

THE HOLINESS OF SAINT JOAN OF ARC

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St Joan stands alone in history. Many women have found sanctity in the cloister, some have shown bravery in battle, but no other ever trained herself to holiness in a soldier's camp, and surely no female saint ever died at the stake condemned by an ecclesiastical tribunal as a witch and a heretic.

Her story is incredible, but true: it rests on the most abundant and clear evidence. { This booklet is based throughout on a critical reading of the original sources, not on second-hand evidence. } She was a peasant girl of no importance and before she was eighteen her intervention had already changed the course of European history for centuries to come. When she died at nineteen, thanks to her, the French had become conscious of being a nation, England had lost all hopes of ever being a Continental power, and Burgundy, the arbiter of the destinies of France, was soon again to be her vassal.

We cannot explain this by a mere recital of the diplomatic and military history of the times. The hand of God clearly appeared in these events. Joan of Arc was the tool He chose to accomplish His work: she is the explanation of the miraculous reversal of the fortunes of France which followed her appearance on the stage of history; but she was a saint first, and, therefore, in this little pamphlet you must expect to find more about Joan the woman and the saint than about Joan the warrior. Were it not for her trust and faith in God, and for her inflexible resolve "to serve God first" she would in time, like her friends, Mengette and Hauviette, have married some poor labourer and lived and died in some obscure hamlet of Lorraine.

Childhood

She was born in January 1412 in the little village of Domremy on the borders of Lorraine. The house where she spent her childhood, the church where she made her first communion still exist, not very much altered. They still show to the visitors, at the back of the living-room, another one, very small and dark, which is said to have been hers. Its tiny and deep window opens towards the church across the road, so that when Joan said her prayers she could almost feel that she was kneeling before the altar. In the church — still in use after more than five (nearly six) centuries — is the grey stone baptismal font over which she was held by half-a-dozen Godparents when Jean Minet, the parish priest, baptized her. Against one of the columns you see the statue of St Margaret which she decked often with wreaths of flowers.

Hers was a Christian home. Her father, Jacquot d'Arc, and Isabel his wife were described by their neighbours at the second trial as "good Catholics", "true Catholics". He was a small farmer who owned his house, and forty acres of good land. Joan's three brothers helped their father on the farm — 24 acres were under the plough — while Joan helped her mother at home. We cannot exaggerate the influence of that good woman on the formation of the heart and mind of her daughter, and on her religious development. "My mother", said Joan to her judges at Rouen, "taught me Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo and no one besides my mother taught me my beliefs." Isabel d'Arc could not read or write: neither could St Joan, yet how well the one taught, how well the other learnt. We have only to read the minutes of the trial to perceive at once that the religion of our saint was not one of conventional practices, of interested and almost superstitious devotions, but one that went down to the essentials: Obedience to God, horror of sin (I should be the saddest of women if I thought myself to be in mortal sin), the practice of prayer, a great love for the Mass, and for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, frequent confession and communion.

The religious teaching given by Isabel to her daughter seems to have been very thorough. The answers of St Joan to her judges on the subject of grace or the workings of God's Providence amongst men are astonishing, not in their wording and conciseness alone, but in the theological knowledge they imply. The judges asked her: "Are you in a state of grace, Joan?"

"If I am not, God put me there", she replied; "if I am, please God so keep me."

To an examiner at Poitiers who suggested that "if God wills to save France it is not necessary to have soldiers", she

answered: "In God's name the soldiers will fight and God will give the victory". "Act and God will act, work and He will work" is a saying of hers which expresses the same idea. Unlettered as she was, Isabel could serve as a model to many a Catholic mother who boasts of a good education but cannot teach her children their religion.

She taught Joan to work as well as to pray. In a busy season she would help in the field with hay-making and harvesting, handling pitchfork and sickle like everyone else; often she would watch the sheep; when they heard enemy soldiers were approaching, she would even drive the cattle to safety; but usually she was to be found working with her mother at home. She was fond of work and when as a girl of seventeen she was in the king's service and following the movements of the royal court from one town to another and lodging with important ladies, she did not sit there, her hands in her lap, content to listen to their frivolous conversations. "She was never idle", said one of them later on. And if nothing else offered, there was always a distaff and spindle handy for her ready fingers. Did she not boast once to her judges that as for spinning and sewing she was ready to compete with any woman in Rouen!

