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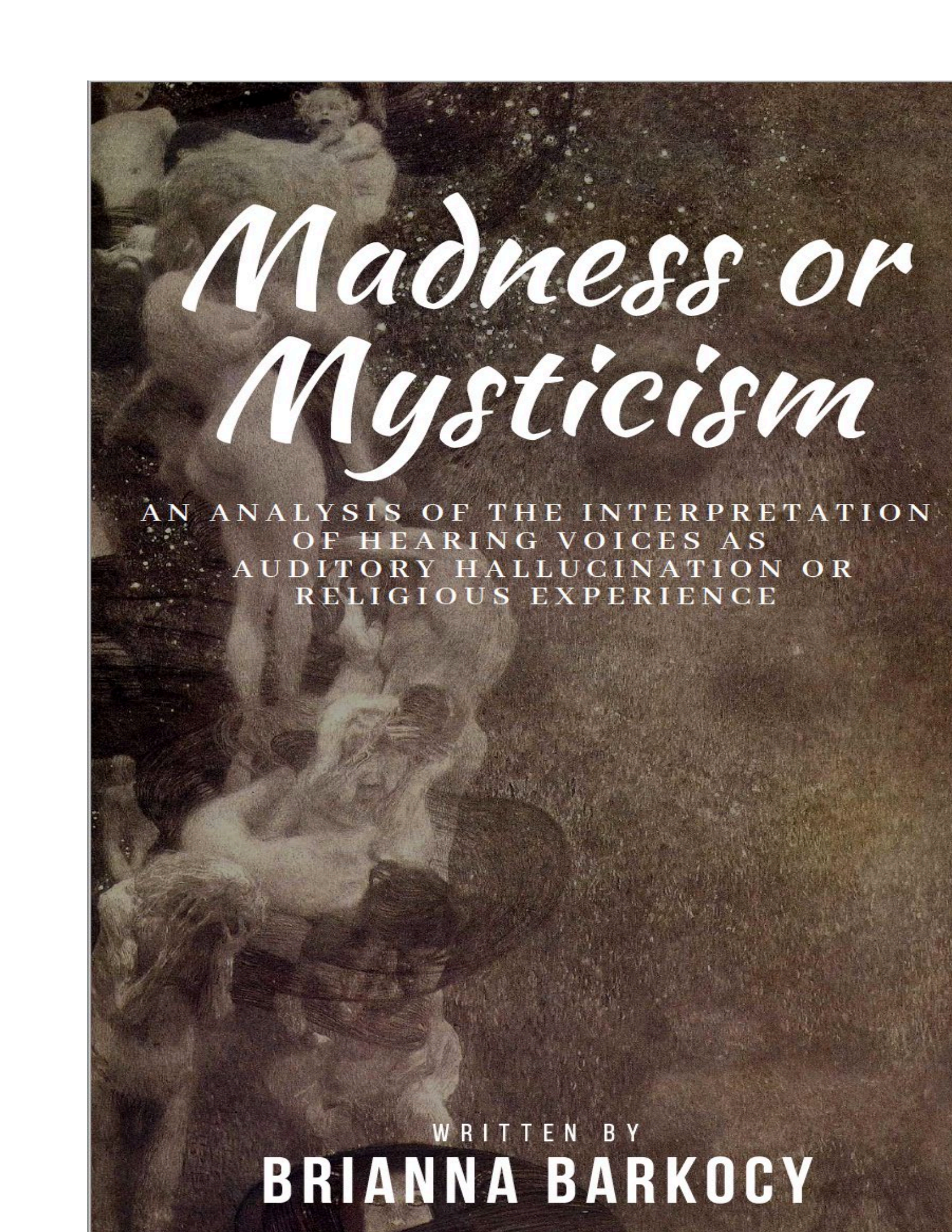
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# *Madness or Mysticism*

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATION  
OF HEARING VOICES AS  
AUDITORY HALLUCINATION OR  
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

WRITTEN BY  
**BRIANNA BARKOCY**



**MADNESS OR MYSTICISM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATION OF HEARING  
VOICES AS AUDITORY HALLUCINATION OR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

**A thesis submitted to  
Regis College  
The Honors Program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Graduation with Honors**

**by**

**Brianna Barkocy**

**May 2019**

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Director, University Honors Program

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Preface and Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction: Uncertainly Mad .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Chapter 1: History of Madness and Mysticism.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Medical Classification of Auditory Hallucinations.....</i>	<i>3</i>
Content.....	4
Perceived Source in Space .....	5
Perceived Vivacity.....	6
<i>Where do Voices Come From? .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>Chapter 2: When Science Meets Religion .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Four Views of Science and Religion.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Is It Human or Divine?.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Recurrence of Voices .....	13
Content of Voices .....	14
Development, Course, and Emotional Consequence of Voices .....	16
<b>Chapter 3: The Reality of Hearing Voices.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Methods.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Testimony Analysis.....</i>	<i>21</i>
Testimony of St. Joan of Arc.....	21
Testimony of Contemporary Voice Hearer.....	24
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>27</i>

<b>Chapter 4: Moving Forward: Implications of Religion as a Method of Interpretation .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Religion as a Positive Method.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Religion as a Negative Method.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Moving Forward: Recommendations for Treatment .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<b>Chapter 5: Are We All a Little Mad? .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Reflections.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>46</b>

## **Preface and Acknowledgements**

This paper was prepared by me for the purpose of partial fulfillment of requirements for the Regis College Honors Program. Much of the information has come from extensive literature reviews and personal experience, but does not include any new empirical data. The analysis and recommendations provided in this paper are strictly from my own observations. Therefore, some professionals and experts in these specific subject areas may take issue with a perceived lack of rigor in the treatment of their topic and lack of unequivocal data to back up certain claims. However, given the nature of this topic, I feel I have done my best to address what I can in the limited time provided to me for this paper's completion.

