

Modern topics (part 2) relics:

How matters like symbols, church history, traditions, illuminati and the Catholic Church impact faith

D E Wasake Esq
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This message covers

- Many Christian denominations venerate relics, symbols and history/traditions. But can these impact our faith in the immortal, invisible God?

Information notice board

- 1) **About me.** Before I became a devoted Christian, I spent 20 years of my life having grown up in church tradition, knowing about God but not knowing God. God however rescued me to turn me into his servant and I got baptized in May 2017. Since then, he has given me a message, to go and preach the gospel as a preacher and an evangelist including to his servants bound up in traditions. You can read my full testimony [here](#):
- 2) **About these series.** The Lord Jesus gave me a single word "Go". This word will define a series of 12 topics he has also given me to tell his church in order to develop mountain moving faith. This message is one of those topics.

(Information notice board continued at the end).

Introduction

When Jesus was hanging on the cross dying, the Roman soldiers below had carried dice with them, perhaps continuing a tradition of theirs, making great gain from the property of dying people. The bible says:

"When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots." Matthew 27: 35.

About Jesus' burial the bible then says this:

So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. Mark 15: 46-47.

The matter of Jesus' clothes seems to have always fascinated Christians and almost 1,500 years after his death it seems that "miraculously" the "burial cloth of Jesus" was discovered to have moved all the way from Jerusalem to France. It was then moved to Turin, Italy, in 1578, and has been attracting visitors to the northern Italian city ever since. It is popularly known as the "Shroud of Turin".

Although pieces said to be of burial cloths of Jesus are held by at least four churches in France and three in Italy, none has gathered as much religious following as the Shroud of Turin.

While the Catholic doesn't class the Shroud of Turin as a relic, which is an artifact believed to be real, still people want to see the Shroud. The Shroud is brought out for irregular "ostensioni," or



showings, at the discretion of the Pope. The last time this happened in 2015, under Pope Francis. Over two million people lined up to see the Shroud.

On an average year when the Shroud is not on display, around 200,000 people visit the chapel annually.

The entrance fee per adult is about €8. Which means 200,000 people generate this Cathedral at least €1.6m not counting related tourism for the city such as city guides, transport, accommodation and food.ⁱ

In 1988, science, by means of radiocarbon dating established that the fabric of the shroud of Turin originated from 1260-1390AD.ⁱⁱ This would mean that what was drawing in visitors was really a fake! Ordinarily, this would have brought its attraction to an end but no. Instead, not only does the research into the Shroud continue; Christians and non-Christians alike continue to pile into Turin Cathedral to see the artifact.

Relics: Intercede for us Saint.





The Shroud of Turin is not the only relic claimed to be from Jesus. While the bible doesn't tell us any more details about what happened to Jesus' cross, the crown of thorns, nails, his shoes et al, somehow these items have turned up in their thousands in churches all around the world!

For example:

- **Relics of the True Cross of Jesus** are claimed by many churches around the world. The same applies to Holy Nails, Holy Sponges, Holy Lances, Holy Thorns and other Instruments of the Passion. Famous examples are the Holy Nail in the Iron Crown of Lombardy in Monza Cathedral, the Holy Lance that was part of the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, and the Holy Thorn Reliquary in the British Museum in London,
- The **Seamless robe of Jesus** is kept in a purpose-built chapel in Trier Cathedral.
- **The Sandals of Jesus Christ** were donated to Prüm Abbey, Germany, by popes Zachary and Stephen II in the 8th century.ⁱⁱⁱ

All sorts of traditions have been applied to many of these relics. For example, about the cross:

According to the **sacred tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church** the True Cross was made from three different types of wood: cedar, pine and cypress. This is an allusion to Isaiah 60:13: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box [cypress] together to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious."

How did the Eastern Orthodox church come to this conclusion other than speculation? Did the Romans at crucifixion get a piece of wood and mix it? Other parts of the bible show Jesus died a common "thief's death" for they said he was numbered with the transgressors. Why then do these relics take on a certain "holiness aura" more than the scriptures seem to indicate?

What is the fascination of some denominations with these relics, these icons?

