



Halloween

...*harmless fun*

A trivial pursuit?

A telephone poll of 1,005 adults took place in America between 21 and 24 October, 1999. The following three statistics, among others, were revealed:

- Around 30% said they believed in ghosts – up from 15% in a poll 20 years previous
- 20% said they believe in witches – up from 10%
- Almost 90% said that they had no objections to Halloween on religious grounds.

It appears that, to many, ghosts and witches – the theme of Halloween – pose no threat to true spirituality. Or, at least, that Halloween is just fun and has no spiritual meaning.

Christians need to sound the warning: the occult practices demonstrated at Halloween are potentially dangerous

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'trivial' as *Of small value or importance... Giving rise to no difficulty or interest*. In the light of this, we might do well to ask whether Halloween celebrations trivialise the occult.

Playing with fire

I remember talking with a Wiccan – a 'white witch' – who said that the same power that is behind white witchcraft is behind black witchcraft. The difference is simply about the way that this power is manipulated and used. This, of course, is the storyline of *Star Wars* – one power, used for good in one character and evil in another.

White witches will tell you they only use their spells for good (although that is debatable). They, and others into occult practices, believe that the same power can be used for very evil black arts. As such, is it really possible to trivialise such beliefs and practices?

By very definition, the power of the occult is supernatural and greater than the person seeking to use and manipulate it. But how can I know that I will always be able to control the 'beast' and that one day it will not turn round and bite me? Or to change the metaphor, if I play with fire long enough, in the end I will be burned!

On the files of Reachout Trust we have many examples of people who started to explore the occult for fun or because it appeared to give them power, only to find, a number of months down the road, that they were not in control of the power. Instead, the power was in control of them. Anyone believing they can always control this supernatural power is mistaken!

Trick or treat?

So far then, we have seen that we trivialise the occult at our peril. But is this really the power behind Halloween? Surely it's all about hollowed-out pumpkins and scary costumes, not supernatural powers that might do us harm?

Interestingly, there are two faces to Halloween (which shouldn't come as a surprise when we realise that the word 'occult' means 'hidden'). There is an outward face that the 'innocent' bystander sees and wonders what all the fuss is about, but underneath the veneered exterior is a different world altogether. It is sometimes hard to separate fact from fiction as far as Halloween is

Oween

or spiritual threat?

concerned, but there are some facts which are beyond dispute.

The celebration of Halloween goes back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced 'sow-en' or 'sah-ween'). It is a pagan celebration of the end of harvest and the beginning of winter. It signifies a season of death and dying.

It was on this night that many people thought that the barrier between the human and supernatural worlds was broken down. A common pagan belief was that the spirits of those who had died during the previous year could not go to their 'final resting place' but wandered the earth until they were properly prepared. To placate the spirits and send them on a one-way trip to the nether world they 'treated' them to food, drink, etc. If a spirit was not 'treated' well, it could 'trick' (or haunt) those who had neglected this preparation.

Witchcraft and darkness

In Celtic and Anglo-Saxon times this was also the eve of the New Year and bonfires were lit to ward off evil spirits. In other periods it was felt that this was a good evening to use divination to invoke the Devil's help concerning marriages, health, etc.

The history of Halloween is clearly one of witchcraft and darkness and, despite the fact that many reputable organisations (eg Cubs and Brownies, schools and churches) host Halloween parties, it is still, behind the scenes, a time for disturbing occult activity. Halloween is one of the main nights of the year for covens (both 'white' and 'black') to meet.

I believe that the public face of Halloween does trivialise the occult. I am not saying that everyone who goes to a Halloween party is going to be 'demon-possessed' (although in exceptional cases this might happen). I am simply arguing that the



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In the last 23 years the work of Reachout Trust has grown from a local outreach to an international work reaching out to all in the cults and occult. Most years they receive around 15,000 enquiries for help.

Each year Doug personally takes around 90 seminars informing and training those who want to be involved in the ministry as well as taking part in a number of TV and radio interviews.

He is also the author of several books, including *Occult Dangers Explained Safely*.

For full details about the Reachout Trust's ministry and publications go to: www.reachouttrust.org

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celebration of potentially dark supernatural power is not a trivial matter! Such power is potentially dangerous and certainly does not come from God.

'Smoking Kills' is writ large on every packet of cigarettes. Yet many millions of people choose to smoke despite the medical evidence presented. The fact that they ignore the warning does not mean the issue is trivial. Nor does it mean that giving such a warning is a complete waste of time.

I believe it is the same with Halloween. It is not a trivial matter. Whilst society may try and pretend there is nothing bad in it, the evidence shows otherwise and Christians need to sound the warning: the occult practices demonstrated at Halloween are potentially dangerous.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12

The Bible is clear in its warnings about the occult. In Deuteronomy 18:10-12 the Lord tells His people not to follow the ways of the occult that the nations around them were involved in. He knows where involvement in such practices will lead and instructs them not even to start on that road. But what if we have been trivialising, or dabbling in, the occult? Is there a way out? Yes, there is! But, because such involvement has led to a supernatural problem there needs to be a Supernatural answer.

The New Testament gives several examples of the proper Christian response to the occult and the way out for those who have been involved – see for instance Acts 16:16-18 and 19:13-16, 19. The power of the occult is supernatural with a small 's' but the power of God is Supernatural with a big 'S'. God has the answer but we need to turn our back on the things we have been involved with and seek Him for deliverance.