

Straight Talk on Dungeons and Dragons

By William Schnoebelen

Should a Christian play D&D? Schnoebelen's first 'Straight Talk' on D&D (at left) raised lots of questions. Here are his well-researched answers on this controversy. Dungeons and Dragons is a tragic and tangled subject. It is essentially a feeding program for occultism and witchcraft. For Christians, the first scriptural problem is the fact that Dungeons and Dragons violates the commandment of I Ths. 5:22 "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Much of the trappings, art, figurines, and writing within D&D certainly appears evil-to say the least of it.

On top of that, the second issue is that the materials themselves, in many cases, contain authentic magical rituals. I can tell you this from my own experience. I was a witch high priest (Alexandrian tradition) during the period 1973-84. During some of that period (1976-80) I was also involved in hardcore Satanism. We studied and practiced and trained more than 175 people in the Craft. Our "covendom" was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; just a short drive away from the world headquarters of TSR, the company which makes Dungeons and Dragons in Lake Geneva, WI. In the late 1970's, a couple of the game writers actually came to my wife and I as prominent "sorcerers" in the community. They wanted to make certain the rituals were authentic. For the most part, they are.

These two guys sat in our living room and took copious notes from us on how to make sure the rituals were truly right "from the book," (this meaning that they actually came from magic grimoires or workbooks). They seemed satisfied with what they got and left us thankfully.

Back in 1986, a fellow appeared on The 700 Club who was a former employee and game writer for TSR. He testified right on the show that he got into a wrangle with the management there because he saw that the rituals were too authentic and could be dangerous. He protested to his boss and was basically told that this was the intent—to make the games as real as possible. He felt conscience-stricken (even though he was not a Christian at the time), and felt he had to resign from the company.

Now, the question becomes—if a person "innocently" works an authentic ritual that conjures up a demon, or curses someone; thinking that they are only playing a game—might not the ritual still have efficacy? I think we know the answer to that question. If you play at shooting your friend in the head with what you think is an unloaded pistol and don't know a shell is in the chamber, is your friend any less dead because you were playing?

People need to understand that God's universe runs on laws no less real in the spiritual realm than the laws of physics that propel a bullet out of a gun—and those laws are just as irreversible. God says that if you tamper with magic and the occult, you are stepping out from under His will and His protection (assuming you are a Christian). If you are not a Christian, then you are REALLY playing with fire. Some verses which clearly teach this are found in Exod. 22:18, Lev. 19:31, Lev. 20:6, Deut. 18:10, 1Sam. 15:23, 2Kgs. 21:6, Is. 8:19, Gal. 5:20, Rev. 21:8, Rev. 22:15.

Deadly Games?

To quote an old proverb, "Though the boys throw stones at the frogs in sport, the frogs die in earnest." Just because the people playing D&D think they are playing a game doesn't mean that the evil spirits (who ARE very real) will regard it as a game. If you are doing rituals or saying spells that invite them into your life, then they will come—believe me! We have prayed with enough people our age and younger who were former D&D fans, and they were totally in bondage to it.

This brings us to other unsavory aspects of the game. One pro-D&D psychologist wrote that "There is hardly a game in which the players do not indulge in murder, arson, torture, rape or highway robbery." In fact, the Dungeon Master's Guide gives the celebrated Adolph Hitler as an example of a real historical person that exhibited D&D charisma! The values contained in the game are, at the very best, "might makes right."

Additionally, much of the game contains overtones that reek of illicit sex and sexual violence. For example, the cover of one D&D supplement, called Eldrich Wizardry, shows a naked woman reclining on an obviously satanic ritual altar. This tragic scene is compelling because it is really what is done in genuine satanic groups all over the nation. It is extremely sado-masochistic because the fate of such a woman is to be either raped, gang-raped, tortured or sacrificed to a demon god. This kind of imagery can be very provocative and seductive to adolescent males or even adults.

Additionally, male characters in the game often try to seduce female characters; and references abound to things like venereal disease and satyriasis (a male condition of permanent sexual arousal). Can these sorts of things be appropriate for Christians or even for any decent person of whatever faith?

Do-It-Yourself Brainwashing

Additionally, Fantasy-Role-Playing (FRP) games like D&D do employ brainwashing techniques:

Fear generation-via spells and mental imaging about fear-filled, emotional scenes, and threats to survival of FRP characters.

