

Joan of Arc

by Megan Beets

Mankind is located, his identity is located in what he or she contributes, to the future of mankind; not how long they live, but what they contribute to the future. And people who are serious, order their lives on the basis of realizing a necessary improvement to the existence and persistence of their lives, their own lives. It does not lie in any other simple explanation. All people die, all men and women die. They will eventually die, so what's the meaning of their life? The meaning of their life is what they contribute, to the future of mankind.... And it's the people who create something which contributes to mankind's future, is the meaning of mankind's existence.

—Lyndon LaRouche, Feb. 28, 2015

The Jeanne d'Arc case is an example of exactly how the history of mankind produces a kind of mankind which is never simply a copy of the predecessor or the predecessor species; that mankind develops to a higher level.

—Lyndon LaRouche, March 18, 2015

Such a concept of the immortal nature of mankind, and therefore of the essence of leadership, lies at the very foundation of the United States republic. It is the source of the great promise that this new form of government, based in natural law, could succeed in ending, forever, the existence of the system of empire. If, how-



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Statue of Joan of Arc by Félix Charpentier (1888) before the Sainte-Jeanne-d'Arc Basilica, Paris.

ever, the present domination of the United States by that system of empire, as centered primarily today in its current President, Barack Obama, is allowed to persist, then the U.S. and much of global civilization face the certainty of collapse into a deep dark age. If we wish to escape that fate, we must learn the lesson of such as Joan of Arc, and how it is that a civilization can emerge from a dark age to refound itself upon a new principle, a new concept and mission for its existence. Such is the choice and the challenge before us today.

The Case of Joan of Arc

In May of 1431, Joan of Arc was burned at the stake, at the age of 19, after a grossly corrupt one-year imprisonment, torture, and trial at the hands of the rotten faction of French clergy (standing in for their English masters), who fondly hoped to gain the favors of the mighty English invaders whom they served, rather than endure the pains of opposing them.¹

The empire which these lackey judges represented was so terrified of this 19-year-old woman, that they burned her twice, in order to ensure that there was nothing left of her earthly existence.

However, when the news of her case, of her trial and of her death, reached the ongoing Catholic Church council, the Council of Basel,² a process was set into motion by the spark which was the *mission* of her life, which ignited those such as the circles of the great Nicholas of Cusa to mobilize against the evil in society which had killed her.

The decision by Cusa and others to create something new, something *contrary* to that evil, triggered the process which rapidly unfolded into the great 15th-Century Renaissance and the emergence of the modern nation-state republic. Just two years after Joan's murder, while at the Council of Basel, Cusa wrote a document on the nature of government, *Concordantia Catholica*, which, though produced for the Church, addressed the subject on the universally applicable level of natural law, the true nature of mankind, and therefore of the characteristics of *legitimate* government.

1. Which pains might have followed, had not their vows to serve the Divine been dutifully cast aside in favor of saving their skins, to better serve an earthly—or, perhaps, Infernal—master. One must be practical, after all.

2. The disastrous Council of Basel ran from 1431 until it was dissolved by Pope Eugenius IV and replaced by the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438. Some, however, remained at Basel and declared Eugenius a heretic, electing an antipope.

Cusa writes:

“Therefore, since all are by nature free, every governance—whether it consists in a written law, or in living law in the person of a prince . . . can only come from the agreement and consent of the subjects. For, if men are by nature equal in power and equally free, the true, properly ordered authority of one common ruler, who is their equal in power, can only be constituted by the election and consent of the others, and law is also established by consent.”

These revolutionary ideas would later reappear in the government of France's Louis XI, and in the founding documents of the American republic.

The System of Oligarchy

To begin to understand the power of Joan's actions, and why the system of oligarchy was so terrified of her, a brief history of the years leading into her activities is necessary.

By 1420, a few years before Joan began her campaign, France was on the verge of disintegration. The English claimed the right to the French throne in 1337 under Edward III, and in subsequent invasions, seized the French crown along with significant swaths of territory. This launched a state of warfare which played out in several phases over more than 100 years, tearing apart both France and England, and leading to the chaos of civil war and economic collapse. Under these conditions, in the four years between 1347 and 1351, upwards of 20 million people, a quarter of the population of Europe, were wiped out by the plague, and in some areas of France 50-60% of the population was lost.