Jacquot, her father, cannot have given the same attention to his daughter's education as Isabel, but his stern attitude towards evil must have impressed her deeply. Having dreamt one night that she had gone away with the king's soldiers as a camp-follower, he spoke next day very strongly on the subject. "If she ever wanted to do such a thing, you should drown her first", he said to his sons. "If you did not, I would drown her myself, with my own hands." And he meant it. This little episode throws a vivid light on the home in which Joan spent the first seventeen years of her life.

At her trial, the judges plied her with questions concerning her childhood and even her amusements, and thanks to this circumstance we are indebted for some precise details. The little children of Domremy used to go picnicking in the neighbouring woods and there danced and sang and made garlands of flowers. St Joan sang willingly but was not very fond of dancing and often, we are told, leaving the others to their games, she went aside "to talk to God", as she explained. If she happened to be in the fields when the church bells rang, then she would stop work and kneel and pray. Her companions passed remarks about her frequent visits to the church, and this, said Hauviette, one of her girl friends, made her bashful. Some thirty years later these boys and girls who had played with her came forward and recorded their early impressions of Joan as they had known her, child and young maid at Domremy. Her youthful piety was no affectation: she was perfectly natural and acted as she believed. The same witnesses describe her as being quiet and reserved, almost to the point of shyness. They all insist that she was simple; by this they meant that she did not give herself airs, she was unaffected in speech and manners, sincere and transparent. The French simple conveys all these meanings. Her prodigious popularity did not change her in this respect. The Duke of Alencon, her hostess at Bourges and others repeat the same words when they speak of her: "Except in affairs of war, she was a very simple young girl". They agree she was cheerful, but of a silent disposition (*moult simple et peu parlant*) and, commenting on this, add that when she spoke it was always with great sense.

Her kindness, her charity towards the poor were also remarkable. One Simon Musnier declared: "She liked to take care of the sick. I know this for certain. When I was a child and I was ill it was she who nursed me." Another witness tells us that she had known Joan to give her own bed to some poor homeless woman and to spend the night herself by the hearth in the next room. This was what Christian charity meant to her.

The Voices

She was about thirteen when, for the first time, she heard the Voice which summoned her to the rescue of France. She tells her judges that on this occasion she was overcome with fear. The Voice came to her towards noon. It was summer time; she was in her father's garden. She heard the Voice on her right, and afterwards she seldom heard it without a light which came from the same side and was usually very brilliant. After she had heard the Voice three times, she understood it came from God and knew it was Michael the Archangel, the protector of France, who came to her and with him the hosts of heaven. The Voice admonished her "to govern herself well and to go to church often", and from the beginning she was told that she must "go to France".{ N.B. — Vaucouleurs (with Domremy) was an outpost of France deep in enemy territory. }

One year, and yet another, passed, the visions went on: the commands became more pressing. St Margaret and St Catherine now appeared to her frequently, their heads richly crowned, their voices gentle, soft and low. Once or twice a week they urged her to leave her home to go and seek the king, and tell him of her mission: that God Himself was

sending her to give help to the kingdom and lead the Dauphin to Rheims for his coronation. Joan, afraid, trembling, dared tell no one for a time. It was all so strange; it sounded so impossible! How could this be, she thought, seeing that "she was a poor maid, knowing nothing of riding or fighting"?

We cannot doubt that to St Joan these visions were intensely real: she saw, heard, touched, embraced them. "I saw them", she says to her judges, "with the eyes of my body as plainly as I see you, and when they left me I cried, for I wanted them to take me with them." {Private examination held in the prison on March 17th, in the afternoon. }

Are we to take this literally? Let us at once say that the visions and revelations of which we read in the lives of saints can never command the assent of Catholic faith, and cannot be part of the Christian revelation. Let us say also that if we believe in a spiritual world co-existing with the visible one, we cannot affirm that spirits have no means of communicating with us, either by direct action of mind on mind, or by causing the brain to originate such pictures, sounds or sensations as are usually produced by an external cause. We are not for a moment suggesting that St Margaret or St Michael or St Catherine assumed in fact a human body in order to manifest themselves to St Joan; nor do we care very much for the theory that these visions were a pure figment of her imagination. After all, these visions did change for many years the course of history for three nations and, in whatever manner they came, we may be allowed to think they were designed by God as the means for Him to influence and direct human affairs.

