

Sunday Sermonette

A Continuing Series by Local Religious Leaders

Halloween

By The Rev. Perry R. Williams
Christ Church Cranbrook

Costumes, masks, cardboard skeletons and the orange and black decorations we see in the store windows these days remind us rather vividly that next week is Halloween. And sooner or later all of us, young and old, may wonder why there are things such as masks, skeletons and cardboard witches—may wonder what all these things really mean and how the customs of Halloween began.

Halloween dates back many hundreds of years, as far back as the third and fourth centuries. At that time people called "Celts" lived in what we now know as Great Britain. These people were very religious, but worshipped the sun and practiced many other superstitions and magic customs. One of the many religious festivals the Celts observed took place on the last night in October. This festival was called "Summer's End" and on this night the Celts sacrificed a horse to the sun-god as a thanksgiving for the harvest.

They also believed that on this same night of "Summer's End" the spirits of the dead were allowed to return to visit their homes and friends. Celts believed, too, that in addition to the spirits of the dead, evil spirits such as witches and ghosts returned to life. For that reason they used to light huge bonfires on hills-tops to ward off the evil spirits as well as to honor the sun-god.

OUR CUSTOM today of wearing masks, of dressing in witch's costumes, of hanging up paper skeletons, originated from these ancient Celtic customs.

In addition to its origin in the religious practices of the Celts, Halloween also had its beginning in the ancient Roman Empire. The Roman government set aside the first of November as a day when all in the empire would remember those who had died for some noble cause.

The first of November was a national religious holiday, a time set apart for remembering the dead. It was the Memorial Day of the Roman Empire. It took place in the empire during the same centuries the Celts in Great Britain were active with their religious festival on the last day of October.

In the early part of the Ninth century, the first of November memorial day of the Roman Empire became a Christian memorial day. The people of the Church chose the first of November as a day when they would remember all Christians who had departed this life in the faith and fear of God. Thus, the pagan religious festival of the Roman Empire became a Christian festival which still exists today.

First Methodist Women Plan Harvest Supper
The Women's society of the First Methodist church will serve a Harvest home turkey supper on Wednesday, Oct. 22, from 5-7 p.m. The event, open to the public, will be in the social hall of the church on West Maple, at Pleasant. Reservations must be made at the church office not later than Monday, Oct. 27.

WHEN CHRISTIANITY spread from Europe to Great Britain, it naturally brought with it its own festivals and holidays. The first of November festival of remembrance of the departed Christians became known in Great Britain as All Hallows, or All Saints Day. And it naturally became associated with the ancient Celtic beliefs and practices of the last day of October. The eve of that night became known as All Hallows Eve, which was shortened to Halloween.

It seems quite natural that the people in the Church should have set aside one day in the Church year as a time when they would especially remember those who had left this life. This is the meaning of the word "Saints." In the Scriptures the word is used of all people of God.

In this sense it does not refer

Recognition of God Is Key to Happiness

"Happiness is here and always available to everyone," Theodore Wallace of Chicago told his audience at the Baldwin school Sunday when he spoke under the sponsorship of the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

"The key to happiness is spiritual understanding," he said, describing this understanding as the consistent recognition of man's relationship to God, which blesses and leads.

Further developing his subject, "Christian Science: The Key to Happiness," Wallace said the ordinary material view of man and the universe is being doubted today by many natural scientists and physicists.

"Some of them now conclude that matter is not the basic substance of all things, and that everything is basically mental," he said. "Happiness is not found in the following the will-o'-the-wisp wanderings of the human imagination, but in the fact that all things are basically mental, governed by divine Principle."

Each tries to get his own wants satisfied, he pointed out, being unready to learn that right at hand there exists a simpler, surer road to happiness. This road is made available to all in the Principle and rules set forth in Christian Science. It can be used, and has been countless times, to cure so-called serious ailments and difficulties. It can be used to heal moral prunings, financial worries and all their troubles which would rob one of his rightful freedom.

In closing he said Christian Science is based on the same law Christ Jesus understood and practices in healing the sick.

"This involved rejecting as fraudulent such thoughts as fear, selfishness, discouragement, resentment and replacing them with God-like thoughts and qualities such as love, unselfishness, courage and generosity."

WALLACH SAID that the word "principle" might be used as a synonym for God, and that Principle is available to humanity to restore health, remove trouble and solve all kinds of human problems.

"Mortals," he said, in every walk of life, are often unwilling to face the fact that all things are basically mental, governed by divine Principle.

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World Community Plans Completed

Women of the several Birmingham churches will celebrate one of their most important church events on Friday, Nov. 7, with a World Community Day program.

Sponsored by the department of Christian World Relations, United Church Women, the day's observance is planned to bring about a better understanding of a needy world. Churches cooperate in an attempt to alleviate the hardships of the needy, promote peace throughout the world and further the plans of United Nations.

The national project this year has been to provide layettes for infants and clothing for other youngsters up to six years. Children in Korea, the Far East, Greece, Lebanon, the Near East and for DP children in Trieste, Germany and Belgium.

The offerings received that day will be used to purchase medicines and vitamins for these children and to support the Christian's Women's Action Program for Lasting Peace.

The Birmingham women will hold their program in the First Baptist church, beginning at 8 p.m. All garments and layettes should be in the hands of committees at this time.

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