

The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 33, Number 1

January • February • March 2013

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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Religion Analysis Service

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ENCOURAGED AND CHALLENGED

Our RAS staff and board are encouraged as we begin 2013. The Lord has seen fit to bless us with new energy and zeal for the work that RAS has pursued since 1946. At the same time we are aware of the many challenges that we face:

1. An increased hostility to Christian values. The enemy of our souls and society at large is seeking to discourage, discredit and destroy us.
2. Ignorance of the true biblical message pervades our educational institutions. The transcendence and power of biblical truth has been replaced by vacuous relativism, secularism, humanism, and atheism.
3. The Blessed Hope of Scripture (the Second Coming of Christ) seems to be like a foreign myth and replaced by the Holy Grail of opulence and hedonism. The skeptic asks: “Where is the promise of His coming?” Jesus replies: “But as the days of Noah were ...so also will be the coming of the Son of Man” ... and again: “Behold, I come quickly”.

Therefore we should be: “Steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”; we continue to serve under “Jehovah-Nissi” (the Lord our Banner).

Thank you for your prayers and gifts toward this ministry!

RAS Team

DEAR READER

Unbelievable! It is simply unbelievable to witness how spiritual and moral values are eroding in America today. According to reports, the present prevailing view and popular American sentiment is tolerance of same-sex marriage. It is incomprehensible and mind-boggling that sodomy has suddenly been accepted by unwitting politicians, judges, social theorists, and even by some theologians. Just a decade ago, this was inconceivable, and since the earliest days of man's history (see Lot and Abraham) was judged as abominable in the sight of Almighty God.

In this connection, the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1. Kings 17 and 18) comes to mind. Idolatry and sex orgies were the order of the day with Baal worshippers. Evil King Ahab and wicked Jezebel fully sanctioned the worship of Baal. God withheld rain from Israel because of these activities for several years. Finally there ensued the great contest on Mt. Carmel between the 450 prophets of Baal and Elijah. We review the scene – the 450 prophets of Baal prayed to Baal for several hours in vain, even cutting and bruising themselves in the process. But “there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention”. Then it was Elijah's turn. In this regard, I remember the oratorio “Elijah” that was sung in the city church of Darmstadt, Germany some 25 years ago. The powerful baritone voice of the lead singer bellowed: “Where is the God of Elijah? Where is the God of Israel?” God answered the prayer of Elijah – “then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench” (1. Kings 18:18).

May the Lord give us courage to stand fast for His truth and, as modern pundits put it, to “push back” against this moral decay. Let us hold fast to biblical, time-tested, God-ordained, and social norms, for our children's sake, for society's sake, for our health's sake. ... And, above all, for our Creator's sake.

Laurence J. Sutherland

WITH THIS ISSUE

RAS President Steve Lagoon concludes his compact and trenchant study on Seventh-day-Adventism with Part 2 as our first article. The material in both parts (Part 1 was in our 2012 October – December issue) should be sufficient to show the total inadequacy of Ellen White's Sabbath theology. William Miller, one of the forerunners of Adventism, made the mistake of date-setting for the return of Christ, but Ellen White and Joseph Bates succumbed to the far worse error of legalism. The SdA people struggle to be recognized as evangelical. It is hoped that Lagoon's work will be helpful in some way for Christians who battle with legalism or works-righteousness.

Our second contribution is a book review of another book analysis. Woody Bridell, a lay youth leader in a local Minneapolis Baptist Church, lends us his thoughts with those of Dr. Martin Bobgan and his wife Deidre, on the popular views of Focus on the Family's director, Dr. James Dobson. Bridell and the Bobgans challenge Dobson's assertions relating to "self-esteem". This is kind of a blow-by-blow account with jabs and haymakers, but always fair and factual. The error of self-esteem appears to be a generational problem that has given birth to sociological and psychological maladies such as narcissism.

The blog from Gary Susman ought to warn us from stepping into the devil's territory without spiritual armament or insight. Horror films, demon possession, séances, etc. are the devil's playground. This blog delineates the growth of this type of film industry and how the devil exacts his tribute from those who dare to go too far into the dark world of sinister spirits. The Christian is comforted by the knowledge that "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1. John 4:4).

Do you like geography? It's hard to understand the Old Testament prophets without some knowledge of Bible geography. Please take the test. If you make 70% or more, you deserve a free gift. Please let us know.

Laurence J. Sutherland

THE SABBATH AND THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS PART 2

by STEVE LAGOON

The Apostles and Sabbath Keeping

We have examined the strong New Testament evidence that shows that the Sabbath is no longer binding upon Christians, noting that it was a command for Jews under the Old Covenant that has now been set aside. Seventh day Adventists ignore this evidence and cling to other arguments that they suppose prove their case for Sabbath observance.

We saw earlier how Seventh-day Adventists point to the fact that Jesus kept the Sabbath and supposed that this proved Christians should as well. Yet, the argument failed in face of the facts that Jesus lived as a Jew under the Law, and not only kept the Sabbath, but all aspects of the Mosaic Law. In other words, if Christians are bound to follow Christ's example concerning the Law, then Christians must observe, not just the Sabbath, but all aspects of the Law as He did.

Yet, we know that this cannot be the case. Jesus Himself taught that the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law (which He observed) were set aside under the New Covenant (Mark 7:19). The Jerusalem Council decided forthrightly that Christians are not bound by the Mosaic Law (in general) or by the command of circumcision in particular (Acts 15:1-21). And even the Seventh-day Adventists recognize that Christians are not bound by the feasts and festivals of the Law, despite the fact that Jesus Himself did observe them (as a Jew living under the Law).

But what about the fact that the apostles during the early church age observed the Sabbath; doesn't that prove that the Christians should also observe the Sabbath? For instance, does not the New Testament show that the apostle Paul observed the Sabbath in synagogues in Acts 13:42-44; 17:2; 18:1-4? Seventh-day Adventists argue that: "As Christ's participation in Sabbath services indicated His acceptance of the seventh day as the special day for worship, so did Paul's."³⁷

Paul, the Synagogue, and the Sabbath

Before examining the passages concerning Paul's activities on the Sabbath, it is vital that we examine a passage in which Paul

³⁷ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines, Washington D.C., The Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988) 254.*

explicitly explains his teaching concerning of the Christians relationship to the Mosaic Law:

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Richard W. De Haan comments on this passage:

But let me remind you that his preaching in the synagogues on the Sabbath day was to groups of non-believers, not to assemblies of Christians. You see, he went into the synagogues on the Sabbath day to preach the Gospel to them. He knew they would be there on Saturday. He gathered with believers, however, for fellowship on Sundays . . . Paul clearly states his purpose. To win his kinsmen, the Jews, he placed himself again under the law that he might reach them for Christ. Remember, then, whenever the apostle went into the synagogues on the Sabbath day, he did not go there for the breaking of bread or for fellowship around the person of Christ. He went that he might witness to his people Israel.³⁸

It cannot be emphasized enough how important this passage is to understanding Paul's actions concerning the Sabbath. It provides the explanation of the passages in Acts that show Paul's Sabbath day activities. Indeed, as we examine these passages, several things will be clear. For instance, none of them states that Paul was observing the Sabbath. As we have seen, his reason for attending these synagogue Sabbath services was for evangelistic purposes, and not out of compliance to the Sabbath commandment of the Mosaic Law.