She had reached her sixteenth year when she knew the time had come for a decision and that she must obey her heavenly counsellors, for they were God's messengers and their commands His commands. "The great pity of the kingdom of France" was always present to her mind. All her life she had heard tales of battles, burnings and lootings. Once she had to take flight with all the inhabitants of Domremy and on their return they had found the little village burnt down by the Burgundians. When in October 1428, the news came that Salisbury with an English army was under the walls of Orleans, she could not wait any longer: "time was pressing upon her", she said, "as on a woman when her day is near".

At last, towards the middle of December, {It is generally accepted that Joan left Domremy and went to Vaucouleurs twice, in May and in December. This raises endless difficulties. We are convinced that the notary who translated into Latin the deposition of Poulengy made a mistake and that the Maid left her home once only and never returned. It all rests on one word: ascension instead of naissance;} she left her home never to return and went to her uncle Laxart, ostensibly to attend his wife in her trouble, but really to be near Vaucouleurs, interview the governor, Robert de Baudricourt, and obtain from him leave to go to Chinon. At first she was rudely rebuffed by the captain, but nothing could discourage her: she knew she was the bearer of God's commands. After six weeks with her uncle at Little Bury she went to stay with some friends in the town of Vaucouleurs and, at last, impressed by her conviction, her persistence, and her personality, as everyone was who came near her, Baudricourt gave her permission to start and granted her an escort of two willing young noblemen and their four servants. Before her final departure, she went to see the Duke of Lorraine at Nancy, perhaps to obtain a safe conduct out of his lands and through enemy territory. On her way to Nancy she paid a visit to the celebrated shrine of St Nicolas du Port, the patron saint of travellers.

The Mission Fulfilled

We may perhaps, before proceeding any further, review briefly the desperate situation of France at that moment. For nearly ninety years an interminable war between France and England had been dragging on, and since Agincourt (1415) the French had only met with defeat and had lost heart. Famine, inflation, pestilence, civil war had added to the misery of their unfortunate country. The King — or rather the Dauphin, since the coronation had not yet taken place — had no money, no soldiers, no allies. His own mother had declared him illegitimate and his kingdom had shrunk to a few provinces south of the Loire.

The English held Normandy, Picardy, Paris in the north, as well as Guyenne and Aquitaine in the south. Burgundy, their ally, stretched from Flanders to Savoy, from the Rhine to the Loire. When Orleans was threatened, the situation of the French king became dangerous in the extreme, for its capture would have opened the roads to the south. Fortunately for him, both England and Burgundy, bent as they were on the dismemberment of France, disagreed about the disposal of the booty: both wanted Paris, both wanted Orleans. Bear this in mind; it is the key to the obstinate and futile French diplomacy of appeasement from 1423 onwards, and the key also to the otherwise inexplicable discarding

of Joan, by the Court after the Coronation at Rheims. Joan wanted to continue fighting. "Peace", she said, "cannot be had but at the point of the lance." The diplomats wanted to negotiate: they thought it less expensive and less dangerous.

Joan left Vaucouleurs towards the end of February 1429 with her small escort. She was dressed as a man, for safety and to attract less attention on the road. This long ride of eleven days through hostile country was a test of endurance: they must often sleep in the open, avoid big towns, be on the lookout for enemies.

When they reached Chinon she had to wait two, perhaps three, days before she was granted an audience. We can take it for granted that there had been some correspondence between Baudricourt and the Royal Council during January and February, for she could not arrive unexplained and unannounced. The officials, however, kept her under close observation for reasons of simple prudence and indeed continued to do so for many weeks after. At last she had word that she would be received by the king. When she entered the great hall that evening the three hundred courtiers assembled there scrutinized her by the light of fifty torches: what they saw was a small but sturdy young girl, about 5 ft. 2 in. in height, of modest appearance, yet not without some dignity of bearing. She had come in her travelling dress: man's hose and doublet and over these a short robe of grey woollen material. Her dark hair was close-cropped but for an unbecoming mop on the top of the head. She went straight to the king, who was concealing himself among the courtiers. "I saw her", said a witness, "when she presented herself before the king's Majesty with great humility and simplicity as a poor little shepherdess. I heard her say these words: 'Most noble Dauphin, I am come and am sent to you from God to give help to the kingdom and to you.'"