By the end of the 14th Century, the royal family of France was not only facing enemies from England, but was completely divided against itself; King Charles VI was suffering from bouts of insanity (which would debilitate him for much of his reign), and a series of assassinations and changing alliances left what remained of the kingdom vulnerable to takeover. In 1415, Henry V of England invaded to reclaim the French throne and lost territories,³ devastating the French forces at the famous Battle of Agincourt. The reconquering of France was consolidated by a few key events. In 1418,

3. Under the Treaty of Brétigny (1360), the English renounced the French throne on condition of the French handover of lands, free of the requirements of feudal homage, and payment of a large ransom for their captured King John II. It was this treaty that Henry V claimed was violated.

FIGURE 1
France in 1415-29



the English faction entered Paris, the current seat of the Dauphin,⁴ led by the turncoat John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy.

The Dauphin Charles was forced to flee, along with the faction of clergy and others at the University of Paris who opposed the English and their Burgundian allies. Among them was the rector of the university, Jean Gerson, a collaborator of Nicholas of Cusa's circles in the Church, who would later recommend Joan to

4. "Dauphin" was the French term for the heir to the throne.

the Dauphin. The university was subsequently filled with lackeys who came to play leading roles in Joan's trial and murder. In 1420, with the Treaty of Troyes, the English-French "union" was consolidated by the marriage of Henry V to Catherine, daughter of King Charles VI, and the "Dual Monarchy" of France and England was established, under the English crown; Henry V of England, not Charles the Dauphin, would succeed Charles VI as King of France. It is not unimportant to note that this disinheritation of the Dauphin was facilitated by the treason of his mother, Queen Isabeau (Isabeau of Bavaria), who allied herself with the English and with the Duke of Burgundy.⁵

In 1422, before having the chance to assume the crown of France, Henry V died suddenly at the age of 35, leaving an infant son as his heir. He was followed into the grave a mere two months later by the French King Charles VI. The throne of France now lay contested between nine-month-old Henry VI and the Dauphin Charles, who had fled south across the Loire.

This is the Europe and the France into which Joan of Arc was born in 1412 in a tiny village, Domrémy,⁶ in the northeast of France. In 1429, when she was 17 years old, and when the resistance of those still loyal to the Dauphin and to the idea of a sovereign France was near collapse, Joan, convinced that France must be free and must be led by its rightful king,⁷ left Domrémy, and traveled through enemy territory⁸ to the court of the Dauphin across the Loire. At the town of Chinon, Joan was granted an audience with the Dauphin, and after some weeks succeeded in convincing him to give her, a young woman, the weapons and command of the troops needed to raise the English siege of the city of Orléans,

5. This led to the popularly spread idea that France was lost by a woman, and would only be saved by a virtuous woman.

6. Domrémy lay within the territory controlled by the English, though it, like many other places throughout the countryside, was loyal to France, as Joan said at her trial.

7. Joan was very clear in her discussions with the Dauphin, Charles, that France did not belong to him, but to God; but that God wanted him, and not the English, to rule it.

8. After some effort, Joan recruited Robert de Badricourt, captain of the nearby town of Valcouleurs, to give her a horse, armor, and the protection of two companions for the 11-day journey to the Dauphin.

the last bastion of French resistance to English takeover.

Joan at Orléans

It is important to note that between the 1415 Battle of Agincourt, and Joan's activities in 1429, France was torn apart by the campaigns of the English and their allies to conquer what remained of the French territory still loyal to the Dauphin, which lay mainly south of the Loire. The city of Orléans sat at the main bridge over the Loire, and its fall would open up France to be taken over completely. In October 1428, the English sent one of their best commanders, the Earl of Suffolk, to lay siege to the city, and by April, when Joan departed Chinon, the exhausted Orléans was at the point of being taken.

When she arrived at the city of Blois en route to Orléans, leading the hardened veterans of France's wars, whose commanders (obedient to the rules and formalities of martial engagement) had failed time and again to relieve France of the attacks from the English, Joan sent a letter to the English commanders to warn them of what she intended for them:

Jesus Maria.