I want to extend my thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Erin Winterrowd, and my two thesis readers Dr. Kari Kloos and Dr. Julia Brumbaugh for their extensive efforts in offering me advice and further readings to better my work. I would like to thank Dr. Tom Howe and Dr. Catherine Kleier for their dedication to helping my honors cohort and me brainstorm ideas and stay organized during this process, as well as taking the time to read all of our theses. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Linda Land-Closson for her suggestions which ultimately led to the creation of my thesis topic. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family who read countless drafts and spent countless nights helping me interpret and integrate new research into this paper. I am forever grateful.

## **Introduction: Uncertainly Mad**

It is 1973. Eight "pseudopatients" with no history of mental illness present themselves at a variety of hospitals across the United States. Their single fabricated complaint: they "heard voices." These voices, they report, are indistinct without any clear message or direction, yet the words "empty," "hollow," and "thud" can be heard distinctly. Aside from this deception, they act normally, going about as they would in their own day to day lives, recounting for the medical staff their own normal past experiences and medical history. The result? Every one of them is diagnosed with schizophrenia (except one who received a diagnosis of manic-depressive psychosis), hospitalized, and prescribed antipsychotic medication. Once in their respective mental wards, the "psuedopatients" continue to act and speak as they normally would, even reporting to the medical staff that their voices have ceased. Despite repeatedly telling the staff "they feel fine" and even taking notes about their experiment in front of them, none of these "psuedopatients" are identified, some even being detained for as long as two months inside the mental ward (Rosenhan, 1973).

What is the purpose of beginning a history of madness in this way one might ask? The study mentioned above, titled "On Being Sane in Insane Places," conducted by Stanford psychologist David Rosenhan, revealed a very important aspect of understanding and interpretation of mental health. His discovery? The single symptom of "hearing voices" could suffice for an immediate, categorical diagnosis of schizophrenia, even in the absence of any other symptoms or abnormalities of behavior. Equally as important, this study showed the tendency for people to look for evidence that confirms their stereotypes or pre-existing beliefs about mental illness. Although this study was conducted over 40 years ago and debated for its correlational data, the fact remains that field of psychiatry and psychology, and popular belief, is still undermined by the seemingly axiomatic belief that "hearing voices" presages madness and required immediate pharmacological treatment, no matter what the context.



What are we missing out on by narrowing our focus so quickly to medical diagnoses? How do we assign meaning to an experience that is, in its very essence, vague, unique, and altogether mysterious? In the following chapters, I will attempt to present the possibility of “hearing voices” from both a medical model, adhering closely to the psychological and neurological roots of auditory hallucination, and from a spiritual/religious model, accounting for those voices that cannot be explained or interpreted by science. Do the voices in our head come from the firing of neurons or the changes in chemicals or is there something greater at work, an external force that speaks to us when we need it the most, providing us with direction or purpose?

Can it be both?

## **Chapter 1: The History of Madness and Mystics**

The history of mental illness goes back to the beginning of documented society, although in its early stages, it was referred to as madness. This kind of madness, as identified through the hearing of voices that were not attributed to one's self, is extensively documented in the writings of ancient Greek, as well as Egyptian and early Christian cultures (McCarthy-Jones, 2012). The earliest medical text from the Middle Assyrian and Babylonian periods (1430-1050 BC) chronicled the hearing of voices. They attributed the voices to the presence of spirits or demons who were separated from their human form postmortem and returned to haunt the living (Scurlock, 1995). Voices at this time were also seen as communication from the gods meant to provide direction or inflict punishment in the absence of the appropriate sacrifice (Scurlock & Anderson, 2005). For some ancient cultures, the occurrence of inner voices was actually sought out as a kind of religious achievement. For example, Ancient Egyptian peoples would attempt to restore mental balance through communication with spirits of the other world via "dream incubation" (Weckowicz & Leibel-Wechowicz, 1990).

In fact, until the eighteenth century, experiences of hearing voices were regarded as predominantly divine, or simply a part of human nature. Many historically important individuals have claimed to have heard voices that were the root of their inspiration. Socrates, the Greek philosopher, speaks of his inner daemon or voice of wisdom in Plato's apology. This voice directs his life, informing his actions and giving him his unique insight into the philosophy of human existence. In early Christian tradition, one has only to look to the biblical prophets to find instances of hearing the voice of God as a source of divine inspiration: God speaks to Adam on the sixth day (Genesis, 2:16-17), Moses is given instructions from a burning bush (Exodus, 34:27), Ezekiel experiences ecstatic visions (Ezekiel 1:1-26), and most strikingly, as many 20<sup>th</sup> century psychobiographies claim, Jesus is suspect as well since He constantly converses with God and other figures, as well as experiences "delusions of grandeur" by

claiming to be God himself (Gottesman, 1991). In addition, if we look into the stories of religious martyrs like Joan of Arc, many of these now saints, placed on a pedestal of religious example, went willingly to their deaths after fulfilling the wishes of God, which had been communicated through a voice that only they could hear.

Other more modern monotheistic prophets have also referred to voices as the initiation of their own divine mission. Mohammed first heard a voice near Mecca as he was meditating, claiming it to be the voice of the Angel Gabriel who told him he was “the prophet of God.” Mohammed later obtained the whole Koran through this holy voice. The Jewish Torah is similarly filled with accounts of the voice of God, as the God of Israel often enters into dialogue with His people, listens to their pleas, and responds in a very personal way through conversation or messages.

Potentially there was some overlap between these kinds of spiritual awakenings and those of psychosis or hysteria, but on the whole, before the onset of the Enlightenment, voices were regarded as spiritual rather than pathological experience. Madness was therefore historically seen as both a problem of the spirit or soul and as a problem of the body. Which causal view predominated was highly dependent on the culture and time period, and influenced the treatment of these “voice hearers” greatly. Some were seen as chosen by God and praised by their communities, others possessed by demons or Satan and isolated or killed, and some simply regarded as uninteresting and left to the care of their families outside of the public eye (Gottesman, 1991).

