

The Biblical Doctrine of the Sainthood of the Believer

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Introduction

One of the most hotly contested issues of the Reformation was the worship or veneration of the Catholic saints, saying prayers to these saints, carrying their images in processions, and attributing miracles to them such as statues or pictures weeping or healing people.

Even today when a Protestant objects to the worship of the saints, some Catholics get violent. At least twenty thousand Evangelicals in Mexico and Central America have been murdered or driven from their homes in the last ten years for refusing to participate in local religious festivals centered on saint worship. Thus it is still an issue today.

Not only do we have to deal with Roman Catholic saint worship but now we must also respond to Eastern Orthodoxy's concept of the veneration of and prayers to their saints through icons.

Too many Christians today object, "Why bother refuting Romanism or Orthodoxy? Just preach the Gospel! Just teach through the Bible verse by verse! Don't be negative but positive. People today don't want to hear you refute heresy. Can't we all just get along?"

Although this is the attitude of most pastors today, particularly with "seeker church" pastors, this attitude is direct disobedient to the Lordship of Christ (1 Pet. 3:15). A pastor's responsibility includes refuting heresy (Tit. 1:9). How can his people know how to defend their faith (Jude 3) if their pastor refuses to equip them to do so (Eph. 4:11-12)?

The end result of pastors failing to refute such heresies as saint worship is the sight of thousands of Protestants converting to Romanism and Orthodoxy! That Peter Gilchrist and several thousand other Campus Crusade workers would renounce the gospel of grace, join Eastern Orthodoxy, and end up worshiping icons of the saints is the direct result of the failure to teach doctrine, which includes the clear refutation of heresy.

Having spent many years in ministry, I believe that there are chief reasons why modern pastors fail to address heresies such as saint worship:

1. Ministerial laziness: Pastors are supposed to "work hard" in the exposition of the Word and the teaching of doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17). The Greek word translated "labor" or "work hard" is *kopia*,w. It means *back-breaking*work. In Lk. 5:5 the fishermen complained that they labored all night trying to catch some fish and got nothing. A farmer labors hard and long to produce his crops (2 Tim. 2:6). A pastor is do back-breaking work in studying and teaching biblical truth. If he merely walks or runs through the Bible without any mental sweat, he is guilty of being a lazy man. It takes hard work to dig deep into the mine of Scripture; to follow the rich veins of gold found only in the deepest parts of revelation; to dig out that gold; to process the ore; to smelt it; to refine it; to polish it; then present to the people of God. I believe that 99% of the problem is ministerial laziness. Too many pastors seek the easy way out and get their sermons off the tapes and books of others.

Note: Ecc. 12:12 “much study is weary to the flesh” means that you must understand that pastors who labor in the Word get physically and mentally exhausted. They need a break now and then to recharge their spiritual batteries.

2. Personal ignorance: Most pastors today are absolutely clueless as to the biblical concept of ministry! They do not read commentaries or check the original languages. They fly by the seat of their pants Sunday by Sunday and the people are so used to shallowness that they don't know the difference between entertainment and education.

3. False teaching: Those who look to secular business models for their concept of ministry are guilty of allowing the world to squeeze them into the mold of worldliness and carnality (Rom. 12:1-2). The world assumes that POPULARITY is the alpha and omega of ministry. A minister must do and say only what will make him and his church popular. He is to play to the crowd and seek the applause of the world. The last thing he should do is to say something that will make him or his church unpopular. Those who seek popularity have forgotten Lk. 6:26; John 15:18-25; 2 Cor. 11:23-28, etc. The prophets and apostles, and our Lord Himself, were quite unpopular in their day and said things that so angered people that they frequently got murdered (Heb. 11)!

Note: This is why we have established a university and seminary. We need to train a new generation of pastors, missionaries, evangelists, apologists, and theologians who will do back-breaking labor in the Word and in doctrine; who will be fearless in confronting unbelief wherever it is found, in the church as well as in the world; who will be more concerned with the smile of God than the smile of the world; who are more afraid of the frown of God than the frown of man; who will live and die in the faithful discharge of their ministry (Tit. 1:9-14; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 6:12-16; 2 Tim. 4:5-8).

PART ONE

I The Vocabulary of Sainthood

A. O.T. Hebrew Vocabulary: **vd,qo** n.m. apartness, sacredness (opp. lxo) –

1. *apartness, sacredness, holiness*, of God:

a. of divine activity, syn. majesty, vd,QoB; (of victory), (song); 'q [Arz> *holy arm*.

b. to attest his word as inviolable.

c. of his name as sacred, inviolable, separate from all defilement, etc.; and so

d. Avd>q' x;Wr *his holy Spirit*.

