

LODGE

Burial Services

If a secret society has a religious ritual that is unobjectionable in form, recognizing the name and office of our Lord Jesus Christ, is there any valid reason why a Christian should not unite with it in *worship*, and especially in its *burial services*?

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

In answer, we need to inquire, What is Christian worship? It is the homage which regenerated men, who have fellowship with Christ, present to their Creator. It does not consist in form, but rather in spirit. For "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24.) It follows, then, that *unregenerate men cannot worship God*. They may use the *forms* of worship, but such forms are but blasphemies in their mouths. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:7, 8.)

RELIGIOUS FORMS.

It is true that men may use the forms of worship without regard to the spirit, and the

prophet testifies of them: "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, therefore the wisdom of their wise men shall perish." (Isa. 29:13, 14.)

It is always right and wise to unite in worship with those who are presumably Christians. Christ has pronounced a blessing upon it; but it cannot be right to unite in a worship where those who are engaged in it are not presumed to be Christians, and are really *not* worshipers. It is rather a sanction of their ungodly pretenses.

WEEP WITH THE WEEPING.

It is always suitable to attend funerals and express our sympathy with sorrowing humanity. It is right to conduct funeral services, provided they are truly Christian; but to unite with the worldly in religious ceremonies which they have devised, and which, even by implication, teach that men may be saved who have not repented and who have no faith in Christ, is not in the line of Christian obligation, but confirming sinners in their error.

SECRET SOCIETY RITUALS.

Some of the secret insurance societies, and the Grand Army of the Republic, have a burial service suitable for any church to use in burying its Christian members.

It needs no argument to show that such lodges are worldly associations, composed chiefly of worldly, not godly, men.

Why should an association of worldly men borrow the livery of the Christian church for use at the grave over their deceased members? Why, after using the name of Christ at the grave, and by inference teaching that these members are saved through him—why do they afterwards ignore the Lord Jesus Christ and speak of their departed compan-

ion as having gone to the Great Chancellor-Commander or the Great Wood-Chopper or to the Grand Architect of the Universe Beyond, etc., etc.?

THE REASON.

The reason why such societies adopt a Christian burial service is that they may use the name of Christ to conjure with before the public. (1) It gives the lodge standing in the community. It is stock in trade. It seems to the public to be clothed with a semi-sacred character. (2) It brings the church and the world closer together. Many are led to say and believe that these worldly societies, with their semi-religious character, are very much like the church, and are about as good. (3) It popularizes the lodge, to use the name of Christ, but it also invites the woe pronounced by him on those who "for a pretense make long prayers," therefore they "shall receive the greater damnation." (Matt. 23:14.)

The reason for referring to their unconverted members as having gone over to the Grand Commander, etc., instead of to be with Christ, is that they are of the world and not of God. They do not love the Lord Jesus nor want to be with him. They have secured by the use of his name all that they wish, and hence they speak now, out of their hearts, of the god of their lodge, to whom the soul of their dead member has gone. They are worldly societies, composed for the most part of worldly men; the world loves them and speaks well of them (John 15:19); but Jesus condemns them by precept and practice. His life was open. His declaration (John 18:20) was that public life should be public, not secret. And hence after the lodge has used the name of Christ to accomplish its purpose, his name is dropped for one more congenial.

IS IT PROFANE?

The use of a Christian burial ritual by these world societies over their worldly members is mocking the Lord Jesus, and is, of course, blasphemy. Jesus everywhere teaches that men must first be "born anew" before they can *see* his kingdom and *enter* it. That they must come out from the world and be separate from it. That while "in the world" the Christian is not "of the world."

Communities are deceived into believing that somehow these members will be all right in the next world because frequently the lodge rituals are read at the graves over unconverted men by Christian ministers. Are not such ministers "blind leaders of the blind?"

Christians who join these societies are blinded by the use of the name of Christ and fall more easily into giving to their lodge credit for charity and kind neighborly offices, which, so far as they are concerned, ought to be given to their church, and thus to their Lord.

As to Christians uniting in the religious ritual or burial service of such lodges as the Freemasons and Oddfellows, which reject and forbid the use of the name of Christ, nothing need be said. The wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err as to his duty in respect to them.

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