

Straight Talk #18 On Pokémon

By William J. Schnobelen, © 2000

The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough. -Prov. 30:15-16

When I went to Australia in the fall of 1999 for a mission trip, I was stunned by the interest and concern about the child's game, movie and toy phenomenon, Pokémon. I got more questions about Pokémon than any other subject, even freemasonry. This was true both in churches and also on radio shows. Many Australian parents suspected something was wrong.

It was to the parents' credit that they were concerned. To be candid, I was only dimly aware of the Pokémon phenomenon. Not having little children, I was only vaguely aware of the video game, and knew precious little of it. For some reason, no one in the states had inquired about it as of yet to our ministry.

So after returning home, I figured I had better investigate this odd phenomenon. I already knew that the term Pokémon meant "POCKEt MONster", but that was about it. I found that out about a year earlier when I saw the odd word being advertised as a giveaway prize at a fast food restaurant. However, not having kids, that was the extent of my expertise.

The first thing I learned didn't surprise me (knowing Hollywood) was that Pokémon had become a huge industry. It included a TV series shown six days a week, a movie, four videos for kids, three video game cartridges (red, blue and yellow) for Nintendo game Boy, trading cards by Topps (which sold \$225 million last year), toys for little ones and toys for older children, candy, etc. finally, there are Pokémon product tie-ins and giveaways being promoted by giants like Burger King and Quaker Oats.¹

As with other such toys (Star Wars, Toy Story, etc.), the tie-ins fed into the movies and TV and they in turn promoted the toys and giveaways; back and forth in a kind of weird, incestuous marketing feedback loop. However, there was something more going on with Pokémon.

Innocent Beginnings

So how did this phenomenon start, anyway? The story is that the creator of Pokémon was a young Japanese misfit named Satoshi Tajiri, called "Dr. Bug" by

¹ *TIME Magazine*, 11/22/99, foldout after p.86.

his childhood friends.² As a boy, he collected insects, beetles and other tiny vermin from the fields, ponds and forests around his home. He simply *turned his boyhood obsession into a video game*, recreating his childhood playgrounds in virtual form. Instead of collecting insects, etc.; the children who play his video games collect cute little monsters.

Tajiri's other passion was more common for Japanese youth: video games. He was raised on the Ur game of computers, "*Space Invaders*." He disappointed his father by refusing to go to college to become an engineer, but instead studied electronics at two-year technical school. He immersed magazine in 1982 called *Game-Freak*. Nearly 10 years later, in 1991, he discovered Nintendo's sensation, Game Boy and was intrigued by the fact that you could connect two Game Boys together with a cable.

"I imagined an insect moving back and forth across the cable. That's what inspired me." Tajiri told TIME magazine.³ He signed a contract with Nintendo and spent six hard years developing the game. His core idea was: "The important thing was that the monster within yourself, like fear or anger." (An insightful and revealing comment, as we shall later see!)

A Secret Monster?

In 1996, he finished Pokémon and Nintendo released it. They did not expect much from it. Comic books were created (originally in Japan) to go along with the game, and it **took off** with amazing popularity. Tajiri cemented his success by starting word-of-mouth rumors that there was a secret twist in the programming.

Supposedly, there are only 150 "known species" of Pokémon (different varieties of virtual critters like "Pikachu," one of the more famous). This statement is from the Pokémon booklet:

Welcome to the world of Pokémon, a special place where people just like you train to become the number-one Pokémon master in the world! But what is a Pokémon, you ask. "Pokémon are incredible creatures that share the world with humans," says professor Oak, the leading authority on these monsters. There are currently 150 documented species of Pokémon... each Pokémon has its own special fighting abilities... some grow, evolve into even more powerful creatures... Carry your Pokémon with you and you are ready for anything. You've got the power in your hands, so use it."

Unbeknownst even to Nintendo, Tajiri had placed a 151st Pokémon – a secret monster – within the soft wear. It was named "Mew" and is a major character in

² This biographical material on Tajiri is taken from *TIME*, *ibid.*, pp.83-86.

