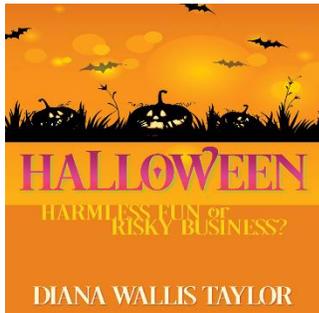


OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS @OBSERVING HALLOWEEN

by **David Lee Burris**



HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN



Halloween has never been a religious holiday. It has always encompassed witchcraft, pagan rituals, and strange beliefs, with a few Christian customs thrown in the mix. Some Christian groups call it the “devil’s birthday.” It began as a pagan New Year’s celebration and evolved into a harvest festival, a merchant’s heyday, a time for fall parties and a chance for children to satiate themselves with candy.

Historians believe that Halloween began with a group of people called the Celts, who came from Asia and settled in northern France and the British Isles. They mined, farmed, worked with metals, built roads, used medicine, and had a legal system, among other things. Their priestly class was the Druids. While they worshipped hundreds of deities, they did not keep written records. Some inscriptions in Greek, Latin, and Irish—much of which was recorded by early monks—reveal some information about their celebrations and festivals. They were skilled in the occult arts (the word *occult* means something secret or hidden from those with ordinary knowledge) and worshipped nature, attributing supernatural qualities to it. They also believed that they could be reborn as animals.

They worshipped over four hundred gods, including the sun god, Belenus, and the lord of the dead, Samhain, the chief Druid deity. The former was worshiped on May 1, and the latter on October 31, and both were times for human sacrificing. The victims were chosen by lot in the form of bits of cake handed out to the people. The piece with the black bottom, deliberately burned beforehand, identified the hapless victim who was to be offered to the gods to insure the fertility of their herds, a good harvest, or victory when they went to war.

The holiday of Samhain was a time to settle debts and to pay taxes, much like our tax day, April 15. It was the end of summer and the beginning of winter. They gathered up their crops and brought in their livestock from the fields. They slaughtered their cattle and pigs to serve as food for the winter, leaving only their breeding stock alive for the next year.

The Celts gathered at Tara, the seat of ancient kings, for playing sports, paying taxes, and delivering justice to those guilty of crimes. Those who were found guilty of particularly grave crimes were executed.

Before the eve of Samhain, the Celts extinguished their home hearth fires and constructed bonfires on a nearby hill. Embers from these fires were distributed to each household, and a tax was collected for the service. In the days leading up to the Celtic New Year, young children would approach their neighbors and ask them to donate materials to fuel these fires, which were known to ward off evil spirits and “rejuvenate” the sun.³

The Druids believed in an afterlife, and that on the night before the New Year, October 31, the door was opened to the underworld. The Celtic day began when the sun went down; so, as darkness fell on October 31, the people began the ceremonies honoring Samhain, the lord of the dead. They believed that on this night, the dead came back to life and that fairylike creatures crossed over into the land of the living to bedevil human beings.

Samhain was believed to summon the souls of the dead who had committed evil and had been condemned to enter the bodies of animals. It was on this sacred day that Samhain decided which souls would advance, in a sense, by being reincarnated as humans, and which ones would remain in the bodies of animals. The Druids believed they could lessen the punishment heaped on their loved ones by praying and offering sacrifices to Samhain.

Furthermore, on this night, Samhain allowed the souls of those who had died the previous year to return to earth for a few hours to associate once more with their families. As a result, **the Celts taught that on October 31, ghosts, evil spirits, and witches roamed the earth. Large bonfires were lit to frighten away these demonic spirits, which were believed to play tricks on humans and cause supernatural manifestations. People dressed up in animal skins to chase away the spirits and wild animals that might try to approach them during the celebration. This practice may have been the beginning of the tradition of dressing in costume on Halloween.**

Women dressed as men, and men dressed as women, to fool the evil spirits. Others put on grotesque masks and danced around these great bonfires, pretending to be chased by evil spirits, or the evil dead. Some people would dress in masks and costumes to “trick” evil spirits into thinking they were someone else, so that they would leave them and their townsfolk alone. But they would set out food and drinks to welcome the good souls.

At the time of this New Year, fortune-telling and divination (the magic art of interpreting the unknown from random patterns and symbols) were prevalent. The feast of Samhain was a holiday to peer into the future, to divine fate, and to communicate with the supernatural. One way they foretold the future was by sacrificing animals and observing their innards.

Around 600 bc, in the Dark Ages and early Middle Ages, Catholicism began to spread Christianity throughout the Celtic world. Pope Gregory III changed the date of the feast of the martyrs to November 1, the date of Samhain, and indicated that it was to be a celebration of all the saints of the church, not just the martyrs. So, the Church sought to replace pagan customs by making November 1 All Saints’ Day, and November 2 All Souls’ Day. Instead of praying to their pagan gods, they were now admonished to remember the deaths of the saints and to pray for them in order to help them escape the torments of purgatory (a place *supposedly* where deceased sinners go to be rid of their sins prior to going to heaven).

The Druids believed in something like purgatory, as mentioned earlier, and that the sinful souls of those who had died and had been relegated to the bodies of animals could be freed to enter heaven by their gifts and sacrifices. Only Samhain could judge these souls and decree what form of body, whether of a human being or an animal, they could inhabit.