King of England, and you, duke of Bedford,⁹ you call yourself regent of the kingdom of France, you, William de la Pole, Sir John Talbot, and you, Sir Thomas Scales, who call yourself lieutenant of the aforesaid duke of Bedford, render your account to the King of Heaven. Surrender to the Maid, who is sent from God, the King of Heaven, the keys to all the good cities that you have taken and violated in France. She has come here from God to proclaim the blood royal. She is entirely ready to make peace, if you are willing to settle accounts with her, provided that you give up France and pay for having occupied her. And those among you, archers, companions-at-arms, gentlemen, and others who are before the city of Orléans, go back to your own countries, for God's sake. And if you do not do so, wait for the word of the Maid who will come visit you briefly, to your great damage. If you do

not do so, I am commander of the armies, and in whatever place I shall meet your French allies, I shall make them leave it, whether they wish to or not; and if they will not obey, I shall have them all killed. I am sent from God, the King of Heaven, to chase you out of all France, body for body. And if they wish to obey, I shall have mercy on them. And have no other opinion, for you shall never hold the kingdom of France from God, the King of Heaven, the son of St. Mary; but King Charles, the true heir, will hold it; for God, the King of Heaven, wishes it so and has revealed through the Maid, and he will enter Paris with a goodly company. If you do not wish to believe this message from God through the Maid, then wherever we find you we will strike you there, and make a great uproar greater than any made in France for a thousand years, if you do not come to terms. And believe firmly that the King of Heaven will send the Maid more force than you will ever know how to achieve with all of your assaults on her and on her good men-at-arms; and in the exchange of blows we shall see who has better right from the King of Heaven. You, duke of Bedford, the Maid prays you and requests that you cause no more destruction. If you will settle your account, you can join her company, in which the French will achieve the finest feat in Christendom. And give answer, if you wish to make peace in the city of Orléans; and if you do not do so, be mindful soon of your great damages.

Joan entered Orléans on April 29, 1429, and the assault on the English positions began on May 4. Intent on total victory, and despite many of her fellow French commanders, Joan accomplished in only three days of fighting what, for six months, had been impossible: She forced the English to abandon the siege.¹⁰

From the dramatic victory at Orléans, Joan proceeded to lead the campaign north, opening up the path-

9. Since Henry VI of England was still a minor, the English government was administered by a governing council which included Henry's uncle John, Duke of Bedford, who was appointed regent of France.

10. The Duke of Alençon, who commanded at Orléans with Joan, said of her military capabilities: "Joan . . . apart from the matter of war, was simple and young, but in the matter of war she was very expert, in the management of the lance as in the drawing up of the army in battle order and in preparing the artillery. And at that all marvelled, that she could act in so prudent and well-advised a fashion. . . as might a captain of twenty or thirty years experience have done."



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King Charles VII of France, painting by Jean Fouque (1445-50). Charles was crowned King thanks to Joan's fight for the nation, but he betrayed her soon after.

way to Reims,¹¹ to the cathedral where France's kings were historically crowned. In July 1429, Joan and the Dauphin entered Reims, and in a solemn ceremony, the Dauphin was crowned Charles VII.

However, Joan was soon betrayed by that King, whose fearfulness and littleness of character denied him the courage and the vision that Joan had of a new, free France. Already negotiating with the enemy, Charles delayed Joan's assault on Paris to the point that the English could fortify the city and prevent the possibility of its being retaken. Her army was soon disbanded by the King. In May of 1430, at the Siege of Compiègne, Joan (who was forced to organize her own, largely mercenary troops) was captured in battle by the Burgundians. She was sold to the English, to be imprisoned in the city of Rouen, the seat of the English in France, where she was put on trial at the hands of the Bishop of Beauvais, Pierre Cauchon, a man well-known

11. The cities on the pathway to Reims surrendered peacefully to Joan, and control of France began to slip further away from the English.

for his servility to the English cause, and his eagerness to preside over Joan's trial.¹²

In May 1431, Joan was convicted by the corrupt court as a heretic, and she was burned alive by those who thought that they could eliminate her, by burning her body, to save their own skins. However, what Joan of Arc unleashed by her mission and by her victory against the evil which killed her, is something that is not locatable within the bounds of the actions that she took during her own mortal life.

Her Mission

Despite the best wishes of her enemies, Joan of Arc's death did not defeat the French cause; it was rather the façade of imperial power which began to crumble. The mission which she refused to betray, her passion for the freedom and the sovereignty of the people of France as a nation under a concept of God-given natural law, soon reappeared as a mission to free all of mankind from the evil of empire, and to crush that in society which had burned her alive.

