

Jeanne d' Arc

An Enigmatic Figure in the Middle Ages

by

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*"There are more things in heaven and on earth
than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio!"*

– Hamlet

If we compare ancient chronicles with modern history books, a significant difference appears. From the Middle Ages through the end of the nineteenth century myths, sagas, legends, prophecies and wonders were taken seriously. They were considered as realistic as everyday occurrences. For modern historians, in most cases, these sources are no longer considered authentic for modern historians. Now they belong to another science, folklorists shall classify and interpret myths, sagas and legends.

Are all of our ancient heroes useless for today's history lessons? A few have survived all forms of criticism. As late as the fifteenth century we find Jeanne d'Arc (1412–1431). No one doubts her existence. For modern historians she is an enigma because her unbelievable but factual actions challenge the theory that occurrences can be explained. Even if one burned the documents that prove she had lived, she will not be ignored. Even the most objective researcher will allow himself to be charmed by "La Pucelle." Some go so far as to write: "She believed she was sent by God." Historians must admit that her actions during the English-French Hundred Years' War were decisive for the future of Europe. Bernard Shaw did not exaggerate when he said: "She took her own King under her wing and let the English King know that all he could do was obey her orders. She spoke defiantly to statesmen and churchmen. She disobeyed generals' plans and followed her own in order to lead her troops to victory."

Her biography makes a big impression on twelve- and thirteen-year-old children. Teachers realize that the goal of history's lessons is to demonstrate how

individual's actions leave deep tracks which are still active today. And for once it is not a man but a woman, a young nineteen-year-old girl, whose actions affect the history of two powerful nations for many centuries.

Anecdotes are stories of human idiosyncrasies. Children will test each history teacher's attitude to the mystery of Jeanne d'Arc by expecting them to answer the same question her judges were faced with: Who was she? Was she, as her judges proclaimed, a lying seducer of the people and the royalty, a pagan, a false prophet, a witch? Was there reason to label the hat she wore at the stake in Rouen with the inscription: Heretique, relapse, apostate, idolatre? Was she a devil or instrument of the forces of evil? Did she play a fantastic but fatal game with the highest military leaders on both sides? Or was she what she always professed? Was she indeed guided by higher, godlike powers that gave her the abilities and courage to act in ways that defied human reason?

The class would laugh if the teacher would try, like Anatole France did, to avoid these questions by glossing over all irrational elements of Jeanne's life. France claimed that her revelations were nothing more than hallucinations, the voices she heard nothing more than her own unconscious. How did Jeanne d'Arc explain her inner voices, that gave her the meaning of her life and mission? Were Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine present? The archangel Michael named them both.

In order to accept her explanations of the voices, let us listen to an answer she gave the investigation commission in Poitiers. Professor Sequin asked her in which language the voices spoke. "A better French than yours," she replied. Sequin was from Limousin, well-known for its ugly dialect.

The judges also asked her about the voices: "How can voices speak with you when you have no voice organs?"

"I leave that for God to answer."

"Did Saint Margaret speak French?" they asked

"Why should she speak English when she was not on the side of the English?" was her reply.

When we first consider Jeanne d'Arc's supersensible revelations, it is tempting to dismiss her as an exalted young girl in a state of ecstasy who forgot everything about herself in an unconscious trance. Her biographer Curt Wallis speaks to the contrary: "Jeanne d'Arc never fell into an unconscious trance. It is clear that she observed her surroundings while she viewed her visions." He goes on to say that she had the visions while she was in meetings or battles or when under attack. She heard the voices on the executioner's platform as she was led to the stake, and she heard them as she was in the fire, as she exclaimed to the onlookers that her voices had never deceived her.

We have her assurance that she hesitated for a long time before following the voices' unequivocal orders. They demanded that she put on armor and hasten the King to action. Jeanne spoke soberly of her natural reaction to this unnatural order: "I am just a poor farmer's daughter, I have neither armor nor a horse, and I cannot ride." Further, the King was hundreds of miles away, in Domremy. What should she do? The voices were clear and relentless. She finally decided to follow their orders. Since it would be dangerous to travel so far alone, she approached the commander at the fortress in Vaucouleurs, Robert de Baudricourt, and asked for help. He was a brave warrior, a jovial, practical man, and immediately skeptical of her visions. When he asked her who had sent her, she answered, "On behalf of the master."

