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Topic
Philosophy, Religion & Intellectual History

Subtopic
Christianity

The Surprising Lives of Christian Saints

Course Guidebook

Emily Graham

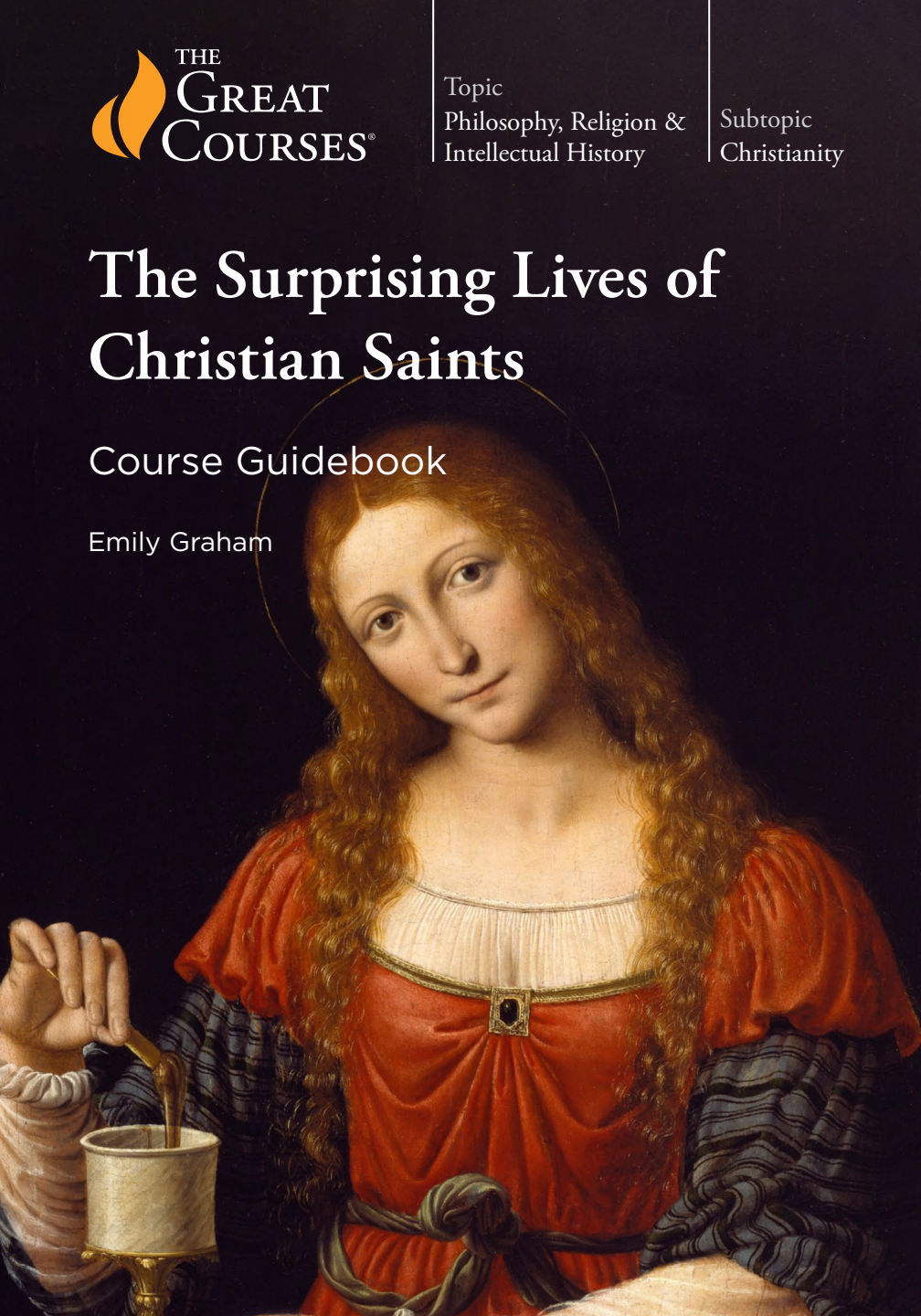

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Table of Contents

Disclaimer

This content contains graphic descriptions of violence, which may be disturbing and may not be suitable for minors or other audiences.

Saints and the People Who Make Them

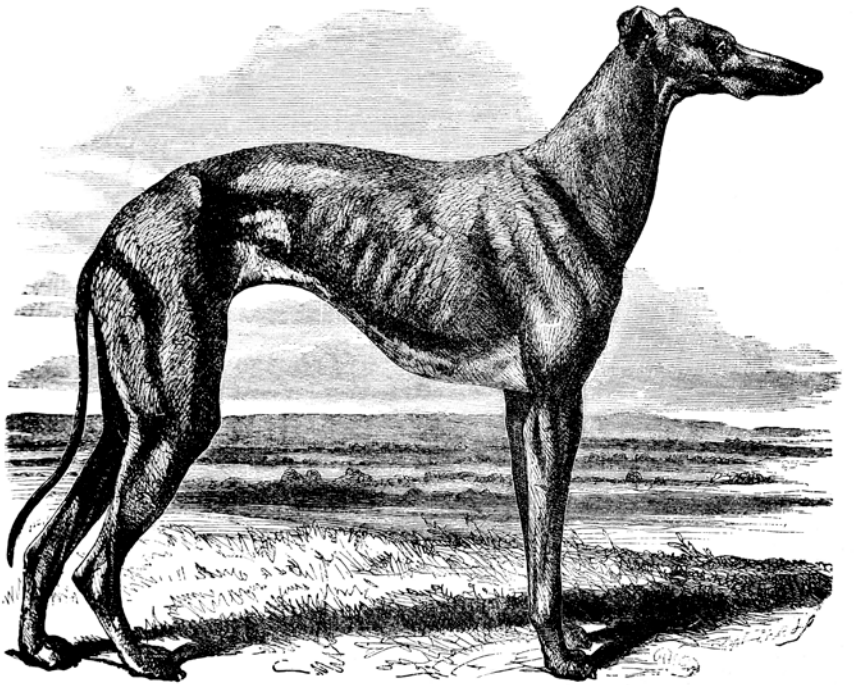
1

For most of the history of Christianity, people had very intimate and complex relationships with their saints. Saints' cults—their story, veneration, and shrine—weren't just about the holy person; they were about regular people and their worries, crises, and troubles. And people were necessary for keeping a saint's cult alive because not all saints were immediately recognized by a Christian church. As the history of saints is explored in this course, you'll meet an amazing cast of real characters. There will be some outlandish stories but also stories of normal people living in extraordinary times and making hard decisions.

The Story of Saint Guinefort

The old inquisitor jolted down the little road toward Dombes on his donkey, bones creaking. Stephen of Bourbon was approaching 70, and this was one of the last trips he would make in his long career rooting out heresies on the backroads of France. He was looking for an extraordinary saint named Guinefort.

Stephen had heard about Guinefort from women who had sought her help with healing miracles for their children through a series of strange rituals. At first, the friar was intrigued. Guinefort seemed like a valiant defender of children and a most efficacious and miraculous intercessor—a saint worth looking into. Imagine, then, his shock when he learned that Guinefort was, in fact, a dog.



Her story begins like this: A couple went out for the day, leaving their baby boy with his nanny. She put the child down for a nap and left him alone with the family dog. It was a peaceful scene until a large snake got into the room and slithered over to the cradle. The dog, a greyhound, lunged at the snake and knocked the cradle down. Dog and snake grappled until the dog won and the snake was dead. The nanny came back to a shocking scene: the dog covered in blood, crouched over the baby. Her screams brought the father running, sword drawn. Thinking the dog had attacked the baby, he killed the dog in anger.

Then, the couple found the baby unharmed and the snake's body nearby. They realized how they had wronged the dog. But it was too late to do anything but throw her body in a well, cover it with stones, and plant trees nearby to commemorate the valiant animal. In later years, the manor was abandoned, but the story of the dog's bravery and unjust death spread. Local peasants honored the dog as a martyr and prayed to her, particularly mothers with sick children. Eventually, they developed a number of curing rituals, some of which actually put children's lives in danger.

That drew Stephen's attention, and when he showed up in the village, he gave them a strong sermon about superstition and infanticide, cut down the trees, and dug up the dog's body so that they couldn't make it into a shrine. He believed that the cult had been thoroughly suppressed. He returned to Lyons, where he wrote up the incident and died a year later.

A saint's cult doesn't have the same negative connotations we use for modern cults. In fact, an active cult was and is a requirement for official recognition of a saint.

In the 1970s, a French historian named Jean-Claude Schmitt studied Stephen's record of his journey. He found that there was a human Saint Guinefort, an Irish Christian who lived at the time of the Romans and was martyred. Even more, he found that as late as the 19th century, there was a shrine in the woods of Dombes dedicated to the canine Saint Guinefort, who seemed to have become enmeshed with the actual martyr saint from Ireland. He also found evidence that locals still told the story of the heroic dog and that mothers had long brought sick children there seeking a miraculous cure. The cult had survived, quietly, in this small rural area, despite Stephen's best efforts to stamp it out. The modern Association of Saint Guinefort, based in a nearby town, claims that women visited the woods seeking healing as recently as the 1940s.

Official and Unofficial Saints

For a saint to have a cult simply means there are people who venerate them and who make that manifest through their beliefs and actions—such as keeping a picture of the saint in a special place, praying to them, celebrating the day marked in the liturgical calendar for their feast, or going on pilgrimage to a site dedicated to that saint.

Stephen of Bourbon's story about Guinefort tells us a lot about people and what they needed from saints and the assumptions they made about what virtue looked like—and that shapes almost everything that we know about a holy person. Saints were holy in life, yes, but to be recognized as a saint, they needed lots of support, lots of stories, visits to their tomb, and prayers that led to miracles. In short, there's no saint without people who need one.

There was usually a period of decades or even centuries between a holy person's death and their official recognition, if it ever came at all. Through all those long years, it was up to local believers to keep that holy person's cult and memory alive. And in the end, your treasured local saint might have still ended up being invalidated and suppressed if the pope decided they weren't up to snuff.

There were and are hundreds of these regional saints and unofficial cults all over the world. They make things tough for historians because most of the evidence they work from comes from official accounts—the documents

created by priests and bishops who wanted to preach about, promote, or just preserve the story of a saint's life and deeds. The few who did make it to sainthood had official accounts written about them, called hagiographies. They're the ones you're mostly going to learn about in this course. But it's important to understand the way that ordinary people contribute to what we know about saints because that has a lot to do with how we remember them.

A hagiography is a kind of biography with a focus on a saint's holiness and added stories of miracles that happened after the person's death.

Saints were touchstones for civic pride, symbols of professional identity, family tradition, and local culture. There were parades, dances, special foods, races, prayer vigils, and processions in their honor. All of that kept saints' cults vibrant and alive, even when they weren't officially recognized or sponsored by the church. But it also boiled the saint down to a legendary figure—and legends aren't what you might call relatable.

Saints as Everyday People

Saints often seem like serene, untouchable figures, separate from the world and from human concerns. But plenty of saints lived normal lives. They fought with their parents or stepparents like Margaret of Cortona or scrubbed out stinky bedpans like Martín de Porres; they were homeless veterans like Francis of Assisi, overwhelmed moms like Elizabeth Ann Seton, and defiant teenagers like Thomas Aquinas. They survived abusive relationships and traumatic violence, like Radegund and Joan of Arc. They got kind of snarky sometimes, like Philip Neri. Saints were college dropouts, aimless wanderers, freethinkers, and activists. Some of them came under suspicion or were even treated as heretics; some of them founded international orders.

Some of them simply did good where and when they could, such as Zita of Lucca and the young man who would become known as Bernardino of Siena. Other saints lived through the same kind of family difficulties many

of us have experienced. Some lived with the chaos and upheaval of alcoholic parents, and some just had normal teen angst. Not all saints were pure and well behaved from birth.

Saints had problems, sometimes major ones. Empress Cunegunda struggled with infertility during her marriage. Saint Catherine of Genoa and Saint Godelieve were victims of domestic abuse. But saints also had petty problems and little embarrassments, such as Saint Bartholomew, who was so embarrassed by his birth name, Tostig, that he changed it to William to escape the teasing from his schoolmates.

So how do saints get from these very real people to the idealized figures that we put on pedestals? Every story that's told many times changes in subtle ways with each retelling. It's a common misconception that by reading historical documents, we can have a direct understanding of the people of the ancient past. No story is transmitted directly to us from the past; it is told, translated, and mediated by the person who wrote it down. And in telling the story, they change it—they embroider, explain, liven it up a bit, and make it more useful for their audience. Saints' stories are no exception. In many cases, clerics were entrusted with crafting a narrative to make a person look especially saintlike, which meant making them fit the mold of other holy people.

Scholarship on saints is full of examples of writers who lifted language from one well-known saint's hagiography and plugged it into the account of another holy person's life so that their sanctity would seem more familiar to the audience.

And ordinary people might look at a story with some familiar outlines—such as a virtuous defender of children who was unjustly killed for it—and overlook the fact that they were, in fact, talking about a dog and not a person. This means that to know the saints, we must know the people who are telling us their story and what they need from it. So, as we go through this course, the hope is that you'll see how questions about historical sources help us to strip away these layers of storytelling and get down to the saint—the person—beneath.

Reading

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Philip Neri: Playful Pragmatist

Philip Neri seemed to have an unpromising start in life: By age 30, he was a failed student and a failed businessman, and he'd become an aimless hermit shambling along at the edge of society. But in the end, he was known as the quintessential saint of the Counter-Reformation. He was quixotic and unfailingly kind, with a pointed sense of humor, and he encouraged sinners to seek a better life through confession, song, and the great outdoors. His followers included humble cleaners and shoemakers, wealthy merchants, musicians, cardinals, and popes. The egalitarian gatherings around him came to be known as the Oratory, a movement that has inspired great artists and thinkers, as well as ordinary people, for nearly 500 years.

Philip's Early Life

Philip was born in Florence in 1515, the second of four children. When he was 5 years old, his mother and youngest brother passed away. His father, Francesco, quickly remarried, and Philip was reportedly close to his stepmother and his sister Elisabetta. The family moved to a neighborhood across the Arno River, with wide vistas across the city and quick access to the Tuscan countryside. For the rest of his life, Philip was drawn to the outdoors and to grand viewpoints.

His family struggled financially. Francesco was known to have been a supporter of Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican preacher who had captivated the city with prophecies and radical social reforms nearly 20 years earlier. In 1498, Savonarola was tortured, tried, and executed. By the time Philip was born, the Medici had returned to Florence and Savonarola's supporters were in disgrace, including his father.

In his late teens, Philip left to live with a relative who was making good money as a merchant in San Germano, a small town near the abbey of Montecassino. But the world of business didn't hold his interest for long. Two years later, we find him in Rome, where he took a job tutoring. In his spare time, he studied philosophy at the University of Rome, La Sapienza, and theology with the Augustinians. He admitted later that he made a poor student, more occupied with prayer than study. He abandoned his course within the year but was slow to choose a new direction.

Philip's Charity Work

The Rome in which Philip arrived in 1533 was a confusion of old and new, of Renaissance luxuries, humanist ideals, and brutal political realities. Philip wandered the countryside as a sort of urban hermit. He was especially drawn to the churches of the martyrs and the catacomb of Saint Sebastian. He also grew closer to some of the independent religious organizations working with the city's poor, particularly the Confraternity of Charity, which he joined. They were mostly laymen, based at the church of San Girolamo della Carità and working in the nearby hospital of San Giacomo. This was the last refuge for many of the poorest, sickest, and most desperate people in Rome, who were quite numerous at this time.

Hospitals at this point provided some basic necessities, such as shelter, perhaps a bed, and, if you were lucky, basic medical care from doctors or medical students. But they lacked things such as cleaning staff, food for patients, and nursing staff. Charitable volunteers stepped into the breach. Philip began doing this work as a young man in the 1540s and continued it throughout his life.

At some point, he also began to evangelize, using his wit and interest in human foibles to approach those he met through the city's vibrant street life. But he was no street-corner preacher. Philip's evangelizing was deeply personal, more conversational than instructional. Slowly, a group of laymen began to gather around him informally, working in the hospital wards as they could and praying with him in their free time.

In 1548, the city was preparing for the upcoming jubilee year of 1550. People of all classes flocked there from faraway lands, crowding the city and straining its capacity. Many arrived sick or injured, and the existing hospices, hospitals, and monasteries couldn't provide enough shelter, food, and care for them all. Philip and his confessor founded the Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity to provide for them. By the time the jubilee year came around, they were hosting some 500 pilgrims every day.

Philip's Ministry and the Early Oratory

It may also have been around this time that Philip experienced something of a spiritual crisis. He felt a calling but was not sure in which direction. He knew the life of a monk wasn't for him, nor the new religious orders, such as the Jesuits. In fact, throughout his career, Philip ardently resisted any attempts at curbing his individual freedoms.

At the encouragement of his spiritual director, Philip entered the priesthood. He was ordained in 1551, when he was about 36, unusually old to embark on the career at that time. He moved into the community attached to San Girolamo della Carità and became a chaplain there, where he lived until pried out by papal order in his old age.

Confessions and the spiritual direction he could impart with them became the backbone of Philip's ministry. But his ministry was intensely personal, flexible, and pragmatic. He continued to meet individuals where they were: on the street, in a tavern or square, and, increasingly, in his own humble rooms.

Philip's kindness, patience, and forgiving nature drew people in crisis to him so often that he hung the key to his door on a hook outside, and anyone who wished could let themselves in for confession, day or night.

Philip's advice often had to do with attaining what today we would call psychological balance: a sense of happiness and even joy in the world combined with a hefty dose of good sense. He was ever skeptical of sudden conversions and quick adoption of intensely pious attitudes, seeing them as less sustainable than consistent, small spiritual exercises.

It's unclear exactly when his gatherings became formalized into the early Oratory, as his followers' organization was later known. But we do know something of their lifestyle. At first, his followers might work a shift at the hospital ward, then gather in Philip's room for a short sermon or discussion on the Bible and meditation. Their leader was a master of improvisation and often led them to hear a sermon at the nearby Dominican church or on a short pilgrimage out of the city to the gardens and hillsides of some villa. Discussions were wide-ranging and in good spirit, intent on broadening the mind.

As Philip's followers grew, they moved from his small room into a room above the nave of San Girolamo. His earliest followers were men from the lower classes, but as his reputation grew, he began to attract prelates from the curia, musicians from the papal chapel, and wealthy businessmen.

In 1564, a group of Florentines approached Philip to become the director of the Florentine parish in Rome, San Giovanni dei Fiorentini. He agreed but continued to live at San Girolamo. However, the new space attracted some of his followers, and they began to hold meetings of the "little oratory" there, attracting a more clerical crowd and shaping the lifestyle of what would become the formal Congregation of the Oratory.

Philip's Unique Style

Stories grew of Philip performing miraculous healings. He was on call not only for confession, healings, and last rites but also for childbirths that were going badly. He was also known to have visions and go into ecstasies, especially while celebrating mass.

Philip yielded center stage readily to his disciples. He identified and cultivated their strengths, allowing them to develop as speakers or encouraging them as scholars. As musicians from the papal court began to attend, he encouraged them to share their talents. The community became a center for innovation in church music.

His sermons took after his own style of speaking, which emblematized the principles of the Counter-Reformation. He addressed the theological and moral debates of the day, discussed Protestant claims and propaganda, and explored Christian doctrine. But by far the most popular of his exercises were Philip's pilgrimage walks. The most well known was the Walk of the Seven Churches. This procession began as a small gathering of perhaps 30 people, but it eventually swelled to 2,000 people or more and stayed that size for much of Philip's life.

Philip had a horror of being considered a saint, and he did ridiculous things to convince people he wasn't: He had his hair cut in church during mass, appeared disheveled, and played children's games in the street. He even used his odd behavior to try to convince cardinals and popes that he wasn't fit for high office.

Philip's antics, the inclusion of laity in theological discussions, and the unusual style of his followers' outdoor religious observations caused some concern in ecclesiastical circles. His group was investigated several times, but the Inquisition could find no cause for concern. In fact, the inquests strengthened the Oratorians' reputation among members of the curia.

The Congregation of the Oratory

In 1575, Pope Gregory XIII sought to formalize Philip's followers. He gave them the little parish church of Santa Maria della Vallicella, not far from the area where they had begun. And in a papal bull, he created them as a congregation. Philip immediately resisted providing a rule or constitutions for them. Until the day he died, he refused to subject his followers to requirements as to their dress, schedules, or habits or to require them to eat or live together or in any other way behave as a religious order. Instead, the secular priests who joined his congregation took no vows and had almost complete autonomy in their daily lives. The sort of fellowship this offered to priests was enormously attractive, and though Philip hesitated to replicate the Oratory in other locations during his lifetime, it spread quickly across Europe after his death.

At Santa Maria della Vallicella, Philip's patrons donated to rebuild the small church into a grand edifice with an attached community. But he remained stubbornly at San Girolamo for years afterward. He eventually agreed to live in rooms attached to the Chiesa Nuova, the new site of the Oratory. His rooms became a hub for the community, and his disciples grew ever more elevated. He was an advisor to cardinals and even popes.

In 1593, at the age of 78, Philip suffered an illness and stepped down as the Oratory's leader. He continued to act as spiritual director and confessor for those who desired his advice until his death 2 years later in May 1595. A familiar figure to the papal curia and all Romans, Philip Neri was immediately venerated, and his canonization was put on a fast track. Testimony was collected very quickly, and he was beatified in 1615, then canonized in 1622 with other Counter-Reformation luminaries.

Today, Philip Neri is venerated the world over. His feast day is May 26, and he is the patron saint of the city of Rome, of humor and joy, and of the US Special Forces. He is affectionately known as the Second Apostle of Rome, after Saint Peter.

Reading

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Türks, Paul. *Philip Neri: The Fire of Joy*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1995.

Peter and Mary Magdalene: Early Saint Stories

This lecture examines the stories told about saints and how they relate to historical evidence. There are two types of evidence for saints: material and documentary. The lecture begins with the written tradition of the life of Mary Magdalene and then looks at what material evidence has to say about the apostle Peter. By looking at how their stories have evolved through the centuries, you can learn something about what people needed from saints.

The Biblical Magdalene

The earliest saints in Christianity are, of course, figures from the New Testament, which is a difficult source of historical information. Mark, held to be the oldest Gospel, was at minimum written 30 to 40 years after Christ's death, Matthew and Luke several decades later, and John in the 2nd century CE. They are occasionally unclear or contradictory. Corroborating historical records are scarce, and later accounts muddle them with apocryphal texts and pseudonymous letters.

Mary of Magdala appears only a few times in the Gospels. All four identify her as one of the women who discover the empty tomb and the one who carries the news of the Resurrection to the apostles. Three also identify her as present at the Crucifixion, two at the entombment. And two Gospels, Mark and Luke, identify her as a woman from whom Christ has cast out demons.

The accounts differ notably, however, on the Magdalene's role in announcing the Resurrection. This is the foundation of a long and contentious legend of the Magdalene as the "apostle to the apostles"—that is, in most of the Gospels, Mary Magdalene and sometimes other women with her are the first to witness the Resurrection when they visit Christ's tomb to anoint his body, and they are then instructed by the risen Christ to go and inform the other disciples of the miracle.

Magdala is believed to refer to Mary's birthplace, derived from the Hebrew word *migdal*, or "tower." It was a bustling Jewish town on the Sea of Galilee. Archaeological finds indicate the town dated back to the 2nd century BCE and include some of the oldest synagogue ruins in the region.

Mary, or Mariam, probably lived among an extended family of multiple generations, and by her late teens, there probably would have been a marriage arranged for her. But unlike most Roman women, Jewish wives could own property in their own right and bring legal actions, including divorce prosecutions.

The Medieval European Magdalene

The story of the biblical Magdalene gives few clues to her family or social status, so medieval authors took the liberty of filling in the gaps. Over the next 1,500 years, the story of Mary Magdalene was stretched to incorporate as many Gospel narratives as possible. As analyzed in Katherine Jansen's seminal work *The Making of the Magdalen*, the many Marys of the New Testament were formed into a "composite" Mary Magdalene as early as 591 CE. This composite Magdalene—a demoniac, penitent, and devoted follower—endured in Catholic tradition until the liturgy was reformed in 1969.

By the later Middle Ages, her story had grown incredibly: Mary was now the beautiful daughter of a wealthy family in Magdala. She was engaged to John (the future Evangelist), and it was at their wedding that Christ turned water into wine. John abandoned the marriage to follow him, and Mary, despairing, sank into a life of sin and luxury. She underwent a conversion and became Christ's disciple, witnessing the Passion and, ultimately, the Resurrection.

The Franks of the 9th century co-opted the Magdalene, and in their telling, she and her two siblings were driven out of Jerusalem and drifted miraculously to the shores of France, where she preached and converted the local populace, lived as a hermit, and died. Her relics were then transported from Marseilles to Vézelay Abbey to protect them from Muslim raiders, and there they remained for centuries. Vézelay became a major shrine to the Magdalene and obtained papal recognition for their relics in 1058.

The Magdalene's cult took another turn in France in the 13th century, as a younger branch of the French royal family known as the Angevins adopted her as their own. They publicized their connections to a "holy bloodline" of saints in 1279, when the Angevin heir Charles of Salerno manufactured the "discovery" of her relics in a Provençal crypt. The family soon circulated

a collection of miracles performed by their relics, castigating the Vézelay relics as false and "powerless." The Angevins won out, and the end of the Middle Ages saw their cult of the Magdalene rise to prominence.

As the Magdalene's legend evolved in the later Middle Ages, her sinful pre-conversion life provided an excellent pretext for preachers to complain about sexual vices, vanity, luxury, or women's behavior in general.

The Protestant Magdalene

During the Reformation, the Magdalene's story was once more adapted. The Magdalene of the Angevins was roundly debunked in a treatise by humanist Jacques LeFèvre d'Étaples, and the more widespread practice of reading the Bible in the vernacular opened her story to interpretation by the dozens of Protestant sects that sprang up in the 16th century.

Protestants were deeply divided over her importance and whether to maintain her role as an exemplar for women. Martin Luther embraced her story as a foundation for women's public role as evangelists, while John Calvin rejected her as a base sinner. Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, had been born in Vézelay, which had become a Protestant stronghold, but one that still had a strong affection for the Magdalene. He embraced her as a symbol of the church. In the English Reformation, the Magdalene remained as patron of some churches and communities.

These stories encompass only a few of the Magdalenes known around the world today. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Mary of Bethany was never folded into the composite Magdalene. In the Baha'i faith, she is an honored example of strength and faith. In the Coptic and Syrian traditions, the Magdalene's presence at the Resurrection is replaced by that of the Virgin Mary, whose cult is especially strong in those areas.

In 2016, Pope Francis elevated her memorial day, held on July 22, to a feast, with a reminder of her renewed image as a strong and devoted disciple of Christ. She is the patron saint of converts, contemplative life, glove makers, hairdressers, perfume makers, pharmacists, tanners, penitent sinners, sexual temptation, and women.

The Life of Simon Peter

Our evidence for the life of Simon Peter after Christ's death is especially dependent on New Testament texts; no additional collection of letters or noncanonical Gospels fleshes out his story. Simon Peter and his family came from the north bank of the Sea of Galilee. He was married, and there are many martyrdom stories about his wife, who went on missions with him. He may also have had children and stepchildren. Peter was known as Christ's main helper, but the Gospels are especially harsh on him, enumerating his flaws.