*In an interview with Catholic News Service, Fr. Mario Conte, executive editor of the Messenger of St. Anthony magazine in Padua, Italy, said, "Saints' relics help people overcome the abstract and make a connection with the holy. ...Saints do not perform miracles. Only God performs miracles, but **saints are intercessors.***

The veneration of the relics of the saints reflects a belief that the saints in heaven intercede for those on earth. A number of cures and miracles have been attributed to relics, not because of their own power, but because of the holiness of the saint they represent.

In fact, Church tradition has played a role in this matter. The Council of Trent of 1563 enjoined bishops to instruct their flocks that "***the holy bodies of holy martyrs ... are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these [bodies] many benefits are bestowed by God on men***". The council further insisted that "in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed and all filthy lucre abolished."

The Shroud of Turin is not the only relic or icon that attracts large numbers of visitors.

Substantial numbers of pilgrims flocked to *Santiago de Compostela* in Spain, in which the supposed relics of the apostle James, son of Zebedee, discovered c. 830, are housed. Santiago de Compostela remains a significant pilgrimage site, with around 200,000 pilgrims, both secular and Christian, completing the numerous pilgrimage routes to the cathedral in 2012 alone.

In the first years after Thomas Becket's death, donations at the shrine in Canterbury accounted for 28% of the cathedral's total revenues.

By venerating relics through visitation, gifts, and providing services, medieval Christians believed that they would acquire the protection and intercession of the sanctified dead.

In Catholic theology, sacred relics must not be worshipped, because only God is worshipped and adored. Instead, the veneration given to them was "dulia". Saint Jerome declared, "We do not worship, we do not adore, for fear that we should bow down to the creature rather than to the Creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order the better to adore Him whose martyrs they are."

The bible example: What is the risk with venerating Relics?

Are saints interceding for us?

First, as highlighted above, one of the core reasons that relics of saints are venerated is because of the belief that by venerating relics through visitation, gifts, and providing services, medieval Christians believed that they would acquire the protection and intercession of the sanctified dead.

Therefore, the core issue here is, are the saints interceding for us?

The Catholic church believes that as God is God of the living, not the dead (Luke 20: 36-38), the saints are just like angels and more alive than us. If it does not offend God when a Catholic says "St Peter pray for me", we should rejoice that God has given us the gift of Peter's prayers. ^{iv}

So what is the bible position?

It is true that God is a God of the living and it is true that the saints like St Peter are alive and are part of the "Great cloud of Witnesses" (Hebrews 12: 1).

The only problem for the Christian is that the bible makes it clear that there is only one intercessor or mediator. The bible says:

There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus. 1 John 2: 5

There is evidence in the bible of Jesus after he went to heaven (Hebrews 4:14-16) and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 26-27) interceding or praying for us, but not directly of the saints already in heaven and so the Catholic position is **speculative** but not directly referenced in scripture, except possible reference in the Apocrypha which other Christians don't recognise^v.

The practice of praying to the saints is therefore one that would have little precedence in scripture and so seems highly likely to be non-scriptural but only the tradition of men. A related area of the Catholics – praying for the dead^{vi}, also has little basis in scripture but rather in tradition and it is noted as follows:

Among Church writers Tertullian († 230) is the first to mention prayers for the dead: "The widow who does not pray for her dead husband has as good as divorced him". This passage occurs in one of his later writings, dating from the beginning of the 3rd century. Subsequent writers similarly make mention of the practice as prevalent, not as unlawful or even disputed (until Arius challenged it towards the end of the 4th century). The most famous instance is Saint Augustine's prayer for his mother, Monica, at the end of the 9th book of his Confessions, written around 398.

Can veneration of relics lead to idolatry?

In the early church the disturbance, let alone the division, of the remains of martyrs and other saints was not practiced. They were allowed to remain in their often-unidentified resting places in cemeteries. It was only later traditions that resulted in several large "funerary halls" being built over the sites of martyr's graves, including Old Saint Peter's Basilica.

The early church seemed to have taken the example of God who hid Moses' body. I believe precisely for the exact reason of preventing veneration of the tombs of saints. The bible says:

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. Deuteronomy 34:5-6 (ESV)

Relic worship in the bible.

One of the dangers inherent in the veneration of relics is the temptation to commit idolatry.