Isolation-psychological removal from traditional support structures (family, church, etc.) into an imaginary world. Physical isolation due to extremely time-consuming play activities outside the family atmosphere.

Physical torture and killings-images in the mind can be almost as real as the actual experiences. Focus of the games is upon killings and torture for power, acquisition of wealth, and survival of characters.

Erosion of family values-the Dungeon Master (DM) demands an all-encompassing and total loyalty, control and allegiance.

Situational Ethics-any act can be justified in the mind of the player, therefore there are no absolutes of right or wrong; no morality other than "point" morality needed to ensure survival and advancement. There are no win-win situations and good forces seldom triumph over evil forces.

Religion-values and belief systems (see below) are restructured from traditional Judeo-Christian ethics (which most people in Western culture adhere to) to belief in multiple gods and deities. Players align themselves with specific deities they select; patron deities are strongly urged. These are not fantasy deities, but are drawn from genuine ancient religions and beliefs! Only occult gods are included. In addition, defilement is urged in many ways, such as excrement or urinating to "defile a font."

Loss of Self-control-authority over self is surrendered to the DM. Depending on the personality and ego-strength of the player, this loss can be near absolute.

Degradation-pain and torture are heavily involved in sadistic, sexual situations that graphically appeal to visceral impulses. Much of the material (as mentioned above) is well into pornographic areas and stresses the defilement of innocence.

A Clash of World Views!

This is another, broader issue here. The values of the game are not only pro-violence and death; they also entrain the player in an entirely different way of looking at life: what is called by anthropologists the "Magical World View(MWV)." This MWV is far outside the cultural norms of most societies, and certainly outside the realms of Biblical values. Let me explain:

The MWV teaches that there exists in the universe a neutral force, like gravity, which is magic. In this worldview, there is no sovereign God; but rather the universe is run like a gigantic piece of machinery. Magic's application is the understanding of how to manipulate the universe to get what you want. The analogy would be of putting a right coin in the slot of a vending machine and pushing the button. You automatically get your candy-assuming you used the right coin and pushed the right button. The MWV is like that. If you know the right technology (spell, ritual, incantation, etc.) the universe must respond-just like the light must go on if you flip the switch. It is automatic, and scientifically repeatable.

The Judeo-Christian Worldview (i.e. from the Bible, and held by most cultures in the Western world to some degree) teaches, on the contrary, that the universe is in control of a sovereign Person, God. To get "results," He must be asked. Thus, it is more like a child going up to a parent and asking for candy, than getting it from a vending machine. The parent may say "yes," "no," or "Wait till later." Similarly, in the Bible, there is no way to automatically manipulate God to get what you want, because He is an omnipotent Person. Additionally, God says that magic is deep and abominable sin (see above).

Now obviously, these two worldviews cannot exist in the same moral universe. Either one is true and the other false or vice-versa. Thus, one cannot be a Christian and believe in the MWV and not be some sort of hypocrite or deceived person. The reason is that in the "universe" of Dungeons and Dragons magic is neutral, and can be used by "good guys" or by "bad guys." It is like "The Force" in the Star Wars movies. This magical morality pervades D&D, and it is utterly in opposition to the Word of God and even common sense.

Now the question becomes, can a person play the game without subscribing to the worldview? It is possible, but considering the high level of emotional and intellectual commitment that the game requires, is that really realistic? D&D is not like chess or Monopoly. It is a game that engages the whole person at deep levels, and it can last months if well-played. How can a person, Christian or not, immerse themselves in a reality view so deeply and not have it impact the rest of their lives? This is difficult to imagine, especially considering the highly demonic and magical content of much of the game. As the saying goes, "if you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas."

As the apostle Paul warns us, (1Cor. 15:33) "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." If games and manuals which extol black magic, rape, sado-masochism, murder and violence are not "evil communications," then I do not know the meaning of the terms!

A D&D "Hall of Shame"

This provides us with a spiritual explanation of why the following tragic litany of evil keeps growing around players of Dungeons and Dragons. The psychological explanation buttresses this as well, for we now understand the D&D can readily be a form of mind-control which also uses real occult techniques to foster possession by evil spirits.

The "Freeway Killer," Vernon Butts, who committed suicide in his cell in 1987 while being held as a suspect in a string of murders was an avid D&D player.

D&D player (14 years old) commits suicide by hanging, 1979, name withheld by parents' request.