The king took her apart and had a long conversation with her. It is said that "she confided to him a secret which was known to him alone and to God, which gave him a great confidence in her". What the secret was, no one knows and St Joan repeatedly refused to reveal it to her judges. Charles was impressed but would take no final decision yet.

He could not afford to make a mistake: if she were an adventuress, if she failed, he would cover himself with ridicule. Even if her story was to be accepted, there were other considerations; what place would she be given in the army which was being raised and equipped at this very moment? What part would she play in the decisions to be taken? This had to be thought out very carefully. For three weeks, Joan was kept in the castle under close and unobtrusive scrutiny. Some great ladies of the court were commissioned to visit her and make sure that her boast of being *virgo intacta* was justified. After this, she was sent to Poitiers for another three weeks, there to be examined by a commission of theologians. She passed all these tests well and the conclusion of the ecclesiastical court, enthusiastic yet cautious, without pronouncing on the origin of her visions, advised the king that "she must not be prevented from going to Orleans with the men-at-arms", that "to do otherwise would be resisting the Holy Spirit and making oneself unworthy of the help of God". This report covered the king and the Royal Council against any accusations of trickery and credulity if Joan failed to fulfil her promises.

Copies of this report were made and sent to every town in the kingdom. In this manner they prepared the mind of the public and built up the fame of St Joan before she had started. There is not much we could teach these fifteenth-century statesmen in the matter of publicity and propaganda, for they did their job well.

Things began to move rapidly. In the middle of April, Joan was at Tours, where her standard was made according to her indications, and she was fitted with a steel armour like a knight's, a plain suit, however, and for this reason called white. The king ordered that she should have her household: a steward, a chaplain, two pages and some two hundred lances.

By then, the army was ready and started marching towards Orleans but, unknown to Joan, the main body moved along the right bank of the Loire while she remained on the left. This makes it clear she was not in command, as some writers seem to imply. It is equally clear that at Orleans the captains did not at first inform her of their intentions, still less did they ask her for advice when they were planning an attack. How is it that within a few days these seasoned soldiers revised their opinion, consulted her and meekly bowed to her counsel? What was her position in the army? What was her share in the victories? How is it that within a month, not France alone but all Europe was ringing with the fame of her exploits?

The politicians of the Royal Council, Archbishop Regnault, La Tremoille and others who had helped to build up the popularity of the Maid, intended her to remain an obedient tool in their hands, a kind of mascot and nothing more.

They would give her fine horses, dresses of silk and tabards of gold cloth; such outward signs of importance were eminently suitable for the role she was to fill; but real authority, they would give none. Their calculations went wrong. This girl of seventeen possessed a personality one could hate and resist but which nobody could ignore. Before many days were over she had inspired soldiers and captains with a new spirit of offensive and a conviction of victory: she had become their leader.

Very rightly, she was henceforth looked upon as the saviour of Orleans and of her country.

How can this be explained? First of all by her unshakeable conviction that she was sent by God. Her faith was contagious: but for a few sceptical politicians round the throne, every one who came into contact with her, be it Baudricourt or the king or the Poitiers theologians or the common soldiers, shared her belief.

She began by turning the expedition into a religious crusade: the army started from Blois like a procession, with priests marching ahead carrying banners and chanting, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. [Come, O Creator Spirit Blest.] She put down swearing, made the men go to confession, and with her own hands turned away roughly the poor creatures who followed the army for immoral purposes. She was not at all gentle on these occasions, and once, using the flat of her sword, broke it on the back of one of them. She acted as one in authority and the stories of her prophecies soon went round the camp: her sword was one miraculously found at Fierbois, buried behind the altar; she had announced she would be wounded at Orleans; her prayers had caused a change in the wind that had prevented her from crossing the river; above all she had, in five days, raised a siege that had been going on for nearly seven months. That was the sign she had promised as a token that her mission was from God. On these and many occasions she showed she possessed a foreknowledge of future events.

