
A MEDIA SPOTLIGHT SPECIAL REPORT
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
A LOOK AT FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

by Albert James Dager

Although fantasy wargames have been around for some time, it is only recently that they have become a fad, particularly among university and college students.

One such game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, is perhaps the most popular. It received considerable notoriety when the news media reported that it may have been a link in a series of mysterious circumstances surrounding the disappearance and subsequent suicide of University of Michigan student, James Dallas Egbert. It was suspected that 17-year-old Egbert had fallen victim to traps encountered during a real-life role-playing activity associated with that game in August of 1979. The bizarre circumstances surrounding his disappearance are shrouded in mystery as a result of his subsequent suicide a year later in August, 1980.

Equally bizarre are the circumstances related to *Dungeons & Dragons* and its part in formulating the idea for a series of mass murders in the "Freeway Killer" episodes in Southern California. According to the testimony of one of the suspects in those killings, the game was a motivating factor in prompting the actions of him and his accomplices.

There are several variations to *Dungeons & Dragons* as well as innumerable other games which center on fantasy and role-playing. Many electronic versions exist which, for a nominal price, allow participants to match their skills and wits against unforeseen circumstances in their quest for imaginary treasures secreted among imaginary labyrinthine obstacles.

It has come to my attention through inquiries from different locales, that this particular game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, has become, or is becoming, a fad on Christian college campuses. One dean of a prominent Christian university in the South called and, not being familiar with the game, asked our opinion since it was absorbing a good part of some students' time and was apparently gaining in popularity.

I must confess that, at the time, I knew little about the game beyond the fact that it involved a role-playing format centering on the imagined use of magic and blood-letting. Even with that limited information, however, it was easy to discern that such fantasy could harbor spiritual danger for the participant. The

dean with whom I spoke was astute enough to recognize such a possibility and he is to be commended for his concern in wanting to do what he could to protect those students under his authority and care. He was wise enough to seek as much information as possible, in order to be sure that he wasn't himself chasing phantoms, before confronting his student body with the issue. (This is a lesson we could all learn in our dealing with spiritual enemies.)

I have since, with prayer, done some research into *Dungeons & Dragons* and upon that research I have drawn some conclusions which, no doubt, will bring accusations that I'm just trying to find more areas in which to destroy people's fun. But I would like to reiterate, as I have before, that all things which come under scrutiny by Media Spotlight are examined in the light of God's Word and His truth. Only His light is pure enough and bright enough to expose the hidden flaws in seemingly innocent subjects. To do that it is necessary for us to put our own preferences aside and take on the mind of Christ, looking at everything as He would see it and not as we would like to see it.

As one who was at one time a "chessnut," my personal inclination would be to find a fascination with games that stimulate the imagination and offer challenges to logic and to problem-solving abilities. Yet, if one were to examine my heart and, indeed, every human heart, it would be found that the greatest satisfaction to be gained in winning out over great odds would be in the gratification of self: ego.

In fact, all competition has built into it the danger of falling into an ego trip (or trap). This is not to say that all competition as such is evil. In a free society, competition is necessary to ensure survival. Competition, though, should be engaged in with an attitude of humility, trusting God for the outcome, whatever it might be.

Some endeavors offer a greater temptation for ego to manifest itself in us, however. The next thing to actual defeat of others and self-exaltation as rulers over the vanquished is the voluntary, imaginary role-playing that is offered by such games as *Dungeons & Dragons*.

One might argue, and reasonably so, that *Dungeons & Dragons* offers no greater

an opportunity than sports such as football, basketball, or even golf to feed the ego. Yet there is a unique self-satisfaction that comes with superior mental achievement that does not come with physical achievement. This is because, above all, man is a spiritual being and, in everything, he seeks to satisfy his soul — even when engaged in what seem to be purely physical endeavors.

It is the opportunity for self-satisfaction that causes fantasy role-playing games to be so popular on campuses where it is meant for the intellect to be stimulated.

But why focus our examination on *Dungeons & Dragons*? Because, beyond the self-aggrandizement offered by other types of games (even chess), this game offers the player the added opportunity to cast himself in roles associated with demon powers. In his imagination he assumes the role of a sorcerer or some super-human person who possesses extraordinary abilities. It is through the casting of spells and enchantments that he breaks the powers of others seeking to destroy him on his quest for treasure.

The game offers an endless variety of situations as well as abilities to overcome, through magic, the adverse circumstances presented. The players create their own characters based upon guidelines that categorize them as "good" or "evil." There are six basic abilities for each character: strength, intelligence, wisdom, constitution, dexterity, and charisma. The game's creators suggest that characters be classified according to their strongest traits, determined by the rolling of dice.

Should a character have an exceptionally high rating in intelligence he would best be suited as a "Magic-user." He may also learn additional languages (some of them not human) which may enable him to overcome certain obstacles to his progress.

According to the instruction manual, "Wisdom is the prime requisite for clerics. Clerics can perform miraculous spells even though they do not have special intelligence, and second level (experienced) clerics can heal wounds."

It should be noted that, "Clerics are humans who have dedicated themselves to one or more of the gods. Depending on the god, the cleric may be good or evil, lawful or chaotic. Clerics have their own special spells. . . . Spells for evil clerics differ slightly from those of good clerics."