Following the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and gift of tongues at Pentecost, the apostles scattered. Peter and John traveled to nearby Samaria. The Acts of the Apostles, written many decades after his death, presents Peter as a charismatic preacher who circulated among Jewish communities. He later began to work among the Gentiles, non-Jewish communities, at Caesarea Maritima. After clashing with Paul at Antioch about the integration of Gentile and Jewish converts, Peter left for Rome.

Most scholars believe Peter was in Rome for some years. The Christian community there dated from about the 40s CE, and they were highly suspect. They refused to participate in the public feasts that were required of all Romans and that were believed to stave off the gods' wrath. This made them easy scapegoats after the great fire that swept the city in the summer of 64 CE.

Peter was executed during these persecutions, which are believed to have been held in Nero's circus, an amphitheater atop the Vatican Hill. Here we lose sight of Peter. While the bodies of criminals were typically dumped in unmarked mass graves, some scholars argue that Christians went to some effort to reclaim the bodies of their dead and inter them respectfully. Others, however, note that the earliest Christians believed Judgment Day was nearly upon them and placed less importance on commemorating martyrs' burials, anticipating imminent resurrection into glory.

Saint Peter's Relics

Nearly 150 years later, the Roman author Gaius noted multiple shrines to Peter: one in a necropolis on Vatican Hill and another on the Via Appia, south of the city. From the 9th century, a relic claimed to be the head of Peter was held in the St. John Lateran Basilica, then the primary residence of the popes.

In the 4th century, after converting to Christianity and legalizing it, Constantine leveled parts of Vatican Hill, including parts of the necropolis, to provide a platform for his great basilica, now known as Constantinian or Old St. Peter's Basilica. Over the centuries, it underwent many changes.

From 461 CE, it was the major papal burial location. Many popes and other notable Christians through the years wished to be buried close to Peter's tomb, beneath the basilica, in an area known as the Vatican Grottoes. While digging for these burials, workmen often turned up evidence of the ancient cemetery that lay beneath. In 1939, Pope Pius XII proposed the construction of a modern chapel to reorder the grottoes. Architects and engineers soon discovered the remains of the buried necropolis. The pope ordered a great excavation, to be conducted quietly, in the early years of World War II. In 1941, several hundred workmen began to uncover a 300-foot-long street lined with tombs.

There was some tension throughout the dig between its supervisor, Ludwig Kaas, and the lead excavators. Kaas believed they were not handling the human remains found with sufficient respect. One of his guides later reported that he had helped Kaas remove some bones from a niche in a recently excavated plastered red wall, unknown to the excavators.

Not knowing that bones had disappeared from the niche, called the loculus, archaeologists continued examining the graves. The bones found in the grave immediately beneath the red wall's little temple, or aedicula, were sent to the pope's personal physician for examination. He verified that they were those of a man in his late sixties, "powerfully built": a description that fit Saint Peter perfectly. The bones were then sent to Professor Venerando Correnti, an expert in medical anthropology at the University of Palermo. After years of careful examination, however, he determined the bones belonged to a mixture of animals and people. None matched the expected age of Saint Peter at his death.

Analysis of the graffiti scratched in the plaster wall has also been contentious. The damaged inscription is said to read either "Peter is here" or "Peter is not here" (a warning to early would-be pilgrims). Further analysis carried out in the 1950s by Professor Margherita Guarducci of the University of Rome suggested that the wall was covered in symbols representing Christian beliefs. She argued that combinations of rho and pi contained some 20 references to Peter as well.

It was also Guarducci who discovered the fate of the bones that Kaas had removed without the excavators' knowledge. When an old family friend of hers was elected to the papacy as Paul VI, she alerted him to the bones' importance, and Correnti went to work on them. He compared the loculus bones with the supposed head of Saint Peter held in the Lateran. Correnti had found that these bones did conform to Saint Peter's description. The bones had also been buried in the surrounding soil at some point and were later wrapped in an expensive garment of purple and gold. Paul VI shared this news with the world in the summer of 1968, and the bones were restored to their niche in a solemn ceremony.

There are, of course, alternate theories about the bones in the loculus. But the point is this: Cult sites and shrines are invested with believers' faith in ways that shape the saint's story and our own understanding of the past.

Cult sites and shrines are tangible links between us and the faithful of the past, who may have had knowledge that we have lost.

Reading

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Jantzen, Kathryn. *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Perpetua and Felicity: Mothers and Martyrs

On a March morning in the year 203 CE, a group of young traitors to the Roman Empire walked quietly from their prison cell to the arena in Carthage, where they were to be executed. One of them, a young woman named Perpetua, had just consigned her prison diary to a fellow Christian. This trusted compatriot added his story of their deaths to Perpetua's diary, along with a brief account from one of the other prisoners. The diary also mentions Felicity, a young slave from Perpetua's family household, martyred alongside her. A word of warning before digging into this subject: This lecture contains references to rape, abuse, and violent death.

Perpetua's World

Perpetua's diary became known as *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*. Modeled somewhat after Greek romances of the time, it depicts a young mother of good family who became a model for the early Christian minority struggling to grow and thrive in the Roman Empire. But at times, she seems almost too good to be true. Can we fully trust what we think we know about her life and about Felicity's life?

By the late 2nd century CE, when Perpetua was born, Carthage was a thriving city, second only to Rome in its wealth. The surrounding farmland supplied Rome with grain, and local producers traded their olive oil and wines across the empire. These were produced on vast estates worked by large numbers of enslaved people in notoriously harsh conditions. The well-off owners, meanwhile, lived in comfortable houses.

It's not clear whether Perpetua's family, the Vibia, lived in Carthage itself or in a town nearby. She and her two brothers would have spoken Punic, Latin, and probably Greek. If they were the prominent family some scholars believe them to have been, the children would have had access to good tutors and cultural events. Their house would've been tended by enslaved people owned by Perpetua's father.

Part of Perpetua's education would have centered on religious duties. She would've been raised to do honor to her family and their ancestors, hailing them among a plethora of other deities who were responsible for every facet of the Roman world. She would also have been keenly aware of the imperial cult, or emperor worship. To sacrifice to the imperial cult was to acknowledge one's place as a loyal citizen and to contribute to the health of the local community. Mystery cults had also become a great attraction for the Carthaginian populace, and early Christians were seen as such a cult by some Romans.

We know that around the time she was drawn to the small Christian community in Carthage, Perpetua was in her early 20s with a 1-year-old child. So, we can assume a marriage of at least 2 years' standing, though the *Passion*'s final author described her as "newly married." Her husband is entirely absent from the *Passion*. Most likely, he was omitted or later edited out to keep the audience's attention focused on the martyr's relationship with God.

Felicity's World

There were two male converts present at the time of the arrest and two enslaved people from Perpetua's household, named Revocatus and Felicity. We know that Felicity belonged to the household of the Vibia, that she was a Christian catechumen along with others in the household, and that she was in her third trimester of pregnancy at the time of her arrest. These are sparse facts, but from them, we can extrapolate much about Felicity's life and world.

In an urban, well-off household, her duties might have entailed tending to the family's clothes, child minding, food preparation, and general tidying and cleaning. We don't know about her family or about the father of her child. It's possible that Felicity was pregnant as a result of rape by either Perpetua's father or brothers or an enslaved man. Roman histories make clear that men treated the sexual abuse of slaves as their right, and Roman wives turned a blind eye.

We have records in which enslaved couples refer to each other as husband and wife. However, because their relationship was not legally formalized, no rights bound the family together; any one of them could be sold at any time. Felicity's hopes of legal freedom were likely slim. Pregnancy only added to the difficulty of her situation. Christianity offered a welcome support and community for the enslaved and the poor, and it's unsurprising that Felicity and Revocatus should have found solace in it.

The Arrest, Trial, and Imprisonment

By the time of Perpetua and Felicity's arrest, the city of Carthage held half a million people, of whom perhaps 2,000 were Christians. There is a popular misconception that large numbers of Christians were persecuted under the Romans. The truth is that the Romans, while mildly prejudiced against Christians, simply didn't care that much about them. But Christians did make for excellent scapegoats when the need arose, and any persecutions were local and relatively small-scale.

Christians were made uniquely vulnerable under the rule of the emperor Septimius Severus, a general who had assumed the imperial throne during a period of turmoil. Severus sought to establish his legitimacy by promoting his own cult alongside that of the Egyptian god Serapis. He also outlawed conversion to Christianity or Judaism, possibly seeing them as competitors.

The ambitious Roman governor, Hilarian, sponsored games to celebrate the birthday of the emperor's son. In Carthage, with a long history of self-sacrifice and even human sacrifice, offering blood tribute may have been especially important. Hilarian probably ordered the arrest of Christian converts for execution as part of the festival. We don't know how the catechumens were identified, but they were immediately placed under house arrest.

During this time, the prisoners underwent baptism, completing the group's conversion and allowing Hilarian to bring the full weight of the new law into effect. They were moved to a prison and joined by Saturus, a leader of the Christian community and voluntary martyr.

The group's trial was held in the forum, with Hilarian presiding. Perpetua's father made an impassioned plea, holding her son and begging her to think of the child. When she refused to listen and her father continued to importune her, the *Passion* tells us that Hilarian had him beaten, which greatly distressed Perpetua. For some scholars, that event calls into question the true status of Perpetua's family, as a man of higher status would never have been beaten in open

court. Kate Cooper has suggested that the *Passion* was edited later to make Perpetua into a less subversive figure, inserting claims of good birth and marriage, but that the original text may have depicted a poor concubine struggling to provide for her child. This would explain some of these oddities we've seen in the text.

The group returned to the prison, where one of them, Secundulus, died, perhaps at the hands of the guards. It is during this part of the *Passion* that we finally learn a little about Felicity: She was estimated to be in her eighth month of pregnancy during their imprisonment. Roman law did not allow a pregnant woman to be executed. However, Felicity went into early labor in prison.

We know almost nothing of Felicity's child, save that she was a girl and was given to "one of the sisters"—presumably a fellow Christian woman—to raise. This, too, is incongruous with Roman law, which said that the child, born enslaved, was the property of Perpetua's father. If the account is accurate, it is possible that Felicity's arrest and condemnation provided her daughter with greater freedom than she might have had otherwise.

Perpetua's father pitiably begged her to perform a public sacrifice and save herself, but she calmly refused, breaking the ties to her birth family to claim her Christian family. To Romans, this would have been deeply shocking; to the Christian readership of the *Passion*, it was inspirational.

The night before, the condemned celebrated a last meal. A crowd gathered to mock and abuse them, but they took the opportunity to preach to the mob and show their resolve. The next day, they turned the short 10-minute walk to the arena into a procession, singing hymns and walking with composure. Yet the *Passion* goes into some detail about the fears of the group in the time before their executions. The Christians would have been familiar with the various means by which they could have been executed. Only common criminals were typically put on display in the arena. This is yet another reason to question the author's assertion that Perpetua's family was well off. Those from high-ranking families were encouraged to commit suicide or quietly executed in a private house.

The Execution

This group had been sentenced to death by wild animals. First, the men were to face a leopard, then a bear. Next, the women were forced into the arena to be confronted by a mad heifer. Prisoners were typically executed naked, a final indignity and sign of their low status. But the crowd was shocked at their appearance, and the women were taken away and clothed. Then, they were presented again to the heifer, who charged, crushing Felicity and striking Perpetua. Despite the blow, both were able to walk and returned to the Gate of Life, the gate reserved for victorious gladiators, where they were joined by Christian supporters.

During this time, Saturus was mauled by a leopard, but the author writes that he lived for some time—enough to memorialize the occasion by dipping his guard's ring in his blood and returning it "as a pledge and as a record of his bloodshed." Perpetua, meanwhile, had recovered herself enough to give encouragement to her supporters.

The crowd at this point demanded that the final blows be witnessed in the arena. Led by Saturus, who was faint from blood loss, they proceeded calmly to the execution platform and bid farewell to their fellows with a kiss. Felicity and Saturus took the sword in silence, but Perpetua's executioner was young and inexperienced. His first strike hit her collarbone rather than her neck. In the most memorable moment of the entire *Passion*, Perpetua "took the trembling hand of the young gladiator and guided it to her throat."

The *Passion* is a curious text, with its multiple authors and viewpoints. It evoked discomfort in many of its readers, and scholars debate whether it represents historical reality or is a rhetorical, sophisticated blend of fiction and other martyr stories' motifs. There are no corroborating historical records to testify to Perpetua and Felicity's lives, and so we may never be able to entirely sift fact from fiction in the *Passion*. Nevertheless, we can admire the enormous impact their story had for Christians through the last two millennia. Today, they are remembered around the world. Their feast day is March 7, and they are the patron saints of mothers, pregnant women, ranchers, and butchers.

At some point, a brief synopsis of the *Passion* began to circulate and was adopted into the popular saints' anthology known as the *Golden Legend*. The original account was almost forgotten until a manuscript of it was discovered in the abbey of Montecassino's archive in the 17th century.

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Empress Irene and the Veneration of Images

5

Some historians view the empress Irene of Athens as a monstrous mother and weak ruler. Yet she has long been venerated as a saint, philanthropist, and brave savior of an essential tradition of the Eastern Orthodox faith: their icons. As you consider the many fascinating elements of her rule in this lecture, perhaps you can find a middle path between the extreme views. Regardless of where you land in your opinion of her, the importance of her legacy is undeniable.

The Iconoclastic Controversy

Irene of Athens was born around 752 CE. By that time, the Byzantine Empire was struggling to hold on to its overseas territories. Government had become increasingly complex, and the Byzantine church played an important part in it; bishops were not only religious leaders but great landowners and political leaders as well. Monks were seen as living images of holiness, and they were often the keepers of saints' relics and images used in venerating the saints. But neither bishops nor monks were unified. Many adhered to imperial policy, even as that policy became increasingly hostile to the use of images as a focus for devotion.

There are competing scholarly views on the rise and importance of the Iconoclastic Controversy—that is, the clashes between image lovers (iconophiles) and those who opposed the use of images for veneration (iconoclasts). Images gained increasing importance as part of the cult of the saints in the 6th and 7th centuries—periods when Byzantium experienced great upheaval due to plague, natural disasters, and military challenges. During this period, images were elevated to almost the status of saints' relics in their ability to connect ordinary people with divine power.

The Isaurian dynasty sought to suppress these forms of devotion. Under Leo III, a general who seized the throne in 717, and his successors Constantine V and Leo IV, the veneration and worship of holy images was suppressed, and the clerics and monasteries that protected them came under attack. The Council of Hiereia in 754 declared the creation of images of saints, and all those who venerated them, to be anathema. Violent factions formed; there were riots, and images were broken or destroyed. After a brief lull under Irene and her successors, a new dynasty returned to iconoclastic policies, ushering in the second and more violent period of iconoclasm in the 9th century.

But some scholars point out that the sources that tell us about this first age of iconoclasm were heavily altered by later generations. They were doctored to paint the Isaurians as radical iconoclasts and villains and Irene as an iconophile champion. There is scant evidence that Leo III ever issued edicts against religious images or ordered their destruction. His son

Constantine V took a harder stance but only toward the end of his reign, after a major rebellion involving the military, court officials, and the patriarch—the highest-ranking cleric in the Eastern Church.

Irene as a Bride and Mother

Irene was born to a powerful regional family based in Athens. She may have caught the attention of the imperial household thanks to her uncle, who was a general in control of the region around Athens. We don't know how Irene was chosen to be the future empress. She arrived in Constantinople in early November 769. Her reception would have been a first and critical lesson for Irene: The empress is always watched, and in public, every gesture mattered. For the rest of her life, Irene capitalized on that visibility, turning public events into propaganda pieces for her reign.

The betrothal ceremony uniting her with the young prince, Leo, took place just two days later in the palace chapel. These kinds of public performances required physical stamina as well as grace, poise, and an excellent memory and self-awareness.

The wedding day began by her father-in-law crowning her as Augusta, signifying her status as a future empress, or *basilissa*. The wedding itself was a small ceremony conducted by the patriarch and followed by receptions and acclamations. It ended at the distant bridal chamber. Irene—still a young girl, perhaps 16 years old—would have settled into life in her own apartments, while her husband and the rest of the imperial family had separate quarters.

A year later, she gave birth to a son, Constantine, named after his grandfather. Empresses were expected to bear multiple children, but Irene had no more children during the decade between her son's birth and her husband's death. Nor did she marry or conceive afterward.

Irene's Rise to Power

In 775, Constantine V died. He left behind an empire that was financially stable, a successful military, a strong dynasty, and a number of ambitious sons with a claim to the throne. Leo moved quickly to cement his power, elevating sympathizers to important bishoprics and increasing the size of the army. The following year, he orchestrated an important ritual, with all military and political leaders present, acknowledging his right to the throne. Five-year-old Constantine was crowned as coemperor, and all were made to swear that they would support his claim to the throne. This may have provoked Leo's half brothers into rebellion. Only a few months later, they were arrested and exiled for fomenting a coup attempt. This was the first of several such attempts over the next 25 years.

When Leo IV died in 780, Irene became regent for her 10-year-old son. She faced a daunting task. Her husband's half brothers still presented an attractive alternative to generals who might prefer a leader who could personally lead their armies. This was not an abstract problem. Byzantium had for decades sustained annual attacks from Arab forces on their eastern front, while the Bulgars threatened from the north, and their territories on mainland Italy were under constant threat as well.

The insecurity of her position—and by extension her son's—was driven home only six weeks after Leo's death, when his half brothers launched a serious attempt to put the eldest of them, Nicephorus, on the throne. Irene resolved the immediate threat, but it took years to fully suppress the half brothers' faction. She further shored up her power by removing some of her father-in-law's generals from power and giving leadership to a series of trusted eunuchs.

Repeated coup attempts formed a habit of mistrust and vigilance that influenced Irene strongly when she came to power.

On the matter of image worshipping, Irene acted slowly but determinedly. We have no direct evidence of her personal thoughts on image veneration, though later historians crafted dramatic stories of Irene as a dedicated secret iconophile hiding in the heart of Constantine V's iconoclastic court. We also don't know much about Irene's religious education, though it's likely her family supported imperial power during the period of Constantine V's iconoclastic policies. But we do have some evidence that even within the imperial court, women of the imperial family were tacitly permitted some private iconophile sympathies.

Irene's Church Reforms

The reform of the Byzantine church became Irene's first major policy initiative as regent. In 784, the iconoclastic patriarch Paul retired to a monastery. Irene selected his replacement—not a cleric but an imperial secretary, Tarasius. It seemed that her choice was made in part to shed her predecessors' image suppression and bring unity to the church.

The following year, Tarasius wrote an anti-iconoclasm profession of faith to the pope, accompanying a request for papal representatives to attend a synod in 786. But Irene had underestimated the iconoclastic faction's determination to prevail. The meeting was broken up after an attempt to assassinate Tarasius during the council itself.

When Irene called a new council a year later—the famous Second Council of Nicaea in 787—she was in far better control of ecclesiastical affairs. The council unanimously approved the reintroduction of saints' images for veneration. Iconoclasm was denounced as heretical, and three former patriarchs with iconoclastic views were anathematized. Monasteries began to invest in art once more, and copies were made of older icons that had survived the first iconoclastic age. This is acknowledged as one of Irene's great achievements, and it's perhaps this council that cemented her place in the history books and as a saint.

Irene Defends Her Throne

By 788, Irene had settled on a suitable wife for Constantine, who was then in his late teens, old enough to assume the throne in his own right. His mother never allowed this, keeping his retinue small, denying him the opportunity to gather supporters to his cause. We know little about him, but he does not seem to have had qualities that would have made him a poor ruler.

By 790, Irene was overcommitted on several fronts. Troops were defending Byzantine territories in southern Italy as Arab and Bulgar attacks threatened to the east and north. Constantine plotted to overthrow her favored general, Stauracius, and step into his place. However, the plot was discovered, and instead, it was the general who had Constantine's supporters arrested, tortured, and exiled.

Irene had Constantine placed under house arrest and forced the army to swear oaths of loyalty to her and not recognize Constantine as sole ruler during her lifetime. But half the army demanded his release, and Irene complied, fearing the repercussions. The army confirmed Constantine as sole emperor, and he made a brief bid to seize power fully from his mother, placing her under house arrest.

We don't know why, but 2 years later, Constantine released his mother and began acknowledging her as his coruler. He may have wanted her support against his uncles, who were once more plotting with military commanders to overthrow him. Irene and Constantine maintained separate courts for several years, and their open hostility appears to have been well known. In 795, Constantine divorced his wife and married his mistress, to great uproar and scandal.

In the fall of 796, Irene made a push to seize power for good. Constantine fled to Anatolia. In 797, he was arrested, confined in the palace where he was born, and blinded there. It's almost impossible that Irene did not know, or order, his maiming. He may have died soon after from his wounds or lived quietly with little trace in the historical records.

Irene's Final Years

Irene announced she would not remarry but would rule alone. This meant there was no clear heir to the throne, and Irene was approaching 50. Almost immediately, her favored eunuchs began jostling for position. One, Aetius, sought to put his brother on the throne, while Stauracius led the other main faction. Irene became sick, and her reputation began to suffer, both from the eunuchs' constant plotting and from events overseas. In the wake of Constantine's death, Pope Leo III had granted the title Holy Roman emperor to Charlemagne, which dealt a blow to Byzantium's imperial prestige.

Irene issued laws and coinage in her own name. She built and restored many churches, and she created dining halls, residences, and cemeteries for the poor; hospices for the sick; and retirement homes for the elderly. She also reduced the burden of taxes.

Among Irene's chief administrators, Stauracius died in 800, and Aetius soon ran amok. In October 802, chief finance minister Nicephorus launched an uprising and seized the throne for himself. Irene's long, improbable tenure on the throne had come to an end. We know little about her life in exile. She died the following year. Irene is commemorated as a savior of images and a saint in the Byzantine Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. Her feast day is August 9.

Interestingly for an iconophile ruler, Irene's coins did not use the Isaurian symbol of a cross, but neither did she adopt a portrait of Christ or the Virgin Mary; instead, she broke convention by depicting herself on both sides of the coin.

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Radegund: Survivor, Queen, Abbess

6

Radegund began and ended her life as one might expect of a medieval queen: Born into a royal family, she died a powerful abbess and respected patroness of arts and politics. But in the interim, she was a child captive, a political pawn, an unwilling bride, a fugitive, and a diplomat. This lecture details how Radegund cleverly negotiated treacherous political and religious currents to forge her own path and become a new exemplar of powerful female sanctity.

A Privileged but Unstable Childhood

As a child of royalty in the restless, shape-shifting kingdoms of 6th-century Francia and Germany, Radegund had a comfortable life—at least in terms of food and clothing. But the endemic violence of the period taught the princess at an early age to be wary of complacency.

She was born around 520 to Berthar, one of three brothers who jointly ruled the Thuringians. Thuringia was roughly near the city of Erfurt, 120 miles northeast of modern-day Frankfurt. The Merovingian kingdoms lay mostly in modern-day France. Both suffered from the same problematic inheritance structure, in which kings often divided their kingdoms equally among their male heirs or made them joint rulers. These kingdoms often ended in invasion or usurpation, as the rulers of ever-shrinking kingdoms sought expansion by pushing into the territory held by their male relatives. It was not surprising that the Thuringian kingship collapsed. One of the three brothers, Hermanfrid, killed the others, taking the royal children into his court as wards.

But in 531, a neighboring king and his allies seized Hermanfrid's kingdom by force. Radegund was perhaps 11 years old when the Merovingians descended on Thuringia. In a memorable story from her hagiography, the princess's fate was momentarily a matter of chance, as the Merovingian leaders gambled for possession of the Thuringian spoils and prisoners. She was claimed by Chlotar, a notoriously aggressive and ambitious Merovingian ruler who also married two of her cousins. He sent Radegund to a villa at Athies in northern France, where she was cared for by the king's trusted followers.

Writings about Radegund

Three of Radegund's intimates wrote about her during her life or shortly after her death, and she is also mentioned in other historical records of the Merovingian royal families. We even have some of her own writings, which make clear that the deaths of almost all her family continued to live vividly in her memory and were central to her adult identity.

We know little about her daily life as a young woman in captivity and later as a reluctant queen. Her story was told by two hagiographers who knew her personally, which enabled them to provide a good amount of historical detail corroborated by chronicles and letters. However, the authors still drew liberally on tropes from other saintly cults and focused largely on her adult life as a religious.

The first author, Venantius Fortunatus, was a highly educated poet with a deft political touch. The second author, Baudonivia, was a nun at Radegund's convent and knew her in life. Her work is intended to complement Venantius's work, and they were written only a few years apart. Baudonivia's work promotes the fame of the convent, emphasizes Radegund's miracle-working powers as a saint, and demonstrates the exceptional level of education afforded to Merovingian noblewomen and especially at Holy Cross.

Only Venantius—and, to some extent, the histories of Bishop Gregory of Tours—discuss Radegund's early years and marriage. Both were churchmen steeped in the literature of martyrs and church fathers of the previous century. Both felt the need to reach a changing audience as Christianity became a majority religion across Europe. They also navigated a new landscape of Christian authority as church leaders evolved from missionaries to administrators. These larger forces influenced Radegund's life, her strategy for steering the monastery of the Holy Cross, and her portrayal after death.

An Unwilling Wife

Until this point, martyrdom had been the main route through which women had been acknowledged as saints. Virginity was also increasingly emphasized as one of the few paths to holiness available to women in the 4th and 5th centuries. However, Radegund was neither a virgin nor a martyr.

She presented her hagiographers with several challenges—most notably, her marriage to Chlotar and the 10 years spent openly sharing his bed as one of his queens. Our dates are uncertain, but around the late 530s, after at least 5 years at Athies, Radegund was considered as being of marriageable age, and Chlotar married her.

Radegund made her lifelong distaste for Chlotar clear in writing and action: She ran away from him before they were betrothed, she avoided attending public events with him, she finally abandoned his court entirely, and even after his death, she contributed to a bitter poetic recounting of his sins against her and her family. The crime of marital rape would not have been recognized by a Merovingian court, but today, we can at least understand a little how deep Radegund's scars may have gone after years of forced intimacy with her family's killer.

She lived at Chlotar's court as one of his wives until at least 550 CE. Medieval marriage was often an arranged union, conducted in an informal secular setting, involving the exchange of property and promises before witnesses, followed by consummation. The partnership would likely not have the expectation of monogamy on the male side, but women were expected to restrict their sexual partners.

Scholars have traditionally regarded Radegund as establishing a new formula for royal sanctity, which became a dominant trend among saints made in the early Middle Ages.

From Court to Convent

Women had little in the way of legal or financial freedoms, but they could own property. Typically, a new wife would receive a dowry from her new husband. For wealthy matches, the gift might be multiple estates or considerable properties. These became the woman's property to own and manage and to support her if she were widowed.

Queens and princesses were certainly conduits for power and wealth, bringing important alliances, trade, and even religion between kingdoms. But in terms of personal power, even a role as an important political pawn did not grant protection. Royal favor was fickle and not to be depended upon.

But it was a combination of wealth and political influence that bolstered most successful Merovingian queens' longevity. Their reputation and status at court enabled queens to practice a quiet sort of diplomacy.