"Who is the master?" asked Baudricourt boldly.

"It is God," answered Jeanne and told him that God ordered her to ride to the King and lead him to Reims to be crowned. She also explained that the "dauphin" did not own France but was asked by God to administer the land as best he could.

The commander was surprised, considered the whole story a joke at best. He told Lassois, a cousin of Jeanne's, who had followed her to the fortress, that he should give his cousin a few slaps to the face and take her home where her respectable father could punish her further. Thus ended her trip to Vaucouleurs.

Jeanne neither gave up nor lost her courage. In the fall of 1428, when Orleans was occupied by the English and France appeared conquered, she visited Baudricourt again. Explaining once again her mission from God to free the city, the commander listened with new interest. Baudricourt had just heard from the King's residence in Chinon that the French had suffered a terrible loss at Rouvray, not far from Orleans, and he was convinced that everything in God's power must be done to prevent the English from taking the final fortress.

Baudricourt did not escort her, but wrote a long letter to the King. Jeanne put on the armor, mounted her horse and defied all warnings about the dangerous journey. "The road lies open for me, I trust my Master. He shall show me the road to the King in order to carry out His command." She suffered through fatigue and earned the respect of her escort of three young nobles and soldiers. The men were sworn by Baudricourt to treat her fairly, but they agreed to test her courage one day. On the first night, the soldiers awoke her unexpectedly by screaming in her ear that the others had abandoned them. Jeanne sat up and cried out, "Stop, do not run. There is no danger, for God is with us."

Her escort were surprised how well she managed in new situations. She rode very well and mounted a horse as if she done it all her life. She was practical and quick to give advice.

Jeanne was eager to reach her destination. There was no time to lose, for the King's position was desperate. The English had conquered Northern and

Western France, including Paris. Everyone knew that if Orleans fell, the enemy would easily conquer the rest of France. The French Parliament in Chinon advised Charles to make an alliance with Duke Philippe of Burgundy, a former ally of the English who ruled over the eastern part of France and Flanders, but Charles did not trust the unfaithful Duke whose intention was to depose him. The French finances were in turmoil; Charles did not have even enough money to pay his tailor. Only the fat, rich and sly financial advisor La Tremoille had money available. This man kept one foot in each camp and enjoyed an alliance with Burgund. The few friends of the King were poor and exhausted from the unsuccessful war, and Charles knew not what to do next.

It was at this critical point that Jeanne arrived in Chinon. She had to wait three days before she could speak with the King, whose advisors knew not what to make of Baudricourt's letter. The whole world would laugh at them if they allowed a little imposter to lead them by the nose. When they finally decided to let her into the castle, they wanted to test her first. The King hid behind three hundred knights, and they asked her to find him as she entered the court. Gaucourt, a court officer at the time, observed this historical moment and reported that Jeanne walked directly to the King and bowed upon her knee saying, "Honored Dauphin, I am sent by God to serve you and your kingdom."

In a subsequent confidential conversation, Jeanne convinced Charles VI that he was the rightful King of France. No one knows how she proved it to him. Historians have been left with what they call *le signe du roi*, and there have been numerous attempts to explain how she did this. Not even the judges at Rouen were able to get it out of her. In any case the melancholic Dauphin was convinced beyond question. He returned to the court more joyful and confident than anyone had previously seen him.

After Jeanne won the King's trust, she became a guest at the Castle of Chinon. The two had many conversations before the King tested her once again by making her appear before a theological commission at Poitiers who had previously sent messengers to her hometown to research her background. They had learned only good news about her childhood and teenage years.

Jeanne respected the lower and poorer priesthood that carried the heavy load of the Church. She held in contempt the rich, well-educated professors who wielded the interpretation of God's word. She was impatient. Upon meeting the theologians of the commission she proclaimed, "In God's book there is much more than in yours."

Professor Seguin probed the most. To his question: "Do you believe in God?" she answered sharply, "More than you."

As he asserted that "if God wished France to win, they would need no soldiers," she countered by saying, "Soldiers shall fight, and God shall give them the victory!"

Insulted, Seguin proclaimed they could not suggest sending her to battle before she proved that she was sent by God. “I have not come to Poitiers to make signs and wonders,” replied Jeanne. “Send me to Orleans and you shall witness a wonder.” The theologians ruled that she was a good girl and that she should be used in battle, especially since the situation was so dire. Curt Wallis comments that during her hearing Jeanne described her mission in four prophecies: Orleans shall be freed, the King shall be crowned in Reims, Paris shall be reclaimed, and Duke Charles of Orleans will be freed from prison.