The first of these passages records Paul ministry in Pisidian Antioch:

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

³⁸ Richard W. De Haan, *Why Christians Worship on Sunday, Grand Rapids MI (Radio Bible Class, 1974) 19-20.*

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:42-46).

In context, the “things” Paul was speaking to them about was the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38-39). Seventh-day Adventists will sometimes argue that this passage shows that Paul did meet for a Christian service on the Sabbath apart from the synagogue. In a sense, this appears to be correct. Verse 45 says that the Jews who “saw the crowds . . . were filled with jealousy.” This would suggest that the meeting Paul was leading was not at the synagogue.

Does this further suggest that Paul regularly observed Christian worship services on the Sabbath? Not at all. First, it should be noted that the time and place for the meeting was chosen by the people (Acts 13:42). These people were the very ones who had been at the synagogue in the first place. In Acts 13:16 (also Acts 13:26), Paul identifies these people as “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God.”

Since these ‘people’ were already in the practice of Sabbath services, it is perfectly understandable why they requested Paul to meet with them on the next Sabbath. The Jews’ jealousy toward Paul shows that antagonism and opposition from the leaders of the synagogue had forced Paul out of the synagogue and the need to preach his message in an alternative location, perhaps even in the open air.

Finally, the meeting is clearly an evangelistic meeting with the hopes of bringing these people to faith in Christ rather than a regular Christian worship service. All this is in accord with Paul’s regular habit of bringing the gospel to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; Romans 1:16).

We see essentially the same thing in the other passages (Acts 17:1-4; 18:1-4) regarding Paul’s activities on the Sabbath. He was involved in evangelistic efforts to bring the gospel to the Jews first (and God-fearing Gentiles) which naturally occurred in the synagogues on the Sabbath. When the Jews finally rejected the gospel, Paul then brought the gospel to the Gentiles outside of the synagogue.

Paul’s evangelistic preaching in the synagogues was certainly not a part of Christian worship services including communion and water

baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The distinctly Christian worship services must have been held at another time, and the record points to Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2, Acts 20:7-12).

Also, as with Jesus, if the fact that the apostle Paul attended the synagogue on the Sabbath means that Christians must also keep the Sabbath, then it follows that since Paul also observed other aspects of the Mosaic Law, Christians should as well.

For instance, the biblical record indicates that Paul worshipped at the temple (Acts 24:11-12), observed other ceremonial aspects of the law such as purification rites (Acts 21:26) and vows (Acts 18:18), and observed Jewish festivals (Acts 20:16).

Sabbath Moral or Ceremonial?

At this point, Seventh-day Adventists are likely to excuse their lack of observing other aspects of the law that both Jesus and Paul kept by appealing to the difference between moral and ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic Law. They suggest that Christians are only bound by the moral aspects of the Law, which they believe include the Sabbath commandment. We need only to remind them that Jesus did not allow for such fine distinctions (even though scholars dispute whether the Sabbath was moral or ceremonial) since he said “Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished”(Matthew 5:18). The Law is either abrogated in whole or it is in force in whole.

James made the same point, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all” (James 2:10). Seventh-day Adventists may keep the Law concerning the Sabbath, but because they do not observe the rest of the Law, they are guilty of breaking it all. There are no fine distinctions made between ceremonial and moral aspects of the Law. How much better is it for Christians to walk by the grace of the New Covenant than by trying to observe the laws of the Old Covenant!

Other Arguments Made in Support of Christian Sabbath Keeping

Seventh-day Adventists will sometimes argue that there are not any passages commanding Sunday worship for Christians. But this works both ways since there is no command in the New Testament for Christians to observe the Sabbath either.

Again, Seventh-day Adventist might argue that there are hundreds of verses in the Bible that command Sabbath keeping and none

commanding Sunday worship.

This statement, while technically true, is misleading nonetheless. This is because, without exception, every verse in the Bible that commands the observance of the Sabbath is in the Old Testament, as would be expected since it was a command for Jews under the Mosaic Law.

Seventh-day Adventist also argue: “*Except for some explicit statement of Scripture in evidence to the contrary, to affirm the one [Sunday] and deny the other [Sabbath] is clearly inconsistent with the major premises we have surveyed, especially in view of the Protestant position on the supreme authority of Scripture.*”³⁹ However, this argument works both ways since there is not one single text in the entire Bible that says Christians should observe the Sabbath.

Seventh-day Adventists argue “*Nowhere does the Bible command us to observe any weekly day other than the Sabbath. It declares no other weekly day blessed or holy. Nor does the New Testament indicate that God has changed the Sabbath to any other day of the week.*”⁴⁰

Canright responds that “*During all the ministry of Christ he never once stated directly that any of the Jewish rites would be abolished, not even sacrifices, the temple service, circumcision, the feast days, or anything. Yet he well knew that all these were soon to end, and designed that they should.*”⁴¹ Canright adds: “*Not one single case can be found where Paul kept the Sabbath in a Christian assembly, nor is it ever mentioned in any way in connection with Christian meetings.*”⁴²

Nine of the Ten Commandments Repeated for Christians

John Rice makes the point that: “*In the entire New Testament there is not a single command to observe the Sabbath. Every other one of the Ten Commandments is repeated in the New Testament (some many times), with the exception of the Sabbath.*”⁴³

To give the full force of this, Canright compares the number of times each of the Ten Commandments is reapplied for Christians in the

39 *Seventh-day Adventist Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-Day Adventist Belief*, Washington D.C. (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957) 162.

40 *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, Washington D.C., The Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988) 254.

41 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith*, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 275.

42 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith*, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 281.

43 *John R. Rice, Sunday or Sabbath: Which should Christians Observe?*, Murfreesboro TN (Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1943) 4.

New Testament in comparison to the Sabbath:

The duty of men to worship the Lord God only as taught in the first commandment is found no less than fifty times in the New Testament. Idolatry, which is the second commandment, is condemned twelve times. Profanity, the third commandment, is plainly condemned four times. Honor thy father and mother, which is the fifth commandment, is taught six times at least. Murder, which is the sixth prohibition, is found condemned six times. Adultery, the seventh, is condemned twelve times. Theft, the eighth, six times, false witness, the ninth, four times. Covetousness, the tenth, nine times . . . The fourth commandment is not repeated in the New Testament, that no Christian was ever commanded to observe it . . . The duty to keep the seventh day is not once mentioned in the whole New Testament. There is not one single command from either Christ or any of his apostles to keep the day.⁴⁴

But some Adventists may object saying that the Sabbath is actually in the New Testament 59 times. Indeed, the word Sabbath is used on many occasions in the New Testament, but never as a command for Christians to observe, but instead as noting the Jewish day of worship.