And there was also her uncanny knowledge of all the crafts of war. One of the commanders, the Duke of Alencon, said of her: "She was most skilful bearing the lance, assembling an army, ordering military operations, directing artillery. She showed as much wisdom and foresight as a captain who had fought for twenty or thirty years." Marshal Foch, in our 20th century days, remarked that "her impulse had real strategy behind it. It did not engage but with good reason, it did not slacken but when the end was achieved." Could these seasoned old soldiers fail to be deeply impressed when they came face to face with a young girl who seemed to know more of their own craft than they did? How could the men fail to trust and follow her! She said to them "Go forward boldly", but she also went first and led where there was danger. Let us elaborate this as we give a brief account of the fighting at Orleans and of the campaign that followed.

She had entered the town on April 29th, but nothing much could be done until the relieving army had arrived. The first real fighting took place on May 4th for the possession of the fortress of St Loup. The captains in charge of the operations had not seen fit to inform her of their intentions. She was actually resting at the time when she woke up suddenly and arose, saying: "In the name of God, my Counsel has told me that I should attack the English". In haste, she put on her armour and mounted her horse. The page passed her the standard through the window and, says a witness, "her lance at rest, she began to ride so rapidly that the stones struck fire". She made straight for St Loup and as she was reaching the bastille, the French soldiers saw her approaching; the battle almost stopped for a moment while the men began to shout aloud and to cheer "and the fort of St Loup was taken".

Next day was Ascension Day and there was no fighting. On May 6th they were attacking the fortress of the Augustines. When Joan arrived in the company of La Hire they found the French retreating and the enemy in pursuit. These two had just crossed the river in a barge with their horses. Jumping into the saddle and lowering their lances, alone they drove full speed at the English and saved the day, for the French took heart, returned to the attack and captured the fortress. Joan went home slightly wounded in the foot, but at dawn next day (May 7th) she was again with the men, fighting for the possession of the fort of Les Tourelles which commanded the bridge of Orleans.

Early in the afternoon, Joan was seriously wounded, but after a while returned to the troops to keep up their courage. The evening came and Dunois, the commander-in-chief, fearing there was no hope of success, had already given orders to withdraw. The Maid went to him and asked him to wait a little while: then, alone in a neighbouring vineyard, she remained in prayer for a quarter of an hour. Then she came back, took her standard, and placed herself on the edge of the trench. "The English seeing the wounded Witch again where she had stood from early morning", as Andrew Lang puts it, were seized with fear and offered but little resistance when the final assault was carried out. For

the English this was final disaster, and the next morning Joan had the joy of seeing them marching away towards Paris, never to return to Orleans. To finish the campaign, there remained to be taken the towns which commanded bridges across the Loire - Jargeau, Meung, Beaugency. These were captured on June 12th, 14th and 16th and the brilliant victory of Patay cleared the country between Orleans and Paris.

After these victories the Royal Council thought the time was ripe for fresh negotiations with Burgundy, while the military party was in favour of prosecuting the war in Normandy. Alone the Maid of Orleans insisted that her Voices ordered her to lead the king to Rheims for his coronation. She spoke to Charles with all the authority she could command and won her point. This was the last time he listened to her. >From now on, the politicians became her enemies openly and the king ceased to pay attention to her warnings.

On their way to Rheims, as she had foreseen, the towns in Burgundian or English obedience surrendered one by one. Rheims itself opened its gates, and on July 17th the coronation took place.

Joan urged a rapid march to Paris. They could have reached it in seven days and probably entered it without much difficulty. English reinforcements were on the way but had not yet arrived and the town was poorly garrisoned. The king deliberately wasted time, both in Rheims and on the road, and it took six weeks of senseless wanderings for Joan and Alencon to arrive under the walls of the capital, and for the king two weeks longer. It was too late. No support was given and the attack failed miserably. Joan, wounded, had to be carried away by her soldiers. A few hours saw the beginning and the end of the "siege" of Paris. For the first time, the name of Joan of Arc was associated with failure, as her enemies at the Court had intended it should be, and from the moment she was no longer invincible, she ceased to count.