The large shift in the interpretation of voices occurring in the middle of the eighteenth century accompanied the emergence of a new secular culture. With the coming of the Enlightenment, philosophers and scientists began to advocate for a medical model of interpretation for these “hallucinations.” Building on the work of Descartes (1641) who proposed the theory of mind-body dualism which claimed that the mind/spirit and body are two distinct and separable entities, these

Enlightenment thinkers (e.g. Denis Diderot and Voltaire) came to see voices as having a physiological basis in the brain (Sacks, 2012).

During this time period, the emergence of more specific medical terminology and diagnostic criteria also began to provide a more scientific and systematic way of categorizing seemingly mysterious experiences. The term *neurosis* appeared in 1783, although it was generally in reference to a disordered nervous system, and towards the middle of the 1800s, the term *psychosis* came into practical use (Gottesman, 1991). In 1809, medical personnel began to notice that other symptoms were usually comorbid with the experience of hearing voices and this “disease” resulting from the “disordered mind,” as it was quickly interpreted, was assigned a variety of different names. By the early 1900s, the most widely accepted diagnosis was called *dementia praecox*, as coined by German clinical psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin, and was characterized by a deterioration into “mental weakness” and the presence of “auditory hallucinations” rather than divine voices (McCarthy-Jones, 2012). It wasn’t until 1908 that Eugen Bleuler, a contemporary of Kraepelin, introduced the term *schizophrenia*, a term which continues to be associated with the experience of “hearing voices,” and related symptomology (Gottesman, 1991).

### **Medical Classification of Auditory Hallucinations**

In order to understand the arguments behind the interpretation of voices, it is first important to have a grasp on what constitutes an auditory hallucination and in what context these hallucinations are recognized. The definition provided by the most recent Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) is a good starting point, since this is the basis from which psychologists and psychiatrists make their diagnoses. According to the DSM-5,

Auditory hallucinations are usually experienced as voices, whether familiar or unfamiliar, that are perceived as distinct from the individual’s own thoughts. The hallucinations must occur in the context of a clear sensorium; those that occur while falling asleep (hypnagogic) or waking up

(hypnopompic) are considered to be within the range of normal experience. Hallucinations may be a normal part of religious experience in certain cultural contexts.

The vagueness of the definition, which is particularly evident in this excerpt, highlights why the concept of “hearing voices” can be so complicated, noting within the description itself both a psychological and religious explanation. For example, there is significant variability in what could be considered “distinct,” as well as no clarification of when the voices appear or what the voices say, or even the amount of distress caused by said voices. Similarly, there is no explicit definition of what “cultural contexts” are normal and how many hallucinations can occur within these “normal contexts” before they are no longer considered religious in nature. Therefore, although these questions do not have concrete answers, there is a plethora of research that has been done in an attempt to provide better classification for an experience which is still very much misunderstood.

To begin, auditory hallucinations are the most prevalent type of hallucination in adults, both with and without a history of psychiatric illness (Blom & Somner, 2010). While verbal auditory hallucinations (i.e., speech- or vocal-based) are the most common, non-verbal auditory hallucinations can also occur (e.g., musical hallucinations, tinnitus, and hearing other incoherent sounds or background noise (Blom & Somner, 2010). Despite popular belief, auditory hallucinations are not always considered a burden by the voice hearers, but in some cases, they can be overwhelming and disruptive (Diederer & Sommer, 2012).

In addition to the variability in type of hallucination or perceived disruption, the classification of auditory hallucinations can be made using three guiding principles: content, perceived source, and perceived vivacity.

### **Content**

The content of auditory hallucinations can vary significantly from person to person, often impacting the interference the voice hearer experiences as a result. Hallucinations can either be benign



or malignant in nature, providing the voice hearer with valuable advice and praise, or threatening, provoking, and demeaning the individual (Sacks, 2012). For most people diagnosed with psychosis or schizophrenia, voices are often vindictive in nature, consisting of threats or curses contradicting one another, or overlapping in an overwhelming cacophony of sound (Haddock et al., 1999). Some people experience a running commentary or repetition of their own thoughts or behavior, a hallucination referred to as *Gedankenlautwerden*, or thought-echo (Cramer, 1889). However, for those who are not given a mental illness diagnosis and who have no previous history of psychosis, the voices are commonly quite unremarkable and benign (Sacks, 2012).

### **Perceived Source in Space**

As to the perceived location of voices, often voice hearers report a surround sound 3-D version of auditory hallucination coming from both inside and outside the head. Many voice hearers have described this experience as “hearing sounds through a well-balanced headphone” (Blom & Sommer, 2010). However, other individuals report hearing their voices in specific places in, on, or near their head, like the top of the head or behind the ear. Even for those who specifically identify their voices as internal voices, most of the sound is reported to originate in a specific spatial location by the ear (Hoffman, Varko, & Gilmore, 2008). Although most people report either external or internal verbal auditory hallucinations and continue to experience these throughout the course of their voice hearing, there are instances where, over time, external auditory hallucination lose their “external” nature and gradually become “internal” or internally integrated (Nayani & David, 1996).

Voices can also be experienced as unilateral or bilateral, where unilateral hallucinations can only be heard originating from one side of the head or the other, and bilateral can have auditory content present at both sides in conjunction with one another. This bilateral experience can also refer to different quality or content coming from both sides, such that in one ear an individual may hear an encouraging voice complimenting the accomplishments of the individual, while on the other side, the

voice is abusive and degrading (Blom & Sommer, 2010). These perceived sources in space help individuals experiencing auditory hallucinations to delineate for themselves which are the natural “self-talk” voices that we all possess, and which ones are invasive hallucinations.

### **Perceived Vivacity**

As one would expect, the vividness of the voices is also not consistent throughout all auditory hallucinations. If the voices are particularly indistinct or faint, they can be considered pseudohallucinations. These are described as “half-formed, fragmentary, hallucinated sounds that remain below the level of a recognizable percept” (Blom & Sommer, 2010). Common examples of these include misunderstood words, random letters or sounds, and discontinuous fragments or phrases. In these cases, the message of the voices is incoherent, becoming far more of an annoyance than a source of distress or comfort for the voice hearer.

