

MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP

Halloween unmasked from a Christian perspective

Living in today's culture is truly a challenge, especially for the sincere spiritual pupils who attempt to adhere daily to the words of the Messiah: Jesus: "And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.'" (John 8:23)

It behooves everyone be sure that the customs, and yes, even some "holidays" of this world's culture are truly understood. Why, you may ask? Every holiday may not be in your best spiritual interest. In addition, we all need to recognize the truth about what we are collectively "celebrating". Did the Master not say, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)? Let's investigate "the truth" about October's major holiday, Halloween! The word "holiday" originally meant "holy day," where a special feast, festival or ceremony commemorating a spe-

cific event was celebrated. Halloween is one such holiday that many of us acknowledge and even allow our children to participate in without truly knowing its "holy" origin and unknown history. Where did this holiday begin? In 607 A.D., Pope Boniface IV was given the Roman pantheon after defeating Emperor Phocas and his barbaric/pagan tribes. Three years later, the pagan tribes. Three years later, the pagan temple was rededicated to "The Virgin Mary and All the Saints of the Early Church." An annual festival was instituted to commemorate the event, and the date of May 13 was chosen. This day became known as All Saints' Day. It was a time when prayers and petitions were offered on behalf of the souls of every deceased saint. In 834 A.D. the date was altered to Nov. 1, and the name was changed to "All Hallow," from which we get the name Halloween. All hallow merely means all holy, and the "een" is a contraction of evening. So, there you have it! On the even of All Hallow Day (All Saints' Day), originally a truly holy day, became the contraction we know today as "Halloween"! But that's not where the story ends! During the first centuries

of the Christian church, Christianity was the new religion in competition with numerous other traditions. One of the earliest On the British Isles, the Druids (of Celtic origin) had their own holy day on Nov. 1, in honor of Samhain, Lord of the Dead. It was Druid belief that on that night all sorts of spirits, ghosts and souls of the evil dead roamed freely, often returning to their original homes; there to be entertained with food. It was believed that if food and "goodies" were not provided, these evil spirits would cast spells and cause havoc toward those failing to fulfill their requests. It was a treat, or be tricked — sometimes even out of one's life! Tricked by the dead to join the dead! Remember the warning of the Apostle Paul: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." (Eph 5:11-14) Instead of its original sanctity, the eve of Nov. 1 is now

a time when children (and adults) dressed up as witches, goblins and ghosts ramble through neighborhoods, knocking on doors and announcing, "Trick or Treat." Do you remember your trick-or-treating days? I remember the 1960s, when this annual ritual of costumes had lighter overtones due to the environment that prevailed. During this era as a child, I certainly felt more secure and safe. Thirty years later in the 1990s, juvenile vandalism becomes the order of the night, and our children's treats need to X-rayed to be sure they are not harmful, even deadly. Some "goblins" tear down mailboxes, paint cars, throw eggs, destroy lawns and flowers — strange customs for a civilized society. So how can we remain in the world but not of the world" when it comes to Halloween? Perhaps these suggestions maybe helpful:

- Provide and evening at church with activities and games where costumes can be worn, and the focus is on education with entertainment.
- Have the church youth make surprise visits to shut-ins or local rest homes, with the children bringing the treats.

I challenge you to investigate the Word of God as it relates to worldly customs

and holidays. I challenge you to uncover the truths about each holiday we observe throughout the calendar year, and may your discoveries lead you to discern how to "live in the world

but not of the world!" And yes, this Halloween, the only ghost you need to entertain or imitate is the Holy Ghost! No trick — His treat will yield unto you the desires of your heart!

Anglican-Episcopal gay dispute could spill over

By Richard Ostling
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS


NEW YORK — The fight over homosexuality in the international Anglican Communion and its American branch, the Episcopal Church, isn't just an internal squabble. It could permanently alter the Anglicans' relationship with Catholic and Orthodox Christianity and affect U.S. Protestant denominations that also are struggling with their policies on gay relationships. Last week in London, top leaders of the world's 77 million Anglicans reaffirmed their opposition to gay sex and warned that the Americans' planned consecration of an openly gay bishop Nov. 2 will "tear the fabric" of the faith internationally. In the United States, conservatives are threatening to quit the Episcopal Church over its toleration of gay clergy and same-sex couples. Other denominations are watching with concern as the situation unfolds. "Ecumenically, we're on new turf here," says the Rev. William Rusch, referring to the long-running quest for unity among Roman Catholics, Protestants and the Orthodox. Rusch, organizer of a 2005 North American ecumenical conference, says homosexuality "is certainly more than an issue of justice or democracy" because many Christians believe it touches key theological issues. For conservatives, who cite Scriptural admonitions

