



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### 'ST THERESE' - HER RELICS AND HER BIBLE



Thérèse Martin, 1873-1897.

The substance of an article by Mr. Colin Maxwell, Free Presbyterian missionary in Cork, Eire, published in *The Kerryman* newspaper.

The relics of "St Thérèse" are coming to a Catholic Church near you. Already large crowds in several parts of Ireland have flocked to see the casket containing some of her remains. Bishop Comiskey, visit organiser, evidently hopes for a repeat of what has happened elsewhere: "People come in their thousands to touch the remains of the dead Thérèse because they wish to be themselves touched with the living power of God who works through her." This makes it hard to be negative about this visit but our title takes in St Thérèse's Bible and this makes the difference.

"St Thérèse's" Bible must be viewed as the final authority in this matter. God's thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9) - cherished or otherwise - and it honours no one if we pit our thoughts against God. The great question must always be: What saith the Scriptures? (Romans 4:5).

There are two distinct mentions of the bones of holy people in the Bible. Both are in the Old Testament. One concerns the bones of Joseph which the Children of Israel carried out of Egypt several hundred years after his death (Exodus 13:19) and the other concerned a miracle which took place around the bones of the long departed prophet Elisha (2 Kings 13:21). If we keep closely to what the Bible actually says, we will discover that :

[1] there is no record that any miracles were associated with the bones of Joseph and that which was afforded to the bones of Elisha was unsought for, unexpected and not repeated;

[2] both these holy people were decently buried - there is no record that their earthly remains were ever dissected in an act called "pious mutilation" and dispersed abroad for pious adoration.

In the New Testament, we read of miracles associated with the hem of Christ's garment (Matthew 14:36). Handkerchiefs and aprons conveyed miracles from Paul (Acts 19:12). Evidently these were not relics - both the persons being very much alive! The passing of the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15) - again not a relic - held great expectations to those who were sick, although there is no record that such expectations were realised. In all three cases, there is no precept or encouragement in the New Testament that such was to be repeated or expected again.

The Church maintains a very fine distinction between venerating and worshipping relics. However it is so finely tuned, that the adoring soul can hardly avoid moving into the realm of idolatry and so incur God's displeasure. We stand here on very dangerous ground. God's ways are not our ways. They are infinitely better. God speaks to us through His own written word. "St Thérèse's" Bible is sufficient to instruct us in the way of salvation (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The rest is surplus to our requirements and should be treated as such.