Merovingian queens did enter convents in widowhood, but Radegund's feat in achieving separation from her husband during his life was extraordinary. Her departure from court seems to have been closely linked to Chlotar's murder of her brother, who had also been taken as a child captive after the fall of Thuringia and may have been killed as a consequence of an uprising there. Venantius gives the most detailed account of Radegund's gradual progression to a consecrated monastic life. At first, he says, she left court and sought refuge with the friendly bishop Médard, who was later himself recognized as a major Merovingian saint. Knowing that she was still married, he refused to consecrate her as a nun. After a bold effort to persuade him, she got her wish.

As a queen, Radegund knew how to exert her limited personal influence just where it mattered most. Her skillful networking was on thrilling display in the founding of her monastery of the Holy Cross and in the ways in which she elevated it from an aristocratic women's refuge to a center of political and spiritual power.

Radegund gave lavishly to hermits and bishops in dramatic public displays, stripping off her expensive clothes and jewelry and piling them on the altar at the end of religious services. This was not only a charitable impulse but a clever political move. Bishops held great political power and commanded wealth and authority. She was shedding her queenly trappings and securing their support as well as making a public statement about her identity and piety.

Finally, Radegund settled at a villa near Poitiers that she owned as part of her dowry. At her villa in Saix, she ate a restricted diet, began a tradition of Lenten self-mortification and retreats, and lived simply in service to the local poor. Baudonivia tells us how she performed the same menial chores as the other women. Her reputation as a holy woman grew quickly, and she began to attract other women—and relics.

For centuries, Radegund was known above all for her reputation as a voracious relic collector. Her efforts tell us a great deal about the ways she maintained and expanded her political network, leveraging it to increase her convent's prestige and stability, even while enclosed as a nun.

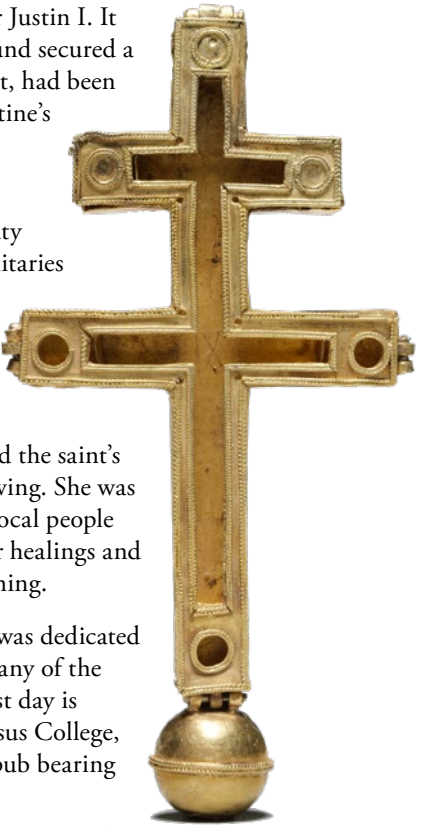
The Monastery of the Holy Cross

From Saix, Radegund seems to have negotiated a settlement with Chlotar. He founded a monastery outside nearby Poitiers for her, which was dedicated to the Holy Cross. She gave the women one of the earliest rules for female monastic communities, written by Caesarius of Arles for his sister Caesaria's community just a few decades earlier.

But once the convent was founded and its way of life established, Radegund sought her own individual path within the community. She appears to have been on friendly terms with a number of male friends, including Venantius, and she closely followed secular politics. She refused to be named abbess, instead making her close companion Agnes the first governing figure of the community.

Her greatest triumph was securing a splinter of the True Cross from the Byzantine emperor. By that time, Chlotar had died, and she was on good terms with his heir, her stepson Sigebert. For nearly a decade, he was in

peace talks with the Byzantine emperor Justin I. It was as a part of those talks that Radegund secured a splinter from the relic that, legend has it, had been brought to Constantinople by Constantine's mother, Helena.



Radegund died on August 13, 587, surrounded by her mourning community of nuns. Large numbers of people, dignitaries and townsfolk, wanted to view the body—some sick and hoping for a miracle. Rather than violate their enclosure by taking her body outside the convent walls, the viewers positioned themselves atop the wall, and the saint's body was carried beneath them for viewing. She was almost immediately acknowledged by local people and bishops as a saint. She is known for healings and for saving some supplicants from drowning.

In later years, the chapel where she lay was dedicated to her, along with parish churches at many of the locations important in her life. Her feast day is August 13. She is the patron saint of Jesus College, Cambridge, near which there is also a pub bearing her name.

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Saint Making in the Middle Ages

7

This lecture explores how Christianity in Europe, specifically Catholicism, shifted in its understanding of sainthood from the time of Radegund in the 6th century to the time of Francis of Assisi in the 13th century. It also covers how the new way of recognizing Catholic saints produced stacks of invaluable documentation of holiness, religious beliefs, and even mundane details of everyday life for medieval people.

Traditional Recognition of Saints

For the first thousand years or so of church history, saints belonged to just a few types: biblical saints, martyrs, founders, theologians, and royalty. The process for recognizing saints then wasn't terribly official. A person had to be recognized as holy by "popular acclaim," meaning that people in general agreed they had lived a good and holy life. There had to be a local cult: people who venerated the saint, treated their burial site as a shrine, perhaps celebrated a local feast in their honor. And there should be commonly accepted miracles wrought through the saint's intercession, which meant that after a person had prayed for a saint's help in doing something, such as curing a sick child, that goal was accomplished through what people accepted to be divine, supernatural means.

When all of these came together, the holy person would typically be recognized by a local ecclesiastical leader, often a bishop, in a ceremony that celebrated the "translation" or movement of their body, now considered relics, to a new and more prominent burial place, suitable for pilgrims to visit. The bishop might also proclaim an indulgence for pilgrims visiting the site to induce people to visit and spread the new saint's cult as widely as possible.

But it was a system without oversight and open to abuse. For one thing, bishops were commonly drawn from the same aristocratic families that produced saints in the early Middle Ages, and they were heavily involved in local politics. This made them susceptible to translating the relics of, shall we say, relatives of questionable holiness.

The importance of saints' recognition by local authorities meant that sanctity and devotion to saints' cults were often fiercely local phenomena. Saints became inextricably linked with personal and civic identity as they were adopted as "patrons" of a place, a trade, or people with a specific illness or need. The veneration of saints was extraordinarily intimate for many people, bound up in ties of familial affection, civic pride, and personal identity.

Today, a putative saint has a daunting course to run that includes legal processes, commissioners, inquests, scientific findings, and more.

The Rise of Papal Power

Changes to the process started in 993, when Pope John XV was approached during a synod by a group bearing the hagiography of Ulrich of Augsburg, a bishop from an aristocratic family who reformed the clergy, cared for the poor, and repaired and built churches and monasteries. That wasn't out of line with the traditional way of recognizing a saint—the pope, recall, is also the bishop of Rome. At that time, his power was extremely limited, but nevertheless, Ulrich's canonization set a precedent. In the 11th and 12th centuries, bishops continued to identify and translate the remains of local holy people and acclaim them as saints. But popes also began to do so. Over a 200-year period, popes canonized about 38 new saints, in addition to those recognized by bishops within their dioceses.

Documents began to use legal terms when discussing a holy person's qualifications: Those present at a miracle became "witnesses," and they started to talk about "attestations" and "proofs" of miracles. Around this time, a specific procedure began to take shape for papal consideration of a holy person's sanctity. An interested party would petition the pope to consider the matter. They would present evidence—often in the form of a written text based on witness testimony—of the holy person's life, reputation, and miracles. Finally, if the pope agreed, a papal letter of canonization would be issued, promulgated in the form of a bull. These new procedures rapidly seem to have developed into an expectation.

By the early 1200s, the popes were monarchs with an income and army as well as growing recognition by international leaders of their spiritual authority. Legal issues that would once have been settled by bishops or archbishops now reached the papal court. Their court, the papal curia, rapidly became a major bureaucracy to process and oversee the many responsibilities that followed the centralization of certain powers within the papacy. Those powers included exclusive rights to canonize saints, for the first time in history.

The period from roughly the late 11th century to the 14th century is known as the papal monarchy. In general, during these centuries, papal power began to grow rapidly.

Building a Case for Sainthood

If a community wanted to see a local holy person canonized, they first had to make the case for that person's sanctity. They might hire a proctor to take testimony from those who had known the saint and to seek out those who had witnessed or experienced miracles attributed to the saint's intercession. They would write these up, often in the form of a hagiography.

Opening a canonization process required that there already be a cult of veneration and that there be many requests for canonization. To this end, communities might circulate a form letter to bishops and other religious leaders in the region, asking them to send something similar to the papal court to lobby for a canonization process. The hagiography would also be sent off, and perhaps the community would hire a representative to smooth its path at the papal court. All of this cost prodigious amounts of money, and that's even before the legal proceedings had begun.

If the pope granted the petition to open a canonization process, he would issue a formal letter to that end. The letter would name two or three commissioners, high-ranking churchmen who would oversee an

investigation into the person's sanctity. The commission would then travel to locations where the holy person had lived or worked. A proctor would draw up a list of questions, locate witnesses, and organize the proceedings. There would often be one or more inquisitors—those trained to investigate—leading the questioning of witnesses. The commission's work might take weeks or even months, during which time the cost of their lodging, food, travel, and other expenses was expected to be borne by the community that had petitioned for the process.

Medieval inquests (from the Latin word *inquisitio*) were legal investigations that gathered testimony on a variety of topics, from heresy to sainthood. Unlike the Spanish Inquisition, which was an early modern institution, medieval inquests were rarely associated with torture or execution. Witnesses who testified would swear an oath to give true testimony. They'd share their personal details, including their connection to the holy person. They would be shown into a room full of learned men who waited to take their testimony. Translators might be necessary, as testimony would often be given in multiple languages.

The standard of evidence for a miracle was high. To get the most accurate account possible, inquisitors questioned witnesses as fiercely as any lawyer in a modern-day courtroom. They also wanted to know logistical details about the miracle to be sure it could be attributed to the saint in question and not to the use of medicine or illicit magic.

With each succeeding decade, the size of canonization processes seems to have grown. The number of witnesses could range from 100 to 400. It was a significant investment of time and resources. After the testimony was collected, multiple copies were made and safely deposited in a neutral location to prevent tampering. The testimony was then scrutinized by the commissioners and officials at the curia.

Finally, the commission produced a summary of the inquest, which would be circulated to the pope and cardinals in preparation for their meeting in consistory to discuss the case. This work could take years, particularly if the commissioners were busy with multiple assignments or if commissioners or the pope died.

After the process was reviewed in consistory, the pope announced his decision. Either the person was not a saint, at which point their cult was supposed to be suppressed (though this often did not happen), or the person was a saint, in which case the pope would preside at a splendid mass celebrating them, enter their feast day into the liturgical calendar, and promulgate a bull of canonization describing their special attributes and miracles.

New Trends in Religious Lifestyles

The 12th-century Renaissance, not to be confused with the later, more famous Italian Renaissance, had an enormous impact on medieval life and the way people thought about their place in this world and the next. Fueled by new agricultural and sailing technologies, the 11th-century economy boomed its way into the 12th century. As crop yields and populations rose, so did cities. These new city dwellers sought a sense of community and purpose.

Above all, as the laity became more informed about their prospects of an afterlife and what a good life looked like, they began to experiment with different forms of religious life themselves. Until this time, religious education had been relatively limited, as was the ordinary person's access to sermons and other forms of religious teaching. Saints and other holy models had shown them only one path to a truly holy life: entry into a monastery, virginity, and separation from the world. But there were few monasteries, and they almost exclusively accepted children of the wealthy.

By the 12th century, a growing literate middle class, with access to preaching and good religious education, was becoming concerned about their prospects in the afterlife. And the church was beginning to promote new models of holy living for people who remained "in the world"—that is, outside the monastery cloister. At first, these remained aristocratic models, but increasingly, local cults recognized holy people who were not nuns, monks, priests, or royals. Married couples might decide to live in service to others and without sexual intimacy. Women, in particular, were drawn to living a religious lifestyle while in the world.

Many small, informal communities sprang up, often with advice from a spiritual director at a nearby church. They might take formal vows before a bishop or simply decide on their own to live as religious. They worked or begged for a living, served the poor, and spent time in prayer and contemplation in private houses. They were known as Beguines, *pinzochere*, and *bizzoche* and by other terms. A few communities in the area of modern-day Belgium grew quite large, as thousands of women banded together to provide a safe harbor for the many women who flocked to the city looking for work. They ran businesses, hired themselves out as servants, and lived otherwise normal lives.

Some of these experimental communities met with great success, but some proved susceptible to charismatic preachers who led them astray, giving rise to anxiety about accidental heresies. The line between orthodoxy and heresy in this period of foment and heady experimentation was so vague, some scholars argue, that it was simply in the eye of the beholder.

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Mendicants: Francis of Assisi and Louis of Toulouse

8

The 13th century saw a boom in new orders, which also heralded a wave of new saints: charismatic founders, inspired preachers, and devoted servants of the poor. None is more famous than Francis of Assisi. This lecture addresses his life as well as that of a little-known saint, Louis of Toulouse. Both men were born into comfortable family circumstances, experienced a conversion in early adulthood, and followed the *vita apostolica*, "apostolic life." Their paths to sainthood say a great deal about the challenges facing new saints and the new barriers to sainthood that arose during the tumultuous later Middle Ages.

Francis as a Young Man

Francis was born around 1181 in the medieval hill town of Assisi. His father, Pietro di Bernardone, was an ambitious self-made man who made an advantageous marriage to his wife, Pica. They raised their family near the bustling town market, and Francis's childhood was typical of a middle-class merchant's boy. At 14, he was apprenticed in the family business, running wild with a crowd of other well-off boys. Francis was their merry ringleader.

During his childhood, the town lived under the dominion of the invading German emperor, Frederick Barbarossa. The Germans had a strong interest in expanding their control over the city-states of northern and central Italy, where their political faction, the Ghibellines, competed with the Guelfs, who supported papal rule over those territories.

In 1197, Assisi had expelled the leaders of the papal faction, and they sought sanctuary in nearby Perugia. Perugia used claims of compensation for these refugees as a pretext for war in 1202, bringing simmering regional tensions to a head. Assisi's imperial allies came to her aid, and the entire region went to war against Perugia.

Dreaming of glory, Francis and his friends joined the city militia as mounted fighters. The campaign was a disaster. Francis saw many of his friends killed on the battlefield, and he was taken prisoner at the battle of Collestrada. In this he was fortunate because mounted combatants were wealthy and therefore valuable. He was held for more than a year in a cold, overcrowded cell, until he became sick enough that his father was allowed to ransom him home.

The confident, flamboyant extrovert returned home weak, sickly, and traumatized. The sources paint a picture of a young man haunted by flashbacks and deeply depressed. He shunned his family and friends, disappeared for days, and behaved erratically. He also gave lavishly to beggars and to poor churches—not only his own possessions but his family's as well.

Francis's father, convinced his son was mad, effectively disinherited him. Francis refused to abide by the court's judgment and, invoking his self-proclaimed religious status as a penitent, summoned the bishop as his ecclesiastical judge. The bishop successfully mediated the conflict, convincing Francis to give up his claim on the family's goods. Francis memorialized this by stripping off his clothing as a symbolic gesture of renunciation.

Francis as a Preacher

Officially deemed a penitent, Francis wandered for months, depending on charity and serving the local lepers. Around 1209, he gathered a few followers, and they resolved to live according to the Gospels. They lived without possessions or even spare clothing and begged or worked for a living. The group made a home at a little chapel known as the Porziuncola. They traveled to Rome several times seeking papal approval for their way of life. Fortunately, Francis's family connections had brought them a bishop and a cardinal to vouch for their orthodoxy. Pope Innocent III told them to come back with more followers.

The brothers began to preach around Assisi and were tremendously successful. As his following grew, Francis struggled with leadership, as he would throughout his life. He was increasingly drawn to solitude in nature, and the early Franciscan hermitages he favored were often caves or other wild dwellings, where the brothers lived sparsely on handouts and through manual labor. This hard way of life took an increasing physical toll on Francis as he grew into middle age, but he continued to preach and travel.

In 1219, he departed for Egypt to fulfill an old dream and travel as a missionary. He joined the forces of the Fifth Crusade, but the military environment triggered renewed flashbacks, and he was an unsettling presence in the army encampment. When he returned to Italy, he found the order in turmoil. Rumors of his death overseas had spread, and in his absence, the leaders had made changes to the Franciscans' way of life, sowing dissension in the ranks.

Accounts of Francis's preaching are full of drama: He did not just speak but sang, danced, leapt, and sobbed to bring the Gospels to life for his listeners. He was, by all accounts, a mesmerizing presence.

Francis would spend the remainder of his life grappling with chronic illness and discontented with the leadership and administrative tasks his order demanded. He handed leadership duties over to a council of brothers and resolved to live under the guidance of his successor, the first minister general of the order. Francis withdrew into a hermit's life as his health worsened, though he continued to travel within a limited range in central Italy. His old flair for the dramatic made itself known from time to time.

By 1225, at the urging of Cardinal Ugo, Francis submitted to surgeries and treatments for a painful eye condition. By the spring of 1226, aged just 45, he was swollen with dropsy and coughing up blood. He died at the Porziuncola, near Assisi, on October 3, 1226. Less than 2 years later, Francis was canonized by Ugo, newly elected as Pope Gregory IX. The order engaged in very self-conscious history making, commissioning a biography of the saint and moving within a few years to record the stories of Francis's early companions as they reached old age.

Today, Francis's feast day is celebrated on October 4. He is the patron saint of animals, merchants, and ecology.

Louis as a Prince

Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, it became increasingly difficult to be recognized as a saint. It took an extraordinary saint and the perfect combination of humility and prestige to navigate canonization—and Louis of Toulouse had both in spades.

He was born in 1274 to Charles II of Anjou, ruler of an extensive Mediterranean empire. We know little of Louis's early childhood, though we can extrapolate from other noble childhoods that he likely would have been raised by servants and given a strong religious education. His family's dynasty was founded by Louis's grandfather Charles I, a son of the French king Louis VIII. When Louis was young, his father was captured during a naval fight in the Bay of Naples and imprisoned by the Aragonese, and his grandfather died months later.

After 2 years of Charles II's captivity, his sons sent a joint letter to the English king Edward I asking for his help in arranging their father's release. Edward agreed, and in 1288, Charles II agreed to give the Aragonese three of his sons as hostages, plus 60 nobles and 50,000 marks of silver—about $30 million in today's money. This marked a turning point in Louis's youth. He and his brothers Robert and Raymond Berenger were given to the Aragonese in the hostage swap. At the time, Louis would have been 14, and his brothers would have been 12 and 8.

The boys lived with the Aragonese court for 7 years, until the war ended in 1295. They seem to have been treated well and allowed to pursue their usual pastimes, including study. Their teachers were Franciscan friars, and this inspired both Louis and Robert with a reverence for the order that lasted the rest of their lives.

Louis, in particular, was struck by Francis's commitment to extreme poverty. During their captivity, the young princes apparently wrote to Peter John Olivi, a theologian who embraced a radical interpretation of the Franciscan vow of poverty, in part to discuss Louis's desire to enter the Franciscan order. Olivi declined, fearing being accused of radicalizing the prince but praising the brothers' devotion to Christ. His letter to them, written in May 1295, still survives. Sources who served Louis during his time in Catalonia testified at his canonization process that this was when the prince vowed to become a Franciscan and take holy orders.

Louis as a Friar and Bishop

The war with Aragon ended in 1295, but the princes' lives were thrown into upheaval by a series of family events. Their eldest brother, Charles Martel, heir to the throne, died from the plague that year, making Louis the heir. However, Louis renounced his claim. As soon as he was freed from captivity in October 1295, he went directly to Rome, and in December of the same year, before Boniface VIII, he was made a subdeacon. By May, he'd been made a deacon and ordained a priest.

However, his father and brother Robert, now heir to the throne, exerted great pressure on him to accept a prestigious office as an ecclesiastic. That winter, he was made bishop of Toulouse against his will. Louis bargained with the pope: He would only accept the bishopric if he could take his vows as a Franciscan first.

Instead of going directly to his diocese, he traveled to the Franciscan convent in Paris, where he served the other friars. By the spring of 1297, he had reached Toulouse but was soon off again. He was certainly in no hurry to execute his duties as bishop.

Like Francis, Louis practiced an extreme and physically taxing asceticism. He ate simply or rejected food altogether and insisted on traveling on foot or by mule. He also instructed his officials to examine the bishopric's revenues, spend only on absolutely necessary expenses, and give all other income as alms.

Louis made his distaste for high rank very clear, refusing to appear in bishops' robes and instead dressing as a simple Franciscan friar.

He was still so unhappy as bishop that after only six months in the role, he resolved to travel to Rome and request that he be freed from his bishopric. He died en route on August 19 in his father's castle at Brignoles and was buried in Marseilles.

Charles II, eager for Angevin expansion, promoted the relatively new dynasty partly through advancement of the family saints. Within 3 years, the family appointed a procurator to campaign for Louis's canonization.

They courted the goodwill of Pope Clement V by allowing him to reside in Avignon, a territory they held in fief. Clement opened a canonization process for Louis in 1307, and in 1308, a relatively modest 33 witnesses gathered in Marseilles to give the testimony that tells the saint's story to us today. After the records were gathered, however, the process stalled upon Charles II's death in 1309.

As expected, Robert assumed the throne of Naples and his father's other titles. He leveraged his influence and wealth to continue the campaign for his brother's canonization. Finally, with the election of Jacques Duèse as Pope John XXII in 1316, the process had a strong ally—in 1308, he'd served as one of the witnesses at Louis's canonization process.

Louis was canonized on April 7, 1317. His cult flourished mainly in the lands controlled by his family, in the western Mediterranean and Hungary. His feast day is August 19. While his greatest role as patron saint was his unofficial patronage of the Angevin dynasty, he is today recognized as a patron saint of the city of Valencia and the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa.

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Margaret of Cortona: Midwife and Mystic

This lecture introduces you to a woman who, in her lowest moment, found the strength to get up and start again. With grit and intelligence, Margaret raised herself from a scorned woman to the pride of her city and left behind hospitals, churches, and a thriving community dedicated to helping the poor. By the time she died at age 50, she'd had several successful careers, was powerful enough to reprimand bishops, and was revered as a holy woman who received visions from God. She had become Saint Margaret of Cortona, light of the Third Order of Saint Francis.

Fra Giunta Bevegnati's Hagiography

Margaret lived during the 13th century, a time when a surge of popular religious interest in following the *vita apostolica*, in imitation of Christ and the apostles, had inspired many new monastic orders and small, informal communities. Many ordinary people like Margaret donned makeshift religious clothes, in imitation of the Franciscans and Dominicans. Known as penitents, they struggled to live a religious life amid the bustle and noise of towns and cities rather than behind quiet monastery walls. Margaret was positioned at the forefront of the papal effort to provide structure to unofficial adherents in what came to be known as the Third Order of the Franciscans.

These "lay penitents" addressed some of the most pressing social needs of the booming medieval city: poverty, disease, safe lodging, and basic medical care. Margaret's life in Cortona was likewise intertwined with the city's problems and squabbles. Most of these details were skimmed over in the official record of her life and miracles, a document known as the *Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona*, or the *Legenda*. It was compiled after her death by her sometime spiritual counselor and friend Giunta Bevegnati, a Franciscan friar, whose Italian title was Fra.

Like many hagiographies, the *Legenda* was intended more to make the case for Margaret's sainthood than to record a factually accurate biography. We know little of her home life or her professional life in Cortona. Brief references show us Margaret as a midwife, charity organizer, hospital administrator, fundraiser, and symbol of her city's civic pride. Fra Giunta glossed over these details to formulate her as a new kind of lay saint. His account emphasized her direct experience of Christ through visions, her penitence and asceticism, and her attachment to the Franciscan order. In his telling, Margaret became the "new Magdalene," a repentant prostitute (heavy emphasis on the repentance) inspired by Francis of Assisi and his followers.

Margaret's Early Life

Margaret's extraordinary journey began in Laviano, a small Tuscan village. She was born there to a comfortable peasant family in 1247. They lived enmeshed in what Judith Bennett has called the "economy of makeshifts," in which residents of small communities bartered necessities with each other and developed what today we'd call side gigs to supplement the harvest.

Around the age of 8 or 10, Margaret would have begun training with her mother in preparation to run her own household. But her mother died when Margaret was about 7. We don't know what caused her mother's death, but we do know her death would have disrupted Margaret's life and education at a critical point. Her father soon remarried, as was common in the Middle Ages. This made stepparents and blended families fairly common in Margaret's world, but it wouldn't have made growing up any easier. Not surprisingly, Margaret rebelled.

We know few of the details, but in her late teens, Margaret fled her father's house, traveled some 9 miles westward to Montepulciano, and took up residence with a nobleman there. Custom has named him Arsenio, though we have no evidence of his actual name or family. We do know that Margaret lived with him in a fortified family holding, often termed a castle. Fra Giunta went to some effort to portray her way of life during that time as sinful and full of material comforts. She and Arsenio seem to have enjoyed a stable, loving relationship. They had one son and raised him together for nearly a decade.

Their story may seem romantic, but they were ultimately unable to overcome the class barrier to marry. Arsenio's family would have forbidden marriage with a penniless peasant (now of bad reputation, as she was living with him unwed). This left Margaret without any financial stability and labeled her son illegitimate.

So, when Arsenio died suddenly from injuries sustained while hunting (or possibly from a roadside attack, not unusual between feuding noble families), Margaret and her son were left with nothing. Soon after Arsenio's death, his family expelled them from their home. She was then, by Thomas Renna's accounting, 25 years old.

Margaret returned to her father, but he was unwilling to have her in the house. The family's business relationships and their other children's future prospects would have been materially affected by what the neighbors saw as Margaret's public disgrace.

Margaret, bereft, sat beneath a fig tree in her father's yard and wept. While the devil tempted her with an easy life as a concubine to more wealthy men, Margaret experienced an epiphany from God that directed her to go to Cortona and "surrender yourself to the obedience of my Friars Minor."

Margaret's Penitent Life and Good Works

Margaret entered Cortona in 1272 as a single mother without resources or shelter. Her early days in the city would not have been easy. Nor was her transition to the penitent life, despite her growing mysticism and personal connection with the divine. The Friars Minor were not convinced by her conversion. They were reluctant to become responsible for penitents like Margaret. Those who imitated religious clothing but still lived a secular life risked being mistaken for corrupt friars, bringing the order into disrepute.

It took Margaret 3 years of ascetic living and good works to win the Franciscans' grudging permission to even wear the clothing of a penitent. During that time, she depended on two wealthy patronesses who granted Margaret and her son a small room in a house they owned and arranged for her to work as a midwife.

Margaret was filled with self-reproach for her former sinfulness and began to deny herself basic needs and comforts such as adequate food and shelter. This denial seems to have extended even to her son, as she often neglected him during this period.

The Franciscan order had a long history of discomfort with ministering to women. They feared the scandal and gossip that closeness between male and female religious might provoke.

When he was about 12, she sent him to the Franciscans of Arezzo as a novice. It is unclear whether they ever met again or what her son's impressions of his mother were. Emphasizing this aspect of their relationship furthered Giunta's efforts to portray Margaret as desperately penitent for her sins and eager to shed her former life, son included.

The connections Margaret had built with wealthy Cortonese families benefited many of her later projects and raised her status in the community. Even as her fame as a holy woman and ascetic grew, Margaret proved herself a savvy manager of people and resources. She leveraged her contacts to become an able fundraiser and administrator.

