

MAGDALENE CHRISTIANITY



The Maid of Destiny

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THE MAID OF DESTINY

Mark Twain wrote of Joan of Arc that hers was 'the most noble life that was ever born into this world save only One.' He intuitively aligned her life with Jesus the Christ and personally I am sure that Mary Magdalene's soul, bonded in the eternal with the Christ, lived again in the Maid's utter dedication to a mission that was foolhardy in worldly terms, in her uncannily luminous presence that so empowered rough soldiers and terrified her enemies, and even in the anguish of her imprisonment, her own Passion.

A most famous young woman

Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orléans, oracle, visionary, pure-hearted teenaged warrior who refused to wield a sword, and inspiration for women down the ages.

Jeanne-Jehanne was born in 1412 to Isabelle Romée and her husband Jacques d'Arc, a small landholder in the village of Domrémy in north eastern France. Around the age of thirteen she began to have visions of St Catherine of Alexandria, St Margaret of Antioch and Archangel Michael. Their messages told her that she was to support the French Dauphin Charles, have him crowned king and save demoralized France from the English. This was during the last stages of the Hundred Years War between the two countries.

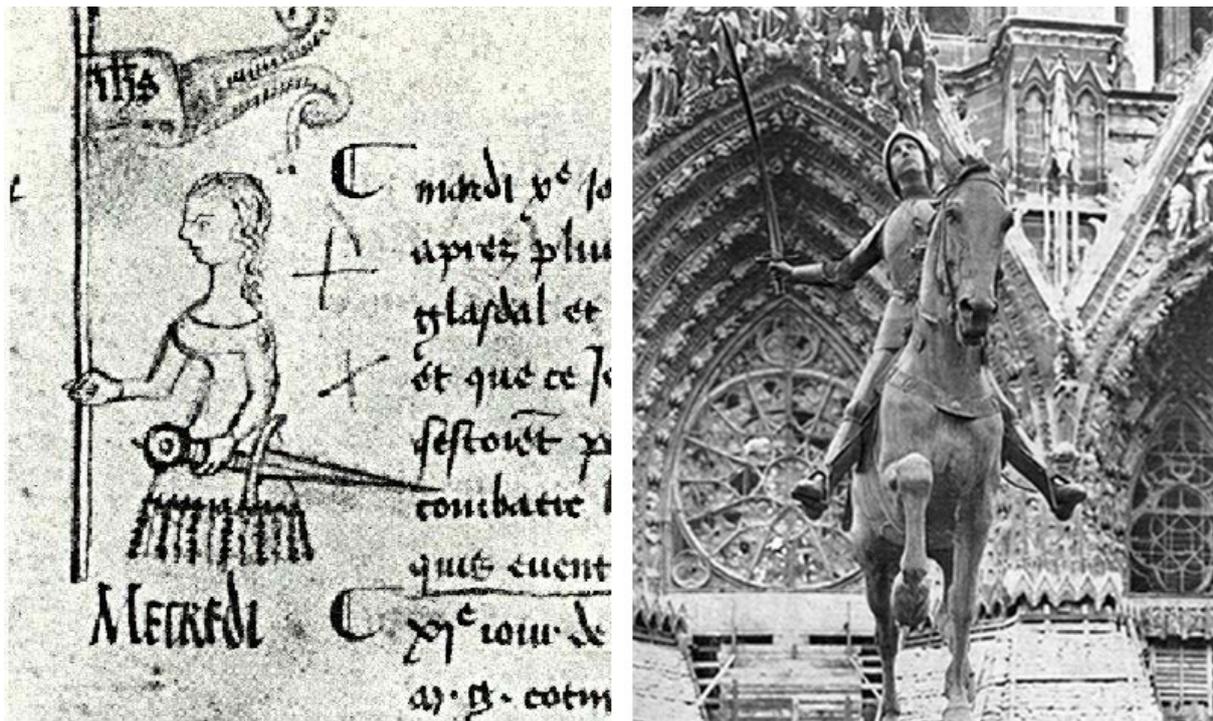
At the age of sixteen the illiterate girl began petitioning French army leaders. Her accurate prophecy that the French would be victorious in a battle at Rouvray, eventually persuaded French captain Robert de Baudricourt to provide her with an armed escort to meet Charles at Chinon. She was dressed in male clothing for her protection.