If one wants to argue that the fact that the Sabbath is mentioned 59 times in the New Testament suggests that Christians must observe it, Canright points out that circumcision is mentioned 55 times in the New Testament, sacrifices 38 times, and the Passover 28 times.⁴⁵ Does this mean that Christians must observe these aspects of the Mosaic Law?

In response to the point that there are no commands for Christians to observe the Sabbath in the New Testament, Seventh-day Adventists will sometimes argue that Sabbath-keeping was simply assumed by the early church, and didn't have to be commanded.

This may well be the case for the Jewish-Christians of Palestine who appear to have continued Sabbath observance for a time. Yet they also held Christian worship services on Sunday. Also, Canright asks: "Besides, the great body of the Christian converts in the latter years of the gospel, were Gentiles, who had never kept the seventh day at all. Why should they not be instructed how to keep it?"⁴⁶

This is an important point that Canright makes. We can understand

44 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 266-267.*

45 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 273.*

46 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 267.*

why Jewish Christians might continue to observe the Sabbath without a command, since they observed it as Jews before coming to Christ. But wouldn't there need to be a command concerning Sabbath observance for the throng of Gentile converts to enter with the expansion of the church throughout the world?

Colossians 2:16 and Disputable Matters

The apostle Paul wisely addressed the debates and disputes that were occurring within the church during his ministry, in an attempt to protect the unity of the body. Such disputes were natural in a church that contained so many Jews who were trying to understand how to reconcile the Old Testament Scriptures with the realities of the New Covenant in Christ.

Tensions also arose as Gentiles began to fill the ranks of the Church. How were Jewish Christians to relate to Gentile Christians? One source of dispute concerned the observances of holy days. In Romans, Paul addressed the issue head on: "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day"(Colossians 2:16).

Seventh-day Adventists argue that this verse does not refer to weekly Sabbaths, but only to special annual Sabbaths: "*In Colossians 2:16, 17, reference is made to the annual Sabbaths connected with the three annual feasts observed by Israel before the first coming of Christ.*"⁴⁷

Further, because Seventh-day Adventists believe these special annual Sabbaths were part of the ceremonial aspect of the Law, they were abrogated at the cross, whereas, the Sabbath, because it was part of the moral aspect of the law was still in effect: "*These typical annual Sabbaths ended forever at the cross, when all the types met their complete antitype. But this in no way affected the seventh-day Sabbath, which was never a type, and consequently was not abrogated.*"⁴⁸

But the Seventh-day Adventists argument that Colossians 2:16 is not referring to the weekly Sabbath is simply wrong. Canright astutely observed: "The only word ever used in the Bible for the weekly Sabbath is the very one Paul did use . . . So if he had meant to name the Sabbath, what else could he have said than just what he did say, the Sabbath days?"⁴⁹

47 *Bible Readings for the Home, Washington D.C. (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958) 429.*

48 *Seventh-day Adventist Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-Day Adventist Belief, Washington D.C. (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957) 16.*

49 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 285.*

Gladson's comments are to the point:

Paul enjoins the Colossian believers to 'let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath' (Col. 2:16 RSV). He rebukes the Galatians for 'observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years' (Gal 4:10). The Colossian and Galatian passages employ a technical formula used frequently in the Old Testament and apocryphal books to designate the sum total of all the Jewish sacred days. The full formula, which invariably includes the weekly seventh-day Sabbath . . . Adventists have claimed . . . the 'Sabbaths' in Col. 2:16 are actually the annual, liturgical Sabbaths found in Leviticus 23. That interpretation must be decisively rejected. By incorporating the periods year, month, and week, the list deliberately encompasses all Jewish calendrical observances. That is, wherever this formula occurs, it includes the seventh-day Sabbath, Saturday. There is no way around this conclusion. This one passage unfortunately threatens the entire claim of the Adventists.⁵⁰

Gladson calls this formula of yearly, monthly, and weekly celebrations (or vice-a-versa) the "triadic structure."⁵¹ Let us observe this same triadic structure in several Old Testament passages:

"I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days-all her appointed feasts" (Hosea 2:11).

"It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths-at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel"(Ezekiel 45:17).

"And whenever burnt offerings were presented to the LORD on Sabbaths and at New Moon festivals and at appointed feasts" (1 Chronicles 23:31).

"The king contributed from his own possessions for the morning and evening burnt offerings and for the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moons and appointed feasts as written in the Law of the LORD"(2 Chronicles 31:3).

"Now I am about to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God and to dedicate it to him for burning fragrant incense before him, for setting out the consecrated bread regularly, and for making

⁵⁰ Jerry Gladson, *A Theologian's Journey: From Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*, Glendale AZ (Life Assurance Ministries, 2000) 332, 334-335.

⁵¹ Jerry Gladson, *A Theologian's Journey: From Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*, Glendale AZ (Life Assurance Ministries, 2000) 334.

burnt offerings every morning and evening and on Sabbaths and New Moons and at the appointed feasts of the LORD our God. This is a lasting ordinance for Israel” (2 Chronicles 2:4).

“According to the daily requirement for offerings commanded by Moses for Sabbaths, New Moons and the three annual feasts-the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles”(2 Chronicles 8:13).

In each of the verses, the triadic pattern of yearly, monthly, and weekly celebrations is present. Paul clearly used this same pattern in Colossians 2:16, which shows definitively that Paul was referring to the weekly Sabbath. In other words, the observance of Sabbath was to be a conscience matter for each Christian to decide rather than a hard and fast law. Seventh-day Adventists fail at this point by judging those who don't observe the Sabbath as they do.