On All Souls' Day in Belgium, people eat special "all souls' cakes" and believe that with each one they eat, they save a soul from purgatory. In Sicily, they eat cakes that resemble skulls and skeletons. In France, people pray for those who are in purgatory.

On the "Day of All Saints," November 1, the church service or mass was celebrated as "All-hallow-mas." The night before this mass was called "All Hallowed Evening." It became "All Hallows' Eve," and then, when "All" was dropped, it was shortened to "Halloween." Again, it was a deliberate attempt to replace the pagan holiday of Samhain with a "Christian" holiday. The priests encouraged their parishioners to remember the dead with prayers rather than sacrifices. The first recorded Roman Catholic celebration of Halloween was the "Festyvall" of 1511 in England.

There has been controversy among historians over how much Samhain really contributed to the modern celebration of Halloween, but a study of the Celtic festivals, pagan rites, and beliefs shows how much of this holiday is retained in our present celebrations.

Both Henry VIII and his daughter Queen Elizabeth I considered All Saints' Day a papal holiday and tried issuing proclamations to eradicate it. Bell ringers continued a superstitious ringing of the bells on All Hallows' Eve, starting in the evening and lasting all night long. Henry VIII tried fining them, but the bells continued to ring as the people perpetuated their occult beliefs.

3. Ankerberg, John, John Weldon, and Dillon Burroughs, *The Facts on Halloween* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996, 2008), 10.¹



¹ Taylor, D. W. (2014). [Halloween: harmless fun or risky business?](#) New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

Similar beliefs among Druids and Roman Catholics

Ancient pagan Druids believed in a purgatory concept:

The Celts believed that the sinful souls of those who had died during the year had been relegated to the bodies of animals. Through gifts and sacrifices their sins could be expiated and the souls freed to claim a heavenly reward. Samhain judged the souls and decreed in what form their existence was to continue, whether in the body of a human being or in an animal.

Yet there are additional historic and contemporary examples of how Halloween and purgatory evolved from pagan practices and are related:

- In the Middle Ages on All Souls' Day, the poor would go begging for soul cakes, which could be given as payment for prayers they had promised to say for the dead.
- In the late 1800s, it was customary for English Catholics to assemble at midnight on Halloween and pray for the souls of their departed friends. "The custom was observed in every Catholic farm in the district, but was gradually given up." One individual would light a bundle of straw and throw it into the air with his pitchfork; short prayers were said while the straw was lit and thrown. When asked about it, "my grandfather replied that it was to represent the holy souls escaping from Purgatory to Heaven."
- On November 2 in Belgium, people eat special "All Souls' cakes" because, supposedly, "the more cakes you eat on this night, the more souls you can save from Purgatory." Where does the Bible suggest this?

- In France, All Souls' Day (*Le Jour des Morts*) "is dedicated to prayers for the dead who are not yet glorified."
- "In Sicily, on All Souls' Day, cakes with images of skulls and skeletons are eaten."
- A popular Halloween song in today's Philippines goes, "...ordinary souls we are, from Purgatory we have come. And there we are duty-bound to pray by night and day. If alms you are to give, be in a hurry please for the door of heaven may close on us forever."
- Ruth Hutchison and Ruth Adams report that in earlier times people took special loaves of bread called "souls" to the cemeteries, placing them on the graves. The people ate these "soul cakes" because they were thought to serve as a powerful antidote against any flames of purgatory "that might be invoked by returning ghosts. At dusk the festival changed from All Saints' Day to All Souls' Eve. Lit candles were placed on graves and in windows, to guide the dead back home."

These examples illustrate how Halloween is related both to ancient Celtic practice and the Catholic concept of purgatory. Significantly, the Lutheran Church dedicated October 31, or the Sunday nearest it, to be the date commemorating the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In Martin Luther's time, the corrupt practice of buying indulgences for the dead "suffering in purgatory" was common. Appropriately, in 1517, on Halloween day itself, Luther took his 95 Theses, which attacked the concept of selling indulgences to free those in purgatory, and nailed them to the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany.²

² Ankerberg, J., Weldon, J., & Burroughs, D. (2008). [*The facts on halloween*](#) (pp. 21–23). Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers.

Are the specific customs of Halloween related to pagan beliefs?

Since Halloween itself originated in paganism, it is not surprising that its customs are related to pagan belief. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,

In ancient Britain and Ireland, the Celtic Festival of Samhain was observed on October 31, at the end of summer.... The souls of the dead were supposed to revisit their homes on this day and the autumnal festival acquired sinister significance, with ghosts, witches, goblins, black cats, fairies and demons of all kinds said to be roaming about. It was the time to placate the supernatural powers controlling the processes of nature. In addition, Halloween was thought to be the most favorable time for divinations concerning marriage, luck, health, and death. It was the only day on which the help of the devil was invoked for such purposes.

Halloween symbols, customs, and practices undoubtedly have had a variety of influences upon Western culture throughout history. However, in early American history, Halloween was not celebrated due to America's strong Christian heritage. It was not widely observed until the twentieth century.

Initially, it was practiced only in small Irish Catholic settlements, until thousands of Irish migrated to America during the great potato famine and brought their customs with them.

