

THE POWER OF INSPIRATION: HOW JOAN OF ARC TURNED THE TIDE OF THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

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The Hundred Years' War, fought between 1337 and 1453, was a power struggle between the competing English and French monarchies vying for control of what is now modern-day France. Though casualties throughout the conflict were high for both sides, the war was especially destructive for the French, as it was fought almost entirely on French soil. More significant than the mere physical destruction, however, was the political discord sown during the course of the conflict. During the Hundred Years' War, a struggle began inside of the French court, pitting two factions, the loyalist Armagnacs and the pro-English Burgundians, against each other in addition to the English threat. The story of the Hundred Years' War after 1415 is one of Armagnac defeat at the hands of the English and their Burgundian allies. Indeed, by October 1428, the English had begun the siege of Orléans, the last bastion of Armagnac power north of the Loire River. With the capture of this strategic city, the English and Burgundian forces would have cemented Henry VI's claim to the French throne while discrediting the claim of the Armagnac Dauphin, the future Charles VII.

However, the English never captured Orléans. From a small, obscure village on the political and geographic periphery of France came Joan of Arc, a girl who claimed to have a mission from God to save France from the English. This illiterate and militarily inexperienced teenage peasant-girl gained the sponsorship of the dauphin and became a leader of the army of France, leading it from one victory to another, beginning with the relief of Orléans in 1429. By the time of her capture and untimely death in 1431, France had retaken the initiative in the Hundred Years' War, and would go on to defeat the English in 1453. The victory, however, began with Joan. In a mere three years, Joan of Arc had reversed the tide of the Hundred Years' War. How was this possible?

To undertake any analysis with the purpose of answering that question, one must begin with a description of exactly how bad the situation was for the French at the time of Joan's arrival on the scene.

The Hundred Years' War began as a territorial dispute between the monarchies of France and England. The English monarchy actually had sizeable land holdings in modern-day France in the thirteenth century, including Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Touraine, Poitou, and Aquitaine.¹ By 1259, however, the balance of power on the continent had shifted such that the Treaty of Paris had re-established the English monarch as a vassal of the French king and left only Aquitaine in English hands.² When the French King Philip VI legally seized this last English province in 1337, English King Edward III went to war against his nominal suzerain.³

Edward was prepared for war with his French "overlord." On January 26, 1340, Edward III made the famous Ghent declaration, in which he declared himself king of France and England.⁴ English forces destroyed the French fleet at Sluys in 1340 and advanced into Brittany by 1342.⁵ In 1346-7, the English sacked Caen and captured Calais, inflicting a humiliating defeat on Philip's numerically-superior army at Crécy on August 26.⁶ This battle was followed by the descent of the Black Death upon Europe, which ravaged the armies and populations of England and France alike.⁷ King John II was defeated by a smaller English force at Poitiers in 1356; in fact, the French monarch was captured in the battle, forcing his country to relinquish Aquitaine and Ponthieu as well as the town of Calais and pay a ransom of three million golden crowns for its king.⁸ Thus, after almost twenty years of war, the French had lost nearly every major battle and their king was a prisoner in London.

Despite some military successes in the latter half of the fourteenth century, the French leadership had descended into civil war by 1407 with the assassination of the Armagnac Louis of Orléans by the Burgundian John the Fearless.⁹ John followed this victory with a successful campaign against his political enemies, seizing Velleux, Rougemont, Ham, Bourges, and Arras, as well as the provinces of Picardy, Champagne, and Berry.¹⁰ Perhaps even

¹ Deborah A. Fraioli, *Joan of Arc and the Hundred Years' War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005), 1-2.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵ Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1999), 10-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ Fraioli, 56.

¹⁰ DeVries, 18.

more ominously, John had also made a truce with the English in 1407, which, as historian Kelly DeVries asserts, “set the stage for the later English-Burgundian alliance which was to play such an important part in the next phase of the Hundred Years’ War.”¹¹

The English took advantage of the raging civil war in France by launching another invasion of the continent. After a month-long siege, the town of Harfleur fell to the English under King Henry V in September 1415.¹² On October 25, 1415, in what has become “one of the greatest and most immortalized victories of the entire Middle Ages,” the English, though outnumbered almost four to one, destroyed an entire French army at Agincourt.¹³ According to DeVries, this loss was staggering: “Agincourt had taken its toll not only on the French army’s leadership and numbers, but, perhaps more importantly, on its military confidence as well.”¹⁴ The French losses did not end at Agincourt, however. Henry V led the English to victory after victory, securing Normandy and capturing the important city of Rouen on January 19, 1419.¹⁵

The Burgundians were not idle observers to the English and French conflict. John the Fearless expanded his control of northeastern France, capturing Chartres and Montl’héry in October 1417.¹⁶ On May 29, 1418, the Burgundians entered Paris, capturing the French King Charles VI and Queen Isabeau of Bavaria; however, they failed to capture the only surviving male heir to the throne, the future Charles VII, who had already fled south.¹⁷ Seeking to make peace with the Armagnac leader and perhaps unite forces against the growing power of the English, John met with Charles VII on a bridge at Montereau on September 10, 1419.¹⁸ Whatever the initial purpose of the meeting, its only real effect was to throw the Burgundians headlong into the English camp, as John the Fearless was murdered on that bridge.¹⁹ His son, Philip the Good, would prove an able ally of the English.

The political repercussions of the English military might and the assassination of the Duke of Burgundy were embodied in the Treaty of

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸ Fraioli, 57.

¹⁹ Ibid. and DeVries, 26. Whereas both sources relate the death of John, Fraioli and DeVries differ slightly in their interpretation of the event. Fraioli implicates the dauphin openly in John’s assassination, writing, “Despite the professions of goodwill and intricate precautions for safety, on the day of the meeting, the dauphin’s men hacked the duke of Burgundy to death.” DeVries, however, does not necessarily attribute the Duke’s untimely death to a plot by Charles: “In meeting with Charles on the bridge at Montereau under a writ of ‘safe passage’, [John] was set upon and murdered by Armagnac adherents.”

Troyes. Signed between Henry V, Philip the Good, and the ailing Charles VI on May 21, 1420, the treaty disinherited Dauphin Charles VII and replaced him with Henry V (or his firstborn son in case of death) as heir to the throne of France.²⁰ As Fraioli describes, “To those who believed in the dignity and rights of the French crown, the last forty years, culminating in the Treaty of Troyes, had brought France to the point of heartbreaking desolation.”²¹ Obviously, the Armagnacs did not accept the treaty as legitimate, and still accepted the dauphin as the rightful heir to the French throne.

Both the English and Burgundians continued to push into Armagnac land in the years following the Treaty of Troyes. Indeed, the relative ease with which they did so is indicative of the military and psychological weakness of the Armagnac forces. In the two years immediately following the treaty, English and Burgundian forces had captured Ballon, Beaumont-le-Vicomte, Montfort-le-Retrou, Fresnay, Harcourt, Dreux, St. Valery-sur-Somme, Gamaches, Crepy, Compiègne, Pontoise, Melun, Epernon, Gallardon, Bonneval, Montereau, Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, La Charite, and Meaux, as well as several important cities, such as Auxerre, Sens, Laon, Soissons, and Reims; most of these locations were captured without even token opposition from Armagnac garrisons.²² The English army defeated its French and Scottish counterparts at Cravant in July 1423 and at Verneuil, a “second Agincourt,” in August 1424, both of which were English victories despite the French army’s numerical superiority.²³

By 1428, the English had devised a plan to bring the war to a successful conclusion. If the English army under the command of Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, could capture the city of Orléans, the English would control the entire Loire River and would thus be in a position to strike at the dauphin in his headquarters at Chinon.²⁴ With this intent in mind, Montagu set about consolidating English control of the regions around Orléans, and began the siege of that city on October 12, 1428.²⁵

Thus, the French situation by the time of Joan’s arrival on the scene was desperate, to say the least. As DeVries describes:

When Joan of Arc involved herself in the Hundred Years’ War, she entered a hornets’ nest of military and political problems. If anything could have discouraged her, the state of France in 1429 should have. Wracked by a war that had lasted nearly a

²⁰ DeVries, 26.