On the evening of April 29, 1429, Jeanne d’Arc solemn entered the besieged Orleans. A witness described the historical moment:

Escorted by France’s most distinguished General Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, Jeanne rode slowly into town on a white horse. The masses received her with joy. They had suffered and feared losing life and limbs. Now they felt comforted—it was as if the siege was already lifted. They been told that within the simple virgin a Godlike power lived. Women, men and children watched her with great love. They pushed forward to see her and touch her horse. A torchbearer came too close to her banner which caught on fire. She spurred her horse so fast that she extinguished the flames. The people were so impressed by her horsemanship that they thought she had followed armies for many years.

Jeanne rode gracefully through Orleans in full armor, something only war-proven knights could display. On her banner, woven in white cloth, were embroidered a French lily, a picture of God surrounded by angels, and the inscription: *Jesus Maria*. On her belt hung a battle-axe and a sword, but she never used her weapons in battle and never killed a soul.

Before the entrance to Orleans she was greeted by Commander Dunois on the banks of the Loires. Their meeting has been described as follows:

Jeanne asked: “Are you the Bastard of Orleans?”

“Yes,” answered Orleans, “and I am very glad you have arrived.”

“Did you give the command that I should enter on this side of the river and not ride straight so I could meet the English and their commander Talbot?”

“Yes, for the sake of safety, and for those who are wiser than I are of the same conviction.”

“By God, Our Lord’s advice is safer and wiser than yours. You wanted to deceive me, and you have deceived yourself! For I bring better help to you than any commanders have received—help from the King of the Heavens.”

From that moment on Dunois followed her orders. He believed in her and supported her throughout the war. The day after he entered Jeanne’s quarters

with news of reinforcements led by Sir John Fastoff on the way to strengthen the English army, she burned inside for battle. “Bastard, bastard, in the name of God, I order you to inform me as soon as you know more about Fastoff’s arrival. If he arrives before I know about it, I will have your head cut off.” Even though she was joking, Dunois promised to honor her request. (We have these conversations recorded thanks to d’Aulon, a French Knight. From him we also have the stories of the dramatic battles that soon followed.)

Both Jeanne and d’Aulon were exhausted from the long journey that morning and rested shortly in the same room when d’Aulon was suddenly awakened by Jeanne who cried out, “Praise God, my voices have told me to engage the English. But I do not know whether I should attack their buildings or attack Fastoff who is bringing reinforcements?”

From the street they heard cries that the English were attacking Fort St. Loup to the east. Jeanne ran out of the house, was brought her horse by her page Louis de Coutes, and took her banner, which was handed down through the window as she mounted the horse. She rode through the town to St. Loup. Just outside the town gates she saw French soldiers in wild retreat towards Orleans. Jeanne reached them and ordered them to turn back, for she would lead them to victory. The soldiers’ confidence returned and they obeyed her command. They were consumed with anger toward the English. Jeanne rode before them, holding her banner. As she arrived at the moat, she planted the banner firmly in the ground and stood calmly as the arrows rained down upon them. The French followed with a charge, blasted an opening in the walls and entered the fortress. As she gave commands, no resistance could stop them. After three hours of hard battle, St. Loup was reclaimed. Forty Englishmen had been killed. Those who fled were captured in a tower and brought to safety by Jeanne, who allowed them to stay in her barracks and receive the care they needed. This was the first victory for the French in the battles of Orleans. Decisive, it proved the English could be beaten and the fortresses conquered.

Jeanne would not let her landsmen go to battle the next day because it was Ascension. Instead they visited the churches. She also commanded that all loose women who followed the soldiers be sent away. A knight who swore near her was grasped by the throat and told, “You shame God, and you may not leave until you beg for mercy.” The people of Orleans loved La Pucelle, the virgin who championed the weak and the strong.