Charles believed in Jeanne but had her examined by noblewomen for evidence of 'impurity' and tested by bishops for any taint of heresy. Part of the testing was to send her to help lift an English siege of Orléans, which she had predicted she could do. In 1429 she was given armour, a horse, banner and sword (which she never unsheathed preferring to ride shouting war cries and holding aloft her twelve-foot banner that depicted Christ holding the world in his right hand, and flanked by angels). Orléans was freed. Jeanne's fearless charisma boosted French morale as she led the way through enemy territory to Reims, the coronation city of French kings. Persuaded by Jeanne, the Dauphin was crowned Charles VII at Reims on 16 July 1429. He considered her to be useful as a figurehead

only, although 'La Pucelle' inspired the French soldiers, and led them into other skirmishes. Many of the nobles took note of her battle plans. The Duke of Alencon saw her as a comrade in arms.

We have descriptions of Jeanne from contemporaries. As a girl she was described as extremely devoted to God, sweet natured, hardworking, generous and compassionate. She retained these qualities when leading the French army and was often moved to tears by the suffering she saw – among the English as well. Even as she was being enveloped by smoke and flame, she prayed for those who had condemned her to death.

People noted that her voice was always warm and feminine, yet she was invariably direct and uncompromising. Such was her charisma the men surrounding her stopped blaspheming in her presence, and while she didn't hide her body, her attractive youthfulness was not a source of lust in the men she fought with, or who like Jean d'Aulon often tended her wounds.



L. Earliest known image of Jeanne d'Arc in the margins of a daily register, May 10, 1429; R. modern statue of her outside Reims Cathedral, 2007 (holding up the sword is wrong)

A march on Paris was stalled, and when it did take place Jeanne was wounded. She recovered and continued to ride at the forefront of the French troops but in a battle at Compiègne on 23 May 1430 she was captured by the Burgundian nobles who were aligned with England. She escaped several times from imprisonment until the Burgundians sold her

to the English who imprisoned her in Rouen, then the main English garrison town.

The English leaders enlisted a pro-English bishop Pierre Cauchon to lead her trial for heresy plus the crime of cross dressing. She had reassumed her male clothing to offend the prison guards and so avoid being raped. Several French attempts to rescue her failed. The trial was politically motivated, even violating harsh inquisitorial rules. All the ecclesiastics were on the English side and it seems that those who wanted a fair trial were threatened. Jeanne pleaded her case with eloquence and no proof of any offences emerged. Records were doctored. She was pronounced guilty anyway and burnt at the stake on 30 May 1431, aged 19. Her body was burnt three times to ensure nothing of her remained, such was the fear of her influence. In Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 1* you see the English propaganda version of her as a witch and a whore.

The Hundred years War ended about twenty years after the Maid's death with the French driving the English armies back across the English Channel. In 1456 the trial was found to be invalid. Jeanne was retried, declared innocent and honoured as a martyr. She was made a saint in 1920. These are the bare bones.

The Maid of Orléans was brave and true and unerringly dedicated to her mission and she tapped into the longing for France to be free. Even so her story is truly extraordinary, that an uneducated country girl wasn't dismissed as crazy or deluded, that French knights believed in her enough to follow her advice, that she inspired the vacillating Dauphin to take up the crown and was adored by the battle-hardened soldiers.

There are numerous novels and movies and non-fiction accounts of her amazing life; even the words of her trial have come down to us. I explore her life now from a different angle. There's more to Joan of Arc that led me to believe she is an incarnation of Mary Magdalene, and my first trigger was her wrongful suffering.

