

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 33, NO. 2

APRIL-JUNE 2013

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Neil Anderson's Rough Road for Believers He's the Same Old Neil with the Same Old Bondage Making Deal

by G. Richard Fisher

Neil Anderson, founder of Freedom in Christ Ministries, has finally done it. He has released his autobiography, called *Rough Road to Freedom*,¹ which reveals that Anderson is the same old Anderson with regard to his extreme teachings on demonology.

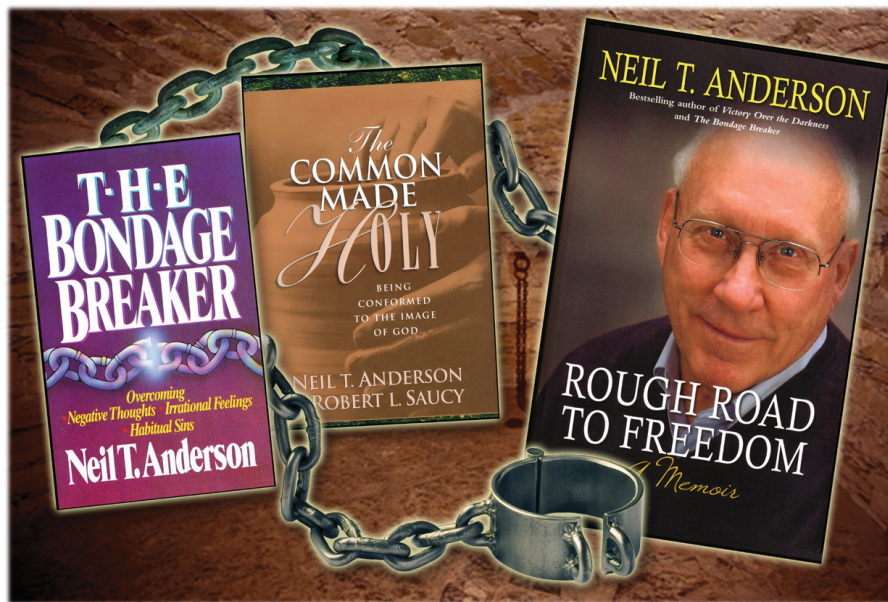
Personal Freedom Outreach released one of its first articles on Anderson over a decade and a half ago, called "Demons, Demons, Where Are the Demons? The Unchanged and Unchanging Neil Anderson."² Fifteen years later, Anderson holds the same views on the subject he did then. Some would say he is being consistent. Yet he has been consistently wrong.

Though some may have hoped for moderation, there has only been a doubling down. He is miles out of the mainstream. Anderson has created a unique interpretation of human

spiritual struggle, using superstition and out-of-context Bible verses. His subjective theology is sold as being the final answer.

Anderson's autobiography details his youth and his family's hard-scrabble Minnesota farm life. He takes us through his formal education and describes how he arrived at some of his beliefs. Anderson details his Navy career, his engineering phase, and his job as a systems designer for Honeywell. He also describes his time at Talbot Seminary. Anderson says he is neutral on the Charismatic movement, a position he based upon the questionable advice of Gamaliel in Acts 5:35-40, whose advice he labels "wise counsel."³ Gamaliel's advice was this: Let a religious movement

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alone and if it grows it must be of God. By applying Gamaliel's flawed logic and advice one must conclude that Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and every other major cult that is growing must be of God.

Anderson also reveals that he is open to and content with the spiritual formation movement, specifically contemplative prayer, as he has learned to practice it.⁴

The book also does a hard sell on his other books and curriculum. For the most part this seems to be standard fare for biographies, but what interests the astute discernor is just how truly biblical or otherwise Anderson's spiritual and religious teachings (and conclusions) are and whether he had modified any at all. It is of little wonder that he writes, "it was not my calling to be an evangelist or an apologist."⁵

Anderson gives a wide berth to apologetics and heartily embraces experiences.

What should give us pause is Anderson's admission that he is a religious lone ranger and sees no need to be hampered by or connected with historical orthodoxy or mainstream creeds. He confesses:

"I have gotten beyond denominations, and sense no obligation to defend any systematic theology. I am just a child of God serving Him in His kingdom. Over the years I have heard people say, 'I can't peg you.' To which I respond, 'Try "Christian".'⁶

Anderson declares, "It has taken me years to discover the reality of the spiritual world, and to learn to be guided by the Holy Spirit."⁷

Belief in direct guidance through contemplative practices apart from the anchor of theology can be a dangerous thing. Anderson does not divulge exactly how he was able to "discover" the things he teaches. He says only that they came from the Holy Spirit. If

something comes from the Holy Spirit, then it must completely agree with the Word of God, which is inspired and authored by the Holy Spirit. However, we will find that some of these "discoveries" are radical, unbiblical, and at times eerie and offensive. Though Anderson does not want to be *pegged*, he can be if one reads his writings carefully.