In addition to the above occultic roles available are those of "Fighting Men" including "Elves," "Dwarves," and "Half-lings" (half-human and half-something else). Then there are "Thieves" described as "humans with special abilities to strike a deadly blow from behind, climb sheer surfaces, hide in shadows, filch items and

pick pockets, move with stealth, listen for noises behind closed doors, pick locks, and remove small traps such as poisoned needles [all "godly" pursuits, eh?]. . . . Thieves are not truly good and are usually referred to as neutral or evil, so that other members of an expedition should never completely trust them."

The underlying motivation of greed in these quests for "treasure" is little to reckon with when considering the enjoyment offered in exercising satanic powers that, in reality, do exist. God's Word is emphatic that we are not to touch such unclean things (II Cor. 6:17). He tells us in Deuteronomy 18:10-13: "*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.*"

He also says, "*Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing*" (Deut. 7:26).

If such practices are spoken of by God as being an abomination to Him, how is it that Christians can desire them as entertainment and allow them to enter their minds which are to be kept holy since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?

Granted, it is "make-believe." But is it really, when the mind is in a state of concentration? Didn't our Lord say that a man is as he thinks? Didn't He also tell us that it is out of the abundance of the heart that we speak? If our speech therefore betrays our hearts, do not our actions also?

While our minds and actions are centered on the "imaginary" use of satanic powers we are at the very least tolerating them if not actually accepting them. How much further before we embrace them? -- or they embrace us?

The dean of the university I mentioned earlier read to me a letter he received from the mother of a student who was concerned about his own spiritual condition. It was after having become enamored by *Dungeons & Dragons* that he wrote to her asking for prayer. She related to the dean a portion of her son's letter. In it he told of an oppression of evil he had begun to feel. He sensed a malignant presence in his room and was frightened by the hold on his mind that Satan had achieved.

I'll concede that, in all probability,

no court of law would hold the producers of such games responsible should some poor soul commit suicide or become a mental case after having become wrapped up in satanic fantasies. But our recourse is not to the courts for protection. It is to the Word of God.

Each character is given an allotted amount of gold, determined by rolling the dice. With this gold he outfits himself by purchasing certain items from a list of those necessary to embark on his quest: "Dagger," -- "Hand Axe," -- "Mace," -- "Sword," -- "Battle Axe," and assorted other weapons. In addition to weaponry he can purchase armor, a horse, a cart, or other paraphernalia for defense and protection. Among the items available for casting spells are "Wolfsbane" -- "Holy Water" -- "Garlic," etc., all part of the esoteric or hidden mystery religious system that characterized the ancient druids and the clerics of the middle ages.

It is not without knowledge that *Dungeons & Dragons* was devised. But it is the knowledge of an evil that mingled the Babylonian mystery religions with a luke-warm "Christianity."

To take the space to relate all the rules and regulations for *Dungeons & Dragons* would require a book the size of its 48--page manual. Suffice it to say that such role-playing opens one's mind up to learn of secrets best left buried in the ancient past. For it is not without purpose that Satan has instituted an outpouring of his own supernatural manifestations in attempting to keep pace with the Holy Spirit's moving in these last days.

It is through the mind that Satan works to weaken the believer. His first approach is to establish toleration for evil by making it appear harmless or the problem of some other poor afflicted soul.

After toleration comes acceptance -- acquiescence to its existence and a lack of desire to do anything about it. Eventually the conscience has become so dulled that, not seeing any physical manifestation of adverse consequences, the Christian finally comes to embrace it for himself.

In spite of God's Word that admonishes us to take on the armor that He has provided (Eph.6:13-18), many Christians choose to enter naked into Satan's camp and dally in the delights of the senses.

Would any right-thinking Christian accept as entertainment a role-playing game centered on sexual fantasy? Such a

game might put the player in a position of seeking imaginary sexual conquests. Most assuredly, every Christian would say that to engage in such a game would be wrong. Why then cannot all Christians recognize the evil inherent in games revolving around occultic role-playing? Is illicit sex a greater sin than satanic activity?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is God's intention to warn you that there are dangers in seemingly innocent pleasures. While we are patting ourselves on the back for using our intelligence to overcome imaginary traps, the enemy is laughing at our complacency and inability to recognize the genuine traps he has set up in the dungeons of our minds.

And that is precisely why it is so important to balance good education with God's Word: in order that the student not become puffed-up and, as Adam, seek to rise above the position that God has ordained for man, and try to become like God in knowledge. It is therefore no wonder that Satan is attempting, through the humanism of today, to eradicate all ideas and thoughts of God from our educational institutions. With that in mind, it is easy to understand the government's propagation of public education while seeking to weaken the position of private education -- especially Christian private education. It is vital that Christian students in particular guard themselves against anything that might break the sanctity of their Christian school and usher in wholesale spiritual disease.

Do we seek wisdom? Let us "ask of God, that giveth liberally," and it shall be given to us. Let us then use the wisdom that God gives us to fight the good fight and lay hold of the real treasure of godliness with contentment. In so doing we can enter into the quest He has set before us and, rather than relying on our own abilities, we can prove God's greatness by warring against Satan with those things the world counts as foolishness: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." For, "against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

If you are caught up in anything akin to fantasy role-playing games, I beg you to burn the abominable thing. Give your mind to Christ. Let His mind be in you.

Games such as these are evil traps. And who can better lay an evil trap than Satan? -- by *Albert James Dager*

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