As her charitable efforts became well known, she inspired the wealthy families of her circle to greater acts of charity themselves. One Lady Diabella dedicated her own home as a hospice of mercy, which Margaret ran as an infirmary for the local Franciscans. She built the small hospice into a thriving charity.

In 1286, she convinced one of the most powerful noblemen of Cortona, Uguccio Casali, to support the foundation of a hospital. She became the driving force behind the foundation and administration of Spedale di Santa Maria della Misericordia, also founding an organization of pious laypeople (known as a confraternity) to run the hospital.

Margaret's Rising Status

While Margaret's embrace of poverty and good works benefitted her reputation in Cortona, it was her mystical visions that attracted followers and elevated her authority above that of priests and bishops. Margaret became a local celebrity. She was asked to perform baptisms, healings, and even exorcisms so often that she began to refuse, fearing that she was spending too much time on these worldly things.

But Margaret also wondered if, by refusing to attend, she would lose favor with Christ. She was constantly on the alert for signs of weakness in herself, and the *Legenda* is full of passages in which she castigates herself for not being ascetic enough—devout enough—to atone for her past sins. She was devoted to prayer and frequently overcome with contrition. She would give away all her possessions, and paupers clustered around her cell in expectation of alms.

Margaret's devoted followers tried to tempt her with good food, but she reprimanded them and rejected their offerings—though apparently, she had a weakness for figs, which she ate but later bemoaned as a temptation.

Margaret also became the holy defender of Cortona. A miracle describes her prayers as forming a wall around the city. This was not a hypothetical attack she envisioned. Arezzo and Cortona had been at war for some time and only reached a fragile peace in 1277. They had a difficult relationship for decades afterward. The holy woman's defense of her city was held up as an example of Cortonese independence.

In the late 1280s, Margaret sought to leave Cortona. The constant throng outside her cell had become too disruptive. She moved to San Basilio, a small church that had been partly destroyed in the wars with Arezzo. She persuaded city officials and a new bishop to restore the building. It was built with bequests and gifts from the wealthy families of Cortona she had ministered to and befriended. The building and its pilgrim hostel were later tended by a community of penitential women who followed the saint from Cortona and set up residence near her cell.

When Margaret died in 1297, she was buried in San Basilio. Pilgrims began to flock to her tomb, and word of the miracles there began to draw more faithful. Fra Giunta began to compile the *Legenda*, rushed along by city officials who wanted to see Margaret canonized. And the contest over her cult began. The city officials, the Franciscans of Cortona, and those at San Basilio all had an interest in how Margaret was portrayed.

When Cortona won new proofs of independence in the 1320s, its first official statutes named Margaret as one of the city's patron saints. They also set aside funds for the rector of San Basilio to lobby the papal curia for her canonization. But Margaret, like many female mystics of her time, waited centuries for formal recognition of her sanctity. The people of Cortona and surrounding areas kept her cult alive, and her tomb remained a popular pilgrimage destination.

Her canonization process was finally completed in 1728, and her feast day was named as February 22. She is the patron saint of the homeless, midwives, reformed prostitutes, orphans, third children, and single mothers.

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Thomas Aquinas: The Saintly Scholar

10

Thomas Aquinas's scholarship continues to inspire philosophers and theologians today, yet he was very much a man of the 13th century. He was also a man of contradictions. Born to a wealthy noble family, he chose to join the Dominican order, which prized poverty over power. He was a deep thinker and a political realist. His work embodied his efforts to prove that two seemingly conflicting paths, faith and reason, could be brought together into a unified system for addressing some of the biggest, most important questions humans face.

Thomas's Early Education

There is little personal information or commentary in Thomas Aquinas's works. What we know of him as a man comes from an early biography written by William of Tocco, a younger Dominican who knew him, and the testimony from his canonization process, which was given some 50 years after his death.

Thomas was born in 1225, the youngest son of a prolific family. His father, Landulf, was a knight descended from the counts of Aquino, and he held territory between Rome and Naples. His mother, Theodora, was a strong presence in young Thomas's life. She was Landulf's second wife, the mother of at least nine of his children, and the descendant of Normans who had settled in the area of Naples. It was customary for noble families with an abundance of children to dedicate at least one of them to the church. To that end, Thomas was sent around the age of 5 to the Benedictine brothers of nearby Montecassino.

Landulf and Theodora might have expected to see their son become the abbot of Montecassino in only a few decades' time, enhancing the power and prestige of the family. Montecassino had several advantages for the family: Its abbot was a distant relative, it was near the family's holdings, and it was both powerful and fabulously wealthy. It was also under the sway of the Holy Roman emperor, ruler of the Germans, Sicily, Jerusalem, and more: Frederick II.

Frederick was an early ally of Pope Innocent III, but the relationship soured when Frederick delayed his promise to go on crusade for decades, leading to the first of several excommunications and, eventually, war. The conflict between pope and emperor devolved into a peninsula-wide phenomenon, in which the pope-supporting Guelf party opposed the emperor-loving Ghibellines. It consumed the politics of city-states, divided families, and generally caused economic and political chaos for more than a century. Thomas's family was deeply affected.

In 1239, when Thomas was about 14, Frederick suspected the Montecassino monks of Guelf sympathies and expelled them. Young Thomas was then sent to a Ghibelline-approved university, at Naples, under Frederick's watchful eye. There, Thomas studied the seven liberal

arts, all of which required fluency in Latin and familiarity with some religious and some classical texts. A good student with resources could then apply to a master of the university to begin studies in theology, church or civil law, or medicine. It may be here that Thomas first encountered some of the works of Aristotle, which were to influence him profoundly throughout his career. Certainly, it was in Naples that he was swayed to join the Dominican order, to the shock and dismay of his family.

Thomas's Entry to the Dominican Order

The Dominicans were founded in 1215 by a Spanish priest from Castile, Saint Dominic, who had set out to establish an order to address the problem of heretical communities. His would be a brigade of learned men, trained as preachers and theologians. Their duties would be to hear confessions, provide theologically sound guidance to the laity, and combat heresy.

Thomas's affiliation with the Dominican order would have seemed personally and politically disastrous to his Ghibelline family. His mother rushed to Naples to try to prevent him from entering the order, only to find the clever Dominicans had already sent him away for his protection. She then ordered Thomas's brothers to kidnap him from his traveling party and bring him to the family stronghold.

Thomas was kept under house arrest by his mother for more than a year, though he was allowed to study and write, and he was even visited by friends and Dominican friars. During this time, the emperor Frederick was formally deposed from his throne by the pope, which may have convinced Theodora to change her stance against the emperor's enemies, the Dominicans.

In the autumn of 1245, Thomas was set free. In one telling, his mother finally relented; in another, his siblings connived to sneak him out through the window. We know that Thomas remained on good terms with his family throughout his career.

Thomas's Early Scholarship

We don't know precisely where Thomas was between 1245 and 1248. He may have spent some years studying in Paris before following his chosen master, Albert the Great, to Cologne. We next find him there in 1248, having risen to the post of Albert's assistant. At this point, the evidence starts to yield up more detail about Thomas's appearance, habits, and personality. He was tall, fat, and balding, often lost in thought and distracted from his immediate surroundings. But Thomas's writings were beginning to show the scope and clarity of his great intellect.

In 1252, Thomas returned to Paris and took up a position as a teacher and scholar of Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*. Thomas's commentary on the *Sentences* became the first of an enormous volume of treatises, syntheses, dialectics, and commentaries that flowed unceasingly from his pen for some 20 years. His writing, which involved multiple revisions, shows a man who was deeply concerned with clear communication of his ideas.

Thomas's ability to rapidly compose his works was aided by his phenomenal memory—possibly photographic—that enabled him to quote at length from thousands of texts with ease.

And it was in Paris that Thomas found his first true forum for those ideas. The preachers and scholars were joined in a newfangled institution called a university, which had grown out of the cathedral school at Paris only a few decades earlier, around 1200. Degrees were granted in only a few areas, mainly theology, law, and, at some universities, medicine.

When Thomas arrived at the university, it was divided into two camps: the so-called secular masters and the masters from the new mendicant orders, whom the seculars regarded as unwelcome interlopers. Secular in this context refers to clergy who did not live under a monastic rule that governed their diet, prayer, and other customs. The rhetoric flew fast and hot, and friars were attacked in the streets. The king posted archers to defend the mendicants' convents.

Amid this turbulent atmosphere, Thomas settled into the Dominican convent of Saint-Jacques and quickly made a name for himself. He excelled at both his studies and teaching. He also preached, laying out his topic clearly in ways that were easy for the audience to grasp.

By 1255, he was qualified to become a Master of the Bible, one of perhaps a dozen of the most highly qualified theologians in Paris, or indeed in Europe. Thomas spent 3 years as one of two regent masters of the Dominican house in Paris before he was called back to Italy around 1260. During this period, he began to write extensively on a variety of biblical and philosophical topics.

Thomas's Scholarly Career

The next decade would be the most prolific of his life, even as he was launched into the upper echelons of his order, papal service, and royal courts. He spent 4 years, from 1261 to 1265, as a reader of theology at the Dominican priory in Orvieto. But his daily teaching work was far more basic than his subjects in Paris. Rather than training future theologians, he was training friars in their pastoral duties. It may have been this experience, and his participation in a commission on Dominican schools, that inspired him to begin his greatest work, the *Summa theologiae*, some years later to address gaps in the training of future preachers and confessors.

At Orvieto, Thomas wrote a variety of works, including the *Truth of the Catholic Faith against the Errors of Unbelievers*, in which he demonstrated how theology could make use of philosophy in investigating matters of religion such as the Trinity.

After Pope Urban's death in late 1264, Thomas was sent to organize a school at the Dominican headquarters: the convent of Santa Sabina atop the Aventine hill in Rome. One theory is that it was intended to be a unique school, where handpicked students would be subjected to an experimental program of study crafted by Thomas. It may be that this atmosphere is what enabled him to begin work on the *Summa theologiae*.

In 1269, he was recalled to Paris, once more as one of the two Dominican chairs in theology, to address the uproar over a new faction of Aristotelian teachers, thought too extreme. Thomas defended Aristotle as helpful for teaching certain things but conceded that teachers should avoid using him when his views were at odds with Christian revelation.

The Roman provincial chapter meeting agreed in June 1272 to task Thomas with establishing a new general school of theology, leaving him free choice of its location, size, and organization. He returned home, to Naples, where political and family concerns awaited. It may have been the strain of his intense schedule that ended Thomas's scholarly career. On December 6, 1273, he experienced an unknown event that caused him to cease writing. Many scholars believe, based on clues about his physical state in later months, that he suffered either a nervous breakdown or, more likely, something like a stroke.

Thomas was summoned a few months later to attend the second Council of Lyon. He may have taken the opportunity to visit family south of Rome. He was at or near his niece's house in Maenza when he either was taken ill or fell and struck his head on a fallen log. When it became clear he would not recover, he asked to be taken to the nearest religious community, the Cistercians at Fossanova. He died there on March 7, 1274. His feast day is January 28, and he is the patron saint of students and all universities.

Thomas died before completing the *Summa theologiae*. Its three parts address more than 500 questions in more than 2,600 articles or proofs. He was at work on the third part when he ceased writing. His students later completed it with a further supplement of 99 questions. It encapsulates Thomas's lifetime of teaching experience, his commitment to the idea that logic and reason can bring us closer to theological truths, and his devotion to communicating his knowledge so that it might be of practical use in the world.

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Tekle Haymanot: Ethiopian Hermit-Teacher

11

The oldest continuously inhabited Christian monastery is in Ethiopia, known in the early Middle Ages as the kingdom of Aksum. The kings of Aksum and their successors inhabited a diverse religious landscape, where Christian communities lived alongside Islamic kingdoms as well as kingdoms dominated by local religions. By the 13th century, the kingdom of Ethiopia was poised to expand, in tandem with a renewed monastic movement that sought to evangelize their neighbors. And at the forefront of that renewal was Tekle Haymanot, a saint venerated in both the Ethiopic and Coptic traditions.

Early Monasticism in Ethiopia

Tekle Haymanot's world resonated with the echoes of one of the great empires of the ancient world: Aksum. Their dominance of the Red Sea gave Aksumites access to Mediterranean and Arabian trade partners and allies and, by extension, goods from Asia and the Indian Ocean, while overland caravans arrived from the southern coasts and interior of Africa.

Artifacts found in graves from the period demonstrate the extraordinary reach of this network for over a millennium. Legend has it that Christianity came to Aksum providentially, but it's more likely that the people of Aksum were exposed to Christianity via trade routes and cultural transmission.

A wave of Christian missionaries appeared in the late 400s, possibly monks fleeing factional conflicts after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Nine monks traveled to Ethiopia, hailing from Rome, Syria, Constantinople, and other diverse Christian areas. All founded monasteries in Aksum. They embraced the earliest model of Christian monasticism: the Egyptian rule of Pachomius, dating to the 2nd century. They fashioned individual communities, many of which still endure today.

The monastic tradition in Ethiopia remained relatively small and limited to early forms of monasticism for about 8 centuries. The communities' leaders were deeply respected, and some advised the king, though they were never as closely tied to the royal court as the Ethiopian bishops were by tradition.

Tekle Haymanot's Early Life

In the 13th century, the old dynamic of monasticism changed under inspired new leadership, and a wave of exciting monastic reforms and new foundations took place. These new monasteries were actively expanding communities that trained their brethren to preach, teach, and find new sites on the edges of the kingdom from which to preach. Their development coincided with the expansion of Christian rule into kingdoms previously dominated by local religions or Islam. This was the situation into which Tekle Haymanot was born around 1215. He was born in Shewa, a district on the edges of the kingdom, to Tsega Zeab, a priest, and his wife, Igzie Haria.

Ethiopian hagiographies, known as *gädlät*, are a mix of legend, common saintly tropes, and historical information. The historical data, as with many hagiographical traditions, must be carefully teased out from beneath a thick layer of legendary concoctions. Tekle Haymanot's *gädl* was written and rewritten by several monasteries in the centuries after his death, each competing for control of his cult and its political influence. It's difficult to know exactly how much historical information each contains, as they change over time.

Translations are extremely limited, but one by Wallis Budge from the turn of the 20th century tells us that when Tsega and Igzie's son was born, he was already a saintly child. They named him Fissiha S'iyon. He grew up in Shewa, was educated by his father, and lived in a close-knit Christian community with strong links to their kin in Amhara and Tigray. His father presented him to the bishop at a young age so that he could be made a deacon. When he was a young man, his *gädl* tells us, the sick would come from miles around seeking healing at his hands.

Tekle Haymanot's Religious Studies and Work

Around the age of 30, Tekle Haymanot left the district and traveled to Lake Hayq, where the monastic reformer Iyasus Mo'a had founded a new community, Debre Istifanos. Tekle Haymanot spent 9 years there studying before he left, probably on pilgrimage. At this point in midlife, he seems to have had no interest in evangelizing; indeed, almost all of his legacy was accomplished after the age of 50. He settled at the ancient monastery Debre Damo, in Tigray, to study with Iyasus Mo'a's mentor, Abuna (Abbot) Yohanni. During this time, Tekle Haymanot began to attract followers and to preach.

After some years there, Tekle Haymanot was directed to return home. His return coincided with enormous opportunities for evangelical work in the region, thanks to a new dynasty that had taken power. We don't know many of the details, but we do know that in 1270, a new king whose power was based in Amhara overthrew the Zagwe dynasty. His name was Yekuno Amlak, and he claimed he was descended from the Solomonic lineage of the Aksumite rulers of old. His successors ruled Ethiopia for at least 3 centuries and perhaps longer.

11. Tekle Haymanot: Ethiopian Hermit-Teacher

Religious authority in their kingdom was a pressing matter for the Solomonid kings. The kingdom lacked a metropolitan bishop for many years after the last Zagwe ruler was ousted. We have letters from Yekuno Amlak that reference multiple requests made to the patriarch in Alexandria for a new bishop, to no avail. In the meantime, clerics from Syria seem to have arrived and claimed some religious authority over the church in Ethiopia.

The Syrian bishops became problematic for the king. His son eventually suppressed them and continued to wait for an Egyptian-appointed bishop. The *gädlät* vary in their accounts of this period at the end of the 13th century, but some claim that Tekle Haymanot was appointed to lead the Ethiopian church for a brief period, until the sultan had a new Egyptian bishop appointed to Ethiopia.

Tekle Haymanot worked among several different religious cultures. Many local religious practices survived, and in some places, elements of belief and practice bled into Christian practices. We know from royal records that, in the decades after Tekle Haymanot's death, royal policies sought to purge the practitioners of local religion from Ethiopian lands. The kings of Ethiopia took a very different tack with their Muslim neighbors, however.

Islam in Ethiopia

Islam came very early to Ethiopia—within the lifetime of the prophet Mohammed, in fact. The Qur'ān and oral traditions tell us that soon after he began to teach in Mecca, his followers were forced to flee the city. They traveled across the Red Sea and sought refuge at the court of the Ethiopian king, where they were welcomed. As the Islamic world grew, the early caliphates came to dominate Red Sea trade, contributing to the decline of the Aksumite empire.

The small Red Sea port of Zeila passed into the control of local Muslim rulers around the time of Tekle Haymanot's birth and grew into a regional economic power. Small Muslim-ruled kingdoms sprang up around the southern end of the central plateau. We know that by the late 13th century, many of their rulers paid tribute to the Christian kings of Ethiopia.

Tekle Haymanot undertook his mission in Shewa just as regional and religious politics became very complicated. In 1285, the Walashma dynasty seized lands stretching from the port of Zeila to Shewa and fashioned them into the kingdom of Ifat. For some decades, the Walashma rulers may have paid tribute to the kings of Damot, who practiced local religions, but other records claim they were tributaries of the Christian king of Ethiopia based in Amhara. While the kings seemed uninterested in evangelizing to their Muslim neighbors, they were very much interested in keeping the tribute from those neighbors flowing.

At the same time, the second generation of the renewed Solomonid dynasty were pushing their borders outward into Damot and other areas dominated by local religions. In this, they were accompanied by the evangelizing monks trained by Iyasus Mo'a, Tekle Haymanot, and their followers.

After Tekle Haymanot returned to the area of his birth, he began to preach. He encouraged local Christians to observe their own customs rigorously and urged them not to be complacent about the local religions that surrounded them. His *gädl* at this point is filled with stories of conversions and miraculous conflicts with magicians and sorcerers.

Debre Asbo Monastery

Tekle Haymanot's preaching attracted followers, mostly young men from the surrounding Christian communities. Eventually, they settled at Debre Asbo, later called Debre Libanos. The *gädl* tells the story of Tekle Haymanot's conversion of a local chief, who became his disciple and helped him acquire the land for the community.

The earliest monastery was no more than a cave, partitioned by a straw curtain into a chapel and living space. As the community grew, they began clearing the nearby forest for fields, farming to feed themselves. Debre Asbo was in a particularly advantageous position for evangelical work. It was in a non-Christian region dominated by local religions with some Muslim influence but not far from the borders of Tekle Haymanot's homeland of Silalish. He could therefore rely on his family connections for some assistance. It was sheltered by a cliff, easy to overlook, but allowed access to the plateau for evangelizing.

Tekle Haymanot turned his attention to educating his followers, bringing their theological knowledge and preaching up to the standard needed to evangelize. Debre Asbo became quickly known as a training ground for religious leaders. At the same time, it provided local Christians with a new model for religious life. Their community included both men and women living and working together.

As Tekle Haymanot entered his final decades, he ceased preaching and retreated from the community to a life of solitary contemplation. He is said to have walled himself up in a cave and stood there at length in prayer, in a form of asceticism that stressed the body. It's difficult at this point to tell what stories are legendary or historical fact. The most consistent tale about his final years, however, is that he lost a foot due to his strenuous insistence on standing to pray. When he finally admitted his disciples to his cave, the *gädl* tells us, his "body was dried up like the grass of summer," and his severed foot was laid nearby.

Tekle Haymanot is often depicted as a winged figure standing on one leg, with his foot and lower leg in the background.

By the time Tekle Haymanot died in 1313, Shewa was well on its way to being converted by his disciples, and a wave of new monasteries had been founded across the kingdom thanks to his teachings. In the generations to come, Debre Asbo became one of the preeminent monastic powers of the kingdom, and their abbots were advisors to kings. The reputation of their founder grew apace, and he is celebrated now in the Coptic Church as well as in Ethiopia as one of their greatest saints.

Saints in Ethiopia are celebrated primarily on the anniversary of their death, with minor celebrations on the same date in every other calendar month. Tekle Haymanot's feast is August 30, which is the 24th day of Mesra in the Coptic calendar, and it's also celebrated on the 24th of each month.

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Saints and the Protestant Reformation

12

Christianity has always had a multitude of views on sainthood, but no other period saw such an explosion of diverse views on sanctity as the 16th and 17th centuries. The Protestant Reformation unleashed a wave of experimental religious groups across Europe and the areas that Europeans occupied and colonized around the world. The reactions of Protestants and Catholics, missionary orders, and indigenous peoples forever changed how saints were recognized and who was seen as saintly. This lecture covers some of those changes and several saints who lived during this time of major reform.

Protestant Resistance to Cults

The Protestant Reformation represented a significant and long-simmering backlash against Catholic practices and corruption in the Catholic Church. This was set against the backdrop of the 15th century, which had seen an explosion of new saints' cults. The spiritual economy—the practice by which money, lands, and goods on earth could be exchanged for time off in purgatory—was booming. This was partly due to increased dedication of wealth to the refurbishment of chapels, churches, and shrines. It was also tied to the sale of indulgences, often available to pilgrims or other believers, for a fee.

Protestant reformers responded strongly to the cult of the saints as a multitude of practices that they argued were embedded within larger institutional corruption. Some theologians criticized the resources that went to praising the holy dead, pointing out that money could have gone to charities that served the living poor. Pamphlets railed against the social disorder of saints' feast days, which they complained led to drunkenness, sin, and licentious behavior. The feast days did add some 50 holidays to the annual calendar on which servants and employees did not work, which reformers complained also disrupted industry and the economy.

Reformation beliefs varied enormously among regions and among leaders. English Protestantism, governed by the crown in the form of the English Church, tentatively continued to embrace saints—within limits. Martin Luther, too, allowed for the important role they played as exemplars and inspirations of faith. Others, such as John Calvin, railed against saints and their images as idolatrous.

The Reformation's Impact on Women

The voices of Protestant leaders and theologians did not, of course, reflect the views of ordinary people. They continued to live in an atmosphere saturated with saints and to observe feast days and festivals. Women, too, resisted the social and cultural changes that went along with theologians' attempts to demote the Virgin Mary and other female saints. During pregnancy and childbirth, the comfort that women derived from the arrival of a local relic of the Virgin or Saint Anne was a powerful social and emotional force.

Ceremonies surrounding childbirth were also difficult to shed, such as the practice of "churching," or celebrating a woman's purification and return to the community 40 days after giving birth. Protestants rejected the need for purification, but in some communities, the celebration remained a form of thanksgiving for the mother's survival and health. It also became used as a form of social control: Churching ceremonies were forbidden to unwed mothers in some Lutheran areas, while in England, unwed mothers were only allowed to celebrate their churching if they named the father and dressed in penitential garb.

Cultural views of the Virgin Mary did change noticeably in Protestant areas during the 16th century—part of a larger social debate about the danger of "disorder" from powerful or unmarried women. Increasingly, women's primary role was seen as marriage and motherhood; there was now no celibate path to a religious career available in most Protestant regions. In comparison with their medieval counterparts, who had more freedom in social spheres and business endeavors, women in the Reformation experienced more restricted opportunities.

The Counter-Reformation

The Catholic Church took note of these complaints, and canonizations paused for 65 years while they contemplated their response. The Counter-Reformation that emerged at the Council of Trent, held from 1545 to 1563, upheld the necessity of saints' roles in the faith. But the church's approach to saint making and the approval of new cults changed dramatically.

The Vatican put forward new organizations to investigate and regulate the veneration of new saints. The Congregation of Rites was created in 1588 to consider canonizations. They were slow and cautious, and they eventually instituted a 50-year waiting period before a holy person could be canonized. In 1602, the Congregation of Beati was created, centralizing the process of beatification: recognition of a potential saint and their cult and a stepping-stone to eventual canonization that still persists today. Canonizations resumed only sporadically in the early 1600s.

In 1622, the Catholic Church canonized five saints from new orders, emblems of the Counter-Reformation. It was the first time that multiple saints were canonized in a single public ceremony. They emphasized heroic virtues and had closer scrutiny placed upon their miracles. The five included Philip Neri; Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier, cofounders of the Jesuits; the mystic Teresa of Ávila; and a 12th-century Spanish laborer known as Isidore the Farmer.

Saints for Reformation-era Catholics served several purposes: They continued to be trusted intercessors and sources of comfort and healing. They were also markers of identity—not just civic and personal identity but a distinctive marker of Catholicism that separated it from Protestant worship.

Teresa of Ávila

Teresa was born in 1515 into a wealthy merchant family of conversos: Jews who had been forced to convert to Catholicism on pain of exile just a few decades earlier. She was educated by Augustinian nuns, and just after she turned 20, she entered a Carmelite convent, where she took up reading mystical texts.

In 1554, the Jesuits opened a school near Teresa's residence, and one of them became her spiritual director. She began to experience raptures and visions, incurring suspicion in the Counter-Reformation atmosphere that saw female mystics as undermining the authority of the church.

She left the Carmelites to found her own order, one open to women of all social spheres. The Discalced Carmelites, as they came to be called, were the first recipients of her guide to prayer, titled *The Way of Perfection*. Her order spread rapidly despite significant challenges along the way. She founded at least 17 convents and influenced the foundation of reformed men's communities as well. She died in 1582, and her feast day is celebrated on October 15.

While Teresa shaped her communities across Spain, both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation expanded apace, leaping from Europe to other continents. European invasion and colonization of the Americas, Africa, and South Asia were rapidly underway, as monarchs and business interests moved aggressively to control resources and trade routes abroad. The Catholic Church is still struggling to come to terms with the often-brutal policies used by missionaries and religious orders to convert and supposedly "civilize" indigenous peoples; revelations are ongoing about abuses at boarding schools, forced separation of families, and Catholic support for slavery.

Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier

The Jesuit order began with a small group of college roommates living in Paris at the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. Ignatius, the eldest of the group, had already had a colorful career as a soldier and a dandy. He famously had a conversion experience while healing from a badly broken leg, and once healed, he took to living as a beggar and hermit in Catalonia. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he embarked on a new career as a student and preacher at age 33. After years of study in Spain and then Paris, he met Francis Xavier in 1529.

Though Francis initially resisted Ignatius, who was intent on converting their fellow students, over time, he came to appreciate Ignatius's calling. In 1534, they joined several other students in making vows to one of their comrades, Peter Faber, who had recently been ordained a priest. The Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits, was born.

Francis and Ignatius were ordained as priests and drew up plans for a new order. They quickly established a college to train potential missionaries. The order was soon recruited by the Portuguese crown to provide missionaries to India and Southeast Asia, where Portugal had recently established colonies. In 1540, Francis Xavier left for India, while Ignatius remained behind to manage and expand the order. He died in Rome in 1556.

Francis, meanwhile, traveled extensively throughout Southeast Asia. At first, he ministered to Portuguese sailors and soldiers. He worked in the hospital and founded a Jesuit headquarters in Goa. He soon turned to efforts to convert local tribes and high-ranking Hindu elites, expanding his efforts into Japan by 1549. He was awaiting passage to mainland China when he died of fever in 1552.