Anderson also seems to resent being *pegged* with extreme exorcists: those who holler and scream, are rambunctious and commanding. These he writes off as misled, though they themselves — men such as Bob Larson — would claim to be Spirit-led. Anderson sees himself as a quiet facilitator in the dispelling of demons. He is the velvet-gloved exorcist. After viewing his Internet videos, one could conclude that he is a pleasant man.⁸ But pleasant does not equate with truth.

Anderson classifies his method as a truth encounter. But although the method is different from the extreme exorcists, who emphasize power over demons, the premise is the same. That premise is that believers can have demons occupying them that need to be driven out. Anderson claims to know exactly where these demons are in the human body.

ROAD TO ROME

Anderson has succeeded in crossing religious lines with his non-commitment and non-alliance to any systematic theology and has written a book called *The Steps to Freedom in Christ, Catholic Edition*, with Father Sebastian. He claims that, "Father Sebastian had found his identity and freedom in Christ through one of my books."⁹

To further solidify his accommodation to Catholicism, Anderson cites a vision of St. Francis of Assisi in which the venerated 13th-century Catholic figure sees a brother carrying a devil on his back into the central Italian town of Portiuncula. Anderson's citation says "Francis saw the devil flee from his presence."¹⁰ But what Anderson does not know or neglects to explain is that the Vatican has

declared Portiuncula a place where one can receive indulgences for visiting and praying there. This is a detail which can be verified in any standard Roman Catholic encyclopedia.

For those unfamiliar with Catholicism's unbiblical intricacies, an indulgence is the promise of time subtracted from an individual's sufferings in purgatory. These illusionary indulgences by the living can somehow also be applied to the dead, who are supposedly suffering in purgatory.¹¹ It is truly remarkable that one who claims to offer a path of freedom may open the way to the bondage of false doctrine.

BUT HE IS SO POPULAR

Those who question Anderson's approach are written off as being rationalists or naturalists. One might even be accused of somehow harboring or hosting a demon. After all, Anderson's books — many of which are published by evangelical publisher Harvest House — have been advertised and promoted in *Charisma* and *The Marketplace* (formerly *The Bookstore Journal*) and endorsed by Elmer Towns (Liberty University), the late Bill Bright, Chuck Swindoll, Kay Arthur, and Jack Hayford (a close friend of Benny Hinn).

Dr. Timothy Warner, whose name is attached to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is another heavyweight who lauds and endorses Anderson. Anderson claims to have received positive reaction and interest from the late "Power Evangelism" guru John Wimber.¹² However, it is not all favorable, as Anderson says he "would have to endure vicious slander on a national level."¹³ Later on in his autobiography, he writes of the "criticism yet to come" and laments that he "really had no idea how cruel some in the church can be."¹⁴ Anderson classifies any disagreement with his teaching as slander.

Anderson claims that his teachings focus on liberation from bondage — bondage from addictions and the power of demonic entities: topics with which any well-taught Christian should be familiar. But a closer look

reveals that these teachings have more in common with fringe Charismatic groups and metaphysical, exorcistic experimentation than they do with the Bible. Anderson often creates a false dichotomy of either believing his extremes or being cast as an anti-supernaturalist when there really is a spectrum of positions between each view. One can hold a robust and biblical view of demonology without adopting Anderson's extremism.

Anderson developed his system by trial and error and based it on how he would interpret the symptom and problems of his counselees. It all required his hearers to go along with his perceived diagnosis, which usually circled back to the demonic. He explains:

"These experiences did not take a lot of discernment, but they raised a lot of questions in my mind. Were they an anomaly, and how many others struggled with the enemy? If we wrestle not with flesh and blood, then the primary battle is spiritual. This has profound implications for how we understand mental health and how to be more effective in evangelism. The answers were slow in coming."¹⁵

The Apostle Paul's answer in Ephesians 6, in terms of not wrestling with flesh and blood, was for us to put on the armor of God, not seek an exorcism. The words *exorcism* or *exorcisms* are nowhere in the immediate or larger context of Ephesians 6. Anderson says "having taken a course on hermeneutics I knew that nothing has meaning without context,"¹⁶ but somehow he missed the context of Ephesians 6 or inserted an imaginary context.

ALMOST EVERYBODY IS IN DEMONIC BONDAGE

So the bondage he claims to see and the deliverance that he promises are not from the power of sin and temptation, but from occupying demons — some originating with long-dead ancestors — who indwell believers or somehow reside in their physical frame. Anderson says that a stagger-

ing 85 percent of all Christians are struggling with various levels and depths of this demonic bondage.¹⁷ The Bible never even suggests that an overwhelming majority of believers are in demonic bondage. Struggling and growing, yes, but not in demonic bondage.

So Anderson first proposes a problem, convinces people they have it, and then offers to sell them the solution. If Anderson convinces someone they have a demonic problem, then they will follow any routine Anderson suggests.

Anderson admits that his early views and rebuking Satan grew not from Scripture, but from within himself and out of his own feelings and an experience he had with a certain man over whom he rebuked Satan: "I sensed that it was a spiritual problem, and it was."¹⁸

Suppose that someone else *sensed* something entirely different? It was only later that he looked for Scripture to try to back what he "sensed." Jude 8-9 warns against rebuking Satan and demons.