From then on, she followed in the wake of the Court, unwanted, unoccupied, although she pleaded that her time was short, that she would last one year and no more. In November they sent her out on two small, ill-equipped expeditions, one of which failed miserably.

She was needed again — soon. In the spring, Burgundy and England, having been given all the time they needed to reorganize their forces, began the battle for Compiegne. This town, the key to Paris from the north, barred the way to the Burgundian armies from Flanders. Joan knew its supreme importance and, on March 3rd, 1430, she left the royal court to join the French forces at Lagny. For two months, the campaign, one of movement, went on. Late in April she received warning from her Voices that she would be taken a prisoner before the feast of St John the Baptist. From that day on she left all decisions to the captains, accepting beforehand what-ever would befall her. She was captured under the walls of Compiegne on May 23rd. She was then just over eighteen years of age.

Captivity And Death

While she was in the hands of Jean de Luxembourg her captivity was not intolerable and she was treated with some consideration. She tried to escape from one of the prisons where she was held and leapt from a tower some 60 ft. high. That she was not killed but only stunned by her fall seemed so extraordinary that the judges accused her of having attempted to commit suicide. In November she was sold by Jean de Luxembourg to the English, reluctantly it appears, and transferred to Rouen, which she reached late in December.

She was imprisoned in the castle and put in an iron cage until the trial began, that is to the end of January. Afterwards she was chained by the waist, wrists and ankles to a heavy beam. To add to "her martyrdom" — as her Voices called it — she was watched day and night by three common soldiers who shared her room and tormented her with insulting words and rejoiced over her misery.

Instead of burning her or drowning her straightway, the Duke of Bedford, governor (as Regent of the boy-King of England) of the English possessions in France, chose the more subtle method of having her judged and convicted by the ecclesiastical court which was to be held at Rouen under his eyes, not in the law courts, but in the castle. In this way, not Joan alone, but those who had employed her, and approved of her, the French king and the French clergy, would be branded, like her, with infamy, "heresy and schism".

Bedford had his tools ready. Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, was to be the presiding judge. He was what, during the last world war, we should have called a collaborator. He was a Frenchman in the pay of England; so was his nephew; so were some of the canons of the chapter of Rouen who sat on the tribunal. Cauchon drew a yearly salary of 1,000

livres tournois as a member of the (English) Royal Council, not to speak of wages for other services as occasion offered. The (English) Regent kept him pliable and dutiful by dangling before his eyes the possibility of a higher reward still. The See of Rouen was vacant: surely a fitting reward for a faithful servant of England.

Cauchon was cunning and unscrupulous. He was also an able man; he and Bedford understood each other. He selected the judges, he planned the proceedings. It must be "un beau proces", for all Europe was listening. This is the course they decided to follow. Joan of Arc claimed that her visions were from God; to the judges this was unthinkable; if they were, it meant that God was against England, it meant also that theirs was a tribunal of traitors. Therefore, either Joan lied or, if she had had the visions, they came from the devil. In order to prove this, the obvious line was to discredit her, to show her up as a vain, superstitious, unreligious, dissolute woman; let them prove also that she was guilty of theft, of perjury, of murder, of attempted suicide, and it would become clear that she could not be God's instrument but the devil's. All these accusations were formulated so as to create a bias in the mind of the judges: they were never substantiated, but the impression was made and went deep. A political enemy is always wrong and his defence worthless; at least Cauchon could claim that they had heard what Joan had to say.

The next step was logical and deadly. Having made up their minds that the visions and revelations of Joan were from evil spirits, the judges insisted that Joan should agree with them and declare she had been deceived by her Voices. They said the Tribunal was the Church and that every Christian must accept the decisions of the Church: he is otherwise a heretic. To Joan, the visions were so real that she could not doubt them; she was too sincere to deny them; she was so unused to legal subtleties that she could not say "It seems to me" when she meant "I am certain". And therefore, her own unyielding answers allowed the Tribunal to send her to the stake as a schismatic and a heretic.

