Dr. Sylvia Solomons | The Trial of Joan of Arc

– [Trudy] Good evening, everyone. It's now my great pleasure to introduce a new lecturer, Dr. Sylvia Solomon. Sylvia's got an incredible amount of experience in education. She has taught for over 30 years, school-level, university, at her home, which I believe is in Canada. But also she's taught all over the world. She's taught in Africa. She's taught in China. And when she first got in touch with me, she offered me an awful lot of trials. That seems to be one of her specialties. Oh, and by the way, she's written a book, which I find fascinating and I think will be fascinating for many of you online, "A Woman's Journey from Career to Retirement." Very, very important. But tonight she's going to be talking about a very, very important trial, which, of course, fits in with what we're doing on France, and that's the trial of Joan of Arc. So welcome, Sylvia, and over to you.

– [Dr. Syliva Solomon] You're very welcome. I'm delighted to be here. ♪ Those fingers in my hair ♪ ♪ That sly come hither stare ♪ ♪ That strips my conscience bare ♪ ♪ It's witchcraft ♪

– You're looking at one of the most famous signatures in human history. It is that of Joan of Arc. Her signature, which reads Johanne, and was the name she preferred, was affixed to a hastily prepared piece of paper that would later be attached to a formal document forcing her to abjure all her claims of visions and voices or be burned at the stake. The year was 1431. It was the 24th of the not-so-merry month of May, and six days, later on May 30th, 1431, Joan of Arc was in the old marketplace in Rouen, France, before a sinister chaotic crowd of perhaps 10,000 people, mainly Burgundian, and was indeed burned alive. A placard set before the funeral pyre listed her offences. Liar, pernicious person, abuser of people, soothsayer, superstitious woman, blasphemer of God, presumptuous, unbeliever in the faith of Jesus Christ, boaster, idolater, cruel, dissolute, invoker of devil's, apostate schismatic, and heretic. Her life has been imagined in play, film, and verse by writers Shakespeare, Voltaire, Schiller, Mark Twain, George Bernard Shaw, Bertolt Brecht, Otto Preminger, and the playwright Maxwell Anderson. Centuries after her death, she has been embraced by Christians, feminist, Mexican revolutionaries, and hairdressers. Her voices have held the attention of psychiatrists, neurologists, and theologians. Her life was a paradox. As an illiterate peasant's daughter, she moved among noble's, bishops, and royalty. She was also a consummate warrior and strategist who mourned casualties on both sides in the English French Civil War during her life from 1412 to 1431 when she died at age 19. Urged on by her voices, she refused to bow to none other than the ultimate temporal power on earth for 1500 years, the Holy Catholic Church. In the words of Mark Twain, she was, "the most noble life that was ever born into this world, "save only one." Let me start with a bit of historical context. Our story today really begins in 1066, and I'll go

through this quickly, just to give you some background. The Frenchman, William the Conqueror, also known as the Duke of Normandy, invaded England and took her throne for his own, precipitating years of turf war and turmoil. What he fought for in the coming Hundred Years' War beginning in 1337, were the French lands, not the country of France, because there was no political country boundary, just land, geography. Nevertheless, William, now the king of England, remained a vassal of the French king, as did his descendants, which caused all sorts of complications. There was, however, one territory in France that was better ruled, economically richer, and the jewel in the French crown called, Aquitaine, and the Duchess of Aquitaine was the historically famous Eleanor who inherited the duchy from her father in 1137. On May 18th, 1152, 185 years before the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, Eleanor of Aquitaine, having divorced King Louis VII of France after 15 years of marriage and no sons, married Henry II of England and became Queen of England, and therefore the area of Aquitaine in France came under English control. She was eventually estranged from Henry in 1173, who then imprisoned her for 16 years, released only when one of her sons became Richard I, also known as Richard the Lionheart, Robin Hood's friend. And we think marriage breakup is difficult today? Eleanor was featuring the film "The Lion in Winter," and the playwright Jean Anouilh featured her in his play "Becket." In 1979, the artist Judy Chicago crafted a place setting for the great historical figure, Eleanor of Aquitaine in her iconic feminist work, "The Dinner Party." Now back to politics, war, religion, intrigue, and the role that Joan of Arc played in all of these.