The legacy of these founders and their order is difficult to parse. Jesuit missionaries were a powerful tool in the hands of European monarchs, who sought to occupy and often enslave indigenous peoples. They ministered to oppressed peoples with the aim of converting them and making them more accepting of the systemic abuse and erasure of their culture. At the same time, Jesuit scholars and missionaries are the reason that some religious texts and languages survived the European onslaught. They sought to understand the peoples they ministered to. These interactions produced new and evolving religious forms, revitalizing saints' cults to meet the needs of different peoples.

Benedict the Moor

Benedict, also known as Benedict the Moor or Benedict of San Fratello, was born in 1526 in Sicily to enslaved parents. The earliest testimony on his life and reputation, from those who knew him, called him "Saint Slave," but later hagiographies claimed that he was freed at birth for unspecified reasons, despite his siblings remaining enslaved.

He worked for a time as a shepherd, which brought him into the ambit of Franciscan hermits living on a remote hillside. Benedict joined them, first as a cook and later as a lay brother. In his late 30s, the community was dissolved as part of the Tridentine reforms, and he joined the Franciscan

convent in Palermo. Once more, he worked as their cook, later rising to trusted roles teaching young novices and even to leadership of the community. He remained humble throughout his life, even returning to the kitchens in his final years.

Benedict died in 1589, but it took nearly 150 years for his beatification and more than 200 years until he was finally canonized in 1807. But well before that, Benedict was openly venerated as a saint in major cities in Spain, Mexico, and Brazil. Today, he, along with Martín de Porres, is venerated as patron saint of African Americans.

Benedict's brethren noted that the kitchens never ran out of food when he presided over them. He was also credited with healing abilities.

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Martín de Porres: Healer of Peru

13

Martín de Porres was a talented healer, a savvy social networker, and, above all, a man of great faith and humility. His extraordinary gifts and tireless work on behalf of the poor and sick almost immediately earned him recognition as a saint within his local community, though it took centuries—and a burgeoning civil rights movement—before he was formally canonized in 1962. Martín was not the first Black saint, but he was the first Black saint to hail from the Americas and the first saint whose life was intimately affected by transatlantic slavery. Celia Cussen has played a major role in bringing Martín's story out of the archives in her book *Black Saint of the Americas*.

Conquest of the Incan Empire

In the early 16th century, the Incan empire was riven by terrible epidemics and civil war. The Pizarro brothers, newly arrived merchants and opportunists, conquered the empire in a series of agreements, battles, betrayals, and executions in the 1530s. They made relatively few changes to the administration of the economy and government, granting Spanish *encomenderos* control over the forced labor of the native population and the wealth not siphoned off to the Spanish crown.

Spanish *encomenderos* abused their privileges, and indigenous people died in great numbers under this harsh system. Although they technically had some rights under the law, in many cases, they were effectively enslaved. By the end of the 16th century, many had been forced into settlements intended to concentrate the labor force. These settlements were also designed to make it easier for missionaries to convert them, and to that end, the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits in particular sent significant numbers of religious to the Americas.

It was in this context that the Pizarros founded the city of Lima in 1535. It became the capital of the entire Viceroyalty of Peru, encompassing all Spanish-claimed territories south of Panama, stretching to the southern tip of the continent. The city grew rapidly; by Martín's time, it held some 25,000 inhabitants, a population always in flux as farmers, craftsmen, merchants, and laborers came and went.

Martín's Early Life

Martín was born in 1579 to Ana Velázquez. We know little about Ana, save that she was born in Panama, was of African descent, and had formerly been enslaved. She had a years-long relationship with Juan de Porres, a young Spanish merchant with respected social connections who did business in Lima. Martín had a younger sister named Juana.

Juan never legally acknowledged or legitimized these two children, but he did acknowledge them socially, to friends and family. Years later, Juan married the daughter of a wealthy businessman, but this did not curtail his relationship with his older children.

Martín was born into a diverse parish where nearly 40% of the children were illegitimate and biracial, like him. His mother was a servant in the household of Isabel Garcia Michel. We can assume that as a young child, he would have accompanied her about her tasks: cooking, cleaning, and perhaps watching the family's children.

Martín left no writings of his own, as he remained illiterate throughout his life. We know about him primarily through the testimony and hagiographies written by his many admirers in the decades after his death. These are problematic, of course, in the ways already discussed for other saints: They frame his life in terms of common saintly tropes. But they add an additional layer of complexity, viewing Martín through their prejudices about Afro-Peruvians' social status, piety, and abilities.

Lima was a remarkably integrated city, and young Martín would've been familiar with Spaniards, Creoles, Indians, and free and enslaved Afro-Peruvians. Despite this spatial integration, the ugly racism that accompanied European conquests and the exploitation of native and African labor pervaded Limeño society and Martín's life.

At one end of the social spectrum were the wealthy Spaniards, European elites who could freely access government positions, higher education, and a bevy of legal rights. At the other end were enslaved Africans and their descendants. Indians occupied a middle status—not enslaved, but not possessing full legal status and rights. Free biracial or mixed-race people, such as Martín and Juana, inhabited a fluid middle sphere—barred from many career paths and opportunities but extended comparatively more privileges and access by the Spaniards than their enslaved and free Black relatives.

The racist concepts that permeated early modern colonial society also permeated religious language and ideas. The only positive Black models Martín may have heard promoted in public discourse were "exemplary" servants and slaves who were compliant, diligent, subservient, and pious. These undoubtedly shaped his sense of self and damaged his self-worth.

Martín seems to have shown an early interest in a career as a healer, and his mother's employer helped him get an apprenticeship with either an apothecary or barber. Even if his father had sponsored his education, however, Martín would have been barred from a career as a doctor.

Martín's Work at El Rosario

After several years of medical apprenticeship, Martín entered the Dominican convent of Our Lady of the Rosary, known as El Rosario, as a lay servant and took vows there 9 years later. El Rosario was strictly segregated by rank and by ethnicity. Only those with "pure blood" (that is, European blood) were allowed to study to be ordained as priests and friars, and they occupied the main cloister.

The convent could not have operated without the labor of many lay servants and enslaved men. Many worked on El Rosario's hacienda, a farm outside the city overseen by lay brothers. The extent to which the Catholic Church not only accepted but participated in and enabled the slave trade and abuse of enslaved peoples is shocking to modern eyes, but nonetheless true. The Dominican order, like the rest of the church, purchased enslaved people to work on their lands and used terrible violence against them. Their preachers encouraged and spread racist caricatures and ideas that sought to justify the treatment of Africans and Afro-Peruvians as people of lesser intelligence and worth.

As a lay servant, Martín performed only basic tasks: sweeping floors, cleaning bedpans, and counting linens. In recognition of his lifelong performance of these humble duties, he is often depicted with a broom. From the beginning, Martín found ways to make his warmth and kindness felt by those around him. Young novices, who later rose to eminent positions, recalled his kindness to heartsick boys.

El Rosario was more than a monastery; it housed a school and an orphanage, provided sanctuary for the odd fugitive, and hosted local religious and social organizations called confraternities. It also operated what we today would call a food bank, soup kitchen, and free clinic.

Patients told stories of how, when they were feeling down, Martín would produce an orange from his sleeves with a flourish to make them smile.

Martín seems to have been everywhere at once: He distributed food and clothing to the poor, counseled arguing spouses, and raised money. Back at the monastery, he swept floors, changed linens, pulled teeth, tended wounds and fevers in the infirmary, and welcomed those poor souls who came quietly to the back door seeking his care.

Martín as a Healer

Once word of Martín's healing skills spread, he was summoned to tend many elite patients in their own households. He proved a shrewd networker, and in later years, he leveraged his relationships with these wealthy and politically connected patrons to gather donations for the infirmary and funds to distribute among the poor.

It's clear that Martín, like many other healers of his day, blended what we would recognize as medical care with prayer and folk remedies that might seem outlandish today. He stitched and bandaged wounds, used wine as a simple anesthetic, and brought his patients comfort in the form of a cup of cool water. He also brewed herbal teas and remedies. He invoked his faith to heal, making the sign of the cross over wounds and assuring patients that God had them in his care. Martín seemed to be able to predict miraculous recoveries, leading people to infer that his healings were divinely assisted.

Martín was also famed for his ability to communicate with animals, speaking to them as though they could understand his admonishments. He splinted birds' broken wings and stitched up wounds for dogs and cats.

Martín, who seems to have been quietly subversive throughout his life, was known to be a guerrilla gardener. On his walks outside the city, he sprinkled seeds for healing herbs along the roadside. He wanted the poor people to be able to gather their own simple remedies, to free them from paying steep prices to the apothecaries.

Being a man of practical mind (and the one who had to clean up infirmary messes), he strictly instructed them not to urinate indoors—and they obeyed.

Martín's Journey to Sainthood

Martín's asceticism, his humility, and his miraculous healing touch made him a highly respected figure in a society that was desperately seeking new holy models to help make sense of their world. Scholars have pointed out that Martín's attraction as a saint and his characterization as a saint were very much molded by his blended identities. He was the kind of holy intermediary the Catholic Church and its laity were searching for, intimately connected with societies that were a fusion of old and new, of brutal oppression and growing faith communities.

In 1639, having served El Rosario and the people of Lima for 40 years, Martín succumbed to typhoid fever. He was already considered a holy man, almost a living saint, and his community was acutely attuned to this fact as he lay dying. Martín asked his superiors for permission to die without being questioned about his mystical experiences and visions. This may have been from humility, or it may have been his order's desire to spare Martín's cult additional scrutiny from the Inquisition, which made a habit of examining mystics' texts for signs of heretical beliefs.

Testimony began to be gathered in 1660, but Martín's process moved slowly through the Vatican. He was identified as a "venerable" a century later. The next phase came in step with the abolitionist movement. In 1837, he was beatified with his compatriot Juan Macias, 2 years before Gregory XVI condemned the transatlantic slave trade in his bull *In supremo apostolatus*.

With the rise of the civil rights movement, the Vatican was moved to seek additional evidence of miracles attached to his cult that could be verified under the new requirements. He was canonized on May 6, 1962. John XXIII's homily on the occasion portrayed him as the "vindication of all the oppressed of the world." Martín de Porres's feast day is November 3, and he is the patron saint of social justice, mixed-race peoples, barbers, and public health workers.

Martín's cult was always strong in Peru, where he is remembered by the sobriquet Fray Escoba ("the man of the broom").

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Kateri Tekakwitha: Mohawk Ascetic

14

Kateri Tekakwitha's short life encompassed a period of immense change among her people, the Mohawk. She is known today primarily through the accounts of French Jesuit missionaries who gathered testimony from her companions and family members. However, they saw through a European lens and wrote with a European audience in mind. In doing so, they misrepresented important periods in Tekakwitha's life. By carefully examining her life and keeping her hagiographers' own prejudices closely in mind, you can better understand Tekakwitha's journey through a shifting cultural and religious landscape. Allan Greer, in his seminal work on Tekakwitha, *Mohawk Saint*, has done an excellent job of peeling back these layers and filling in details of the saint's life from historians' knowledge about Haudenosaunee customs and society. This lecture owes a great deal to his work.

Tekakwitha's World

In the mid-17th century, the area we know today as upstate New York and the Canadian border was very much in flux, caught between the French to the northeast, the Dutch and English to the south, and a variety of tribal nations with their own alliances and enmities. The Mohawk were the easternmost tribe of the Haudenosaunee, also known as the Five Nations or the Iroquois: a confederacy made up of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca tribes.

Tekakwitha was born in 1656, in the village of Caughnawaga, the easternmost village in the Mohawk territories. They had more frequent contact with trading posts and European settlements, and they were also more vulnerable to attack, both from their long-standing friction with the Algonquins and as wars between the French and British drew in native allies.

Because of this, Caughnawaga lost its people at a high rate and adopted a correspondingly high rate of captives to replace them. Tekakwitha's mother was one such captive. She was an Algonquin woman and had lived near a French settlement for some time—enough to become familiar with Catholicism and be baptized herself. It's possible that she passed some of her beliefs on to her small daughter before dying in the great smallpox outbreak of 1661 to 1663, which also took Tekakwitha's father and brother. Tekakwitha herself survived the disease, but it left her with scars and weakened eyesight.

The Haudenosaunee approach to child-rearing would have ensured Tekakwitha enjoyed a stable and loving childhood despite her losses, guided by the many aunts and other maternal figures of her longhouse. Girls were especially treasured, since longhouses and clan affiliations were marked through the mother's family.

When Tekakwitha was 11, her community relocated to a new village site. There was a small chapel, although scholars estimate only perhaps 8% of the village was baptized Christian converts—and most of these were assimilated captives who had been born into tribes with larger Christian populations, as Tekakwitha's mother had.

As Tekakwitha grew, the women of her longhouse would have introduced her to the tasks that sustained the community. Women had charge of the village, including farming, food storage and preparation, child-rearing, festivals, adoptions, greeting travelers, and other essential roles. Unlike in European societies of the time, the domestic tasks were not seen as lesser duties.

Tekakwitha's hagiographers portrayed her tending to domestic tasks as a mark of her low status and ill treatment by her family. But to the Haudenosaunee, those tasks were an expression of women's power and the respect they were given.

Tekakwitha's earliest experience of religion would have been Haudenosaunee ceremonies. She would have learned the story of the Sky Woman and the world's creation as a young child. The concept of balance was at the heart of almost everything in Haudenosaunee community life: politics and peacemaking, redress for offenses, mourning, and celebration.

Tekakwitha's year was organized around six festivals focused mostly on planting and harvesting. Each was a happy occasion with singing, dancing, and feasting. Almost every event was accompanied with rituals to recruit the assistance of supernatural forces.

The Jesuits' Mission at Caughnawaga

In the 1650s, Catholic missionaries, mostly Jesuits, established missions at several sites, one of which was the St. Pierre mission at Caughnawaga. It was abandoned when war broke out between the Haudenosaunee and a French-Algonquin-Montagnais alliance. In 1666, the missionaries participated in negotiations that established peace with four of the Five Nations. The Mohawk were the last nation to make peace a year later. The treaty recognized hunting and trading rights within the nations' own territories while also inviting French traders and missionaries into those lands to facilitate trade.

Unlike in Peru or English-occupied territories, the French and the tribal nations of the Northeast understood conversions as a facet of alliance, not something imposed by conquest.

As a result, Jesuits came to Caughnawaga in 1667, when Tekakwitha was about 11. They would have been aware that their presence was an implicit exchange of hostages to guarantee the peace, just as Mohawk leaders would have been aware that learning more about Christianity might provide them with tools for further negotiating relationships with European powers.

The Jesuits were known to be more flexible than other Christian missionaries, adapting their teachings to incorporate local beliefs. But communication was difficult. Because of the language barrier, religious instruction was extremely basic. Missionaries focused on the performance of Christianity, teaching them basic prayers, gestures, and dietary rules. The Jesuits also tried, often in vain, to convince them to give up attending certain festivals and visiting the shamans.

Tekakwitha lived in the village for 8 years alongside the missionaries without expressing an interest in Christianity. Around puberty, she would have undergone a special ceremony in which she undertook her adult identity, and her aunts began to think of arranging a marriage for her. Throughout her life, however, she insisted she had no interest in a relationship with a man. Her lifelong virginity in the face of cultural pressure was later taken by her devotees as a sign of holiness.

Tekakwitha's Conversion

Tekakwitha's first meaningful encounter with Christianity, in 1675, came because an injury to her foot had kept her at home while the rest of the women were tending the fields. As one of the Jesuits was passing the longhouse, he found Tekakwitha there. She proved an eager listener.

Without her own testimony, we don't know exactly what influenced Tekakwitha's interest in Christianity. But several of her aunts were Christians, as they are recorded as already baptized by the time Tekakwitha

received that rite at Easter of 1676. And there is good evidence that it was common for whole extended families to convert together. We know that she later found strong friendships among Christians and that she found mortification of the flesh a way to transcend her physical limitations.

We also know Tekakwitha told the missionaries she had only held back from seeking baptism because she was reluctant to disappoint her uncle. He believed that if she embraced Christianity, she would leave the village as other converts had done. The Jesuits had established a separate community for converts, Kahnawake, along the St. Lawrence River, and beginning in the 1670s, they encouraged converts to emigrate there.

Tekakwitha remained at Caughnawaga for 2 years after her conversion. The story of her departure is heavily dramatized by her hagiographers, and it's hard to know the truth of it. We do know that Tekakwitha was invited to Kahnawake by her sister, and she left Caughnawaga while her uncle was away on a trading expedition to Albany.

It was only on her arrival at Kahnawake that she began to truly learn the essential doctrines of her new religion. Her most important relationships continued to be with the women around her, who were her religious instructors, companions, and friends. Tekakwitha took her first communion within months of arriving, on Christmas Day 1677. She settled into a new routine of daily mass, stopping by the church to pray between work duties.

Tekakwitha's Extreme Asceticism

Tekakwitha grew close to an Oneida widow, Marie-Thérèse Tegaiaguenta. They met while exploring the construction site for a new chapel and developed a deep and abiding friendship. They began to meet regularly to beat each other's shoulders with branches in an act of penance. They were soon joined by a small group of followers.

By the summer of 1678, Tekakwitha and Marie-Thérèse formed the idea of creating their own convent for native women. The Jesuit superior rejected the idea out of hand. The proposed site, an island, was too far away to be protected from attack. Instead, the little group seems to have formed something akin to a curing society, a group that often formed around a shaman, or a confraternity.

As 1678 wore on, Tekakwitha's group dwindled to a handful, and their asceticism became more extreme. Deliberate exposure to the cold was common, as was flagellation. Tekakwitha took her penance even further. Burning became a particular feature of her self-mortification, and as her kin slept around her, she would take embers and burn her feet and lower legs.

The women's extreme penitential practices were not isolated to their group at Kahnawake but part of a larger phenomenon that seems to have been modeled on the privations that Haudenosaunee and other tribes' warriors put themselves through before departing for war. The women expressed the intent of doing penance not only for the sins they had committed but also for their future sins and the sins of their community and the world: a viewpoint likely shaped by the worldview of their upbringing rather than Christian teachings.

Tekakwitha's Death and Legacy

Tekakwitha's health had never been good, and her continual ascetic practices weakened her terribly. Reports began to circulate of a glowing light around her when she practiced self-mortification and other signs of divine favor.

By the spring of 1680, at the age of 24, she had become so weak she could scarcely leave the longhouse. She had caught the attention of the younger Jesuit missionary, Claude Chauchetière. He came to see Tekakwitha as part of his duties but became fascinated with her patient suffering and goodness. It was Chauchetière who first identified Tekakwitha as an especially holy person, and she became the spiritual guide who led him out of his own depression and despair.

Her friends, fellow penitents, and kin crowded her bedside, along with converts and a few French settlers who had heard about her. Marie-Thérèse never left her side. As she slipped toward death, Tekakwitha spoke comfortingly to those around her. She died, according to Chauchetière, murmuring, "I will love you in heaven." Moments later, the smallpox scars that had marked her face disappeared in a miraculous alteration.

Tekakwitha's legacy is a difficult one. A healing cult immediately sprang up devoted to her, but she was not canonized until 2012. Her feast day in the Catholic liturgical calendar is July 14. However, in Canada and in the Diocese of Phoenix, her feast day is celebrated on April 17, the anniversary of her death. She is the patron saint of Native Americans, people living in exile, the environment, and ecology.

For many Native American Catholics, Kateri Tekakwitha is a treasured saint, while others are wary of her story as a representation of devastating colonial practices.

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Absalom Jones: Abolitionist Priest

15

Reverend Absalom Jones was born enslaved in the mid-18th century. After purchasing his family's freedom and then his own, he dedicated his life to helping others as a preacher and activist. He was a cofounder of the first Black benevolent society in the United States and later founded one of the first Black churches in the country. He was ordained the first African American Episcopal priest in the United States, and for more than a decade, he was one of the most beloved ministers and leaders of the African American community in Philadelphia.

Absalom's Journey to Freedom

Absalom Jones was born in 1746 near Milford, Delaware. His mother was enslaved by a Dutch planter, Abraham Wynkoop. From a young age, Absalom was forced to work in the fields. At some point, he was identified as an especially bright child and made to work in the house. This may be when he gained some basic education.

When Absalom was 7, Abraham Wynkoop died. His son Benjamin promptly sold the property and tore families apart to profit from their sale. Absalom was forcibly separated from his mother, brothers, and sister when he was between 9 and 15 years old (different scholars give different dates for the event). This traumatic separation undoubtedly shaped the man he became.

Benjamin Wynkoop forced Absalom to move into his household in Philadelphia and work in his store. When he was able, Absalom attended a night school for free Blacks run by the Quakers. He put his little spare time into doing extra jobs to amass savings, buying books when he could.

As a teenager, he courted the girl next door, Mary Thomas, and they were married when Absalom was 20. Mary and her family were enslaved by Sarah King, whose house adjoined the Wynkoop residence. Absalom worked hard to gather the funds necessary to buy Mary's freedom, as did Mary's father, John Thomas. This was especially important, as any children she had would share her legal status. He and John pooled their savings, and he used his relationship with the Quakers to seek loans and donations.

Fourteen years after Mary was freed, the couple had managed to repay the loans, buy a house, and save enough to purchase Absalom's freedom. He was now in his 30s. But Wynkoop refused, again and again, until he finally assented in 1784.

Founding of the Free African Society

Absalom continued working in Wynkoop's store, now for wages. But he lost no time in asserting a new identity for himself. He took the last name Jones and joined St. George's, a Methodist church. It was there that, 2 years

later, he met Richard Allen, a Black preacher and freed man. It was the beginning of an enduring partnership, one that led to decades of activism and organization.

Allen first floated the idea of a separate African American Methodist church only a year after his arrival but got such strong resistance from both Black and White members of the community that he put the idea on hold for the time being. Instead, he partnered with Absalom Jones and six others to found the Free African Society of Philadelphia, the first Black benevolent society run for and by Black people. At first, they met in Allen's home, then in the Quakers' African school.

The enormous variety of Jones's activities in this period and the speed at which he moved show us a driven problem-solver with a gift for organizing. The FAS went further than traditional White benevolent associations, offering services that free Blacks struggled to get from White clergy. They kept a register of marriages, tried to establish an African American cemetery, and, in 1791, began to hold religious services.

In those early years of organization, Quakers were some of Allen's and Jones's closest allies. They supported several schools for free African Americans, as well as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which brought lawsuits on behalf of those who were still enslaved but should legally have been freed already. Among their leading lights were Benjamin Franklin and other officials. The FAS formed a joint committee with the PAS to pursue many of their political goals.

Founding of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas

It may have been especially troubling to Jones and Allen when their Quaker supporters pulled back from their plan to found a nondenominational Black church and school. While the Quakers supported abolition, they did not believe African American leaders capable of operating independent institutions successfully. Eventually, the school fell by the wayside, and FAS leaders moved their focus to writing articles of association and a plan of church government for the African Church of Philadelphia. Fundraising began in 1791.

Despite resistance from White clergy, Quakers, and Methodists, Jones and Allen raised enough money to buy the land for their church: two lots on 5th Street. The impetus for their efforts was that St. George's was rapidly expanding, and its elders made it a more segregated and unwelcoming space for African American congregants.

They met at first in a rented storeroom. The Methodist elders continued to harass and threaten their group with being disowned from the denomination or publicly disgraced by being turned out of meeting. They then refused to allow their preachers to hold services for the group.

The leaders of the new church held a vote to determine which denomination to associate with. Not surprisingly, the majority voted to affiliate with the Episcopal Church, whose governing structure allowed the community more of a voice in decisions than did the more autocratic Methodists. The only two dissenting votes were Jones and Allen, who remained convinced of the superiority of Methodist organization and the greater attraction of their style of preaching and outreach.

Allen disagreed so much, in fact, that he left the effort to found his own church on 6th Street, Bethel African Methodist Church. After his departure, the founders requested Jones lead the new church, and their application to join the Episcopal Church stipulated that he be ordained as a deacon and, if found acceptable, as a priest.

Construction on the Episcopal church on 5th Street continued, and in August 1793, a banquet was held to celebrate the roof raising. One hundred White tradesmen and city leaders sat at long tables for a dinner served by free Blacks. Then, they stood, and in their places sat 50 African Americans, waited on by 6 of the most powerful of the White attendees.

Both Allen's and Jones's churches were very clear in their articles of association and later incorporation: They reserved the right to appoint their own leaders, Black leaders, without interference from White parishes.

Yellow Fever Epidemic

The first cases of yellow fever in Philadelphia were recorded in July 1793. In that fall alone, 10% of the city died from the disease, 400 of them free Black people. Some 20,000 Philadelphians fled the city, and many of those who remained refused to work out of fear of contracting the disease. It was not understood then that yellow fever was spread by mosquitoes and not through close contact with the sick.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Quaker physician, convinced the mayor that it was imperative that the free African American people of Philadelphia be hired to assist in relief efforts. This was based on his belief that those of African descent had a special immunity to the disease, a theory soon proven terribly wrong. Jones and the men and women of the FAS did heroic work that fall. But within weeks, Black volunteers began to fall sick, and Rush realized the enormity of his mistake.

The epidemic finally ended in November, as cold weather killed off the mosquitoes. The mayor commissioned an official account of the epidemic and the city's relief efforts from Mathew Carey, a printer and entrepreneur. His account contained slanderous accusations of wage extortion and theft by Black nurses. Jones and Allen teamed up to counter these incendiary accusations. Their rebuttal was published as a pamphlet, which is still being studied by scholars as a masterful treatise on the nature of citizenship.

Jones's Advocacy and Ministry

In the aftermath of the epidemic and the pamphlet, clerical resistance to the new church evaporated. The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas was dedicated on July 17, 1794, and its opening drew clergy from every denomination.

Jones was ordained deacon in 1795 and began a period of intense political advocacy. In early 1797, four men sought his aid. They had been freed in North Carolina and made their way north, but a law passed in the state allowed the capture and re-enslavement of almost all manumitted Black people. The law incentivized the hunting of freed slaves.

Jones wrote to Congress on their behalf. His petition was rejected, but it marked the first petition to Congress by African Americans asserting their natural rights. Two years later, Jones wrote again, this time petitioning against the renewal of the slave trade in Maryland—but his petition was much more than that, implicitly calling for the abolition of slavery.

He continued to found organizations for the benefit of his parishioners and the community. In 1804, he became the first Black Episcopal priest in the United States. However, St. Thomas had to strike a bargain for his ordination: The Episcopal authorities would waive requirements for knowledge of Latin and Greek if the church would give up its right to send a representative to the annual meeting where Episcopal policy was made. It must have been a blow, when they had chosen the Episcopalians precisely because they might have more of a voice in their own affairs, but the parishioners evidently considered it worth the sacrifice to have Absalom Jones as their minister.

Jones's ordination should have capped his extraordinary career, but it was only the beginning of his challenges. From 1805 onward, there was a marked atmosphere of hostility toward African American residents in Philadelphia, compounding racism with working Whites' aggressive territoriality over employment.

Jones and his allies were kept busy funding schools to help freed slaves and immigrants gain literacy and job skills, circulating petitions for abolition advocacy, combating dangerous legislation, and providing spiritual support. They also had to fend off recolonization schemes intended to deport free African Americans to either the Appalachians or West Africa.