³ *Ibid.* p. 84.

the just released Pokémon movie. However, the catch was that you could only acquire Mew by interacting. “Without trading, you can ever get Mew,” Tajiri stated. This led to both interactive gaming and, ultimately, the trading card frenzy. Today, the bug-collecting misfit Tajiri is 34 and very rich!

An animated cartoon version of the game was created (and later exported to the US), a cleaned-up and provocative form of Japanese animation called “*Anime*” and is very different from most cartoons in the states. In 1997, an episode of the cartoon show caused 700 Japanese children to have seizures.⁴ It was investigated and believed to have been caused by flashing lighting bolts from Pikachu. It is known that flashing, strobe-like lights can produce seizures in epileptics. However, another explanation could have been **supernatural** (demonic?). Such visual effects were discontinued.

Greed and Magick

Many people began looking askance at Pokémon when kids began to become rabidly addicted to the games, cards and comics. Violence began erupting in toy stores as kids (or their parents) actually began fighting over either the toys or the collector cards. Riots broke out in some toy stores over the cards, toys and games among parents trying to get rare items for their precious little tykes. In November of 1999, a 9-year-old boy in Long Island stabbed an older schoolmate over a Pokémon trading card.⁵ This sort of thing began with the Cabbage Patch dolls more than a decade ago, and *they* turned out to have a pretty sinister pedigree.⁶ Since then, few toys have inspired the kind of obsessive behavior that the Pokémon toys and cards have created.

Of course, the children have had ample opportunity to observe obsessive behavior on the part of many of their parents over the past few years. Between the rise of gambling in almost all fifty states and the obsessive collecting of “*Beanie Babies*” and other similar fads, adults have been acting rather more greedily than usual themselves lately. Note the rise in popularity of these “Antique Collectibles” shows. More and more parents are getting obsessed with the acquisition of (often) totally meaningless trinkets or chotskies. None of these things have any eternal value, yet one sees adults literally lined up around the block to get the last of the “*Beanie Babies*.”

⁴ Ibid. p. 86.

⁵ Ibid. p. 82.

⁶ Cabbage Patch dolls have been implicated in a lot of demonic infestation of children. Every Cabbage Patch doll “birth certificate” we have seen has the doll’s birthday as October 31, Halloween. Many of the dolls have high occult sounding names, and they are ugly. We do not recommend parents keep them in their home.

I have had an opportunity to observe, first-hand, the glassy-eyed look in the eye of pleasant suburban housewives as they wait in line to acquire Beanie Babies. I will tell you, it is very akin to the spaced-out stare in the eyes of the gambling addict playing a slot machine or a teenager playing a video game. It is **not** a pleasant sight. Why all this emphasis on collecting useless junk? Can you imagine our parents or grandparents (who went through the Great depression and World War II) standing in line for three hours to buy Pokémon cards or Beanie Babies?

With role modeling like that, is it any wonder that our kids are getting totally obsessive about collecting Pokémon bric-a-brac? Some of this obsession borders on insanity. *TV GUIDE* calls Pokémon “*the Microsoft of kiddie obsessions, towering darkly over all that came before – from Pog to Mutant Ninja Turtles to a quaint activity known as playing outside with something called a ball. What began as a quirky animated Japanese import about cuddly monsters with superpowers has evolved into a real monster.*”⁷

However, some of this goes beyond just living in a culture of acquisitiveness and greed. Like a lot of toys today, there are **significant occult elements** in both the overall concept of Pokémon and the minutiae of the game (which of course, every true devotee of Pokémon has to master).

Cute Animals and War!

Pokémon heroes are little monsters. Most of them look cute, and some look nasty. The idea behind the games is to collect these little monsters (like lightning bugs in a jar) and use their powers to achieve ever-higher levels of Pokémon attainment. The same *TV GUIDE* article explains it this way: “It’s war with stuffed animals. The [Pokémon cartoon] show has a simple but powerful premise. Capture Pokémon and use them to battle and capture other monsters. The monsters are like pets. Fighting pets. In cartoons this is cute. In real life, it’s called cock-fighting.”⁸ The article even acknowledges that the game /show/ cards are full-blown addiction!