A word of advice, just go with the flow for the next few minutes. The comings and goings of Western European history can get quite complicated. Who was married to who? Who sat on what throne? Was it Louis V or Edward III? And were they cousins or was it brothers? The quest and then the acquisition of power is always complicated. For example, in the United States today, and that's all I'm going to say about that. What's called the Little Ice Age began across Europe in the early 1200s, and then between 1314 and 1317, the worst famine to strike Europe occurred. The Hundred Years' War, actually a series of war, began in 1337 and ended in 1453, 116 years later. This marked the development of strong national identities and was the beginning of the political consolidation of Europe as we know it today. It also gave Shakespeare a great deal of theatrical material. And over all of these political and social machinations was the Catholic Church, exercising its God-given right to life and death and religious domination, most often in the guise of political persuasion or economic blackmail. And if that wasn't sufficient, they'd cooked the religious books, and for those who disagree, there was a fixed price menu that included death by hanging or being burned at the stake. In 1328, just before the Hundred Years' War began, Charles IV of France died, leaving a daughter and a pregnant wife. Women were ineligible to ascend the throne, and by proximity of blood, the nearest male relative of the late Charles IV was his nephew, Edward III of England. Edward was the

son of Isabella, the sister of the late Charles. The late Charles's first cousin, Philip, the Count of Valois, became Philip VI of France. Edward III of England recognised Philip and paid homage to his French domain, Gascony, and then went off to fight the Scots. And in 1340, Edward formally assumed the title King of France and French Royal Arms. And to back up his claim, he besieged the French city of Calais in northern France, which would remain under English control even after the end of the Hundred Years' War. There were now two factions claiming the French crown, each with their own armies, Edward III of England and Phillip VI of France. And then with all the political drama of the day, the Black Death ravaged Europe between 1347 and 1350, killing an estimated 30 to 60% of the population. To give you a point of reference, according to the World Health Organisation, approximately three million people have died of COVID worldwide. The estimated world population, by the way, is eight billion. Seems that in the big picture, COVID, although it has affected all of us, might not be seen in the future as anything more than a portent of what is to come. Who knows? Back to France. Edward's son, known as the Black Prince, who was actually the Prince of Wales, invaded France from Gascony. The French nobles were too disorganised to resist and chaos ruled. Edward, taking advantage of the moment, invaded France for the third time, and this time the result of his invasion was increased lands in Aquitaine. In return, Edward abandoned his claim to the crown of France. The Hundred Years' War achieved its first peace between 1360 and '69, followed by more fighting, and then a second peace broke out between 1389 and 1415, at which point Aquitaine had been lost to the English, leaving Calais their only holding in France. The king, however, Charles VI of France was descending into madness, leaving the French government in turmoil. Taking advantage of the moment, the Burgundians from Burgundy in France, but English sympathisers, sacked Paris in 1418. They fought on until 1429. During this time, the French had fought the catastrophic battle of Agincourt, in which 40% of the French nobility were killed. Henry the V, the English king, then married Catherine of Valois, Mad Charles's daughter, thereby assuring that Henry's heirs would inherit the throne of France as well as the throne of England. Mission accomplished, but not quite. Henry died on August 31st, 1422, and then Mad Charles died two months later, leaving both thrones vacant. In England, Henry V's son, Henry the VI, was still an infant. While in France the heir apparent, Charles VII, whose mother was married to Mad Charles, was declared quite possibly illegitimate. With a throne empty both in France and England, both countries descended into a power vacuum as rival factions vied for supremacy. Supporters of the heir apparent, the Dauphin, Charles VI, squared off for the French throne with the armies of the Duke of d'Orléans, his cousin. Meanwhile, the supporters of the infant, Henry VI of England, took advantage of the chaos in France, and their forces occupied Northern France, including Paris, and then Reims, the city in which French kings were traditionally crowned. France became a patchwork of allegiances, both French and English, in a bloody civil war. The position of the Dauphin, Charles VII, was interesting, both

historically and politically. The word dauphin in French means dolphin, as a reference to the depiction of the animal on their coat of arms. Heir apparent is the English term. Charles VII, the Dauphin, was the fifth son of Mad Charles VI, who disinherited him in 1420 because he was thought to be illegitimate, which was ultimately too bad, because all four older sons died without reaching the throne, and Charles was left with a rich inheritance of titles, but little money. He fled to protection in southern France and married. By this time in the 15th century, famine, plague, and warfare had so drained France of able bodies that the economic and social fabric no longer supported serfdom, and the thousand-year-old system of feudalism had all but collapsed. This was the world that Joan's father Jacques d'Arc was born into.

- [Trudy] Sylvia, can I interrupt just one minute. There's so much fantastic information. Can you go just a little slower?

- [Sylvia] Sure.

- [Trudy] Thank you.

- By this time in the 15th century, famine, plague, and warfare had so drained France of able bodies that the economic and social fabric no longer supported serfdom. We've gone through this already. By the time Joan, the fourth of her parents' five children, was born in 1425, France and England were again at war and France was in social and economic free fall. Death was everywhere. It's very tempting when reading and writing about Joan to overlook the realities of this period and instead speak about the so-called romanticism of a virgin child warrior galloping into battle, red and blue banners flying and cannons blasting away against the sworn English enemy. Urged on by the voices of unseen and unheard, except to Joan, angels, the impoverished serf soldiers rose up in desperate support of this now 17-year-old female with short hair, dressed in male attire. Joan believed that she was being told by her heavenly Father to restore the Dauphin to his rightful role. The historical truth is that, in 1431 at the age of 19, two years after Joan's armies lifted the seven-month siege of Orléans, and barely more than four days before the Dauphin was anointed the king of France at Reims, the sacred church where all French kings were anointed, only two years and Joan was burned alive in the old marketplace in Rouen, abandoned by her king, sold to the English enemy, and branded as a heretic by the Catholic Church for what she believed. Let's now examine how this happened and why her life still resonates with us today and why her life changed the course of the Hundred Years' War and that Western history. Joan was born in 1412 to Jacques d'Arc and Isabelle Romée in Domrémyan, an isolated village of 150 to 200 peasants, 150 miles northeast of Paris that had remained loyal to the French crown, despite being surrounded by pro-Burgundian, that is pro-English, lands. In 1425, when she was 13 years old, she described, "A voice from God to help and guide me "in the persons of