against homosexual acts, the authority of the Bible is at stake. The retired world Anglican leader, former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, said this week that the approval of Robinson by last summer's Episcopal convention is "an ecumenical scandal." Orthodox reactions undergird his assessment. • Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh said Robinson's supporters are betraying Christianity's one "source of truth, the Bible in the holy tradition of the church" and declared that Orthodoxy's official talks with the Episcopal Church are "defunct." Says another longtime Orthodox participant in the discussions, the Rev. Paul Schneirla: "I cannot imagine going on." • The bishops who head North America's nine Orthodox branches jointly lamented that Christianity's 2,000-year tradition on marriage is being "questioned, challenged or denied" in society and in certain "faith communities" (politely avoiding mention of the Episcopalians). Roman Catholic leaders also have shown displeasure in various ways: • A Catholic bishop withdrew permission for the Episcopal Diocese of Florida to use one of his churches for a ceremony because the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church planned to participate. (The presiding bishop later withdrew.) • At the Vatican, Pope John Paul II told Carey's successor, Archbishop Rowan Williams, that "new and serious diffi-

culties have arisen on the path to unity." The pope said the problems "extend to essential matters of faith and morals." • The Vatican's doctrinal overseer, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, sent warm greetings to this month's Dallas rally of 2,700 conservatives planning a break with the Episcopal Church. Still, the Rev. J. Robert Wright of New York's General Theological Seminary, a veteran Episcopal ecumenist, takes heart that this month's Catholic-Episcopal dialogue session occurred as scheduled — even though a key Catholic bishop said the Episcopal actions will have "serious implications" for the talks. "I was quite relieved at that, frankly," Wright says. He thinks accord among Christians on gay issues is possible, but he's thinking long term — perhaps 50 years down the road. The Rev. Richard John Neuhaus of First Things magazine, a conservative Catholic long engaged in ecumenical matters, said Episcopal actions won't "slow down or dilute the commitment of the Catholic Church to work for full communion with all Christians, Anglicans included." However, Neuhaus sees a "big pothole in the road" for the world Catholic-Anglican talks, among the most fruitful of such negotiations. His reasoning: The Anglican Communion could dissolve into factions and even if it doesn't, Catholics can't be certain whether Anglicans speak with a single voice.

Within other U.S. Protestant denominations, the Episcopal quagmire also has implications. Canon David C. Anderson, whose American Anglican Council is leading the conservative Episcopalians' charge, thinks his denomination's struggle could weaken pro-gay efforts in other mainline churches. "If they see the Episcopal Church truly shipwreck, this will give them pause about going down the same road," he says. But a conservative leader in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Rev. Parker Williamson, fears the opposite. He thinks Robinson's victory "was a great encouragement to those who would like to see endorsement of homosexual behavior in our denomination." He says the Episcopal and Presbyterian situations "are quite parallel." The Anglican Council's Dallas rally all but overshadowed a simultaneous meeting for 250 of Williamson's Presbyterian Coalition allies.

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Gospel musical at McGlohon

Continued from page 8B she said. "Unfortunately once it happens we tend to carry around that baggage with us. What happens later is we begin our search and we look within ourselves. That's when we discover there's something inside of me greater than what happen to me. "I have been abused. I had to tell myself I'm better than the person I have become. I wanted to live a life that truly was reflective of my spirit. "My Soul Sings" will focus on the lives of Moses mother, Hagar, the mother of Ishmael a single parent mentioned in Genesis as a means to teach the audience how to release people for the greater good. "These stories will help people depend on the strength of God to let go," Bennett said. "There are times when

you have to separate yourself from someone for the greater good." "Unrighteous Resurrection" is part of the show that deals with how women deal with each other. Bennett says there are times when sisters try to play and put each other's buttons: "Sometimes a person can push your buttons so much that the old woman you use to be will rise up. Women are beautiful but they try to play each other whether they are at the church, club, and work or in high school. At the end of this piece we focus on how women can assist in the healing of their sisters." The play is for all ages and Bennett says the play will celebrate the power of God in your. "It will help you make it through the pain and to overcome."

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J. M. LITTLE - TEACHER

The greatest thing that can happen to a poor, spiritually bankrupt sinner is for the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to his heart. Salvation is the Divine revelation of Christ to the sinner. "And Jesus answered and said unto him (Peter), Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17). There you have it, my friends. You cannot know Christ until He is revealed to your heart. Stop short of Christ being revealed to your heart and you'll land in Hell! Our churches today, as a whole, know absolutely nothing about Christ being Divinely revealed to the heart of a sinner! And that includes religious leadership. I am not judging as many of you accuse me, just stating the facts. The greatest evidence of that is that the church member, and leader, moves and has his being in the dark. That is, you are not sure of your salvation. Salvation to you is just historical and far away. Like George Washington was president of the United States. There is no reality of Christ to your heart, including you preachers and Bible teachers. If Christ had been revealed to your hearts, you could teach and preach Him in the first person. That means you would speak of Christ as a living reality to your heart! But as I listen to you speak there is no reality of Christ there. He has not been Divinely revealed to your heart. You place the major emphasis on something else. You do not set forth the Divine Revelation of Christ as Salvation. But it is. Salvation is the Divine Revelation of Christ to a lost sinner's heart! There is no other way of a sinner being saved but by revelation. When God saves a sinner the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to that sinner through the Word of God. Salvation begins with God and the sinner is just the recipient of God's grace of love.