



A New Place For Nightmares

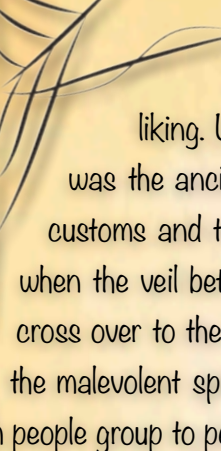


The Hollow History Of HALLOWEEN

By Kyle M. Matthews

How's this for irony, we spend all year teaching our children not to talk to strangers and to never take candy from strangers...only to parade them through the neighborhood on Oct.31 to do what?... take candy from strangers.? But is it really the height of irony? Or is it celebrating the macabre as meaningless fun for the kids? Or yet perhaps commemorating the remnants of age old pagan rites unrelated to our own religion?...While wickedness is not always sinister and a sinister thing not always wicked, once in a while, we find a heathen custom embracing it's true nature in brazen display of both. And Halloween is just such an example of evil on display...yet ironically, regarded by most as harmless play. How very dangerously wrong they are...

While most heathen customs adopted as Christian tradition tend to present a pretty face (Christmas and Easter being chief examples), Halloween has taken on the opposite appearance. Witches and spiderwebs, grinning pumpkins and ghosts and goblins and ghouls decorate neighborhoods every October in modern times. But this is but the plaything left over from the much older holiday borrowed originally from the celts. The dark and devilish night known as Samhain (pronounced Sahwin).



As is the bad habit of the church, when she can not completely prevent the people from practicing their evil ancestral customs, she adopts them instead and adapts them to her liking. Usually with greater, success at shining them up and making them seem less evil. Samhain was the ancient pagan end of harvest, pre-winter festival steeped in magic and mystery. With differing customs and traditions across Ireland, England and Scotland in particular. A night of ancestral worship when the veil between the realms of living and dead was said to be thinnest and porous and ghosts could cross over to the mortal world. On Samhain communing with loved ones was the hope as well as appeasing the malevolent spirits that roamed the earth. Various customs ranged from bonfires to souling. They differed from people group to people group and region to region, as well as shifting with the time period.

With the arrival of Catholicism in the British isles, the darker Druidic rituals were suppressed while more seemingly harmless habits were slowly tolerated and eventually absorbed into the church as a Christian gloss was developed for them. What came to be All Hallows Eve, preceding the already existent All Saints Day (itself developed to replace the earlier Roman festival of Feralia) gradually superseded the heathen Samhain till they were one and the same or at least indistinguishable from each other. Given enough time All Hallow Evening was shortened to All Hallows Eve, Hallows Even, and as we know it now, Hallowe'en.

Oddly enough this day wasn't a major event in the New World until the mass immigration of over 2 million Irish to America. As is the norm, these immigrants brought with them their cherished customs and traditions. And though these too have undergone their own evolution over the last few centuries in the United States, they yet remain essentially those of the Halloween of old, or as the Irish now call it - Oíche Shamhna (pronounced as Eeha how-nah).

Of old it was common to dress in masks and costumes to hide from malevolent spirits that prowled the night meaning mischief, but in time this grew into dressing up for fun. Then fearing witches hexes and ghostly haunting was a very real dread, but that fear has evolved over into fun dress up as ghosts and witches and worse. The ancient tradition of begging sweet cakes of neighbors merged with the more sinister Druidic practice of begging blessings or threatening curses has come to us through time to take the form of "trick or treat".

All in all, it was once evil and is now innocent right? A once deeply dark holiday of Celts and Druids is now a day of family fun where every one can play dress up and eat candy and no harm done? Right?...Wrong! Can we who follow the Heavenly Father's Way, who live by His Instructions and seek only ever to glorify His Holy NAME, honestly engage in the celebration of Halloween without harm?! No. We can not. We can act like it's not our place to judge, and we can pretend it's a personal choice between the individual and

the Almighty and none of our business. And while there's an element of truth to that, in that each person is free to do great evil against the Most High and to flout His commandments, yet it remains the responsibility of those who follow the Father's Word to address these issues head on and not tiptoe about. Halloween is evil. No bones about it, it is not a practice that should be engaged in by those who believe in YHWH and who are called by His NAME. We did not learn such behavior from the Savior, and so we should not be teaching it to our children.