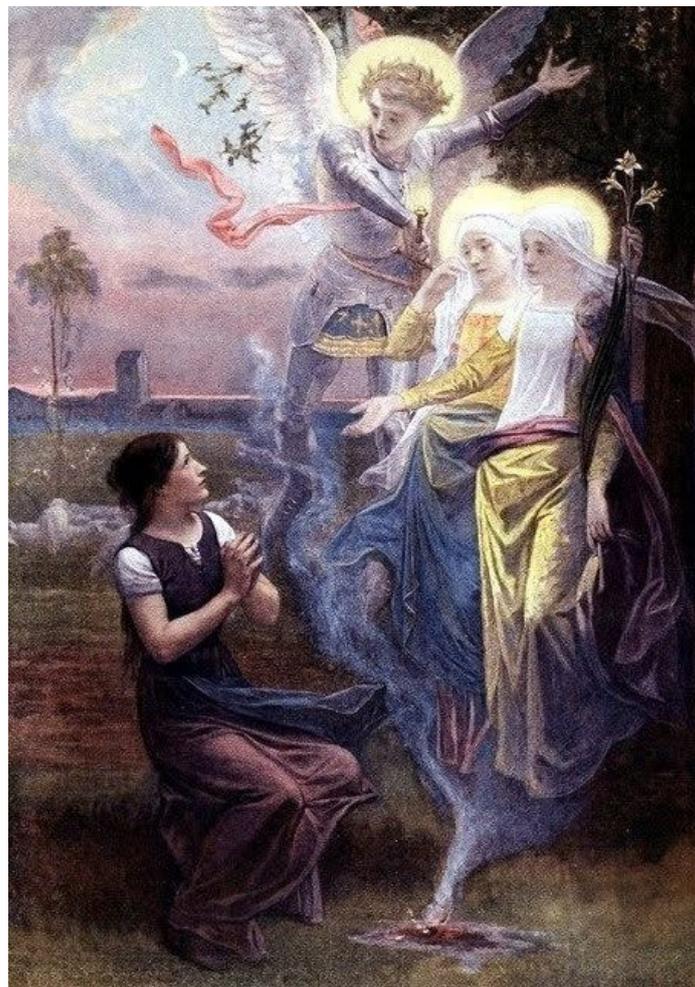
Looking deeper

You might recall that the year of her birth, 1412, heralds a new age, the Age of the Consciousness Soul. According to Rudolf Steiner's spiritual insight Jeanne was born on January 6, 1412. The baby who would be the Maid of Orléans entered the world during the dark time of the year in the northern hemisphere.

The earth sleeps between the winter solstice 21-22 December and the Christian feast of Epiphany on January 6, but the spiritual light of the sun is most active in the earth's aura and in souls. We are looking at the Maid's soul during its final days in the womb. There on the threshold of the new

age the spiritual forces worked to open the inner being of this chosen soul, so that during her incarnation her consciousness would dwell in that tidal place between the intellectual soul and the first incoming wave of the consciousness soul, which is also the age of the spiritual will.

Within this space came the voices accompanied by a shining light, speaking to Jeanne over her right shoulder. From the past, through a last fully empowered sibylline clairvoyance she heard the potent message of her saints, while the future shone in through the Archangel Michael and brought her to conscious action with such clarity of purpose. Let's look at her saints.



'Joan of Arc Listening to the Voices' – painting by Diogenes Ulysses Maillart, 1893

St Catherine of Alexandria and St Margret of Antioch

The short lives of the two saints have a similar trajectory – followers of Christ in a non-Christian environment, they were tortured and flung into

prison for refusing to marry a non-believing ruler. Their stories are recounted in di Voraigue's thirteenth century *Golden Legend*.

Behind these legends and other similar ones is a fervent time in early Christianity when many women rejected traditional roles of wife and child bearer to dedicate themselves wholly to Christ. The emperor Diocletian (284-305) instigated a widespread persecution of Christians, which included the forceful marriage (often rape) of Christian women.