She did not yield easily; the judges themselves complained of her skill in defending herself during this long trial which lasted from February to May, with six public sessions and nine private ones in her prison. She knew she was not facing a tribunal of impartial judges, but one of enemies. Once she said to Cauchon: "You say you are the Church. What is the Church? If you say it is yourself, I will not submit to your judgement, because you are my deadly enemy." Repeatedly she expressed her submission to the Holy See, asked to be taken to the Holy Father the Pope and to be judged by him. Her appeals were rejected under the pretext that Rome was too far away. This alone would have made the judgement illegal. There were many other irregularities as well. The judges were her political enemies. They were under English influence and at times even under coercion; the trial was taking place in the castle instead of the Law Courts which were available. The French king was not represented. The accusation produced no names, no documents, no evidence, no proofs, no witnesses. The prisoner was given no counsel; no one advised her as to the meaning and import of the subtle and crafty questions she was asked, nor did she always understand them.

The trial became a mere battle of wits between a young girl deprived of all the means of defence to which she was entitled and a tribunal whose only business was to find her guilty. Even the summing-up of the accusation condensed into twelve articles was often in contradiction with the answers of Joan as recorded in the minutes and it is on this unfair presentation of the case that the University of Paris, on being consulted, condemned Joan without having seen her.

Her condemnation was in any case a foregone conclusion. In the churchyard of St Ouen Joan had signed a brief recantation which possibly was no more than a promise "not to bear arms and not to wear male attire". This did not save her for long. Three days later the woman's dress was taken from her and she had no option but to put on again the forbidden hose and doublet: this, in the eyes of the judges, who came to the prison to verify her guilt, was sufficient to revive the death sentence. While they were thus occupied, Warwick was waiting in the courtyard below. He and Cardinal Beaufort had the prisoner in their charge and he had been heard to declare that he did not intend her to die a natural death. He was there to make sure that Cauchon would not forget what was expected from him. It was not the first time he had intimidated members of the Tribunal, Brother Isambart for instance. With Cauchon, no threats were needed: he was their man. Coming out of the tower and catching sight of the earl he called out across the courtyard, in English: "Fare well, fare well, she's caught, we have her this time", and he was laughing. Even if we did not know of his partial conduct of the trial, this despicable joy over his victim's fate would justify the contempt in which posterity has held his name.

He was busy during the next two days: he must draw up in writing a judgement that would satisfy his masters and

give orders for the necessary preparations in the old market-place: two platforms for the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, another for the preacher and Joan, and a scaffold so designed that the victim could be seen in her agony by everyone in the marketplace.

St Joan, unaware of these preparations, was waiting in her jail, still hoping, perhaps, to be transferred to a church prison. On Wednesday, May 30th, early in the morning, three Dominicans came to her: they were bringers of bad news and one of them, Martin Ladvenu, had been chosen as the Tribunal's messenger. He was one of the youngest members of the Tribunal, being then just over thirty years of age. Awed by the important people who had sat to consider the case, he was still perplexed and uncertain as to the guilt of Joan, and gave a timid and qualified assent to the condemnation. But although he was probably not capable of rising above the partisan spirit, and of being fair to those who did not belong to the same political side as himself, he was not lacking in compassion and kindness and he did all he could to comfort Joan during the last hours of her life. When he broke the terrible news to the poor girl, that this morning she must die and die by fire, she lost her composure: "Alas," she said, "am I to be so horribly and cruelly treated that my body which has never been corrupted should to-day be consumed and burned to ashes?" The bishop, unfeeling and callous, had the audacity to come in at this juncture, to try and justify his sentence. "Bishop," she said, "I die through you, for this I summon you before God." She knew well enough he was not a judge but an enemy.

By a contradiction which shows how little the Tribunal were convinced of the justice of their own sentence, they granted her — a declared schismatic and heretic — the privilege of Holy Communion, which all these long months had been denied her. She made her last confession to Ladvenu: the Blessed Sacrament was taken openly to her cell and she received her Saviour, with what feelings we may guess: He was the one friend who was not deserting her when she was abandoned by all others, who did not turn against her when, as it seemed, the Church had condemned her, the one friend who would stand by her to the last and welcome her at the end of the terrible day. "God willing," she said later to Pierre Maurice at the foot of the scaffold, "this evening I shall be with God in Paradise."