To some degree, our modern Halloween is an Irish holiday with early origins in the Celtic winter festival. Interestingly, in American culture, the rise in popularity of Halloween also coincides roughly with the national rise in spiritism that began in 1848.

Irish Holiday. Ireland is the only place in the world where Halloween is actually a national holiday (celebrated with fireworks); children are even released from school for the week.

Where did the jack-o'-lantern originate?

The carved pumpkin may have originated with the witches' use of a collection of skulls with a candle in each to light the way to coven meetings. But among the Irish, who, as noted, prompted the popularization of Halloween in America, the legend of "Irish Jack" explains the jack-o'-lantern. According to the legend, a stingy drunk named Jack tricked the devil into climbing an apple tree for an apple, but then cut the sign of a cross into the trunk of the tree to prevent the devil from coming down. Jack then forced the devil to swear he would never come after Jack's soul. The devil reluctantly agreed.

Jack eventually died, but he was turned away at the gates of heaven because of his drunkenness and life of selfishness. He was sent to the devil, who also rejected him, keeping his promise.

Since Jack had no place to go, he was condemned to wander the earth. As he was leaving hell (he happened to be eating a turnip), the devil threw a live coal at him. He put the coal inside the turnip and has since forever been roaming the earth with his “jack-o’-lantern” in search of a place to rest. Eventually, **pumpkins replaced turnips since it was much easier to symbolize the devil’s coal inside a pumpkin.**

How did the tradition of trick-or-treating begin?

There are several ancient practices that point to this tradition. One possibility is from the notion that ancient witches had to steal the materials needed for their festivals. The Druids may have believed that witches held this day to be special, something clearly true for modern witches.

The idea of trick-or-treating is further related to the ghosts of the dead in pagan, and even Catholic, history. For example, among the ancient Druids, “The ghosts that were thought to throng about the houses of the living were greeted with a banquet-laden table. At the end of the feast, masked and costumed villagers representing the souls of the dead paraded to the outskirts of town leading the ghosts away.”

As already noted, Halloween was thought to be a night when mischievous and evil spirits roamed freely. As in modern poltergeist lore, mischievous spirits could play tricks on the living—so it was advantageous to “hide” from them by wearing costumes.

Masks and costumes were worn to either scare away the ghosts or to keep from being recognized by them:

In Ireland especially, people thought that ghosts and spirits roamed after dark on Halloween. They lit candles or lanterns to keep the spirits away, and if they had to go outside, they wore costumes and masks to frighten the spirits or to keep from being recognized by these unearthly beings.

Where did Halloween costumes originate?

Besides the reasons given above, Halloween masks and costumes were used to hide one's attendance at pagan festivals or—as in traditional shamanism and other forms of animism—to change the personality of the wearer to allow for communication with the spirit world. Here, costumes could be worn to ward off evil spirits. On the other hand, the costume wearer might use a mask to try to attract and absorb the power of the animal represented by the mask and costume worn. According to this scenario, Halloween costumes may have originated with the Celtic Druid ceremonial participants, who wore animal heads and skins to acquire the strength of a particular animal.

Added tradition explaining the origin of Halloween costumes comes from the medieval **Catholic practice of displaying the relics of saints** on All Saints' Day.

“The poorer churches could not afford relics and so instituted a procession with parishioners dressed as the patron saints; the extras dressed as angels or devils and everyone paraded around the churchyard.”

As for the “trick” custom of Halloween, this is related to the idea that ghosts and witches created mischief on this particular night. For example, if the living did not provide food, or “treats,” for the spirits, then the spirits would “trick” the living. People feared terrible things might happen to them if they did not honor the spirits. The Druids also believed that failure to worship their gods would bring dire consequences. If the gods were not treated properly in ritual, they would seek vengeance. People soon realized that a mischievous sense of humor, or even malevolence, could be camouflaged—that they could perform practical jokes on or do harm to others and blame it on the roaming ghosts or witches.

What’s the significance of Halloween fruits & nuts?

In the Roman fest of Pomona, cider was drawn and the Romans bobbed for apples, which was part of a divination that supposedly helped a person discover their future marriage partner.

How did we get the tradition telling ghost stories?

It became a natural expression of Halloween to tell ghost stories when dead souls were believed to be everywhere, and good, mischievous, and evil spirits roamed freely.³

³ Ankerberg, J., Weldon, J., & Burroughs, D. (2008). [*The facts on halloween*](#) (pp. 14–19). Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers.

TRICK OR TREAT

For most children today, trick-or-treating is what Halloween is all about. We've heard those three words a thousand times from little costumed persons on our porches. But where did the phrase come from?

To learn the real story behind trick-or-treating, we must again go back to the Middle Ages. On the eves of All Saints' Day, November 1, and All Souls' Day, November 2, people went "mumming," or "guising," which consists of parading in costume, chanting rhymes, and playacting. This custom was originally associated with Christmas but was later attributed to Halloween.