In 1808, Congress finally banned the slave trade. Reverend Jones was perhaps the first Black preacher to begin the tradition of a thanksgiving sermon on January 1, the day the ban was enacted.

In a petition to Congress, Jones explicitly likened the Black struggle for freedom from slavery to the country's struggle for freedom from Great Britain.

Absalom Jones died in 1818 and was mourned by the Black community of Philadelphia as a brave spokesman, staunch leader, and kind minister who knew and carefully tended to each member of his congregation. He is commemorated by the Episcopal Church on February 13. The Episcopal Church raises funds annually for a scholarship to two historically Black colleges and universities in his name.

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Elizabeth Ann Seton: Convert and Caretaker

16

Elizabeth Ann Seton is renowned today as the founder of the Sisters of Charity, which provided critical poor relief to Catholics in cities across the eastern half of the United States in the 19th century. But she herself did not found or work in any of the urban orphanages or free schools for which her order is famous. Only the last decade of her life was spent in a religious community. Before converting to Catholicism and becoming Mother Seton, she'd lived as a happy newlywed, an overwhelmed young mother, an anxious caretaker, and then, later, as a bankrupt widow dependent on family members.

Elizabeth's Early Life

We have rafts of letters, journals, and other writings from Elizabeth Ann Seton herself and memoirs from her companions. But rather than illuminating her path, this access to Elizabeth's inner life only complicates her story. Catherine O'Donnell's excellent study of Seton's papers, *Elizabeth Seton: American Saint*, unveils her complexity as she struggled to fashion a life on her own terms while still caring for her children and extended network of family and friends.

Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton was born in 1774 at the dawn of the American Revolution. She did not have a happy childhood. Her mother died when she was young. Her stepmother was overwhelmed and uncaring, probably addicted to an opiate known as laudanum. And her father, Richard Bayley, was a distant figure. He was a brilliant physician, devoted to caring for the poor.

Elizabeth was a withdrawn and reserved child. She was drawn to French philosophers rather than to religion. Eventually, she found happiness when she met William Seton, the son of an enterprising Scottish immigrant who was the head of one of the prosperous merchant clans of New York. When he and Elizabeth married in 1794, their home on Wall Street was full of acquaintances, musical evenings, and companionship. She wrote of this period as one of the happiest times of her life.

Elizabeth's Busy Domestic Life

In the 1790s, New York's merchant families, including the Setons, began to struggle in the aftermath of a financial crisis known as the Panic. Elizabeth was a young mother, living on Long Island with her three children, while William commuted from Manhattan several times a week. She became involved with one of the benevolent societies that sprang up to support poor women and their children.

By 1798, William's father had fallen ill. Responsibility for the struggling family business and his six younger half siblings fell on the young couple. They moved into the Seton house, effectively making Elizabeth a mother to nine children (with the help of several servants). She also assisted her husband as his clerk.

It was clear to Elizabeth that her husband did not have a head for business, and by early 1800, the business was clearly going under. In the nick of time, Congress passed the Bankruptcy Act, allowing businessmen to organize and discharge their debts in a highly structured process overseen by committee. The family managed to limp along thanks to the kindness of friends. They moved into the first of a long series of rental homes.

It's at this point that Elizabeth was drawn to organized religion. She and her sister-in-law Rebecca became regular attendees at Trinity Church, the parish for New York's wealthy Episcopalians. They were particularly enthralled by an assistant rector there, John Henry Hobart, whose impassioned sermons stirred the women to form a private prayer circle. Elizabeth's faith seems especially linked to fear of death—she had seen a good friend die recently, and William was increasingly showing signs of consumption, or tuberculosis.

As they could no longer afford their rental home, Elizabeth and the children spent a summer with her father, who lived now in an isolated house as the quarantine officer for the Port of New York. It was his responsibility to inspect ships coming in and quarantine the passengers and crew if they showed signs of communicable disease. The entire family contracted typhus at the end of the summer. The children recovered quickly, but Richard Bayley died of it, and Elizabeth tended him in his final days.

In the fall of 1803, Elizabeth, William, and their eldest daughter, Anna Maria, sailed to Livorno to stay with William's business associates, the Filicchis. Their four younger children were parceled out to various relatives to await their return. In Italy, William's symptoms meant that they were sent into a 30-day quarantine—not a field hospital with medical treatment, as Richard Bayley had run, but a cold stone room with three pallets on the floor, a locked door, and apologetic but firm Italian jailers. Her beloved William died only a week after their release from quarantine, and in his final days, Elizabeth cared for him alone.

Elizabeth's Conversion and Charity Work

Elizabeth and her daughter went to live with the Filicchi family. It was the Filicchis who, seeing Elizabeth's piety and charisma, believed she could be a light for the nascent Catholic Church in America—if she could be convinced to convert.

It was the humble parish church in Livorno that inspired Elizabeth. She had a strong emotional reaction to the moment of transubstantiation, when Catholics believe the Eucharist is transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Having been taught all her life the Protestant doctrine that the moment is symbolic rather than literal, she was fascinated by the idea of such extraordinary access to the divine and the community unity she perceived around the mass. She was also increasingly drawn to the Virgin Mary, whose veneration was not as strong in the Episcopalian tradition she had grown up in.

Back in New York, Elizabeth lived on one floor of a small home outside of town, taking in boarders downstairs. For several years, she agonized over the question of conversion. She was open about her spiritual struggles, and her family worried that the Filicchis had preyed on her grief and loneliness.

To support her children, she was reluctantly persuaded to partner with a couple who planned to open a school, though the work did not interest her. Finally, her decision to convert came to her through an emotional revelation: She attended a service at Trinity and felt a strong aversion to the symbolic Eucharist that was offered.

An enthusiastic convert, she refashioned her life around her new faith. Her family rented small rooms near the Catholic parish, St. Peter's, so that she could go to mass every morning and twice on Sundays. Plans for the school were in disarray when her partners pulled out, and she turned to quietly evangelizing the young Setons who attended her prayer circle.

Elizabeth turned to a Baltimore priest, Louis William Dubourg, who was in New York raising funds for a new Catholic school. He convinced her to join him in Baltimore and open a school for girls. Baltimore was then the center of Catholic life in the young United States, and many of the

wealthy families there supported the new school. They were merchants and plantation owners, often with ties to Caribbean properties and trades that depended on the labor of enslaved people.

Here, it must be acknowledged that the model of charity that Elizabeth Ann Seton embraced was strictly limited by religious and racial boundaries. She had an uncritical attitude toward slavery and racism. The benevolent society she managed as a young matron served only poor White women, never considering aid for poor women of color, a stricture that seems to have been accepted without question.

In her life as Mother Seton, her community depended on the money that came from donors' plantations, fueled by the labor of enslaved people. She lived in close acquaintance with the enslaved people at the Sulpicians' institutions in Emmitsburg—Catholic religious orders still practiced slavery at this time. It seems to have never occurred to her to open the free school to people of color or make any attempt to address the miseries of slavery. Yet she certainly would have been aware of abolitionists' work and recolonization efforts supported by one of the most influential donors to her community.

Elizabeth's Role as Mother Seton

The new school quickly attracted students from wealthy families. Together, Dubourg and a pragmatic Sulpician priest named Jean Dubois purchased land in Emmitsburg—a plantation in rural Maryland—and the enslaved people constrained there. A former sea captain and Catholic convert, Samuel Cooper, donated funds to establish a women's community on the model of the French Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul in the town. Elizabeth set out for the new property in 1809, before the community was built.

By late summer, the first sisters had arrived. Dubourg served as their spiritual director and superior and gave them interim constitutions based on the rule of Saint Benedict. The women woke early and spent their days in prayer, reading, and household tasks. They were to be silent save for readings or singing.

The following year, a fine new building, known as the White House, was completed as a residence for the sisters and for the students of St. Joseph's Academy. The Sulpicians lightly adapted the rule of the Daughters of Charity, and the sisters and Mother Seton finished out their year of the novitiate together and took their vows in the summer of 1813. By this time, there were 18 sisters, and the school boasted 32 paying boarders and 7 lodgers living at the White House.

Elizabeth struggled with her vow of obedience as well as her relationship with her Sulpician superiors. Dubois began to favor her assistant, Rose White, and Elizabeth worried the Sulpicians would replace her as Mother and appoint Rose in her stead.

Within 4 years, she lost Cecilia, Harriet, and two of her daughters—Harriet to an unspecified illness, the others to tuberculosis. Anna Maria's death precipitated a mental health crisis for Elizabeth. A new assistant, Simon Bruté, was able to engage Mother Seton on both an emotional and intellectual level beyond that of her previous spiritual directors. With steady guidance and empathetic companionship, he provided the stability she needed to grow into her role as Mother Seton.

Elizabeth's community opened a free school, and soon, invitations came from Philadelphia and New York to take over orphanages there. Rose White, with two sisters to help her, organized and ran flourishing orphanages, free schools, and outreach to poor Catholics in both cities.

Within a few decades, the Sisters of Charity were operating similar institutions across the eastern US. But Elizabeth Ann Seton did not live to see the reach of their success. She first grew sick in the spring of 1818, though she rallied to spend another 3 years endlessly writing. By the winter of 1820, she was in the final stages of consumption, and she died early in the new year.

Elizabeth Ann Seton is recognized in both the Episcopal and Catholic Church. Her feast day is January 4, and she is the patron of widows, the deaths of children and parents, and problematic in-laws.

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Saints and Modernity

17

The world has changed at an astounding pace in the last two centuries. New technologies, new forms of work, new countries, and new ways of thinking about humans' place in the world have developed at rapid speed. You might think that the advent of modern medicine and the scientific method would have inspired a backlash against older forms of comfort in sickness, such as patron saints. To the contrary, the cult of the saints developed right alongside them.

Evolution of the Canonization Process

You may recall that after the Protestant Reformation, attitudes toward saints changed, and so did the process by which they were made. In the Catholic Church, a series of reforms in the 1600s clarified the bureaucratic process for the creation of saints, added several committees for oversight, and brought it fully under papal control. Pope Urban VIII, in his 1634 promulgation *Caelestis Hierusalem cives*, clarified that both beatification and canonization were fully under papal jurisdiction. He elucidated specific evidentiary rules for investigation into both the deceased's life and their miracles. These reforms also specified that four verified posthumous miracles were needed for canonization.

The process was codified in the 1730s under the future Pope Benedict XIV and remained in use until the 20th century. Urban VIII also created a parallel process, known as equipollent canonization, for historical saints with long-standing cults who didn't have to go through the same evidentiary processes. That is still in use today; in the 21st century, many medieval holy people have been canonized through it, including such luminaries as Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th-century abbess, composer, reformer, medical author, and preacher.

Modern papal efforts to address saint making have emphasized streamlining the process. In 1917, the Code of Canon Law confirmed that a process could not be opened until 50 years after a person's death, but by the end of the century, John Paul II shortened this to just 5 years. The bureaucracy surrounding the process changed as well: In 1969, Paul VI changed the committee structure overseeing canonization processes to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and emphasized the weight of papal authority in beatification, reclaiming the authority from local bishops.

For all the changes and adjustments made to saint making by various popes, none can matchthose of Pope John Paul II. Not only did he further streamline the canonization process, reducing the requirement for canonization to two miracles (one for beatification and one for canonization), but he also made it possible for popes to bypass that 5-year waiting period, as was the case for his own canonization under

Benedict XVI. Miracles and the putative saint's way of life still must be verified, a process that involves doctors, lawyers, archivists, and historians, as well as theologians and cardinals.

Pope John Paul II single-handedly canonized or beatified as many holy dead as all his predecessors combined. Under his papacy, canonizations became enormous events, and St. Peter's Square became an exuberant, joyful sea of proud national groups waving flags and celebrating their saints.

Miracles and Modern Science

In the face of modern medicine and science, how should we understand, investigate, and even verify miracles? This is a problem the Catholic Church has been grappling with for centuries. Even as early as the 13th century, doctors might be called in to examine the bodies of the holy dead and confirm signs of sanctity. This might take the form of curious anatomical findings, as with Saint Clare of Montefalco. When she died in 1308, a local doctor helped the sisters of her community perform an autopsy. They discovered her heart muscle had altered to form the shape of the instruments of the Passion, and three gallstones represented the Trinity, making her a kind of "living reliquary," in the words of scholar Cordelia Warr.

Other medical experts might be called in to examine the exhumed bodies of saints, who were regularly moved from their initial resting place to a prominent location beneath or near the altar of a church. A common early physical indicator of sanctity was supposed to be the appearance of an "incorrupt body," or one that was at least partially mummified, with a "sweet odor" instead of the stench of decomposition.

The records of canonization processes have proved fruitful for many scholars examining medical practices and attitudes of the past. Even medieval testimony often required witnesses or recipients of a miraculous healing to detail whether they had sought traditional healing first and what methods or prescriptions had been tried without success. The Counter-Reformation placed increased importance on verifiable evidence, bringing skepticism and expert opinions to bear on miracle accounts, often using inquisitorial methods.

Whereas previously the number of miracles had been a deciding factor, now the quality of evidence for a few miracles was more privileged. Under Urban VIII, for example, only one saint was canonized through the full bureaucratic proceedings: Andrea Corsini, whose 64 miracles were minutely scrutinized, with careful attention to testimony and rigorous cross-examination of witnesses. Later on, in the early 19th century, the evidentiary bar was so high that few canonizations and almost no miracles were verified between the mid-1700s and 1838. Geopolitical events may have strongly influenced the slowdown in saint making. The closure of religious orders in central Europe; Napoleonic influence in France, Spain, and Italy; and the suppression of orders during Italian unification may all have contributed to a lack of evidence for miracles during the period.

The professionalization of canonization testimony and expert opinions continued to grow throughout the 20th century. In 1949, the Congregation of Rites annexed a college of physicians, which provides the expert testimony to verify healing miracles. These are foundational to most canonization processes—historical records show that multiple doctors often testified on a single miracle even in the 17th century.

Miraculous healings from disease tended to track with medical advances: There were far fewer miracles dealing with tuberculosis after effective treatments

Jacalyn Duffin's study of medical miracles has shown that they constitute more than 90% of all miracles from processes between the 1600s and 1900s.

for the disease were made available in the late 20th century, for instance. Likewise with smallpox, which all but disappears from miracle accounts after the advent of the vaccine.

Advances in medical technology were also reflected in the treatments provided to miracle recipients. The introduction of the stethoscope, chemotherapy, and other modern treatments changed the way we understand and seek to treat disease and therefore our understanding of what constitutes a miracle. Duffin verifies that the congregations are not interested in easy miracles. The records show an insistence on up-to-date methods, solid evidence, and scientific skepticism.

Recognition of Martyrs, Heroes, and Heroines

Although the Protestant Reformation changed the approach to sainthood, martyrs were still recognized by Catholic and Protestant alike. Today, at least two major Protestant denominations recognize the holy dead with special calendar days, churches, and other institutions named in their honor. The Methodists recognize martyrs, and the Anglicans recognize both Catholic saints venerated before their split from Rome and "heroes and heroines" from the post-Reformation period. Some of these include martyrs on both sides.

After the long pause and recalibration of canonizations following the Reformation, emphasis turned to saints who were active in social reform—founders of a new type of religious order that was focused on their community. Katharine Drexel, founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, used her wealth and connections to establish schools for Native Americans and African Americans throughout the United States. These included Xavier University in New Orleans, the only Catholic HBCU in the country.

The wave of canonizations that began in the late 20th century under Pope John Paul II has vastly diversified the saintly choir as well. These include martyrs from the world wars and conflicts in Central and South America, a member of the Lebanese Maronite Church, and victims of slavery and human trafficking.

Margaret Clitherow and the Jesuit lay brother Nicholas Owen are recognized as martyrs by the Catholic Church for their actions during the English Reformation. They are among a group known as the Forty Martyrs: Catholics killed in England under Protestant rule.

Some of his choices were controversial, none more so than Edith Stein. She was born to a German Jewish family in 1891. She converted to Catholicism in middle age and became a nun, Teresa Benedicta, with the Discalced Carmelites, taking her full vows in 1938. She was killed during World War II at Auschwitz. Her canonization process was controversial for several reasons. Her beatification as a Christian martyr seemed to some critics at odds with the fact she was killed for her Jewish heritage. The timing of her canonization also seemed suspect: It came during the 1990s, a period when the Catholic Church was being criticized for its lack of response to Nazi atrocities during the war.

Like the Catholics, the Anglican Church also divided its focus between martyrs and social reformers and embraced a wide-ranging group of artists, poets, and notables whose work had a strong religious focus. It recognized a wide variety of "heroes and heroines" in the wake of the Reformation.

One of the earliest to be so recognized was the 17th-century reformer and religious leader George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, a group also known as the Quakers. Other Anglican heroes and heroines include Florence Nightingale and other social reformers, such as William and Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army. Nightingale is, of course, famous for revolutionizing battlefield medical care and organizing nursing care to professional standards of modern hygiene.

Anglican "heroes" also span the globe. Ini Kopuria, a police officer from the Solomon Islands, is honored as the founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood, an Anglican religious community created in 1925 that now spans Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea as well.

The changes to the modern cult of the saints reflect our changing world. We still need mystics, visionaries, and philosophers, even as the work of social reformers and exemplars of bravery and virtue in the face of injustice have become ever more relevant and urgent.

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Joan of Arc: Peasant-General

18

Joan of Arc was a peasant, a general, a visionary, a politician, and a heretic. In the modern age, she has become a national hero of France, a saint, and a feminist icon. It's difficult to peel back all of those layers and get at the historical person at their core. Fortunately, the profusion of chronicles that came out of late medieval France can be accessed, as well as Joan's own words through her letters, her extensive testimony at her heresy trial, and the testimony of those who knew her from a later trial. They reveal a young woman who defied categorization: neither peasant nor noble, feminine and masculine by turn, and simple yet expert in ways that defied her humble origins.

Contest for the French Throne

Joan was born in 1412, during the final stages of the Hundred Years' War. It began in 1337 with a dispute between the new king of France and the king of England over English-held lands in France, and it eventually became a contest for the French throne.

The pendulum of victory swung slowly. At first, the English had the advantage, but in the second half of the 14th century, the war stalled. France suffered a series of tragedies that drove it to despair by 1429: the deaths of two princes, two assassinations, a major military defeat, and a ruinous treaty.

In the spring of 1420, King Charles VI of France signed the Treaty of Troyes, along with King Henry V of England and the new duke of Burgundy. This incredible document disinherited the dauphin—the French king's son, also named Charles—and acknowledged Henry V as Charles's heir. Henry married Charles's daughter, Princess Catherine. The dauphin fled to the lands still under his control, south of the Loire.

Henry V died in 1422, leaving an infant son behind. The duke of Bedford became the English regent and the leader of their force in France. He pressed young Henry VI's claim to the French throne. A stalemate ensued as the dauphin dug into his position in the south while the Burgundians held the traditional coronation site, the city of Reims, which the dauphin needed to bolster the legitimacy of his claim to the throne. It became clear that Orléans, gateway between the north and south, was the fulcrum upon which the war would turn. But by early 1429, the fall of Orléans and the dauphin's ultimate defeat seemed imminent.

This was the desperate situation in which Joan of Arc arrived in the early spring of 1429. Her family had suffered for many generations under the prolonged war, and aided by God, she was on a mission to bring the suffering of the French people to an end.

Joan's Early Years

Joan of Arc had been born in the small village of Domrémy, in the duchy of Lorraine, to a prominent local family. Her father, Jacques, was a man of standing in the village and directed their defenses. Domrémy was part of a small pocket of royal supporters, surrounded by duchies committed to the Anglo-Burgundian alliance.

Despite the influence of war in her life, Joan would also have had a typical peasant childhood: tending animals, helping with the harvest, or shadowing her mother around the house, perhaps tending to a younger sibling. Her mother, Isabelle, a devout Christian, also provided her religious education.

Most of what we know about Joan's initial path toward leadership comes from the records of her two trials: one for heresy in 1431, which led to her execution, and one in the 1450s, which overturned her heresy conviction and restored her reputation. Testimony from the villagers of Domrémy, family, and her later advisors rounds out the picture we get from Joan's own words at her 1431 trial.

They tell us that around the age of 13, she began to hear saintly voices. She eventually understood these to be Saint Michael the dragon slayer; Saint Catherine of Alexandria, who was known for her divinely gifted theological knowledge; and Saint Margaret of Antioch, who preserved her virginity by dressing as a man and living her life as a monk. Interestingly, they possessed traits for which Joan would become known. They assured her that it was her destiny to raise the siege at Orléans and put the dauphin on the throne by having him crowned at Reims.

Joan's Preparation and Training

Word of Joan's visions began to spread, and she began to aggressively seek an audience with the garrison commander of the nearby fortress of Vaucouleurs, Robert de Baudricourt. He rebuffed her repeatedly but eventually agreed to provide her with safe passage to the royal court at Chinon. She was said to have convinced him of her divine mission by successfully predicting the outcome of a battle before news of it arrived.

On her arrival at Chinon, the dauphin had hidden himself amidst a crowd to test Joan, but she picked him out easily and won him over in a private meeting. Nevertheless, he needed proof of Joan's God-given authority and that her mystical knowledge didn't have more sinister origins. He sent her to Poitiers for examination by a slate of learned theologians, who interrogated her for signs of "visionary falsehood." Their reports were mixed but overall positive. Lastly, Joan was examined by two ladies of the court, and her virginity was confirmed. Joan was embraced as a potent figurehead, a symbol of Charles's right to rule and divine support.

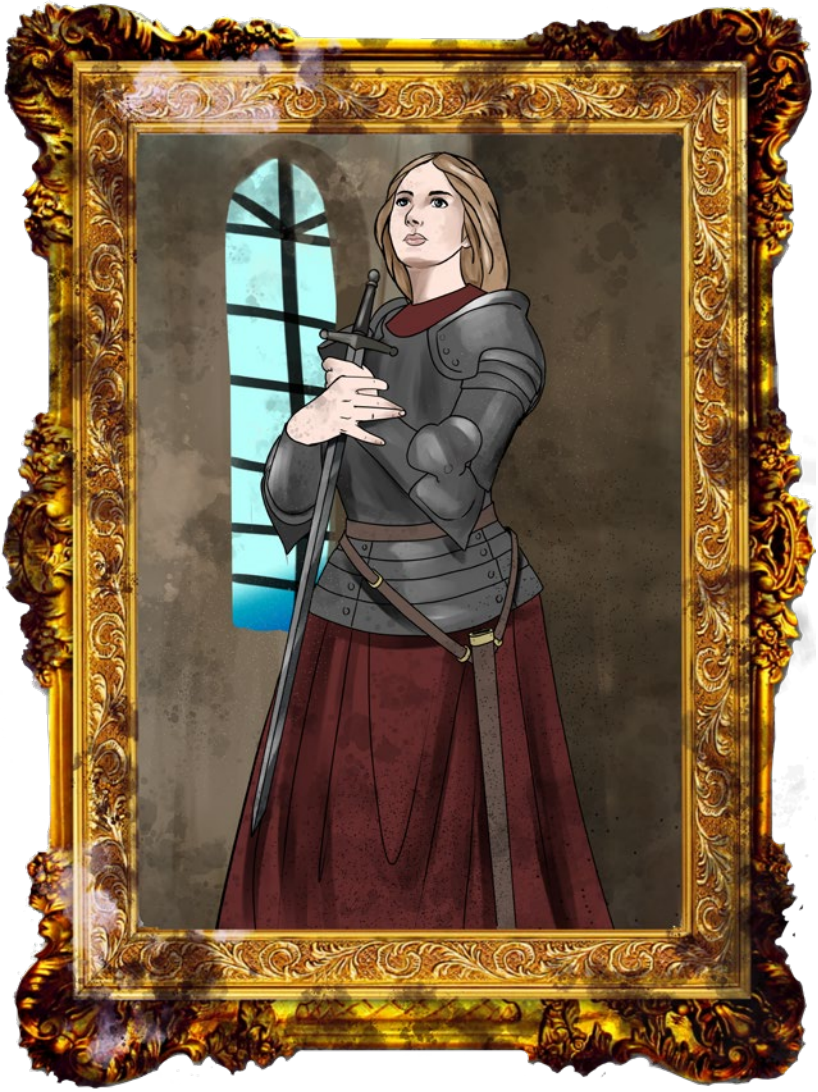
She was sent to Tours and outfitted with customized armor and banners. For her weapon, Joan asked monks at Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois to unbury a sword from a specific site and send it to her. They searched and found a rusty sword with five crosses on it buried behind the altar. Her miraculous knowledge of the weapon imbued its possession with further divine authority—though Joan later dimmed that somewhat by breaking it on the back of a prostitute she was chasing out of camp.

Joan's preparations may also have included some military training. Commanders later commented she displayed uncannily seasoned battlefield knowledge, particularly in her tactics and skill in aiming artillery.

Joan continually surprised the court and the French military captains by taking an active and even intrusive role in military strategy, circumventing chivalric norms, and using aggressive tactics to win the day.

Joan's Divine Missions

Joan was eager to fulfill her divine commission when she arrived at Orléans in late April 1429. She was frustrated to find that the leader of the city's defenses was inclined to retreat and abandon the city to the English. On May 6, Joan seized the initiative and insisted on leading her troops out in a sortie against one of the English fortifications. Joan was always at the forefront of the attack, charging with couched lance. It was a resounding success, with few French losses. But it did not win her favor or influence with the other French captains, who decided without her to wait for more supplies and men from the king.



The next day, in defiance of their plans, Joan attacked the most important of the English fortifications, known as Les Tourelles, which controlled access to the main gate of the city. With this critical victory, they liberated all of Orléans. Within days, the news was all over Europe.

Joan had fulfilled the first of her divine missions; it remained only to see Charles crowned in Reims, more than 150 miles away. The main army departed Gien on June 29, and letters flew thick and fast as Joan commanded cities in their path to open their gates, provide supplies, and acknowledge their king properly. The city of Troyes offered some challenge but surrendered on July 10.

After Troyes, cities began to readily open their gates to the king's forces, and they made rapid progress. Charles entered Reims on July 16, 1429, and was crowned the next day. His coronation was the peak of Joan's career, as she stood at his side during the long day of ceremony. After the nobles had done homage to him, she knelt before the new king and wept.

Joan proved herself fearless and repeatedly put herself into the thick of the action, though she personally refused to shed blood. It was taken as a further sign of her holy status.

Joan's Capture and Trials

Having fulfilled her two divine missions, Joan now embarked on a more aggressive goal: to expel the English entirely from French soil. But Charles organized a truce with Burgundy. Joan was unhappy. She was also furious when Charles deferred besieging Paris until September, then called it off after only a few days. He disbanded the army at the end of the month.

It was a long and frustrating winter for Joan, detailed to attack a regional bandit but prevented from engaging with the English. The following spring, she was given only a small number of men to harass the Anglo-Burgundian forces north of Paris. She managed several small victories, but

during a retreat to the town of Compiègne, she was separated from her men and captured by the Burgundians. Joan was then only 18 years old. Her fantastic career had lasted no more than a year.

No captain was more feared by the English than Joan. For a king's ransom, the Burgundians turned her over to the English. At that point, her fate was sealed. The duke of Bedford organized a highly biased trial; there was never any hope that Joan would be acquitted.

Joan's trial brought together more than 100 clerics and was directed by the bishop of Beauvais, a tool of the English. It was common knowledge that hers was a show trial. Joan's testimony, given over five months, was extensive and remarkable. She openly lied and prevaricated, even warning that she intended to do so, but she also fenced and parried with her interrogators with remarkable wit, sophistication, and bravery.