### **Where Do Voices Come From?**

Verbal auditory hallucinations can occur in a variety of individuals, ranging from patients with neurological and neurodegenerative diseases, to patients with psychiatric disorders, to healthy individuals in the general public (Aleman & Laroi, 2008). They can be the result of disordered brain pathology, substance use such as cannabis, methamphetamine, or cocaine, or in some cases, mysterious psychological irregularities. In this section, I will attempt to clarify our scientifically understood sources of hallucinations, as well as more generally theorized causes of verbal auditory hallucinations.

Verbal auditory hallucinations commonly occur in the context of a variety of neurological disorders like epilepsy, brainstem pathology, brain tumors, migraines, and delirium (Asaad & Shapiro, 1986; Brasic, 1998). Modern research has revealed an interesting relationship between neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s and verbal auditory hallucinations, with prevalence rates

ranging from 1% to 29% of Alzheimer's patients who experience voices (Bassiony & Lyketsos, 2003). Verbal auditory hallucinations are also highly correlated with certain psychiatric disorders, namely bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, and dissociative identity disorder. Amongst those with bipolar disorder, 56% report hearing voices, whereas the rates amongst patients with schizophrenia are as high as 70% (Diederan & Sommer, 2012). These kinds of psychiatric disorders are most commonly thought to be the underlying cause of verbal auditory hallucinations. Therefore, many voices are treated with antipsychotic medications to various degrees of success. Interestingly, there are significant gender differences in rates of verbal auditory hallucinations among those with schizophrenia in that women report higher rates than men (Marneros, 1984).

When looking at the plethora of cognitive theories of AVHs, the most popular is the misattribution of an internal voice to an external or alien source (Waters et al., 2012a). Recent data has revealed that individuals experiencing verbal auditory hallucinations demonstrate externalizing bias during monitoring tasks, as well as activation of the superior temporal brain regions during both AVHs and tasks that measure verbal self-monitoring (Moseley, Fernyhough, & Ellison, 2013). Additionally, evidence from neuroimaging suggests that auditory hallucinations in both psychotic and nonpsychotic patients activates the same language areas of the brain. These areas include the bilateral inferior frontal gyri, insula, superior temporal gyri, supramarginal gyri and postcentral gyri, left precentral gyrus, inferior parietal lobule, superior temporal pole, and right cerebellum (Diederan et al., 2012), indicating that auditory hallucinations are experienced as if hearing external speech. Another neuroimaging study has found evidence for elevated microglial (immune cell) activity in patients with schizophrenia and in persons with subclinical symptoms who are at ultra-high risk of psychosis (Marques et al., 2018). Therefore, a greater presence of microglia is related to at-risk symptom severity. These findings suggest that neuroinflammation is linked to the risk of psychosis and related disorders, as well as the expression of subclinical symptoms. This has been attributed to overactive microglia engaging in aberrant synaptic

pruning, often during the formative stages of brain development of adolescence and young adulthood when most symptoms of schizophrenia begin to appear (Sommer, 2012).

However, the voice hearers that I find most fascinating are those individuals who are considered healthy individuals who are part of the general population. In a study by Tien (1991) of 17,000 healthy US citizens, 13% reported having experienced some form of hallucination at some point in their life, and 3.2% specifically reported some kind of verbal auditory hallucination. These results vary greatly by age, sex, and social subgroup as well. For example, 15% to 38% of college students claim to have some sort of verbal auditory hallucination, which is significantly greater than the statistics found for the general population (Barrett & Etheridge, 1992). Additionally, women are more likely to experience hallucinations in their late 20s-early 30s whereas men show presenting symptoms between 20-25 years of age (McGrath et al. 2008).

For those without an identifiable disease or psychological disorder, where do these irregular hallucinations arise from? How can those that experience unexplained auditory hallucinations make meaning from a seemingly incongruous event? One potential answer is divine communication. It is not surprising that people turn to this explanation considering 90% of the world population is involved today in some sort of religious or spiritual practice (Barrett & Johnson, 2001). In fact, religion and spirituality has been used as a common and powerful coping mechanism for centuries, allowing individuals the ability to process through grief, make sense of suffering, exercise control over overwhelming external and internal forces, and seek out support through the faith communities that arise from these practices (Koenig, 2009). Those who experience unexplained verbal auditory hallucinations can therefore use divine communication to make sense of their voices so as to gain perceived control of an otherwise external, confusing, and intimidating experience.

## Chapter 2: When Science Meets Religion

When Jean-Etienne-Dominique Esquirol introduced the word *hallucination* into the medical lexicon, it was based on the Latin root *alucinor*, meaning “to wander in the mind,” used to describe not only perceptions for which there were no external evidence, but also misperceptions for which there was external evidence. However, there was a clear danger to adding this label and many psychiatrists of the time recognized the perils of pathologizing voices. By adopting a strict medical interpretation of voices, they became a concrete indication of mental illness even though “the term tinges it with a logically intrinsic pathology where there may be none” (Leudar & David, 2010, p 257).

The stage was then set for the seemingly insurmountable barrier between a scientific explanation of voice hearing and the realm of spiritual experience. For the past two hundred years, religion and science have been at odds, with religion often feeling threatened by an attempted empirical explanation of all things spiritually mysterious. The solution to the pitting of these seemingly monolithic forces against one another has often been the banishment of each to their respective corner where they are able to exist unexamined. The differences between the two are, in the eyes of most, blatantly obvious; science deals with the physical in its search of empirical facts and religion is metaphysical in its search for meaning connected to the transcendent world. To assert that either one can play a role in the function of the other is to breach the “proper” borders in which these two ways of proceeding “should” be contained.