Even the war council was conspiratorial. When one of the high lords, Cousinot, described only half the plan for the attack on Fort St. Laurent, she discovered it immediately and scorned him: “You hide a part of the plan from me? Let me hear the whole plan. I can hold a confidence in events greater than these.” In her room, she paced back and forth. Dunois decided to inform her:

“Jeanne, we thought we could not trust you with everything at once” A few minutes later he set the whole plan before her, Jeanne was reconciled, approved the plan and dismissed the war council. Dunois proclaimed her as talented a strategist as two or three of his most experienced warriors and accredited all success at Orleans to Jeanne d’Arc.

On her behalf during the process of her rehabilitation (1450–1456), De Termes, another famous French commander during the Hundred Years’ War, provided the following report: “In the battles for Orleans Jeanne demonstrated battle skills that no one else could surpass. The officers could not comprehend her courage. When she led men into battle, she acted like the most experienced commander, one who had spent a lifetime learning the art of war.”

A decisive act in liberating Orleans was conquering the castle Les Tourelles. An eyewitness commented: “The attackers climbed on the walls in many places and fought so hard you would have thought they believed they were immortal. Many times they were thrown back by the English and fell from the tops of the wall to the field.” Jeanne stormed up a ladder and was hit by a crossbow arrow that sliced its way between her plates of armor in one shoulder so the point stuck out her back. She fell to the field. The Englishmen cheered for they thought that the feared “witch” had been killed or at least knocked out of battle. Jeanne was pulled out of the worst fighting; they removed her armor and treated the wound with olive oil. When she found her strength again, the French had been thrown back for the fourth time by the English, and defeat seemed certain. Dunois and his war council had already decided to sound the retreat when Jeanne walked forward and stopped them: “Bastard, stop the retreat immediately. We will attack again. Both fortress and Les Tourelles shall belong to us before nightfall.” Dunois gave in to her confidence. Jeanne found a place to spend a few minutes on her knee in prayer before she hurried up to the walls. She planted her banner and climbed up a ladder. When her landsmen saw this, they climbed up their ladders wildly. The English saw Jeanne, whom they thought was dead, and fled into the fortress in panic.

The brave Glassidas and his comrades covered their retreat with heavy axes against the French. Jeanne d’Arc saw danger and yelled to him: “Glassidas, Glassidas you have fought me hard, but surrender and I will spare your life!” Glassidas and his comrades did not listen to her, continued the battle and fell into the water shortly thereafter. In their heavy armor they sank quickly to the bottom. Jeanne fell to her knee and prayed for the lost souls. Her landsmen were also sad, for as the English knights drowned, so the large reward sums were lost.

The French stormed into Les Tourelles from two corners, and by evening all resistance was silenced. Everything had happened as Jeanne had predicted.

From Orleans the people had watched the battles. After the victory all of the church bells rang, "*Te Deum*." The French burned down the castle as Talbot and his Englishmen witnessed that Orleans was wrested out of their control. The very next day, May 8, 1429, the French retreated from the walls of Orleans, and the British army retreated to Paris, followed by the French led by Jeanne d'Arc.

Talbot was captured, Fastoff escaped with his troops. In a letter to the British Parliament, Bedford reported: "Everything was successful until the occupation of Orleans, where God punished our large army. As far as I know it is due to the fear some had for the devil's disciple, called the Virgin, La Pucelle. She used magic and witchcraft, reduced our forces but also strangely discouraged the survivors."

With Jeanne d'Arc at the front of the troops, the French Army rode to Reims. Town after town opened its gates for the King's successful warriors. On July 16, 1429, Charles entered the old coronation town and was proclaimed King of France. The ceremony was described in a letter sent by Pierre de Beauvais to Charles' wife and her mother, Yolande of Sicily: "It was magnificent to witness the mysterious ceremony. Marshalls de Rais and de Boussac, Admiral Culen and many knights rode in full armor with banners waving towards the majestic cathedral bringing with them *la sainte ampoule* which contained the holy oil. They rode past the doors into the church and forward to the holy altar where they dismounted. The Archbishop of Reims asked the King to read the Royal Oath, anointed him and set the crown upon his head. The crowd cried: "Noel! Noel!"

The trumpets blared with such force that one might think that hell would be blown to pieces. And during the whole mystery of this holy ceremony, Jeanne stood straight as a candle, holding her banner at the side of the King. D'Albret held the sword while d'Alencon proclaimed the King a knight, an honor he had not yet received. Guy de Laval was named an Earl.

