

DRY BONES

Don't Fear All Hallows' Eve

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



With interest increasing in supernatural things the spotlight now focuses on Halloween.

Is there some kind of spiritual danger which accompanies children who dress up as witches and goblins and parade the streets on Halloween?

Or is it just harmless fun?

Halloween is actually the eve of All Saints' Day — a day in the early church calendar as sacred as Christmas or Easter. It began back in the 6th century when Pope Gregory III consecrated a chapel in St. Peter's Basilica to all the saints. Later, in 834, the feast of All Saints' was extended to the entire Roman Catholic church as a hallowed day.

As with most religious holidays, however, Halloween soon gave way to a veneration of the saints. Celebrants made masks of the various saints and wore them on the streets to "honor" them. Or, dressed in ghost costumes to depict those who had gone on before, they roamed the streets carrying lanterns.

Especially was this done on the eve of All Saints Day, called "All Hallows' Eve," later "Hallowed Eve," and finally Halloween.

In the Dark Ages this was mixed with the agrarian and pagan rites of the Druids and Celts, plus a celebrated European "witches' sabbath" which fell on the last day of October.

Witches were said to fly to the meetings on broom sticks accompanied by black cats. Eventually the two forms of ritual, sacred and demonic, were mixed. Even churches gave way to practicing divination on All Hallows' Eve and priests were known to take off their frocks and dress as goblins to entertain their parishioners.

Immigrants from England and Ireland brought secular Halloween customs to the USA — including the

figures of witches, black cats, pumpkins cut in the "death's head" grin, masks, pranks and the "trick or treat" which grew from wandering groups of celebrants who went from house to house demanding food in preparation for the evening's festivities. Those who didn't contribute had their chimney's stopped up, fences torn down, outhouses overturned or wheels removed from their wagons.



Today Halloween is a prime example of what happens when the Church becomes religious rather than spiritual, puts its trust in rites rather than righteousness, and honors celebrations rather than Christ.

As to whether Halloween presents a real spiritual danger ... that's up to each individual to decide.

I have to confess Satan has never approached me on Halloween night — except one night on Times Square when she called to me from a doorway asking if I wanted to have "some fun" on a trick. That, however, seemed to be quite different from the "trick or treat" my children used to take part in through the neighborhood.

Nor has Satan ever approached me dressed in a devil's suit, witch's hat, or goblin costume — as despicable as those may be. Once he did appear as the international director of a Christian organization (just moments before I was to speak to that group of people) saying I could make a lot of money by investing through him in a gold mine in California. On another occasion he came to me dressed as a friend of mine who is a pentecostal preacher and almost persuaded me to take a public stand against everyone who uses doctors and medicine. And one afternoon, on a plane from Seattle to Las Vegas, he almost talked me into something which could have ruined my life.

But on none of these occasions was he accompanied by black cats, jack o' lanterns or dressed in a Dracula outfit.

Except for that one time on Times Square, the only time he's ever even put in an appearance on Halloween was the time my wife caught me eating all the candy bars from the big bag at the door to be given away to trick or treaters. That night I saw a lot of Satan.

But just because Satan has never put a razor blade in my Halloween apple, nor entered me in the form of some hideous demon, does not mean he's not on the prowl — especially on Halloween night. For it's this night, which began as a veneration of the saints, that is now the one night of the year even churches hold parties honoring their arch enemy. For that reason I am careful about classifying all spooky things as just "harmless fun."

Yet, the blood covenant is more powerful than Satan's wiles! As long as we don't presume on the grace of God, Halloween can be enjoyed — not feared. Trick or treating can be good clean fun. There is no guarantee you won't meet our adversary, roaming about roaring (or beckoning, as the case may be). But dressed in the full armor of God, even trick or treaters can walk safely.

Happy Halloween! >