

“Watchman, what of the night ?”



“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!” Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

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Editor's Preface

In early June of this year, WWN's Associate Editor, Dennis Tevis, was notified of an exposition of Christian relics that was hosted and being held at a Roman Catholic Church in Cresco, Iowa. The event was presented by "Treasures of the Church," a traveling "ministry of evangelization of the Catholic Church." Its purpose, so stated: "Is to give people an experience of the living God through an encounter with the relics of his saints in the form of an exposition." Realizing the importance that an eyewitness observation of a public display of this sort could be, Brother Tevis made a 70 mile drive to the Notre Dame Parish Church and attended. The first article in this Issue of WWN is his report of the meeting.

The second article is a write-up on what the Scriptures reveal about the veneration of "saints" and "relics." This Editor is convinced that the Word of God pinpoints the predominant danger associated with this practice. A consultation with Brother Tevis concerning the information, thoughts, actions, and attitudes that he observed at the Cresco exhibition further confirmed this conviction.

The final article is our ongoing continuation of *The Sanctuary Truth* as outlined in previous Issues.



A FIRST HAND ACCOUNT OF A RECENT PUBLIC DISPLAY FEATURING "CHRISTIAN" RELICS

On June 7, 2018, a Roman Catholic Church in Cresco, Iowa, hosted an event where over 150 "holy" relics were on display, with some purportedly as old as 2,000 years. Before viewing the objects, Fr. Carlos Martins, the traveling priest who was in charge of the exposition, gave a media presentation with slides inside the church's worship hall in front of approximately 300 people that lasted for 75 minutes. The title slide proudly announced, "Sacred Relics of the Saints: Treasures of the Church." Among other things, the priest presented passages of Scripture which he confidently stated endorses the practice of venerating relics. The first text was 2 Kings 13: 20-21:

"And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet."

Martins remarked that Elisha was one of the great prophets to the northern kingdom of Israel. After Elisha's death, another dead man hastily buried in Elisha's tomb came back to life through the *touch* of his *body* with the *bones* of the dead prophet. The next passage was Matthew 9: 20:

"And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment."

The priest pointed out that the woman touched the *hem only* of Christ's garment and not even any physical part of His body to receive healing. Thirdly, he read Acts 5: 15:

"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."

Here was a major apostle, Martins commented, where people who wanted to be healed were satisfied with just having Peter's *shadow* covering them and miracles would come about. Putting these three instances together is proof, the priest proclaimed, that healings were done through *material objects* related to certain godly individuals. The Catholic Church follows this procedure with their saints.

The priest went on and added that the relics in and of themselves do not possess power, instead, that comes from being connected to the Holy Spirit. For confirmation he read from a slide, 1 Corinthians 6: 19:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

You see, he said, that your *body* is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. This agent of God was definitely living within the saints, which makes them holy and the best of role models. If a person desired to make a connection with one of the saints, it will happen that night - the priest guaranteed it; something will happen out of the ordinary as an indication of which saint is responding.

The power of God, he continued, is exercised through the saints; He chooses them for this role. Martins brought forth the story of St. Bernadette. She was the nun who supposedly beheld in vision Our Lady (the Virgin Mary) at Lourdes, France. A slide showed a recent picture of her dead body enclosed in a crystal case. "Miraculously," no signs of decomposition are there (?); she died in 1879.

This and more teaches the faithful that saints have intercessory inroads with God. As mediators, they can plead with and influence Him to use His power in helping those who call upon them.

Next, he proceeded to name the top two relics on display - Veil of Our Lady (Mary) and True Cross of Our Lord, in that order. The priest related the story of how fragments of the cross were found - the Roman emperor Constantine I, who converted to Christianity about 313 A.D. and his mother Helena, are generally credited for that. These two relics and a select few were placed on tables with gold colored cloths. They could not be lifted, being too delicate or on the heavy side. The remaining relics were on tables covered with blue cloths. Being smaller in size, they were easier to handle. Practically all of the relics were termed as '1st Class' (*ex ossi* - a part of the saint's body); the rest were listed as '2nd Class' (*ex indumentis* - a piece of the saint's clothing). Taking photographs of the relics would be permitted.