He also admits that he was looking for something different: "Finding an alternative way to minister was my motivation to get my doctorate."¹⁹ It would have been better for him to say that seeking a *biblical* way to minister was his motivation.

For even more questionable support, Anderson refers to the mystic and neo-Gnostic false teacher Watchman Nee.²⁰ He also admits that he feels the need of something more than the Scripture in dealing with others and his reliance on so many extra-biblical sources make that plain:

"I knew something more than the verbal communication of God's Word had to happen if God's children were going to be free of their past and become the persons God intended them to be."²¹

In trying to explain what Anderson's "something more" includes, one can conclude that he must not believe Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as

to the truth that inspired Scripture is *sufficient* for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness so that believers may be established for all good works. The Word is inherently powerful and will accomplish what God pleases.

Anderson teaches formulaic prayers and has suggested that the following prayer should be prayed:

"I cancel out all demonic working that may have been passed on to me from my ancestors. ... I renounce all satanic assignments that are directed toward me and my ministry, and I cancel every curse that Satan and his workers have put on me. ... I reject all other blood sacrifices whereby Satan may claim ownership of me."²²

These prayers are not to be said by someone seeking salvation, but by Christians who already have been "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son."²³

While Anderson talks about freedom in Christ, he offers demonic bondage as an answer for besetting sins rather than the biblical concept of progressive sanctification: putting off old (sinful) habits and putting on new (righteous) ones. Biblical sanctification is lifelong character change motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit and directed by the Word of God. It is certainly neither a simple fix nor is it easily accomplished in one counseling session. Sanctification is an ongoing struggle as we pass through life.

MUCH DISSENT

Many strongly disagree with Anderson's position that theology must be overcome rather than be a sure guide. The Assemblies of God denomination issued a 15-page booklet refuting the idea that Christians can have indwelling demons. It calls the teaching unbiblical and says it erodes the biblical concept of salvation and peace.²⁴

The Christian Research Institute published this about Anderson's teachings:

“While Anderson promotes ‘freedom in Christ’ vociferously, his emphasis on the occult from which we are to become free is more noticeable, and is described in more vivid terms in the material he presents in seminars and publications than our freedom. His seven steps to freedom, the core of most of his materials, includes a lengthy recitation of renunciation/announcement statements that focus on blood oaths, marriage to Satan, generational curses, and so on. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a precedent for such a focus.”²⁵

Way back in 1995, the *Calvary Contender* also issued a “Neil Anderson Warning”:

“Much of what he says is soundly biblical, but his message and methods are dangerously tainted by [his] ‘version of demonic deliverance, inner healing, psychotherapy, false memory syndrome, a *steps* approach, one naturism, ritualism, and generational curses.’”²⁶

FELLOW TRAVELERS

There is no doubt that Anderson believes his experiences are normative for the Church. Along with using his feelings and senses and looking for alternate ways of ministry, Anderson latched onto Mark Bubeck and his books.²⁷ Bubeck and C. Peter Wagner all parrot many false ideas, often using one another as source authorities.²⁸ They fall into the extreme of an obsessive demonic focus.

Bubeck has a prayer to get demons off all parts of the human body:

“I ask You to look all through the sexual organs and function of my body for any evil spirit activity. ... I ask that the Holy Spirit would search out all my bones, blood circulation, nerve circuitry, muscles, tissues, glands, hair, skin and every cell for any wicked spirit activity against my physical body. Evict any afflicting, evil powers totally away from my body.”²⁹

Anyone who maintains that Anderson’s and Bubeck’s teachings are biblically unsound needs to be able to define what the Bible does teach about demons and the believer. Pastor Gil Rugh summarizes:

“Believers cannot be possessed by demons. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells us and is greater than the devil who is in the world. ... The Scripture is clear on this matter. ... Christ’s work was sufficient. There is no further deliverance that must take place. If there were, salvation in Christ would be incomplete. If the Church would stop and think through its theology of Scripture, we would realize that something is drastically wrong with what is being promoted by those who teach that believers can be demonized.”³⁰

While Anderson may attribute sinful propensities to our own as well as our ancestors’ demons,³¹ the Bible is quite clear in James 1, Mark 7, and Galatians 5 that man sins by himself, from himself, and that there is no exorcistic short-cut.

Thomas Ice also warns believers:

“The real potential for problems in the Christian life is blaming things on the demonic and neglecting normal Christian growth and maturity. It is this kind of lack of maturity in the lives of many believers, because they are looking for the quick-fix of a Neil Anderson deliverance, that will prove in the long run to effect the greater damage. I am concerned that believers wake up to the false ways of Dr. Anderson.”³²

Calvary Chapel founder and pastor Chuck Smith labels “Christian ‘Possession’” a false doctrine and answers the question as to whether a born-again Christian can be indwelt by a demon:

“The proponents of this unscriptural doctrine use such terms as Christians being ‘invaded by demons’ rather than demon possessed. This is nothing more than

a word game and a smoke screen to hide the scriptural weakness of their position. They also present an illogical supposition that demons can invade or control the mind or body but not the spirit. God’s Word declares that the body is a temple of the Holy Ghost who is in us.”³³

CONFUSION IN THE CAMP

Not all deliverance teachers speak with the same voice and Anderson may not be aware of the disarray in this field. Or maybe he believes he is the only one with a handle on the subject.

