

Trick or Treat: The History of Halloween

1. THE ORIGIN

It has been said that some of our modern holidays, particularly Christmas, are pagan in origin. This line of thought is quite weak historically. For example, the allegation regarding Christmas is supported by one primary pagan connection, the December 25th date. This is not true of All Hallows' Eve, more commonly known as Halloween. Very little difference exists between Halloween festivities now and Halloween festivities 2,000 years ago. The reason ancient Halloween rites have not changed (unlike the ancient rites of December 25th) lies in the unique position of this ritual, in terms of the occult.

Halloween is a practice originated, as far as can be told, from the ancient Celtic peoples.

According to Funk and Wagnall's Standard Reference Encyclopedia, Halloween or "All Hallows' Eve" is a name applied to the evening of October 31, preceding the Christian fest of Hallowmass, Allhallows, or All Saint's Day. Among the ancient Celts, Halloween was the last evening of the year, and it was regarded as a propitious time for examining the portents of the future. The Celts also believed that the spirits of the dead revisited their earthly homes on that evening.

Indications in our popular culture are that the public is becoming increasingly aware of the original rites of Halloween. Probably largely responsible for this reawakening are three movies which have grossed millions of dollars: "Halloween," "Halloween II" and "Halloween III - The Season of the Witch." In all three movies, this cult of death which is celebrated October 31st is very well illustrated. Now, for the first time in possibly one thousand years, many know the origins and true significance of Halloween.

Before examining modern witchcraft's rise, in relation to Halloween and its affiliated rituals, we should consult the Bible. Exodus 22:18 says, "*Thou shall not suffer a witch to live.*" The Bible contains repeated denunciations of witchcraft and other practices of this ilk. Therefore, claims by modern witches that they are "unopposed" to Christianity must be put to rest. Exodus 22:20 further warns, "*He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.*" Thus, although the numbers of those who practice the black arts are growing, we must remember that the ancient practices of sacrifice and witchcraft are expressly forbidden.

Man, Myth, and Magic, a 24-volume encyclopedia of the supernatural, says, All Hallows' Eve, or Hallow'en, was originally a festival of fire and the dead and the powers of darkness. It is the evening of 31 October, the night before the Christian festival of All

Hallows' or All Saints' Day. All Hallows' Day commemorates the saints and martyrs, and was first introduced in the 7th century. Its date was changed from 13 May to 1 November in the following century, probably to make it coincide with and Christianize a pagan festival of the dead. All Souls' Day in the Roman Catholic calendar is 2 November. It is marked by prayers for the souls of the dead. The intentional effort by the Catholic Church to stamp out the pagan ceremonies of Halloween failed, however. Whereas the original meanings were clouded or lost, the actual methodology of witchcraft and worship survives until the present day.

The Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology tells us: ". . . on the eve of Samain the people of the side (otherworld) left their domain and wandered in the world of man . . . hideous and terrifying ritual at Samhain . . . attacks by hostile supernatural powers and of sacrifices are indicative of this insecurity and the need for propitiation." Simply put, the Celts wished to know the future and believed that on this terrible night they could learn the future by use of a ritual. This ritual consisted of constructing a basket, containing a human being or an animal. This basket was then burned, with the unfortunate inmate within burned to the death. It was the belief of the Celts that by watching the victim die by fire, they would be able to see signs of the future as the sacrificial victim passed from this world into the next.

Jack Santino's work, "Night of the Wandering Souls" reveals: Samhain, with its emphasis on the supernatural dieties as evil and associated them with the Devil.

As the Celts converted to the new religion, they did not forget their stories of the dead traveling to the afterworld on Halloween, nor did sightings and activities of fairies cease being reported. Instead, manifestations of this night became overwhelmingly evil, and the festival adopted even more malicious overtones. Everything supernatural was attributed to demons who masqueraded as fairies, hobgoblins, vampires, werewolves, and virtually any other myth. Interestingly, until the advent of the 20th century, these supernatural beings were regarded as very real and very dangerous.

As more Celts became Christian, the native Druids or Celtic priests were correctly labeled "witches." Witchhunting became a very common phenomenon until the 17th century, with the usual punishment prescribed being burning at the stake. Whereas witch-hunting crazes broke out indiscriminately, hunting witches during Halloween became virtually a national pastime. Man, Myth and Magic says, effigy of a hideous old witch was ceremoniously burned on a bonfire at



Hallowe'en. It should be noted that Queen Victoria ruled the British Empire at its height, during the 19th century. Witches were very much on the public's mind during the last two millennia. Midnight of October 31st was considered an extremely hazardous time, as witches were believed to be actively hexing people and communing with the devil. Many Catholics took to making charms and casting "white magic" spells to protect themselves from the evil they knew to be very potent on this night. What many apparently did not realize was that charms themselves were as evil as the witches they were supposed to thwart.

2. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TELL US

Foretelling the future was an idea intriguing to the Celts, as much as anyone, and many still believed the Druids could do just that. Therefore, burning sacrificial animals and, occasionally, people was still not uncommon. Even in our time, animals are sacrificed on Halloween in Europe and in the Philippines, as well as in the Americas.

Using witchcraft to foretell the future was a crime that cost King Saul of Israel his life. 1 Samuel 28:7-8 reads, *"Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee."*

The story of the witch of Endor already possessed several significant similarities to the witches of the Celts. Familiar spirits are nothing more than demons, and the fairies and leprechauns of Celtic myths are the same as familiar spirits.

The Lord's punishment upon Saul was pronounced to him the very same night. 1 Samuel 28:17-18 relates, *"And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day."* The Lord's pronouncements concerning witchcraft are quite clear. **There is no such thing as "white" magic; it is all evil and empowered by evil beings. It should also be emphasized that these actions transpired at night-time, as do traditional Halloween activities.**

3. CHARM

The other, and much more popular, so-called white magic act is the creation and wearing of charms. Few people realize that the wearing and use of charms is simply another manifestation of witchcraft. Be it rabbits' feet or religious medallions, trinkets, or other such relics, these objects are subject to demonic power. The word "charm" means "to cast a spell on." The Bible contains several passages about charms and the use thereof. Psalm 58:3-5 says, *"The wicked are estranged*

from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." This is hardly a ringing endorsement of the use of charms. Furthermore, Isaiah 19:3 states: *"And the spirit of Egypt shall fall in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards."* The Lord purposefully groups together idol worshippers, witches with familiar spirits, wizards, and charmers. This is not the only Scripture dealing thusly. The activities of Halloween, the making of charms, divining the future, the practice of magic, and dealing with unclean spirits and demons are explicitly forbidden to mankind. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 says, *"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer (that is "one who seeks to interrogate the dead," according to Schofield). For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee."* This is a very explicit commandment from the Lord.

4. COSTUMES & CANDIES

Among the Celts - as well as among the Chinese, the Egyptians, and even the Aztecs - it was thought that the spirits of the dead required food and drink. During the festival of Samhain, the people would leave various articles of food outside to placate the spirits. This was very important, for only the finest mutton legs, vegetables, eggs, and poultry - as well as honey and wine - were left outside for the spirits to consume on their way to the netherworld. To supply nothing meant that the hungry and possibly irritated spirit might intrude upon one's house and help itself to one's belongings. Leaving out food that had spoiled was also considered an open invitation to disaster. Therefore, families who faced uncertain diets, often of very low quality, gave what was most precious to them: food. This takes on added implications when we recall that, at that time, food was very difficult to preserve. Moreover, Halloween marked winter's beginning, when food was at its scarcest, and starvation not uncommon.

From this practice evolved one of the most remarkable aspects of Halloween; to quote Santino: Virtually all of our Halloween customs today can be traced to the ancient Celtic day of the dead. Each of Halloween's many mysterious customs has a history, or at least a story, behind it. The wearing of costumes, for instance, and the roaming from door-to-door demanding treats can be traced to the Celtic period and the first few centuries of Christianity when it was thought that the souls of the dead were out and around, along with fairies, witches, and demons. Food and drink were left out to placate them. As the centuries wore on, people began dressing as these dreadful creatures and performing antics in exchange for offerings of food and drink. This practice, called mumming, evolved into our

present trick or treating. To this day, witches, ghosts, and skeleton figures of the dead are among the favorite disguises.

The practice of wearing masks and outfits to represent these evil creatures is universal in the human experience. From the Indians of America to China - in all the inhabited areas of the earth - traditions exist in which individuals who dress to present a god or demon are imbued with supernatural powers and often given presents or beneficial treatment. There is a reason for this. Idols and masks of idols are representative of something! 1 Corinthians 10:19-21 says, *“What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and the table of devils.”* So the Bible tells us that idols represent demons, “demon” being the actual word used in the original Greek text. Offerings of food are offerings of food to demons; the trick or treating of today is reminiscent of that practice. In fact, trick or treating children often masquerade as demons. Food is given these children under the guise of a “trick or a treat.” It has become a recent phenomenon that adults participate in these activities, a strange shadow of what transpired 2,000 years earlier.

5. CARVED PUMPKIN

Virtually everyone in this country has either made or seen a jack-o’ lantern. These macabre, grinning pumpkins with candles inside often light the way of the errant ghost seeking his or her candy. Have you ever wondered where the idea for the jack-o’ lantern originated? This, too, was a Celtic invention used during the ritual of Samhain or Halloween. In the United States, the jack-o’ lantern is a carved pumpkin. The orange, grinning, candle-filled lamp of Halloween is extremely popular and may be observed virtually anywhere in the United States at Halloween. The use of a pumpkin for the jack-o’lantern is an invention of the American Indian. In Europe, where the concept for the jack-o’lantern was conceived, it is not a pumpkin but rather a carved-out turnip. The switch was made in America because, besides being much larger than the turnip, the pumpkin is easier to carve. The turnip was the original jack-o’lantern, and here is the earliest known tale of how it originated.

