

Let Saints on Earth in Concert Sing

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Let saints on earth in concert sing
With those whose work is done;
For all the servants of our King
In heav'n and earth are one.

One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
To His command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

E'en now to their eternal home
There pass some spirits blest;
While others to the margin come,
Waiting their call to rest.

Jesus, be Thou our constant Guide
Then, when the word is given,
Bid Jordan's narrow stream divide,
And bring us safe to heaven.

October 31, 2025

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Allhallowstide

Kevin T. Bauder

Today—the day this essay appears to the public—is October 31, All Hallow's Eve. Halloween has become the second most popular “holiday” that is celebrated in the United States. We Americans tend to twist every celebration. As Robert Delnay used to note, we have devoted Thanksgiving to the lust of the flesh, Christmas to the lust of the eyes, and Easter to the pride of life. At one time, October 31 was a preparation for All Saints' Day. These days initiated an observance, Allhallowtide, which included All Souls' Day. This season was a time to remember the departed, especially saints, martyrs, and other faithful believers. Among Western Christians, this was a time to give thanks for God's faithfulness.

Now it has become a time to scare one another with the macabre, the occult, and the demonic. I cannot walk through my neighborhood without encountering human skeletons. They hang or lie here and there. I assume that they are fabricated reproductions, but I don't really know. They look so realistic that they are impossible to distinguish from genuine bones.

Several lawns in my neighborhood have been turned into graveyards. A couple of residences have become habitations for giant spiders and other enlarged vermin. A few homeowners have fitted their dwellings with loudspeakers that fill the night with spooky noises. Many homes have strung lights in purple and other seasonal colors. Some neighbors are displaying enough lights to rival their Christmas decorations.

Thankfully, not many places in my part of town are actively celebrating the demonic. We do get a few stereotyped witches, but we have few overt references to the occult or the underworld. Having said that, we did once have a witch (a real one) for a neighbor. She had a kind of miniature Stonehenge in her yard and signs that said things like “Blessed Be” and “Witches Heal.” But she was a year-round witch, not a pretend one, and she moved away years ago.

Biblical Christians obviously cannot celebrate the power of God's enemies, which is what demons are. Nor can we celebrate death, which is our tyrant and enemy. Furthermore, we cannot rejoice in irrational terror, because that emotion is an affront to God's sovereign rule. For these reasons, we almost



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centralseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

instinctively react against what Halloween has become. Christians have increasingly turned against Halloween, and justifiably so.

Yet in rejecting the day, we also lose certain good things. At the simplest level, people enjoy dressing up in costumes, some of which can display remarkable ingenuity. People also delight to watch children going door to door collecting candy. Children enjoy it, too, and I have fond memories of the big bags of sweets that I accumulated in my pre-teen days. These harmless cultural customs have no public parallel.

At a more sober level, the original purpose of Allhallowtide was perfectly legitimate. It was about remembrance. We do well to remember those who invested in us and who have now gone to their reward. Scripture particularly commands us to remember those who led us and spoke God's Word to us (Heb 13:7). When this text was written, a generation of church leaders had evidently passed on, and the writer to the Hebrews did not want those departed ministers to be forgotten.

We do well to honor saints who helped to equip and form us. I honor Robert Weckle, my boyhood pastor. I honor George and Myron Houghton, who taught me church history and theology respectively. I honor Robert Del-nay (Greek and history), Charles Hauser (an example of godliness), David Nettleton (a true humanist and churchman), Arthur Walton (New Testament and dispensationalist), and Harry Gray (my favorite Arminian theologian).

We should also remember those upon whose labors and insight we build. I owe a debt of gratitude to Richard V. Clearwaters, founder of Central Seminary. I owe other debts to Oliver W. Van Osdel, to Jonathan Edwards, to John Wesley, to John Calvin (yes, I know that their theologies disagree, but each of them has taught me something). I owe a debt to Thomas Aquinas, to Anselm of Canterbury, to Augustine of Hippo. I owe a very large debt to Irenaeus of Lyons. Such debts cannot be fully repaid, but they should at least be acknowledged.

We remember the patriarchs, apostles, and prophets when we study the Scriptures. We also need times for remembering those who ministered to Christ's Church after the canon was completed. One of our faults is the scarcity of such observances. If we do not remember the past, we tend to become rootless in the present.

A season like Allhallowtide also has another use. We do not and cannot celebrate death after the manner of pagans. But we ought to remind ourselves of its approach. We are told to number our days in the pursuit of wisdom (Psalm 90:12). While it has lately become a meme, *memento mori* is a fully Christian sentiment. We are mortal, and our greatest task is to prepare ourselves and others for death's approach.

Acknowledging debts and preparing for death are sobering responsibilities. A season for such activities could well form an Allhallowtide. It is well that such a period is followed in the United States by a season of Thanksgiving, for we ought to give thanks both for the lives that we live and for the people who have taught us to live well.

Of course, October 31 is also Reformation Day. It is the date upon which Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the Wittenberg church door. That is an event that affects all gospel believers, and it too provides an occasion for remembering.

We certainly should reject the occultism and morbidity of contemporary Halloween festivities. At the same time, we should recognize that there is something older and better that predates these corruptions. It is not syncretism to try to reclaim those older values, whether we label the season as Reformation Day, Allhallowtide, or with no name at all.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