The cart that was to take her to the market-place was waiting for her in the courtyard. Dressed in a woman's cotte, close-fitting bodice and long skirt, on her head a linen coif, its front fold let down to hide her face from prying eyes, she was led to the tumbrel, pushed into it and the procession started. An escort of some eighty soldiers surrounded her, Martin Ladvenu walked by her side, and Joan was weeping. All Rouen had come to see her die; they lined the streets, appeared at every window, packed the market-place, that is, what space the English soldiers had left for them.

Standing on a platform facing that of Cauchon, Beaufort and the Tribunal, she had to listen to a long exhortation by Nicolas Midi, one of her judges. Since Midi is that same man who was selected six months later to offer an address of welcome to the English King on the occasion of his visit to Paris, you are at liberty to think it contained more insulting remarks than expressions of compassion. St Joan, they say, listened patiently and quietly throughout.

The sermon ended, Bishop Cauchon had the impudence once more to approach Joan to exhort her to repentance. Once more, she faced him with the same reproach: "Alas, I die through you, Bishop". Returning to his seat, the bishop began to read out the sentence. Here are some samples of the expressions this traitor used in delivering his judgement on a saint:

"Having regard to the malice of her diabolical obstinacy" . . . She is guilty of "unheard-of crimes, damnable malice, perjury and blasphemy". She is described as "a homicidal viper, a member of Satan . . . they must watch that the horrible contagion of her pernicious leprosy does not contaminate the Church." She is "a rotten member that must be cast out from the unity of the Church". Cauchon meant to earn the gratitude of his masters as well as his fee.

After the reading of the sentence of excommunication came a long pause, for a condemned person was not denied time to address the people if wishing to do so. For half an hour or more Joan spoke, protesting her faith and trust in God, asking for the prayers of the people as well as for the intercession of the saints, and her words, "pitiful, devout and Catholic", were so moving that those who could hear her, even the Cardinal of England (Beaufort) and many Englishmen, were seen to weep.

The soldiers grew impatient. Two sergeants came and forced her down from the platform where she stood and led her to the Bailiff who represented the English authorities. So far she had been excommunicated but not sentenced to death: yet no judgement was read in the name of the king, no sentence was pronounced, and the Bailiff, merely waving his hand, to signify these legal formalities were not worth troubling about, said: "Menez. Menez" — that is:

"Take her away. Take her away" — and she was straightway taken to the stake and handed to the executioner. She asked for a cross and a soldier hastily made one with two pieces of wood tied together — she kissed it and put it in her bosom. Then her arms were pinioned behind her back and she was chained to the stake. At her request, Isambart, who, as well as Ladvenu, was attending her, sent for the cross of a near-by church and held it before her right to the end of her long agony. "To the end of her life", affirms Martin Ladvenu, "she maintained and asserted that her Voices came from God and that what she had done had been done by God's command. She did not believe that her Voices had deceived her, and in giving up the ghost, bending her head she uttered the name of Jesus in a voice that could be heard all over the market-place by all present, as a sign that she was fervent in the faith of God." Her heart was unconsumed. By order of Cardinal Beaufort, the ashes and all that remained of St Joan were put into a sack and thrown into the Seine "that the world might have no relic of her of whom the world was not worthy". [Andrew Lang: The Maid of France.]

On the scaffold at St Ouen St Joan had appealed to the Holy See. In 1456, twenty-five years after her death, another appeal was made, this time in the name of her mother and of her brothers who were still alive. The verdict of 1431 was reversed by Pope Calixtus III on the grounds of the obvious hostility and unfairness of the judges, of additions, suppressions and omissions in the summing-up, of the incompetence of the court, culminating in an illegal sentence and an irregular execution.

A mere reversal of the iniquitous sentence could not satisfy posterity, nor did it do full justice to the memory of St Joan, for she was more than the innocent victim of political and national quarrels, more than a great patriot: she was a saint, as many of her contemporaries had indeed believed and proclaimed her to be. On May 13th, 1920, in the great basilica of St Peter in Rome, Pope Benedict XV solemnly declared her to be one of God's great servants and declared that she was to be honoured as Saint Joan, Virgin.