After the King was crowned, Jeanne fell on her knees and, with tears flowing down her cheeks, spoke: "Honored King, now God's will is done, after He ordered me to take Orleans and crown you as King of France in Reims. You are the rightful King of France." Once the ceremony ended the festivities began. Two of her brothers rode next to her. Their stern father was met by the King and awarded a large sum of money. Jacques d'Arc remained in Reims for two months at the expense of the city. Jeanne d'Arc had now reached the height of her enlightened but short mission.

Let us try to understand what she looked like in the eyes of her landsmen. There is no existing portrait of her. Reports describe her as strongly built with a robust body, sunburned face, dark eyes and dark hair cut short above her forehead.

In his letter of July 8, 1429, Guy de Laval, a young nobleman from Bretagne, tells of his arrival in Loches to offer his service to the King. He meets Jeanne d'Arc who is preparing for war. She offers him some wine and portends that she will next offer him wine in Paris. "She appears and sounds like a goddess. Together with Marshall de Boussac she rode at the head of a troop of cavalry and bowmen. I saw her mount her horse in full armor. The black stallion did not want her to mount so she spoke soothingly to it: 'Bring me to the cross in front of the church over there.' She swung her legs over its back and headed for the church door speaking with a mild female voice: 'Priests and churchmen, make a procession and offer prayers to God.' She turned around and cried: '*Avant! Avant!*' A page carried her banner while Jeanne brandished her little battle-axe in her hand."

Jeanne d'Arc's next mission was to take Paris and throw the English out of France. The uneasy King Charles had made plans to surround the city, but they did not dare enter the city. After an early skirmish the King gave the order to retreat. Charles decided to negotiate with the Duke of Burgundy, but Jeanne wanted a quick battle to decide the matter. (It was only a few years after her death when her will was accomplished and Paris opened its doors for the King in 1436.) In the meantime Jeanne did not let the indecisive King thwart her. With a small group of loyal troops she attacked the enemy's positions around Paris. Knowing well that her time was near, Jeanne heard voices telling her that her mission would soon be over. They warned her of the danger of falling in the hands of her enemy. Indeed, the English had declared that their highest wish was to burn her at the stake, in grotesque revenge for the losses she had given them. Despite the warnings Jeanne attacked Compiegne with her small forces. The town was under the control of Burgundy and completely surrounded by enemies. Her friends warned her but she would not desist: "*Par mon martin!* I will see and help my good friends in Compiegne!"

On this campaign she was surrounded by Burgunders and captured. A Burgundian recorded: "She surpassed the forces women possess and tolerated great resistance to defend her company. As the strongest of them all she fought until the last. There fate ended her honor. For the last time she would carry weapons."

Jean, Earl of Luxembourg and the highest commander of the Burgundian Army, handed her over immediately to his allies, the English. They paid him 10,000 *livres tournois* in ransom. Jeanne tried to escape during the transactions by throwing herself out of a tower, but she was found unconscious at the foot of the tower and placed in heavy security. She recuperated, but her voices had not lied. She was transported to Rouen and placed in prison for seven months where

she was chained to the wall in a tiny, dark prison tower. Her only protection was the fact that the guards believed the superstition that touching a witch would sentence them to eternal death.

As Curt Wallis mentions, her worst torture was being denied mass, communion and confession. Everything that had given the devout girl strength was taken from her. She was accused of witchcraft. The only time she breathed fresh air was between the court and the tower. The path passed a little chapel where she fell on her knees and prayed. At first the guards allowed this but were then ordered to prevent it.

She received a visit from the Lords of Suffolk and Warwick. Jean of Luxembourg, who accompanied them, promised she could be ransomed by her countrymen if she promised to never take up arms again. Jeanne replied: "In the name of God, you play games with me. I know very well that you cannot do what you offer!" When Luxembourg repeated his proposal, Jeanne countered: "I know the English will kill me. They believe they will capture France, but even if they had one hundred thousand more troops, still they would not be able to take our kingdom."

Lord Suffolk was enraged. He pulled his knife and wanted to kill her on the spot. He would have succeeded had not Lord Warwick held him back. He did not want Jeanne to be murdered in that fashion. Rather, she should be sentenced by a church court comprised of French clergymen whose job was to sentence her to burn her as a witch. The literature on this part of her death is unimpeachable. The trial was a hypocritical attempt at justifying a murder.