Going "a-souling" meant going from door to door and offering prayers for the dead in exchange for treats. These treats were generally in the form of "soul cakes" and other sweets. In the 1880s, children in Great Britain and Ireland would go around to the houses on All Saints' Day and sing a little song (also called "souling"). Here are two versions I found:

**Soul day, soul day,
We be come a-souling;
Pray, good people, remember the poor,
And give us all a soul cake.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for Him who made us all.**

An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry,
Or any good thing to make us merry.
Soul day, soul day,
We have been praying
For the soul departed:
So pray, good people, give us a cake,
For we are all poor people,
Well known to you before;
So give us a cake for charity's sake,
And our blessing we'll leave at your door.
Soul! soul! a soul-cake!
Good mistress; gi' us a soul-cake!
One for Peter; one for Paul;
And one for Them [sic] as made us all.
An apple or a cherry
Or anything else to make us merry!
Go! good mistress! to the cellar;
And fetch us a pail o' water.
It is a good fame
To get a good name.

In Britain, youths wearing masks and sometimes carrying carved turnips lighted by live coals begged for pennies. In Ireland, farmers went from house to house, asking for food in the name of their ancient gods. The food was to be used for the village Halloween celebration.

Good luck or physical treats were promised to those who supplied goodies. “Give us something, or we will trick you,” they would threaten those whom they petitioned for treats.

In the mid-1800s, the potato blight in Ireland caused so many crops to fail that there wasn't enough food for families to eat. Irish immigrants fled to America to escape the great potato famine. They came by the thousands, searching for a better life, and they brought their own Halloween traditions to the United States. Half a million Scottish immigrants also brought their own Halloween customs to America. By then, mumming, or souling, was generally forgotten, and no one gave out soul cakes; but Halloween was soon pretty well established here.

In 1870, an article in *Godey's Lady's Book* portrayed Halloween as a holiday for English children. It talked of children entering a house by stepping over a broom in order to keep witches out. Then they would tell fortunes by various means, including pouring hot lead into water and “reading” the shapes that were formed. There were taffy pulls and the making of “fate” cakes, which were small pastries prepared and baked in silence and then put under a pillow to invoke dreams. The article was widely read, and it stimulated many readers to have similar parties of their own.

When the Great Depression of the 1920's hit, few families had extra money to spend, and one of the solutions was for neighbors to pool their resources and create one organized Halloween party. Groups of children were led from one house to the next, each home hosting a different activity. This event soon evolved into the popular tradition of trick-or-treating as we know it, when children go from house to house asking for treats.

There was a custom similar to trick-or-treating among the Pennsylvania Dutch communities called *Pelznickel*, from the German word *pelzen* ("to wallop") where costumed participants moved from house to house offering small "tricks" in exchange for treats of food.

After World War Two rationing was over, commercial candy was more readily available, and the modern custom of trick-or-treating spread through America.

In the 1940s and 1950s, merchants began to capitalize on the practice of trick-or-treating by selling elaborate costumes. In the past, costumes had been rather simple; popular choices were characters whose outfits could be assembled using old clothing, such as pirates, gypsies, hoboes, or bandits. But in the 1950s, when cheap rayon, vinyl, and plastic became available, the production of cheap masks and commercial costumes soared. It was no longer popular to be a ghost, using an old sheet, as had been done in kindergarten. Ghoulish masks and costumes became more and more graphic and scary.⁴

⁴ Taylor, D. W. (2014). [*Halloween: harmless fun or risky business?*](#) New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

APPLE BOBBING

The game of apple bobbing was popular for hundreds of years. It is thought that bobbing for apples was a divination game, part of the known customs of Halloween in early times. Some historians believe it began in the British Isles before the Romans brought Christianity, perhaps in Ireland and Scotland. Because Samhain was celebrated in October, the peak of the apple harvest, there were plenty of them to go around.

William Adams ascribed the divination use of this fruit to an “old Celtic fairy lore.” Here is how he described apple bobbing:

[Apples] are thrown into a tub of water, and you endeavour to catch one in your mouth as they bob round and round in provoking fashion. When you have caught one, you peel it carefully, and pass the long strip of peel thrice, *sunwise*, round your head; after which you throw it over your shoulder, and it falls to the ground in the shape of the initial letter of your true love’s name.¹⁶

People had a variety of ways of foretelling a person’s future with apples. One involved counting the number of seeds in an apple: two foretold an early marriage, and three revealed future riches. Sometimes, a piece of an apple was put under a person’s pillow to encourage prophetic dreams.

“Snap apple” is another game played on Halloween and is very similar to apple bobbing. The only difference is that the apples are tied on a string instead of placed in water. This is why Halloween used to be known as “Snap-Apple Night.” The person who got the first bite of apple was predicted to be the first one to marry.⁵

⁵ Taylor, D. W. (2014). [*Halloween: harmless fun or risky business?*](#) New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

JACK-O'-LANTERNS AND "IRISH JACK"

The seemingly harmless practice of carving pumpkins into what are called jack-o'-lanterns originated with the Celts. They carved turnips and put live coals inside of them to ward off evil spirits. Witches also placed candles inside human skulls and carried them with them on their journey to coven meetings.

The term "jack-o'-lantern" comes from an old Irish legend of a man known as Stingy Jack. As the story goes, Stingy Jack invited the devil to have a drink with him. True to his name, Stingy Jack didn't want to pay for his drink, so he convinced the devil to turn himself into a coin that Jack could use to buy their drinks. Once the devil did so, Jack decided to keep the money, and he put it into his pocket next to a silver cross. This prevented the devil from changing back into his original form. Jack eventually freed the devil, under the conditions that he would not bother Jack for one year and that, should Jack die, he would not claim his soul.

