

My dear Wormwood

Your last letter caused me great distress. It appears that you totally under-estimated the power of the enemy, in particular how he channels his power through that strange loyalty called love that permeates his family.

What caused us to get this point of crisis ? Did you tire from spreading confusion in your patient's mind while he was reading the book of the enemy ? Did you tire from tempting him with the tried and tested vices of worldliness, selfishness and lust ? Did you tire from frustrating the plans of the enemy's people to encourage and serve him ? Did you tire from reminding him of how different he is from those people from other backgrounds and races who he would be called upon to love as his brothers and sisters ?

You will remember how patiently I taught you of the importance of the last point, but it appears you are slow to remember. The world in which your patient lives has not changed much over thousands of years – in spite of political platitudes about nations and tribes living peacefully together, tribalism is firmly in place and highlighting such differences between people remains a fruitful strategy for us, especially in the family of the enemy. I need not remind you that we have scored notable victories in recent times in this regard.

To enter into the enemy's family, people must give up their hard-wired sense of security and identity with their tribe or physical family. These are powerful forces of inertia that we must continually remind our patients of, and imprint in their minds the downsides of losing this identity. We of course know that those who take the risk and enter into and participate in the family of the enemy appear, for reasons we do not understand, to be at peace and to lead lives far more fulfilling than what they had previously. But this truth is not to be communicated widely - under no circumstances are we to make it easy for our patients to assimilate into the family of the enemy, a process which even the book of the enemy refers to as a "mystery". It is certainly a mystery for you and me, and one which gravely undermines our cause.

At the risk of speaking out of order, but it is necessitated by the gravity of the situation, I can share that this was a main discussion point in the meeting of the High Council last week. The Council is extremely concerned about the resolve and growth of the family of the enemy. As we know and have discussed often in the past, many human beings attend "church" and live their lives in a manner that is of no threat to us. Our strategy with them has not changed in hundreds of years and is as brilliant as it is simple - provide them with what they want in a worldly sense from such communities, a task made easy by the endless list of greedy individuals who wish to lead and benefit personally from such "churches". It still amazes me how easily these patients are taken in by promises of worldly prosperity and good health which, praise our father below, releases us to pay attention to more problematic cases such as we are now faced with in Port Elizabeth.

If I understand your letter correctly, your patient has been attending meetings of a community of the enemy's people in Port Elizabeth and these people have consistently loved and served him. He has received help with understanding the book of the enemy and has made startling changes to his life that are directly opposed to the worldly values and norms that we have so successfully nurtured since our great victory in the Garden of Eden so long ago. Your patient appears to have deflected

what the book of our enemy calls the flaming arrows that you shot at him (it always irritates me how easily the enemy sees through our plans to destroy life and comes up with such accurate and vivid imagery ...).

But back to my point ... Your patient has rejected the values of the world and has taken a decision to enter into the family of the enemy through the "one-whose-name-we-are-forbidden-to-utter". Your patient appears to have a sound understanding of the enemy's plan to rescue him from the death that we plan for him and he now looks forward to the eternal life promised by the enemy. He also has a good understanding of the communal nature of that life and appears ready to die to his own will and desires to serve those he views as his new brothers and sisters. Of particular concern is his new found zeal to share what he has experienced with others who are currently under our control. This is a grave situation and I still do not know how you allowed it to deteriorate to this point !

But there is no time for regrets and finger pointing – let me move quickly to explain my plan to prevent a very bad situation from deteriorating further. Firstly, it is probably too late to prevent your patient from entering into the family of our enemy through the "one-whose-name-we-are-forbidden-to-utter". Only his death will prevent that from happening and as you know, bringing that about is beyond the power of even our father below.

I took the liberty to call up our latest research on the family of the enemy in Port Elizabeth. It was uncomfortable reading to say the least! This community of people have rejected our values, they genuinely care for one another and are determined to grow in their relationships with the enemy. This is of course something we will never understand – why their god would want a relationship with such pathetic creatures ! Our plan to woo and destroy is so much simpler, neater and cleaner.

I also hear that this family of our enemy in Port Elizabeth is determined to make the enemy known to others in their city. More alarming is their understanding of this concept – they have not fallen for the Platonic view (that resonates so well with most humans ...) that knowing is largely a mental and individual exercise. Knowledge of the enemy has taken residence in their hearts, and they are growing in their knowledge and faith through their relationships with one another. Their connectness with similar groupings of people in the family of the enemy all over the world also strengthens them in their resolve and makes it more difficult for us to find weaknesses in their armoury.

If we allow them to continue on this path unhindered then they may indeed fully succeed with their stated purpose to know their father and to make him known.

As I said earlier, I suspect that your patient is a lost cause to us. However, we must not give up and it is time to unleash on him the full armoury at your disposal. He will of course expect this and will no doubt be very aware of another of those irritating images of warfare and weaponry so powerfully presented in the enemy's book. What I find so frustrating is the mysterious power of that book to keep us at bay – I suspect it has something to do with the mysterious link between that book and the "one-whose-name-we-are-forbidden-to-utter".

I have taught you extensively about the various weapons at our disposal, and how you should select and use them after thoroughly researching your patient. But let me give you some pointers.

Remember the Golden Rule that the battle is fought in the mind, so make every effort to distract him from reading the book of the enemy, create situations in his workplace that will keep him from meeting with the family that he is about to enter, seed his mind with racist and other divisive thoughts, and let him question the need for ongoing confession and repentance from sin. Our collective experience is that if he does not buckle in the first 40 days under such assaults, it is best to leave him and work on another patient. We will not give up entirely on him, but there will be more fertile fields for us to harvest.

I must also share with you that this particular family of the enemy in Port Elizabeth was discussed at the High Council meeting last week. Their behaviour is becoming a great threat to our cause in that city, and is being felt throughout the spiritual world. We hear of great excitement and celebration in the realm in which their father lives together with the angels who remained loyal to him. It is having quite the opposite effect in our world.

Even more concerning is the influence that this family of the enemy is starting to have on the powers and authorities in the world – for thousands of years these authorities have been on our side, almost without exception. But the reconciliation and unity projected by this diverse family are unique in their city and expose the shortcomings of the political and religious leaders there. Our challenge in Port Elizabeth has thus been elevated to a whole new level.

I hear that strategies and plans to thwart their progress will be developed at this week's meeting of the High Council. While I cannot anticipate what those plans will be, from past experience I suspect they will focus on disrupting the unity that they project to the world and which they so fiercely protect. Their unity in diversity arises from what the enemy refers to in his book as his "wisdom". If left unchecked it will set us back a long way, standing so squarely against the more common sense worldly wisdom that we offer. The "wisdom" of the enemy is complex and multi-faceted and appears to be closely associated with obedience to him and to the "one-whose-name-we-are-forbidden-to-utter". It's really irritating how he pops up everywhere, isn't it ?

We can of course expect the enemy to protect his people, strengthening and encouraging them through his spiritual presence. Oh how I long that we too could have such power to be everywhere at the same time, but alas, this is beyond us.

So the situation is indeed very grave and here is the crunch for you. You have failed in how you have cared for your patient. He has rejected your temptations to continue to live in our kingdom, choosing instead to move from what their book terms darkness to light (we of course cannot imagine why someone would choose to live in such transparency, but that is another one of those "mysteries" we will apparently never know ...). So I am recalling you to be briefed for your next assignment with immediate effect. I do not know yet where that will take you, but you can expect it will be in a less pleasant place than the beautiful city of Port Elizabeth. Perhaps you too got caught up in the relaxed atmosphere there, but we will discuss that at your performance review.

Your uncle,

SCREWTAPE