²¹ Fraioli, 57.

²² DeVries, 27.

²³ Ibid., 28.

²⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁵ Ibid.

century by this point, half of it occupied by a foreign military, its society frightened by marauding armies and confused by the political dispute waged between two parties whose arguments had little grassroots permeation, its economy broken by the constant marching of armies across its agricultural fields, their soldiers largely living off the land, and its industries blocked from the markets and trade routes which had once made them prosperous, with no crowned king, and few others who could or would rise to take over leadership of the government or the armies, the kingdom of France was not even a shadow of its thirteenth-century prototype.²⁶

Perhaps even more daunting than the challenges facing France were the disadvantages Joan herself had to overcome in order to be in a position to facilitate change. The daughter of a poor farmer, Joan was born in about 1412 in the village of Domremy.²⁷ She was illiterate, as were most peasants at the time.²⁸ Her entire career, with all of its astounding successes, took place while she was still a teenager; indeed, when she was burned at the stake in 1431, she was only about nineteen. The young woman who would take command of the army of France grew up having absolutely no military experience whatsoever.²⁹ Joan's career is especially remarkable in that she commanded an army of men and earned their loyalty, respect, and admiration in an age in which women were excluded from the military and commoners excluded from command. Perhaps most surprising of all, she possessed neither noble blood nor powerful familial connections. It seems that someone facing as many obstacles as Joan would be an unlikely candidate to turn the tide of the Hundred Years' War, yet she was able to do just that in spite of her military inexperience, her illiteracy, her femininity, and her peasant upbringing.

Joan had a lasting impact on the Hundred Years' War. Her actions at the siege of Orléans inspired the demoralized French army to relieve that city and win its first major victory in nearly a decade. The army's newfound confidence was further enlarged by another victory at Patay, in which the French, again spurred into action by Joan, defeated their English counterparts on the field. These victories enabled Joan to lead the army to Rheims, where the dauphin was crowned Charles VII, giving France an

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Malcolm G.A. Vale, *Charles VII* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 45-46.

²⁸ Frances Gies, *Joan of Arc: The Legend and the Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 21.

²⁹ Ibid, 22. Gies writes, "Joan's early life has resembled that of other girls in all the villages of France. . . . Except that she may have been a little more pious than most, there was little to distinguish her from all the others."

anointed monarch once again. Though she would not live to see her France entirely cleansed of English forces, Joan's leadership and her ability to inspire turned the tide of the war in favor of the French. Orléans and Patay had reawakened the French Army's belief in its own ability to win, and the dauphin's coronation gave the French people a leader to follow. Though the English would fight on for another twenty-two years after her death, it was Joan's actions that set the stage for their eventual defeat. As the mastermind behind the English victories to that point, the Duke of Bedford wrote to King Henry VI, "Everything prospered [in France] for you until the siege of Orléans. . . . At which time . . . it seemed that there fell by the hand of God a great stroke upon your people assembled there, caused in great part, as I think, by lack of proper belief and by a disciple and follower of the fiend called the Pucelle."³⁰ Joan of Arc had reversed the tide of the Hundred Years' War through her ability to inspire and her generalship.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Joan's story is perhaps one of the most frequently discussed topics among medieval historians.³¹ Indeed, the incredible nature of the topic has sparked a massive amount of research and numerous opinions concerning the motivations, means, and consequences of Joan's extraordinary achievements. While many of these works address *what* Joan was able to accomplish, none provide a satisfactory answer addressing *how* Joan accomplished all that she did. Beginning in the last century, however, several historians have attempted to answer this question. The evolution of that answer is discussed below.

In her narrative work *Joan of Arc: The Legend and the Reality*, Frances Gies tests the validity of some of the commonly-accepted facts about Joan of Arc. She focuses her writing on the story of Joan, from her rise to prominence in France to her death. Throughout the book, Gies retains a relatively unbiased tone, citing evidence both in favor of and against the usual heroic narrative of *La Pucelle*, the virgin saint.

After providing her own reasonable narrative, Gies critiques other less-neutral scholars who have written on the topic. These writers include a vast number of French, English, and American historians, as well as notables such as Shakespeare and Freud.³² Gies argues that these sources, consisting of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English and Burgundian chroniclers outraged at Joan's success, French *philosophes* downplaying her religious

³⁰ John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford, "The Duke of Bedford's memorandum" (14/15 June 1434) in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, Craig Taylor, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 239.

³¹ Vale, 46.

³² Gies, 245, 257.

conviction, and American writers enhancing the romance of her story, all spin their narrative in support of a certain agenda, using the story of Joan to advance their respective causes. As Gies herself writes, “Every biographer and historian who has written about Joan has in one way or another expressed dissatisfaction with her real story.”³³ Gies is not exempt from this rule; she argues that the commonly-accepted status of the Treaty of Arras in 1435 as the turning point of the Hundred Years’ War is due to the bigotry of male historians. She contends that the relief of Orléans, Joan’s campaigns in the Loire Valley, and the Battle of Patay were, collectively, the turning point, citing the beneficial effect of victory on French morale, as well as the corresponding decline in English morale following the French successes.³⁴ Her work provides an accurate, well-balanced, properly documented narrative of *La Pucelle*, and it built the foundation for future analysis of Joan’s accomplishments without conducting such an analysis itself. Gies’ work successfully informs the reader as to what Joan did, but, being more of a narrative work than one of analysis, does not venture to determine how Joan accomplished what she did.

The first significant answer to this question can be found in *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* by Kelly DeVries. In this book, DeVries explains Joan’s exploits from a military standpoint. He points out that, although numerous studies have analyzed Joan from religious, feminist, nationalist, and socialist views, few have devoted intense study to her primary reason for fame: her military accomplishments.³⁵ Indeed, he devotes his entire book to this aspect of Joan of Arc.

According to DeVries, “Joan of Arc was a soldier, plain and simple.”³⁶ This part of Joan’s life, DeVries asserts, is the most important aspect of study, as without her military ability, Joan would never have been as successful as she was. He supports this claim with an impressive historiography and detailed descriptions of her Loire River campaign, culminating in the crowning of the dauphin at Reims in July 1429.³⁷ Yet DeVries’ study, in focusing explicitly on Joan’s military leadership, discounts other important reasons for her success. The spiritual and religious factors that led to her prominence in the French army certainly contributed to the military victories DeVries so arduously promotes. While he excellently describes the soldierly qualities of Joan and how crucial they were to her success, DeVries’ answer is too narrow as it does not consider

³³ Ibid., 258.

³⁴ Ibid., 100.

³⁵ DeVries, 2.

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

³⁷ Ibid., 134.

the role of Joan's religious conviction and her ability to inspire as other factors in her success.

Indeed, DeVries' analysis of Joan's accomplishments tends to downplay inspiration. Though DeVries correctly asserts the military nature of Joan's accomplishments, as well as her ability to influence events both on the battlefield and in the conduct of the war itself, he does not give due credit to her role as an inspiration to the soldiers of the demoralized French Army.

Stephen Richey, in his book *Joan of Arc: The Warrior Saint*, analyzes Joan's leadership abilities. He asserts that Joan's success was due to her intuitive knowledge of military tactics, to the qualities of intellect and character that she possessed, enabling her to lead soldiers, and a series of lucky circumstances.³⁸ Richey organizes his work into two parts: first, he provides an exposition of the literature on Joan of Arc and describes what feats she actually accomplished; second, he delves into the intellectual and spiritual qualities Joan exhibited, as well as the fortuitous circumstances surrounding her rise to power in the French army, all of which, he argues, is why Joan was able to accomplish what she did.