The next year, Jack again tricked the devil by convincing him to fetch him an apple in a tree. As the devil was climbing the tree, Jack carved a cross into the bark at the trunk to prevent the devil from coming back down. Then the devil was blackmailed, having to promise Jack that he wouldn't claim his soul for at least ten years.

When Jack died, God would not allow him into heaven because of the wicked life he had lived on earth. So, Jack went to the devil, but he wouldn't accept him either, keeping the promise he had made. As Jack turned to leave hell, the devil launched a hot coal at him, and, to light his way, Jack put the coal into a carved turnip he'd been eating. Legend has it that ever since, he's been homeless and wandering around with his jack-o'-lantern. Thus, **the jack-o'-lantern became the symbol of a lost soul.**⁶

⁶ Taylor, D. W. (2014). [*Halloween: harmless fun or risky business?*](#). New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

BLACK CAT BONE

Black cats are among the most-often-used figures to represent Halloween. They are shown hissing, with their backs arched and their fur standing up. Sometimes they are pictured riding with a witch on a broomstick.

Many of our superstitions of black cats, such as the one that admonishes us not to cross paths with a black cat to avoid bad luck, derive from the fear of these animals.

The ancient Druid priests believed that on the night before November 1, Samhain gathered together wicked spirits that had been condemned the year before. They considered cats to represent people who had committed wicked deeds in their lifetime and then were reincarnated as cats after death. Because most cats have a sort of aristocratic air about them, it is easy to understand why people attributed human traits to them.

During ancient Druid ceremonies, even in the Middle Ages, cats were burned in wicker cages in the November 1 fires—a gruesome thought, but then again, these were pagan peoples with superstitious beliefs.

The magic of the “black cat bone,” a lucky charm used in hoodoo, was a well-known superstition among the African Americans in the nineteenth century. After a period of fasting, they would catch a black cat and boil it alive at midnight; afterward, a hoodooist would examine its bones and identify which one had magic.

Halloween is a time when there is a large demand for cats, especially black ones.⁷

⁷ Taylor, D. W. (2014). [*Halloween: harmless fun or risky business?*](#) New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

Why After We Became Christians, My Family & I Chose To Cease Participation In Further Halloween Festivities

Anyone who takes on an objective and in-depth study of the origins of Halloween will soon find that many of them are easily traced back to the ancient druids or shaman who served as the priestly class of the ancient, pagan, Celtic religion. Modern man might refer to and picture them more in terms of something like “witch doctors,” or “medicine men.” Their beliefs included that of reincarnation; that is to say, that once a person dies they can come back to life again in a different body.

These druids were also polytheists, or believers in many and multiple gods. As polytheists they believed in a plethora of various and diversified “nature gods.” This included their so-called “sun-god,” Belenus, as well as Samhain, their so-called “lord of the dead.” The reason this becomes important to us is because their belief in Samhain necessitated human sacrifice; a bloody evil which was commonly practiced and which helped set the stage for some of the Halloween traditions we imitate today. Not only did they have full confidence in human sacrifice as a method of successful divination, but were actually reported to have burned alive scores of people at once whom they had imprisoned in large cages, believing the more the victims, the better their crop yield.

With the advent of the Celtic new year which both these pagan people as well as their druidic priests believed began on what is our November 1st, they also apparently believed that on the night before (our October 31st), or last night of the previous year, that Samhain, their “lord of the dead,” reincarnated all the ‘evil’ dead who had been condemned to enter the bodies of animals, at which time he decided what animal form they would inhabit in the coming year. The ‘good’ dead would at this time supposedly also be reincarnated as humans. The druids also apparently believed that the punishment of the ‘evil’ dead could somehow be abated somewhat by sacrifices, prayers, and gifts to Samhain. (A bribe of “buy-off” if you will. Later on, some of these pagan practices perpetuated themselves into the perverted Catholic doctrine of ‘purgatory,’ with its similar “pay-off to escape from punishment” sale of indulgences).

Druidic worshippers during this time sought to appease Samhain because of his perceived control and power over the souls of their dead loved ones from the past year in particular, believing that, for those who had died within the past year, Samhain granted their spirits a brief reprieve to return to visit their former families and places of habitation. Hence, they believed ghosts, evil spirits, and even witches abounded on this one unique and last night of the year. (Sound familiar?)

In order to honor their 'sun-god' Belenus and to help him to rejuvenate the sun – as well as to frighten away any evil spirits that might be lurking and looking to cause problems (because these evil spirits allegedly feared fire) – young boys would travel neighborhoods begging for any material available to help with the great bonfires. (This too, sounded very familiar and similar to certain Halloween activities it apparently spawned.) It is reported that up until fairly recently, Scottish hilltop Halloween fires were still reportedly referred to as 'Samhnagen' in Samhain's honor.

On this night, evil and frustrated ghosts were believed to play evil tricks on their human counterparts. In response, people donned grotesque masks and danced around these great bonfires, often pretending to be chased by evil spirits. While these fires were lit to 'scare away' supposedly 'evil' spirits, food was put out to make the ghosts or souls of the 'good' dead that Samhain had supposedly released feel welcome and at home.