St. Michael, Patron of Warriors; "St. Catherine, Patron of Virgins; and St. Margaret who was canonised in 1250 by Pope Innocent IV for dying as a martyr for her Christianity. I want to mention here that almost all the quotes I'm using, those that are attributed to Joan of Arc are factual and have come directly from original mediaeval transcripts which were written at the time. This is particularly true with regard to her trial. Her inquisitive were scrupulous in taking down every word spoken, particularly by Joan, in the hopes that she would literally hang herself by her descriptions, which would then cause her to be charged with heresy. Later at her trial, Joan stated, "A great deal of light on all sides "is was most fitting; I wept. "I would have them take me with them, too." When pressed by her inquisitors for greater clarity regarding her visions in order to track her as a heretic, she replied, "I would rather have you cut my throat "than tell you all I know," which infuriated her captors. This theme is repeated often, that her most intimate experiences were hers alone and were part of her identification with virginity, a state of being un-penetrated and un-plundered, the integrity of her body reflecting the integrity of her soul. Joan la Pucelle, the virgin as she was known, would live and die never letting go of this belief. At the age of 16, she petitioned Robert de Baudricourt, a local garrison commander for permission to visit the French Royal Court at Chinon. Baudricourt laughed off the peasant girl's absurd request, to be revisited by Joan the next January. She told him, "I must be at the king's side. "There will be no help if not from me. "I must do this thing for my Lord wills that I do so." Meanwhile back at the court, matters were going from worse to really bad. On October 12th, 1428, the English had laid siege to Orléans, the single remaining bastion to prevent them from crossing the Loire and occupying what remained of France. Miraculously, Joan had predicted the imminent fall of Orléans, and with nothing to lose she was soon on her way to take charge of her country's army and lead to victory as her voices had instructed. The scene in which Joan last meets the Dauphin grows more fantastic with every telling. And having been thoroughly vetted by a church tribunal, she picked out the Dauphin from a crowd of courtiers. Our cameras were there to record this historical moment with Ingrid Bergman as Joan and José Ferrer playing the Dauphin.

(A video clips of the 1948 film "Joan of Arc" plays)

– My gentle Dauphin, it is you I seek. I've come a long way to find you and no other can take your place. God has spoken to me through his messengers, and it is his will that I come to aid you and that you be king of France.

– How did you know me?

– I can tell you that when we are alone.

– [Charles] What is your opinion?

– This girl is dangerous.

– There must be a third party.

– [Speaker] I can swear she was sent by your enemies.

– [Joan] My Dauphin, I say to you, from this hour the war will change and your life will change.

– Well the truth is Joan, I'm not the sort of person God would be very likely to be interested in. Truly I'm not. No, I'm no worse than the others here, probably, but God bothers very little with any of us, if you should ask me. Now, I've been honest with you. Be honest with me. What is it you want? Money? Lands? Presents? I'm a poor man in spite of being–

– It is not true that God takes no interest in you. You say that to hide yourself from me and suggest you've hid among the women. But God will find you out and make you king.

– This is an honest voice, listen to her, child. I think you've come just in time.

– For a moment I thought you were the Dauphin.

– I'm his cousin, the Duke d'Orléans.

– I'm glad you're here, good duke. The more we gather of the royal blood of France, the stronger is our cause.

– [Speaker] Don't trust her, my Lord.

– I'm trying not to trust her, but every time I look into the eyes, I believe what she says is true.

– The more reason to distrust her.

– Gentle Dauphin, if I tell you things so secret that they are known to you and God alone, will you believe that I'm sent by him?

– Come with me, Joan.