2. of places set apart as sacred by God's presence:

a. heavenly abode.

b. on earth: holy ground

c. the tabernacle and its courts; tabernacle by itself; court; the outer room

(specific designation; 'Qh;); inner room, but specif. design. ~yvidqh vdq; 'qh lq,v, *shekel of the sanctuary*.

d. the temple and its precincts; Avd>q'B. rBd (oracle; al. *by his holiness*, as yvdqb yt[bvn), temple by itself; 'Qh; outer room; courts of priests; inner room, specif. \$vdq rybiD>; ~yvidqh vdq; 'Qh; tAk.v.li (v. hK'v.li 1 c).

e. Jerusalem and its hills; of city and suburbs in Mess. future. Cf. f. vdq (h) of Zion.

g. of holy land; future portion of priests; of Levites.

3. things consecrated at sacred places:

a. furniture of tabernacle; altar of burnt-offering.

b. sacrifices of animals; sacrificial food; tithe was vdq, also first loaves of new harvest; fruit of trees of 4th year.

c. any consecrated thing: vows, house, field; treasures consecrated to treasury of tabernacle or temple; consecrated things in general; these may be ~yvdq (h) vdq.

d. anointing oil of priest; incense; shew-bread; foretold of common articles.

4. persons sacred by connection with sacred places:

a. priests, garments of priesthood, specif. of h. priest; inscription on head piece.

b. of Israel, and so spoil for their use; holy adornment; covt. between God and his people.

5. times consecrated to worship; assembly called at stated times for worship.

6. of things and persons ceremonially cleansed, and so separated as sacred; things; flesh; priests cleanse thus; 'qh %r,D, way of the clean.

B. N.T. Vocabulary

a[giój, &a, &on (from to, avgo,j religious awe, reverence; a;zw, a[zomai, to venerate, revere, especially the gods, parents (Curtius, sec. 118)), rare in secular authors; very frequent in the sacred writings; in the Septuagint for vAdq";

1. properly *reverend, worthy of veneration*: to, o;noma tou/ Qeou/, Luke 1:49; God, on account of his incomparable majesty, Rev. 4:8 (Isa. 6:3, etc.), equivalent to e;ndoxoj. Hence, used:

a. of things which on account of some connection with God possess a certain distinction and claim to reverence, as places sacred to God which are not to be profaned, Acts 7:33; to,poj a[giój the temple, Matt. 24:15 (on which passage see bde,lugma, c.); Acts 6:13; 21:28; the holy land or Palestine, 2 Macc. 1:29; 2:18; to, a[gion and ta, a[gia (Winer's Grammar, 177 (167)) the temple, Heb. 9:1,24 (cf. Bleek on Heb. vol. ii. 2, p. 477f); specifically that part of the temple or tabernacle which is called 'the holy place' (vD'q.mi, Ezek. 37:28; 45:18), Heb. 9:2 (here Rec.^st reads a[gia); a[gia a`gi,wn (Winer's Grammar, 246 (231), cf. Exo. 29:37; 30:10, etc.) the most hallowed portion of the temple, 'the holy of holies,' (Ex. 26:33 (cf. Josephus, Antiquities 3, 6, 4)), Heb. 9:3, in reference to which the simple ta, a[gia is also used: Heb. 9:8,25; 10:19; 13:11; figuratively of heaven, Heb. 8:2; 9:8,12; 10:19; a[gia po,lij Jerusalem, on account of the temple there, Matt. 4:5; 27:53; Rev. 11:2; 21:2; 22:19 (Isa. 48:2; Neh. 11:1,18 (Complutensian LXX), etc.); to, o;roj to, a[gion, because Christ's transfiguration occurred there, 2 Pet. 1:18; h` (Qeou/) a[gia diaqh,kh i. e. which is the more sacred because made by God himself, Luke 1:72; to, a[gion, that worshipful offspring of divine power, Luke 1:35; the blessing of the gospel, Matt. 7:6; a`giwta,th| pi,stij, faith (quae creditur i. e. the object of faith) which came from God and is therefore to be heeded most sacredly, Jude 1:20; in the same sense a[gia evntolh,, 2 Pet. 2:21; klh/sij a[gia, because it is the invitation of God and claims us as his, 2 Tim. 1:9; a[giai grafai, (ta, bibli,a ta, a[gia, 1 Macc. 12:9), which came from God

and contain his Words, Rom. 1:2. b. of persons whose services God employs; as for example, apostles, Eph. 3:5; angels, 1 Thess. 3:13; Matt. 25:31 (Rec.); Rev. 14:10; Jude 1:14; prophets, Acts 3:21; Luke 1:70 (Sap. 11:1); (oi`) a[giou (tou/ Qeou/ a;nqrwpoi, 2 Pet. 1:21 (R G L Tr text); worthies of the O. T. accepted by God for their piety, Matt. 27:52; 1 Pet. 3:5.