Another problem with the Seventh Day Adventist's interpretation is their inconsistent handling of the new moon celebrations related to the Sabbath in the Mosaic Law. For instance, commenting on Colossians 2:16-17:

*This apostle's faithful observance of the weekly Sabbath stood in sharp contrast to his attitude towards the annual ceremonial Sabbaths. He made it clear that Christians were under no obligation to keep these yearly rest days because Christ had nailed the ceremonial laws to the cross . . . Said he, 'Therefore, let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is Christ' (Col. 2:16-17). Since 'the context of this passage deals with ritual matters, the Sabbaths here referred to are the ceremonial Sabbaths of the Jewish annual festivals 'which are a shadow,' or type, of which the fulfillments were to come in Christ.*⁵²

Note that the Seventh-day Adventists claim in the *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* book that the Sabbaths Paul refers to are not the weekly Sabbaths, but rather are the annual festal Sabbaths that along with new moon celebrations are abolished for Christians as shadows fulfilled by Christ. Yet, on the very same page of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, they quote Isaiah 66:22-23 to show that the weekly Sabbaths were and are perpetual in nature despite the fact that Isaiah lists the new moon celebrations among these perpetual

⁵² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, Washington D.C., The Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988) 254. A footnote in the passage quoted gives this information: "Sabbath," SDA Encyclopedia, rev. ed., p. 1244. See also SDA Bible Commentary, rev. ed., vol. 7, pp. 25, 26; cf. White, 'The Australia Camp Meeting,' Review and Herald, Jan. 7, 1896, p. 2."

observances:

On the contrary, Scripture reveals that God intended that His people should observe the Sabbath throughout eternity: 'As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make will remain before me,' says the Lord, 'so shall your descendants and your name remain . . . From one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the Lord" (Isa. 66:22, 23).⁵³

Clearly, the Seventh-day Adventist's position is inconsistent by relegating the new moons and alleged annual Sabbaths to the status of annulled, and yet, quoting from Isaiah 66:22-23 to show that the weekly Sabbath is perpetual despite the fact that this would also require the same for the new moon celebrations.

Former Seventh-day Adventist Dale Ratzlaff states:

If it is to be argued that the Sabbath should be kept today because in an Old Testament prophetic description of the new earth the inhabitants are said to bow down before the Lord from Sabbath to Sabbath, then it must also be argued that new moon celebrations should be observed today for they too are said to be observed in the 'new earth.'⁵⁴

Romans 14:5-6

Paul also deals with the problem of controversy over the celebration or observation of certain holy or holidays in Romans 14:5-6:

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God"(Romans 14:5-6).

It is argued that since this passage does not explicitly refer to the Sabbath, it is irrelevant to the debate over the Christian's relationship to the Sabbath. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the passage is more inclusive than just the Sabbath day, but involves disputes about the observance of any special days. In other words, **Christians should not dispute or clash about any holy day and that includes the Sabbath**, whether they are weekly or

⁵³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, Washington D.C., The Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988) 254-255.

⁵⁴ Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, Revised Edition, Glendale AZ (Life Assurance Ministries, 1990, 1995)285.

only annual in nature. Paul deliberately worded his admonition to end controversies regarding the observance of any holy days.

He concluded his section over disputable matters by saying: “Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another” (Romans 14:13). In other words, agree to disagree concerning these debatable matters, rather than judging each other. The same thing still stands today; Christians should not judge each other over whether their primary day of worship is Saturday or Sunday. However, Scripture is clear that Christians need to regularly join together for corporate worship (Hebrews 10:25).

New Testament Evidence for Sunday Christian Worship Services

Let us examine the evidence that the New Testament church held their distinctively Christian worship services on Sunday rather than on the Sabbath. First, and foremost was the fact that Christ Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples on Sunday, the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1-2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1). A week after the resurrection, Jesus again appeared to the disciples on Sunday. Many scholars believe that the Pentecost on which the Holy Spirit descended on the church was also a Sunday. These Sunday appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ set the pattern for later Christian worship.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2:

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 clearly supports the idea that the Christian day of worship was Sunday. It says:

Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Seventh-day Adventists, of course, dispute this. Yet, there is simply no other explanation for the command to set aside money on Sundays other than that it was, in fact, the day Christians assembled for worship. Otherwise, Christians would simply set aside their gifts on whatever day they each individually received their own pay.

Theologian Anthony Hoekema asked:

Why should Paul say this [set aside gifts on Sunday] if the Corinthians regularly gathered for worship on Saturday? Christian

giving is part of our worship; it is to be expected that we engage in this form of worship on the day we gather for public prayers . . . The only plausible reason for mentioning the first day in this passage is that this was the customary day on which Christians were meeting for worship.⁵⁵

Canright adds:

Adventists say that this does not imply any meeting that day [Sunday]. They were only to lay by at home. But this would defeat the very object Paul had in view. Paul said he hastened to be in Jerusalem. He could not be delayed to gather up collections when he came. So they were to have them all collected and ready when he came. But if these gifts were all at their homes then the collection would have to be made after he came, just the thing he commanded to avoid.⁵⁶

1 Corinthians 16:2 is indeed powerful evidence of regular Christian worship on Sundays.

Acts 20:6-11:

Another verse that has been regularly appealed to in support of the idea that Christians held their worship services on Sunday is Paul's late night sermon at Troas:

But we sailed from Philippi after the feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left (Acts 20:6-11).

Canright comments on this passage:

Notice the further fact, verse 6, that Paul was there seven days, yet no notice whatever is taken of the Sabbath Day, not even to

⁵⁵ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults, Grand Rapids MI (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963) 166-167.*

⁵⁶ D. M. Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 207-208.*

name it, while the first day is prominently noticed. The breaking of the bread and the assembling on the first day of the week, it will be noticed, are connected together. Notice further, that though Paul was there a whole week and over the Jewish Sabbath, yet the Lord's Supper is not administered until Sunday.⁵⁷

Some Seventh-day Adventists have argued that the meeting was actually on Saturday night which by Jewish reckoning of time was a part of the first day of the week since Sunday would have begun at sundown. With this assumption, it is then argued that the church service actually began on the Jewish Sabbath and just ran into the evening. In other words, the service began on Saturday and ran into Sunday as the sun went down. However, Seventh-day Adventist scholar Samuele Bacchiocchi forthrightly dismissed such speculation: "*Whether it was the evening before Sunday (Jewish method) or the evening following Sunday (Roman method), it was still the first day on which the meeting occurred. This fact is undisputable.*"⁵⁸

Bacchiocchi is most definitely right for the text itself say it was "On the first day of the week we came together" (Acts 20:7). In other words, there is no way one can argue that the meeting began on the Sabbath, when the text specifically says it began on Sunday by any reckoning.

Putting it together, then, this passage shows that although Paul was with the church at Troas for a week, there is no mention of a Sabbath day worship service. Yet there is a Sunday worship service in which Paul preached and the Lord's Table was observed. Strong evidence indeed for Sunday Christian worship!

Revelations 1:10

Another passage often appealed to in support of the idea that Christians held their worship services on Sunday is Revelation 1:10: "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet."

Two issues are important to clarify in this verse. The first is to determine the meaning of the term "The Lord's Day." The second is to determine just what John, the author of the Book of Revelation, was doing on the Lord's Day?

It is relatively easy to answer the first question. Gladson states:

There are thirteen instances in the post-apostolic literature from

⁵⁷ D. M. Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith*, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914)204.

