

SERIOUS TIMES

MAKING YOUR LIFE MATTER IN AN URGENT DAY

Vol. 2, No. 20

The Trick in the Treat

I grew up in a day when Halloween was little more than pumpkins, fall festivals, hayrides, and dressing up as a pirate or a farmer to go trick-or-treating. That is what it held for my now post-Halloween-age children as well. As a result, I've had a built-in resistance to those Christians who bash October 31st as a pagan festival that followers of Christ have no business supporting, much less engaging. I know its history, but few celebrations in our day are free of pagan roots, and the idea that donning a costume and receiving a mini-Snickers bar was an invitation to the occult was ludicrous to my thinking.

I still hold to the child-like fun the night can hold, but I no longer view the day *itself* as innocuous.

For example, in an article in *the New York Times* titled, "Good Girls Go Bad, For a Day," Stephanie Rosenbloom writes of the changing nature of women's Halloween costumes in the last several years. Little Red Riding Hood, in her thigh-highs and miniskirt does not seem en route to her grandmother's house. Goldilocks, in a snug bodice and platform heels, gives the impression she has been sleeping in everyone's bed. And then there is the witch wearing little more than a Laker Girl uniform, a fairy who appears to shop at Victoria's Secret and a cowgirl with a skirt the size of a – well, you get the point. As Rosenbloom notes, the images "are more strip club than storybook." It's a wonder, she adds, that "gyms do not have 'get in shape for Halloween' specials."

Of course, experts are often trotted out to speak of this as the "empowering" of women as they embrace their sexuality, and look for deep and positive meanings in the evolution of Cinderella from virgin to vixen. But take a walk through your neighborhood mall's costume store, as I recently did – mine featured a prominent "no one under 18 allowed without a parent" sign out front – and you can cut through the sociological analysis.

It is, as comedian Carols Mencia jokes, "Dress-Like-A-Whore" day." And need I even delve into the gore side of things?

This growing debasement is coupled with another trend: the Christmas-ization of Halloween. There are now Halloween trees decorated with ghosts and pumpkins, orange lights on houses, and even Halloween displays on lawns. In an article in USA Today on how Halloween is getting "Christmassy," Maria Puente writes that "Halloween...is second only to the December holiday in

spending." According to the National Retail Federation, Americans will spend \$840 million this year on Halloween decorating alone. Just a few years ago, Halloween was a one-night affair; now, like Christmas, it's becoming a month-long excuse to decorate.

This may be the most insidious dynamic of all. Christmas has already been on a long slide into a secular celebration of emotion divorced from content. But at least the trappings of Christmas pointed us to the *promise* of meaning. Now, through the co-opting of Christmas by Halloween, even that may be lost.

So we string our lights and decorate our trees, and dress as Little Bo "Peep Show" and Miss Foul Play. Welcome to the anti-Christmas, and a reminder that we probably missed out on what was really demonic about Halloween all along.

James Emery White

Sources

Stephanie Rosenbloom, "Good Girls Go Bad, For a Day," *New York Times*, Thursday, October 19, 2006, p. E1 and E2.

Maria Puente, "Halloween décor is getting Christmassy," *USA Today*, Friday, October 13, 2006, p. D1.

*New to the Update? While current Updates are only available to subscribers (subscribe for free at www.serious-times.com), 2005 Updates are now archived for your perusal at <http://www.serious-times.com/information.asp?TopicID=45>.

Sign-Up for the Serious Times Update

If this email was forwarded to you, consider signing up for the bi-weekly Serious Times Update at www.serious-times.com. Beyond signing up for the Update, at www.serious-times.com you will find reading lists and book reviews, "whitepapers" on critical issues and strategic links to other sites, small group resources and homeschooling curriculum, tapes/cd's and study guides.

(To remove your address from the list, just send a message to update-Unsubscribe@serious-times.com)