For example, to call something spiritual or religious is to add an ethereal quality, one that transcends the human world and therefore seems to be beyond human understanding. Therefore, it is assumed that something experienced as religious or spiritual cannot be connected to the concrete. As Daniel Smith writes, “When passed through the lens of science, these [religious] qualities often become pathological. From the perspective of the believer, the result is the degradation of a divine entity” (2007, p 14). In other words, some might say that the very attempt to provide worldly/scientific explanations



for these kinds of occurrences defeats the entire purpose of faith, discounting the mystery that exists when the spiritual and earthly collide. Citing the writings of sociobiologist Edward O Wilson, Ian Barbour, a prominent scholar in the field of religion and science, notes this particular sentiment: “The power of religion will be gone forever when religion is explained as a product of evolution; it will be replaced by a ‘philosophy of scientific materialism’” (2000). This tendency to put religion and science in conflict with one another, therefore, results in a harsh separation of religion and science. For those who view these two sides in conflict, anyone who supports a religious lens will find a pathological explanation of divine voices as ludicrous and even blasphemous, whereas those who support a scientific lens will use a pathological explanation as a way to discredit the legitimacy of religious experience.

However, it is important to note, and I would like to argue through this thesis, that religion and science must not always be at odds with one another. In turning to the work of Barbour (2000) and his “four views of science and religion,” I find a compelling argument for ways to reach potential integration.

#### **Four Views of Science and Religion**

As mentioned previously, Barbour’s first view of science and religion is one of conflict where “religion and science are enemies... the scientific method is the only reliable form of understanding... religious beliefs are not acceptable, in this view, because religion lacks experimental testing and criteria of evaluation. Science alone is objective, open-minded, universal” (p 11). Science, in this way, undermines the credibility of religious belief. However, those who hold this view have failed to distinguish between scientific and philosophical questions. Every discipline, despite its claims of truth, is selective and limited since “each abstracts from the totality of experience those features in which it is interested” (Barbour, 2000). Therefore, neither Theism nor Materialism can claim to be all encompassing in its understanding of reality.

Barbour moves away from the idea that religion and science must be used to discredit the other by saying,

“The concept of God is not a hypothesis formulated to explain the relation between particular events in the world in competition with scientific hypothesis. Belief in God is primarily a commitment to a way of life in response to distinctive types of religious experience... it is not a substitute for scientific research” (p 32).

This allows for Barbour to lay out his next three views of religion and science which offer a more integrative approach. The first of these is independence. To avoid conflict between the two sides, a view of independence places religion and science in two completely separate domains. They speak different languages which have different purposes and cannot be judged by the criteria of the other. By keeping them in separate compartments, this view guarantees that neither science nor religion muddy the truth that the other claims to reveal.

The second view is that of dialogue. Barbour emphasizes that dialogue between science and religion allows for a more constructive relationship by stressing certain similarities, presuppositions, and concepts where they might overlap. For example, contrary to the popular view that science is completely objective and religion is completely subjective, Barbour highlights that “Scientific data are theory-laden, not theory-free... theories do not arise from logical analysis of data but from acts of creative imagination in which analogies and models often play a role” (2000, p 24), particularly in areas that are not directly observable (astronomy or quantum physics). Religion has similar characteristics, although not empirically driven, and if religion includes religious experience, rituals, scripture, and historical texts, these are also used to build and support theories of its own right.

The third and final view supporting an overlap is that of integration. Through this lens, religion and science work in symbiosis with one another, each contributing and building on each other to create a comprehensive metaphysics. These two must be viewed in conjunction with one another because

“we do not experience life as neatly divided into separate compartments; we experience it in wholeness and interconnectedness before we develop particular disciplines to study different aspects of it” (Barbour, 2000, p 22). By using one lens alone, we limit ourselves to a skewed view of reality because both spirituality and the empirical world add to the diversity of lived experience. As Pope John Paul II writes, “Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish” (1990, p 2).

It is this view with which I wish to proceed in my own analysis of verbal auditory hallucinations. I believe religious experience and pathological diagnosis each hold an important key in fully understanding, and therefore effectively interpreting and treating, such elusive experiences. The history of religious notables is evidence for the overlap of these kinds of experiences. For instance, many spiritual exemplars from history who have heard religious voices have also been prone to a variety of other psychological conditions like depression, anxiety, obsession, and compulsion. For example, St. Jane Frances de Chantal suffered a deep darkness we would likely now call depression. Similarly, St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Therese St Thérèse of Lisieux suffered from scruples, or what is potentially the obsessive-compulsive obsession with an exaggerated sense of sin. We need not look further than scripture or the lives of the saints to see that hearing the voice of God was not always a pleasant experience. Often times, it led to great pain and suffering, and for those who ended up martyrs to the faith, even death.

### **Is it Human or Divine?**

It is difficult to make a distinction between voices as auditory hallucinations or religious experience. The testimonies of those who live with these voices on a regular basis and those who only live out these occurrences once or twice in their lifetime can sometimes tell a different story, though

there are common elements that make their way into each recollection. In this section I will attempt to illustrate the nuanced differences between those stories which seem spiritual in nature and those which are convincingly pathological.

### **Recurrence of Voices**

According to the DSM-V diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia, auditory hallucinations must be present for at least one month or longer and/or be a continuous commentary on the day-to-day activities of the person suffering from these voices (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). For many diagnosed voice hearers, their hallucinations are a daily occurrence, a constant cacophony of whispers they have to fight through in order to simply exist. A combination of medication and therapy, as well as other techniques like humming softly or creating a purposeful inner dialogue can provide some temporary relief, but there is rarely a complete cessation of the voices all together. The voices return, time and time again (Watkins, 2010). In contrast, those voices experienced by people who are not suffering from any type of pathology occur on a much less continuous basis, by definition. According to a study by the Society of Physical Research, an organization that devotes time and research into the presence of paranormal phenomena, 3.5% of a sample of 17,000 individuals, or 595 people, said that they had experienced hearing voices at one point in their lives. Of those, only 159 (less than 1%) claimed that they had heard these voices on multiple occasions (Sidgwick et al., 1879). Even amongst the majority of religious historical figures, the reports of hearing the voice of God occur on an irregular basis, often after extended periods of time of complete silence, rather than a consistent dialogue. Therefore, it seems as though the reoccurrence of voices can be an indication of psychosis and mental illness, especially if these experiences happen on a consistent basis, whereas non-pathological voices are one or two memorable blips in an otherwise “normal” existence.