2. *set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his*; followed by a genitive or a dative: tw/| kuri,w|, Luke 2:23; tou/ Qeou/ (equivalent to evklekto,j tou/ Qeou/) of Christ, Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34, and according to the true reading in John 6:69, cf. John 10:36; he is called also o` a[giou pai/| tou/ Qeou/, Acts 4:30, and simply o` a[giou, 1 John 2:20. Just as the Israelites claimed for themselves the title oi` a[giou, because God selected them from the other nations to lead a life acceptable to him and rejoice in his favor and protection (Dan. 7:18,22; 2 Esdr. 8:28), so this appellation is very often in the N. T. transferred to Christians, as those whom God has selected evk tou/ ko,smou (John 17:14,16), that under the influence of the Holy Spirit they may be rendered, through holiness, partakers of salvation in the kingdom of God: 1 Pet. 2:9 (Exo. 19:6), cf. Exo. 19:5; Acts 9:13,32,41; 26:10; Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 16:15; 1 Cor. 6:1,2; Phil. 4:21f; Col. 1:12; Heb. 6:10; Jude 1:3; Rev. 5:8, etc.; (cf. B. D. American edition under the word Saints).

3. of sacrifices and offerings; *prepared for God with solemn rite, pure, clean* (opposed to avka,qartoj): 1 Cor. 7:14 (cf. Eph. 5:3); connected with a;mwmoj, Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; avparch,, Rom. 11:16; quasi,a, Rom. 12:1. Hence,

4. in a moral sense, *pure, sinless, upright, holy*: 1 Pet. 1:16 (Lev. 19:2; 11:44); 1 Cor. 7:34; di,kaioj kai, a[giou, of John the Baptist, Mark 6:20; a[giou kai, di,kaioj, of Christ, Acts 3:14; distinctively of him, Rev. 3:7; 6:10; of God pre-eminently, 1 Pet. 1:15; John 17:11; a[giou avnastofai,, 2 Pet. 3:11; no,moj and evtolh,, i. e. containing nothing exceptionable, Rom. 7:12; fi,lhma, such a kiss as is a sign of the purest love, 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; Rom. 16:16. On the phrase to, a[giou pneu/ma and to, pneu/ma to, a[giou, see pneu/ma, 4 a. Cf. Diestel, Die Heiligkeit Gottes, in Jahrb. f. deutsch. Theol. iv., p. 1ff; (Baudissin, Stud. z. Semitisch. Religionsgesch. Heft ii., p. 3ff; Delitzsch in Herzog edition 2, see 714ff; especially) Cremer, Wörterbuch, 4te Aufl., p. 32ff (translation of 2nd edition, p. 84ff; Oehler in Herzog 19:618ff; Zezschwitz, Profangrätigkeit as above with, p. 15ff; Trench, sec. lxxxviii; Campbell, Dissertations, diss. vi., part iv.; especially Schmidt, chapter 181).

II. Four Key Concepts to being a saint (Holy One):

A. You have been *chosen by God*: Num. 16:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Eph. 1:4; Col.

3:12; Rev.17:14

B. You are His special *possession*: Psa. 33:12; 135:4; Isa. 43:1-8; Tit. 2:13; 1 Pet.

2:9.

C. You are called to be *separate* from the world: 2 Cor. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:19

D. You should strive for *holiness in life*: 2 Cor. 7:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 12:14

III. All of the children of God are “saints,” (i.e. they are chosen by God to be His special possession and who are thus called to a separated life of holiness.)

A. In the O.T. all of God’s people were called “saints.” Psa. 34:9; 37:28

B. In the N.T. all of God’s people were “saints.” Acts 9:13, 32; 26:10; Rom. 1:7;

8:27; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1-2; Rev. 14:12

IV. In order to supply a biblical justification for saint/relic worship, Orthodox, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Pagan, and Muslim apologists have pointed to various verses in the Bible that supposedly teach the veneration of the saints and their relics. What kind of biblical evidence do they have to produce? They must put forth clear commands, examples, and perceptual biblical passages. But they have not been able to do so.

A. The worship (veneration) of saints and their relics was never commanded in Scripture.

B. The Bible does not record a single example of Patriarchs, prophets, apostles or Jesus worshipping or venerating saints or their relics.

C. When the Jews began to venerate the relic of the bronze serpent, such worship was condemned and the snake and pole were destroyed (2 Kings 18:1-5) lest they be venerated.

D. There is no historical evidence that the Jews ever engaged in saint/relic worship during biblical times.

E. The doctrines of saints, icons, relics, and the veneration of them is never taught in any didactic passage in the Bible.

F. The Early Church Fathers denounced the veneration of images.

Clement

"The Law itself exhibits justice. It teaches wisdom by abstinence from visible images and by inviting us to the Maker and Father of the universe" (*Stromata*, Book II, XVIII).