The trial began in February 1431. For more than three months one cardinal, six bishops, thirty-two theological doctors, sixteen theological teachers, seven medical doctors and one hundred three professors tried to press a confession from Jeanne that her mission had not been inspired by Godly powers but by the prince of darkness. Jeanne defended herself courageously during the one-sided trial. The president of the judges was the sly Bishop of Beauvais, Cauchon. The protocols are preserved, from which is taken this short exchange between the uneducated farmer's daughter and the Bishop of Beauvais:

"Do you hear voices often?"

"A day does not pass without my hearing the voices. I would have died a long time ago had I not been comforted by them."

"Which words comfort you?"

"They tell me that I will be freed through a great victory. Or, they tell me to be quiet, receive everything with composure, and in the end I will come to paradise. 'Answer bravely. God will help you.'"

"Do the voices ever change their meaning?"

“I have never experienced that they speak with a double meaning.”

“Do you have other revelations as you hear the voices?”

“I am not obliged to answer that. You say you are my judges. Take notice of what you ask. I am sent by God, and it is you who are exposed to grave danger!”

“Do you believe you are at God’s mercy?”

“If I am not in it, my God send me to it—if I am in it, may He keep me in it.”

“Is St. Michael accompanied by a light when he approaches you?”

“Yes, he is accompanied by light from all of the corners, but they do not reach to him.”

“Does everyone who belongs to your party believe in that you are sent from God?”

“I do not know if they believe that. But if they do not, I am no less sent by God.”

“And if they do believe it?”

“They make no mistake.”

Thomas Courcelles, doctor of theology and professor at Sorbonne asked her so some political questions: “Do you believe that the Englishmen will be less successful in war?”

“The English will lose a larger stake than Orleans, they will lose all of France! From my visions I know it will happen within seven years. I am sad that it will take so long. But as surely as I sit her now I know it will happen. The day and hour I do not know.”

For many months the judges tried to trap Jeanne with well-formulated questions. Against his will, Cauchon decided he would show her which torture methods he would use if she did not confess that she was part of the devil’s work. She was brought into a torture chamber where the executioner stood with glowing tongs: “Now, Jeanne, how would it be if I let you become familiar with fire?”

Though Jeanne had a panic fear for fire since childhood, she answered: “Even if you pull apart my limbs so my soul flies from my body, I will say nothing more than I have already said. And even if I were to say something different, I would shortly thereafter declare that you forced me to say it.”

Once Cauchon successfully coerced Jeanne to confess when she was threatened to be burned alive, and indeed, a few days later she told Cauchon that her confession was a lie, and she retracted everything she had said under pressure. But her fate was forever sealed. Two Dominicans, Ladvenu and Toutmouille, had the task of pronouncing her sentence. Toutmouille witnessed that Jeanne pulled her hair and cried: “O, shall you treat me so horribly and so grotesquely that my body will be destroyed and turned to ashes! Oh! Oh! I would

rather be guillotined seven times than burned. I cry to the highest judge, O Lord, and complain over the injustice and persecution I am subjected to!"

When Cauchon visited her in prison, she said: "Bishop, I die because of Him and before Him I shall file my complaint for God." Wallis records that Cauchon "suffered a fit of anger."

Jeanne was granted the opportunity to confess her sins and receive the sacraments before she was sent to the execution platform. To a monk who attended her, she asked: "Maitre Pierre, where shall I be this evening?"

He answered: "Do you not have comfort from the Lord?"

"Yes," she answered, "and through God's mercy I will be in paradise."

As Jeanne was led away she cried so loudly that everyone who heard her could not hold back their tears. One of her most avid prosecutors asked on his knees for forgiveness. Before she climbed to the stake, Jeanne was strong enough to forgive not only the evil he gave her but also Cauchon and all of his fellow judges. She appealed to the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and all of the saints in paradise. She asked for a cross on which to gaze in her final moments. An English soldier made a cross of two pins and extended it to her. As the flames burned around her, Jeanne cried to the judges that her voices had come from God, that they had never deceived her, and that everything she had done was upon His orders. The final word they heard from her lips was "Jesus."

Of the life of Jeanne d'Arc, the King of England's secretary cried aloud: "We are lost, for we have killed a saint!" The executioner was so devastated that he confessed his sins: "I have burned a saint, and God will never forgive me." According to French legend, shortly after Jeanne's final breath, a white dove flew from the fire into the sky above.