

Perspective

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Is the Occult Influencing Your Family?

You have striven hard to create a Christian family microcosm so your children's minds are properly educated in a godly way. We may think our families are unaffected by the world and its ways. Yet often, unbeknownst to parents, there are powerful hidden subtle influences which are vying to sway our children's minds. Satan the Devil, who is the master of deceit, begins his insidious drive to sway men's minds at the earliest possible. Most nursery rhymes, which many think are harmless, often depict macabre themes about death, murder, immorality, domestic violence, and other bizarre motifs. Rhymes are intended to influence the mind of small children. The same kind of influences may be found in children's shows on television and the internet. Some shows present themes of magic, witchcraft, or the supernatural; a child's exposure can present the occult in a positive way. The Bible warns us in James 1:27 that our genuine worship before God must be unspotted by the influences of this world. What else do we need to watch for?

Modern paganism and worship of the gods

In Europe, paganism has been a significant influence, particularly in regions like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Albania, where Muslim majorities exist alongside Christianity. Historically, ancient religions such as Ancient Greek, Roman, Slavic, Celtic, and Germanic paganism are prevalent, with modern revival movements like Wicca and Druidry gaining popularity. There is a resurgence of interest in these ancient beliefs in the practice of religions. Outward evidence of the rising interest has been demonstrated openly.

At the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris there was a big controversy regarding their pagan-themed presentations during the opening ceremony. In the ceremony there was a parody disrespecting the Last Supper. It was an Olympics which disrespected the teachings of the Bible, and openly celebrated the Devil and the ancient practices of paganism.

The Gotthard Base Tunnel that opened in 2016 is a railway tunnel dug through the Swiss Alps. It is the world's longest railway (8 miles) and deepest traffic tunnel. At the completion of this project, the tunnel was inaugurated with a ceremony that included pagan festivities and dark symbolism. The event was characterized by performances that drew comparisons to Baphomet and satanic rituals. Baphomet is a symbolic figure associated with the occult and is depicted as a winged, goat-headed human figure. The ceremony was described as "disturbing" and "demonic," among other things. The inauguration was attended by prominent figures in Europe, which included former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former French President François Hollande.

Indoctrination is being administered in the school system

In an article on New Age Influence in the schools, "Public Education or Pagan Indoctrination?" from *The Christian Research Journal*, August 15, 2023: "Public schools and children in America have become strategic targets for conversion to the ideology of the New Age movement. It can be conclusively demonstrated that occult, New Age philosophy and practices have been integrated into public educational curricula and programs. This intrusion is especially evident in certain health, guidance counseling, gifted, sex, and drug education programs. The use of New Age psychotherapeutic programs is usurping parental authority... The self-indulgent philosophies and ideologies of many of these new programs are alien and hostile to Christ and His truth, and they are perpetuated by individuals and institutions that have their own social and political agendas."

A major problem is disengaged parents and churches which do not take a stand. Many churches have been also indoctrinated by vain philosophies of this world, and they have rejected the Bible for the most part. The false ideas have robbed them of soundness of mind which only God's Word and Spirit yields (II Timothy 1:7). They often profess to be wise, but they become fools (Romans 1:22). The apostle Paul, who was a brilliant servant of God, taught the Colossians: "*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*" (Colossians 2:8)

Consider this about “Christian” churches, seven out of ten Americans observe Halloween, and most Christians have accepted the holiday and actively participate. Understand also that this is not just prevalent in the United States but is true all over the world.

Is Halloween a harmless holiday?

Halloween is celebrated in many countries. Part of the celebrations involve the children dressing up to go trick or treating. A recent YouGov survey found 77% of U.S. adults say Halloween is a harmless holiday. Every year, in the United States alone, around \$8 to \$10 billion is spent on Halloween-related products.

Many think dressing children up as zombies, mummies, vampires, witches or warlocks, werewolves, Frankenstein, Chewbacca, Sorcerer, or some other super hero is harmless. However, clearly this practice is demonic and not of God.

Should you participate? Many in the world struggle with this important question. To make a sound biblical decision, we need to understand both the historical roots of Halloween and what the Bible teaches about participating in such celebrations.

Halloween can be traced back all the way to the ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain. It was originally an event that marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter in Ireland. Samhain was seen as a time when the boundaries separating the spiritual world and the real world were reduced. This is why Halloween has become associated with appearance of spirits, fairies and ghosts from the mythical realm.

When the lines were blurred between the worlds of the living and the dead, Celts used the opportunity to honour and worship their ancestors. However, many were concerned about accessing darker evil spirits' influence on those in the real world. This is why many Celts dressed their children as demons. They believed it would confuse the evil spirits. They also marked their doors with animal blood to deter spirits.

In the 9th century AD, the Catholic Church began to influence and displace old pagan rituals within the Celtic regions. At the behest of Pope Gregory VI, “All Hallows Day” was assigned to the date of November 1, the first day of the Celtic new year. The Pope, nevertheless, renamed the event “All Saints’ Day,” in honour of all the Christian Saints. “All Saints’ Day” and “All Hallows’ Day” are terms that have been used interchangeably throughout history. The eve before these dates was then called “Hallowe’en” – a contraction of “Hallows” and “Evening.” In the last century however, the holiday has been referred to simply as Halloween, celebrated on the ‘Eve’ before the Day of the Hallows, October 31.

What does God say?

Often, we have people write to the United Church of God because they believe they are tormented by demons. The advice we give is never dabble in any kind of demonism, witchcraft, spiritism or mysticism. We also instruct them to seek God through prayer and do their best to keep their actions and thoughts godly at all times.

God instructed ancient Israel in Deuteronomy 18:10-11 about false pagan practices: “*There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.*”

This isn’t just an Old Testament concept. The Apostle Paul reinforces this teaching in Ephesians 5:11, telling believers to “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*”

Worship of other gods and idols is condemned and forbidden in the first and second commandments. (Exodus 20:3-4). Paul wrote Corinth giving them wise instruction which applies to us also: “*And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’*” (II Corinthians 6:16-17)

We are challenged to not allow ourselves or our children to be tainted by the false ideas of man and always remember, “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*” (James 1:27)