"[because God does not want us to] cling to things of sense. . . . For familiarity with the sense of sight disparages the reverence of what is divine" (*ibid.*, Book V, V.).

"It is with a different kind of spell that art deludes you. . . . It leads you to pay religious honor and worship to images and pictures" (*Exhortation to the Heathen*, IV).

"Works of art cannot be sacred and divine" (*Stromata*, Book VII, V).

Tertullian

"These two evil spirits are in sworn confederacy with each other, as the patrons of drunkenness and lust. So the theater of Venus is as well the house of Bacchus: for they properly gave the name of Liberalia also to other theatrical amusements--which besides being consecrated to Bacchus (as were the Dionysia of the Greeks), were instituted by him; and, without doubt, the performances of the theater have the common patronage of these two deities. That immodesty of gesture and attire which so specially and peculiarly characterizes the stage are consecrated to them--the one deity wanton by her sex, the other by his drapery; while its services of voice, and song, and lute, and pipe, belong to Apollos, and Muses, and Minervas, and Mercuries.

You will hate, O Christian, the things whose authors must be the objects of your utter detestation. So we would now make a remark about the arts of the theater, about the things also whose authors in the names we execrate. We know that the names of the dead are nothing, as are their images; but we know well enough, too, who, when images are set up, under these names carry on their wicked work, and exult in the homage rendered to them, and pretend to be divine--none other than spirits accursed, than devils. We see, therefore, that the arts also are consecrated to the service of the beings who dwell in the names of their founders; and that things cannot be held free from the taint of idolatry whose inventors have got a place among the gods for their discoveries. Nay, as regards the arts, we ought to have gone further back, and barred all further argument by the position that the demons, predetermining in their own interests from the first, among other evils of idolatry, the pollutions of the public shows, with the object of drawing man away from his Lord and binding him to their own service, carried out their purpose by bestowing on him the artistic gifts which the shows require. For none but themselves would have made provision and

preparation for the objects they had in view; nor would they have given the arts to the world by any but those in whose names, and images, and histories they set up for their own ends the artifice of consecration."

Origin

"The Scythians, the nomadic Libyans, the godless Seres, and the Persians agree in this [rejection of images] with the Christians and Jews. However, *they are actuated by very different principles*...For none of these other groups abhor altars and images *on the ground* that they are afraid of degrading the worship of God and reducing it to the worship of material things...It is not possible at the same time to know God and to address prayers to images." *Against Celsus* 7, 4-5

"conduct of the Christians in refusing homage to *any object* except the Most High God, and the First-Born of all creation" (Ibid., LXX).

Christians "learned from Jesus Christ the *true way* of serving God. And we shrink from [images which], under a *pretense of piety*, leads to utter impiety" (Ibid., Book VIII, XX).

Athenagoras

"[not] that trust is to be reposed in images, as was of old done by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which those images represent; in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ; and we venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear" (Council of Trent, Session XXV).

"It is asserted by some [pagans] that, although these are only images, yet there exist gods in honor of whom they are made. They say that the prayers and sacrifices presented to the images are to be referred to the gods, and are in fact made to the gods" (*Apology [To the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Anoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus]*, XVIII).

"And I would beseech you, greatest of emperors, before I enter on this discussion, to be indulgent to me while I bring forward true considerations; for it is not my design to show the fallacy of idols, but, by disproving the calumnies vented against us, to offer a reason for the course of life we follow" (ibid.).

Arnobius

"'But you err,' says my opponent, 'and are mistaken. For we do not consider either copper, gold, silver, or those other materials of which statues are made to be in themselves gods and sacred deities. Rather, in them we worship and venerate those beings whom their dedication as sacred items cause to dwell in those statues made by workmen.'"

Lactantius

"What madness is it, then, either to form those objects that they themselves may afterwards fear, or to fear the things that they have formed? However, they say, 'We do not fear the images themselves, but those beings after whose likeness they were formed, and to whose names they are dedicated.' No doubt you fear them for this reason: because you think that they are in heaven" (*The Divine Institutes*, Book II, II)

"So why, then [since you think that they are in heaven], do you not raise your eyes to heaven? Why do you not invoke their names and offer sacrifices in the open air? Why do you look to walls, wood, and stone—rather than to the place where you believe them to be? What is the meaning of temples and

altars? What, in short, is the meaning of the images themselves, which are memorials either of the dead or of the absent?"

Irenaeus

"[They] call themselves Gnostics. They also possess images, some of them painted, and others formed from different kinds of material. They maintain that a likeness of Christ was made by Pilate at that time when Jesus lived among them. They crown these images, and set them up along with the images of the philosophers of the world. That is to say, they place them with the images of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the rest. They have also other modes of honoring these images, after the same manner of the Gentiles" (*Against Heresies*, Book I, XXV.6).