After the media presentation, the audience made their way from the worship hall to a large room in the church's basement. The relics - the actual objects themselves - are in ornate metal enclosures, encased in glass and set in golden stand holders. Upon observation, most were 12 inches tall, with the tallest (30 inches) belonging to the Virgin Mary. Some of the other relics were: Crib of Our Lord (a piece of the manger); Mary Magdalene (a particle of bone); the Apostle Peter (a particle of bone); Mother Teresa (strands of her hair); and Pope John Paul II (a fragment of cloth saturated with his blood).

The ways that the attendees were venerating the relics was a sight to behold! The most common was touching the round glass enclosure storing the relic with rosary beads. Peo-

ple were also touching the same spot with pictures of their loved ones. Others, kissed the same area. Holding the relics up to their hearts was the way for some. Another method was kneeling down before the relics and making the sign of the cross.

God's judgment on relics is clearly revealed in the Bible. The second commandment in the Decalogue forbids image veneration (worship):

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20: 4-6).

The peril to God's people posed by these objects is the tendency toward idolatry. This very thing happened to ancient Israel. God had commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent in order to save the Israelites from a deadly plague of poisonous snakes (Numbers 21: 5-9). The bronze serpent itself was preserved by the Hebrews as a reminder of God's grace and salvation. Tragically, centuries later during the reign of King Hezekiah, this "relic" had become an object of worship. This necessitated, among the reforms instituted by Hezekiah to check the growing tide of idolatry in the kingdom, the breaking "in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan." (*A piece of [bronze]*, marginal reading - 2 Kings 18: 4).

And from the Writings, Ellen G. White

penned the following account on June 1, 1886, concerning her observation of relic veneration that she witnessed during a visit made to the Milan Cathedral in Italy:

"The Lord knew the weakness of men, and their desire to venerate dead men's bones and things of no value; therefore when Moses and Aaron, the leaders of ancient Israel, died, the Lord hid them so that the people would not be tempted to commit idolatry over them, as the Romanists do over their senseless relics. The Lord's plan was that the living God alone should be exalted; but the Roman Church has turned this reverence from the Creator to the creature, and Satan is satisfied." (RH, June 1, 1886).¹ ❖ DJT

[The Foundation's Facebook feed is accessible on its website. Pictures of the relics are located there.]

SAINT/RELIC VENERATION: Another Way Of Opening The Door To Spiritualism

False teachers in the first-century church introduced a number of unscriptural inventions into the doctrine and practices of the Christian faith. By combining elements of paganism, perverted Judaism, and worldly philosophical speculation with Christianity, these forerunners of the Gnostics began creating a spurious system which deceptively was made to appear as the genuine truth. In the succeeding centuries, Roman Catholicism followed this same principle by heavily integrating the paganism of the Roman Empire with aspects of Christianity to form a syncretistic counterfeit of true biblical faith. This amalgamation, among other things, is the basis of its false worship practices.

Within the Roman Catholic Church, the veneration of relics is simply a corollary to the veneration of its saints. In the Bible, both the Hebrew and Greek words translated,

"saints," are defined as "holy ones" or "set-apart ones" and refer to both loyal, unfallen angels and *all* humans anywhere and at any time who have saving faith in God through Christ, whether they are now dead or alive. Thus sainthood is determined strictly by God who confers it upon all true believers who venerate (worship) only Him. In contrast, Catholicism teaches that humans can become saints only after death and that it is conferred solely upon a select few whom the officials in the Roman Church's hierarchy deem as worthy through a canonization process based on man-made standards of "holiness." Accordingly, sainthood is a status granted by men upon certain dead people who are viewed as "special friends of God" that can be asked to intercede for those still on earth. These saints (dead people) are to be prayed to for help, guidance, wisdom, deliverance from troubles, and to effect favor, miracles, and various kinds of spiritual and material benefits. As a result, they, and any physical objects directly associated with them (relics) are to be venerated (worshipped) for these acts of benevolence. The Roman Catholic Church (along with other Orthodox / liturgical types of churches) have designated throughout the centuries of the Christian era over 10,000 dead people as "saints."

