



## Trump and the mis-speak

When it comes to Russia meddling in the US elections, this was what Donald Trump said in the presence of Vladimir Putin:

“My people came to me, Dan Coates came to me and they said they think it’s Russia; I have President Putin; he just said it’s not Russia. I will say this: I don’t see any reason why it would be Russia.”

When he got home to America, Trump realised something; so in a press conference, he made clear: “In a key sentence in my remarks, I said ‘would’ instead of ‘wouldn’t.’”

At least, this is his explanation after he faced a volcano of resistance from his supporters who had believed this president was going to be a strong man, until had turned out to be a patsy in the hands of Vladimir Putin.

It seems to me Trump is the kind of playground bully who pushes people around when the other people play by the rules; in the face of a bigger bully (Putin), he quivered, withdrew and bent the knee before him. Now he gets home, he realises his mistake and tries to explain it away.

But here’s the thing: I think he believes it. I think he genuinely believes that he meant to say ‘wouldn’t’, and that, despite the whole tone of his remarks then not making any sense, that that solves the entire thing. It was just down to a simple blip where he missed out a negative. He’s so used to telling lies,

that he can no longer tell when he is telling a lie or telling the truth.

What is manifested here, though, is just a more blatant than usual example of a spiritual blindness that is all too common among many of us. It’s a subtle one, but it happens when we are so spiritually corrupt, we no longer notice that we are spiritually corrupt.

It happens when we moan about society putting pressure on our children, but we then buy them extra tutoring for an 11+ exam; it happens when we parade a concern about global warming, but then continue to live in houses with little insulation or travel around the world by car and plane (fossil fuels) and think it’s doing no damage; it happens when we complain about homelessness but then walk past the Big Issue seller.

Sometimes, just sometimes, the scales fall from our eyes and we see things as they really are. Something like this has happened to the nation in the last twelve months about our use of plastic. We have come to see more clearly what we are doing, and begun to rectify our practice. But until Planet Earth II came out, most of us hadn’t actually noticed that we were doing anything wrong in the first place.

Trump’s lack of grip on the truth is remarkable but it is only something of which, at some level, we are all guilty. Essentially, we tend to believe we are more virtuous than we actually are.

*July 2018. for the Train is a short column by the Reverend Robert Stanier, the vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read “Thought for the Train” at [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).*