Don't you find it incredibly interesting that during Halloween festivities, porch lights (as welcome fires) are turned on as a sign and to invite and make feel welcome those who have "donned grotesque masks" and are imitating any and all sorts of spirits to stop by and get some food in the form of welcome treats?

It is also notable that because this night was believed to be the entry point into a new year, an increased interest in divination and fortune telling for their futures also became an important part of this October 31st holiday! It might be appropriate at this time to backtrack for just a moment, into some of the Catholic Church's failed attempts to reform and refit this grotesque & gruesome holiday into something more... "glorious" and "God honoring," at least in their eyes...

In the middle ages the Catholic Church attempted to oppose the paganism of this satanic celebration of Samhain by superimposing November 1st with the tag "All Saints Day," and November 2nd as "All Souls Day," the former being promoted as a celebration of dead saints (according of course, to the corrupt unscriptural Catholic definition thereof) and especially those who had been martyred, while the latter, "All Souls Day," evolved into an annual day to pray for the dead in order to help them escape the torments of "purgatory" (which of course, once again, occurs absolutely nowhere in the sacred scriptures). In 835 Pope Gregory IV combined the two remembrance days into one, and November 1st, 'All Saints Day,' the day after Halloween ("Hallow's Eve" — later to be transformed into "Halloween") became a day dedicated by the Catholic Church, to the virgin Mary and their dead "saints."

Let us now carefully consider some of the very specific origins of some of those traditions and practices, and then honestly ask ourselves the question as Christians, **“Can we, who are to honor and glorify God in all things; and to do all things in the name and by the authority of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; truly, faithfully, and in good conscience to our Lord, really honor, glorify, and celebrate these things by our continued participation in them?”** (See: Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.)

1. Take for example, the practice of “trick or treat:” Going from door to door seeking treats may hail back to the Druid practice of begging material for the great bonfires. It is also related to the Catholic concept of purgatory and the custom of begging for a “soul cake” (for which actual recipes can be found online). A “soul cake” is a small round cake, somewhat like a biscuit, which was traditionally made for *All Souls’ Day* revelers to celebrate the dead. These plain cakes, often simply referred to as *souls*, were given out to children and beggars who would go from door to door during this period saying prayers and singing psalms for the dead. Traditionally, each cake eaten would represent a soul being freed from Purgatory. The practice of giving and eating soul cakes is often seen as the origin of modern-day *Trick or Treating*, which now falls on *Halloween*.

2. As for the “trick” custom of Halloween, this [term of extortion] is related to the idea that ghosts and witches created mischief on this particular night. For example, if the living did not provide food or “treats” for the spirits, then they would “trick” the living. People feared terrible things might happen to them if they did not honor the spirits. The Druids also believed failure to worship **their gods** would bring dire consequences: If **the demi-gods** were not treated properly in ritual, they would seek vengeance. Further, some people soon realized that a mischievous sense of humor could be camouflaged – that they could perform practical jokes on others and blame it on ghosts or witches [supposedly] roaming about.
3. In his article entitled, “Halloween,” Walter Porter reported: ***“Jack-o-lanterns are lamps lit by coals from hell carried by a man named Jack, who was a worthless drunk of long ago who used to make deals with the devil, so the story goes. He tricked the devil so often Satan refused to take him into Hell, and he was too worthless to go to Heaven. So now he roams the earth as a ghost carrying his lantern lit by a coal from hell.”*** (A further explanation of this origin was found elsewhere in the following: ***“The ancient custom of human sacrifice to appease the gods usually involved the town idiot or town drunk, who, being captured, was paraded around town all day in a cage and then sacrificed Halloween evening.”***)

4. Porter then also went on to report: ***“Another symbol of Halloween is the black cat. Black cats have a long history of association with evil. They were considered to be animals inhabited by the spirits of witches... A few days ago my wife told me she saw a television announcement from the local Animal Shelter warning residents about the coming Halloween. The announcement said for owners of black cats to keep them penned up, because Satanists, round these up – using them as sacrifices in order to indulge their lust for blood and death.*”**
5. What about costumes? As noted, Halloween was a night where mischievous and evil spirits roamed freely. As in poltergeist lore, mischievous spirits play tricks on the living – so it was advantageous to “hide” from them by wearing costumes. Masks and costumes were worn either to scare away the ghosts or keep from being recognized by them. ***“In Ireland especially, people thought that ghosts and spirits roamed after dark on Halloween. They lit candles or lanterns to keep the spirits away, and if go outside, they wore costumes and masks to frighten spirits or to keep them from being recognized by these unearthly beings.”***

And these are a few questions we Christians should ask regarding our participation in this unbiblical “other-worldly” *day of the dead*. – ***Church of Christ Articles***

CHURCH OF CHRIST ARTICLES OFTEN FEATURE OPPOSITE ARGUMENT ON MATTERS OF OPINION

Reflections on Halloween

What should be the Christian's observance of Halloween? I would like to offer a few reflections. Personally, I feel about this as I do most other holidays—**Christians are to use discretion.**

Knowledge of the background of this holiday is indeed helpful and eye-opening. As are with most holidays, its roots are in paganism—"Hallow's Eve" is the day before "All Saint's Day" (November 1). In 608 AD, the Roman Emperor Constantine appeased the majority of the heathen people he conquered by combining their pagan ritual of Samhain Day with All Saint's Day. Therefore, on this particular evening (October 31), Samhain would return with the spirits of the dead to abuse (trick) them unless they were appeased (or treated).