Catherine, a scholarly young woman, whose name means 'pure', rejected the pagan emperor Maxentius (the ruler Constantine defeated in 312). In prison her wounds were tended by angels and a dove fed her. She converted many prisoners but still refused the emperor, stating that she was married to Christ. Maxentius condemned her to be broken on a torture wheel, but it shattered. So she was beheaded. Catherine was just eighteen.

When Margaret was in prison, she was tempted by the Devil in various disguises. One miraculous event, too fantastic even for di Voraigue to believe, describes how she was swallowed by the devil in the form of a dragon, but the cross she carried irritated its gut, so she was disgorged. On this account Margaret became patron saint of childbirth. She was beheaded in 304 after attempts to burn and then drown her failed. Margaret means 'pearl', connecting her with sea symbolism and with purity. In the Eastern church she is known as Marina, which also associates her with the sea.

These two saints, executed for their refusal to give up Christ and their steadfast and uncompromising commitment, were among the fourteen saints known as Holy Helpers. Joan of Arc surely had a sense of her own vulnerability and could take strength from the help of women who beneath the elaborations of legend, did walk the path of faith to its bitter end. I find an aura of Mary Magdalene surrounding such stories as if indeed she too is present.

Saint Michael

No Christian Martyr this, but Archangel Michael. The name means the 'face of God' – Micha-el. Michael's symbols are the sword and the scales – for it was originally the archangel's task to contend with the powers of darkness and to weigh the souls of the dead. In the new Age of the Consciousness Soul this high being, servant of the Christ, would become the Time Spirit or cosmic inspiration for the age in which we must learn to take charge of our own soul and so transform the negativity within us. We are the ones who weigh our soul.

On the border between the old and the new, intuitively the Maid of Orléans opened her whole being to Michael and to the Christ. She led the French soldiers into battle to fulfil the destiny revealed to her by her voices. And her insight was such that she recognized the profound truth in the messages of Archangel Michael who points to what must come to be.

The Maid entered the gory field of battle but did not carry a weapon. Perhaps war was the only way to achieve what she had to. But rejecting her sword evokes images of Saint Brigid of Ireland giving away a king's sword to help a poor family, or in the Arthurian legend magical Excalibur returned to the arms of the Lady of the Lake by the lone survivor after two armies destroyed each other.

In ancient times spiritual powers could make use of the human propensity to wage war, only because spirit worked through the consciousness of a whole group or tribe. That time has passed. Despite its prevalence war does not belong to this age when decisions born from the spiritual self must become conscious and active in every individual.

Joan of Arc is usually on any list of warrior women who led mighty armies. Yet she is unique among these women. When she entered the zone of war with indomitable pure-hearted courage, her motivation was not from the physical world.

What was Joan of Arc fulfilling that was so important for the future?

Here we enter the world of spiritual geopolitics. In historical events we see only the external effects of spiritual forces at work. And although we are yet to fully grasp the reality of the mystery of Golgotha, the Christ power continues to be active in evolution, working into human events and through chosen individuals. Thus it was for Joan of Arc.

Vikings had long ceased their raids in northern France. They had settled and leaders married into the French nobility. In 1066 these Normans (from 'Norsemen') under Duke William 'the Conqueror' invaded Anglo-Saxon England. William declared himself King of England and imposed French feudalism. Although 'Frenchness' barely touched the consciousness of ordinary people, intermarriage within the royal families of France and England meant the folk souls of France and England were beginning to merge. Meanwhile the family connections sowed the seeds of dynastic trouble. The Hundred Years' War began in 1337 over rival claims to the French throne. The long conflict engulfed the people of both lands and brought about the end of feudal society.

Much of Europe had been bound together by Christendom; the grasp of Rome holding on through the universal Catholic Church. Now the ties

were loosening. A different consciousness was emerging through regional folk souls. Externally separate countries were being shaped.

In the long run the feeling for one humanity needs to awaken, although born from rich diversity, never the imposition of bland sameness as envisaged by the church. In the first part of the Age of the Consciousness Soul preparation was taking place across Europe with the development of guiding group souls for different 'nations' with that diversity of consciousnesses.