Ultimately, the idea is to acquire the largest possible number of Pokémons so that you can use their superpowers (often occult). The final goal of every Pokémon-playing child is to achieve the level of “Pokémon Master” (even though Yah’shua [Jesus] warns us to call no one master – **Matt. 23:8**). The Pokémon universe is deliberately made to be very complicated, and thus draws the child in deeper and deeper. Additionally, this level of complexity bewilders most parents. It is more complicated than being a “Lord of the Rings” devotee or a Star Trek enthusiast

⁷ *TV GUIDE*, October 30, 1999, p.8.

⁸ *Ibid.* p.9.

who knows the name of every single “Starfleet vessel.” This effectively keeps parents out of the loop.

Like many video games, Pokémon is riddled with occult concepts. Concepts like “magical stones,” teleportation, ghosts, all-seeing eye, psychic power and using spirits to achieve results in the real world are all givens in this game realm. *All* of this is contrary to scripture. The Pokémon games and comics, etc. teach what I have called a magic worldview that is completely opposed to the Bible.

The Magic Worldview is the idea, common to all occult belief systems, that there is not really any sovereign Deity over creation. Instead, creation is ruled by a series of occult laws. In a sense, the universe is like a cosmic vending machine. As long as you put in the right coin (ritual or spell) you automatically achieve the desired result. The Bible teaches, on the other hand, that the Almighty is more like a parent than a machine. Just as parent can say no to a child’s request for a Snickers bar, so YHWH can say yes, no or later to our prayer requests. The Magic Worldview takes no account of this and says that as long as you get the mechanics right, you will get what you want. If you fail to achieve the desired results, it is because you did something wrong in the ritual or spell.

The other key idea of the Magic Worldview is that **magic is neither good nor evil**. Like the Star Wars “Force”, it is simply **neutral**. Thus, “good-guys” can use magic to fight the bad guys (who also use magic). But since the heroes’ hearts are pure, their magic is cool, and they will win the day. This is *totally* contrary to the Bible, but it is a value system at the core of Pokémon.

Additionally, a key concept throughout the game is that these cute little monsters can “evolve”. For example a Pokémon called “Poliwag” can evolve in “poliwhirl” and ultimately into “Poliwrath;” a being with mental powers which can attack and destroy.⁹

Sorcerer’s Apprentices?

Of course, evolution is an anti-Biblical science fiction concept with no more truth to it than Tinker Bell. We also have the disturbing idea of gathering these little monsters to empower yourself. This is the main point of the game. Thus, the entire game is a metaphor (Perhaps more?) for demonization.

What is meant by that statement? Perhaps a brief lesson is “high magic” is in order. High magick (spelled with a “K” to differentiate it from prestidigitation or stage magic) is very elaborate and ritualized, unlike witchcraft, which is usually kept fairly simple. Because of this, it is often called ceremonial magick. In this sort

⁹ *The End Times* (Nov./Dec. 1999 – vol. 13, #6) p.3 from Joseph Chambers, Paw Creek Ministries, 5110 Tuckaseegee Rd., Charlotte, NC 28208.

magick, rituals take long time (hours or even days) and may involve weeks of preparation. There are large, complex workbooks called grimoires to be used to put together these ceremonial magick rites.

In ceremonial magick, the entire point is for the magician to supposedly capture and control evil spirits (demons, djinn, etc.) so that they will grant him power. High magick is about 50% based on the idea that you can conjure up a demon and trap it in special triangle of manifestation and command it to give you occult power.

The sad part is that all of this is a deception on the part of the demons and their master, Satan. They “play by the rules” of their ritual when it suits them. When it does not, there is – literally – hell to pay! I personally have seen one magician horribly slaughtered by a demon, even though he followed all the rules of high magick.

The magician works from within a specially prepared magic circle which *supposedly* protects him from the demon as long as he stays inside it. He uses special magickal weapons like a wand, staff or sword to threaten the demon and make it do his or her bidding. Once the ritual is successful, *supposedly* the demon belongs to the magician to do his or her bidding -as long as the stipulations of their contract are kept by sorcerer. Often the demon will grant the magician occult powers or give him or her special talismans to control others. This is a large part of high magick.