"They also hold that Jesus was the son of Joseph, and was just like other men, with the exception that he differed from them in this respect, that inasmuch as his soul was stedfast and pure, he perfectly remembered those things which he had witnessed within the sphere of the unbegotten God" (XXV.1).

"This idea has raised them to such a pitch of pride, that some of them declare themselves similar to Jesus" (ibid.2)

"And in their writings we read as follows, the interpretation which they give [of their views], declaring that Jesus spoke in a mystery to His disciples and apostles privately, and that they requested and obtained permission to hand down the things thus taught them, to others who should be worthy and believing" (ibid.5).

V. 6: "*Others of them* employ outward marks, branding *their* disciples inside the lobe of the right ear."

V. 6: "*They also possess images*, some of them painted, and others formed from different kinds of material."

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PART TWO

THE EASTERN ORTHODOX WORSHIP OF SAINTS AND RELICS

The pagan religions of the Pre-Christian Greco-Roman world provide us with the cultural background and the religious Origin of the EC doctrine of sainthood. The pagans believed that it was possible for man to become God. This doctrine was called the deification of man.

Heroic men and women could become "God" (or "gods") by various methods including mediation, prayers, trances, and out of body experiences during which they saw uncreated eternal light.

As a result of deification, these "gods" are divine in body as well as in soul. Thus their bones were worshiped as relics because their bodily parts had the power to heal the sick. Their bones are to be venerated as well as their icons.

The ancient pre-Christian pagan concept of man becoming god or God is called **apotheosis**. As pagans came into EC, they brought their belief in apotheosis into the church and introduced the practice of worshiping the icons of these gods.

As pagans, they had venerated the icons of deified men and women by praying to and before them, lighting candles and burning incense to them, carrying these icons in public processions, placing them in their pagan temples where they were kissed and adored, and even placed them in their houses. Archeologists even found houses with pagan icons in every room.

The connection between the pre-Christian pagan doctrine of deification and icon/relic worship and EO is obvious. As pagans entered the EO churches, they brought their belief in the deification and their worship of icons/relics with them. What is done today in every EC church was already practiced by pagans before Jesus was born.

The pagan and EO doctrine of the deification of man is called apotheosis. The standard reference works explain.

The Catholic Encyclopedia:

Apotheosis: (Gr. *apotheosis*, from, and *theos*, deify). Deification, the exaltation of men to the rank of gods. Closely connected with the universal worship of the dead in the history of all primitive peoples was the consecration as deities of heroes or rulers, as a reward for bravery or other great services. "In the same manner every city worshipped the one who founded it" (Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, III, v). Because of the theocratic form of their government, and the religious character which sovereign power assumed in their eyes, the peoples of the great nations of the Orient -- Persia, Chaldea, Egypt -- paid divine honours to living rulers. Hero-worship had familiarized the minds of the Greeks with the idea that a man by illustrious deeds can become a god, and contact with the Orient made them ready to accept the grosser form of apotheosis by which divine honours were offered to the living (Boissier, *La religion romaine I*, 112). Philip of Macedon was honoured as a god at Amphipolis, and his son, Alexander the Great, not only claimed descent from the gods of Egypt, but decreed that he should be worshipped in the cities of Greece (Beurlier, *De divinis honoribus quos acceperunt Alexander et successores ejus*, p. 17). After his death, and probably largely as the result of the teaching of Euhemerus, that all the gods were deified men, the custom of apotheosis became very prevalent among the Greeks (Döllinger, *Heidentum und Judentum*, 314 sqq.). In Rome the way for the deification of the emperors was prepared by many historic causes, such as the cult of the manes or the souls of departed friends and ancestors, the worship of the legendary kings of Latium, the *Di Indigetes*, the myth that Romulus had been transported to heaven, and the deification of Roman soldiers and statesmen by some of the Greek cities. The formal enrollment of the emperors among the gods began with Caesar, to whom the Senate decreed divine honours before his death. Through politic motives Augustus, though tolerating the building of temples and the organization of priestly orders in his honour throughout the provinces and even in Italy, refused to permit himself to be worshipped in Rome itself. Though many of the early emperors refused to receive

divine honours, and the senate, to whom the right of deification belonged, refused to confirm others, the great majority of the Roman rulers and many members of the imperial family, among whom were some women, were enrolled among the gods. While the cultured classes regarded the deification of members of the imperial family and court favorites with boldly expressed scorn, emperor-worship, which was in reality political rather than personal, was a powerful element of unity in the empire, as it afforded the pagans a common religion in which it was a patriotic duty to participate. The Christians constantly refused to pay divine honours to the emperor, and their refusal to strew incense was the signal for the death of many martyrs. The custom of decreeing divine honours to the emperors remained in existence until the time of Gratian, who was the first to refuse the insignia of the Summus Pontifex and the first whom the senate failed to place among the gods.

