

There is always a reason for any service of a religious nature in which people take part.

Let us take for instance, the Jewish Festivals which are recorded for us in the Old Testament.:

1. The Sabbath Day, which is the weekly commemoration of the day of rest after the creation of the world.

2. The Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is the first and greatest of the three annual feasts instituted by Moses as a perpetual memorial of that great deliverance of the Hebrew People from their Egyptian bondage.

3. Pentecost - the feast held fifty days after the Passover - its purpose being, not only to remind people of the first-fruits of the harvest, but also to commemorate the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

4. The Feast of Tabernacles, which was to remind the Children of Israel of their wanderings in the wilderness, when they lived in tents and also, in that remembrance, to commemorate their final settlement as an agricultural community in Canaan,

and so be in a position to thank God for the gifts of the harvest.

5. The Feast of Trumpets. This was the observance of the Festival of the Jewish New Year. There was a purpose in all that their religious services.

It was just the same with their sacrifices:-

1. The burnt-offering was intended to express the entire self-dedication of those taking part in it.

2. Their sin-offering and trespass-offerings following upon the Day of Atonement and the confession of sins over the head of the scape-goat - the purpose of which was the expiation of their sins.

3. The peace-offering or thank-offering, which was intended to show gratitude for mercies which had been received.

It is just the same with Islam. One could take many instances of the various purposes of their religious observances, but two will suffice:-

1. The twenty-eight days of fasting called Rhamdhan. The purpose of which was to bring under

control all the desires of the body.

2. The commemoration of Muharrum which re-enacts the tortures which the Shiah Sect of Islam experienced at the hand of the rival sect - the Sunnis, and, as such is very similar to our Passion Plays of the West.

How much more purpose is there in our own Christian Services.

1. Our own observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day is, as you know the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Our Lord on the first day of the week.

2. In our Sacraments, which are an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace - and the purpose of them is the receiving of that grace.

3. In our ordinary Morning and Evening Services, where, because it is now our custom to abbreviate the opening exhortation, we are apt to forget the fundamental purposes of our worship:-

(a) Thanksgiving - "To render thanks for the great benefits which we have received at His Hands."

4.

(b) To praise God - "To set forth His most worthy praise"

(c) To hear God's Holy Word.

(d) To lay our supplications before Him - and in order to do that the more worthily - first to confess our sins of omission and commission.

4. In all our historical Festivals - Christmas, Easter, Ascension and Whitsun. There is a definite purpose behind it all, though sometimes, it must be confessed, in our familiarity with our services and our Festivals we are apt to forget or at least to overlook those purposes.

Moses, when he said that in future generations that question "What mean ye by this service?" would be asked, almost hinted that he wanted it asked, so that the answer could be fully given and very fully explained.

I want to suggest to you this afternoon, that which you already know, but which we are all apt to forget, that in all our Masonry there is a very definite purpose and that each Degree has that

purpose very clearly defined and as far as possible indelibly impressed upon our memories.

I am not giving away any Masonic Secrets when I say that in some of the Higher Degrees - such as that of the Knights Templars, the whole purpose is to make its members strong and energetic soldiers of the Cross, so that they can guard the Holy Sepulchre and thereby enter so fully into the Resurrection of Our Lord that they may make His Risen Life their own.

Or in the Degree of the Rose Croix, in which we worship Jesus Christ as the Rose of Sharon and intensify our adoration of Him as did His Beloved Disciple St. John.

So I could go on, enumerating the purposes of our Masonic Traditions, but we, who are gathered together here this afternoon are members of the Craft - we are workers - workers for God. Our tradition is steeped in the building of the Temple of King Solomon and in an allegorical manner we are reminded (as it was pointed out in the second lesson for our service to-day) that we ourselves are the Temples

of God. And that tradition inspires us as to how that work is to be undertaken:-

1. It is to be undertaken in accordance with the Inspired Word of God as contained in the Holy Bible - or as we sometimes call it, the Volume of the Sacred Law. It is there that we are taught our duty to God, to our neighbour and ourselves. And here may I recommend that each one of us, quite quietly reads through once again, in the silence of our own room those wonderful words with their solemn charge, which were delivered to us at our entry into Freemasonry, recapturing once again the earnestness and sincerity of that occasion.

2. That duty to God and to our neighbour and to ourselves was to be accompanied by daily prayer. You will recall the words: "Part to be spent in prayer to Almighty God." Prayer is an essential part of the true life of every Freemason - and let us not forget that prayer is not only talking to God, it is talking with God, or communing with Him.

3. Then again, the life of a Mason must be an unselfish life - part of each day is to be spent in

helping those in need of help. There is surely no need for me to enlarge upon this point. It is so basically a part of the tenets and principles of Masonry.

4. It is to be a dedicated life - "Grant that he may so dedicate and devote his life to Thy Service" that is part of a prayer which all of you will remember as a vital part of your entry into Freemasonry.

"What mean ye by this service?"

I have, this afternoon, purposely stressed the point that there is always a real purpose in the gathering together of people into the House of God - of worshipping together in God's Temple. Most of those purposes look back upon some happening, so that, reminded of the past, the present and the future may be assisted by the inspiration of the past and find again the real purpose of life. And I want to suggest to each one here this afternoon that the real meaning of this service is to recapture something of the past in our lives and enkindle again the fires

that then burned, the zeal and enthusiasm which we then had, and so go forward re-invigorated, re-vivified for the future.

as well as those who are Masons. Those of you who are not Masons/will have some such moment in your lives to look back upon. It may have been the moment of your Confirmation. It may have been the moment of your first Communion. You will, each one of you, know the moment of the supremest spiritual elation of your lives. Think back upon that moment and capture again the solemn rapture of that experience.

And, in addition, I would ask my Masonic Brethren to go back in your minds to that solemn occasion when you entered the Craft and pledged yourselves to God's Service and to the service of your fellowmen; and as you do so, to use this present service as an opportunity to re-dedicate yourselves afresh.

It will, of course mean a more regular reading of and study of His Holy Word.

It will of course mean a renewed and more



realistic prayer life.

It will, of course, mean a life in which self-interest is relegated to the back-ground and the needs and interests of others is brought more to the fore.

It will then mean that when the question "What mean ye by this service?" comes whispering to you in your innermost soul you will know the answer - the answer given also in your own innermost soul to your Creator, the Great Architect of the Universe - and it will be henceforth: "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

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