In 1435, four years later, Pope Eugenius IV and many of Nicholas of Cusa's closest allies (such as Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II) intervened into the French situation by helping to organize the Congress of Arras, at which the alliance of England and the Duke of Burgundy was broken, and the formerly warring factions within France were united against the English occupation. Two years later, just before its dissolution by Eugenius,¹³ Cusa left the Council of Basel as an emissary of the Pope to Constantinople. His mission was to bring back the representatives of Byzantium to a new council, the Council of Florence, for the reunification of the Eastern and Western Churches, split since the "Great Schism" of 1054.

Cusa succeeded in this great mission and helped to bring back 700 representatives from the East, including the Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Emperor was accompanied by Georgius Plethon, the leading Plato scholar, and the complete works of Plato, which had never been seen by the West. In Florence, Plethon lectured on the difference between Plato and Aristotle, and in 1440,

12. For the which he was generously rewarded, as he had been for helping to negotiate the 1420 Treaty of Troyes.

13. Among the other evils of the Council of Basel, many of Joan's judges, including the piggish Pierre Cauchon, were deployed there to run damage control, and generally to pollute the discussion.

Cosimo dei Medici, who attended these lectures, was inspired to mobilize a complete translation project of Plato's works and to found the Platonic Academy in Florence.

What was set into motion by the leadership of Cusa became a transformation of society. In 1461, Charles VII was succeeded by his son (and a much greater man), Louis XI, under whose reign France instituted the first modern form of commonwealth government. Louis wrote in his treatise *The Rosebush of War*, written for his son and heir in order to teach him the principles of government, "None should fear death, having defended the common good, for therein is merit."

France underwent a dramatic transformation under Louis XI, as the interests of the feudal oligarchy were subverted to the well-being of the whole nation with Louis' economic and social reforms. However, this transformation was preceded by an important event: In 1450, the city of Rouen, where Joan had been held and killed, was finally liberated by the forces of Charles VII, and a second trial of Joan of Arc began. At Joan's

trial of rehabilitation, 1450-56, a thorough examination was done of Joan (by the testimony of those who knew her), and of the corruption of the first trial. The condemnation of Joan was overturned, and was instead heaped upon on her judges, and upon the greater evil which they represented.

Fulfilling the Mission

The renaissance process, ignited by the resonance of Joan's mission with the leadership of Cusa, was the beginning of what eventually blossomed into the American republic. It was also the foundation of the later scientific discoveries and passionate commitment of Johannes Kepler, who established the unity of the principle of the Solar System in a conception of the human mind,¹⁴ thus demonstrating the capability of the mind of man, any man, as expressed by Cusa in *Concordantia Catholica*, to introduce into society a newly created and valid conception, which could fundamentally alter mankind's future.

The fulfilling of the mission of Joan of Arc, not yet complete, was first taken up by a very small handful of leaders in what became the Renaissance. The question before all of us today, is: Will we respond to the horrors of the potential of nuclear war and of the potential extermination of the human species, as the faction of Cusa responded to the horrors of what was done with Joan of Arc? Will we strive to create something new within mankind, as a reversal of the current evils, upon which mankind's future existence can unfold?

As seen in the case of Joan, this goes beyond the seeming termination of one's mortal existence, to the meaning of mankind, the *mission of mankind*. It is in the creative process which, long after one's death, establishes a continuing process of the further perfection and uplifting of the powers and capabilities of the human species to which we should look for the continuing meaning of mankind in the Solar system. Such is the required standard of leadership today.

For Further Reading

Irene Beaudry, "The Military Genius of Jeanne d'Arc, and the Concept of Victory," *EIR*, Nov. 17, 2000.

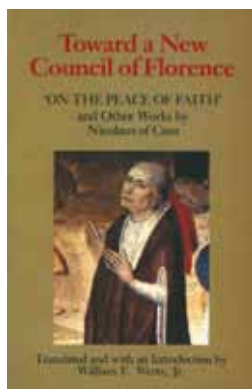
14. See Johannes Kepler, *The Harmony of the World* (American Philosophical Society, 1997). Also see pedagogical presentations of Kepler's work at: science.larouchepac.com.

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