

Cremation.

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THE disposing of dead bodies by cremation has become very common in our day, so that it has almost become the rule and not the exception for persons occupying public stations in life to be cremated. Cremation Societies advertise cheap rates in the newspapers and every effort is made to cause this practice to become more widespread by holding out that it is more to the benefit of the health of communities than the burial of the dead. Many also argue that it is unimportant whether the body goes back to its elements by the slower process of the grave or by the speedier process of burning, and are loud in their expressions of preference for the latter without, we believe, ever giving it serious thought, or seeking any other foundation for their preference than a growing volume of public opinion. Having given this subject serious thought for a number of years back we have noticed two things in particular in connection with it - First, that its popularity increases as true religion declines, and, Second, that those who leave instructions for their bodies to be cremated, are, with very few exceptions, men and women in whom true and vital godliness is conspicuous by its absence. This ought to cause us to examine the subject of cremation in the light of God's infallible Word, which ought to be our rule in all things.

In the Old Testament we have a record of the death of many of God's dear saints, and where any of them gave instructions concerning the disposal of their bodies, they clearly stated that it was to be by burial. Abraham's first possession in the land of Canaan was a burying-place where he "buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah," where afterwards he himself was buried. Jacob took an oath of Joseph that he would bury him in the cave of Machpelah, and Joseph himself took an oath of the children of Israel that they should carry his bones out of Egypt, which the Apostle brings before us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as having been done by faith. But in this matter we have a higher authority than the actions of men, the example of God Himself, for we read concerning the death of Moses, that he "died there in the land of Moab, according to the Word of the Lord, and he buried him in a valley of the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." In the New

Testament God again sets the example for when He died in our nature He chose not to be cremated but to be buried thus fulfilling what was written of Him, "And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death," and so leaving an example for his people to follow.

To the child of God. the burial of the dead is agreeable to the hope of a resurrection. The Holy Ghost says in Isaiah, lvii, 2, in connection with the removal of the righteous, "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in in his uprightness." This hope may be even more clearly set before us in Job xix., 25, 26. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." That which is sown in corruption is raised in incorruption. Their sleep in the grave is a sleep in Jesus, and on the resurrection morning they shall awake and be satisfied with His likeness.

In the Scriptures we find only two passages which clearly refer to the disposal of bodies by cremation, that is, in I. Samuel, xxxi., 12, where we read that the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons were burnt at Jabesh and in Amos, vi., 10. In connection with both these instances we find that religion was at a very low ebb in Israel for they "were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works." They had forsaken God, "the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water," and what comfort could be found by them in the belief of a resurrection? This is exactly the position of many today. They despise the Bible and yet their very consciences tell them that it must be true, and if true, that the resurrection of the dead can have no comfort for them. This has led many to prefer cremation to burial for behind cremation there is the idea of the destruction of the body in such a way that it will be impossible for it to have a resurrection. Cremation is common among the Hindoos to the present day, while it was extensively practised among the Celts and Norsemen before the advent of the Christian religion among them, but on embracing Christianity they turned away from this manner of disposing of their dead. From this we see that it is a pagan and not a Christian practice.

Further it violates all natural feelings. Those of our readers who have given the subject serious thought will find it very difficult to prefer cremation to burial in the case of those to whom they are bound by ties of tender love. Where parties

are united by the double tie of natural and Christian love and death makes it imperative that the living should seek a place where he might remove his dead out of his sight, can any who have experienced that love think without horror of casting into one of these “furnaces for the dead” the wife who has been to him “as the loving hind and pleasant roe,” the child who has been the subject of his many prayers at a throne of grace, or the mother in whose lap he was tenderly nursed in the helplessness of childhood. Where no such horror is felt in connection with such a matter, it is our firm conviction that tender love is conspicuous by its absence, and that in this we are bearing an unmistakable proof of being given over to the judgments of the Most High.