

Wicked ‘Supernatural’ Gift Among 2014’s Christmas Sell-Out Items

When my friend told me that ouija boards were going to be this Christmas’ sell-out item my initial reaction was that this was another “urban myth” best treated with a healthy dose of skepticism. Who, in an age of the Internet, online gaming, Facebook and 3-D televisions would want to move a pointer around on a board in the hope of getting messages from the spirit world? The astonishing answer is, quite a lot of people!

The story turns out to be true. Promoted by an apparently truly dreadful film (sponsored by Hasbro, the toy firm that holds the rights to ouija boards), sales of the £20+ boards have gone through the roof. And it’s not just me who is mystified. As Simon Osborne wrote in the *Independent*, “What better time to talk to dead people for fun than the festival to celebrate the birth of Jesus?”

Three observations. First, this is yet another phenomenon reminding us that, for all the bold claims of the new atheism that the world is moving into an age of rational thought in which every form of the supernatural is rejected, the reality “on the ground” is very different. The hunger for the supernatural, the paranormal and the mystical remains intense and almost universal. Indeed, it seems as if the more a “universe without God” is talked up, the more people flock to the supernatural. If atheism is true, then it’s very odd that no one seems to follow it.

Second, a ouija board is not, in any way, a game. Let’s be honest. To use it is to seek to contact spirits, whether of the dead or of any other sort. Here it is worth stating that

the Bible is clear that there is a spiritual world beyond our physical senses; it contains both good and evil forces and we are not to seek to communicate with either for news of the future or for any other purpose. Good spirits are off limits because we are commanded to pray to the God whom they serve, and bad spirits are forbidden because they always seek to deceive and harm us.

Some relevant Bible verses include Leviticus 19:31 ("Do not turn to spirits through mediums or necromancers. Do not seek after them to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.") and Deuteronomy 18:10-12 ("There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or who uses divination, or uses witchcraft, or an interpreter of omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or a spiritualist, or an occultist, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God will drive them out from before you."). It's not just the Bible that is negative either. Every minister I have ever talked to on the subject has been able to tell me of people they know personally whose lives have been very negatively affected by using (I refuse to use *playing* with) a ouija board.

It is my view, and it is shared not just by other Christians but by many other people, that evil spiritual forces do exist. To use a ouija board or anything similar is rather like sneaking into a zoo and unlocking cages at random. You may get far more than you bargained for. Ouija boards are potentially dangerous things.

Thirdly, there are only two interpretations of what goes on when people use a ouija board. The first is that any movement of the pointer is purely a subconscious psychological effect of those involved and the whole exercise is worthless. (Interestingly enough, one of the first people to demonstrate that this kind of claimed 'supernatural' motion had a purely human origin was the 19th-century scientist and devout

Christian, Michael Faraday.) In that case, the purchase of any ouija board is a complete and total waste of money.

The second interpretation is that use of a ouija board *can* result in contact being made with harmful forces or individuals “out there,” in which case its possession or use is appallingly dangerous. In either case, they are to be avoided. The word *ouija* is often claimed to originate from a merger of the French and German words for “yes”; everybody would be far wiser simply to say “no.”

What if you have one of these boards? I’d take a tip from Acts 19:19, which says, “Many who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them before everyone.” If you have a ouija board, then I think only serious question you face is this: Where am I going to burn it?