We know from the trial records that Joan's donning male clothing was heavily emphasized by her interrogators. This, however, may have led Joan's biographers to overstate its importance during her career. It was also not unprecedented for a woman to lead troops. It was quite common, in fact, for aristocratic women to be trained in organizing siege defenses and to oversee military preparations.

After interrogating her for months, her judges were split. Some found her boastful, vain, and a liar but did not support executing her. Others wanted to forward the case to the pope, which was the appropriate legal venue for an appeal. Instead, the English executed Joan by burning. The 19-year-old did not die well, or easily. Her death was described by witnesses as "long and dreadful," and even her most ardent opponents were horrified by its cruelty.

Twenty years later, seeking to rehabilitate her reputation, her mother pressed Charles VII for a new trial. These proceedings, called her nullification trial, overturned the heresy conviction on which she was executed and provided historians with hundreds of testimonies about her life and career. Interestingly, there was no talk of sanctity; she was not regarded as a saint until the mid-19th century, at the time of the second French revolution. Her path to canonization was begun in 1869 but not completed until 1920, in the nationalistic atmosphere of post–World War I Europe. Today, she is honored on May 30 and is the patron saint of soldiers and of France.

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Andrei Rublev: Artist-Monk

19

Andrei Rublev was an artist—the artist, as far as Russian icon painters were concerned—who was born around 1360 in the area around Moscow. His brief career left a stunning legacy of theologically sophisticated compositions, even as he endured plague and the desecration of his monastery. He lived at the heart of an exciting revitalization of Russian monasticism and the rise of the Muscovite principate. Centuries after his medieval life, his path to sainthood illustrates the political stakes of canonization in the modern world.

Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery

Rublev was born into a divided land—a smattering of principalities that were struggling through the dissolution of almost two centuries of Mongol rule. These disruptions to the Rus economy and political sphere would have been felt by Andrei Rublev's family and formed the backdrop of his childhood.

We don't know much about his early life. According to Engelina Smirnova, an expert in medieval Russian icons, we can roughly date Rublev's birth to around 1380, and he was probably from a well-off family. The hagiographical tradition has him entering the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery at around the age of 15, an appropriate age for a novice.

Today, Trinity-St. Sergius is known as one of the great monasteries of Russia, but in the 14th century, it was still relatively new and small. It was founded in the 1330s as an experimental community of hermits by the monastic reformer and saint Sergius of Radonezh. Sergius appears to have had great personal charisma and was famed throughout the region as "the wonder-worker." He was also a politically gifted leader.

By the mid-1370s, Sergius had become a close adviser to the metropolitan bishop of Moscow. It was around the same time that Sergius introduced his followers to a new way of life inspired by the rule of Saint Sabas the Sanctified, also known as the Jerusalem rule. The new rule transformed the monastery into a fairly rigid hierarchy. There was greater emphasis on poverty, asceticism, and obedience. The rule also emphasized that the monks were to venerate authority figures, including the archbishop and prince.

Rublev would have experienced this newly transformed community when he entered Trinity in the 1390s. His life as a novice and a monk would have been extremely restricted. The Jerusalem rule emphasized the brothers' utter humility and subjection to the authority of the abbot, who controlled every detail of their lives. Each monk performed manual labor to benefit the community and had specific duties assigned according to his skills. They were forbidden to have any personal possessions; everything was held in common.

Rublev spent most of his monastic career under the rule of the abbot Nikon, Sergius's handpicked successor. Nikon used the monastery's resources, including Rublev's talents, to spread Sergius's cult and to promote the abbey as the site of Sergius's burial and shrine.

The monastery also diversified its political connections and strengthened its ties with urban and economic centers, which may have contributed to the scope of Rublev's career. He would have received a good education, as Russian monasteries were essential centers of learning in the medieval period. They provided society's artists, architects, authors, and more. He might have trained in a scriptorium, where illuminated manuscripts were produced and where his artistic talent would have been noticed and refined. He would also have had the opportunity to study fine icons.

Russian Icon Painting

After the end of the second iconoclastic age in the 9th century, icons regained their place even more emphatically at the center of Orthodox worship. As the Orthodox Church spread, the use and creation of icons modeled after early Greek exemplars spread as well.

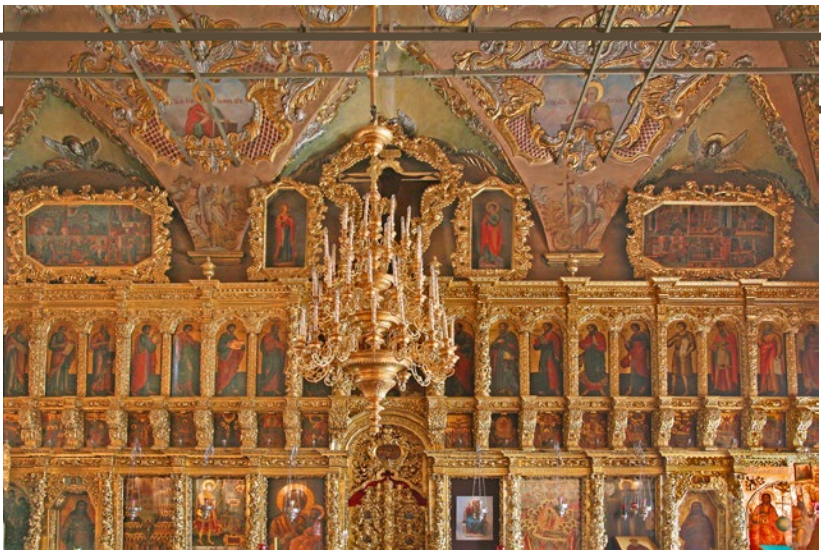
The trade between the Black Sea and the Rus grew as they forged more political ties in the later Middle Ages. With that came the importation of skilled Greek craftsmen, architects, and artists, who built churches and painted frescoes and icons for the landowning classes. Russian institutions and culture were also constantly being refreshed with new ideas and styles from Byzantium.

But Russian icons also developed their own norms and styles. Rublev's lifetime was known as the start of the golden age of Russian icon painting. As a young artist, he would have been exposed to a variety of styles. But the strong Russian influence of older works also shone through, in a new style that combined Byzantine elongated features with the 13th-century Russian trend toward rich decoration and larger scope. Works began to emphasize simple compositions, particularly inclined toward illustrating Gospel stories and saints' lives for the common people.

The predominant visual impact that icons made was in the iconostasis, which may best be described as simply a wall of icons: rows and rows of them, reaching high above one's head. They typically contained several doors, which were opened during services to permit the laity to see and hear the service being conducted beyond the iconostasis.

The iconostasis served to separate the nave from the sacred space nearer the altar. The lowest row of icons, presumably the most accessible to the standing laity, was known as the local row. On it were icons of special significance to the community, representing perhaps the name of the church or monastery where they were found. It was in this row that Rublev's great work, the *Holy Trinity*, was placed at Trinity-St. Sergius monastery.

Above the local row are two to four more rows, each with its own conventions. The Deesis row shows Christ enthroned, John the Baptist, and the Virgin, as well as other major saints and archangels. The Twelve Great Feasts row shows the great celebrations throughout the year. Further rows show the apostles, prophets, and patriarchs, along with further Marian images. One can imagine how painting the images for a single iconostasis might occupy years of a painter's life, as it undoubtedly did for Rublev and his companion painters.



Rublev's Career as an Artist

Around 1370, a painter and philosophy student known as Theophanes the Greek traveled from Constantinople to the region of the Rus. He is believed to have painted dozens—perhaps hundreds—of works in fresco, icons, and illuminated manuscripts. An acknowledged master, he was highly sought after and known particularly for his use of color and finely balanced compositions.

Theophanes is perhaps best known as a mentor of Andrei Rublev. The first historical mention of Rublev was in a list of painters decorating the Cathedral of the Annunciation, in the Moscow Kremlin, in 1405. The three artists were listed in order of seniority, with Theophanes first and Rublev coming last—yet another indication of his relative youth. The modern building, however, is not the one Rublev worked on, which was a wooden church that burned down a few years after the artist completed work there.

In 1408, Rublev formed his greatest artistic partnership, with the older icon painter Daniel Chorny. Chorny was also a monk, and the two worked together on every major commission for the next 20 years. Their first known commission was painting the Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir. Rublev is often associated with the Deesis tier of the iconostasis there, though there is no firm evidence he painted these particular icons. The icon of *Our Lady of Vladimir* there is, however, often attributed to him.

By 1422, Rublev was in his 40s and at the height of his artistic powers. He was back at Trinity-St. Sergius, undoubtedly commissioned to commemorate two important events for the community. The discovery of Saint Sergius's incorrupt relics took place in July 1422, after which it was decided to build a memorial church in the saint's honor. Construction was complete by late 1426. During those years, Rublev and Chorny painted the church, both in fresco and the scenes of the iconostasis.

According to the conventions of the day, Rublev and Chorny likely co-painted individual icons, making it difficult to attribute the iconostasis images to only one of them.

Rublev died carrying out his final commission: painting the frescoes of the Saviour Cathedral at the Andronikov Monastery in Moscow. He may have died during a recurrence of the plague in 1427, though at least one source records his death as taking place in 1430.

Rublev's Icon of the *Holy Trinity*

Rublev's most famous work by far is the icon of the *Holy Trinity*. Its creation is generally dated anywhere between 1411 and 1427. But it is firmly associated with the monastery of Trinity-St. Sergius. The hagiography of Abbot Nikon tells us that he commissioned it as a "house icon" to honor Saint Sergius.

The icon depicts the visit of three angels to Abraham and Sarah at Mamre, but the composition is subtly arranged to indicate that the angels are, in fact, the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This comes from a long tradition dating back to the 4th century. Early on, the figures were designed to suggest that the three angelic visitors were, in fact, Christ with two attendant angels. As the tradition progressed, Abraham and Sarah were often removed from the scene or portrayed as marginal figures.

Rublev's great innovation was to depict the attendant angels as members of the Trinity as well. He did this through clever and careful use of colors and gesture, and the figures were posed with careful intent.

Rublev's *Holy Trinity* icon is widely considered to be the finest example of Russian icon painting and has been described as "the pride of Russian art" and "the quintessential Russian icon."

The Trinity icon was installed in the lowest local row of the iconostasis and became one of the prized pieces of the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery. It is widely considered to be the finest example of Russian icon painting. Rublev's subtle use of symbols and theological representations is what truly sets him apart, but the clean, ascetic lines of his works also show his mastery of the blending of styles from Theophanes the Greek and other Russian icon painters.

Rublev Refashioned through the Years

Rublev's work was admired after his death, but it was not until the 16th century that his reputation was elevated above that of other Russian icon painters. The Church Council of 1551 produced a document known as the Hundred Chapters. Chapter 41 instructed icon painters to "paint from ancient models, such as the Greek icon painters, and as Andrei Rublev painted." From then on, he was revered as the highest exemplar of Russian icon painting, and his style was consciously imitated. However, medieval icons fell out of interest as Russia turned to more European styles in the 18th century under Catherine the Great. Rublev was all but forgotten until the Trinity icon was cleaned in the early 20th century, which attracted scholarly attention.

Rublev's reputation as an artist was revived by Soviet propaganda in the 20th century. The Trinity icon appeared in an exhibition of icons in 1920 in Moscow, then moved to the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, where it remains today.

During the Cold War, Russian commentators likened him to da Vinci, Rembrandt, and other famous European painters. This lionization culminated in his glorification (the term used in the Orthodox Church for canonization) in 1988, even though there was no shrine or evidence for miracles being performed through him. His tomb remains unknown to this day. He is celebrated on January 29 and on July 4.

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Josephine Butler: Victorian Feminist

20

Josephine Butler faced down angry mobs, arson attempts, and overwhelming political opposition in her campaigns for women's rights. Born to a wealthy, progressive family, her faith and her supportive husband, George, led her to work on behalf of women's access to education and employment. After the traumatic death of her young daughter, she turned to working on behalf of the poor and then on behalf of sick prostitutes. Her campaigns for the rights of so-called fallen women and later against child prostitution and human trafficking made her famous across Europe. Butler's charisma made her whirlwind speaking tours an enormous success. But it was her deep faith and daily contemplative prayer that enabled her to withstand vicious opposition and hostile governments.

Josephine's Early Years

Josephine Butler was born in 1828 into the height of the British Empire—one of the most powerful nations on earth, but one in which women were essentially powerless. Married women had little control over anything—not their wages, their property, their children, or even their own bodies. They had only limited access to divorce, and even if successful, they would have little hope of seeing their children or gaining custody afterward. It was also considered unfeminine for women to pursue hobbies or interests outside the home, including higher education.

Josephine was the seventh child of 10 and the fourth daughter. Her parents, John and Hannah Grey, made sure their daughters were as well educated as their sons. Their home was always open to friends from a wide variety of backgrounds, and young Josephine and her siblings would have been privy to discussions among American abolitionists, activists, agricultural experts, and staunch feminists.

When Josephine was 5 years old, her father began working as manager of the vast estates of Greenwich Hospital. His children often accompanied him there to visit the dozens of farms and tenant families, where they saw the realities of rural poverty. By the time Josephine was 17, this exposure to the extremes of social inequality and its consequent human suffering brought her to a crisis point: How could a loving God permit such misery? She seems to have resolved the crisis somewhat, and her deep faith in God never faltered.

Josephine's Marriage and Early Activism

In 1850, at the age of 22, Josephine met George Butler, a Classics master at Durham University. Like the Greys, the Butlers were upper-class progressives who moved in elite circles. After marrying, the young couple moved to Oxford, where George hoped to be appointed to a chair in Classics.

The move was something of a comedown for Josephine. The Butlers' social life consisted largely of unmarried male intellectuals, convinced of the importance of their own views and of the unimportance of women's

opinions, however well informed. Josephine was further driven to scorn at their fellows' hypocritical treatment of women, whom they pursued, seduced, then abandoned and castigated as "fallen women." She took an interest in several of these poor women, even bringing some into the Butler household.

In 1857, 5 years into their marriage, they moved to Cheltenham College. Josephine had the last of their three sons there and began working to expand women's access to education at Cheltenham Ladies' College.

She soon had a daughter, Eva. But the family was devastated when 5-year-old Eva died after falling from an upper floor in their home. It's impossible to overstate the effect Eva's death had on the Butlers, especially her mother. After 2 bleak years, they left Cheltenham for Liverpool, where George became headmaster at Liverpool College.

Driven by her consuming grief, Josephine sought an outlet in being "of use" to others in pain. She could have joined other well-heeled matrons in a benevolent society, but she wanted to help the truly desperate—those deemed unfit for charity by those "respectable" benevolent society ladies for reasons they saw as unbefitting their model of the "deserving poor." Josephine made no moral judgments about those who needed help.

Battling the Contagious Diseases Acts

Josephine had learned that many women, to stave off utter destitution, worked as prostitutes—that is, until they caught venereal diseases from their clients and were thrown out to starve. Once a woman was in the later stages of syphilis, no refuge or charity would help her—except the Butlers. They began by taking in and caring for a few individuals, who lived with them for weeks or months until their deaths. Eventually, the Butlers founded several respite homes for prostitutes, known collectively as the House of Rest.

By the fall of 1869, other prominent women's activists were urging her to take on leadership of a new campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act (CDA) of 1866. It was a delicate and dangerous task that could endanger her husband's career and her own reputation.

The CDA was supported by the government, medical associations, the military, and even by progressives as a public health tool. The act originally targeted only a few garrison towns, with the aim of preventing an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases spreading among the military. In those 11 towns, any woman detained on even a suspicion of prostitution could be forced to submit to an intrusive gynecological examination. Women who refused the exam were imprisoned; those who agreed and were found to be sick were detained in a special hospital for up to three months.

This was all done without any trial, evidence, or witnesses. The act was expanded a few years later to nearly 20 cities across England and Ireland, and its supporters eventually envisioned it being enacted across the whole of the United Kingdom and abroad.

One of the bitter injustices that continued to enflame Josephine's passions over the decades was that while women saw their lives ruined by the economic pressure to engage in sex work, their male clients saw little if any repercussions.

Butler proved an ideal spokeswoman: She was a respectably married woman of unblemished reputation, upper-class, charismatic, and determined. Her campaign framed the CDA as a violation of rights and a danger to respectable girls who might be caught up by baseless suspicions. It also emphasized the double standard that women were held to—the acts penalized prostitutes but let the clients who infected them go about as free men.

Butler was an enormously popular speaker. The campaign's influence was felt in local elections, and she became such a prominent figure that the Royal Commission on the acts invited her to testify. She gave a powerful speech linking the acts, the sexual trafficking of children into prostitution, and the abuse of young working-class girls as unjust and immoral.

In 1872, just 3 years after Butler began her work, new legislation was introduced that repealed the acts, introduced new punishments for procurers of young girls, and raised the age of consent from 12 to 14. But it also widened the scope of the CDA to the entire country. Butler rejected it. She stepped down, handing over leadership of the campaign against the CDA to a progressive former cabinet member, James Stansfeld. He eventually brought about the end of the acts more than a decade later.

Angry crowds protested at Josephine's speeches, and she was sometimes disguised while entering and exiting speaking venues. On more than one occasion, she was thrown out of a lodging house whose owners were too afraid of the mob to let her stay with them.

Fighting Child Abuse and Sex Trafficking

Butler's involvement in defeating the acts had introduced her to the horrible scope of abuse and predation on young girls in the country, a number of whom were kidnapped, drugged, or even purchased from their parents and sold into sexual slavery in brothels in England or trafficked to the Continent. Without any official backing, she set off on a fact-finding tour of western Europe. Armed only with a handful of introductions from Quakers and the foreign secretary, she poked her nose into brothels, toured hospitals, and gently interrogated police departments.

She traveled France, Italy, and Switzerland, investigating and giving speeches. On her return to Liverpool in 1875, she made her report to a newly formed British and Continental Federation for the Abolition of the Governmental Regulation of Prostitution. It would be the second great campaign of her life, extending over the next decade.

The 1870s saw enormous advances for social reformers in general. Children aged 5 to 10 were now required to attend school, which dramatically improved the literacy rate, especially for girls. Women were able to keep their wages, to sue for divorce on the grounds of violence, and to see their children after divorce.

Perhaps the most sensational episode of this period was an article that appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885. The piece focused on the trafficking and abuse of English children. Butler was involved in the most spectacular part of the reporting.

The journalist, William Thomas Stead, had enlisted one of Butler's house guests, Rebecca Jarrett, a reformed brothel keeper, to pose in the guise of her former profession and purchase a young girl. In his published account, Eliza Armstrong was duly bought from her own mother and taken to a brothel, where Stead claimed Eliza spent the night unharmed before being brought to the Butlers.

These events were later contradicted in court by testimony from Jarrett, by Eliza herself, and by her mother. Stead was jailed for several months, while Jarrett served six months' hard labor, which Butler thought was terribly unjust.

The uproar pushed Parliament to act: They finally raised the age of consent to 16 and imposed strict penalties for traffickers. But the same legislation had unintended consequences, including harsh punishments for the very women Butler hoped to help. Police now had greater power

to arrest prostitutes, and the legislation also spawned grassroots "social purity" groups and "vigilance committees" across Britain. They sought to shut down music halls and theaters as well as brothels, lumping them all together as "dens of vice"—and in the process mounted campaigns against all extramarital sexual activities.

Meanwhile, Josephine embarked on a flurry of letter writing, aiming to expand resistance to the CDA to British colonies. She could not go herself, as George had become sick. He died in 1890. Josephine never fully recovered from his loss, but she continued to work for the suppression of prostitution regulation abroad and wrote frequently as an advocate of international causes.

Butler left behind a voluminous correspondence, assorted biographical sketches of other campaigners for women's causes, and six books. One book was a biography of Saint Catherine of Siena, who she refigured as a feminist prophet, a model for Butler's own work. Butler felt a keen closeness with the saints, particularly female mystics such as Catherine and Teresa of Ávila. Their emphasis on personal communication with the divine mirrored Butler's devotion to prayer, though she struggled with it at times.

Butler died on December 30, 1906. She is remembered in the Anglican Church on May 30, and a college residence hall and a women's college of higher learning in England bear her name, along with several memorials.

The Ladies' National Association she led against the CDA is now known as the Josephine Butler Society and still works on behalf of abused and underage sex workers.

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Padre Pio: The Science of Miracles

21

Perhaps no saint better represents the tension between the modern need for evidence and irrefutable proof and the unknowable miraculous workings of the charismatic saint than Padre Pio. In his long career as a Capuchin monk, he was revered as a mystic and ascetic, a recipient of miraculous stigmata. He was a founder and a healer who used his popularity to help the poor through modern science and medicine. He was also repeatedly investigated, censured, separated from his followers, and demonized as a fraud and heretic by the Vatican and his own order. His associates included fascists, Nazi sympathizers, and war profiteers. This lecture covers the life of this controversial figure.

Pio's Early Years

For a modern figure, Padre Pio is exceptionally difficult to pin down. The sources on Padre Pio's life are highly colored by his devotees' desire to paint him as a holy figure, making it almost impossible to separate fact from later embellishments. In that way, his legend is not so different from a medieval saint's.

He was born Francesco Forgione in 1887, son of a poor family in the small village of Pietrelcina in Italy. Italy had then been a nation-state for a little more than 25 years, and its rural communities were suffering immensely from misguided government policies and corrupt landlords. Food supplies were unstable, and disease was a constant threat.

Francesco entered the Capuchin order in the Franciscan tradition at age 15 and took the name Pio. He spent some years moving among a closely knit network of Franciscan communities, studying for the priesthood. During this time, the teenager became terribly sick. His digestion seems to have been a recurring problem throughout his life.

He was ordained in 1910 at the age of 23 but did not return to his order. Instead, he lived with his family for the next 6 years. Finally, the order transferred him to a quiet mountain town where the air might benefit his health: the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in San Giovanni Rotondo, in the impoverished province of Foggia. It was a small community of seven friars, peaceful and removed from many of the concerns of the outside world.

Pio's Growing Popularity

At the onset of World War I, many religious were called to military service as chaplains. Pio was drafted in late 1915, and though diagnosed with tuberculosis, he was assigned to serve with the medical corps in Naples. However, he complained constantly of poor health and was discharged in the spring of 1918. He also contracted the Spanish flu during the major pandemic of 1918, and it was as he lay ill at a nearby convent in Foggia that he received the stigmata: bleeding rents in the flesh of his palms, feet, and side.

While the provincial minister saw them as a gift, the order's leader and minister general urged caution. They quietly arranged an appointment with a professor of pathology at an elite university, who suggested the wounds had both natural and artificial causes: neurotic necrosis maintained and shaped with caustic substances.

It took only a few months for news to circulate around San Giovanni Rotondo about the quiet friar's miraculous wounds. And a few months later, word spread that Padre Pio had performed a miracle, healing a young veteran made lame by grenade shrapnel. An article in a major Neapolitan paper brought public attention to the friar, and the story was picked up by other national newspapers. Padre Pio was said to levitate, to survive on almost no food, and to have miraculous visions and prophecies. An enthusiastic group of worshippers sought him out as their spiritual director and confessor, and letters began to pour in daily from the poor and sick.

Lay prayer groups began to spring up, inspired by him but outside the direction of any cleric. A new provincial minister wrote worriedly to his superiors—he had been threatened by a group of locals against removing Padre Pio from the convent, the first of many such conflicts over the next decade. The church's old anxiety about unapproved and unregulated cults reared its head, and the new minister took steps to contain the friar's growing cult following.

Padre Pio's stigmata was questioned repeatedly throughout his lifetime and was only fully put to rest with the formal canonization process in the late 20th century.

Pio's Investigations

Floods of mail deluged the convent, followers begged for meetings, and skeptical churchmen descended to investigate the convent's theological and financial soundness. An inquisitor was dispatched from Rome in the summer of 1921 and found the friar full of vague statements: He frequently claimed he was "hazy" or couldn't remember a particular point. Pio stated

that he was unaware of the miracles ascribed to him, and he downplayed any role he might have in encouraging an active cult around him. In response to questions about pharmaceutical products in his cell, he claimed the acids were used to sterilize syringes only. The inquisitor found no wounds on his feet or side, but healed scars.

Local clerics and Catholics continued to petition the Vatican for investigation. They claimed that Padre Pio was, in fact, a rather vague tool of overfamiliar female followers and unscrupulous friars. Yet another investigator, an apostolic visitor, arrived in the 1920s to look into the situation. Agostino Gemelli, a young Franciscan, had served in a series of military hospitals during the war. Although Gemelli had found him an exemplary religious, he castigated the friar as a man of little knowledge, "monotonous ideas, little volition," and without the hallmarks of the true mystic.

The Vatican's doubts were further raised when, in the wake of Gemelli's scathing report, a local pharmacist submitted a sworn statement that the friar had secretly procured unusually large amounts of caustic substances from him since the spring of 1919. The friar claimed the substances were to disinfect syringes that he used for the medical treatment of his brothers, but he could have obtained such disinfectants directly from the friars' own doctor.

Pio's Political Entanglements

San Giovanni Rotondo, though remote, was not immune to Italy's economic and social pressures, including the clash between socialists and fascists that ultimately brought Benito Mussolini to power in 1922. In August 1920, Padre Pio had emerged from the convent to formally bless a convoy of veterans passing by, a decision he never explained. It might be considered naivete, but locals understood it to be a declaration of political allegiances. The veterans had split from the local Socialist Party and begun to organize in military-style groups to protect local landowners from worker demonstrations.

Only a few months later, San Giovanni was the site of one of the largest massacres that marked those years of labor conflicts. In October 1920, local elections had raised tensions between the victorious Socialists and the challenging party, the Fascists. The morning of October 14, the Socialists

had planned a march, alongside which there was a counterdemonstration. Weapons were brandished, two bombs went off, and troops fired on the Socialists, killing 11 farm workers.

Shortly afterward, Giuseppe Caradonna, a decorated veteran and activist and the first Fascist deputy elected in the south of Italy, made a special visit to San Giovanni Rotondo. One of Padre Pio's devoted followers invited him to visit the friar, who gave Caradonna a warm welcome.

It's unclear whether Pio fully understood the political implications of the relationship. Their meeting inspired more than a personal connection between the two men. From then on, a veritable Fascist guard was mounted outside the monastery. They proved such a menacing threat that both church and civic authorities were dissuaded, again and again, from plans to move Padre Pio to another region of the country.

Pio's Hospital and Later Years

In the postwar years, Padre Pio turned his attentions to fundraising. His modest clinic, founded in the 1920s, was now to become a modern hospital—the first in the Gargano peninsula. Southern Italy was in desperate need of renewed public health initiatives. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was convinced to devote substantial sums of money to supplement the gifts of the faithful.

Construction took 9 years, and when it was complete, the five-story hospital towered above the monastery. While under construction, it was referred to as the Fiorello La Guardia Clinic, after the New York mayor and former UNRRA director general whose ancestors had emigrated from Apulia and whose supporters were instrumental in directing the funds to San Giovanni. It has been known ever since as the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza.

Interestingly, the hospital also presented a conundrum: Who was to own its shares? Rather than allocating it to a congregation of lay Franciscans, Padre Pio requested that he be absolved of his vow of poverty in order to control and own the hospital directly, and his request was granted.