Richey begins his work with an exposition of the arguments already presented about Joan, presenting her historiography in detail.³⁹ His analysis is both thorough and diverse, detailing research done on Joan of Arc from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. He describes the situation in France at the time of Joan's arrival on the scene, including the aftermath of the Battle of Agincourt and the alliance between England and Burgundy, as well as the capitulation of Charles VI to Henry V.⁴⁰ This background information, while providing no new or insightful material, gives the reader the foundation required to understand Joan in her historical context.

Had he stopped there, his work would not have produced anything different from DeVries. Indeed, Richey uses much of DeVries' research in his own exposition of Joan's accomplishments. Yet he expands upon DeVries' argument, accepting that Joan's soldierly aptitude contributed to her success but disagreeing with DeVries that her military prowess was the sole reason for her achievements. Richey argues that Joan's success stemmed not only from her ability as a soldier, but also from her use of religious "symbols" as an inspirational tool. Among the symbols he includes in his writing are Joan's use of prophetic statements, her sword, and her battle standard.⁴¹ Overall, Richey's argument is useful in its articulate

³⁸ Stephen W. Richey, *Joan of Arc: The Warrior Saint* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 6.

³⁹ Ibid., 7-12.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16-23.

⁴¹ Ibid., 102-109. Joan's sword was supposedly the sword of St. Catherine-de-Fierbois, and her standard included not only the fleur-de-lys (a symbol representing the Virgin Mary), but also the names "Jhesus-Maria."

descriptions of Joan's charisma and military effectiveness, and he rightly expands upon DeVries' incomplete argument, yet still, he does not fully address Joan's role as an inspirer.

Richey asserts Joan's use of symbols inspired those who followed her. Yet it was Joan who inspired, rather than the sword she used or the banner she carried. While these things enhanced her inspirational ability, the source of inspiration was Joan herself, including, but not limited to, the prophetic abilities Richey identifies. Richey's argument, then, while it does expand upon DeVries by citing the power of Joan's religious symbols, is also inadequate as he does not go far enough. Joan was successful in turning the tide of the Hundred Years' War not only because of her competence as a soldier, and not only because of her use of religious symbols, but because she inspired the French to military success between 1429 and 1430 via her inspirational abilities on both a personal level and as a general.

Joan was not only a soldier, nor was she merely a soldier who manipulated religious symbols. Joan's true strength lay in her ability to inspire. Yet she was also not a mere "mascot," for her inspiration derived from the example she set for those around her as a leader.⁴² She set this example not only through her spiritual qualities, but also through her qualities as a soldier and general. These qualities and their inspirational effects on her followers are evidenced throughout her short-lived career, beginning at Vaucouleurs and continuing even beyond her untimely death at Rouen. Yet no instance better exemplifies her spiritual and military qualities as the relief of Orléans. The rest of this project will be devoted to delving into Joan's inspirational qualities and their effects, concluding with an analysis of those qualities in action at the turning point of the war, the relief of Orléans.

Despite the extensive research reviewed above which explores how Joan accomplished all she did, no historian has yet adequately answered how Joan was so successful when presented with the opportunity to alter the course of the Hundred Years' War. The situations surrounding this success were influenced by the way Joan was perceived by her contemporaries – as a saint, gifted with the voice of prophecy.

⁴² DeVries, 7. He concurs with my assertion here; I am indebted to him for providing the term "mascot" to describe what some historians erroneously label Joan's main role in the Hundred Years' War. Though I am unsure as to the origins of the term, I also extend my thanks also to Professor Clifford Rogers for identifying a reference to Joan as "mascot" in Frances Winwar, *The Saint and the Devil* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Harper, 1948), 149.

JOAN'S SPIRITUAL QUALITIES

Joan often spoke with authority on the outcome of certain future events that came to pass in the manner that she predicted. This seeming ability to prophecy was a source of inspiration that led many witnesses of her life to believe in her cause. Catherine Royer, Joan's hostess during her stay at Vaucouleurs, was one of the first to experience this prophetic gift. Faced with the skepticism of Robert de Brandicourt, the commander of the camp, Joan insisted that he aid her in her quest to meet with the dauphin at Chinon, quoting a prophecy which indicated that a virgin from Lorraine would restore France.⁴³ The inspirational effect of Joan's referencing this prophecy was swift, as Royer recalls, "I remembered having heard that, and I was flabbergasted. . . . And after that I believed what she said and so did many others, so much so that Jacques Alain and Durand Laxart agreed to escort her."⁴⁴ Royer's reaction gives the reader a glimpse of the power of the spiritual realm in the mind of the medieval Christian. Catherine believed in the prophecy, and thus Joan's assertion that she was the one to fulfill that prophecy gave her credibility even before she could produce any kind of proof of her divine mission. Thus, even at the early stages of her public life, Joan exhibited the ability to inspire followers through her prophetic spirit.

Upon her arrival at Chinon, Joan continued to display a gift for prophecy. According to the account of Husson Lemaitre, an observer at the dauphin's court, Joan recognized the future monarch, who had concealed himself among his court, despite having never seen the man before.⁴⁵ Joan's ability to see past the deception demonstrated an apparent supernatural power, giving credence to her insistence that she was sent by God. Indeed, even the dauphin himself believed in her divine mission, as her confessor, Jean Pasquerel, reports:

⁴³ Regine Pernoud, *The Retrial of Joan of Arc: The Evidence at the Trial for her Rehabilitation 1450- 1456*, J. M. Cohen, trans. (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1955), 75.

⁴⁴ Pernoud, 76. *The Retrial* is one of the few primary sources that recount the life of Joan. Twenty years after her death at the hands of the English, Joan was rehabilitated by the Church in a separate trial. Pernoud's work is an exposition of that rehabilitation trial. It is filled with the testimonies of witnesses from every segment of Joan's life, including her childhood, her journey to Chinon, her examination at Poitiers, the relief of Orléans, the Loire River campaigns, her defeat at Paris, her capture at Compiègne, her imprisonment at Rouen, her trial, and her execution, as well as interviews with several of the judges in her trial. Thus it is a very valuable primary source. When reading the accounts of the witnesses, however, the reader must keep in mind that the information may not be entirely accurate. Firstly, the rehabilitation trial took place twenty years after Joan's death, and memories are not as clear with the passage of time.

Secondly, since many of the witnesses to her life were close friends of Joan, their testimonies undoubtedly contain a bias in her favor. Finally, the reader must also consider that events came about as Joan had predicted: the English were kicked out of France. Thus, some witnesses may have been influenced by the desire to be seen as a stronger supporter of Joan than they were in reality. For all its shortcomings, however, *The Retrial* remains one of the most important windows into the life of this extraordinary woman, and any serious analysis of Joan's life must include it.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

Joan repeated: “I tell you on behalf of the Lord that you are the true heir of France and the King’s son. He has sent me to you to lead you to Rheims, there to receive your coronation and your anointing, if you will”. After he heard this, the King said to those who were present that Joan had told him a certain secret that nobody knew or could know but God. That is why he had great confidence in her.⁴⁶

This was perhaps the most important outcome of Joan’s travel to Chinon. The support of the dauphin was necessary for Joan to fulfill her mission of saving France. She would have been unable to accomplish anything of significance without first gaining the dauphin’s confidence. It was through her remarkable performance at Chinon and her mysterious knowledge of the dauphin’s private secrets that she did just that.