– The church, ever wary and suspicious, recommended that Joan's claims should be put to the test by seeing if she could lift the siege of Orléans, as she had predicted. And on April 29th, 1429, she arrived at the besieged city with a rag-tag army of 2,500. Joan was outfitted in white armour, which lacked the decorative flourishes of ceremonial armour, but from one fitting to the next, never was a bride more excited about her gown. "I much prefer my standard to my sword," Joan

said. "I loved my banner 40 times more than my sword, "and when I went against my enemy, "I carried my banner myself, lest I kill any. "I have never killed anyone." The standard was about 12 feet in length with a banner three feet wide of white linen infringed in silk. The world held aloft by Christ was painted on it, and two angels on each side were painted on a field of white fleur-de-lis. At her trial, she was asked, "At whose direction did you have it painted?" "I have done nothing except at God's command. "I have told you this often enough," she replied. Before the battle she sent an ultimatum to the English in the city, "Surrender to the maid sent hither by God "to establish the blood royal, ready to make peace if you agree to abandon France "and repay what you have taken. "I am sent here in God's name "to drive you body for body out of all France." There was no reply. Apparently as the battle was about to begin, the wind changed direction, allowing the French army to cross the 400-yard-wide Loire River with both supplies and soldiers. The English apparently did nothing, having themselves been close to starvation within the besieged city. Joan entered the Burgundy gate to the cheers of an ecstatic populace, astride a white charger, armoured and carrying her white standard, and the siege was lifted on May 8th, 1429. Joan had been wounded during the battle for Orléans. Afterwards, while she rested for several days the fame and terror of her reputation for single-minded savagery swelled. While Joan rested, the Dauphin and his advisors dithered as to what to do next. Although Joan could not have known it yet, the enemy had made it clear to the French that they, the English, had lost at the hands of a sorcerer. The church pricked up its ears. Finally on Monday, June 29th, 1429, Joan and her army, along with the Dauphin, who was on his way to his coronation with his courtiers, set out for Reims. Joan's army was resupplied by either loyal subjects from towns along the way or by force. On Saturday, July 16th, the gates of Reims opened for Joan, the Dauphin, Charles, and a hungry, exhausted army. The next morning, Charles prostrated himself before Archbishop Regnault in the cathedral. Also on the diocese was Joan, an androgynous virgin dressed as a man and armoured as a knight, a transvestite who apparently was deaf to the demands of modesty, who attacked the foundation of religion, and who was becoming, despite her popularity with the peasantry, increasingly isolated and alone. The final step in Charles cementing his rule was the retaking of Paris, which was less than 100 miles from Reims, but Joan had lost contact with her angels. Meanwhile, Charles, who was desperate for money, through his emissary and mis-advisor, La Trémoïlle, had been negotiating an armistice with the English Duke of Burgundy two and a half weeks before his coronation. Joan would soon be sold to the English. Peace negotiations dragged on as the Wiley English duke stalled, therefore, buying more time to shore up Paris in preparation for an attack. Joan now leading, but strangely without her voices, was adrift. Desperately she had marched her army to within seven miles north of Paris, just as the Dauphin cut a deal with Phillip Duke of Burgundy, signing a truce for four months. Six weeks had passed since Charles' coronation and Joan had lost half her men as the bankrupt

king had no money to pay them. Paris had been armed and fortified to the teeth. Finally, in September, Charles gave his go ahead to attack, Joan was shot through the leg by an arrow, and Charles decided that Paris was too strongly fortified and there were to be no further attacks. Joan would be no good to him dead. Joan's trajectory was on the way down. Nevertheless, she continued to win small battles, which burnished her reputation and reflected her own determination to prevail over the enemy or literally die trying. A week later, according to the court inquiry, she said, "I was told by my voices that I would be captured, "it had to be so and that I should not be distressed, "but take it in good part. "They said God would aid me." The town of Compiegne was in danger of falling to the English when Joan and a small army of only 400 went to fortify the city. In the ensuing battle, Joan, who had come out of the town to fight, was locked outside the city walls, ambushed, and captured by the English. Her enemies were ready and eager to pounce. Now in English hands, Joan was valuable, and the ransom would be high. She was locked up for six weeks while negotiations between the parties ensued. The Dauphin, showing his sadistic side, said and did nothing. He also had no money, so the English now turned to the church, which had lots and lots of money. Unlike the Dauphin, Pierre Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, was very keen to do something. He said that he could prove that Joan was a sorceress, a witch, and on June 22nd, 1430, Cauchon demanded that the Duke of Burgundy relinquish Joan to the church for trial. Travelling from court to court, both secular and ecclesiastical, in the summer of 1430, Cauchon lobbied tirelessly for a beautiful trial. After all, whoever burned the most notorious sorceress ever known would catapult himself into fame and power that could set him on the path to the papacy. I'll talk a bit more about the burning of witches across Europe and North America later, because I think that Joan's surmise was a foreshadowing of what was to come. Joan grew increasingly expensive, costing perhaps 10,000 livres daily, which would be equivalent to approximately £11,000 sterling or 13,000 euros or 960,000 U.S. dollars today. She also became increasingly desperate, having been imprisoned in a claustrophobic tower for months, and when she finally jumped into a dry moat, she was hurt and recaptured. To the relief of her soon to be inquisitors, they could now charge her with attempted suicide, that is the rejection of life and God, a capital crime. While in captivity, Joan was exhibited as a travelling sideshow, as she was carted literally in a cart, through winter's rain and sleet during a six-week tour through Burgundy and the other English home territories. She was spat on, called a witch, a whore, and other similar expletives until she arrived in Rouen on December 23rd, 1431, and was reportedly thrown into a maid to measure cage. Finally moved to a dark, barren secular prison cell where she would spend the last five months of her life, Joan was chained day and night, and then had to fend off guards, rapists, which she did by wearing layer upon layer of uncomfortable, awkward men's clothing. The English had sold Joan to the church, who would then be able to try her for heresy, although they lacked proper legal jurisdiction. Joan had