The tale of the jack-o’lantern is, in several ways, reminiscent of the classical tale of Dr. Faustus in world literature. A blacksmith by the name of Jack made a contract with Satan. The deal contained a trade-off. Jack the blacksmith would be given powers by Satan that would make him the best blacksmith in the world for a period of seven years. In return, Satan would demand Jack’s soul at the end of this seven-year period. Jack thus received the powers and hung a sign outside his shop proclaiming himself the master of all masters.

As the story goes, one day the Son of God came to the shop, accompanied by the apostle Peter. The sign had indicated that the owner was in need of religious indoctrination. Thus, the two worked several miracles - to no avail - in Jack’s presence. Peter then offered Jack three wishes, which Jack immediately seized upon. Santino writes: first, he wished that whenever he told someone to climb a nearby pear tree that person would have to stay in the tree until Jack allowed him to come down. He made the same wishes regarding his armchair and his purse: one must stay in them until Jack allowed him to go. ‘You have wished very foolishly,’ said Saint Peter. ‘You should have wished for everlasting peace in Heaven.’

Nevertheless, Jack used these three wishes to trick the Devil when he came to take his soul. Each time the Devil came, Jack tricked him into climbing the tree, sitting in his chair, and finally shrinking himself and entering his purse. Each time, the Devil gave Jack seven years in return for his freedom, and finally he simply fled in terror.

Jack could not live forever, however, and one day he died. When presented at heaven’s Pearly Gates, Peter would not allow Jack inside. Denied entrance into heaven, Jack went to hell. At the gates of hell, Satan refused Jack entrance, saying that Jack was full of too many tricks and would cause mischief. Satan then ordered the gates of hell closed. But before Jack was thrown out, he managed to scoop out a burning coal from the fires of hell with a turnip he had been eating. As this coal came from hell, it was eternal and would never be extinguished. Thus, Jack, who was denied entrance into heaven and hell, was doomed to roam the earth with his peculiar lantern, his Jack-o’ lantern, if you will.

6. CONCLUSION

The Halloween festival became fully established in America after the huge influx of Irishmen as a result of the great Irish potato famine of 1846. America, in that era, was quite religious, and so the stories of fairies and leprechauns, as well as demons and ghosts, were accepted as fact. Religious beliefs aside, those less well-educated tend to be more superstitious - at least that was the prevalent thinking of the early to mid-twentieth century. In America, those who were the most superstitious were also the least-educated; the American Indian, the Negro, and poor white settlers in Appalachian and Ozark regions tended to take superstitions very seriously indeed. Other than these groups, belief in the Bible as the Word of God confirmed, as a matter of course, the existence of ghosts and demons. Education - as taught in the mid-twentieth century until the present - has become increasingly secular and anti-supernatural in thinking. Studies in the occult, from both religious and purely academic points of view, have shown a marked increase in the numbers and efforts of satanists in the latter part of this century. By satanist, we include such practices as witchcraft, following pagan religions, charmers, necromancers, and other practices of the black arts.

According to Paul Lee Tann's Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, Satan worship and all forms of the occult is evident everywhere. It is estimated that there are a least 100 million Americans who dabble in some form of Black Magic.

No, the occult is not dead. In fact, the occult is currently probably stronger than at any time since the Dark Ages. Zombies are no laughing matter in Haiti, any more than demons are to Christians; and who is to say in what form demonic power can manifest itself? Astrology, chiefest of the black arts among Americans, has skyrocketed in popularity since the 1960s. According to the Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, Americans spend over \$200 million a year on astrology alone. A 1976 Gallup Poll indicated that those who take astrology seriously may number as many as 32 million . . . It is estimated that 1,200 of the 1,700 U.S. daily newspapers regularly print horoscope columns. The evil world of the occult wages an ongoing assault against Christianity.

We believe revival of witchcraft and the black arts is indicative of the end times. Satan knows the time of Christ's return is near, and he is mustering all of his forces to engage in a battle he has lost already. Let no one doubt that witchcraft and sorcery are very real. The number of occult-related murders has been on the increase in this country for more than a generation. Moreover, one of the most significant occult dates of all - the one favored for the Black Mass - is Halloween, celebrated the last day of October in our nation. On college campuses and universities today, Anton LaVey's Satanic Bible is often a best-seller - in some cases, out-selling the Bible itself.

It is of great importance to realize that the powers some claim are not powers of themselves; real sorcery relies on demonic or Satanic power. Ephesians 6:12 states: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* There is, in conclusion, only one way to win against Satan; that is victory through Christ Jesus.

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