Joan continued to play a key role as an inspiration for the dauphin. Seeking some reassurance as to the validity of the supposedly divine origin of Joan’s mission, the dauphin ordered an investigation of Joan by the theologians at Poitiers in March 1429.⁴⁷ When pressed to perform some sign to provide her divine aid, Joan became indignant, as Seguin Seguin, one of her examiners, recalls:

She answered: “In God’s name, I have not come to Poitiers to make signs. But lead me to Orléans, and I will show you the signs I was sent to make.” . . . And then she prophesied to me and those others present four things which were then still to come, and which fell out as she foretold. I have seen all this come true.⁴⁸

The four signs Joan promised at Poitiers would each seem miraculous in its own right when viewed through the lens of the dispirited and demoralized French in 1429. According to the Duke of Alençon, one of Joan’s lieutenants, her four missions were: to expel the English; to have the King formally anointed and crowned at Rheims; to free the Duke of Orléans from the English; and to relieve the siege of Orléans.⁴⁹ It was by these signs, Joan asserted, that the Poitiers council could judge her worth as one having been

⁴⁶ Ibid., 140-41.

⁴⁷ Taylor, “The conclusions of the Poitiers investigation (March – April 1429),” 72. This source, though most likely not the official records of the theologians, nonetheless describes the causes and effects of the investigation.

⁴⁸ Pernoud, 87.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 123.

sent by God. Having already considered the desperate situation of France in 1429, the accomplishment of even one of these tasks would be viewed as something miraculous to the French people. And, although Joan neither expelled the English nor freed the Duke of Orléans, she did relieve the siege of Orléans in April 1429 and enabled the king's coronation at Rheims in July of that same year.

Indeed, as the army, accompanied by the dauphin, approached the gates of Rheims, the King hesitated. As Simon Charles, an important member of the dauphin's court, testifies,:

Joan said to [the King]: "Have no fear. The people of Rheims will come out to meet you." And before they reached the city of Rheims the citizens surrendered. The King was afraid that they might resist. . . . But Joan bade the King ride boldly forward, for if he would but advance courageously he would recover his whole kingdom.⁵⁰

This testimony demonstrates Joan's profound impact on the outcome of the war. Her ability to steady and reassure the wavering dauphin through her confidently prophetic statement led to his coronation, cementing Charles VII's claim to the French throne in the eyes of his subjects.

Joan's seeming knack for prophecy extended to the battlefield as well. On June 17, 1429, the eve of the Battle of Patay, the leaders of the French army received word of the approach of an English army under the command of Sir John Fastolf. Much of the French leadership sought to flee, fearing the threat of an English attack, but Joan advocated the opposite course of action. As Alençon recalls, "She maintained that she was certain of victory, and said in French: 'The gentle King shall have the greatest victory today that he has had for a long time. My Counsel tells me that they are all ours.' And I very well know that the English were routed and killed without great difficulty."⁵¹ Described by Burne as a "disaster" for the English, Patay was Joan's first victory against an English army in the open field.⁵² With Talbot's portion of the army annihilated and the rest under Fastolf in retreat, the English would be able to do little to impede the French from consolidating their control over the Loire Valley. The battle was undoubtedly won, of course, by the force of French arms, but those arms

⁵⁰ Ibid., 85. He was the President of the Chamber of Accounts, and, according to Pernoud, is one of the finest sources on relations between the King and Joan.

⁵¹ Ibid., 123.

⁵² Alfred H. Burne, *The Agincourt War: A Military History of the Latter Part of the Hundred Years' War from 1369 to 1453* (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Essential Books, Inc., 1956), 260.

would not have been put into action without the inspiration of the Maid and her Voices.

Yet perhaps the most powerful example of Joan's prophetic ability comes to us from the testimony of the Duke of Alençon. He explains:

During the attack on the town of Jargeau, Joan told me at one moment to retire from the place where I was standing, for if I did not "that engine" – and she pointed to a piece of artillery in the town – 'will kill you.' I fell back, and a little later on that very spot where I had been standing someone by the name of my Lord du Lude was killed. . . . I wondered greatly at Joan's sayings after all these events.⁵³

Examples such as this enhanced the belief in the army and among the other followers of Joan that she had the gift of prophecy, as well as a connection to the divine so strong that it indicated sainthood.

That Joan's contemporaries considered her a saint is more significant that it seems when viewed from the distance of several centuries since her life and over a century since her formal beatification by the Catholic Church. First, medieval society did not usually confer such an honor on women, as André Vauchez writes in *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*: "Women laboured under a dual handicap which, in general, denied them access to sainthood: their physical and moral weakness, which, in the minds of their male contemporaries, was not in doubt; and their status within the Church, which condemned them to a passive role."⁵⁴ Thus, most women, even those who exemplified the Christian life, faced resistance to achieving sainthood based solely on their sex. Yet, as the following examples will show, Joan did not exhibit physical or moral weakness; rather, her physical and moral courage served as an inspiration for the professional (and male) soldiers around her. Additionally, no historian can accurately describe her role in history as anything approaching "passive."

Secondly the term "saint" is fairly commonplace in medieval writing. According to Aviad M. Kleinberg in *Prophets in their Own Country*, "The medieval perception of sainthood was fluid; it was personal, concrete, and of an ad hoc nature."⁵⁵ These "saints" were people who possessed "moral excellence" or "virtue;" however, this mere holiness did not mean they were

⁵³ Pernoud, 121.

⁵⁴ André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, Jean Birrell, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 371.

⁵⁵ Aviad M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5.

saints by the modern-day concept of the word.⁵⁶ Kleinberg asserts that the true saints (in the modern-day sense) of medieval society were those who exhibited not only holiness, but demonstrated supernatural power as well: “The saint possessed virtue (meaning both a quality of life and power) and as such gave rise to the expectation that she would manifest her power.”⁵⁷ Thus, according to Kleinberg, medieval society believed in the sanctity of those who demonstrated holiness and performed supernatural feats; indeed, as saints, such holy people were expected to possess supernatural powers.

Joan’s faith in God, her deep morality, her conviction in the sanctity of her mission, and the heroism she displayed at her death convinced many witnesses at her retrial that she was a saint by whom they were inspired. The testimonies of these witnesses are filled with references to her Voices, her personal holiness, her humility in spite of success, and the inspirational effect all of these factors had on the people around her.

Joan was known to be a holy person, and she called those around her to live holy lives as well. For instance, a priest of Orléans, Messire Pierre Compaing, asserts that it was Joan who convinced the mercenary captain La Hire to make a confession.⁵⁸ Another stirring example of her inspirational holiness comes from the testimony of Reginalde, widow of Jean Huré and citizen of Orléans:

One day a great lord was walking in the open street, cursing and blaspheming God in a most shameful fashion. When Joan heard and saw him she was most troubled and immediately went up to him. Then, taking this blasphemous gentleman by the shoulder, she said to him: “Ah, sir, do you dare to blaspheme our Lord and Master? In God’s name, you will withdraw your words before I go from here.” And then, as I saw – I who speak to you here – that gentleman repented and at the Maid’s exhortation begged for pardon.⁵⁹

Thus, the witnesses to her life establish that Joan exhibited an exemplary and inspirational holiness.

Combined with her personal holiness, Joan’s confidence in the ultimate success in her mission encouraged those around her and served to convince some who followed her of Joan’s saintliness. Bertrand de Poulengy, one of Joan’s original companions on the road to Chinon,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 6-8.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁸ Pernoud, 114; she describes La Hire as “a valiant soldier but a terrible pillager.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 115. This example also serves as a demonstration of Joan’s courage and confidence (discussed in further detail below), as she does not shy away from critiquing her social and military superiors when they behave in a manner that does not benefit their station.

remembers the journey from Vaucouleurs: “We had plenty of alarms on the road. But Joan always told us not to fear, and that once we had reached the town of Chinon the Dauphin would welcome us. She never swore, and I was myself greatly encouraged by her voices, for she seemed to me to have been sent by God . . . she seemed like a saint.”⁶⁰ On the road to Chinon, Joan demonstrates sainthood through her personal holiness and her confidence that God was guiding the group. If a normal soldier in her company testified as such, so early in Joan’s career, one can reasonably suggest that such a sentiment, as well as the inspiration it produced, was only enhanced as she accomplished more and more.

