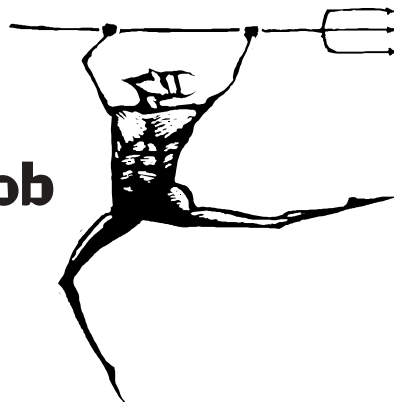




Letter to Slumgob



Dear Slumgob,

Your progress is very, very slow. Your patient has barely reached his twenty-fifth year of life and has already abandoned our beverages and magazines. What is happening to his old lackadaisical manner? What ever happened to the old friends who used to counsel him to ease up on himself lest by his excessive and pompous "morality" he be harmed? What happened to the invaluable ploys and tricks you were so excited about learning at the last Tempters' Retreat? Your latest short-term assignment was to instill in him either slothfulness or gluttony—two relatively simple vices—and for the moment he has not the faintest smell of either. Several anonymous sources in fact have informed me that you have been enjoying somewhat of a self-delegated respite from your work. Your negligence will not be overlooked.

But there is a more pressing issue at hand. I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a church servant. All your former efforts to peel him away from the church, all your zealous and foolhardy vows to "lead him irredeemably down the road of irreligion and perdition" have become wax. As you know, once a human has entered the service, the chances of pulling him out by his own will are horribly slim. There is only one solution that I see for the way things now stand: you must focus all his attention directly on himself. To himself he must become—as the latest Handbook on Spoiling Servants states—server, served, and service. That is, he must come to feel (though not consciously think) that his service, along with that of the others, revolves around his own person.

Let me illustrate. When I was still a trainee four or five eons past, I was assigned a miserable chap similar to your own who had just begun the service. My first move was to persuade him to adopt the system of Ranks. Whereas he had originally (from the outside) seen all the church servants as a single amorphous, unstratified globular body working toward a common goal, as soon as he became a servant (now on the inside), the whole service world swiftly took on the shape of your typical human monarchy—with differing Ranks of prestige and importance, as the "little people" flounder down at the bottom while the "real" service is handled all the way at the top by a senior. To be sure, he was startled at first by the earthiness of this new view of the Adversary's work; but I helped him acclimate.

So he soon naturally placed himself into the appropriate Rank, and a secret game of rivarly began playing in his head. All of his following "services" were rendered not for the Adversary nor even for the pitiful children, but only to secure his position among the Ranks. And if any other human were to accomplish some grand feat for the same service, though it advanced the Adversary's interests, yet it was



considered an unfortunate episode in his mind—it was competition *vis-a-vis*. This is our oldest and most well-tested method of dismantling the Adversary's service: some know it as "Divide and Conquer." And all this was possible thanks to the Ranks. If all he desired was to fulfill the Adversary's vulgar wishes, then there could be no ranks, no upper and lower echelons, and so another servant's feat would be considered equally a victory for himself too. You avoid this kind of thinking by focusing the patient's attention, again, on himself. Servant's should never be "teammates."

You have only one thing going in your favor at the present. He is by nature a rather irascible creature. I myself have noticed with what ease he is pulled into a vortex of fury whenever he is done a wrong turn, as by a family member. Temperamental, yes temperamental he is—yet admittedly not due to any work on your part. The significance of this is that he must preserve this wonderful trait for the next few years without feeling any incompatibility between it and his new duty as "servant." That is, he must be fully content with extolling forgiveness while in the classroom and then shooting the lip (as the fleshlings call it) at home. If his "regular life" at home begins to align itself with his "service life" at church, the situation becomes extremely critical. It is essential that the two "lives" remain separate realms. For then it is that we can not only avoid virtuous weeds growing in his soul, but we can furthermore harvest a pretty patch of hypocrisy in his life. Remember the scribes and Pharisees. Our father calls them "a greater prize than Sodom." And do keep him from encountering that man Paul's writings; he speaks too much of practicing what he preaches and that sort of thing.

I have seen first hand what happens when servants forget about themselves. It's deplorable. All they care about is the "well-being of the kids"—a base, putrid, unattached concern for the little vermin's souls (I mean unattached from ulterior motives). And even when all the other servants are applauded for their labor more than they, they rejoice still; because, apparently, the Adversary's will is done, the children are happy and whole, and that is all they are concerned with. This type is not overly common, however, and you will find some degree of self-importance in every servant you deal with. But be aware that they are each continually fighting this inner tendency. For although you are tirelessly working toward their final ruin, the Adversary Himself is at the same time always toughening their nerves and building their souls up for His kingdom.

Your concerned counselor,
Quagmire