thou shalt not', and
'fire and brimstone', and so forth. And
gloomy sentences like, 'The wages of sin is
death'.

SECOND DEMON

Not a very jolly catch-phrase, is it? I mean, compared with a slogan like 'Beanz Meanz Heinz'. The wages of sin is death.

FIRST DEMON

Anyhow, thanks to our work, most people find the concept of 'sin' totally meaningless. And they don't like to think about death, either. To them, the Bible is a big black book full of battles and begats. And page after page of outdated rules.

SECOND DEMON

It's not a book to read - it's a fearsome object - an instrument of justice - the thing people swear on when they're in a court of law.

FIRST DEMON

Quite so, Number Two. Or at least, that's how it's been in the past. But now the publishers have started dressing it up in colourful covers.

SECOND DEMON

Giving it a 'make-over'.

FIRST DEMON

Yuk - with bigger print.

SECOND DEMON

And nice illustrations. And user-friendly notes.

FIRST DEMON

What a revolting phrase - 'user-friendly'.

SECOND DEMON

And footnotes that actually help people understand what they're reading!

FIRST DEMON

And hints on Life Application! Horrifying. Never mind. We must redouble our efforts. We can still spread the highly effective notion that the Bible is boring.

SECOND DEMON

Boring!

FIRST DEMON

And incomprehensible.

SECOND DEMON

Incompa - em - yes, what he said...

FIRST DEMON

And most of all, irrelevant.

SECOND DEMON

But hang on. 'Irrelevant'? Will they really swallow that? When it's the story of everything that has ever been and ever will be! When it chronicles the creation of the universe, the fall of man, and of angels like ourselves into Hell, and cataclysmic events like a crucifixion and a resurrection!

FIRST DEMON

Please! Must you use obscene words like that? This may be a crisis, but there's no need for bad language.

SECOND DEMON

Sorry. Got carried away...

FIRST DEMON

So, fellow demons, what are we to do?

SECOND DEMON

(anxious)

Absolutely - what are we to do?

FIRST DEMON

You idiot! Embark on a campaign of maximum distraction, of course, from this Year of the - well, you know what it is, I don't have to say that detestable word again. And we must attack. The Bible is unreliable...

SECOND DEMON

(sings)

It ain't necessarily so - it ain't necessarily so - the things that you're liable, to read in the Bible, they ain't necessarily so.

FIRST DEMON

Have you quite finished? As I was saying, unreliable. Deliberately obscure. And of course the Bible contradicts itself.

SECOND DEMON

No, it doesn't...

FIRST DEMON

I know that, you numskull, but it's a great propaganda line. Discredits the whole thing. What else can we say - it's lost in translation...

SECOND DEMON

It has no meaning for the twenty-first century...

FIRST DEMON

And it's impossible to understand without a degree in theology.

SECOND DEMON

And in a busy multimedia world, who wants to read ancient scriptures from the dim and distant past?

FIRST DEMON

Allegedly the transcripts of musty and mouldy old scrolls, that nomads allegedly found in the Dead Sea?

SECOND DEMON

(trying a joke)

Where did the nomads find the scrolls? In nomad's land! Get it? Nomad's land! Sounds like no man's land...

FIRST DEMON

(witheringly)

Will you please be quiet? So we must always attack the veracity and authority of these writings. You know all the arguments. The so-called Epistles of Paul weren't actually written by Paul himself.

SECOND DEMON

And Genesis couldn't possibly have been written by Moses.

FIRST DEMON

Even if he dictated it...

SECOND DEMON

But how could he know that in the beginning, there was darkness over the deep? No-one could see anything then, because God hadn't yet said, Let there be light...

FIRST DEMON

The workings of your mind, such as it is, never cease to astonish me.

SECOND DEMON

(takes it as a compliment)

Why, thank you, Number one.

FIRST DEMON

Which brings me to perhaps our most powerful and persuasive argument of all. And one which is a relatively new weapon in our armoury.

SECOND DEMON

Yes, er, quite, er... which is, er?

FIRST DEMON

The God Delusion.

SECOND DEMON

Ah, yes! Thanks to our friend Richard Hawkins, or whatever his name is...

FIRST DEMON

The very entertaining idea that belief in God is a delusion.

SECOND DEMON

Er, but we believe in God...

FIRST DEMON

Of course we do, you silly demon. We know God as a terrible and awesome enemy on a daily basis. But consider how brilliant it is, to plant the idea among humans that faith is a delusion. When of course it's the exact opposite of the truth! Start with the concept that it's a harmless eccentricity, like believing in fairies. Then, develop it into Christianity being not merely a delusion but a mental illness!

SECOND DEMON

Oh, yes. And it causes war, too!

FIRST DEMON

Yes, that's a remarkably effective fiction.
Faith causes war!

SECOND DEMON

I think you're on to something here, Number
One. Yes, so the campaign we should run is
this. Read the Bible and you'll go mad!

FIRST DEMON

You'll turn into a fundamentalist and go
round starting wars. Well, fellow demons, I
hope that has given you some food for
thought on how to attack this repulsive
festival, The Year of the Bible. And now for
the next item on the agenda. The Middle
East...