Apotheosis is the process of deification. Some Roman emperors underwent apotheosis upon their deaths. The process involved the creation of a waxen image of the emperor sitting in state, adorned with rich raiments and jewelry for a period of days, after which it would be burnt. The apotheosis of an Emperor was an essentially political act performed by the dead emperor's successor. The tradition began with the declaration by the Senate of Julius Caesar.

Emperors who had been deified were referred to with the word 'divus' before their names. Thus, Claudius was called 'divus Claudius.' This word is often rendered as 'god' (i.e., "Claudius the god") but that is something of an over translation; a better translation might be 'divine' (i.e., "the divine Claudius"), a somewhat softer formulation that Roman intellectuals could comfortably understand as metaphorical. In the later empire, this honor became more and more automatically associated with dead emperors, to the extent that it might just as well be understood as meaning 'late' (i.e., "the late Claudius"). The fact that 'divus' had lost much of whatever truly religious meaning it had is made clear by the fact that it was used with names of early Christian emperors after their deaths (e.g., "divus Constantinus").

Apotheosis occurs as well in literary contexts: In the Aeneid, Vergil depicts Aeneas deification, saying he will be taken up to the stars of Heaven, and mentions Caesar's apotheosis. also describes Caesar's apotheosis in book XV of *The Metamorphoses*. The notion of apotheosis was parodied by Lucius Annaeus Seneca in his *Apocolocyntosis of the Emperor Claudius* (sometimes translated as *The Pumpkinification of the Emperor Claudius*), in which Claudius is transformed, not into a god, but into a pumpkin.

The Encyclopedia Britannica:

Apotheosis: is elevation to the status of a god. The term (from Greek *apothēoun*, "to make a god," "to deify") implies a polytheistic conception of gods while it recognizes that some individuals cross the dividing line between gods and men. The ancient Greek religion was especially disposed to belief in heroes and demigods. Worship after death of historical persons or worship of the living...

The Columbia Encyclopedia

Apotheosis: the act of raising a person who has died to the rank of a god. Historically, it was most important during the later Roman Empire. In an emperor's lifetime his genius was worshiped, but after he died he was often solemnly enrolled as one of the gods to be publicly adored. Apotheosis is closely related to ancestor worship.

PART THREE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC WORSHIP OF SAINTS AND RELICS

PART FOUR

ISLAMIC WORSHIP OF SAINTS AND RELICS

Most Christians do not understand that the Muslims venerate saints and relics just like pagans, Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, and Orthodox. John Gilchrist explains: The Veneration of Saints and Pirs in Islam.

One of the great phenomena in Islam is the widespread veneration of saints and tomb-worship that for many Muslims is their religion, orthodox Islam having very much a secondary place. Conservative Muslims frown upon the plethora of rites, superstitions and practices that are found in popular Islam but for centuries it has held its own alongside orthodox Islam and is likely to sustain its influence in future.

Saints' tombs are a characteristic feature of the landscape in most Muslim countries, where, whether associated with mosques or isolated, they are popular centres of visitation. The orthodox divines have spoken frequently and vigorously against this practice of visitation, but the consensus of the community has almost everywhere proved stronger than the condemnation of the theologians and the common folk still visit the tombs of saints to pray, to leave ex-votos, to seek blessing (*baraka*) and the intercession of the holy persons buried there. (Jeffery, *Islam: Muhammad and his Religion*, p. 226).

Within a few centuries of Muhammad's death a deeply mystical worship-form took root within Islam. Persia and India's two great religions, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism, were mystical in essence and converts to Islam found it impossible to conform solely to the rites and outward forms of their new religion. The dry legalism of Arabian Islam soon found itself challenged by a very different form of religious expression and *Sufism*, Islam's mystical arm, quickly rooted itself within the Islamic realm. In its early days it was strongly ascetic and its adherents were a selection mainly of individual purists seeking to unite themselves spiritually to the Divine Being. In later centuries, however, as Sufism became more attractive to the masses, so it degenerated into a public mass-movement where "saints" (generally called *pirs* in Indian Islam), both dead and living, were sought out for miracles, powers and various blessings. To this day the Muslims in much of the Islamic world follow not so much Muhammad, the Qur'an and Islam, but the cult-worship of the local saint, being more concerned about obtaining his *barakah* ("blessing" in the form of power and miracles) than the favour of Allah.

Whatever his origin, the saint has, for an essential attribute, the *baraka*, the sacred emanation. Through it he brings to those who worship him, prosperity, happiness, all the good things of this world; he can bestow his gifts, passing beyond the individual, upon a whole district, and even beyond the confines of this world, through his powers of intercession with Allah. (Gaudefroy Demombynes, *Muslim Institutions*, p. 56).

