

During the Roman festival called Saturnalia, there were theatrical performances similar to the mummery plays. Most descriptions of the Saturnalia paint a picture of rambunctious raillery and sexual debauchery which also involved wassailing.

Today, we have evidence of the theatrical performances connected with the Saturnalia in the form of literary works and also in the calendars from early Rome. One calendar from the mid fourth century displays a mask and dice in the illustration for the month of December. Gambling with dice was a common Saturnalian activity and the mask was symbolic of theatrical performances among other things. From very early on, there has been some sort of masking or guising associated with the Saturnalia. Martial, who wrote during the first century, recorded a German mask as number 176 on his list of presents made to guest at the feasts.

"CLXXVI A GERMAN MASK

I am the fancy of the potter, the mask of a red-haired Batavian. This countenance, at which you smile, is an object of terror to children." ~ Martial

Here the mask is described as an object of terror to children, and for good reason. The origins of the mask at Saturnalia has less to do with the theater, and more to do with being a remnant of a much darker side of

Saturnian worship, which is human sacrifice. This quote from Macrobius shows that human sacrifices were replaced by the use of masks.

"... set up a shrine to Dis and an altar to Saturn, whose holiday they called Saturnalia. And though they long believed that they were appeasing Dis with human heads and Saturn with men as victims, because of the oracle's words, ...and heads to Hades, and send a man [phôta] to the father, they say that Hercules, returning through Italy with Geryon's cattle, persuaded their descendants to replace those ill-omened sacrifices with favorable ones, offering to Dis [Hades/Pluto] not human heads but masks with skillfully fashioned human faces and honoring Saturn's altar not by slaughtering a man but by kindling lights'..."

~Macrobius by Kaster

In paganism, there is a belief that the blood, hide, or head of a sacrificial victim can somehow pass a blessing on to those who come into contact with it. The belief that some sort of blessing can be passed from an object to a person leads back to the practice of carrying objects through the streets, or even going house to house with them. The supposed power behind this practice lies in the mask, which we have seen would have derived its so called power because it represented the head of a person who was a victim of sacrifice. There is no benefit for the Christian to engage in these types of practices. We aren't called to put on a

mask or disguise which originated from such a dark origin. We are called to "put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the Image" of our Creator.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

We are called to glorify God, not to connect our worship of Him to these dark pagan rituals. The mumming ritual glorifies the mask and a magical potion which supposedly has the power to resurrect the dead. The first chapter of Romans tells us that after we know God, that we should not fall back into the ways of the world by connecting the worship of our incorruptible God, with things of a pagan nature.

Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things..

Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:.

Those who drape their bodies in pagan costume do indeed dishonor their own bodies. There is more on the Website.

Mumming

Many Americans may be unfamiliar with mumming as it is declining in popularity. Mumming is a type of play where the participants act out a series of scenes in which a person is killed and then brought back to life by a doctor using a magic potion. The people dress up in costumes and usually wear masks or makeup. Sometimes the performance is held in situ, other times the performers move through the streets or go house to house. In some cultures there is a game made of trying to guess who is hiding behind the costume and mask. The plays are sometimes performed without sound, and at other times with disguised voices. This custom has a connection to wassailing. It is easy to see why Christians have condemned and avoided the practice throughout the centuries. The act of pretending to raise the dead through the use of some sort of magic potion violates the Christian walk in obvious fashion, not the least of which is blatant blasphemy. Pretending to take on the powers of God is seen as blasphemy, and rightly so. The Bible verse that is most often used to define blasphemy is Joh 10:33, which states:

Joh 10:33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

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Mumming



This informational pamphlet gives the reader a basic understanding of the origins of mumming.