⁵⁸ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*, Rome, (The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977)107.

the early second century on where the term *kuriake hemera*, 'Lord's day,' or *kuriake*, 'Lord's,' appears associated with Sunday ... Some of these may be disputed, but this is still a weighty body of material, and indicates a growing conception.⁵⁹

D.M. Canright agrees: "The fact that the term 'Lord's day' immediately after the time of John, whenever used by the early church, was always applied to Sunday, and never to the Sabbath, settles its meaning in Rev. 1:10."⁶⁰ Keener stated: "Most scholars think that 'the Lord's day' refers to Sunday, as the weekday of Jesus' resurrection; the early Jewish Christians may have preferred that day to avoid conflicting with Sabbath observance."⁶¹

Determining what John was doing on this Sunday or Lord's Day (the second question) is less clear. Yet the preponderance of the evidence is that he was worshipping God. While not definitive proof of Sunday worship, Revelations 1:10 is certainly in accord with it. A. T. Lincoln concludes that:

It is highly unlikely that John writing to the churches of the province of Asia at the end of the first century would use κυριακῆ ἡμέρᾳ ('the Lord's Day') to mean some different day, so that Revelation 1:10 provides evidence from the New Testament that by this time, at least in the churches of Asia Minor, the first day of the week had become regularly observed in the Christian church and was distinctive enough to be graced with the title of the Lord's Day.⁶²

Conclusions

D. M. Canright shows that whether the Sabbath was instituted at creation or at the time of Moses, nevertheless, God has the right to remove or change the hallowed nature of the day, and indeed has done so:

The Lord has made other days holy, days on which he never rested. The day of atonement was as holy as the weekly Sabbath ... Further, a day which was once a holy Sabbath day, so holy that it was death to work on it, as in the case of the day of atonement, Lev. 23:27-32, may cease to be so and even become a common working day. See Col. 2:16 ... So, then, holiness can be put upon a

59 Jerry Gladson, *A Theologian's Journey: From Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*, Glendale AZ (Life Assurance Ministries, 2000) 326.

60 D. M. Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith*, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914) 194.

61 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary—New Testament*, Downers Grove IL (InterVarsity Press, 1993) 766.

62 A. T. Lincoln, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, D.A. Carson Editor, Grand Rapids MI (The Zondervan Corporation, 1982)383-384.

day, taken from it, or changed to another day. It is not necessarily a permanent, unchangeable affair.⁶³

Indeed, this is what the majority of Christians throughout church history have believed. That though the seventh-day Sabbath was a holy day for Jews under the Mosaic Law, yet, **the Lord of the Sabbath hallowed another day, the first, by the power of his glorious resurrection from the dead.**

We wholeheartedly agree with the feelings of Walter Martin:

“I believe that Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Baptists, and Sabbatarians of other religious groups have the right to worship on the seventh day in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free ... I suggest it is no more legalistic for them to observe the seventh day out of conviction than it is for the Christian Church to observe the first day. It is a matter of liberty of conscience.”⁶⁴

Yet, we must emphasize that the purpose of those who choose to worship on the seventh-day is decisive. Ratzlaff states: “There is nothing wrong with a new covenant church or Christian worshipping in the seventh day as long as it is not done for old covenant reasons.”⁶⁵ In other words, if one is worshipping on the Sabbath because they believe that Christians who do not observe the Sabbath are in sin, then there is serious cause for concern. Let us walk in the covenant of grace and freedom in Christ rather than running back to the yoke of the Law.

The evidence that Sunday worship is of apostolic origin and direction is strong and fully justifies the practice of Sunday worship by the Christian church throughout its history. The distinguished church historian Philip Schaff concluded: “The celebration of the Lord’s day in memory of the resurrection of Christ dated undoubtedly from the apostolic age. Nothing short of apostolic precedent can account for the universal religious observance in the churches of the second century. There is no dissenting voice.”⁶⁶

The Sabbath as a Symbol of Salvation and Rest in Christ

We conclude this article by noticing the important role the Sabbath plays in the Bible as a symbol of salvation. Jews were commanded to rest in memory of God’s rest from creation (Exodus 20:11). They were also to remember how God had rescued them from their bondage and

63 *D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After An Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by A Prominent Minister And Writer Of That Faith, New York (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889, 1914)168-169.*

64 *Walter Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults, Revised and Expanded Edition, Minneapolis MN (Bethany House Publishers, 1985) 470.*

65 *Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, Revised Edition, Glendale AZ (Life Assurance Ministries, 1990, 1995) 275.*

66 *Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Volume 2, Grand Rapids MI (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910- Reprinted 1980) 201.*

slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15), and would give them rest in the Promised Land. The Christian has escaped from slavery to the Devil and has found rest from the yoke of the Law. Indeed, Christians will find ultimate rest in the New Jerusalem, the city of the Living God.

The writer of Hebrews stated: “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9-10). Jesus Himself said:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-29).

This is all the more compelling in that this statement is immediately followed by the account of Jesus healing on the Sabbath and proclaiming himself “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8). It is my hope that every Seventh-day Adventist will enjoy this blessed rest in Jesus Christ.

BOOK REVIEW BY WOODY BRIDELL

“JAMES DOBSON’S GOSPEL OF SELF ESTEEM AND PSYCHOLOGY”

by MARTIN and DEIDRE BOBGAN

I have enjoyed reading and reviewing this book. I believe it has set the record straight from a biblical perspective, as well as helping to delineate truth as it relates to psychology and the Bible. One of these sources is dependent on opinion and the other on the authority of Scripture. Dr. Bobgan delves into a number of books that Dr. James Dobson has written and uses psychological research studies as well as the Bible to counter his false gospel of self-esteem. All references to Dr. Bobgan include his wife Deidre who co-authored this book. I have made a few personal comments along the way.

This book begins by laying a foundation of reasons why we should be concerned about the theories and psychological opinions that Dr. Dobson has espoused. Dr. Bobgan’s overall concern has to do with psychology as it pertains to the very nature of man, how one should live, and how man should change. He contends that “self-esteem teachings compromise the preaching and hearing of the true Gospel”. He characterizes this as “psycho-heresy”, and defines it as “a departure from absolute confidence in the Word of God for all matters of life and conduct and a movement towards faith in the unproven, unscientific psychological opinions of men”.

Dr. Bobgan lists four major concerns. The first has to do with the reality that the doctrine of self-esteem has been brought into, and is influencing, the church. Secondly, he is concerned that psychology and self-esteem are used to supersede sin, salvation, and sanctification. Thirdly, Dr. Bobgan is concerned that psychology and the Scripture are often mixed together and sold as having the same authority. His last major concern is how self-esteem psychology is widely accepted in Bible colleges and seminaries.

Dr. Dobson seems to use psychology as some kind of a savior. He reinforces this idea by telling stories that lend reality but avoid theological doctrines. He attempts to empathize with young mothers who have multiple children at home, but tells enough horror stories to instill fear and a desperate need for psychological counseling yet all the while saying that guilt is “another formidable barrier in building self-respect”.