## **Content of Voices**

However, recurrence of voices is only one of the criteria used to delineate between psychotic and non-psychotic voices. This distinction is also highly dependent on the content of the voices present, although this criteria is not specifically mentioned for differential diagnostic in the DSM-5 . Just as there is a vast variation amongst the mentally ill population in the voices that they hear, so too is there diversity in the content of non-pathological voice hearing. In a study by Posey and Losch (1982), non-mentally ill participants were asked to identify with a list of fourteen quotations ranging from “Sometimes I have thought I heard people say my name... like in a store when you walk past someone you don’t know” to “I hear my thoughts aloud” to “Almost every morning while I do my house work, I have a pleasant conversation with my dead grandmother.” Of these participants, over half claimed to have experienced something like the first quotation, while only 5% identified with the last quotation. This study highlights that the vast majority of non-psychotic voice hearers experience mild or passive voices they might not even be sure they heard.

When directly contrasting the voices of those who are diagnosed with mental illness and those who believe their voices are of a spiritual nature, there are further important distinctions in content to note. For those whose voices are unquestionably pathological, the content can range from the issuing of commands, echoing of patient’s thoughts, running commentary on everyday actions, or berating, cursing, or insulting of the hearer, or as one voice hearer powerfully describes the experience, “a constant state of mental rape” (Torrey, 2001). Also indicative of psychotic disorders are voices which are terse (repeating single word or short phrase), extremely hostile, antireligious, threatening, derogative, or those that involve two or more voices speaking amongst themselves about the hearer (called “third person voices”) (Watkins, 2010). The majority of people with schizophrenia who hear voices describe the experience as being always or almost always negative (Smith, 2007).



This is very different than those who recall voices as having a spiritual component, especially those where they say that angels or God speak to them. The overwhelming majority of people who hear spiritual voices describe them as positive, encouraging, and supportive. It is important to note, however, that positive voices might just be interpreted as religious more often because they don't cause distress, even if they have an element of pathology. There are other contextual elements, therefore, that aid with further delineation. In a large-scale semi structured interview study conducted by Dein and Cook (2015), participants described their voices as communications from God if they were related to current events rather than prophetic in nature, informing them of future events still to come. The thoughts labeled as spiritual did not reveal any sort of metaphysical insights, but rather spoke of mundane matters, offering direction, consolation, and empowerment. My own observations of the spiritually inclined have indicated that these voices also have an element of eloquence that psychotic voices do not. People report that God often speaks in extended phrases, full sentences, or even the occasional longer monologue, choosing to use words like "my child" or "beloved."

For many people who have felt as if God has spoken to them directly, the voices quote elements of scripture, or, at minimum, have alluded to the teachings of Christ and religious values (McCarthy-Jones, Waegeli, & Watkins, 2013). This element stands out as one of the most important differences between the content of psychotic voices and spiritual voices. If there is validity to the claims of divine communication, then it can be assumed that the voice of God would never contradict scripture. Therefore, anything that is condemning of the sanctity of life or the value of the person could not be from God. Although this might not work in reverse (Ex: all voices that speak encouragement and positivity *are* from God despite the tendency to interpret them in this way), I think it is safe to say that this qualification provides a logical element of distinction between the two when combined with evidence of other religious criteria mentioned previously.

### **Development, Course, and Emotional Consequence of Voices**

Another important distinction between these two types of interpretations involves the context in which the voices are heard, and the residual feelings resulting from these particular experiences.

Psychotic voices, as mentioned before, often arise in the midst of everyday events, persisting throughout periods of happiness, sadness, stress, depression, or elation. According to the DSM-5, they often develop in the mid-20s for males and late 20s-early 30s for females (McGrath et al. 2008). They are always present, repetitive, and inconsistent. Religious voices, on the contrary, reveal themselves in times of stress or indecision, when individuals have come to cross-roads in their lives and need some sense of direction, simply are at a loss of how to proceed, or are experiencing a time of social crisis (Dein & Cook, 2015). Although some individuals hear the voice of God as clear and authoritative words spoken from a source outside of themselves, a significant portion of these testimonies illuminate a phenomenon that is closer to what we could identify as intrusive thoughts. As one voice hearer describes, “It sounds different from my own thoughts. It is the abrupt intrusion of this thought which indicates its external or divine origin” (Dein & Cook, 2015).

Not only is the context of the voice different, but the authoritative nature of the voices is very different between the two as well. Those who hear the voice of God, or interpret it as such, do not feel compelled to obey God. Their personal agency and sense of control over the voices allows them to discern whether or not they want to adhere to the requests posed by the voice. In other words, the voices are simply a suggestion for improvement rather than a demand with consequences attached for insubordination (McCarthy-Jones et al., 2013). Psychotic voices are, unfortunately, not so benign. Individuals diagnosed with mental illness often feel powerless in relation to their voices, as if the demands of their hallucinations are a threat, removing the autonomy from these people, leaving them feeling victimized or violated (Smith, 2007).

Not surprisingly, these stark differences in the experience of control over hearing voices results in significantly varied emotional responses. Watkins (2010) argues that “authentic spiritual voice-hearing experiences will tend to contribute to the development of peace, growth, humility, balance, free will, inclusiveness, and legitimacy, while those of a more dubious or pathological nature tend towards agitation, stagnation, inflation, preoccupation, compulsion, isolation and eccentricity” (p 210). Although these are not fool-proof ways to delineate conclusively between the two, there is a compelling aspect to this argument. Those who see their voices as a form of pathology over which they have no control, much of which functions to destroy their self-esteem and adds to the feeling of hopelessness many voice hearers with mental illness experience, are often left worse-off than if they heard no voices at all. On the contrary, voices of a spiritual nature which provide consolation, support, and direction can increase agency, functioning to improve sense of self, and in turn, drawing these people closer to finding value in themselves as the beloved children of God.

