4   The Pastor Manul Laphroaig's First Epistle to Hacker Preachers of All Hats, in the sincerest hope that we might shut up about hats, and get back to hacking.

First, I must caution you to cut out the Sun Tsu quotes. While every good speaker indulges in quoting from good books of fiction or philosophy, verily I warn you that this can lead to unrighteousness! For when we tell beginners to study ancient philosophy instead of engineering, they will become experts in the Art of War and not in the Art of Assembly Language! They find themselves reading Wikiquote instead of Phrack, and we are all the poorer for it!

I beg you: Rather than beginning your sermons with a quote from Sun Tzu, begin them with nifty little tricks which the laity can investigate later. For example, did you know that *'strings -n 20 /.bitcoin/blk0001.dat'* dumps ASCII art portraits of both Saint Sassaman and Ben Bernanke? This art was encoded as fake public keys used in real transactions, and it can't be removed without undoing all Bitcoin transactions since it was inserted into the chain. The entire Bitcoin economy depends upon the face of the chairman of the Fed not being removed from its ledger! Isn't that clever?

Speaking of cleverness, show respect for it by citing your scripture in chapter and verse. Phrack 49:14 tells us of Aleph1's heroic struggle to explain the way the stack really works, and Uninformed 6:2 is the harrowing tale of Johnny Cache, H D Moore, and Skape exploiting the Windows kernel's Wifi drivers with beacon frames and probe responses. These papers are memories to be cherished, and they are stories worth telling. So tell them! Preach the good word of how the hell things actually work at every opportunity!

Don't just preach the gospel, give the good word on paper. Print a dozen copies of a nifty paper and give them away at the next con. Do this at Recon, and you will make fascinating friends who will show you things you never knew, no matter how well you knew them before. Do this at RSA–without trying to sell anything–and you'll be a veritable hero of enlightenment in an expo center of half-assed sales pitches and booth babes. Kill some trees to save some souls!

Don't just give papers that others have written. Give early drafts of your own papers, or better still your own documented 0day. Nothing demonstrates neighborliness like the gift of a good exploit.

Further, I must warn you to ignore this Black Hat / White Hat nonsense. As a Straw Hat, I tell you that it is not the color of the hat that counts; rather, it is the weave. We know damned well that patching a million bugs won't keep the bad guys out, just as we know that the vendor who covers up a bug caused by his own incompetence is hardly a good guy. We see righteousness in cleverness, and we study exploits because they are so damnably clever! It is a heroic act to build a debugger or a disassembler, and the knowledge of how to do so ought to be spread far and wide.

First, consider the White Hats. Black Hats are quick to judge these poor fellows as do-gooders who kill bugs. They ask, "Who would want to kill such a lovely bug, one which gives us such clever exploits?" Verily I tell you that death is a necessary part of the ecosystem. Without neighbors squashing old bugs, what incentive would there be to find more clever bugs or to write more clever exploits? Truly I say to the Black Hats, you have recouped every dollar you've lost on bugfixes by the selective pressure that makes your exploits valuable enough to sustain a market!

Next, consider the Black Hats. White Hat neighbors are still quicker to judge these poor fellows, not so much for selling their exploits as for hoarding their knowledge. A neighbor once told me, "Look at these sinners! They hide their knowledge like a candle beneath a basket, such that none can learn from it." But don't be so quick to judge! While it's true that the Black Hats publish more slowly, do not mistake this for not publishing. For does not a candle, when hidden beneath a basket, soon set the basket alight and burn ten times as bright? And is not self-replicating malware just a self-replicating whitepaper, written in machine language for the edification of those who read it? Verily I tell you, even the Black Hats have a neighborliness to them.

So please, shut about hats and get back to the code.

—M. Laphroaig

Postscript: This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!