This is exactly what happened in ancient Israel. God had told Moses to make a bronze serpent in order to save the Hebrews from a plague of poisonous snakes (Numbers 21:8–9). That bronze serpent was kept by the Israelites as a reminder of God’s goodness and salvation; however, by the time of King Hezekiah, the “relic” had become an object of worship. Hezekiah’s reforms included breaking “into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan)” (2 Kings 18:4).

Physical aids to faith, if not commanded by God, are unnecessary and inevitably lead to superstition and idolatry. An elaborate church filled with relics is no more valid a place for worship than a simple tent in a jungle. We worship the Lord in spirit and truth (John 4:24), not by idols, icons, or relics, whether genuine or fake.^{vii}

Why is this therefore a modern topic?

Because it seems we are at risk of or already committing the same sin as the Israelites. Relics lead to the sin of idolatry. IT seems we are just like the children of Israel who moved from worshipping the golden calf in the desert to worshipping the bronze snake. The only difference today is that we are not in the desert. We are 200,000 “tourists” paying 1.6m and lining up in Turin to pay to see an icon, the Shroud of Turin.

Is this not what got Jesus mad when he drove merchants out of the temple?

“It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’” Matthew 21: 13

Is the refusal to give up some of these relics even when proven to likely be fakes driven by our greed for money or fear of loss of income, rather than about faith?

When Paul visited the city of Ephesus, he preached Jesus but as the city was filled with idols, his preaching for people to turn from idols to Jesus was not taken lying down and the bible records the city merchants saying:

There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Acts 19: 27-28

Satan often masquerades as an angel of light and wrapping up idolatry in religious relics makes this deception easy.

Take care of yourself saint.

The thief comes to steal to kill and to destroy, but I have come that they may have life and have it to the fullest (John 10: 10).

Symbols: Fertile ground for conspiracy theories

Illuminati symbol or God's compassionate watchfulness over humanity?



You have probably seen the symbol or image above. If not on conspiracy theory websites, certainly on the US \$1 bill. It's actually called the "Eye of Providence".

Originally the Eye of Providence was a Christian symbol, and the earliest examples of its use can be found in religious art of the Renaissance period to represent God. An early example is Pontormo's 1525 Supper at Emmaus, although the symbol itself was painted on later, perhaps in the 1600s.

It was invented as a sign of God's compassionate watchfulness over humanity. Nobody is certain who originally invented it, but whoever did craft it out of a set of previously existing religious motifs.

The triangle was a long-standing symbol of the Christian Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; sometimes in previous centuries God was even depicted with a triangular halo. The rays of light that are often shown emanating from the symbol are also a pre-existing sign of God's radiance in Christian iconography. But what are the origins of that eerie disembodied eye? God had been depicted in numerous cryptic ways before, such as by a single hand emerging from a cloud, but not as an eye.^{viii}

Did the Free Masons have a hand in creating the mysterious image? Are the illuminati really a secret society that seeks to bring in the New World Order and that's their symbol?

God's word on images/symbols

The eye of providence and the pyramid started out as seemingly holy ideas: "Let's depict God as an eye and his Holy Trinity as a Pyramid." This sounds reasonable but with time, meanings of symbols change, symbols get hijacked. It seems that is why God in his wisdom precisely gave one of the 10 commandments as this:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. Exodus 20: 4.

Just like relics, symbols easily lead to idolatry and people begin worshipping them or twist and turn them and give them more mysteries than they should and then these symbols cause fear – which is the enemy's tool so that we may be tied up in all sorts of mysteries – instead of worshipping God.

In fact, symbols and such secret "codes" are a means of the false teachers creeping in to lead people away from the truth for they promote mysteries, secrets, cleverly devised stories. Yet the gospel is simple and plain. It is not hidden; it is in the light:

*For **we did not follow cleverly devised stories** when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 2 Peter 1: 16 – 17.*

How should we therefore deal with these clever stories or conspiracies?