A good illustration of the total disarray is John Arnott, who says that what he used to call demons now could really be the Holy Spirit. In other words he may have been calling the Holy Spirit demonic:

“We used to think when people shook, shouted, flopped, rolled, etc., that it was a demonic thing manifesting and we needed to take them out of the room. That was our grid, that’s what our experience had taught us, that demons could be powerful. ... Who cares? If he thinks it’s God and he likes it, let him enjoy it! Because you can test the fruit later. ... if you play it safe with this thing, the Holy Spirit, you know what? You’re never going to get anywhere.”³⁴

Counseling clients often are manipulated to play into the suggestions of such “warfare counselors.” What is sought in the way of “demonic manifestations” usually can be created by suggestion of a power figure. It has long been recognized that symptoms of demonic possession can be self-induced through expectation and priming.³⁵ Gullible, confused, hurting, struggling people can be led along almost anywhere by an apparently knowledgeable authority figure.

Counselor David Powlison writes:

“An atmosphere of intense expectation can produce almost anything. Counselors find what they are looking for; counselees

produce what counselors are looking for. The 'power of suggestion' may sound like a cheap trick... . But suggestion is a force of vast and subtle power."³⁶

So it is clear that a counselor usually finds — or can help create — what he is looking for. Suggestion goes a long way in creating the anticipated results. A counselee's experiences and responses call for an interpretation. For instance, if a counselee falls asleep in a session, is it medication, lack of sleep the night before, or a demon? The interpretation can be an imposed meaning or wishful thinking.

A MORE PALATABLE VERSION

Because exorcisms of any sort were being forbidden at the school where Anderson was employed, another way had to be found. That way was a relationship with Robert Saucy:

"I was blessed to have Dr. Robert Saucy as a friend. Dr. Saucy was the most respected man on campus, and the chairman of the Systematic Theology Department. As long as we were in agreement, nobody on campus would take much issue with me or with what I was doing."³⁷

Out of that relationship evolved the book, *The Common Made Holy*, co-authored with Saucy.

Anderson's misrepresentation of the biblical doctrine of sanctification is evident in *The Common Made Holy*. Anderson and Saucy toned down, nuanced, sanitized, and created a softer, kinder version with modified and subdued exorcisms, now called truth encounters. Though trying to make these ideas more palatable and less offensive, it is still the old "demons in Christians" error.

The book was also a sales pitch and marketing tool for Anderson's other writings, which teach more blatantly the "demons in Christians" doctrine and his ability and techniques to kick them out and send them running.

In the chapter titled "The Warfare of Sanctification," Anderson and

Saucy subtly present quotes on the general theme of spiritual warfare from authors who would not agree with the premises of demons in believers or ancestral bondage, such as Thomas Brooks, F.F. Bruce, and Martin Luther.

Amazingly, Anderson and Saucy go so far as to quote David Powlison, whose book, *Power Encounters*, thoroughly refutes Anderson and teachers like him. While these out-of-context quotes from Powlison give the air of respectability, scholarship, and agreement, they also are tremendously misleading.

Powlison actually calls the views of Anderson and the like "a hybrid religion" and a "demonic and superstitious worldview."³⁸ He shows without question that exorcistic ministry is not the sturdy biblical view of historical orthodoxy.

Powlison also describes counselees caught up in these views as living in an "impoverished world of semi-occult 'warfare'"³⁹ and others who lose the view of classical biblical warfare as "living in a cartoon world."⁴⁰ How can they pretend Powlison is a friend?

ENSLAVEMENT OF THE FLESH

Anderson and Saucy further confuse the picture:

"Thus yielding to the flesh is also yielding to the influence of Satan and his demons. That such influence can reach the point of enslavement is also taught in Scripture."⁴¹

Again there is a confusion of categories. Yielding to the flesh is talked about throughout Scripture (e.g., James 1:14-15). And, yes, the flesh can enslave. But saying that yielding to the flesh is *exactly* the same as yielding to Satan *directly* is untrue. There is a sense in which all sin plays into Satan's program. There is a sense in which all sin furthers Satan's aims. However, Scripture does not confuse the corrupted flesh or the sin nature with demons which are always *external* to the Christian. There is a sense

in which yielding to sin is a yielding to Satan because we further his agenda, but it is a stretch and a lie to say that means we then have occupying demons and we need a special prayer ritual/exorcism to rid ourselves of those internal, infernal pests.

The Bible warns us in regard to the mastery of sin (which is the power of sin in what the world would call addiction). Anderson would link addictions to demons. The flesh and its power should be a far greater concern than personal forays with demons. There is a sense that if I will take care of my life as God intended, He will take care of the demons. It is a matter of focus.

The Apostle John gave us great assurance when he wrote, "He who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18). The Greek word for touch is *hupto*. It means to fasten onto or to lay hold of. What Anderson says can happen, John says cannot happen.