What should be apparent is that this entire practice heavily involves attempted contact and communication with the dead. And though it is garbed in Christian dress and wears this disguise through the apologetic sanction and blessings of Rome and her allies, it is nothing more than the blatant occultism that Scripture forbids and condemns (see Deuteronomy 18: 9-14 and Isaiah 8: 19-20, for example). For professed Christians to "venerate" dead people, no matter how it is presented, is to engage in the same practices

as do the pagans in the worship of their false gods. Concerning ancient Israel's apostasy with Baal-peor, God's Word declares:

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto *the sacrifices of their gods*: and the people did *eat, and bowed down to their gods*. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." (Numbers 25: 1-3, emphasis added).

Later, commenting on this same incident in Israel's history, the Bible further reveals:

"They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and *ate the sacrifices of the dead*." (Psalm 106: 28); that is, sacrifices that had been offered to the dead (emph. added).

This clearly shows that contact with, worship (veneration), and devotion that paganism has with its "gods" is a homage to "the dead." This close association (equating) of pagan gods with dead humans is further expounded upon in the Writings. The Lord's messenger declares:

"Nearly all forms of ancient sorcery and witchcraft were founded upon a belief in communion with the dead. Those who practiced the arts of necromancy claimed to have intercourse with departed spirits ...

"This same belief in communion with the dead formed the cornerstone of heathen idolatry. The gods of the heathen were believed to be the deified spirits of departed heroes. Thus the religion of the heathen was a worship of the dead ...

"The deification of the dead has held a prominent place in nearly every system of heathenism, as has also the supposed communion with the dead. The gods were believed to communicate their will to men, and also, when consulted, to give them counsel ...

"The belief in communion with the dead is still held, even in professedly Christian lands. Under the name of spiritualism the practice of communicating with beings claiming to be the spirits of the departed has become widespread ... Spiritual beings sometimes appear to persons in the form of their deceased friends ... Those who thus assume to be the spirits of the departed are regarded with a certain idolatry, and with many their word has greater weight than the word of God ...

"Modern spiritualism and the forms of ancient witchcraft and idol worship - all having communion with the dead as their vital principle - are founded upon that first lie by which Satan beguiled Eve in Eden: 'Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, ... ye shall be as gods.' (Genesis 3: 4-5). Alike based upon falsehood and perpetuating the same, they are alike from the father of lies.

"The Hebrews were expressly forbidden to engage in any manner in pretended communion with the dead. God closed this door effectually when He said: 'The dead know not anything, ... neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.' (Ecclesiastes 9: 5-6). 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.' (Psalm 146: 4). And the Lord declared to Israel: 'The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.' (Leviticus 20: 6).

"The 'familiar spirits' were not the spirits of the dead, but evil angels, the messengers of Satan. Ancient idolatry, which, as we have seen, comprises both worship of the dead and pretended communion with them, is declared by the Bible to have been demon wor-

ship. The apostle Paul, in warning his brethren against participating, in any manner, in the idolatry of their heathen neighbors, says, 'The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.' (1 Corinthians 10: 20). The psalmist, speaking of Israel, says that 'they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,' and in the next verse he explains that they sacrificed them 'unto the idols of Canaan.' (Psalm 106: 37-38). In their supposed worship of dead men they were in reality worshipping demons.