When Joan of Arc entered the scene, France and England were still entangled. The liberation of Orléans in 1429 marked a key turning point for France and for the unfolding of the new era. The English opposed what was an impulse of Christ carried in the pure soul of the Maid. She acted because in her this was alive.

Because of her dedicated courage the Maid of Orléans snapped the link between England and France. Her enemies, ignorant of deeper purposes in play, burned her to death. But soon after England retreated. Both nations henceforth were free to develop in their own way. The symbolic barrier of the English Channel became once more a real one.

The French needed to be free to develop a soul nature philosophically inclined and epitomized in a vibrant, emotional, expressive personality that would influence the rest of Europe and even today makes France so 'romantic' for visitors. As an example, here's what I wrote when in France in 2015, especially concerning the women.

In a Paris schoolground I watched young boys and girls playing together, and it was quite rough and tumble, but you couldn't define the play as boys' or girls' – so unlike a typical Australian school yard.

Is that why Parisian females grow up to be confident, naturally elegant and 'cool'?

The women in the Burgundian towns and villages we visited were different, yet still with a strong presence, a vivacity and warmth in their voices that seemed to come from an innate surety of knowing who they are in this land of Joan of Arc.

English souls, Anglo-Saxon northerners at heart, moved in a different direction, towards the expression of the will in the external world, parliamentary democracy, liberalism, practical philosophies, scientific progress, an expansionism no longer niggling at Europe but spreading outward, taking English culture and laws across the world.

Developments in both lands were harbingers of the consciousness soul and of the potential for genuine spiritual individuality. But even a superficial look at subsequent events reveals how missteps have brought so much tragedy in their wake. The actions we take resonates within souls and what lives in the soul leads to external events. We saw this when the French Revolutionaries' cry of liberty, fraternity, equality was so violently misappropriated during 'the Terror', and in England's colonial adventures, the misuse of the will that all but destroyed indigenous cultures.

Ancient tribal 'us and them' conflicts and wars undermine the positives in a people's distinct soul nature. Yet everywhere there are people who value differences and uniqueness and find connections through them. It may take many ages but the inexorable road towards unique individuals uniting as one humanity is the destiny spirit works for.

The Magdalene, the Maid and the women

For many people there is a direct personal impact of the Maid's mission, for it included something virtually unknown to history. An army of women followed her lead. They were not the usual camp followers who serviced the men's sexual needs – the Maid was said to have chased them away. These women and girls looked to her and sensed the possibility of a freedom they had never known in that time when women had few rights. Inspired by her example they left their homes and banded together to become fighters, healers, strategists, arms bearers, and message carriers between the lines.

Back in 1984 I was given a first glimpse of how it was in a spiritual blessing by my teacher Mario. To my amazement he said, 'You were a follower of the maid, Jeanne d'Arc. With joy you fought, better than a man...'

It was a message from a past life and Mario went on to describe why this soul picture came up. In my intent to become pure hearted like Joan of

Arc, I was fighting, fighting myself, but that now fight was no longer the way. When I sat with this, I did acknowledge that I had indeed been there with her.

I came to recognize the presence of the Magdalene's enlightened soul – and that she had incarnated with a new purpose. On the cusp of a new age as the Maid of Orléans she was active in the evolution of consciousness, pointing towards the need in human souls for women's greater role in affairs once seen as exclusively male, for instance in the fields of science and politics. This was and remains a struggle.

There will be souls alive today who were part of that sorority of the Maid. And the influence exists widely among women, and men. It is made up of those who strive to do what is right, and to achieve balance and change, not by fighting against any obstacle as 'the enemy' with metaphorical sword unsheathed, but through the inner surety and strength of their I AM, so that deep in the soul they find the courage to keep going whatever the odds. That's the Magdalene.

There will never be another Maid of Orléans arising amidst our wars of drones and weapons of mass destruction. Yet in every age the beloved disciple and Christed initiate that was Mary Magdalene will express the Christ power and love in a unique way, whether she is in incarnation or not.