John further wrote, "Keep yourself from idols" (1 John 5:21). He did not write, "Keep yourself from indwelling demons."

No wonder John can say: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Idols of the heart should be a great concern for us as Christians. Again, we must attend to the things God prescribes and He will take care of the rest.

METHODICAL AND MISLEADING

Anderson and Saucy sometimes sound orthodox. For example, they write: "Scripture reveals that believers can, to a varied extent, come under the influence of Satan and demons."⁴²

Readers can agree with the reality of warfare, demonic influence, and intense struggles with evil, but the two authors move to another extreme and describe warfare in a more occultic fashion.

There is a great difference between influence and indwelling, between influence and occupation, between influence and moving in and taking

over. It is one thing to say that my enemy influences me or tempts me as opposed to saying my enemy has moved into my house.

Anderson's apologists sometimes say, "We are closer than you think in what we believe — we are not that far apart, our agreements are more than our disagreements." Yet on this vital issue Anderson is a world apart from orthodox Christianity. Such teachings must drastically color one's view of sanctification, sin, addiction, discipleship, counseling, the Bible, and pastoral care.

WHOSE POSSESSION?

Anderson and Saucy play another word game, saying, "Biblically, it is impossible for Satan to possess a believer in the sense of ownership."⁴³ Once a believer belongs to Christ, he is God's possession; Satan has no ownership.

But Satan possesses a believer not in the sense of ownership, Anderson says, but in the sense of indwelling. After all, that is what the New Testament means when it speaks of demon possession (a demon inside a person).

Anderson and Saucy say that demon possession is the same as saying a person is demonized (Greek: *diamonizomai*) which is the same as *having* a demon inside.⁴⁴ They are right on that.

Anderson and Saucy then teach that a *believer* can have a demon inside, and that a demon can occupy and control a believer's body. Their view is that a believer can be internally demonized, that in fact the demon has moved in.

Anderson and Saucy also dodge the issue with the statement, "the demon need not be seen as residing in the very center of the person."⁴⁵ The demon is not at the very center but is still somewhere inside and they will venture to say exactly where.

The Bible is silent on the issue of *where* a demon resides in an unbeliever but Anderson and Saucy, in neo-gnostic fashion, offered this explanation:

"Bible commentator Franz Delitzsch describes how demonization simply involves demons intruding themselves between the person's own spirit and body and taking over the person's nervous system in order to express demonic actions, thereby limiting the person's expression of his or her real self."⁴⁶

Anderson and Saucy, via Delitzsch, localize the demon in the nervous system inside the believer. Jessie Penn-Lewis⁴⁷ is the real source of this guesswork, not the Bible.

Anderson and Saucy do not explain if Delitzsch is talking about the saved or unsaved, and there is no Scripture to support their conclusions. Yet we are to believe that demons, though not in the very center of our being, are in our nervous system, because Anderson and Saucy say so and cite Delitzsch.

Anderson also cites Delitzsch's *A System of Biblical Psychology*.⁴⁸ The volume used by Anderson was published by Baker Book House in 1966. It is a reprint of an edition originally published in 1899, nearly a decade after Delitzsch's death. Delitzsch is not an entirely safe source to quote on the subject of demons. A close reading of the nineteenth century theologian shows a mixed bag at best.

Delitzsch was persuaded in his later years by higher criticism and "theosophic influence."⁴⁹ Theosophy, in its origins, was an Indian philosophy championed by cult leader Helena Blavatsky. She taught the latent spiritual power of man as well as reincarnation and occult knowledge.⁵⁰

Moreover, a reading of the entire chapter from *A System of Biblical Psychology* from which Anderson made his brief citation is even more damaging to his employment of Delitzsch. Under the chapter heading "Natural and Demoniactal Sickness" (pp. 345-360), Delitzsch is addressing pre-cross and pre-resurrection demonic relationships to *sickness* in the New Testament. He is emphatic:

"We first of all present to ourselves only symptomatically the

demoniacal forms of sickness that Scripture places before our eyes."⁵¹

Delitzsch never once suggests that Christians can be invaded by demons, but suggests quite the opposite. He contends that the accelerated demonic activity in Christ's time was to confront and contend with Jesus, knowing He was the "vanquisher."⁵² He states clearly "the kingdom of God that came in and with Christ was to announce itself unmistakably by the visible overcoming of demons (Luke xi. 20)."⁵³

We must also note that Delitzsch located the demons not in the nervous system as stated by Anderson, but that "demons intrude themselves between the corporeity — more strictly, the nervous body — and the soul of man, and forcibly fetter the soul together with the spirit, but make the bodily organs a means of their own self-attestation full of torment to men."⁵⁴

Again, Delitzsch was emphasizing the relationship of demons to physical sicknesses in the Gospels. He was also careful to say that not every sickness has demonic origins.⁵⁵

Therefore, two things are evident: Anderson should have been suspect of his source in the first place; and Delitzsch is dealing with a different issue (the demonic and disease in the pre-cross New Testament era) and does not support Anderson's position at all.