Now, one could go to one extreme and say that because of such, one should not observe such at all, which would be fine by me, as long as he or she did not try to bind that on others.

Yet, I do not believe that a six-year-old girl, dressed as a princess, knocking on doors and saying, “Trick or Treat!” is participating in that which the Bible forbids—witchcraft and idolatry (Galatians 5:19-21). In fact, I believe this may be an **innocent means of the observance of this holiday without participating in its pagan roots.**

Nevertheless, the other extreme would be the allowing of our children to participate in such by sinful ways—dabbling in Satanism and occultism on their most holy day.

Therefore, the Christian’s observance of Halloween can be as a Christian celebrates any other cultural holidays, as Christmas and Easter—the exchanging gifts or the hiding eggs are not sinful observances of these holidays either, although **one may abuse such observances by taking extremes or binding their opinion upon others.** We need to balance ourselves in the way we live and the positions we take.

Parents ought to be careful in the costume they allow their children to wear. A Christian family ought not to have a desire to wear any costume that celebrates Satanism.

In First Corinthians 8-10, the apostle Paul regulates such things as freedom, responsibility and purity, especially with the illustration of eating meats that the citizens of Corinth had sacrificed to idols prior to selling them in the market. He states that knowledgeable Christians who know that idols are not really gods would not sin by so eating, but warns not to offend the weak faith of the newly converted. This example may be profitable by application to the observance of this holiday that has roots in paganism. The knowledgeable one may observe such with clear conscience, but one whose faith is weaker might not want to do so if such would bother his or her conscience (Romans 14:23).

– *Church of Christ Articles*



Church Publication Balanced Treatment

@Guardian of Truth Magazine Article:

A combination of pagan ritual & perverted Christianity account for the origin of Halloween. “Pope” Boniface IV (608-615) designated May 13 as “All Saints Day” upon the rededication of the Roman Pantheon. This was to be a day of veneration for all those who had become martyrs for their faith. However, observance of the day was not widespread until the ninth century when the date was changed to November 1, perhaps to accommodate the Druidic practices of some of the Celtic tribes that were being assimilated into Roman Catholicism. Whatever the reason for choosing the date of November 1, most of our Halloween traditions originated in the rites and superstitions of the Druids. According to an article by Harold L. Myra, the Druids believed that at the end of the summer, the beginning of the Celtic year:

Samhain, the lord of death, sent evil spirits abroad to attack humans, who could escape only by assuming disguises and looking like evil spirits themselves. The waning of the sun and the approach of dark winter made the evil spirits rejoice and play nasty tricks (“is Halloween A Witches’ Brew?”, Christianity Today, 10/22/82, p. 32).

The name Halloween itself reflects the Roman Catholic influence in its history. All Saints Day was also called All Hallow's Day. October 31, the eve of All Hallow's Day, was known as "All Hallow's Fen."

Whatever the intent of the costumed Druids or of the Roman Catholics, there is obviously nothing inherently wrong with putting on a costume, and knocking on someone's door to ask for candy, or carving a face on a vegetable. However, if the individual is costumed for the purpose of evading evil spirits, or Halloween is observed as a day of preparation for worshiping saints on the following day, then of course there's something wrong. Hence, we must consider . . .

The Intent Of The Individual

That it is possible to participate in some of the activities associated with Halloween without any intention of venerating saints, or engaging in pagan ritual, hardly needs proving. A six-year-old child trick-or-treating in a Superman costume knows nothing of Samhain and certainly is not trying to evade evil spirits. And atheists who participate in Halloween activities certainly have no intention of venerating saints. It is true that an individual may participate in many of the activities associated with this holiday without any pagan or so-called "Christian" intention. But even though one's intentions are innocent, one last consideration is involved . . .

How One's Intent Is Perceived By Others

Jesus said, "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!" (Mt. 18:6-7).

Paul, His apostle, wrote, "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God" (1st Corinthians 10:32). He expressed his willingness to **forgo his rights to avoid causing another to stumble** when he then wrote, "Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (1st Corinthians 8:13). The Christian is not concerned only about himself, but also about others. He will see to it that his participation in Halloween activities in no way lends credence to any pagan superstition or so-called Christian connotations. And certainly one can imagine circumstances in which a Christian should forgo all participation in activities associated with such holidays. Had a Celtic Christian explained to his Druid neighbor the gospel while donning a spirit costume, he certainly would have laid a stumbling block in front of his friend. — *Jeff Smelser*

Romans 14:5,6

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.



All things are lawful for me,
but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.
1 Corinthians 10:23



Couple Of Church Bulletins Span The Spectrum:

Halloween and the Christian



During the month of October, many conscientious Christians grow curious about the moral aspects of participating in Halloween. Christians observe violent, bloody, and immodest costumes on Halloween and wonder if such is appropriate for their children to celebrate the holiday. Some Christians celebrate Halloween simply by dressing up in a costume and having fun, seeing it as innocent and harmless.

Other Christians are equally convinced Halloween represents a satanic holiday established to worship evil spirits & promote darkness and wickedness. The questions vary from, "Wasn't Halloween originally a Satanists' holiday?", "Is it wrong for a Christian to celebrate Halloween?". When I studied history at Tennessee Tech University, one of my classes was the history of "Ghosts, Myths, and Legends". The professor spent half of the semester discussing the history of this holiday.