### **Chapter 3: The Reality of Hearing Voices**

In order to demonstrate the complexity of identifying religious vs psychotic voices, I have chosen to analyze two testimonies of voice hearers: one claims to hear spiritual voices and one claims to hear psychotic voices. The testimony of religious experience comes from the trial of Joan of Arc, a notable Catholic saint and martyr during the 1400s, who claimed that the voice of God, disseminated to her through the voices of St. Catherine and St. Margret, wanted her to lead an army against the English to restore the throne to the French king. The testimony of psychosis comes from the personal story of a contemporary voice hearer who started to hear her voices during her childhood, much like Joan of Arc, but did not attribute them to a divine source, even though her initial voices were benign.

## Methods

### *Testimony Selection*

Two testimonies of hearing voices, one where the voices were claimed to be religious and one where the voices were claimed to be psychotic, were picked from citations I found in texts read for the previous chapters. The testimony of St. John of Arc (see Appendix A) comes from the transcript of the *Trial of Jeanne D'arc* translated by W.P Barrett (1932) and represents a case where the voices she experienced, which began in her childhood, were attributed to religious sources, namely God and other saints. I selected this text to analyze because it is one of the few primary source texts from religious figures whose voice-hearing had a prominent influence on their identity and actions and who believed, without a doubt, the voices they heard were from the divine. This text was originally transcribed in 1431, was translated into Latin around 1435, and translated from Latin to English in 1932. To represent psychosis, I selected a testimony of a contemporary voice hearer from the website *Intervoice: International Hearing Voices Network* (see Appendix B) who had similar characteristics to St. Joan of Arc's voices, but interpreted her voices as psychotic. This source was published in 2015 on the website.

Although one is a historical text and one is a contemporary text, I selected both of these testimonies because they were primary sources written about the personal experience of hearing voices; both voice hearers were females of similar ages (Joan was 19 and the other women in her 20s) at the time of giving their testimonies; both started experiencing benign voices when they were children; both provide a detailed account of how their voices changed over time; and both experienced voices as a significant element in their identities and decision-making.

### *Coding Testimonies*

To analyze these two testimonies, I created a coding rubric (Figure 1) based on the criteria delineated in the previous chapter as well as the official diagnostic criteria provided in the DSM-V. For

each testimony, I marked each mention of voices which matched the criteria for religious experience according to my rubric as a 0 and each mention of voices which matched the criteria for psychosis as 1 to delineate between the two. I then counted the number of 1s vs number of 0s within each testimony. I also counted how many times voices were mentioned in total. I then compared the number of times the voices met criteria for psychosis and the times the voices met criteria for religious experience within each testimony.

Religious Voices	0	Psychotic Voices	1
<p><i>Source of Voices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice distinctly different from own voice or intrusive thoughts</li> <li>• Single voice</li> </ul> <p><i>Incidence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irregular, inconsistent occurrence of voice</li> <li>• Occurs in times of need, indecision, or social crisis</li> </ul> <p><i>Content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides direction</li> <li>• Full sentences, complete phrases</li> <li>• Relation to scripture</li> <li>• Speaks specifically to the voice hearer</li> <li>• Content includes one of the following: scriptural references, references to current events, issuing of commands, messages of consolation, offering of future direction, advice giving, expressions of love or deep emotional connection</li> </ul> <p><i>Tone</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on hope or human dignity</li> <li>• Positive and uplifting</li> </ul> <p><i>Individual Response</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to the development of one of the following: peace, growth, humility, balance, free will, inclusiveness, and legitimacy</li> <li>• Person retains a sense of control over the voices</li> </ul>		<p><i>Source of Voices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice distinctly different from own voice</li> <li>• Can have one or more voices in conversation</li> </ul> <p><i>Incidence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present for 1 month or longer or constant</li> <li>• Occurs in the midst of every day events or after a traumatic experience</li> </ul> <p><i>Content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers critique or criticism</li> <li>• Disjointed phrases, individual words, repeated phrases</li> <li>• Speaks to the voice hearer, in third person or about the voice hearer</li> <li>• Content includes one of the following: issuing of commands, echoing of patient's thoughts, running commentary on everyday actions, or berating, cursing, threatening the individual</li> </ul> <p><i>Tone</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative and nagging</li> <li>• Distressing</li> </ul> <p><i>Individual Response</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to the development of one of the following: agitation, stagnation, inflation, preoccupation, compulsion, isolation and eccentricity</li> <li>• Leads to self-harm or injury</li> <li>• Individual feels helpless in the face of voices, lack of control</li> </ul>	

Table 1: Rubric for coding voice hearer testimonies

### *Testimony of St. Joan of Arc*

After analyzing the testimony of St. Joan of Arc, I found a greater number of “religious voice” criteria with 44 mentions of voices that fit a spiritual interpretation and only 18 mentions of voices that fit a psychotic interpretation (out of 62 total mentions of voices). Given this data, St. Joan of Arc’s voices as translated were twice as likely to fit religious criteria as psychotic criteria. This indicates that St. Joan of Arc’s voices may have been religiously founded, even though there are elements of psychosis as well. I have provided some excerpts from the testimony that most clearly exemplify a spiritual interpretation and a psychotic interpretation:

#### **Indications of Psychosis**

*“Then Jeanne said that there is not a day when she does not hear this voice; and she has much need of it.”*

This quotation fits the criteria of the recurrence of psychotic voices which must be present for 1 month or longer or be in constant communication with the voice hearer. St. Joan, on multiple occasions, refers to the omnipresence of this voice and her tendency to regularly refer to its counsel in her day-to-day activities.