Dr. Dobson believes in a pragmatic view of psychology. He concludes that it must be true because it works. Dr. Bobgan’s response to this is that “Psychology has eroded the authority of the Bible by discouraging “should’s”, “ought’s”, and “must’s”, and replacing them with a pragmatic reason for obedience”.

For instance, he says that “children should obey their parents, but

primarily to boost self esteem rather than to obey God". My caution is that, if you obey for the wrong reasons, have you really obeyed? Is it perfunctory or is it from the heart?

Dr. Dobson does use the Bible to reinforce some of his psychology, but his reasoning seems to come more from psychology than the Bible. Some psychologists excuse this by saying that there are certain things that the Bible does not address. I believe that there is wiser, more practical and spiritual counsel in the Bible than in any other book ever written: however, when Dr Dobson refers counselors, he recommends only licensed therapists. In so doing, he ignores pastors and spiritual counselors.

In his book "Emotions Can You Trust Them", Dr. Dobson describes "repression", as "the process by which we cram a strong feeling into the subconscious mind". His conclusion is that these feelings will be released elsewhere. This is called the "hydraulic model of emotions", and has been scientifically discredited by other psychologists.

Dr. Dobson does criticize other psychologists, especially those who promote permissiveness. Permissiveness stems from the secular humanistic idea that all are born good, but need self-worth to establish them as good citizens. He also takes issue with psychologists who ignore Judao-Christian ethics, and says that they have argued God out of existence. Dr. Dobson often refers to a Judeo-Christian ethics rather than the "thus saith the Lord" of the Bible. New Testament Christianity often differs from Judeo-Christian ethics. Dobson uses multiple self words, such as self-worth, self esteem, self-acceptance, and self-doubt. He concludes that social problems are a direct result of people unsuccessfully trying to deal with inferiority or self-doubt. He attributes the attempted genocide of the Jews in Germany to an inferiority complex. Personally, I think a stronger case could be made that it was a result of a superiority complex.

Dr. Bobgan states that "self-justification" can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden, where Adam blamed the woman and the woman blamed the serpent. He further equates self-esteem with pride, conceit, and depravity, and then quotes Spurgeon as saying "the poor in spirit of the beatitudes as demonstrating "the absence of self-esteem".

Dr. Dobson concludes that there must be a need for psychology since women and children have emotional needs. He continues: "personal worthiness is the cure for this problem".

He says that women obtain self- worthiness when they are loved, and men get it when they are respected. He further concludes that people gain self-esteem when their needs are met and thus become good loving people. Self-esteemers do not respond well to the commands of Scripture, and often change them into needs and rights.

Dr. Bobgan says that psychological thinking is man- centered not Christ-

centered, because it focuses on man's needs, not God's grace. This then becomes the new morality, but it is in no way compatible with Christianity.

Dr. Dobson is a big proponent of unconditional love of self, but as Dr. Bobgan points out "unconditional love is a myth". Secular psychologists have long promoted the lie that we must be our own God and forgive ourselves while Dr Bobgan says that "the Bible has a great deal to say about God forgiving us and us forgiving each other, but it says nothing about forgiving ourselves". It seems to me that if so called self-forgiveness is problematic in one's life, it is because we either do not understand what forgiveness is, or we do not believe that God has forgiven us.

While Dr. Dobson says that feelings of inferiority are pervasive throughout all ages of society, a recent study by Dr. Shelley Taylor from UCLA, shows just the opposite. Dr Dobson tends to treat people as victims rather than sinners. He offers three ways to foster self-esteem. His first term is "personal achievement". Dr. Bobgan says this often leads to competitiveness and pride. His second solution is working on one's own subjective view of self. Dr. Bobgan quotes Dr. Robert Smith as saying "John 12:43 teaches us not to love the praise of men". Thirdly, Dr. Dobson says that we can foster self-esteem from the response of others to one's self. Dr. Bobgan counters by saying "the Bible emphasis is not on what others think of us, but on us loving, respecting, and esteeming God and others. He goes on to say that the argument of low self-esteem is a "convenient excuse for bad behavior".

Dr. Dobson says that low self-esteem in women is directly related to estrogen levels. Dr. Robert Smith counters: "There is no proof that such a thing exists". Dr. Dobson states that "self-esteem is women's greatest need". Dr Bobgan rebuffs this by asking: "Why is it absent from the Bible?" He quotes Romans 12:2, which reads: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God".

Dr. Elza Vasconcellos clearly links the self-esteem movement to humanism by asserting: "The humanistic, man-centered view is very foundational for the self-esteem movement". Reuven Bulka sees the self-esteem movement as in conflict with religion. He goes on to say: "It would seem as if the self-esteem school and religion are on a collision course". He adds: "Selfist schools have not delivered on their promises, and are very often the disease of which they pretend to be the cure and that selfist philology is bankrupt and self defeating".

Dr. Robyn Dawes puts it this way: "The false belief in self-esteem as a major force for good can be not just potentially but actually harmful". Dr. Dobson is a strong advocate for self confidence and states: "God can help you build up self confidence", but Dr. Bobgan answers with the Bible text: "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 3:5).

Dr. Dobson equates the human spirit with self-esteem, but the Bobgans state clearly there are no Scriptures to support this assumption. While Dobson is claiming that there is no greater ego satisfaction than to know that “the creator is acquainted with me personally”, Dr. Bobgan says “Jesus did not die so that people can enjoy ego satisfaction. He died to save them from their sins and give them new life”. He continues: “The Bible does not teach that people suffer from low self-esteem, it says that they suffer from sin and its consequences”.

In his book “Hide and Seek”, Dr. Dobson does admit that “the quest for self-esteem can take us in the direction of unacceptable pride”. To this Dr. Bobgan strongly agrees: “Jesus was emphasizing relationship and involvement, not self-hood”.

Dr. Dobson uses Matthew 22:40 as a proof text for self-love— we should “love our neighbor as ourselves”. My response to this is that this passage does not tell us to love ourselves; it, in fact, directs our love away from ourselves and toward God and others. Dr. Bobgan does say that “people do love themselves”. He supports this with Eph. 5:29 that says: “for no man yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church”, but he explains: “this is, however, a natural occurrence, but never a command of Scripture”. He uses several Scriptures to illustrate that the Bible clearly teaches self denial, not self love; for instance, II Tim. 3:1-5 warns that “in the last days....men will be lovers of themselves”.

Dr. Dobson attempts to link low self-esteem to violent crimes such as rape and homicide. He implies that John Wilkes Booth and Adolph Hitler were men of low self-esteem. The Bobgans point out that these are selfish crimes. He further states that “the self-esteem crowd says that we cannot love God and others until we first love ourselves, but the Bible teaches that all love begins with God and then extends to others. He quotes I John 4:10-11, which reads: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us”. Another passage reinforces this by saying: “We love Him because He first loved us”.