The bible makes it clear that they should be silenced or removed from the Church and pay not attention to them. It says:

*For there are many rebellious people, **full of meaningless talk and deception**, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by*

*teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of **dishonest gain**. One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will **pay no attention to Jewish myths** or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. Titus 1: 10-14 (NIV).*

Why should we pay no attention to these things? It's because they are often spread by false prophets/teachers. The bible says:

*But there were also false prophets among the people, **just as there will be false teachers among you**. They will **secretly introduce destructive heresies**, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed **these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories**. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. 2 Peter 2: 1-3 (NIV).*

The Lord God has asked me to warn you strongly about these false teachings which seem to be shrouded in truth but in actual sense are lies and beneath them is the spirit of the Anti-Christ. Jesus was often angered by such false teachers and again in another passage where he was angry he said:

Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Matthew 23: 16 – 19 (NIV).

The Lord is making it clear that you shouldn't fall into the trap of tradition like the Pharisees of old. These guys preached about how the gold in the temple was sacred, forgetting God who made the entire temple Holy.

In the same way, many traditions lead us to venerate saints, relics and icons and to line up in millions to pay "dulia" to them but in the process we forget the one who is greater – God the author of faith, who is immortal, invisible, residing in unapproachable light.

Run away from these useless traditions saint. Run away from these useless conspiracies saint!

If the Illuminati conspiracy and the New World Order has any validity and is indeed occurring, for the Christian, there is one fact that must be remembered: God has sovereignly allowed all these developments, and they are not outside of His overall plan. God is in control, not the Illuminati. No

plan or scheme the Illuminati develop could in any way prevent, or even hinder, God's sovereign plan for the world.

If there is indeed some truth to the Illuminati conspiracy, the Illuminati are nothing but pawns in the hands of Satan, tools to be manipulated in his conflict with God. The fate of the Illuminati will be the same as the fate of their lord, Satan/Lucifer, who will be cast into the lake of fire, to be tormented day and night, forever and ever (Revelation 20:10). In John 16:33 Jesus declared, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

For Christians, all we need to understand about the Illuminati conspiracy is summarized in the words of 1 John 4:4, *"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."*^{ix}

And if you are really still wondering "Should a Christian be interested in conspiracy theories *such as about the illuminati", the answer as given by other brethren is a clear "no". These things cause unnecessary fear. The bible makes it clear:

"The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed." But "He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them" (Psalm 2:2,4).

Conclusion: Faith without seeing

Sola Scriptura which means "bible only" or "scripture only" was a "rallying cry" of the reformation. You see one the core reasons for the reformation were that there was too much tradition in the Church and rules of men had replaced God's word.

The Catholic church wanted people to do certain works in order to get to heaven and so things like relics and symbols and traditions had replaced faith in God.

The Lord Jesus is warning us that in our generation, which calls itself "modern" these ancient things are still happening. Yet the bible shows this again and again:

*For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Romans 1: 25 (NASB).***

*Jesus replied, "Do you believe because you see me? **Happy are those who don't see and yet believe.**" John 20: 29 (CEB).*

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. Hebrews 11: 1 (NIV).

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. Hebrews 11: 27 (NIV).

So, saint, how do you separate tradition from truth? How do you separate imagination, even from seemingly holy people from fact? How do you separate false worship from true worship? How do you detect the false teachings, seeking to tear apart the precious sheep of God from the holy word given once and for all?

It is as it was at the beginning: *Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11: 6).*

In whom are you putting your faith? Is it through that which you see? The relic, the symbol, tradition, the intercessor or are you instead following the model God gave us.

In the Old Testament God said: Have no image of any likeness. He then gave us examples to prevent veneration of relics: Moses' body he hid. So, no one could venerate his tomb.

Faithful King Hezekiah also saw the risk of relics and destroyed the bronze snake, which had indeed been previously "miraculous" but at his time people were worshipping it, instead of the blessed God who reigns forever.

In the New Testament: One of few times we see Jesus extremely angry is when people were using the premises of the temple, a holy place to sell their wares. Just like we see today, churches making money from relics. Instead of turning it into a house of prayer, it is a den of thieves. Knowing full well these are fakes, they not only condone of the fraud, but continue to make money from them.

Every Saint old or new kept their eye on the invisible God, not on what they could see for if you can see it then it's not faith at all!

It is correct that miracles happened from physical things like Jesus' cloak when touched by a bleeding woman caused healing but Jesus clearly told the woman, "Your faith has made you well." (Mark 5: 34). Besides this was a living and breathing Jesus, not dead people's relics.