In 1960, the Vatican was sent a series of tapes purporting to hold private conversations from the friar's chambers and confessional. Pope John XXIII wrote privately that he had been told the tapes contained disturbing revelations about improper relationships with women. Yet another apostolic visitor was dispatched to investigate the convent.

Extended interviews between the visitor and Padre Pio revealed how the friar had come to mistrust the Vatican. He particularly suspected they wanted to take control of the cash flow coming to the convent from his followers. And he resisted any efforts to turn away journalists or to impose order on the lay Franciscan women who jealously guarded access to him. The visitor made several recommendations to address the issues, and for several years, Padre Pio lived under the new strictures.

The Vatican's efforts to bring Padre Pio's organization in line ended, however, with the election of Paul VI in 1963, who granted him "full liberty" in his ministry. Pio ended his years among the company of his trusted friends, living simply as he preferred and enjoying the good that his hospital was doing in the community. In the summer of 1968, observers noticed the stigmata on his hands appeared to have healed. A few months later, on September 23, he died quietly in the night.

Padre Pio's feast day is September 23. He is the patron saint of civil defense volunteers, teenagers, stress relief, and the town of Pietrelcina. Some would say he is an unofficial patron saint of Italy as well, so widespread is his veneration there.

During World War II, rumors spread that Padre Pio had powers of levitation and even flight, that he'd miraculously intercepted bombs, and that he'd even appeared to Allied fighters in flight and turned them away from civilian areas.

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Josephine Bakhita: Freed from Slavery

22

The name her parents called her is lost to today's scholars and even to herself. But the saint known as Josephine Bakhita is recognized around the world as a symbol of freedom from slavery and of welcome for refugees. Bakhita is the name given her by her kidnappers, who seized her from her village in Darfur and sold her into slavery in faraway cities. For years, she suffered horrific cruelty at the hands of those who enslaved her before she could finally choose her own path.

Bakhita's Childhood and Capture

Much of what we know about Josephine Bakhita comes from Bakhita herself, when she was interviewed later in life by the Canossian Sisters. Around 1869, Bakhita was born free into a large and loving family. Her parents were members of the Daju tribe, and they lived in a small village called Olgossa, near Mount Agilerei. Bakhita recalled that her uncle was the village chief, and she was one of seven children. Their parents were farmers, working in fields outside the village to grow sorghum, corn, and millet.

The villagers' peaceful lives were endangered, however, by the forces of al-Zubayr Rahma Mansūr, also known as Zubayr Pasha. A trader from northern Sudan, he had established a series of trading forts from the 1850s across Sudan, specializing in ivory and slaves. In 1877, the year of Bakhita's capture, a great rivalry broke out between Rahma and the newly arrived British governor-general of Sudan, Charles Gordon, who sought to abolish the slave trade.

Bakhita's village was targeted many times by Rahma's raiders, and families lived in fear that on any given day they might return from working in the fields to find loved ones killed or taken. Bakhita's eldest sister had been captured, and though the family searched desperately for her, they never discovered where she had been taken.

While picking flowers with a friend, Bakhita's worst fear materialized: Two men seized her at knifepoint and dragged her along for miles until she lost all sense of location and time—and self. Mute with fear, she was unable to tell them her name. They mockingly named her Bakhita: "Lucky" or "Fortunate" in Arabic, as she would make them "a fortune."

Bakhita's Life in Slavery

Bakhita was sold to a trader and added to a convoy with many other grieving, confused people who had been torn from their homes. By night, they were entombed in cisterns or locked in stinking, crowded huts in the slavers' fortresses, and by day, they marched endlessly.

Bakhita's main companion was another girl, about the same age. Once, they were separated from the caravan and put to work in a village. The girls formulated a daring escape plan and raced through the nearby forest, dreaming of reaching home in just a few days. They had no idea how long or how far they had traveled when fear of wild beasts drove them to a small village. Naively, they accepted an offer of shelter, only to find themselves once more in chains and sold to passing traders.

This time, the girls were taken to a warehouse beside the great slave market at El-Obeid. The warehouse owner took them to serve his daughters—pampered girls who treated them like pet dogs. Bakhita seems to have given up on rescue or escape and fixed her heart on a new hope: that she would see her older sister there and they would be reunited.

For three months, she went on in this way, until she dropped a valuable vase in front of the son and heir of the household. He beat her so severely that she contracted a fever and became very sick. Soon, Bakhita was informed that she'd been sold to a general, whom she referred to as the "Turkish general"—though it's very likely, given the political situation, that he was in fact an Egyptian.

Bakhita's remembrance of her time as the general's slave was full of fear and pain. His wife and his mother abused the enslaved people of their household regularly. The general himself beat her and the other slaves as an outlet for his anger, scarring her deeply. It was another year before the general's household was told to pack up—they were leaving Sudan. In 1882, the general sold most of the enslaved people, then brought his household to Khartoum and sold the remaining 10 slaves.

The worst of the pain inflicted on Bakhita was a scarification ordered by the women of the general's family. She endured more than 100 wounds—cuts from a razor blade that were then rubbed with salt to build scar tissue.

Khartoum was at that time a sophisticated international city. It sits at a convenient location for trade, at the junction of the Blue Nile and White Nile. When Egypt established the Sudan as a subject territory in the 1820s, they chose the small market town as their capital and eventually the seat of the governor-general. It grew rapidly into a bustling city, made wealthy by the slave trade.

Bakhita was bought by the Italian consul, Callisto Legnani. Once more, she hoped that new surroundings might bring her into contact with her lost sister, and once more, her hopes were dashed. After the fear and torment of the general's household, she remembered her 2 years in the Legnani house as a time of comparative "peace and tranquillity."

In 1883, Bakhita's life was thrown into upheaval, this time from the danger of invasion. The expatriate community of Khartoum was strongly encouraged to leave, as the city would almost certainly be overrun by the forces of al-Mahdī. Al-Mahdī, who claimed an illustrious lineage descended from Mohammed's grandson Hassan, also publicly claimed to be the Mahdiyya, sent to prepare the second coming of the prophet Isa, or Jesus. He refused to be bought off by the governor-general, who offered him a generous pension to step down. He eventually raised most of Sudan in rebellion, unifying tribes and even non-Muslims with his cause.

When the British announced they would withdraw from the Sudan and evacuate foreigners, there was a hurried exodus. The Legnanis were among the families who fled northward in late 1884, eventually arriving in Genoa. There, they encountered friends from the Sudan: the Michielis, hoteliers who owned a luxury property in the Red Sea port city of Suakin. Maria Turina Michieli pressed her husband for a slave to look after their daughter, and Legnani gave Bakhita to them.

Bakhita would have found herself in an entirely strange place, surrounded by people speaking a language she did not yet understand. To be so suddenly and casually cast off from the Legnanis—whom she clearly valued—must have caused her deep shock.

The Michielis seem to have led a divided life between their property in Mirano, just outside Venice, and their hotel in Suakin. The situation in Sudan remained unstable for some years. After a calm interlude near Venice, during which Bakhita picked up the Venetian dialect that she spoke for most of her adult life, the Michielis spent nearly a year in Suakin, after which they decided to stay and make it their permanent base. The women of the household were sent back to Italy to wind up the family affairs there, a process that took some 2 years. Finally, unable to sell their property, Maria Turina departed again for Suakin to consult with her husband. She left her daughter and Bakhita in the care of a close friend, Illuminato Cecchini.

Bakhita's Religious Life

Cecchini was a devout Catholic and an advocate for peasants. He seems to have begun Bakhita's conversion to Christianity and to have encouraged further instruction by arranging lodging for Bakhita and her charge in Venice with the Canossian Daughters of Charity, an order of nuns also devoted to serving the poor. They were founded in nearby Verona in the early 1800s, and by the time Bakhita encountered them in 1888, they had multiple houses in Italy and Southeast Asia. By the time Maria Turina Michieli returned to collect them, Bakhita had developed a strong affinity for the sisters and her new faith. She bravely refused to go with Maria Turina, and they argued bitterly.

There ensued a long legal struggle over Bakhita's rights and freedom. The mother superior pleaded Bakhita's case to the patriarch of Venice, Giuseppe Sarto, the future Pope Pius X. Meanwhile, as the church intervened on Bakhita's side, the Michielis sought help from the royal court. The court eventually found, in what must've been a bittersweet judgment for Bakhita, that not only was she not the Michielis' slave but also that she'd never legally been a slave, as slavery had been outlawed in the Sudan since 1877 and in Italy during her lifetime.

Bakhita was baptized in early 1890, and 6 years later, in her mid-20s, she completed her novitiate and became a sister herself. Religious life proved varied and energizing for Sister Josephine. The Canossians mixed elements of the traditional religious life with public service work, including ministering to the sick. Her community was deeply interested in Bakhita's life story, and she was interviewed by a fellow sister in 1910—the beginning of many records and retellings she was asked to conduct throughout her life.

Her convent, in the town of Schio near Venice, was requisitioned during World War I as a military hospital. The appearance of male soldiers must have been a significant change for the community, which rallied to meet their needs. Sister Josephine cooked and also served as an ad hoc nurse for the soldiers, who greatly admired her.

After 25 years with the community, Sister Josephine was a respected elder, entering her 50s but still an active and vital voice among the sisters. By 1922, she was made doorkeeper, a position of great trust that relied on her discretion and ability to interact with the public. The interwar years saw her shoot to fame as Madre Moretta, the "Black Mother" of the convent. Her story was popularized by Ida Zanolini, a local teacher, who wrote the highly popular biography *Tale of Wonder*. Visitors began to seek her out, and she was suddenly in great demand as a public speaker at other Canossian convents. A Vatican photographer sought her out, and her portrait became known around the country. Bakhita struggled with her suddenly public image after decades living in quiet and calm.

Bakhita took the name Giuseppina Margherita Fortunata, reclaiming the "lucky" name that had been initially forced on her by her kidnappers as a symbol of true fortune in her new life.

After 4 years on a speaking tour followed by 2 years as doorkeeper of the International Canossian Missionary Novitiate in Milan, old age and poor health sent her back to her beloved quiet community in Schio. She spent World War II there, and while Schio was bombed during the war, not a single inhabitant was killed during the attacks—a fact later ascribed to Bakhita's presence and holiness.

Josephine Bakhita died of pneumonia in 1947, after several years' struggle with respiratory illness. Her feast day is February 8, and she is the patron saint of Sudan, South Sudan, the Canossian Sisters, and those suffering from modern-day slavery and human trafficking. She has been remembered in several books, in a movie, and at the many refugee centers dedicated to her.

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Óscar Romero: Voice for the People

23

Archbishop Óscar Romero is perhaps the saint least in need of introduction in this series. His assassination in 1980 sent shock waves around the world, and he has been acclaimed a martyr and hero of the popular movement in El Salvador ever since. But his life story is more than the sum of his final moments, or the last few years, in which he became a staunch "voice for the voiceless," as he put it.

Romero's Early Life and Education

Óscar Romero was born in the small town of Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador, in 1917. His father, Santos, was a government telegraph operator posted there when he met and married Guadalupe, a schoolteacher and the daughter of a local landowner. They were a happy, busy family with seven children, relatively secure and prosperous.

Óscar and his siblings attended the local school, which went through the third grade. When he proved especially bright, his family paid the teacher to continue tutoring him in more advanced work. He also picked up Morse code and typing from his father, a precursor to his later interest in communications.

Óscar was also devout and loved to spend time in the church. He was offered a half scholarship to a pre-seminary school in the city of San Miguel. He threw himself into the life of the school and quickly became a top pupil. Paying the other half of Óscar's tuition strained the family finances, so his father appreciated that he was able to pay it in coffee beans rather than in cash.

But during the Great Depression, coffee prices were so badly depressed that many farmers, including his father, mortgaged their land—and eventually lost it. The government's losses were also heavy, and they stopped paying their employees. The family took in boarders to help make ends meet. Santos began to drink heavily.

Óscar began working with his brothers at a gold mine, earning enough to cover his school expenses, and he graduated in 1935. His plan had been to continue studying at the small seminary in San Miguel, but when the Spanish Civil War broke out, the seminary was forced to close. Óscar returned to Ciudad Barrios to work and wait.

Two years later, he was invited to study at the Jesuit seminary at San Salvador, the capital city. He was just settling in there when he learned that his father had died and his mother had suffered a stroke. Óscar felt even more pressure to earn a salary that would help his family. He jumped at the chance for a scholarship to study in Rome at the Pontifical Latin American College. He enjoyed exploring the city and the camaraderie with his

fellows. But that ended in the summer of 1940, when Italy entered World War II. Some seminarians were taken in by neutral countries, but Romero remained in Rome, where he witnessed growing desperation and people begging in the street for food.

He graduated with a degree in theology. Unable to leave Rome, he began work on a doctorate and was ordained a priest. In the summer of 1943, the bombing raids finally came. Thousands were killed, though the seminarians survived. Óscar learned that he was needed in his home diocese. Together with an old friend from San Miguel, he made the dangerous journey via Spain and Cuba, where they were detained as arrivals from an enemy country (Italy). The two men spent some time in an internment camp doing hard labor until local priests learned about their situation and arranged for their release. It took them four months to arrive home. Romero said his first mass at Ciudad Barrios on January 11, 1944.

Romero's Conservativism amid Social Change

Not long after his return, his new bishop soon summoned Romero to work as his personal secretary in San Miguel. This began a period of fervent activity as Romero threw himself into the life of the diocese. Perhaps the most enduring work he did was editing the weekly diocesan newspaper, the first in a long line of editorial and publishers' roles.

In San Miguel, Romero helped organize the construction of the city cathedral, and he did extensive outreach to the people—founding an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter, working with Catholic charities, visiting prisoners, and even organizing the shoeshine boys.

Romero also took to radio. His Sunday morning mass began to be broadcast, and soon, his was one of the most powerful clerical voices in the diocese. His editorial stances largely followed Vatican lines and were socially conservative. He seems to have struggled in his private life during this period, growing distant from his peers, who resented his attempts to enforce his own high standards on their lives.

The gulf between him and his fellow clergy widened further. The social change of the 1960s and Vatican II was upon them, and the clergy and young religious responded enthusiastically. Vatican II had a strong influence on grassroots religious organization in Latin America. San Salvador's archbishop, Luis Chávez y González, was sympathetic to social justice concerns, promoting the idea that clergy should serve the people and listen to them rather than dictate to them. Romero, meanwhile, grew increasingly uncomfortable with these new directions in the church. As the secretary general for the Salvadoran bishops' conference, he relocated to San Salvador, where he took up residence in the seminary that served as their headquarters.

Romero's tone was marked by his conservatism and strict adherence to Vatican dogma. Professionally, his reputation among the conservative bishops grew, and he was elevated to Chávez's auxiliary bishop.

During this time, El Salvador was in tumult. The country was struggling with poverty, high unemployment, and dispossession from their land; the number of landless poor more than tripled from 1961 to 1975. Paramilitary death squads had begun to operate, and the military was recruiting peasants to spy on their neighbors in exchange for minor favors or food aid. Increasingly, they threatened, abducted, tortured, and killed those they believed to be popular organizers or social justice workers—including priests.

Romero, still a solidly conservative, pro-government voice, was tapped in 1971 to replace a more liberal editor at the diocesan newspaper. Under his leadership, the paper published more Vatican news, steering away from the issues of human rights and social justice. Readership fell steeply, and the paper fell into debt. He became director of the San Jose seminary, which closed soon afterward. He became unpopular with the archbishop by labeling some of the church's grassroots efforts as communist-leaning, unaware of the danger this put the affiliated religious in.

Romero's Shifting Worldview

After a few years, Romero was made bishop of the smallest and poorest diocese in the country, Santiago de María, which included his hometown. He became increasingly convinced of the value of some grassroots efforts. He also noticed the increasing numbers of migrant coffee harvest workers sleeping in the streets. He opened Catholic buildings to shelter them, and in conversations with those staying in his own house, he learned that landowners were bribing government ministries to look the other way while paying illegally low wages.

Romero's worldview was slowly turning already when he was named archbishop in February 1977, after Chávez's retirement. He was still seen as a deeply conservative choice, but the bloody events of that spring engendered a profound transition in Romero's priorities. His growing empathy for the poor was matched by horror at the violence directed at them and resolve to do something about it.

He was particularly affected by the murder and torture of priests, among them some of his closest friends. Landowners blamed the church for popular resistance, and handbills papered the streets, urging: "be a patriot, kill a priest."

By 1978, Romero's advocacy for the poor had garnered international attention. He was nominated for the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. He also received harsh criticism from his conservative bishops and from the Congregation for Bishops at the Vatican. Romero was deeply disturbed by the Vatican criticism, retaining as he did his strong sense of obedience to church hierarchy.

Romero's work as a bishop took him back to the kind of communities in which he had grown up, and it forced him to confront the terrible dangers and injustices they were suffering.

He continued to broadcast his weekly masses and encouraged young activists to get involved with the archdiocesan office. He set up legal aid services for the poor and recruited Catholic aid to feed and shelter the many refugees from government attacks flooding the capital. Many survivors of attacks wrote to him or visited his office personally, eager to tell the one authority who cared about their missing and their dead. At the end of each week's homily, Romero gave a short summary of this news: the missing, the dead, and their families' grief. For many campesinos, it was the only public acknowledgment they ever received.

YSAX, the diocesan radio station, became the only source of reliable information in the country.

In 1979, one of Romero's proteges, Father Octavio Ortiz Luna, was holding a retreat at one of his parishes when the National Guard and Treasury Police attacked. Five men were killed, including Ortiz, who was crushed by a tank. Romero bitterly denounced the government cover-up and security forces in his sermon.

On October 15, 1979, a coup replaced the military government with a joint military-civilian junta. For a few months, it seemed that reform and peace were a real possibility. Romero worked tirelessly to pressure the junta members for land reforms, earning criticism from both the conservative bishops and left-wing groups. By the end of the year, however, all chance for reforms was dead. The military made it clear they were in power. The civilian members of the junta resigned in protest.

Romero's Assassination and Funeral

By early 1980, Romero knew that his name was on government hit lists. He had rejected offers of shelter and a bulletproof car, saying that if his flock could not enjoy those protections, neither should he. Despite the imminent threat of death, his language grew even stronger.

While saying mass in the chapel of the cancer hospital on whose grounds he lived, a single shot struck him in the chest. A sniper outside, on the orders of a former army major, had shot him. Romero lived only a few minutes, surrounded by the nuns attending the mass, and died either at the chapel or at the hospital to which he was taken.

People flocked to the capital from every corner of the country for his funeral service, which was held on the steps of the cathedral to accommodate the huge crowd. A bomb was set off during the homily, and snipers from the adjoining palace opened fire on the crowd. Thousands shoved into the cathedral for refuge, creating mass panic and crushing conditions—at least 40 people were trampled or suffocated. Despite the conditions, the priests continued the service and buried Romero's body quickly in the crypt. His death marked the start of the civil war Romero had been working to avoid. Over the next 12 years, at least 75,000 were killed.

Óscar Romero's feast day is March 24. He is the patron saint of persecuted Christians and is commemorated in several films, as well as a school and various institutions dedicated to human rights.

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Saints in Our Everyday World

24

The choir of saints, like Christianity itself, continues to evolve to meet the challenges of new generations. And yet it's fascinating to look back to the earliest saints: the apostles and biblical figures like Peter and the Magdalene, martyrs like Perpetua and Felicity, and brave leaders like Radegund and Joan of Arc. They were very much people of their time, yet they also have remained vital figures for believers through the centuries. Perhaps that's because their lives also speak deeply about timeless needs: for bravery, agency, and solace in difficult times. In many ways, they were also relatable; they were flawed like us—struggled like us. This final lecture covers several more saints and the ways in which their stories have been updated and blended to suit our own needs: national, seasonal, and personal.

Modern Saint Making

The way that saints are made has changed a great deal over the centuries. But the basic beginning of saint making is a reassuring constant: simple belief by ordinary people that this holy person can help their prayers reach the divine.

Today, the papacy continues to refine the process. In 2017, Pope Francis promulgated *Maiorem hac dilectionem*, which added a new path to sainthood: giving up one's life for love of another when it's clear that death will be the result. This change, like all others, was itself a bureaucratic process, passing through the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, expert debate, and a vote by assembled ecclesiastic authorities.

Saints provide inspiration and exemplars for spiritual growth—but people turn to them most for comfort.

Modern popes have been canonizing saints at a furious pace, beginning with John Paul II, who canonized nearly 500 and beatified more than 1,300. His successor, Benedict XVI, canonized 45 and beatified nearly 900, while Francis has to date canonized more than 900 and beatified more than 1,400. Some of these include the canonization of large groups of martyrs, or equipollent canonizations, which bypass the evidentiary requirements for miracles in the case of long-dead saints with a long-standing cult, such as the medieval saint Margaret of Castello.

Saint Margaret of Castello

Margaret was born in the late 13th century, and her story is a stark reminder of not only the challenges that people with disabilities face from family and society but also the relationship between disability and the cult of the saints. She was born blind and with severe spinal curvature at a time when infant disability was strongly believed to be a reflection of the parents' sins. Her parents kept her separate from society for most of her childhood, but after a pilgrimage to a healing shrine failed to produce miraculous results, a teenaged Margaret was abandoned by her family.

She lived on charity for a time until she came to live at a convent, where she gained some religious education. But Margaret was a strong critic of the nuns' seemingly easy way of life, and she was soon asked to leave. She earned a living giving young children basic religious instruction and found solace in spiritual direction from the Dominican friars of the town, eventually becoming a Dominican tertiary or laywoman. She was beatified in 1609 and canonized in 2021.

Saint Valentine

We also encounter the saints in popular culture. For example, many of us celebrate February 14 as the day of romance and call it Valentine's Day. This holiday, however, originally commemorated a fairly gruesome martyrdom. Like many early martyrs, Valentine is a shadowy figure as far as historians are concerned, more myth than man. He may, like Mary Magdalene, be a compilation of several different figures, and everything that defines his story comes to us unreliably, from sources written centuries later and often based on legend and hearsay.

One version of his story has it that he was a priest or bishop during a time of persecution in the late Roman Empire, around the mid-3rd century CE. He was imprisoned and killed on a visit to Rome on February 14, 269, which became his feast day when he was formally entered into the Catholic calendar in the 5th century. Another legend held that he secretly performed Christian weddings for young couples, giving out heart-shaped parchments as symbols of faith. He later became the patron saint of those suffering from epilepsy.

Valentine's feast day first became associated with romantic love in the 14th century, probably in England, where birds were believed to pair off in February. It had entered popular custom by the 15th century, when we have our first evidence of a Valentine's Day love letter. Margery Brews wrote it to John Paston, the son of a well-to-do family of English gentry whose extraordinary letter collection survives to this day. In it, she explains the young couple's plight: Her dowry is not enough for them to marry, but she hopes John, her "well-beloved valentine," will marry her anyway.

Saints Patrick and Joseph

Soon after Valentine's Day comes Saint Patrick's Day, celebrated on March 17. Saint Patrick is another early saint with a tumultuous past. Secure historical information is scant, but legend has it that Patrick was born into post-Roman Britain in the 5th century, kidnapped as a young man, and sold into slavery in Ireland. He was converted to Christianity there, then escaped and returned home. But he chose to return to Ireland as a missionary. He is now remembered as the saint who "cast the snakes"—not literal snakes, but the Druids—out of Ireland. He is the patron saint of Ireland, and his feast day is closely associated with that country and with areas with significant numbers of Irish expatriates and communities.

Two days later, on March 19, several countries, including Poland and Italy, and communities of expatriates around the world celebrate Saint Joseph's Day, either as the patron saint of their country or as a form of Father's Day. As with many biblical figures, we know little of Joseph's life or personality. He was briefly described as a craftsman or carpenter, was present at the Nativity, and disappeared from Gospel accounts after Jesus's visit to the temple at age 12; Mary is thereafter presented as a widow. His feast day does not appear to have been known or recorded until at least the 9th or 10th century, and it became more popular in the early modern period and 19th century. He is now the patron saint of the universal church and of workers, fathers, pregnant women, and unborn children. Today, his feast is celebrated with charitable giving and a bounty of specially prepared foods; in some traditions, the foods contain breadcrumbs to represent the carpenter's sawdust.

Saint John's Eve is celebrated on June 23, the night before the feast day of Saint John the Baptist. The day often falls on or close to the summer solstice, and observation can blend the magical and mystical with Christian celebrations as well as rituals linked to cleansing, beauty, love, and nature.

All Saints' Day

The eve of All Saints' Day, also known as Halloween or All Hallows' Eve, falls on October 31. It has taken on some aspects of pre-Christian celebrations of the deceased, such as Samhain or various harvest festivals, and bonfires and quasi-magical practices were once common. All Saints' Day, on November 1, dates back at least to 9th-century celebrations of martyrs and "all saints" on that day. It was a significant medieval festival involving specially baked cakes, festive lanterns, and cemetery offerings. The period was seen as a turning point in the year, one during which the veil between this world and the next wore thin, and games were played to "tell the future."

In the northwest corner of Europe, this festival was traditionally celebrated with guising: caroling in exchange for food—or later, in a more sinister version, visits by disguised children who extorted small change to leave houses unmolested. This developed into the American tradition of trick or treat, which nowadays focuses overwhelmingly on the treat side of the equation. Carved turnip lanterns have become jack-o'-lanterns, and soot and rag costumes have evolved into an entire industry producing outfits for little witches, superheroes, and ghosts.

Saint Nicholas of Bari

Saint Nick, formerly Saint Nicholas of Bari, is almost unrecognizable in his modern incarnation as a polar-dwelling toy maker with a fur-trimmed red suit, a booming laugh, and a belly "like a bowlful of jelly." We know him today by a corruption of his Dutch name, Sinterklaas: Santa Claus. Like many other early saints, Nicholas is a murky figure. Born in southern Turkey in the 3rd century, he became a local bishop and experienced the Diocletian persecutions, one of the rare empire-wide periods during which Christians were banned from worship and were ordered to perform sacrifices to public cults. He went on to attend major church councils and spend his fairly long life serving the poor of his community. Long after his death, Nicholas's body was taken to the southern Italian city of Bari, which at the time was a Mediterranean trading power.

This workaday bishop seems a far cry from the "jolly old elf" with his reindeer (something certainly unknown in Asia Minor during his lifetime) and snow-ready sleigh. His feast day isn't even on December 25—it's on the anniversary of his death, December 6, when, in some traditions, children leave their shoes out to be filled with

presents by good Saint Nick. But while the saint's historical connection with Christmas seems tenuous at best, his reputation as an open-handed gift-giver comes straight from the early accounts of his miracles. At the time, girls whose families couldn't provide a dowry for them might not marry at all, and their families could not continue to support them—possibly forcing them into sex work to survive. The bishop, hearing about such a situation, made a quiet nighttime visit to the family and left funds for their daughters' marriages in secret.

The good bishop would no doubt be extremely puzzled by modern depictions of his red-cheeked namesake, warmly dressed in furs for snowy expeditions—an image conjured up by the 19th-century poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas," also commonly known as "The Night before Christmas."

Each of the saints we've explored lived a deeply human, flawed, and ultimately well-intentioned life. Each was transformed into a potent symbol by those who came after and crafted their legend to suit their own needs. There are thousands of saints to explore just within Christianity and many more fascinating lives of holy men and women cherished by other faiths across the world. The more we read and learn about the holy dead and what people have made of their legends and legacies, the better we can understand our own history and the forces that shape our beliefs and our world.

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