Dr. Dobson often takes the exception and makes it the rule and vice versa when it comes to self-esteem. “There is a definite self-serving bias in all of us... they are part of fallen sinful nature”, says Dr. Bobgan. He supports this by quoting Jer. 17:9, which states: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked”. He expounds on this passage by saying “self-esteem and self-righteousness go hand in hand”. He uses the Biblical example of the rich young ruler, who by the world’s standards had great success and self-esteem, but refused to give up his riches to follow Jesus Christ.

Dr. Dobson seems to advocate for Christian psychology, but Dr. Bobgan points out, so called Christian psychology uses the same secular methods of Freud, Rogers, Maslov and others. He quotes A. W. Tozer, who declared: “To try to find common ground between the message of the cross and man’s fallen reason, is to try the impossible, and if persisted in, must result in

an impaired reason, a meaningless cross, and a powerless Christianity". Dobson and one of his radio show guests, Dr. Collins, try to link Christianity and psychology, but the predominance of evidence concludes that these terms are so divergent by definition and practice, that there remains no credible evidence to support such a marriage of terms.

Dr. Dobson speaks only in very general terms about his critics. He fails to quote any of them directly, but he claims that they have distorted his beliefs and teachings. He has drawn some very dramatic conclusions that others in the world of psychology have found outrageous. For instance, he has attempted to link low self-esteem to teen suicide, drug abuse, and sexual immorality.

Dr. Bobgan comments on "The Social Importance of Self-esteem", by saying that "narcissistic disorders in which people appear to have very high levels of self-esteem also result in suicidal behavior"; as for drug abuse, the research is mixed and clearly inconclusive. One researcher opined: "Given the extensive speculation and debate about self-esteem and delinquency, we find these results something of an embarrassment".

Dr. Bobgan concludes that low self-esteem is not the problem that plagues our society, but sin. He adds: "History will demonstrate that self-esteem teachings are merely transitional on the way to false doctrines, and false teachings leading to a false Christianity and false super-naturalism". He mentions religious revivalsim, which is a combination of humanistic and transpersonal psychology: "In humanistic psychology, self is god and the therapist is the priest". The scary thing is that such revivalism has been brought right into the church.

Selfism is not a new concept. It is well described in Isaiah 47:10: "and thou has said in thine heart, I am and none else beside me". Our author draws these conclusions: "the 'isms' and 'ologies' of self will cause people to take their eyes off Jesus...will lead to self as the great 'I am' and then to destruction". He quotes Colossians. 2:8-9 which warns us to "beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit", and adds his own warning about trusting in man and his theories and therapies, emphasizing "only God knows the heart". There is hope for all of man's needs, but it is found in God alone. He also quotes Colossians. 1:27 which reads "Christ in you the hope of glory". His final conclusion is that "this is all about relationship with Jesus Christ and no psychological therapy of selfism can be compared to it".

I think Dr. and Mrs. Bobgan have given us a critical but fair analysis of Dr. Dobson's writings on the subject of self-esteem. Where he has agreed with Dr. Dobson, he has said so, but where he has disagreed, he stated it loud and clear and supported it with Scripture and the opinions of other professionals in this field. I believe that one of Dr. Dobson's failings is that he seems to use mere cognitive reasoning to draw conclusions that are unproveable by research and unsupported by Scripture.

25 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT EXORCISM MOVIES

by GARY SUSMAN

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Ed: Slight deletions have been made for the sake of brevity

Like body-swiping demons, exorcism movies simply refuse to go away. The latest one to take possession of the multiplex is 'The Devil Inside,' which premiered Jan 2012. You may think you know all about exorcism movies, since you've seen 'The Exorcist' (the 1973 classic by which all other exorcism movies are judged), as well as all the documentary-style possession-and-expulsion chillers of recent years. But you may not know about the forgotten Jewish exorcism tale that launched the genre, or the apparent curse that afflicted 'The Exorcist' both during production and after its release, or the truth behind the real-life exorcism stories that inspired many of these films.

1. One of the first movies about an exorcism, if not the first, was 1937's 'The Dybbuk,' filmed 36 years before 'The Exorcist. Based on the celebrated Yiddish play by S. Ansky, it's the one of the only exorcism movies that draws upon Jewish lore (including Kabbalah mysticism) rather than Catholic traditions. Shot in Poland, the Yiddish-language film tells the story of a bride possessed on her wedding day by the tormented spirit (the "dybbuk" of the title) of the man to whom she was betrothed before her current groom.
2. The genre as we know it starts with 'The Exorcist,' based on the 1971 novel by William Peter Blatty. The author was inspired the story of a real-life exorcism as performed on a 1940s child named Roland Doe or Robbie Mannheim, depending on the account. Blatty borrowed several details from the Doe story, including the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area setting, the levitating furniture, the strange marks on the child's body, and the guttural voice emanating from his throat. Catholic priests performed the exorcism ritual on him 30 times before the strange events stopped happening.
3. During the filming of the 1973 movie version, an apparent curse seemed to plague the production. An increasingly serious set of unexplained mishaps led the filmmakers to call in a priest to bless the Washington, D.C. film set. A fire destroyed much of the set except for the bedroom of young Regan (Linda Blair), where most of the demonic action takes place. A scene where a demonic force throws Regan's mother Chris against a wall led to a permanent back injury for co-star Ellen Burstyn. Most eerily, actors Jack MacGowran and Vasiliki Maliaros, whose characters both die in the movie, died in real life before the film's release.

4. The curse seemed to continue once the film was released. 'The Exorcist' was one of the most successful R-rated movies ever made and is still regarded as one of the scariest -- so scary that one moviegoer fainted and broke his jaw on the seat in front of him. As a result, he sued Warner Bros. and received an out-of-court settlement. He wasn't the only viewer who had a violent physical reaction, which is why some theaters started passing out 'Exorcist' barf bags.
5. The movie did lead some Catholics to reaffirm their faith. Director William Friedkin says he met James Cagney shortly after the film's release, and that the screen legend complained to him that the movie made his longtime barber decide to quit cutting hair and enroll in a seminary.
6. Also cursed: the relationship between Blatty and Friedkin, whose dispute over cut scenes ruptured their friendship for nearly a quarter of a century. Eventually, the two reconciled, and 12 minutes of footage that Blatty missed were restored for a 2000 re-release, including the notorious scene where a contorted Regan walks like a spider and another scene in which the two exorcists discuss the possible reason for Regan's possession.
7. 'The Exorcist' spawned a number of instant copycats in other countries. One of the most unusual was 1974's 'Seytan,' a Turkish version (the title means what you think it means) that puts an Islamic spin on the tale of a possessed girl.
8. There was also a German version, 1974's 'Magdalena: Possessed by the Devil,' and a Spanish version, 1975's 'Exorcismo.'
9. The curse continued: A sequel starring Blair, 1977's 'The Exorcist II: The Heretic,' is generally regarded as one of the worst horror movies ever made. Blatty himself directed the third installment, 1990's 'The Exorcist III.'
10. In 1979, 'The Amityville Horror' launched the current wave of exorcism movies based more explicitly on real-life stories. Based on Jay Anson's best-seller, it was the supposedly true story of a Long Island house whose inhabitants are tormented by paranormal phenomena unleashed by the house's bloody history (a previous resident had shot and killed six family members there). The film spawned eight (!) sequels and a 2005 remake.
11. There have been a few comic spoofs of the exorcism genre. The most famous is 1988's 'Beetlejuice,' Tim Burton's second movie, in which it's the dead who try to expel the living from their house because of their frightful taste in interior design.
12. The other noteworthy exorcism comedy was 1990's 'Repossessed,' with Leslie Nielsen (of course), and with Linda Blair spoofing her signature role.