Apart from Delitzsch, Anderson — from at least 1990 — has taught on his own that "demonic influence is not an external force in the physical realm; it is the internal manipulation of the central nervous system."⁵⁶

Another misleading argument of the two authors is that because we may relinquish control to a besetting sin, it follows that an evil spirit can control us from within our body.⁵⁷ Scripture affirms the former about besetting sins, but not the latter. The authors mix oranges and cucumbers.

Scripture never suggests equating sin with demons. We are told to

struggle against besetting sins (Hebrews 12:1) and lay them aside. We know that the flesh and temptation is ever with us. However, there is no Scripture to ever suggest that demons can reside in a believer in the way that sin does. Sins are inclinations and actions; demons are fallen spirits. Scripture says a believer could possibly be controlled at times by the old nature, but never by an indwelling demon.

Apologists Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller write:

“This analogy between demonic evil and the evil of fallen humanity is flawed. God stands in a different relationship to demons than to believers. He is the *judge*

The discerning Christian must start with Scripture and critique everything in its light. Anderson tries to deflect the criticism over his being too anecdotal by writing off anyone who would say so. “It seems like those who use the anecdotal argument have no anecdotal experiences to share themselves,”⁶⁰ he contends. In other words, we have to match stories. So Anderson says that if you have not done what he has done you cannot critique it. It would be like saying that an oncologist cannot diagnose and treat cancer if he has not had cancer himself.

Anderson asserts direct conversations with demons. He writes that during one counseling session, “an evil spirit manifested and challenged

practice, then superstition has no place in Anderson’s faith and practice.

In spite of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*, superstition surrounding Friday the 13th is connected to occult numerology and only goes back about 100 years. Nathaniel Lachenmeyer writes:

“Friday the 13th only emerged as an independent superstition in the twentieth century. ... Public opinion and almost every news story on Friday the 13th notwithstanding, contemporary folklorists are in agreement that Friday the 13th is a twentieth-century superstition.”⁶⁶

Historical sources, including Lachenmeyer, say credit must be given to Thomas Lawson and his 1907 novel, *Friday, the Thirteenth*, for the coupling of Friday and the number 13 — both of which were heretofore thought unlucky. Anderson is not stripping his counselees of superstitions and occultism, but actually promoting them.

SATAN ON A TIME CLOCK

Anderson teaches that demonic attacks regularly occur in the early morning hours. He claims that the period between midnight and 3:00 a.m. “is like prime time for demonic activity.”⁶⁷ There is no Scriptural support for this and its impact on impressionable people is obviously negative. Anderson argues that these experiences were not self-generated, but rather they are given directly from God. “I was not looking for these experiences, but God was bringing them to me for a purpose,”⁶⁸ he writes. By attributing the encounters to God, Anderson may be trying to escape accountability for the unbiblical nature of these stories, but to assign to God actions He is not committing and which go against His Word is dangerous.

Such teaching only adds a deeper level of fear to one already confused, defenseless, and in a vulnerable frame of mind. This is more like “bondage making” than “bondage breaking” and more akin to the methodology of occult practitioners. God could not be

Anderson teaches that demonic attacks regularly occur in the early morning hours. He claims that the period between midnight and 3:00 a.m. “is like prime time for demonic activity.”

of Satan and demons and the *savior* of believers. Demons are enemies of God; believers, despite their sin natures, are His servants and friends. God will dwell with His people; He will not dwell with His enemies. This argument fails to recognize the essential difference between evil persons (demons) and redeemed persons (believers) who have evil within them (the ‘flesh’), but also have a new nature (the ‘spirit’) which causes them to ultimately triumph over evil (1 John 3:9).⁵⁸

OTHER VERY TROUBLING AREAS

Later in his biography⁵⁹ Anderson presents testimonials, anecdotes, and sensational stories. However, these do not determine truth. These stories and experiences are often put through a subjective grid of embellishment, faulty evaluation, and interpretation.

me. I told it to leave in the name of Jesus and the spirit said, ‘Where will I go?’⁶¹ Anderson is not always clear and though he denies that he casts demons out, he suggests as much. “I took authority over the evil spirit,”⁶² he further writes. Somehow the demons leave as Anderson progresses through his routine.

Anderson also holds to some strange superstitions.⁶³ He believes that Friday the 13th has some kind of “spiritual significance” and that day is even more potent and troubling if it happens to “coincide with a full moon.”⁶⁴

Believing in superstitions is miles from the Bible, yet Anderson throws in the obligatory claim, “I look to the Bible for answers and I have always believed that God’s word is the sole authority for faith and practice.”⁶⁵

This rings hollow. If the Bible really is the only authority for faith and

the originator of something so unbiblical.

It is no surprise that Anderson admits that his “theology has changed.”⁶⁹ “My theology has been affected by my experience,”⁷⁰ he writes. Anderson’s experiences or his interpretation of his experiences shape his theology. This is a slippery slope and no one knows where his experiences might lead him next.

