

Readings Relevant to “That Hideous Strength”: *C. S. Lewis on Scientism*

Assigned

1. Lewis, C. S. “Religion and Science”. In W. Hooper (Ed.). (2000). *God in the Dock*, pp. 72-75.

Reprinted from *The Coventry Evening Telegraph* (3 January 1945), p. 4.

This presents in conversational form Lewis’ view that science does not in any sense disprove miracles and the essay also contains certain of Lewis’ responses to critics of *That Hideous Strength*.

2. Lewis, C. S. “Letter 1”. From *Screwtape Letters* (1942).

In the very first letter of *Screwtape Letters*, a senior demon offers advice about how to get humans to accept materialism—the idea that matter is all that exists (Recall Carl Sagan’s line in *Cosmos*, “The universe is all there is or ever was or ever will be.”)—by having him “dabble in science” but not delve deeply in “the real sciences.”

Other Relevant Resources

Lewis, C. S. (1966). A reply to Professor Haldane. In Walter Hooper (Ed.) *Of other worlds: Essays and stories by C. S. Lewis*. London: Geoffrey Bles, pp. 74-85.

A response to an article by J. B. S. Haldane entitled “Auld Hornie [the devil], F.R.S.[Fellow of the Royal Society]” criticizing Lewis’ space trilogy. Haldane’s article was published in *The Modern Quarterly*, Autumn, 1946.

Aeschliman, Michael D. (1998). *The restitution of man: C. S. Lewis and the case against scientism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

A brief summary of Aeschliman’s thesis in this book is in “C. S. Lewis on Mere Science” in *First Things*, October 1998.

Peters, Thomas C. The war of the worldviews: H. G. Wells and scientism versus C. S. Lewis and Christianity. In David Mills (Ed.) (1998). *The pilgrim’s guide: C. S. Lewis and the art of witness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 203-220.

As Peters’ title suggests, Lewis entered into writing science fiction as a way of opposing the scientism espoused by H. G. Wells in novels like his *War of the Worlds*.

Ward, Michael. (2013). Science and religion in the writings of C. S. Lewis. *Science & Christian Belief*, 25, 3-16.

Provides a helpful overview of references Lewis makes to science in his various writings. Excerpts from the abstract: “Although he was a literary historian, not a scientist, C. S. Lewis has much to say of interest regarding the interface between science and religion because of his scholarly study of the sixteenth century and, in particular, of the imaginative effects of the Copernican revolution... He argues that scientific statements, because they tend to be univocal and strive to be verifiable, are actually rather small statements, all things considered. He argues that there is always a mythology that follows in the wake of science and that both scientists and non-scientists should take care not to put excessive weight on particular scientific metaphors.”

Williams, Peter. (2013). The positively blunt sword of scientism. In his book *C. S. Lewis and the new atheists*. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster.

Christian philosopher Peter Williams uses Lewis’ arguments to show the weaknesses in the position of some of the new atheists like Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris.

Williams, Rowan. (2015). That Hideous Strength: A reassessment. In Roger White, Judith Wolfe & Brendan N. Wolfe (Eds.). *C. S. Lewis and his circle: Essays and memoirs from the Oxford C. S. Lewis Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91-109.

The former archbishop of Canterbury and current Master of Magdalene College (the college in which Lewis for the last decade of his life), Cambridge University presents what he sees as the strengths and weaknesses of the final novel in Lewis’ space trilogy.