

HALLOWEEN

OCTOBER 31

**Have no fellowship
with the unfruitful
works of darkness,
but rather
reprove them.**

Ephesians 5 v 11

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Forward

In an article about Halloween, The Times newspaper commented on October 31, 2003 ‘We have benefited from a host of American imports, but not this one.’ It deplored the fact that for many children Halloween had usurped November the fifth, Guy Fawkes night, and called for a reversion to British traditions.

We see young children dressed up in the trappings of witchcraft. We witness the commercial exploitation—shop counters filled with these items and clearly doing a lucrative trade. We have our door bells rung for what The Times calls ‘begging with menaces.’ Our children may be subject to peer pressure to join in. They may be encouraged at school to undertake activities with Halloween implications. It is widely embraced in the media. We see a generation being raised who are taught by parents and those that they trust from an early age that this is acceptable, this is harmless, this is fun.

Should Christians be concerned? Celebrating Guy Fawkes night with fireworks can harm the body. What of the potential emotional, mental and spiritual harm of Halloween? Some Christians apparently have no difficulty with these customs. Others do worry. An experienced headmistress of a Church of England primary school was concerned enough about the effect on impressionable young minds to write to all parents warning of the dangers.

This booklet has been called for by a number of concerned parents. They, in love, seek the Lord’s help to instruct and protect their children and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Its intention is to inform from generally recognized authoritative sources and above all to warn, in love, from the Word of God.

History

Celtic

Around the times chronologically of the last books of the Old Testament—Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah and Malachi—a people were migrating from Europe to settle in the British Isles. These Celtic tribes lived from mixed farming and brought with them their men of religion, learning and magic—the druids. Around the 2nd century BC Celts also migrated to Turkey and these became known as Galatians.

The Celts, led by their druid priests worshipped many gods. One of these was the sun god. They believed that during the winter the sun god was taken prisoner by Samhain (pronounced ‘Sowayne’), their lord of the dead and prince of darkness. This then ushered in the season of darkness and cold.

Halloween can be traced back to the Celtic festival of Samhain. The eve of Samhain marked the end of summer and was held on October 31. The new year began with the festival of Samhain on November 1. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes Samhain as ‘one of the most important and sinister calendar festivals of the Celtic year.’ It also states that ‘Samhain was an important precursor to Halloween.’

On the eve of Samhain huge bonfires were lit on the tops of hills to frighten away evil spirits, since the souls of the dead were supposed to visit their homes. The Celts believed that the world of the gods was visible to mankind and demons of all kinds were roaming about, including witches, fairies and ghosts.

They believed bad spirits would take the form of animals, the worst of all being black cats. It was a time of real fear and danger, since the people thought the spirits and gods played all sorts of tricks on them. Celts left out portions of food, including nuts, as presents to try to appease the spirits—the origin of the present day trick or treat.

The druids also taught that it was the time to worship the powers that controlled nature. It was the only day of the year on which they could call for the help of the devil and carry out favourable divinations concerning health and death, marriage and luck.

The November 1 festival lasted for three days and honoured both Samhain and the sun god. Celts would wear costumes made from skins and the heads of their animals, since the grazing season was over and the flocks were culled. BBC History states that ‘Samhain was a transitional period, when the spirits could pass between two worlds—this pagan tradition still continues in our society today, at Halloween.’

Roman

When the Romans occupied Britain they brought with them their own festivals and customs. One of these, held around November 1, was the festival to honour Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit trees. It is believed that ducking for apples in tubs of water, sometimes associated with Halloween, originated from this festival.

Catholic

The next influence came from the spread of the Roman Catholic religion in Europe and Britain. In 835 AD the Pope decreed November 1 as a church holiday—or holy day—to honour all the saints. It was called All Saints Day, or Hallowmas, or All Hallows—with October 31 a holy or hallowed evening. Later November 2 was added as All Souls Day to honour the dead. The season was celebrated with big bonfires, parades and people dressing up as saints, angels and devils.

October 31—now a mixture of Celtic, Roman and Catholic influence—became known as All Hallow Even, then All Hallow’s Eve and eventually Halloween.