"Modern spiritualism, resting upon the same foundation, is but a revival in a new form of the witchcraft and demon worship that God condemned and prohibited of old. It is foretold in the Scriptures, which declare that 'in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.'" (1 Timothy 4: 1). (PP, pgs. 684-686).²

Whatever else may be said in regard to the unbiblical nature of saint / relic veneration, the thing that stands out most is the door that this demonic influenced idolatry opens for the entrance of spiritualism into the life of the believer individually, and the church collectively. The current robust evangelization efforts of the Roman Church in spreading the acceptance and adoption of this practice among a biblically illiterate society is slowly but steadily moving forward. This, along with an extremely deceptive cloak that this satanic menace projects, preys upon the growing susceptibility to all kinds of spiritualistic delusions that the general public, including many professed Christians, have willingly fallen victim to in today's "New Age" culture.

Therefore, the inroads that this counterfeit

is making, in both the world and Christendom, is advancing onward seemingly undetected. This is almost entirely due to the near universal belief, even among the vast majority of professed Christians, in the natural immortality of the human soul. Acceptance of this tenet, directly rooted in the first lie perpetrated by Satan upon mankind's first parents (Genesis 3: 3-5), leaves humanity completely unguarded against all forms of spiritualistic deceit. And since Bible prophecy indicates that demonic activity will progressively reach its climax just before the second coming of Christ (Revelation 16: 13-16), we can expect the spiritualism manifested in saint / relic idolatry to grow and intensify. ❖ GLP

THE DAILY HEBREW TABERNACLE SERVICE: The Courtyard Ministrations - Sacrificial Offerings [continued]

The Fat Of The Sin Offerings (resumed) --

"All the fat" the Lord claimed as His, and with the blood, forbade that it should be eaten (Leviticus 3: 16-17). What is the significance of this part of the ritual? What do the kidneys represent? What is the meaning of the fat and why is it cut away and burned?

First, the kidneys: The kidneys "were regarded as the seat of the tenderest and deepest emotions." (Keil & Delitzsch).³ Gesenius in his Hebrew lexicon states that the word for kidneys (הַתְּוִי'אֵלֶּכֶס, *k'layoth*) was used metonymically to represent "the mind, soul as the seat of the desires, affections, passions," and is often coupled with "heart" (לֵב, *lev*). Observe closely the following texts. Note the use of the Hebrew word for "kidneys" as a figure of speech. In each instance, the word is translated "reins" in the KJV:

"The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." (Psalm 7: 9).

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my

reins and my heart." (Psalm 26: 2).

"Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my *reins*." (Psalm 73: 21).

"But, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the *reins* and the heart." (Jeremiah 11: 20).

"I the Lord search the heart, I try the *reins*, ... " (Jeremiah 17: 10).

How are we to understand this in relationship to the sin offering? God met Israel at the level of their perception. The "seat of emotion, desires and passions" was removed from the body and burned on the altar. But before this could be done, the "fat" had to be stripped from the kidneys and also burned. The full comment found in Keil & Delitzsch is interesting. It reads: "Now, if the flesh of the victim represented the body of the offerer as the organ of the soul, the fat portions inside the body, together with the kidneys, which were regarded as the seat of the tenderest and deepest emotions, can only have set forth the better part or inmost kernel of the man." (*op. cit.*).³ While this comment relates the separation from the body of certain parts of the sin offering, and differentiates between the "outer" and "inner man," it still

leaves unexplained, why the fat had to be separated from the kidneys. Paul addresses the "outer" and "inner" man concepts. He wrote, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." (Romans 7: 22). To him, "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4: 16). He explained how this could be. He wrote - "I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15: 31). Self, "the reins," was crucified with Christ (Galatians 2: 20). The kidneys were burned on the altar. Yet the offerer lived because he was forgiven.

In this service, the fat stripped from the inwards parts as well as the kidneys, was also burned. Into "smoke" it was consumed away. What does this mean, and what is this ritual saying to us?

» *To be Continued.*

1. Ellen G. White, *Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol. 2, 1886-1892* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 47.
2. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 684-686.
3. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, April 1991), 306.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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