Anderson says he knows a lot about satanic ritual abuse even though many facts dispute its existence and some leading proponents of these ideas have been exposed as frauds. He offers this about interacting with victims of SRA:

“Some of what they say may not be true, but there will be no way to prove it. You have to accept what they say in order to help them.”⁷¹

Despite this hollow warning, he claims to know about a woman who had been ritually abused and had bred fetuses for ritual sacrifice.⁷²

After having been told of the breeding of fetuses for ritual sacrifice, if Anderson does not present the information to the authorities he violates Scripture.⁷³ He may wish to dodge his responsibility by saying, “Usually satanic ritual abuse (SRA) victims come for help years after the crime.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he should be reporting the perpetrator of the ritual abuse which he has uncovered, along with the details of the killings of the fetuses.

GIVE THIS SOME THOUGHT

Anderson labels his deliverance sessions “a freedom appointment.”⁷⁵ That sounds really hopeful to someone who is struggling with life. Anderson deals almost exclusively with vulnerable and needy people. Perhaps, in many cases they are fragile and broken. There is nothing wrong with that; more Christians ought to be reaching out to those in need. But it must be done with great care because in the presence of an authority figure such as Anderson, vulnerable people can be talked into anything.

They might not even question someone if they were told that their struggles and sins were actually demonic forces at work in their lives. After all, an expert — one with revelation from God — said so. The *interpretation* of their plight could be massaged and manipulated in numerous ways. Anderson’s approach and *interpretation* of people’s difficulties changes the face of pastoral care in so many ways that it cannot be truly biblical. Anderson does help some, according to the testimonials. If nothing else, when a person is told and convinced that their problem is of demonic origin and then they are told that they are free from the demon by a perceived expert authority figure, we realize how powerful suggestion can be. Some will feel a placebo effect.

Anderson seems to have an anemic view of forgiveness that falls short of the biblical definition. He spends nearly six pages⁷⁶ protesting and complaining about an unnamed nationally syndicated radio ministry that issued four articles critiquing his positions. Though he says he opts to “forgive” them, he spends a number of pages accusing them of slander and mistreatment. He never gets specific with his charges, but his obsession raises the question: Why spend all this time complaining if forgiveness has been extended?

True forgiveness is a commitment to not raise past forgiven offenses to others or to one’s self. Those who have even a basic knowledge of Anderson’s critics are well aware that the unnamed group is the Christian Research Institute and the alleged unnamed offenders are ministry president Hank Hanegraaff, and Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller, who wrote the critiques of Anderson’s teachings. Although Anderson accuses them of violating Matthew 18, he needs to know that public teaching, when false or harmful, calls for public rebuke. The Matthew 18 passage has to do with one-on-one personal offense in the context of a local church. That does not apply in this case. Anderson should abstain from calling slander what is legitimate criticism leveled by CRI. He has aired his complaints to

the world saying in numerous ways that he was treated unfairly all the while saying it is all forgiven. Christians should be happy that God does not deal with our sins in that way after forgiving us. Psalm 130:3-4 and Hebrews 8:12 assures us that God will not bring to mind our forgiven offenses.

REAL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Michael Horton’s words on Ephesians 6 — the greatest single passage on warfare in the Bible — go right to the heart of Anderson’s errors:

“And we are not left with our own weapons or armor, but with the same armor that won Christ’s victory in the first place. He clothes us with his victory, with his righteousness, with his truth, with his gospel, and his salvation. His Word protects us from Satan’s designs.”⁷⁷

Horton continues:

“That approach may not be as exciting as the theology of glory, which reads a passage like this one as if it were a *Star Wars* script. It is, however, sufficient to keep us from dying on the battlefield. If spiritual warfare were really concerned with ‘taking back’ territory and goods stolen by the devil, in terms of ‘naming and claiming’ the salvation of loved ones or automobiles, we would be the saviors. Instead we are wearing borrowed armor. And it is alien armor — protective gear that is not our own. Furthermore, there is nothing here about territorial spirits whose activity can actually be ‘mapped’ by specially gifted prophets — that has more to do with superstition and magic than with Christianity. Folk religion always finds a way of deifying and demonizing ‘spirits of the forest’ or ‘spirits of the cities.’ Nor does this passage tell us how to get rid of so-called ‘generational curses’ — that is, the attribution of demonic activity to genetic or hereditary problems.”⁷⁸

Horton concludes:

"There is not the slightest hint of such superstitious tendencies in this key passage on spiritual warfare. In fact, Satan most likely uses such diversions to distract us from the real battle, which Paul is anxious to set in our view."⁷⁹

The beliefs and superstitions of Anderson are not at all like revelations from God, but are imaginations of a weird and tainted mind. Anderson feeds on a troubled clientele and ruminates on what they convey. His instructions are really cruel ideas that will bring unstable souls into darkness and bondage.

Anderson's *Rough Road to Freedom* is a rough road for believers if they choose to travel on it.