Reformation

In 1517 Martin Luther nailed to the church door at Wittenberg in Germany his famous statement of criticisms against the Catholic Church and the effects spread across Europe to reach England. Since Protestants did not believe in the Catholic saints there was no need to celebrate All Saints Day and for the most part the English stopped celebrating Halloween.

With the arrest and execution of Guy Fawkes in November 1606 a new English autumn ceremony emerged which remained unchallenged until later in the twentieth century.

In Ireland however the old influence of Halloween lived on. It also lived on in Scotland in poetry and games, when young people assembled to see who would marry during the year and in what order. Scots used a hollowed-out turnip carved in the appearance of a demonic face with a lighted candle inside. The intention was to frighten away evil spirits from around homes. This tradition became in the United States the pumpkin lantern.

United States

The influence of the early Protestant settlers in New England long limited any Halloween celebrations. However in the southern colonies the influence of a mix of different European ethnic groups and American Indians led to parties to celebrate the harvest, share stories of the dead, tell ghost stories and fortunes, and to dance and sing.

America was flooded with new immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century. These included millions fleeing the terrible Irish potato famine of 1846. The traditions of the southern colonies and Irish immigrants mixed, including dressing up in costumes and going from house to house asking for food or money, now called trick or treat. The occasion was used by boys and young men as an excuse for vandalism, breaking windows and overturning sheds and outhouses.

Halloween evolved into an American traditional holiday mainly aimed at the young. Today it is estimated that Americans spend nearly \$7 billion dollars a year on Halloween.

Britain Today

The influence of Guy Fawkes night, particularly with big family bonfire parties has waned, and Halloween has not been slow to fill the gap. There is also increased interest in the occult with material being much more readily available in books for adults and children, the internet, computer games, films, video, DVD and television. Schools may try to remove any religious significance from Christmas and Easter but encourage children to dabble in Halloween, despite its clear occult origins. Not least, as in America, there is the profit that can be made from promoting the sale of Halloween products largely aimed at children.

But Halloween remains controversial. At least one broadsheet newspaper has questioned it. Numerous leaflets warn against it. A teachers' organisation has consistently highlighted the dangers. Authoritative research sources point to the clear pagan origins. Books have been written detailing the dark associations. At the end of this booklet is a copy of a warning issued to all Head Teachers of London schools by the then school inspectors some twenty years ago. The warning is as necessary today as it was when it was written. But above all what does one book say—that which Almighty God caused to be written?

What Does The Bible Say?

The reality of Satan is ridiculed by many today. They feel they can then dabble in Halloween and all the things of darkness clearly associated with it and solemnly they encourage their children to do so too. But the Word of God is abundantly clear. We read of the devil, his power to tempt and the awful consequences of evil from Genesis to The Revelation.

Old Testament

Some 3,500 years ago the Lord knew the dangers and temptations His people and their children would meet and warned: ‘When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 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 any enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, (*one who casts spells*) or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer (*one that consults with the dead*).’ (Deuteronomy 18) We need to so heed today the solemn, comprehensive warning that follows ‘For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord.’

In the time of the Kings we read the consequences of disobedience: “And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight’ (2 Kings 17)

In King Saul’s day we read of the solemn, awful consequences when Saul visited a woman with a familiar spirit—that is a witch—and consulted with the dead. Samuel told Saul of his death, the deaths of his sons and the defeat of the host of Israel the very next day. (1 Samuel 28)

The Gospels

Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell us of the devil tempting the Lord Jesus. The Gospels speak of Jesus casting out devils, of His warning to Peter ‘Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you...’ and of His loving encouragement ‘But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not’ (Luke 22). The same chapter in Luke tells of the Lord’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and of His telling words ‘but this is your hour, and the power of darkness’.

But when the Lord rose again from the dead he triumphed over the power of death and the grave. He redeemed—from sin, Satan, and the grave. ‘Jesus came and spake...All power is given unto me in heaven and earth.’ (Matthew 28)

There is an old military lesson: never underestimate your enemy. Peter could speak from experience ‘Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour’ (1 Peter 5).