Joan’s personal holiness inspired others to strive for a more holy life as well, not only increasing their resolve and willingness to fight alongside her, but also convincing them of her divine support. The Bastard of Orléans, Jean, Count of Dunois, testifies, “As for myself and the rest, when we were in her company we had no wish or desire to approach or have intercourse with women. That seems to me to be almost a miracle.”⁶¹ Though Joan’s ability to inspire others to lead a more Christian life does not have a direct correlation to her turning the tide of the war, her example of holiness reinforced the belief in her as a divinely-guided saint, inspiring loyalty and devotion in those around her and enabling them to more readily follow and trust in her directions. Furthermore, had the Maid not been so adamant in her pursuit of holiness, this would cast into doubt the divine source of her aforementioned power of prophecy, as well as the sanctity of her mission itself, because medieval saints, like those of more modern times, were expected to exhibit personal holiness. Joan’s ability to remain a virgin in the midst of such company as the soldiers of the French army was also a significant indicator of her saintliness. As Vauchez writes in *The Laity in the Middle Ages*: “[Most people] believed that those who managed to preserve their virginity in particularly difficult circumstances acquired thereby a sort of supernatural power.”⁶² This is important because, as stated above, saintliness was defined by a combination of personal holiness and supernatural power. Joan’s holiness and personal sanctity convinced others to follow her because they viewed her as having been sent by God. This is further evidenced by the words of her squire, Jean d’Aulon:

Joan appeared to me a good and modest woman who lived a Christian life.
 . . . She was angry when she heard anyone

⁶⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁶¹ Ibid., 111. The *Retrial* is filled with accounts of this type; for example, see p. 123-124 for such a testimony from Alençon.

⁶² André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, Daniel E. Bornstein, ed., Margery J. Schneider, trans. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 202.

blaspheming God's name or anyone swearing. I heard her reprimand my lord Duke of Alençon several times for swearing or uttering some blasphemy. On the whole, nobody in the army would have dared to swear or blaspheme in front of her for fear of a reprimand from her.⁶³

Thus, Joan's holiness inspired great loyalty among her troops, giving the army the confidence it needed to achieve victory in battle, as the men strived to make themselves worthy of such a saintly leader.

Joan served as an inspiration of saintliness even to witnesses of her execution. The references from the *Retrial* are numerous; perhaps the most remarkable is the testimony of Isambert de la Pierre, an assessor in Joan's trial who visited her on her last day. He describes:

Immediately after the execution, the executioner came up to me. . . . He was struck and moved by a marvelous repentance and terrible contrition; and he was desperate with fear that he would never be able to obtain God's pardon and indulgence for what he had done to the saintly woman. He said and affirmed that, notwithstanding the oil, sulphur and charcoal that he had applied to Joan's entrails and heart, he had not found it possible to burn them or reduce them to ashes. He was astonished at this as a patent miracle.⁶⁴

Many of these witnesses expressed their admiration of her holiness, both during her trial and at her death; for some, this is in spite of political opposition to her cause, as several such references indicate that Joan inspired even her domestic enemies.⁶⁵ Even though her execution occurred after she had already made her impact on the Hundred Years' War, the above testimony indicates that the example of Joan's life caused some of her enemies to have a change of heart. If such holiness at her death inspired those opposed to her, how much more inspiring was the holiness Joan displayed during her life to those who followed her?

⁶³ Pernoud, 138. This is yet another example of Joan's courage and confidence in correcting her social and military superiors. D'Aulon recalls a similar example on p. 128, in which Joan jokingly threatens to have Dunois beheaded if he allows the English to get past his position. On p. 138, Louis de Coutes also cites an incident in which she chased away the mistress of one of the knights in the army with a "naked sword."

⁶⁴ Ibid., 212.

⁶⁵ The *Retrial* is indeed full of quotations from "enemy" witnesses to Joan's execution which indicate their admiration of her holiness and saintliness. See pages 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, and 212 for examples of Englishmen, French supporters of the English, and even Joan's judges being inspired by her demeanor at her death.

As the above sources indicate, Joan's spiritual qualities of prophecy and the holiness of a saint, though hardly martial qualities in their own right, were catalysts for French military success, as those qualities cemented Joan's claim to have been sent by God and gave credibility to her insistence that the French would defeat their English enemies. Moreover, Joan's exemplary holiness, as well as certain seemingly supernatural acts she performed, gave the French soldiers cause to believe that she was indeed a saint. However, were Joan simply a saintly prophet, she could not have had nearly as profound an impact on the course of the war as she did. Just as Joan was not merely a soldier, she was also not just a "spiritual cheerleader," who made dramatic prophecies and exhorted others to live holy lives. Joan inspired the French to win victories not only with her gift of prophecy and her holiness, but also through her qualities as a soldier. Throughout her career, Joan exhibited both moral and physical courage, possessed the presence of mind and decisiveness to make key decisions quickly and forcefully, and demonstrated an inexplicable knowledge of good military tactics. These qualities of generalship inspired Joan's followers even further, directing the energy created by her spirituality and harnessing it to win victories against the English.

JOAN'S MARTIAL QUALITIES

Joan demonstrated moral courage through her willingness to pursue her mission in spite of resistance or disagreement from the military and political leaders of her day. She did not hesitate to disagree with her more experienced military superiors when their plans conflicted with the plan she had been given by God. Alençon tells of her exhortation to several timid leaders of the French army, who suggested a withdrawal before Fastolf's arrival at Patay: "Many of the King's men were frightened, and said that it would be a good thing to send for the horses. 'In God's name,' cried Joan, 'we must fight them. If they were hanging in the clouds we should get them.

For God has sent them to us for us to punish them.'"⁶⁶ In this instance, Joan's decision to advocate the course of action opposite that of her social and military superiors demonstrates moral courage, and, as already discussed, the fruit of this courage was the greatest victory France had experienced in years.

Indeed, Joan exhibited moral courage throughout her entire career. She apparently knew, or at least believed, that her time in the public arena would be short, as Alençon reveals, "I sometimes heard Joan say to the King

⁶⁶ Ibid., 123. This quote also serves as an example of her ability to prophesy, as she asserts that God will aid the French in the battle.

that she herself would last a year and scarcely more, and that they must think during that year how to do their work well.”⁶⁷ This simple statement reveals so much about the courage of *La Pucelle*. If Joan really believed that her actions in the service of Charles VII and France would result in her death, yet still chose to serve anyway, can a finer example of moral courage exist? Indeed, knowing that Joan herself believed in her own impending death makes her physical courage in battle all the more remarkable, as she continually thrust herself into situations in which that premonition of death could be realized.

Joan habitually demonstrated courage in battle, providing her soldiers with an example to follow as they fought the English. Her personal courage inspired them with the will to win victories they had always had the ability to win; after all, France had always had a larger population base and a stronger economy than the English, and, as previously stated, the French usually outnumbered their enemies at the onset of most battles.⁶⁸ What the French army lacked, however, was the belief that they could overcome the English after so many years of defeat. To break this “loser’s mentality”⁶⁹ required courageous action. Joan displayed such courage at several points during her career.

Joan exhibited courage at Troyes, a city on the road to the coronation city of Rheims. As Simon Charles again recounts:

But at the moment when [the King] arrived before the city the soldiers saw that the provisions were exhausted, became dispirited, and were on the point of retreating. But Joan told the King to have no fear, for the town would be his next day. Then she picked up her standard, and a number of foot-soldiers followed her, and these she ordered to cut faggots to fill the moat. They cut a great number, and the next day Joan cried: “Charge!” as a signal to throw the faggots into the moat. At the sight of this the people of Troyes feared an assault, and sent to the King to negotiate a surrender. And the King made terms with the townsmen and rode into Troyes with great ceremony, Joan carrying her standard beside him.⁷⁰

As Charles’ testimony indicates, Joan’s courage by leading the charge at Troyes enabled the French to easily take the town, clearing the way for

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ DeVries, 10.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁰ Pernoud, 84. See also p. 36 of this work for a similar example from the battle of Orléans. This particular account also serves as another example of Joan’s gift of prophecy, as she predicts the victory of the French army despite the fact that their supplies were already drained.