no counsel herself, which also violated ecclesiastical law. The trial record contained statements from Joan that the eyewitnesses later said astounded the court because of her sophistication, remember, she was an illiterate peasant, in understanding their underlying purpose in order to trap her theologically. The most famous of these entrapments was when she was asked if she knew she was in God's grace. If she answered yes, she would be charged with heresy. If she answered no, then she would've confessed her own guilt. What she did say was, "If I am not, may God put me there; "and if I am, may God keep me." With regard to the issue of cross-dressing, the charge of heresy, which this so-called crime instigated, would only come into effect if it was a twice repeated crime. When Joan ultimately abjured, that is she signed a confession to save her life, which she did very close to the end of her life, she would be admitting to a one-time charge. The inquisitors needed a repeat offence, and here's how the church arranged for that. They're followed on February 21st, 1431, a week of public examination, in which Joan and the chief prosecutor Cauchon verbally sparred over matters of ecclesiastical and legal certitude.

Let's have a look at a clip from the silent film, "The Passion of Joan of Arc," with Maria Falconetti starring as Joan, made in 1928. It's a silent film, and I will do my best to read the script.

(A video clip of the 1928 film "The Passion of Joan of Arc" plays with Dr. Solomon reading the subtitles)

– "Will you swear to speak the truth upon those things which are concerning the matter of faith and what you know?"

– "About my mother and father I will gladly swear. As for my revelations from God I will say nothing, not to save my head."

– "Not even a prince, Joan can refuse to take an oath when required in a matter of faith."

– "I swore yesterday, that should be quite enough. You overburden me."

– "Do they rightly believe you to be sent by God?"

– "If they believe I am sent from God, they are not deceived."

For a week in March, Joan was interrogated in her cell nine times. From April 5th to seventh, the original 70 charges were reduced to 12. On May the second Joan was taken from her cell to receive an amplified version of the admonition Cauchon had delivered earlier in her cell. Her crimes were again tallied. She would not submit. She persisted in wearing men's dress. She was accused, as written in the transcript, of having searched curiously into things passing our understanding, put faith in what was new without consulting the opinion of the church.

"You are in great peril of body and soul," the transcript goes on to say. "Your soul is in danger of eternal fire "and your body of temporal fire "by the sentence of your judges." "You will not do as you say against me "without evil overtaking you in body and soul," Joan responded. On May 9th, 1431, Joan was further threatened by being forced to visit a chamber where instruments of torture were displayed before her. Next, Cauchon tried bribery in the form of a ransom. In reply, Joan said, "In God's name, you are mocking me. "I know very well that the English will have me killed, "believing that after my death "they will win the kingdom of France. "They will not gain the kingdom." Two scaffolds had been erected near the church, the cathedral of Rouen, and on May 23rd, Joan, under heavy guard, was paraded publicly to the cries of witch and harlot on her way to her apparent death by being burned alive unless she abjured. At this point, history becomes a little obscure. Joan, apparently worn down by so many struggles and perhaps seeing the funeral pyre, did consent to some sort of retraction, the precise terms of which we will never know. In the official record, a form of retraction is inserted, which is particularly humiliating and took half an hour to read. However, the actual retraction was only a few lines, which was attested to by five witnesses in which Joan plainly declared that it was only God's will that she was signing and that everything she had done had been God's will. Joan was then returned to her prison where she put on women's clothing as part of the deal struck in the recantation. The English and Burgundians were furious that Joan had not been burned at the stake, while Cauchon famously said, "We shall have her yet." And he was right. In a few days, Joan had dressed herself again in men's clothing, confirming through her actions, although still on her own terms, that she was to be burned as a heretic. Joan was immediately put in care of the executioner, and on May 30th, 1431, she was paraded once again to the marketplace in Rouen, where as many as 10,000 people, seething with excitement, trampled over one another to gain a better view. La Pucelle asked God's forgiveness for her persecutors. Joan was not to be hanged before burning, which was the usual format. Apparently the rope wasn't long enough to reach the neck of this small woman. The executioner had been instructed to incinerate every scrap of her body and throw all the ash into the Seine. The executioner reported, as he fell to his knees seeking absolution, that Joan's heart would not burn. The Dauphin, Charles VII, didn't lift a finger to save Joan, neither through ransom nor repatriation of prisoners nor attempt at escape. By 1456, just 25 years after her death, the political winds had changed. France had been reunited and Joan's case was heard in court once again. This time she was found not guilty of heresy. Saint Joan was canonised in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV.