How we need the Lord to help us pray ‘And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil’ (Matthew 6).

Paul’s Epistle to The Galatians

Galatia was a huge Roman province extending through central Turkey. Acts chapters 13 and 14 tell us that Paul founded four churches in southern Galatia. Acts chapters 16 and 18 record two follow up visits.

The original Galatians in New Testament times were three Celtic tribes living in the north of Galatia. From the Celtic history in the origins of Halloween, we know of their witchcraft and pagan worship. The Lord knew of the origins of the Galatians and their tendencies. Should we find it remarkable that Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote in Galatians chapter 3 the question ‘O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you...?’ The word bewitched in the original means fascinated by false things.

Again, in Galatians chapter 5 when the works of the flesh are listed, witchcraft is included, the only time that word is used in the New Testament. Witchcraft in the original Greek language also meant magic and sorcery. Does not this question and the accompanying warning have

a particularly relevance to those of these islands today with similar Celtic tendencies?

The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 19 tells us solemn things when ‘certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus... And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so they fled out of that house naked and wounded.’

The same chapter goes on to show the blessed effects of the gospel ‘and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men...So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.’

Finally

The reality of the devil and the power of evil forces is clearly shown in the Scriptures. Equally the history of Halloween clearly points to its pagan origins. Whilst some of the traditions seen today may appear harmless on the surface, Christian parents will be concerned to keep their children from any activities which might lead them further into the real dangers of evil practices. Paul warned the Thessalonians ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil.’ (1 Thes 5)

Paul also wrote to the Colossians ‘Touch not; taste not; handle not’ (Colossians 2). At the end of his life he wrote movingly and lovingly to ‘my dearly beloved son’ Timothy: ‘But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.’ (1 Timothy 6). We pray therefore to be kept and guided on suitable teaching and activities for our children and young people.

Jeremiah prayed ‘let not me be dismayed’ and he proved ‘thou art my hope in the day of evil’ (Jeremiah 17). Above all may we remember great words of encouragement the Lord Jesus spoke to Peter concerning Himself ‘upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ Matthew 16

WARNING BY INSPECTORS OF THE INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY ON OCCULTISM IN SCHOOLS, MARCH 1986

To: Head Teachers in all Schools

Dear Colleague,

The Education Officer receives a small but continuous stream of letters from parents who are concerned that their children's interest in the occult is being stimulated by aspects of their education. This may involve reading schemes which involve ghosts, teaching about witches, computer games with a strong 'fear' element, celebration of Hallowe'en and direct teaching about the occult. Something of the anxiety of parents may be gauged from the fact that a Christian organisation has just published and completely sold 50,000 copies of a pamphlet called *Danger Children at Play* within four weeks.

We have therefore met as an Inspectorate Committee to consider the matter and believe it would be helpful if we registered our concerns so that you may bear them in mind when deciding on your own policies.

We are concerned about **INACCURACY**. Many stories of witches, for example, fail to inform children that the term was often applied to women who lived alone and who were victims of superstition and cruelty.

We are concerned about the heightening of **CHILDREN'S FEARS**. Although there is a view that when children's fears are stimulated by frightening stories in a controlled setting, it enables them to learn to face fears outside of such support, we are aware of children who have been badly frightened by stories and other activities even to the point where it has caused severely disturbed behaviour.

We are concerned about **INSENSITIVITY**. Many religious believers [Christians, Jews and Muslims for example] believe that there is a spiritual reality which lies behind this world and that there are forces of evil as well as good. They believe that it is possible for children's interest in the occult to be stimulated by games, festivities and stories which involve some kind of emotional reaction to the occult and that it is harmful to their children. They are not generally opposed to objective teaching about such elements—indeed this might be an important element in education—but they are concerned at what they feel to be encouragement or endorsing of occult practices.

We hope these points will help you in what appears to be a growing area of concern.