Charles VII's coronation at Rheims. Yet she displayed such courage even earlier in her career, as at Jargeau in June 1429. Alençon provides some of the most vivid examples of this courage. He describes Joan's actions following a successful English sortie from the town: "But when Joan saw this, she picked up her standard and went to the attack, exhorting the soldiers to be of good courage. And they were so successful that that night the King's soldiers were lodged in the suburbs of Jargeau."⁷¹ Providing further detail, he recounts her actions:

Joan was on a ladder, holding her standard in her hand; this standard was torn and Joan herself was struck on the head by a stone, which broke on her steel cap. She was thrown to the ground, and as she picked herself up she cried to the soldiers: "Up, friends, up! Our Lord has doomed the English. At this very hour they are ours. Be of good cheer!" At that moment the town of Jargeau was taken, and the English retired toward the bridges with the French in pursuit.⁷²

Joan exhibited courage in battle even when she was wounded, a quality that had obvious and palpable effects. Indeed, this behavior must have been even more inspiring to her soldiers, particularly those of noble blood, who would undoubtedly feel ashamed to stand by or flee while a peasant girl continued to advance in spite of injury.⁷³ Thus, at both Troyes and Jargeau, the inspiration produced by Joan's courage contributed to the French victory.

If Joan's courage, both physical and moral, was a key source of inspiration on the battlefield, so too were her abilities as both a soldier and tactician, especially in light of her humble upbringings. Indeed, given her peasant background and gender, Joan should not have been a good soldier. Yet she was able to handle herself well in spite of her non-military heritage. Her skills as a soldier impressed even the most experienced veterans, as Marguerite La Touroulde, Joan's hostess at Chinon, recalls: "From all that I know of her she was absolutely ignorant except in the matter of arms. For I have seen her ride a horse and wield a lance as well as the finest soldier, and

⁷¹ Ibid., 120-121.

⁷² Ibid., 122. A more famous episode of Joan continuing to lead the French despite wounds occurred at Orléans, and is referenced below on p. 36. This instance also reinforces Joan's gift of prophecy, as she rallies the soldiers with the statement of impending English doom.

⁷³ I argue that the shame a professional male soldier feels when he cowers while an inexperienced, young, peasant girl advances is in itself a form of inspiration, albeit a very crude form. Regardless of their intention, which is impossible to truly ascertain, the fact remains that the French soldiers performed better when Joan was present on the battlefield. The evidence indicates that a contributing factor to this performance was Joan's courageous actions, such as the example at Jargeau cited above. Since it was Joan's heroic actions that caused a renewed effort on the part of the French soldiers, I am correct in asserting that those actions were an inspiration which contributed to the French victory.

the soldiers themselves were most astonished by this.”⁷⁴ Joan’s ability to

adapt to and excel in living the life of a soldier motivated her troops, who would have been surprised to see such feats from a lowly peasant girl. Indeed, regardless of how holy, prophetic, or courageous she may have been, Joan’s possession of such soldierly qualities as cited by La Touroulde were absolutely essential if soldiers were to be inspired by her in battle; after all, how can one inspire mounted knights by leading them in a charge if one cannot ride?

Joan’s skills as a soldier were enhanced by an uncanny but impressive grasp of military tactics. Somehow, without any kind of formal or informal education, Joan knew what to do during the battles she fought and was able to successfully lead veterans to victory. Aleçon eloquently describes this quality:

In everything that she did, apart from the conduct of the war, Joan was young and simple; but in the conduct of war she was most skilful, both in carrying a lance herself, in drawing up the army in battle order, and in placing the artillery. And everyone was astonished that she acted with such prudence and clearheadedness in military matters, as cleverly as some great captain with twenty or thirty years experience; and especially in the placing of artillery, for in that she acquitted herself magnificently.⁷⁵

Joan’s inexplicable grasp of tactics was undoubtedly a crucial factor in the victories at Orléans, Jargeau, and Patay, victories which breathed new vigor into the fledgling French cause. The Maid’s knowledge of how to handle an army and use it to defeat her enemies was an inspiration for the troops who followed her, not only in its own right, but also because such knowledge required years of training and experience to accrue under normal circumstances, reinforcing Joan’s assertion that she had been sent by and received aid from God. Armed with the tactical expertise comparable to that of a grizzled veteran, Joan knew what to do when faced with a battlefield decision.

Joan’s decisiveness was another quality which inspired her followers and enhanced the fighting power of her soldiers. Though she lived centuries before her fellow Frenchman, the Maid of Orléans understood the importance of the sentiment underlying Napoleon’s Maxim 65: “The same consequences which have uniformly attended long discussions and councils

⁷⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 124.

of war will follow at all times. They will terminate in the adoption of the worst course, which in war is always the most timid, or, if you will, the most prudent. The only true wisdom in a general is determined courage.”⁷⁶ Joan faced war councils on numerous occasions throughout her military career. In each case, the French leadership attempted to recommend cautious actions, whereas Joan sought to act aggressively. Such was the case at Jargeau, as Alençon describes:

There was a debate among the captains because some were of the opinion that they should attack the town and others held a contrary view, maintaining that the English were very powerful, and were there in great numbers. When Joan saw that there was discussion between them, she told them to fear no numbers in attacking the English, for God was conducting their campaign.⁷⁷

The French leadership was used to defeat at the hands of English forces, even when the English were outnumbered, lending a sense of invincibility to the invaders. Dunois addresses this perception of English invincibility in his statement that, before Joan arrived, two hundred Englishmen would have been “sufficient to rout eight hundred or a thousand of the royal army.”⁷⁸ Thus, the caution of the French leadership was founded in the sobering reality of their repeated defeats against what appeared to be an inferior foe. However, Joan’s decisive nature drove the French army from victory to victory; her consistent admonishments to the other leaders of the French army to go on the offensive and be aggressive slowly helped them realize in their own minds what had already been proven a reality with the relief at Orléans: the myth of English invincibility was just that, a myth. Indeed, even as the attack on Jargeau began, the Duke of Alençon hesitated, prompting Joan to say to him: “Do not have doubts. When God pleases, the hour is ripe. We must act when God wills it. Act, and God will act.”⁷⁹ As previously stated, Jargeau fell to the French attack. Joan’s decisive nature served as an inspiration for the army and its commanders, galvanizing the leaders to be aggressive and renewing their confidence in the abilities of their soldiers. After all, if this saint, believed to have been sent by God, had confidence in the French army, then who was

⁷⁶ Napoleon Bonaparte, “Military Maxims,” *Roots of Strategy: A Collection of Military Classics*, vol. 1, Thomas R. Phillips, ed. (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, Ltd., 1943), 233.

⁷⁷ Pernoud, 120.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

the Duke of Alençon, the Bastard of Orléans, or any other French general to disagree?

Joan not only had the knowledge to make battlefield decisions, she demonstrated an ability to make good decisions even under great stress. This quality, which the renowned military theorist Carl von Clausewitz names “presence of mind,” is best exhibited in Joan’s life during her trial in Rouen. Though her testimony at her trial could hardly have contributed to the French fortunes in the Hundred Years’ War, her behavior there highlights the presence of mind that she possessed. Unfortunately, references to this quality from her campaigns are rare; however, the trial records are full of statements by Joan which inspire skeptics and even enemies. Even a brief analysis of several of these statements indicates the power of this presence of mind that Joan possessed, a power which inspired those at her trial, and, as we shall see, during her life as well.