When we speak about the story of Joan of Arc changing the course of history, two large ideas are held within her life. The first is the Holy Roman Church and its influence in Joan's life, and the second is better asked in the form of a question, which I'll let you answer for yourself, was Joan the first feminist? With regard to the church,

there is little historical proof that during this period, called the High Middle Ages in Western Europe, the church was anything other than an all-powerful arbiter of political persuasion, strict religious observance, and economic self aggrandisement. All of this apparently done in God's name. The church, for sometimes the better, but often for worse, was embedded in the very fibre of everyday life, from collecting tithes from the impoverished futile peasantry, to advising kings on political and spiritual matters. This was a time of great superstition about the natural world. The devil and his adherence were seen and felt everywhere, encouraging immorality and sin, and witches on broomsticks were seen flying through rainstorms, the heavens being split by lightning. More about the witches later. When Joan of Arc, for a few brief years, replaced the church in the hearts and beliefs of millions of peasants, and then the aristocracy for their own political reasons followed her into battle, the church suddenly was losing its adherence both spiritually, politically, and economically. Everyone except Joan had skin in the game, and to lose was intolerable, so they did what they did. But the church, as often happens in history, just as they seem their most all powerful, had actually sewn the seeds of their soon-to-be waning power. In this case, it would be the idea that an illiterate peasant and a 19-year-old girl had not only stood up to the church's corrupt power, but had the audacity, not to mention the courage, to make a spiritual end run around God's representatives on earth, and as they say today, gone direct via her angels. This was anathema to the church and attacked the basis of their power and the influence that the church had held over all of Western society for the previous almost 1500 years. Joan changed the course of history because hers was among the first and perhaps most dramatic and lasting challenges to both the secular and religious power of the church. In a few years, European nations with legitimate political boundaries would begin to form, and the division of church and state would soon become a reality, while science versus religion would be the main event in a continuing battle of beliefs up to and including today. The paradox of Joan's life continues, as while she was then adopted by the feminist movements of England and North America, her right wing credentials were appropriated by Marine Le Pen's right wing party in France. She has also served as protectress of British suffragettes and the patron saint of women gymnasts. She has appeared on the labels of brie cheese and a brand of pork and beans. Whatever happened to copyright? Joan became a feminist heroine by setting the stage for acts by women where anyone can step into male-dominated roles and succeed. She makes evident the dimension of women's dynamism. That said, burning women at the stake soon became a bit of a habit in both Europe and America. By the 15th century, two very different models of criminal justice had established themselves in Europe. On the continent, judges asserted the wisdom of the Romans and the authority of canonical law and the right to investigate any crime they detected. In England, on the other hand, kings had already delegated considerable responsibility to ordinary men whose role was only to assess the complaints and defences of people who came before

them. The history of the witch trials, a saga that lasted two centuries and claimed the lives of between 60 and 100,000 people, mostly women, would encapsulate the differences between the systems. It began in the hushed monasteries and torture chambers of Central Europe and would end amid the high drama of Salem, Massachusetts. The secrecy of the inquisitorial process and the subtleties of theological doctrine transformed superstitions into denunciations and generated a vicious cycle of confession and execution. "Summis Desiderantes Affectibus," Latin for desiring with supreme ardour, was a papal bula issued by Pope Innocent VIII on December 5th, 1484, regarding witchcraft and recognising the existence of witches. It included these words. "Many persons of both sexes "and mindful of their own salvation "and straying from the Catholic faith "have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi, and succubi, "and at the instigation of the enemy of mankind "they do not shrink from committing and perpetrating "the foulest abominations, which remain unpunished, "not without open danger to the souls of many "and the peril of eternal damnation." It gave approval for the inquisition to proceed, correcting, imprisoning, punishing, and chastising such persons according to their desserts, and authorised two German Dominican friars Heinrich Krämer and Jacob Sprenger to produce a full report. Their findings were published two years later in the form of the "Malleus Maleficarum," or "Hammer of Witches." If the Malleus had depended on logic for its fuel, it wouldn't have gone very far, but the myths were powered by a force that would send them cascading down the centuries, hatred, and more particularly a hatred slash fear of women. It was the "Mein Kampf" of misogyny. Published less than 30 years after Europe's first printed book, and reprinted 13 times over the next four decades, it transformed superstitions into reasons to execute. The theories of the Malleus percolated through Europe's pulpits and universities. The frequency of prosecutions accelerated rapidly in subsequent decades, and in the West and Central European epicentres of the craze, women would constitute about four fifths of those charged. The Reformation, which tore Europe in two during the mid 16th century, ratcheted up kill rates everywhere. In Germany, inquisitors would execute witches at a greater rate and frequency than the rest of the continent combined. Tales of the evil female are nothing new. According to rabbinic legend and Jewish mythology, the problem was even older than Eve. The very first woman was Lilith, who legend has it, had spurned God and Adam in favour of communing with demons and killing children. Homer sang of Circe, ruler of the island of Aeaea, who transformed Ulysses' men into pigs and kept the hero distracted with her charms for a full year. The Greeks had bequeathed to their barbarian successors tales of the Styx, daughter of Tethys, an airborne hag with claws and teeth who spent the hours from dawn till dusk dive bombing cradles and eating human flesh. These nightmares were now transformed into a worldview. German jurists revived the cold water ordeal, whereby suspects were immersed and condemned if they floated too easily, evidence that they were being aided by Satan. When regular courts in England were suspended during the civil war of the mid