Yours sincerely,

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**This letter was issued by the ILEA
Inspectorate [note NOT the Authority]**

Main Sources:

Encyclopaedia Britannica Deluxe CD2000

The Bible—Authorised (King James) Version

The Lion Handbook to the Bible—2002 Edition

www.bbc.co.uk/history

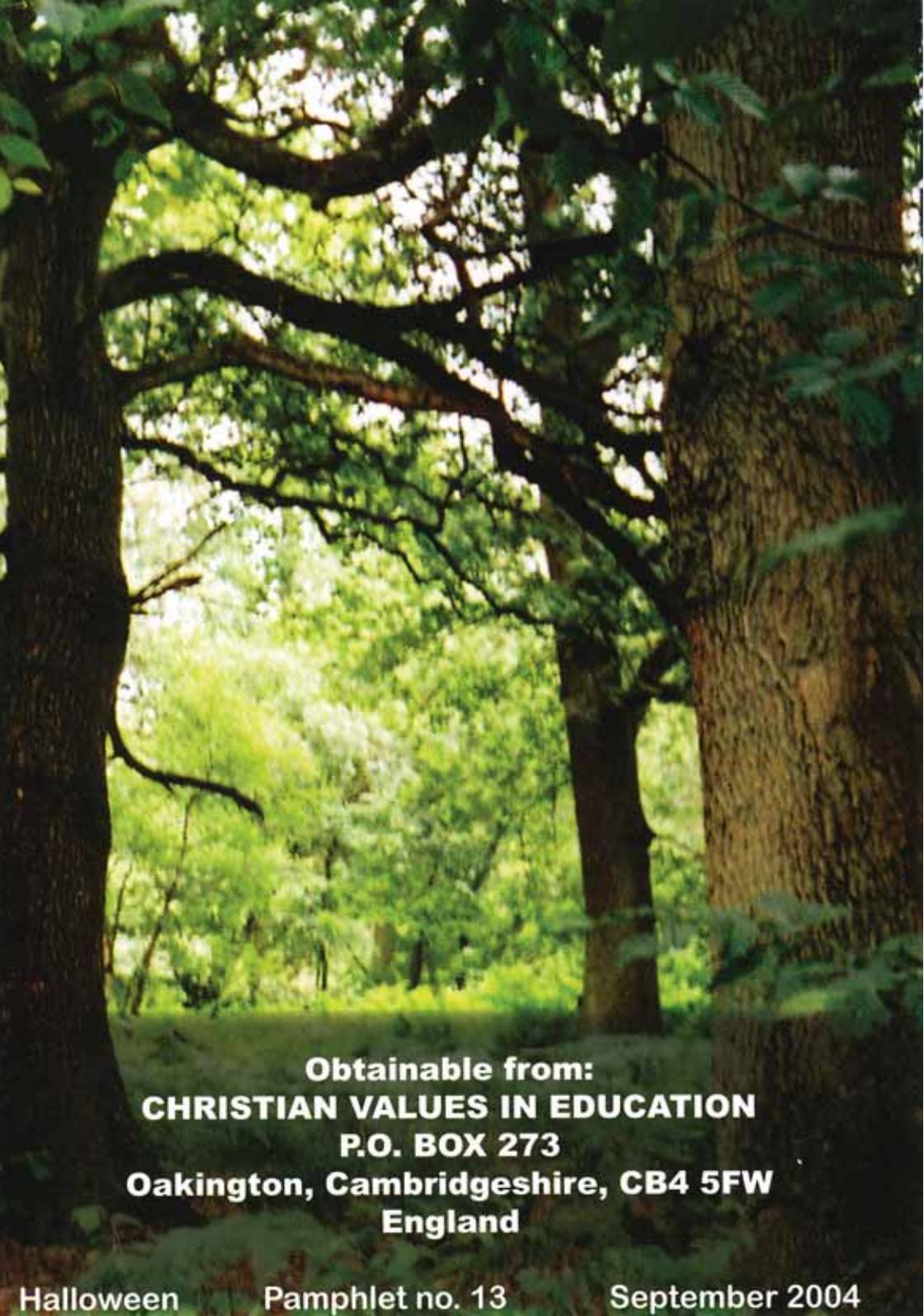
www.christian-teachers.org

www.historychannel.com

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