Joan possessed a strong presence of mind, exhibited most especially at her trial. Clausewitz defines “presence of mind” as “the conquest of the unexpected.”⁸⁰ In order to possess this quality, he asserts, one must first possess “resolution,” which he describes as “an act of courage in a single instance, and, if it becomes a characteristic trait, a habit of the mind.”⁸¹ Having already examined the numerous accounts of Joan’s courage, we can safely assert that it was a characteristic trait of hers. So the question then becomes: how did Joan “conquer the unexpected” during her trial?

To answer that question, one can first consider the testimony of Nicolas de Houpeville, a Bachelor of Theology who observed the case; de Houpeville remarked that Joan possessed a remarkable “steadfastness . . . that caused many to say she had spiritual aid.”⁸² This steadfastness refers to the strength of Joan’s self-defense against the accusations of the trial judges. As Guillaume Manchon, a notary in the case, testified, “She answered very wisely, and sometimes very simply, as can be seen from the record of the trial. I do not think that she would have been capable of defending herself alone in so difficult a case against such learned men, if she had not been inspired.”⁸³ This testimony indicates Joan’s proficiency at withstanding the expert intellectual assault of the judges in her trial.

Joan amazed those around her with her defense of her actions in the Rouen trial. Several specific examples of this inspiration exist in the

⁸⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, O. J. Matthijs Jolles, trans. (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal, Inc., 1950), 35.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸² Pernoud, 207. Again, this also reinforces Joan’s gift of prophecy.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 166. Other witnesses indicate this same sentiment, including a skeptic, p. 167, who began to believe in her saintliness after hearing her wisdom, her torturers in her prison, p. 170, and even three of the judges in her case, pp. 168, 193, 195.

testimonies of the *Retrial*. For instance, Jean Massieu, an usher in the trial, recalls:

I well remember that they often asked Joan questions in several parts, and several of them asked her difficult questions at the same time. Then, before she could reply to one, another put another question. She disliked this, and said: “Please take your turns.” And I was surprised to see how well she could reply to the subtle and tricky questions that were asked her, questions that an educated man would have found it difficult to answer well.⁸⁴

This example demonstrates not only Joan’s courage in facing the challenge of an academic debate with some of the most educated men in France, but also her presence of mind in thinking to insist on being allowed to answer each question in its turn. And, of course, she further demonstrated that same presence of mind by providing satisfactory answers for the difficult questions posed! The confidence Joan exuded during these proceedings was admired even by those judging her, as Nicolas Caval testifies, “She had a very good memory. For when they asked her a question she would say: ‘I have already answered that, and in these words.’; and she would make the notary turn up the day on which she had given her answer. And they found it all to be exactly as she had said. Considering how young she was, people were astonished.”⁸⁵ As this example demonstrates, Joan’s presence of mind, her ability to respond to unexpected challenges at her trial, was a source of admiration and inspiration for those who witnessed the trial – even including her accusers.

The most famous example that demonstrates Joan’s presence of mind, however, comes from the second scribe in the case, Boisguillaume. During the rehabilitation trial, he recalls:

I remember that she was asked more than once whether she was in a state of grace. She replied that it was a very big thing to answer a question like that. But finally she replied: “If I am, may God keep me in it, and if I am not may God make me so, for I had rather die than not be in the love of God.” Her interrogators were dumbfounded by this answer, and they

⁸⁴ Ibid., 165.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 196.

stopped at this point, asking her no more questions for the moment.⁸⁶

Joan's response as depicted in this testimony reveals wisdom and a presence of mind which enables her to escape the trap set by her judges. More importantly, this response so surprised and impressed them that they ceased questioning. Just as her presence of mind on the battlefield contributed to the French victories at Jargeau, and, as we shall see, Orléans, so did that same quality in the courtroom allow her to withstand the barrage of challenging questions by her judges.

If Joan's performance at her trial served to inspire her enemies and fill them with respect and admiration for her presence of mind, her successful military campaigns also inspired the English army – with fear. Joan's accomplishments and reputation inspired fear in many English soldiers which impacted the way in which they fought the French under her command. This fear of Joan reduced the effectiveness of the English, further enhancing the fighting quality of the French opposing them. Joan's victory against the English at Orléans was the first major check to English power in years. This victory had a tremendously positive impact on French morale, and shattered the growing myth of English invincibility. Indeed, Clausewitz describes this phenomenon in *On War*, writing, "Everyone thinks less of his enemy's courage as soon as he turns his back, and everyone ventures much more in pursuit than when pursued."⁸⁷ Clausewitz's words accurately portray the confidence of the French advance under Joan's leadership. By contrast, Joan's victory was troubling to the English, especially considering the remarkable circumstances leading up to her arrival at Orléans. Following the seemingly-miraculous French victory at Orléans, the English armies lost much of their confidence. The Duke of Bedford himself recalled this loss of courage in a letter to King Henry VI in 1434: "A disciple and follower of the fiend called the Pucelle, who used false enchantment and sorcery. . . . [Her] strikes and complete victory not only greatly reduced the number of your people there but also drained the courage of the remnant in marvelous ways and encouraged your adversary's party and enemy to rally at once in great number."⁸⁸ Thus, the apparently- supernatural abilities of Joan inspired fear in the English armies, which, like the French armies, were composed of Christians who believed in the supernatural powers of both God and the devil. Ultimately, the English fear of Joan impeded their ability to conduct operations. For example, as Friar

⁸⁶ Ibid., 167.

⁸⁷ Clausewitz, 72.

⁸⁸ "The Duke of Bedford's memorandum (14/15 June 1434)," in Taylor, 239.

Jean Toutmouille, a Dominican friar who visited Joan on her last day, testifies:

Before her death the English proposed to lay siege to Louviers, but they quickly changed their minds and said that they would not besiege the town until the Maid had been examined . . . immediately after her burning they went and besieged Louviers. They reckoned that while she was alive they would have no glory or success in the field of war.⁸⁹

Thus did Joan inspire fear in the hearts of her adversaries.

So far, this analysis has examined Joan's impact on the Hundred Years' War from nearly every moment of her public life, with one notable exception. The French victories at Jargeau, Patay, and Troyes, the coronation of Charles VII at Rheims, and the drama of Joan's trial and execution all occurred after the Maid's most important contribution to the French cause. It was at Orléans in 1429 that the fate of the entire war hung in the balance, and it was here that Joan made her greatest and most important contribution to the Hundred Years' War: Joan of Arc inspired the French to defeat their English occupiers, and she turned the tide of the Hundred Years' War. Joan's inspirational abilities, both in her various personal characteristics and through her generalship, are best represented in practice at the relief of the Siege of Orléans.

THE TURNING POINT: ORLÉANS

Joan demonstrated resolution and moral courage in her letter to the English. Illiterate and thus unable to write herself, she dictates:

King of England, and you, Duke of Bedford, who call yourself Regent of the kingdom of France; you, William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk; John Lord Talbot; and you, Thomas Lord Scales, who call yourselves lieutenants of the said Duke of Bedford, make satisfaction to the King of Heaven; surrender to the *Pucelle*, who has been sent here by God, the King of Heaven, the keys of all the good towns that you have taken and violated in France. . . . And you too, archers, companions-at-arms, gentlemen and others who are before the town of Orléans, go back to your own country, by God. And if you do not do this, await news of the *Pucelle* who will come to see you shortly, to

⁸⁹ Pernoud, 154.

your very great harm. King of England, if you do not do this, I am commander of war, and in whatever place I come upon your men in France, I will make them leave, whether they wish to or not. . . . I have been sent here by God, the King of Heaven, to drive you out of France, body for body.⁹⁰

In this letter, Joan clearly and definitively states her position: there will be no compromise. The English will leave France, or she will throw them out. She uses the letter to announce her intent to relieve Orléans, and her words are filled with a spirit of determination and zeal that galvanize the French into action. Though she would not live to see the complete expulsion of the English, Joan began the long process of the liberation of France with this letter.