The power of a saint is called *baraka*, blessing, and this is imagined as almost intangible. By kissing the saint's hand or tomb, this power passes to the worshipper who will be helped by it. (Tritton, *Islam*, p. 143)

The cult-worship has many forms indicating Sufi origins and inclinations. Each pir has his own order and way of life (*tariqah*) and his followers, once inducted, must follow this way implicitly. It is only through total obedience to the pir that the *murid*, the disciple, will be able to obtain the power of the pir and come to the knowledge of God.

Accordingly a person seeks to attach himself or herself to a spiritual guide of one of the *darwesh* orders called a *pir*, or *murshid*, who initiates him as a *murid*, or disciple, into the secrets of divine worship, to the intent that by following the special *tariqa* laid down for the order he may proceed by definite stages until he is blessed with divine knowledge and final absorption in the Divine Love itself. (Titus, "Mysticism and Saint Worship in India", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 12, p.

130).

Although there are many to this day who endeavour to become genuine Sufis, the masses have simply attached themselves to *pir* and tomb-worship, seeking not to be admitted to a spiritual way of life, but rather to obtain whatever blessings and assistance they can through superstitions, cultic influences and animistic practices. This has led to faith in amulets and talismans, occultic experiences and other forms contrary to the spirit, not only of legalistic Islam, but also of Sufism itself. It seems appropriate, therefore, to distinguish between Sufism and popular, cultic Islam, and in this section we will consider the latter as a separate movement of the masses.

All over the Muslim world one finds domed shrines and other elaborate structures covering the tomb of a departed saint. In India such a shrine is known as a *mazaar*. Believing that the saint's powers can still be acquired after his death and that his spirit frequents his tomb, Muslim devotees, both men and women, flock to these shrines and express their petitions in various ways. A Christian missionary speaks of his experiences at one of these tombs:

Inside I found many men praying towards the saint's *mazar*. The room was filled with the heavy smoke of incense. Pilgrims were taking slips of paper, writing out their petitions on them, and then leaving the rolled-up paper either on the tomb or along the side on a railing. Well-dressed men were lost in mystical contemplation as they stood near the remains of a saint who they are convinced lives on today in spirit and in power. (Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, p. 93).

Some of these shrines are of great antiquity and it is not even known who is buried there. In other cases mazaars rise over the supposed tombs of departed saints and as long as reports of signs and wonders flow in, no one bothers to question further whether the saints are actually buried there or not. A well-known European scholar has given an interesting insight into the creation of the shrine of a supposed saint known as Abu Turab in Egypt:

This place used to be covered by sandy hills. Once, when it was intended to build a house there, the ruins of a mosque were found. In Arab manner the people called the ruin 'Father of the sand' (*abu turab*). In due course this was taken a personal name and thus sheikh Abu Turab and his grave came into being. (Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, Vol. 2, p. 320).

There can be little doubt that Muhammad would be displeased if he could see what passes for Islam in much of the Muslim world today. In the Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal there is a tradition to the effect that he warned against the veneration of his tomb (Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition*, p. 168) and in the Qur'an he expresses his distaste for those who take their *ahbarahum* (religious leaders) and *ruhbanahum* (monks and ascetics) as their lords apart from Allah (Surah 9.31). The veneration of saints and universal tomb-worship have become a subtle substitute for idolatry in Islam and have accordingly been severely condemned by scholarly Muslims. One says:

The miraculous powers of the living and dead saints - of course the dead more than the living - have ruled the masses and even a large number of the 'Ulama. Tomb-worship and the ills accruing from this have rendered the Muslim masses almost incapable of understanding the Islamic teaching . . . Instead of this moral- social order it taught people certain techniques of auto-suggestion and hypnotism and an excessive indulgence in an altogether emotionalized religion which can only be described as a mass spiritual hysteria. It is this phenomenon - the total effect of superstitionism, miracle-mongering, tomb-

worship, mass-hysteria and, of course, charlatanism - that we have described above as the moral and spiritual debris from which Muslim society has to be reclaimed for Islam. (Rahman, *Islam*,

p. 246).

Each saint has a festival, known as an *Urs*, which occurs on his birthday or, if he is deceased, on the anniversary of his death. On this occasion celebrations of various kinds take place and offerings are brought to his tomb. Naturally it is expected that greater blessings will flow to the masses of his devotees at this time:

At all the important tombs there is held an annual *'Urs*, which is the celebration of the anniversary of the saint's death. *'Urs*, which literally means wedding, is the term used, because the occasion is the anniversary of the *wisal* or union of the spirit of the saint with Allah, which occurs at death. This takes the form of a holiday celebration, and is a great event, lasting from one to several days. (Titus, "Mysticism and Saint Worship in India", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 12, p. 136).