Other instances of physical objects, such the dry bones of Elisha causing resurrection (2 Kings 13:21) or Paul's handkerchief resulting in healing (Acts 19: 12) show that indeed God can use such objects to bring healing but this is no basis for veneration of said bones or handkerchief such that we build monuments to them!

We have to correctly apply/dissect the word of truth.

Symbols, relics are the stuff of legends and we seem to be beholden by them for example Indiana Jones was searching for the Holy Grail as if it was some "magical thing". God on the other hand has

always wanted us to have direct access to him, by faith, not through intercessors – whether through dead saints or relics.

God has made it clear that there is only one mediator between God and man – Jesus.

The catholic church, the orthodox church and any other denominations that glorify this stuff are putting their faithful followers at a significant risk of idolatry – causing people to venerate the creature, rather than the blessed creator.

Instead of seeking to know God – reading their bibles to find God, people end up instead spending more time as pilgrims or tourists chasing after the Shroud of Turin in the home of a miracle and paying their hard-earned money to get healing or get closer to God and yet what does God say?

The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, [a]‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17: 20 (NKJV).

It is true that there are elements where seeing something could stir up faith. For example, a film about Jesus, could stir up faith in Jesus. Pictures or images in books of instruction could make a concept clearer, or for those who are illiterate but these shouldn't be venerated, they are simply that: tools of instruction.

The ultimate question you have to ask yourself is this:

Does the relic/image/symbol/tradition you are looking at, displaying or following potentially cause someone to stumble?

If it does, Cut it out. It is better to lose the part of your body - that source of revenue, that source veneration and then go to heaven with part a part than for the whole body to go to hell (Matthew 5: 29-30) – where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out (Luke 13: 28).

Let us pray.

How can I pray for you?

- **You are faithfully searching for the Kingdom of God** – but you can not see it clearly owing to all the traditions and symbols blinding you. Jesus wants you to see clearly! Receive your sight back in Jesus' name.
- **You are hard of heart** – Somehow you believe we who believe in faith alone have got it wrong, that there is a place for these relics. The Lord Jesus says, repent, my kingdom does not come by that which you can observe.
- **You have never received the gift of Christ**, being eternal life and neither have you received Jesus' Holy Spirit, the one who will give you the gift of faith to believe without seeing.

Write to me so I can pray further for you: dwasake@shaweleroad.com

Next steps

- Visit our website which shows the steps it takes to get to know Jesus and be saved from this wicked generation. <https://www.shaweleroad.com/what-must-i-do-to-get-saved>
- Our work is freely given for we received freely from the Lord. If you however like what we are doing: [Then you can partner with us by giving to our work.](#)

Information notice board (continued)

Pray for us! Without the Lord, our effort is in vain. Pray that we remain faithful, humble servants.

Subscribe to our [YouTube Channel](#) and keep up with our videos which support the website.

Looking for a ministry to partner with (pray, volunteer, give, subscribe to)?

<https://ministriesofpastoralcare.com/>

Ministries of Pastoral Care is a teaching and healing ministry dedicated to imparting a biblical understanding of persons and how we grow into Christian maturity.

The above ministry/website has not paid us to provide this recommendation and so the views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the ministry promoted above. Likewise the views therein do not necessarily reflect those of this ministry.

Notes

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- ⁱ <https://www.tripsavvy.com/shroud-of-turin-visiting-information-1548064#:~:text=Seeing%20the%20Shroud%20of%20Turin&text=Current%20admission%20is%20%E2%82%AC8,have%20been%20conducted%20on%20it.>
- ⁱⁱ <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/shroud-of-turin-mystery-italy/index.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relic#Christianity>
- ^{iv} <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/how-to-defend-the-intercession-of-the-saints>
- ^v https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercession_of_saints#Intercession_of_the_dead_for_the_living
- ^{vi} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_for_the_dead#Catholic_Church
- ^{vii} <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-relics.html>
- ^{viii} <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20201112-the-eye-of-providence-the-symbol-with-a-secret-meaning>
- ^{ix} https://www.gotquestions.org/illuminati-conspiracy.html?fbclid=IwAR09_g8Kz9CfRbGhyCXv7q7RFTtxZY4kofq4KwjBzPSiuV1LesF6LQWmO7I
- ^x <https://www.gotquestions.org/conspiracy-theories.html>