1640s, a series of wars mostly about governments, a posse of freelance witch hunters strode into the legal limbo, and in the space of just three years took the lives of between 10 and 20% of all the witches ever executed in England. The most notorious of these was Matthew Hopkins, who announced in 1644 that he was England's Witchfinder General. The 17th century teetered between tradition and reform, and England's last execution for witchcraft took place 18 years later in Exeter where three women went to the gallows, but it was not England that would see the apotheosis of the witch trials as theatre. That came in 1692 in a small American village near Boston called Salem. The puritans of Massachusetts, they sprang disproportionately from East Anglia and Essex, regions that had produced two of England's deadliest witch hunts. They'd been mutating from the moment that the first colonists sailed from the Isle of Wight in April of 1630. Their leader and governor, John Winthrop, stood on the deck of the flagship Arbella and delivered a sermon that defined their mission. We will be an example to the world as a city upon a hill. One in five of the colonists died during the first winter. Isolated communities lurched from one crisis to another over the next few decades. For a community committed to the belief that God had long ago chosen who to save and who to damn, the adversary had to be Satan. The alternative that God had forsaken them was too appalling to contemplate. In 1684, an influential Boston minister named Increase Mather wrote a book, "Wonders of the Invisible World," in which he portrayed New England as a land on the verge of Armageddon, where Satan rode lightning bolts, God worked wonders, and nothing was quite as it seemed.

Four years after Mather wrote his book, four sick Boston children named a cantankerous Irish widow as the magical source of their ailments. Following a trial at which she proved unable to say the Lord's Prayer perfectly, she became the first Massachusetts citizen to be hanged for witchcraft. Thunder began to roll in February 1692, when two children in the village of Salem fell into convulsions and were diagnosed as bewitched. The younger girl was a niece of the village's new minister, Samuel Parris and his Amerindian slave, Tituba, who had evidently tried to cure them by feeding the family dog a case laced with their urine. The spasms intensified. Two more guards declared themselves, girls declared themselves inflicted, and all four began to claim that Tituba herself was one of the three spectral tormentors. The next to be accused was Martha Corey, a prosperous churchgoer who was questioned before hundreds of Salem residents on March 21st, 1692. She denied that she could or would've hurt anyone by witchcraft, but as she spoke her three accusers, none yet a teenager, began to twitch and moan. The drumbeat would only intensify. The number of people being afflicted was increasing daily. We're going to skip this scene from "The Crucible" because of time. By the end of May there were 50 people in jail, and it was becoming apparent that anyone who confessed and named accomplices would not face trial, but there were some who continued to insist that they were not witches and their cases needed resolution. The new governor, Sir William Phipps, who had just arrived

from England, set about providing it. The colony abolished witchcraft as crime within two years, and on January 14th, 1697, it held a Day of Humiliation during which one judge and all 12 Salem jurors begged forgiveness. The trials have earned the puritan's a reputation as bigoted psychopaths, but the caricature is considerably more misleading than useful. There were very specific reasons why the prosecutions had occurred when and when they did. Conflicts and land disputes fractured Salem village, and ruptures widened in 1689 with the appointment of Samuel Parris who had been born middle class in England and became wealthy quickly in America as the community's minister. In a community so torn apart, those who would not humble themselves before the community were spat out from it. Salem was almost the last great gasp of the Western world's witch frenzy, as professionals and intellectuals increasingly subscribed to philosophies that removed God from the cosmic machine, societies handed to doctors the responsibility of identifying and treating those deviants whose supposed witchcraft had previously been handled by lawyers and priests. Executions sputtered on across continental Europe until the mid 18th century, while English juries remained superstitious enough to convict for four decades after Salem. The offence of witchcraft was finally abolished by the English House of Commons with the introduction of the Witchcraft Act in 1735. Witch hunts are far from being a thing of the past. Even in the 21st century in many countries this is still a sad reality for many women today. Historian Wolfgang Behringer, a professor at Saarland University in Germany, claims that in the 20th century alone, more people accused of witchcraft were brutally murdered than during the three centuries when witch hunts were practised in Europe. Between 1960 and 2000, about 40,000 people alleged of practising witchcraft were murdered in Tanzania alone, and he goes on to say that such murders are far from being arbitrary and isolated cases and that witch hunts are not a historic problem, but a burning issue that still exists. That is why August the 10th was declared a World Day Against Witch Hunts in 2020. Everyone can agree, I think, that the witch hunts, and I propose that the trial of Joan of Arc was one of these, were irrational, but the lessons to be learned from that irrationality have inspired controversy. The key feature of the early modern witch hunts was not that they focused on evils that did not exist. Their lunacy and their lethality arose because they allowed for punishment on the strength of panic alone. Individuals were called to account for vast events that they could never have prevented, simply because they seemed to be the kind of people that would've brought them about if they could. The absence of proof linking them to crime became a reason to intensify the search rather than abandon it. For it is not the presumption of innocence, but the possibility of conviction that fuels the criminal trial, and the urge to punish lies close to the heart of every prosecution. What is very clear, I think, is that the restraint of prejudice is only one of the functions that prosecutions have historically served. They have often, like rain dances, dispelled doubts using noise and movement alone. We need to stop and think, what