D&D player (17 years old) Michael Dempsey, Lynnwood, WA. suicide by gunshot wound to the head, 5/19/81. Witnesses saw him trying to summon up D&D demons just minutes before his death.

D&D player (? years old) Steve Loyacano, Castle Rock, CO., suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning, 10/14/82. Police report satanic writings and a suicide note linked the death to D&D.

D&D player (21 years old) Timothy Grice, Lafayette, CO., suicide by shotgun blast, 1/17/83. Detective reports noted, "D&D became a reality. He thought he was not constrained to this life, but could leave [it] and return because of the game."

D&D player (18 years old) Harold T. Collins, Marion, OH., suicide by hanging, 4/29/83. Collins was noted to be "possessed" by D&D as if he were living the game.

D&D player (16 years old) Daniel Erwin, Lafayette, CO., murder by brother's shotgun blast to head, 11/2/84 (right after Halloween). Death was apparently the result of a death pact as part of the game.

D&D player (12 years old) Steve Erwin (see above) suicide by gunshot, 11/2/84. Detective report: "No doubt D&D cost them their lives."

D&D player (no age given) Joseph Malin, Salt Lake City, UT., pled guilty to first degree murder 3/2/88 and was sentenced to life in prison. He killed a 13 years old girl while acting out the fantasy-role game. The girl had been raped, her throat cut, and she had been stabbed twice in the chest. Police said his "violent urges were fed by 'extreme involvement in the fantasy role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons.'"

D&D player (14 years old) Sean Sellers was convicted of killing his parents and a convenience store clerk in Greeley, Oklahoma (1/11/87). He is the youngest inmate of death row in the country as of this writing (22 now). His involvement in hard-core Satanism began with D&D, according to his own testimony. Praise the Lord, he is now a Born Again Christian!

D&D player (14 years old) Tom Sullivan, Jr. got into Satanism and ended up stabbing his mother to death, arranging a ritual circle (from D&D) in the middle of the living room floor and lit a fire in its midst. Fortunately, his dad and little brother were awakened by a smoke detector; but by then, Tom, Jr. had slashed his wrists and throat with his Boy Scout knife and died in the snow in a neighbor's yard.(1/19/88, Amarillo, TX.)

Of course, just like everything else, some people (young or otherwise) will say, "Those people were just weird or losers to begin with. I'm too together to fall into stuff like that. It's just a game!" Yeah, and an H-bomb is just a firecracker! Like the people who think they can play around with crack or pre-marital sex and not get burned by death, AIDS or pregnancy, the person who thinks they can mess with D&D without getting burnt is whistling in the dark. The evidence is definitely stacked against them! The game is too carefully crafted a trap for many people to elude.

Conclusions

Quoting Dr. Thomas Radecki MD, a psychiatrist at the University of Illinois School of Medicine: "The evidence in these cases is really quite impressive. There is no doubt in my mind that the game Dungeons and Dragons is causing young men to kill themselves and others. The game is one of non-stop combat and violence. It is clear to me that this game is desensitizing players to violence and also causing an increased tendency to violent behavior."

Thus, in my mind, and in the minds of most who have come out of this background as I have (occultism and Satanism); there is no doubt that Dungeons and Dragons and its imitators are

right out of the pit of hell. No Christian or sane, decent individual of whatever faith really should have anything to do with them.

Endnotes

Peter Leithart & George Grant, *A Christian Response to Dungeons and Dragons*, Dominion Press, Ft. Worth, TX. 1987, p.5.

Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, Avon Books, 1969, p.135.

Pat Pulling, quoted in *File 18 Newsletter*, 10/24/86, from CCIN, 222 N. Latah St. Boise, ID. 83706-2657, 208-336-9950.

Leithart & Grant, *op. cit.*, p.5.

Statistics 2-8 courtesy of Yvonne Peterson, EXODUS S.A. Occult Awareness Program, P.O. Box 700293, San Antonio, TX. 78270; 1987, p.9.

Salt Lake Tribune, 3/2/88.

File 18 Newsletter, *op. cit.*, 2/22/87. Since this article was originally written in 1989, it is now my belief that Sean Sellers was executed for his crimes and is now (thanks to the mercy of Jesus and Sean's faith in Him) in heaven.

cf. Amarillo Globe Times, 1/19/92

Peterson, *ibid.*