Now, there is barely a dime’s worth of difference between this and what goes on in the “make-believe” Pokémon universe! It is possible (though not provable) that many of these weird, cuddly creatures are actually named after demons. Most of the names seem harmless, but *why take the risk?* Look at Pokémon called “Abra” (an ancient magic term) this monster evolves onto “Kadabra” (Get it? Abracadabra!) and thence into “Alakazam” (another magic incantation).

Abracadabra is actually a powerful term and spell from *The Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*, one of the most powerful magical workbooks in print!¹⁰ It was used by many of the most powerful sorcerers of this age, including Aleister Crowley (known as the Great Beast 666) and Alex Sanders (King of the Witches!) I also worked the ritual and I can tell you, though it appears benign, it can be highly dangerous. When you use these kind of phrases, you are definitely playing in the “demonic big-leagues”!

Now, these are the magical demon-names we know of - from Western Magick. There are literally hundreds of demonic names in the various grimoires that I have

¹⁰ *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage* (translated by S.L. MacGregor Mathers), DeLaurence Co., Chicago, 1948.

not had time to thoroughly investigate. Then, there is the fact that Asian cultures (like Japan and China) have their own elaborate demonology which is totally different from European ritual. I am not well-versed in their demonology, so it is entirely possible that many of these Pokémon names are just as dangerous as the one mentioned above.

Would you want your children **collecting demons** like you might have collected stamps or coins as a child? Not if you are a Christian you wouldn't!

To summarize a Few Key Points:

- 1) Pokémon teaches kids that they can make demon-like beings (cuddly little monsters¹) obey them;
- 2) They are taught that these demons can be mastered and controlled;
- 3) They are taught that demons are their servants and will help them.
- 4) They are encouraged to become “Pokémon masters” by “conquering” more and more demons.¹¹

In essence, these games are turning kids into real sorcerer's apprentices! No wonder children are obsessed with this! Their culture's **greed** is coming at them from one front and **the games themselves are doorways for demons**. Remember, anytime you are dealing with serious addictive behavior (and some of this IS SERIOUS), you can assume a spirit of bondage (**Rom. 8:15**) is at work. The spirit of bondage is a powerful strongman that needs to be dealt with quickly and preemptively in the authority of Jesus. Its best “antidote” is the “Spirit of Adoption” (same verse) which speaks deep to our hearts and cries out “Abba Father.”

I used to work with addictions every day in a secular counseling job, and I believe that part of the reason we are seeing so much addictive behavior in both kids and adults is that many of us have never tasted of that spiritual adoption. We fell like *spiritual orphans!* In our children, this situation is not helped by single-parent families and by two-parent families who throw their children into daycare as quickly as they can.

Many of these kids (just like their parents) have never known the Love of Abba Father. Because of their thirst for it, they are drinking out of hell's cisterns with

¹ Remember, demons can appear to be any shape they desire, including something rather cute or cuddly.

¹¹ Partially based on Brother. Chambers' research.

these demonic, addictive games. Remember, just because your kids think they are innocently playing does not prevent the evil spirits from being deadly in earnest in exploiting their neediness and bringing bondage. If the devil (or his minions) can appear as an angel of light (**2Cor. 11:14**), he can certainly appear as a cute, warm fuzzy little cuddle-toy of a character.

If you or your child are involved in addictive and/or occult behavior you need to go before the Throne of YHWH and formally renounce it in the name of Yah'shua (Jesus) the Messiah and ask Him to forgive you for it. Then you need to destroy, ideally by fire, all the stuff that goes with the game. I realize that this might represent a considerable investment going "up in smoke," but believe me - it is better to do that than to allow yourself or your child to become further ensnared by occult bondage. I know. I was stuck in it for 16 years!

For further information, please contact:

With One Accord Ministries

3500 Dodge St., Ste 7-290

Dubuque IA 52003

www.withoneaccord.org

sneblen@gmail.com