did past civilizations hope to achieve through scapegoats and sacrifices? How have emotion in fear inspired Western notions of justice with governments everywhere eroding legal protection. In the name of an indefinite war on terror, we need to ask these questions. Marianne Williamson, an American spiritual teacher, author, lecturer, former potential candidate for president of the United States said that, "Today's average American is more act to rebel "against a tennis shoe not coming in the right colour, "than against the slow erosion of our democratic freedoms." Given what happened after the election in the U.S. and from 2000 to 2004, and what is still festering today, perhaps she and Franz Kafka were both right. The trials of witches, whether undertaken in the guise of protecting a nation or a church, as with Joan of Arc, or just saving a community as with the other witches, is something real in human history. I leave you with this question, in a time when alternate facts are deemed real and constitutional rights are challenged, what do we need to be doing, each of us in our own lives, to ensure that we don't experience a 21st century of witch trials? When I did the research behind my lecture series, I thought that the trials I was talking about would show how, as human beings, we have progressed. Today I find I'm not so optimistic. Maybe, just maybe, we can still move forward together. Thank you.

– [Trudy] Thank you, Sylvia, that was absolutely extraordinary, and brought up so many different questions. I'm just going to see what questions our audience have.

Q & A and Comments

A lot of people are saying nice things. Let's go on.

Q: "How did Joan get an army of 2,500 peasants to lift the siege?" asked Shelly Shapiro.

A: Okay, well she got that from the poor peasants who had very little to lose and who rallied around her knowing that they were going to be demolished by the king.

– [Trudy] Okay, now this is from Monty. This is a very interesting question.

Q: Is it okay to play fast and loose with Joan of Arc? I'm thinking of the play "I, Joan" at the Globe Theatre in London portraying her as a trans woman.

A: I think it's fair to play loose with anything, if you have something backing up your loose play. So, there have been plays, there have been movies, there are books, and they're historical fiction, and we always have to remember historical fiction means it has some truth,

but the personal details are added.

- [Trudy] It's a bit of a problem, because I think a lot of people get very muffled up, don't you? Faction. This is from, Dennis is complimenting you. This is from Francois, "Separation of church and state in France happened quite a bit later," she's saying, 1905.

- Yeah, it started during the period after Joan of Arc and slowly, slowly, slowly ended up with being an official separation of church and state. But I would question whether that separation really exists. Because certainly I can use Canada as an example, where we supposedly have separation church and state, and yet every major Christian holiday is a holiday for everybody in the country.

- [Trudy] Power of the church. This is from Shelly.

Q: Were any women of the nobility tried and burned as witches?

- Pardon me? Can you say that again?

- [Trudy] "Were any women of the nobility "tried and burnt as witches?"

A: I am not sure about that, but I wouldn't be at all surprised. It was a very convenient way to get rid of women you wanted to get rid of.

- [Trudy] There was a Romanian countess, I believe, who was accused of witchcraft. She was walled-up in her castle, but that is the only one I can think of. This is from Ruth. Again, complimenting you, "Compliments." Okay, this is from James Wagman.

Q: What do you make of Margaret Murray's book 'The God of the Witches,' which sees witchcraft as the survival of the pagan religion into Christian times and Joan as a charismatic leader of the pagan population?

A: Her surrender to the English and her burning as a witch, was a way in which the death of the victim provided divine support for the followers and their cause.

- [Trudy] Margaret Murray some people think is lunatic. Other people think she's a historian. I'm not sure which she is. I find reading her stuff interesting, but with very little to truly back up her opinions.

- [Trudy] More and more compliments. More and more compliments. Compliments. "A beautiful opera by Arthur Honegger, 'Jeanne d'Arc' "or 'Joan of Arc,' with the flames being presented "beautifully by the music." That's from Nikki. Again, compliments, compliments.

"Have you Andrew Doyle's book, "2022 book, 'The New Puritans'?"

- I have not yet read it.

- [Trudy] People seem to want to know where you live.

- I live in Toronto.

- [Trudy] Toronto. This is from, I think, probably a friend of yours, Naomi, saying, "Thanks, good to see you on my screen. "Yay, women in Toronto." I think that's it actually. So may I, again, thank you so much? And I'm sure we're going to see you again, Sylvia. So thanks a lot everyone, and see you all soon.