Joan demonstrated both physical and moral courage during the battle as well. Simon Charles recounts a confrontation that occurred on May 6, 1429, between Joan, who wanted to assault the English fortresses, and Lord de Gaucourt, who wanted to remain in defense of Orléans: “Joan called the Lord de Gaucourt a wicked man. ‘Whether you like it or not’, she said, ‘the soldiers will charge, and they will win as they have done in other places’. And despite the Lord de Gaucourt, the soldiers who were in the town broke out and made an assault on the Bastille des Augustins, which they captured.”⁹¹ Here Joan, never fazed by her humble roots, showed the moral courage to overcome the social stratification between her peasant upbringing and de Gaucourt’s nobility, enabling her to counter his ineffective orders and lead the soldiers to victory. Additionally, the passage also demonstrates her physical courage, as she led the assault on the Bastille. This same scene is recounted by Jean d’Aulon:

When they saw the enemy coming out of their bastille to attack our men, La Hire and the Maid, who were always in the van to protect the rest, swiftly couched their lances and were the first to strike out at the enemy. Then everyone followed them and began to strike out at the enemy so effectively that they drove them back into the Bastille des Augustins.⁹²

This quote clearly demonstrates Joan’s courage and soldierly skills, as she and La Hire charged the enemy force, prompting the rest of the group to follow them into battle. This action, inspirational in itself, also demonstrates just how powerful Joan had already become in the minds of the French

⁹⁰ “Joan of Arc’s letter to the English (22 March 1429),” in Taylor, 74-75.

⁹¹ Pernoud, 84.

⁹² Ibid., 130.

soldiers by the time she arrived to Orléans, as the entire force followed her and claimed the fortress. This scene is again described by a third witness, Louis de Coutes:

Towards evening, when the King's men saw that they were achieving nothing and that night was already near, they despaired of taking the fort. Joan, however, continued to persist, and promised them that they would capture the place without fail that day. The King's men got ready to attack again; and when the English saw this they put up no defence. They were terrified.⁹³

Joan's courage in this instance inspired the French troops when they were prepared to give up, and her leadership enabled them to achieve victory.

Joan demonstrated physical courage at other points during the course of the battle as well. Having just awoken to the sound of battle on May 4, Joan rushed to join the battle, as d'Aulon recalls,

While I was arming her, we heard a great noise and loud cries from those in the city, who shouted that the enemy were doing great harm to the French. . . . [Joan] went out into the street, where she found a page on a horse. Immediately she made him dismount, and quickly mounted the beast herself. Then straight and as fast as she could, she made her way right to the Burgundy gate where the greatest noise came from.⁹⁴

Here, Joan demonstrated not only physical courage, but also displays a clear presence of mind, as she rides towards the place where she knows she will be most needed. She continued to display this courage as d'Aulon and Dunois left Orléans with a small force to bring back reinforcements from Blois, Joan screened their departure, as d'Aulon testifies,

Then with La Hire and a certain number of her men, she went out into the fields to guard us from any attack by the enemy. And to do this, the Maid placed herself and her men between the enemy's army and the city of Orléans. So successful was she that notwithstanding the great power and numbers of the

⁹³ Ibid., 137.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 128.

English army, thanks be to God, my lord Dunois and I got through with all our men and safely went on our way.⁹⁵

This action demonstrates a selfless disregard for her own safety. In protecting Dunois as he left the city, Joan put her own life at risk for the sake of her companions. D'Aulon's admiration of the Maid rings clearly through his testimony.

Joan did not inspire the French to victory through her courageous example alone; rather, she made several prophetic statements as well. Indeed, Dunois, after first meeting her, recounts an apparent miracle performed by Joan as the army, stranded on the south side of the Loire, awaited a favorable wind to cross:

Then Joan said to me: "In God's name, the counsel of the Lord God is wiser and surer than yours. . . . I am bringing you better help than ever you got from any soldier or and city. It is the help of the King of Heaven. It does not come through love for me, but from God himself who . . . has refused to suffer the enemy to have both the body of the lord of Orléans and his city." Immediately, at that very moment, the wind, which had been adverse and had absolutely prevented the ship carrying the provisions for the city of Orléans from putting out, changed and became favourable. . . . From that moment I had great hopes of her, greater than before, and I begged her to agree to cross the Loire and enter the city of Orléans.⁹⁶

This testimony reveals just how inspirational the Maid was in the mind of Dunois, as well as those who followed her. Whether or not the change in the wind was the result of divine intervention or mere coincidence, its effect was the same: the soldiers of the French army believed in the Maid. Joan was already known to maintain a high degree of personal holiness, and thus her seeming ability to perform supernatural acts, such as changing the wind, supported the French belief in her sainthood.⁹⁷ As Dunois indicates, this incident was viewed as miraculous, and gave credence to her claim to have been sent by God. Confident that Joan was being guided by the divine, the French soldiers were inspired to victory by her apparent gift of prophecy,

⁹⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 105.

⁹⁷ See the testimonies (cited above in this document) of the examiners at Poitiers, Bertrand de Poulengy, and Jean d'Aulon.

especially her continued assertion that God would aid them in their struggle against the English.⁹⁸

The effects of the victory at Orléans with respect to how the French soldiers viewed Joan were immediate. The Duke of Alençon testified, “From what I have heard of the soldiers and the captains who were there, they all regarded almost everything that happened at Orléans as a miracle from God, and considered it to have been the work of no human hands but to have come from on high.”⁹⁹ As Alençon asserts, the French viewed Joan as a saint, and many came to share in her conviction that God would aid them in their mission to expel the English. As the Bastard of Orléans himself proclaimed, “I believe that Joan was sent by God, and that her deeds in the war were the fruit of divine inspiration rather than of human agency.”¹⁰⁰ Here, Dunois asserts that Joan was guided by God, and that the victories wrought during her time with the French army were inspired by that guidance; he acknowledges that the French army could not have won the victories of Orléans, Jargeau, or Patay without the inspiration it received from God through Joan.

Finally, in what is perhaps the most celebrated, recreated, and dramatized episode of Joan’s entire career, Joan demonstrated profound personal courage during the battle despite being wounded, as Dunois recounts:

Joan was wounded by an arrow. . . . Despite this, she did not retire from the battle and took no remedy against the wound . . . I was going to break off, and intended the army to retire into the city. Then the Maid came up to me and requested me to wait a little longer. Thereupon she mounted her horse and retired herself into a vineyard. . . . When she came back, she immediately picked up her standard and took her position on the edge of the ditch. The moment she was there the English trembled with terror; and the King’s men regained their courage and began to climb, delivering their assault against the bulwark and not meeting with the least resistance. Then that bulwark was taken.¹⁰¹

This scene epitomizes the various inspirational qualities of *La Pucelle*. Despite her wound, Joan returned to the fight, exhibiting physical courage. She retired to pray, demonstrating her holiness. She prepared to charge,

⁹⁸ Pernoud, 105.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 106-107.

showing keen presence of mind by choosing the exact time and place of her advance. And, finally, she led her soldiers to victory.

CONCLUSION

Joan was not just a soldier, nor was she merely a soldier who manipulated religious symbols. Joan's true strength lay in her ability to inspire. It was through her holiness, her gift for prophecy, her courageous example, her presence of mind, and her tactical expertise that Joan inspired the French to victory at Orléans. And, indeed, it was Joan herself who enabled the French to victory, as Jean Luillier, spokesman for the townsmen of Orléans at Joan's retrial, testifies:

I and all the people of the city believe that if the Maid had not come from God to help us, we the inhabitants and the city would shortly have been at the mercy and in the power of the enemy who were besieging us. I do not think that the inhabitants or the soldiers who were in the town would have been able to put up a long resistance against an enemy who was then so much superior to them.¹⁰²

The significance of Joan's victory at Orléans is clear: the tide had turned. The Hundred Years' War, though it would continue for nearly thirty more years, would never be as close as it was just before Joan's arrival on the scene. Joan of Arc changed the course of history through inspiration.

¹⁰² Ibid., 113.