13. More evidence of the 'Exorcist' curse came in the early 2000s when an 'Exorcist' prequel was made and then re-made. John Frankenheimer was supposed to direct the film, but he died and was replaced by Paul Schrader. Schrader spent \$30 million making a film the producers ultimately regarded as too psychological and not gory enough. Renny Harlin was brought in to retool the film. He ended up reshooting most of it, at a cost of \$50 million. His version, 2004's 'Exorcist: The Beginning,' was generally panned but earned \$78 million, not quite what the film had cost to make. So the producers gave Schrader another \$35,000 to finish the cut of his own footage. That version was released in 2005 as 'Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist.'

14. In 2010, NECA Toys came out with a Regan doll, with a demon-distorted face and a mechanical head that spins 360 degrees and barks out lines from 'The Exorcist.'

15. There may be medical explanations for the symptoms Regan displayed in 'The Exorcist' -- or at least for the symptoms displayed by Robbie Mannheim in real life. Among the strange conditions that could have been involved are Dermatographic Urticaria, a skin condition that would explain the formation of strange markings and raised figures, and Allotriophagy, the pathological swallowing of objects that may later force themselves through the skin.

16. In 2000, a made-for-cable movie, 'Possessed,' depicted the story of Roland Doe/Robbie Mannheim that had inspired Blatty's 'Exorcist.' Starring Christopher Plummer, Timothy Dalton and Piper Laurie, the cable movie hewed much closer than 'The Exorcist' to the reported details of the Doe/Mannheim story.

17. Not all exorcism films were based on real-life stories. 1999 saw Patricia Arquette star in 'Stigmata,' a purely invented tale. In 2005, Keanu Reeves starred in 'Constantine,' based on the noirish DC comic series about a suave, urbane exorcist.

18. Atmospheric Japanese horror films (dubbed "J-horror" by fans and critics) emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many of them focusing on evil spirits, possession, and haunted children. Exorcism was a theme particularly in the 'Ju-On' series, remade in America as the 'Grudge' movies.

19. A new trend towards seemingly realistic, fact-based exorcism movies began with 2005's 'The Exorcism of Emily Rose.' Based on the case of a German woman named Anneliese Michel whose exorcists when on trial after she died in 1976, 'Emily Rose,' was unique in that it was part courtroom drama, part horror movie. The trial inspired two other films: the 2006 German film 'Requiem' and last year's American-German co-production 'Anneliese: The Exorcist Tapes'.

20. The trend kicked into overdrive with so-called “found footage” dramas like ‘Paranormal Activity’ (2009) and ‘The Last Exorcism’ (2010). Inspired by the success of ‘The Blair Witch Project,’ these films pretended to consist of real-life footage of demonic possessions and exorcisms. Studios liked them because they could be made for a shoestring, without star salaries (‘Paranormal’ leads Katie Featherston and Micah Sloat were each paid just \$500 initially for the week-long shoot).
21. Another found-footage chiller, 2009’s Spanish-language ‘[REC] 2,’ features a unique twist. In the first ‘[REC],’ it’s implied that a zombie plague is the result of a ‘28 Days Later’-type virus.
22. 2009’s ‘The Unborn,’ about a young woman possessed by the spirit of her stillborn twin brother, may be the first possession movie since ‘The Dybbuk’ that involves a dybbuk and a Jewish exorcism.
23. The producers of ‘Emily Rose’ also made ‘The Rite’ (2011), about an apprentice exorcist who learns the ritual from a priest in Rome. It was based on Matt Baglio’s book ‘The Making of a Modern Exorcist,’ about Father Gary Thomas, who learned the rite in a similar fashion and who allowed Baglio to witness some 20 exorcisms.
24. ‘The Rite’ wasn’t the only exorcism movie out January 2011. There was also ‘Season of the Witch,’ a medieval twist on the genre, starring Nicolas Cage as a Dark Ages hero. Alas, the film wasn’t able to lift the apparent curse afflicting the Oscar-winner’s recent career.
25. ‘Devil Inside’ is another documentary-style tale, centering on a young woman trying to determine whether her mother, who killed three people while undergoing an exorcism, is clinically insane or really possessed. The star-free saga comes from Paramount, the studio that made a fortune on the similar ‘Paranormal Activity’ series. Whether or not it becomes a big hit like the others, it’s clear that movie studios still have a strong appetite for exorcism movies.

QUIZ:

Bible Geography

1. Another name for Tarshish is
 a. Gaul
 b. Spain
 c. Assyria
 d. Sardis
2. The ark of Noah finally rested on
 a. Mt. Hermon
 b. Mt. Horeb
 c. Mt. Zion
 d. Mt. Ararat
3. Jerusalem lies in which direction from Damascus?
 a. south
 b. west
 c. east
 d. north
4. The Persian Ahasuerus (Xerxes) met his great defeat at
 a. Antioch
 b. Corinth
 c. Thermopylae
 d. Alexandria
5. Going clockwise in a circle from north to south, which nation, surrounding Israel, follows Syria?
 a. Moab
 b. Edom
 c. Ammon
 d. Philistia
6. The Apostle John was banished to an island. Which?
 a. Elba
 b. Patmos
 c. Crete
 d. Cyprus

7. Isolated in Edom and surrounded by rocks was the city now called
 _____ a. Samaria
 _____ b. Nazareth
 _____ c. Gaza
 _____ d. Petra
8. A city lying well under sea level is
 _____ a. Capernaum
 _____ b. Tyre
 _____ c. Jericho
 _____ d. Bethlehem
9. The battle of Armageddon will take place in
 _____ a. the Arabian peninsula
 _____ b. the plain of Meggido
 _____ c. the Tigris-Euphrates river valley
 _____ d. near the Dead Sea
10. Belshazar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Ezekiel all had to do with the ancient city of
 _____ a. Babylon
 _____ b. Carthage
 _____ c. Athens
 _____ d. Alexandria

Answers:

1. (b); 2. (d); 3. (a); 4. (c); 5. (c); 6. (b); 7. (d); 8. (c); 9. (b); 10. (a)

Personal Notes on the Articles:

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