Usually the saint has an annual festival. In Egypt this is called *mawlid*, birthday, and is very popular; there may be a procession, prayers in the mosque, and a fair; all tastes are catered for and all enjoy themselves. (Tritton, *Islam*, p. 144).

In India and Pakistan the *Urs* of a departed saint is widely advertised and devotees will travel great distances to participate in the festivities.

2. The Supposed Miraculous Powers of the Saints. To the ordinary tomb-

worshipper, the chief object of his devotion is the miracle-working power of the saint (generally known as a *wali*, meaning a kinsman or one closely-related, in this case to Allah). Throughout the animistic world there is a fear of the unknown and a feeling that the departed, who now know it all, can give succour and strength. In Africa this takes the form of the worship of ancestral spirits, in Islam of departed saints.

Popular belief has kept, through the centuries, the certainty that illness is a result of the wiles of Satan, of the jinns, of wizards and witches, and that one must cure oneself by the use of magical counter-measures. (Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Muslim Institutions*, p. 170).

Accordingly even those who live this side of the grave, if they can show that they have power over the occult, will soon be regarded as saints and their help will be sought in cases where men or women are troubled by evil spirits.

In short, to command the attention of the demons and the Jinn is no easy matter. At the present day if any one is able to secure their obedience he is regarded as a *Wali* or Saint, and a worker of miracles. (Herklots, *Islam in India*, p. 230).

Muslims nevertheless are very careful to distinguish between the miracles of the prophets and those of the saints as pointed out in an earlier chapter. Each prophet performs a *mu'jizah* and his miracles are known as his *ayat*, his "signs", whereas the miracles of the saints are known as *karamat* and the word *hujjah* is usually used to describe the saint's "proof" of his powers. Indeed in South Africa, whereas the shrines of Indian Muslim saints are known as mazaars (there are three in Durban and one in Cape Town), the shrines of Malay saints, all of which are found in the Cape Peninsula (one is on Robben Island), are known as kramats, signifying the supposed miracle-working power of the man who is buried within the shrine.

There are many other superstitions in the Muslim world relating to miraculous powers and effects. It is believed that the Qur'an itself has talismanic powers and more will be said of this shortly. At present, however, it will be useful to mention one or two ways in which it is believed that its text can be made to work miracles.

A verse from the Qur'an will be written in ink or sandalwood paste on a plate or on the inside of a basin. The container will then be filled with water, which dissolves the writing. The water is poured into a glass and given to the patient to drink. Another method is to write the words of the Qur'an on a piece of paper and wash them off into a glass of water. This is then given to the sick person to drink. (Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, p. 75).

The shrine of the saint has arisen in Islam alongside the mosque as a symbol of popular worship. While many of the practices found at these shrines are an abomination to orthodox Islam, one cannot help feeling that the shrines themselves testify to the inability of the legalistic religion of the mosque to satisfy the inner longings and yearnings of the heart.

Human hair is also believed to possess strange powers in cultic Islam. Many Muslims, after having their hair cut, will be careful to remove all the hairs on the floor, take them home in a packet, and carefully conceal them. They fear that an enemy, if in possession of his hairs, will be able to use them against him in the same way that voodoo dolls are used to injure those they represent.

It is remarkable that in Arabia, Egypt and North Africa everywhere this custom of stowing away clippings of hair and nails is still common among Moslems and is sanctioned by the practice of the Prophet ... In North Africa a man will not have his hair shaved in the presence of any one who owes him a grudge. After his hair has been cut, he will look around, and if there is no enemy about he will mix his cuttings with those of other men, and leave them, but if he fears some one there he will collect the cuttings, and take them secretly to some place and bury them. (Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam*, p. 70, 71).

The reason for these scruples about hairs, which also apply to nail-clippings and the like, is that it is believed that the soul occupies every part of the body and anyone in the possession of such hairs or clippings can therefore influence the soul of the man he despises. These beliefs have, on the other hand, led to a wide pursuit after the hairs of Muhammad himself, a practice said to go back to his own lifetime. Because it is believed that his hairs actually contain part of his soul and therefore guarantee his presence and blessing, they are more sought after than any other relics from his life. I have seen one such hair said to be from Muhammad's own beard on public display in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul.

The relic most eagerly sought after is hair from the head or beard of Muhammed. Imitating the examples handed down from early times pious men have always been fond of wearing such relics as amulets or have asked for them to be put into their graves. (Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, Vol. 2, p. 329).

But the relic which is the object of the most energetic search is the hair of the Prophet's head or beard. The hair was worn as an amulet, and men on their deathbed directed by will that the precious possession should go down with them and mingle with the earth. (Goldziher, "The Cult of Saints in Islam", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 1, p. 306).