Endnotes:

1. Neil T. Anderson, *Rough Road to Freedom*. Oxford, U.K. and Grand Rapids, Mich.: Monarch Books, 2012.
2. *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1997. Much of that original article has been incorporated into this article.
3. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 50.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 60.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 211.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 12.
8. See, for example, "Neil Anderson - Finding Freedom in Christ Pt 1," YouTube video. Video accessed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBurYssOmH8.
9. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 262.
10. Paul Sabatier, *The Road to Assisi: The Essential Biography of St. Francis* cited in *ibid.*, pg. 222, quotation rendered in italics in original.
11. See further, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, pg. 417, entry 1498.
12. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 197.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 206.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 75.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 73.
17. Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1990, pg. 107.
18. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 92.
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 93.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122. For additional information on Watchman Nee, see G. Richard Fisher, "Watchman Nee: The Master of Mix-Up," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2003, pp. 1, 10-20.
21. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 131.
22. *The Bondage Breaker*, op. cit., pg. 207.

23. *Ibid.*
24. "Can Born Again Believers Be Demon Possessed?," Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1972.
25. "Dr. Neil T. Anderson — Freedom In Christ Ministries," Christian Research Institute International, Statement No. DA-080, pg. 1.
26. *Calvary Contender*, August 15, 1995, Vol. XII, No. 16, brackets and italic in original. Document accessed at: <http://home.hiwaay.net/~contendr/1995/8-15-95.html>.
27. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 111.
28. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Mark Bubeck and Spiritual Warfare - The Cloning of Jessie Penn-Lewis," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1996, pp. 1, 14-18; G. Richard Fisher, "Mountaintops and Other Tall Tales - Examining the Fantasy World of Modern-day 'Apostle and Prophet' C. Peter Wagner," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2011, pp. 4-11. See also other PFO reports on Rebecca Brown and deliverance issues in various issues of *The Quarterly Journal*.
29. Mark I. Bubeck, *Spiritual Warfare Basics*. Sioux City, Iowa: self-published conference booklet, no date, pg. 23.
30. Gil Rugh, *Demonization of the Believer - An Unbiblical Teaching Exposed*. Lincoln, Neb.: Indian Hills Community Church, 1994, pp. 27, 28.
31. *The Bondage Breaker*, op. cit., pp. 205-208.
32. Thomas Ice, *Biblical Perspectives*, Vol. V, No. 3, May-June 1992, "Demon Possession And The New Clinical Deliverance," pg. 6.
33. Chuck Smith, *Answers for Today*. Costa Mesa, Calif.: The Word For Today Publishers, 1993, Volumes 1 & 2, pg. 67.
34. John Arnott cited in Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pg. 52. Quotations taken from Toronto Airport Vineyard audiotapes dated November 18, 1994 and December 16, 1994.
35. See further, Frederick S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out - A Study In Biblical Demonology*. Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990, pp. 180-181.
36. David Powlison, *Power Encounters*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1995, pg. 134.
37. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 111.
38. *Power Encounters*, op. cit., pg. 25.
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 151.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 142.
41. Neil T. Anderson and Robert L. Saucy, *The Common Made Holy*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997, pg. 353.
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 347.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 349.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 350.
46. *Ibid.*
47. For more information on Jessie Penn-

- Lewis, see G. Richard Fisher, "Pressing Truth to the Extreme - The Errors of Jessie Penn-Lewis," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2000, pp. 1, 11-20.
48. *The Common Made Holy*, op. cit., pg. 398, endnote 39.
49. Elgin S. Moyer, *Who Was Who In Church History*. New Canaan, Conn.: Keats Publishing, Inc., 1974, pg. 114.
50. See further, *The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia*. New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 1953, Vol. 2, pg. 1260.
51. Franz Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1966, pg. 347.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.
53. *Ibid.*, pg. 360.
54. *Ibid.*, pg. 354.
55. *Ibid.*, pg. 348.
56. *The Bondage Breaker*, op. cit., pg. 111.
57. *The Common Made Holy*, op. cit., pg. 351.
58. Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller, "Can A Christian Be 'Demonized?'," *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1993, pg. 38.
59. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 176-192.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
61. *Ibid.*, pg. 135.
62. *Ibid.*, pg. 148.
63. For a critique of superstitions, see Edgar L. Havaich, "Black Cats and Sidewalk Cracks... Superstition: The Reverence of Fear," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1991, pp. 5-7.
64. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 179.
65. *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
66. Nathaniel Lachenmeyer, *13: The Story of the World's Most Popular Superstition*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004, pp. 80, 86.
67. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 183.
68. *Ibid.*, pg. 184.
69. *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
70. *Ibid.*, pg. 244.
71. *Ibid.*, pg. 180.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-183.
73. See further, George C. Scipione, "The Limits of Confidentiality in Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*. Laverock, Pa.: Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, 1984, Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 29-34. Scipione asks, "Are there limits to confidentiality?" and replies, "Yes, the Bible has answers to this question" (pg. 29). He further states, "Knowledge of certain serious sins does not allow for the protection of confidentiality or secrecy" and lists "knowledge of a murder" as an exception to the "general rule of confidentiality" (pg. 30).
74. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 180.
75. *Ibid.*, pg. 236.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-243.
77. Michael Horton, *In The Face of God*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996, pg. 97.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*