

read at the different services on that Festival, all bearing reference to John and to the prominent facts connected with his remarkable life, and with his cruel death. In former times the 29th day of August was observed in commemoration of his martyrdom, but now we celebrate, on one occasion, the opening and the close of his earthly career.

He then spoke of the motive which had induced the ancient and honorable Society of Freemasons to make choice of that day as one of their peculiar Festivals.

It was not so much because John was the founder of the Order, even supposing him to have been a member of it, for Freemasonry was organized long before the day when he first saw the light. We read that from the time of the Babylonish captivity Masonic Lodges were dedicated to Zerubbabel; having been previously, and from the building of the first temple at Jerusalem, dedicated to King Solomon.

Nor was it even because the Baptist was a member of the Craft; for, although it is supposed by some that the "girdle of a skin," which St. Mark tells us he "wore about his loins," was a Masonic apron, he did not venture to assert that this was founded on fact, however deserving of credence it may be deemed by those more deeply read than himself in the History and the Ancient Charges of the Order.

His opinion was that John the Baptist was selected as one of the Grand Patrons of Freemasonry because he was the "fore-runner of the *Light*." His illustrious namesake, the other Grand Patron of the Order, "the loved Apostle John," declares that the Baptist "came for a witness, to bear witness of the *Light*." Our Saviour, too, of whom he was the herald and the harbinger, Himself testified of him that "he was a burning and a shining *Light*,"—illustrating thus his high and honorable office after the manner of the people he

addressed, who were in the habit of exemplifying a more than ordinary acquaintance with heavenly truth by means of that bright emblem.

This, then, is the reason, or rather one—perhaps the most influential—of the reasons which has operated in the selection by the Craft of John the Baptist as one of their Grand Patrons; viz: that he was the "fore-runner of the *Light*, the herald commissioned by the Great A. of the U. to announce the advent of "the true *Light*—the *Light* which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

And how worthy was the Baptist of that distinction! Yet, after all, John was but a mere man; he was no angel; not one of the heavenly host who stand ever before the throne on high, ready at any moment to wing their way on messages of love and mercy; he was, as was said by St. James of his prototype Elias, "a man, subject to like passions as we are." "Would to God," said the preacher, "that we, brethren, might be esteemed men of a character so spotless as was his! We are not called upon, for the sake of our religion, to make the wild and boundless prairies, or the Rocky Mountains of the West our dwelling-place; but there is a retirement to which we should occasionally betake ourselves,—the retirement of our closet,—there to give ourselves to meditation and to prayer, to 'commune with our heart and to be still.' It is not incumbent on us to restrain our appetite to the extent of limiting the articles of our daily sustenance to wild honey, and to the locusts which are still used for food by the Asiatic poor. But we are expected, nay we are commanded, to abstain from the opposite extremes of gluttony and drunkenness: nor can we entertain the hope of receiving even the smallest measure of the commendation bestowed upon the Baptist unless we avoid the too prevalent, the too lightly regarded sin of intemperance. The crystal spring welling up