TRICK
OR
TREAT

But it's not enough to just label a celebration bad and boycott it. We need to know the reasons and be able to share clear proofs of why...as well as being capable of sorting out the nonsense spread about it. If you grew up stateside in the last half century or so, you were probably either gleefully participating in Halloween or else hiding and hailing it as the devil's night. From all that we've seen about so far it is hardly harmless fun...but is it honest to blindly brand this as devil's night and Satan's holiday, especially while embracing equally pagan practices like Christmas and Easter. (But that's another story altogether. See "The Reason For The Season" and "Resurrecting The Easter Controversy".) Until the 1960s or so Halloween was viewed not as a satanic holiday by most Christians but rather simply as "other". It's someone else's holiday. Except among the more liturgical versions of the church, it was largely ignored and in these versions, it was still regarded as All Hallows Eve, the prelude to All Saints Day which is followed by All Souls Day. But in mostly Protestant America, even these were not regarded with any degree of importance.

With the advent of the counterculture and the rise of the "Church of Satan" in the world and the United States in particular, Halloween took on a much more evil mask. As it so happens satanists have a tendency to embrace the opposite of Christianity, even if the Christian doctrine, symbol, or practice was an accident, mistake, mistranslation, or an adoption from outside. Since this specific holiday was holy to some and heathen to others and came from a dark place, satanists wholly embraced it, driving even more Christians to shun what the satanists hold sacred, and compelling other Christians to develop excuses to continue as they always have. Today Christians will celebrate "harvest festivals" and do "trunk or treat" with the kids instead of "trick or treat". They dress their children in biblical costumes or at least avoid the most devilish looking ones, but at best their celebration is adjacent-to rather than absent-from Halloween.



As with the Christmas tradition and to a lesser degree, the Easter celebration, what the holiday has become and now is is due to many different factors. And how it is perceived is the result of even more. But mostly in the present, Halloween is almost entirely the result of the commercial industry, a multi billion dollar a year investment never netting a loss. Is the industry the result of

the holiday or the holiday the result of the industry? Is Halloween seen as satanic by some because Christians refuse it or cuz satanists embrace it? Unfortunately it's like the age old question "which came first the chicken or the egg?" Both at the same time most likely. Halloween celebration is driven by industry nowadays. But it is also the fault of those who participate. The one feeds the other and the other the one in Infinite regress.

How then can the true hearted break the vicious cycle? How can we avoid falling prey to indulgences offered by the callous consumer industry as well as falling victim to the temptation of relegating the day to Satan? Above all things we must hold fast to the truth, not as we were raised to see it, not as we want it to be, not as we imagine it in our minds but in its entirety and sans any bias. We may love Halloween or we may hate it as satanic, but both of these positions are not a love of the truth in its fullness. It is neither devil's night nor harmless fun, but the end of a long line of lies leading back over the sea to the old country, to religions long lost and lands far off. Maybe it's mild by comparison to its ancient wild nature, but that doesn't justify our delighting in it, does it? Do we get to gorge ourselves on sweets cuz it's not as bad as it used to be? Less evil is hardly a ringing endorsement after all. And of course folks would argue that because it's not satanic now and not heathen like it was, we should be free to indulge in its frivolity. Yet is this not merely an excuse to do as we desire with wish-fulfillment reasoning to justify our whims?

Just because we've moved on from barbaric bonfires and running from ghosts in the darkness doesn't mean we haven't merely made a new place for our nightmares. We still want to carry on as we always have and will use whatever gloss will suit us. But if we are following the Way of YHWH, learning to walk after His Instructions, and to set our hearts wholly on His Holiness embodied in our lives, then we will not recast the madness of old as either wholesome or hellish. We will simply shun it as the celebrations of other cultures and other religions alien to our own. We did not receive Halloween from the Scriptures but rather from Samhain. And though our fathers tried to turn it into a memorial of the righteous dead, nevertheless it remains as ever it was, a most wicked trick of the devil, not in worshipping him, but in giving us what was never intended that we should have - a heathen holiday to replace those required in Scripture and a distraction from the Instruction we were intended to do.





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