Halloween developed out of three cultural traditions: the Celtic Feast of Samhain, the Roman Harvest Festival of Pomona, and early Catholic traditions. When Julius Caesar invaded Britain from 55 to 54 B.C., the Romans brought with them their cultural celebrations such as the Roman harvest festivals of Pomona. Community celebrations from bountiful harvests including apples, pumpkins, beets, and other garden vegetables were used in celebratory games. These traditions assimilated with the ancient Celtic traditions and festivals. The Celtic Feast of Samhain took place within the same time-frame as the Roman harvest festival.

The last day of October was the Celts' New Year. The Celts believed this was a time when the veil between life and death was thin. Samhain represented a time of celebrating and remembering ancestry. The Celts believed the spirits of ancestors would visit them during this time of the year when the nights grew longer. Celts would disguise themselves when leaving their houses so that the angry spirits would not recognize them and take vengeance. At the beginning of the first century, the Celts and the Romans assimilated the two festivals together. The Roman Celts would light candles in pumpkins with carved faces to scare or capture the angry spirits. Some would leave food on the front door to placate the spirits. During the 9th century when Catholicism spread to Britain, the missionaries integrated the Christian saints within these festivals. The Christians called this remembering time, All Hallows Eve, where the term Halloween originated.

During the 12th century in Britain, young men traditionally skulked around in disguise threatening vandalism and chanting for "soul" cakes with songs that resembled the "trick-or-treat" rhymes. If people provided them with cakes, the young men would not vandalize their property, thus "trick-or-treat." Such traditions carried over to New England in the 1800s and local traditions changed slightly and developed into what we now see as Halloween.

Some Christians believe Halloween originated in Satanism, but that is a myth. Halloween stemmed from Roman and Celtic paganism and was later influenced by Catholic church traditions. In the 1800s, blood cults & New England Satanists would often use this time of year for sacrifices & ceremonies. Satanists celebrate Halloween, but Halloween was not created by Satanists. Originally, Halloween had nothing to do with Satan but was predominantly a celebration of ancestry and harvest!



What About Halloween?

It is believed that most of the ideas behind the night we now call “Halloween” originated with the Celtic religion of Druidism which flourished for around 350 years between the second centuries BC & AD.



For the Druids, this night meant that the “lighter” part of the year was coming to an end and the “darker” part was beginning. They further believed that on this night the veil between the living and the dead was its thinnest and that Samuin, lord of the dead, would call forth evil spirits to do mischief. In response to this belief, bonfires would be lit and some would dress themselves with masks and/or paint, apparently all in the hope of warding off said spirits.

Through the years, such ideas have been intermingled with other fall or harvest festivals from various cultures until we come down to what we have today. What does Halloween night mean for most of us in America? Simply put, it’s the fun kind of “scary stuff” we enjoy. It’s kids in costumes mooching candy, then going on a hayride and afterwards having popcorn balls and smores. Halloween means jack o’lanterns, fake spider webs and bobbing for apples at parties decorated with orange and black.

Sure, there are a few who see Halloween as a special night to dabble in the occult, but no one I know either does or promotes that. That kind of thing just never even comes to mind for most of us.

Two questions seem important to me to ask here. First, “Is this, holiday, intrinsically evil?”. In my experience, it is not. Even the practices of the Druids were intended to avoid contact with evil. I’d promote that, would you? My second question would be, “Does Halloween provide any opportunity to do good?”. Again, according to my experience, it certainly does. Year after year I see young families enjoying each others’ company as they go from house to house with their costumed children who squeal with innocent delight at the haul of goodies homeowners happily dole out.

Sometimes we simply gather in Christian fellowship around our own bonfires, toasting marshmallows and deepening relationships, warming ourselves both inside and out in the cool night air of early fall.

Now if your view of Halloween is different from someone else’s, do not despair. Paul said in Romans chapter 14 that each of us has the freedom in Christ to observe such days according to our own opinions:

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. Romans 14:5-6

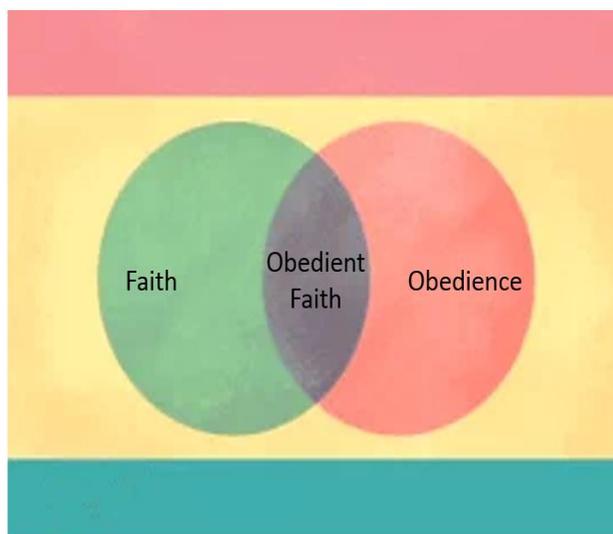
So be at peace with others regardless of how you see the day, and give thanks to God for it!



AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

