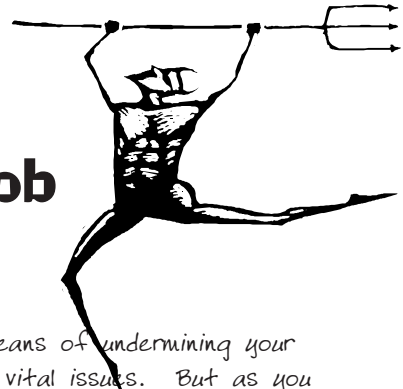




## Letter to Slumgob



Dear Slumgob,

You have asked me to counsel you as to the most effective means of undermining your patient's faith, and I try never to delay in responding on such vital issues. But as you might have learned by now, assaulting a young human's faith is generally not the prime method for acquiring his soul. The prime method will often be through his flesh—for this is the only medium through which we may level substantial attacks against him day by day. So never neglect the work on his flesh, even when attempting a new plan of attack. You might even try coupling an attack on his flesh with an attack on his faith—or his anxiety or anger or greed, whatever—and if performed correctly, you should have a rather potent mixture of vices with very promising results.

But now as to his faith. I know that some rather naive manuals recommend direct terror as a means of defeating human faith; but as I see it the evidence is against terror. If you remember your history, when the Adversary's little following began to spread from its source in Palestine centuries ago, our father was seized by a moderate fear and in the heat of the moment bade the world's authorities to threaten the following with racks and lions unless they would apostasize. But after 300 years, counter to our expectations, the body of believers grew to such an immense size that physical terror became no longer practical.

So our father thought a more workable method would be to pull them from their faith inwardly instead of outwardly. (You can begin to see our father's subtle genius in these plans.) He began sending droves of heretics to alter their doctrine in such a way that, while the appearance of religion still remained in them, their beliefs were changed just enough to ensure their safe entry into our realm. Notwithstanding such a brilliance scheme, direct heresy proved to be of only limited potential—ostensibly because it was a bit too upfront in its blasphemic character. After all, why would any Christian choose to believe a doctrine that was openly labeled “wrong”? For heresy means just that.

Our father's new strategy—horrible be his name!—does not any longer interfere with their doctrine. In fact, it does not touch theology at all. Our father's new blasphemy is a social blasphemy. That is, we are now training the humans to refuse the Adversary not because He is theologically unacceptable but because He is socially unacceptable. For instance, if your patient were to mention His name in public, he should be told, not that the Adversary is false, or that He is not the true savior, or whatnot; but he must be told that the Adversary's mere name somehow implies “intolerance” if mentioned in a public arena.



Or again, if your patient were to publicly state anything about the Adversary being the only way to heaven (though I don't see why anyone would want to be there), the response must not be that he is "wrong" or "mistaken" but that he is "narrow-minded."

You see the effect? To put it simply, our mode of attack has shifted in recent times from annihilation of their faith to mere sterilization. For it turns out that the wild, madly volatile atheist is not half so bad as the cold, indifferent, social sophisticate. It profits us no longer to make men enraged at religion—those were bygone days. Today, we have much more success in making men reject the Adversary on the basis of a refined nonjudgementalism or a cultured distaste for religious exclusivity. And this is all accomplished by quitting the attempt to tear apart their faith; we just sterilize it.

Though I speak of sterilization, the condition we are in reality looking for in your patient is what is known as "blasphemy against the Spirit." The phrase does seem rather strong to be compared with the moderate "sterilization," but data shows that the two can be related by a close mutualism. We first learned of the phrase from a certain spy in our Intelligence Department who heard the Adversary say that this is the one unpardonable sin for humans. We also learned that, contrary to popular conceptions of blasphemy, this type has been found to be not an action but a state of being—the condition of a soul where it does not, and cannot, feel itself. It is where the soul is utterly insensible to its stray condition, no matter how many red alarms and foghorns the Adversary sends it. And a soul in this state is never forgiven, simply because it does not feel its need for forgiveness, and therefore, does not ask for it. I am sure you realize how "sterilization" will help you achieve this.

So, what shall you do with your patient? The point to bear in mind is that if you can get him worrying over whether a certain belief he holds about the Adversary is tolerant or intolerant, you have got him away from worrying about whether it is true or false—the only real question that will affect the eternal destiny of his soul. The aim in all cases is to have him drop his absolutist vocabulary and to replace it with the relativist. As long as he is constantly attending to social impulses rather than to religious truths, he will be kept in the proper condition. I might even prefer seeing him believe fervently in a social fashion than in a false religious doctrine. The latter is harder to keep fixed; the former is easier to control.

But you have much work ahead of you. Your patient's present state is not at all hopeful for the condition I have been describing. He still adheres with stubborn tenacity to the idea that everything important falls into one of the two categories of Truth and Falsehood, and that anything else is trivial. Even his doubts are being quickly filed into either of the two categories. I would see to him soon, if I were you. And it might avail you to jumble his common sense a little; human common sense has never been a favorable factor in our Cause.

Your Faithful Teacher,  
Quagmire