*“Asked if the saints spoke at the same time, or one after another, she answered: “I have not leave to tell you; nevertheless I have always had counsel from both.”*

This quotation is indicative of the multiple voice criteria used to diagnose psychotic voices. Spiritual voices are usually singular in nature, addressing the voice hearer directly, whereas pathological voices are more likely to involve multiple voices which converse between themselves as well as the voice hearer.

*“Asked whether when her voices came to her she bowed down to them altogether, as to a saint, she answers yes. Asked if she always did or accomplished what her voices bade her, she answered that with*

*all her might she accomplished the behest which Our Lord spoke through her voices, as far as she could understand. And they bade her nothing without the good pleasure of Our Lord."*

This quotation is evidence of the lack of control over the voices signified by a tendency to believe that they must be listened to and obeyed without question. For St. Joan of Arc, this delineation can prove complicated since her feelings of allegiance to the voices might not be a result of her feeling helpless in the face of her voices, but simply a result of her willingness to serve God who is its source. It is important to note that in Joan's testimony, she never mentions being intimidated or threatened into submission, but does so under free will. Nevertheless, her continuous adherence to the demands of her voices are strikingly psychotic in nature.

### **Indications of Spirituality**

*"Asked if the voice sometimes varied in its counsel, she answered that she had never found it utter two contrary opinions. She said also that that night she had heard it tell her to answer boldly."*

This quotation stands out strongly to me as evidence of the ability of this spiritual voice to provide direction. A voice that calls Joan to answer "boldly" in the face of adversity does not seem indicative of the distressing or confusing voices of a psychotic mind which gives the voice hearer disjointed and often contradictory information.

*"She was very angry; and though her voices forbade her to jump from the tower, at last, from fear of the English, she leaped and commended herself to God and Our Lady, and in leaping was wounded. And when she had made this leap the voice of St. Catherine told her to be of good cheer [that she would recover] and the people at Compiègne would have aid. She said she always prayed with her counsel for them of Compiègne. Asked whether the leap was made at the counsel of her voices, she answered that St. Catherine told her almost every day not to jump, and God would help her, and the people of Compiègne too"*



There are many notable aspects to this quotation, but the ones I found to be particularly powerful was the clear admonition they provided to Joan when she was considering an attempt on her life. This is a message of consolation, not of reproach, and offers support in her time of need. Psychotic voices usually push the voice hearer towards self-harm, so it is particularly interesting that Joan's voices not only did not encourage this, but were passionately vocal about preventing suicidal ideation. Equally notable is Joan's freedom to obey her voices, which she chose not to do. In response to exercising this freedom, Joan found her voices to help her to "be of good cheer" in her recovery.

*"She said the voices left it to her to tell her father and mother, or be silent."*

Similar to the explanation of the voices mentioned above, this particular example clearly points to the autonomy that St. Joan perceived to have over her voices, something that is rare in the case of psychotic voices. It seems as though Joan's voices gave her choices in some aspects of her spiritual direction, adding to the autonomy she was able to experience.

*"Asked if her voices did not call her daughter of God, daughter of the Church, daughter great-hearted, she answered that before the raising of the siege of Orleans, and every day since, when they have spoken to her they have often called her Jeanne the Maid, daughter of God."*

In a particularly telling response, Joan comments that her voices call her a daughter of God which has undeniable ties to Christian tradition and scripture. Joan finds solace in her place as the daughter of her Beloved which is both positive and uplifting as well as a clear expression of love. In the Christian tradition, to be claimed as a son or daughter is to be deemed worthy of a father's affection. This reference as a daughter of God, therefore, seems to be a signal of inclusion and support, rather than a grandiose delusion.

### *Testimony of Contemporary Voice Hearer*

For the privacy of this individual, I will refer to the woman who offered this testimony as Jenny. After analyzing this testimony, I found more “psychotic voice” criteria with 17 mentions of voices that fit a psychotic interpretation and only 6 mentions of voices that fit a religious interpretation (out of 23 total mentions of voices). Given these data, Jenny’s voices were almost 3 times as likely to fit psychotic criteria as religious criteria. This suggests that Jenny’s voices were likely psychological, even though there are elements of religiosity as well. Just as above, I have provided some excerpts from the testimony that most clearly exemplify the indication of psychological voices as well as some religious features:

#### **Indications of Psychosis**

*“My childhood has been difficult, dotted with painful and traumatic experiences for a helpless baby girl alone in this world. My family consisted of an alcoholic and depressed mother and a violent father. At the onset of my experience with voices and visions, my parents had only just divorced and I totally blamed myself for the whole catastrophe.”*

At the very start of this testimony, there is evidence of traumatic experience which is often a trigger of auditory hallucinations, especially if the individual is predisposed to mental health concerns (Longden, Madhill & Waterman, 2012).

*“All of a sudden, my visions and voices became aggressive against me. Since that very moment my voices began commanding and dominating me.”*

At this point in the testimony, there was an obvious turn in tone in reference to the voices. The benign voices conceded to more aggressive voices which became distressing and negative.

Jenny also hints at the sudden loss of control over these hallucinations which take on a

commanding tone, not simply as an advisor, but as a dominating figure which demands obedience.

*“They were male voices with different identities and ages.”*

As is typical with auditory hallucinations, Jenny’s voices were distinctly different than her own and were identified as multiple voices in conversation with both her and each other. This varies from the single divine voice experienced by those who indicate a religious experience. In my reading of religious testimonies, I have never read about voices having a particular age either.

*“These voices considered me their property and compelled me to obey them, otherwise they would threaten and torture me with horrible and gruesome sights whilst I was tied up. They would call me as a number and forced me to pay respect to them through a series of questions. For example, my voice would ask me who they were and I had to answer: “You are my bosses, you are my God, you are the Law”. The sense of powerlessness and anguish I was feeling led me to a total sensation of being unable to defend myself.”*

As with the previous quotation, this testimony is highly indicative of controlling voices that are threatening, commanding, and highly distressing. It leaves the voice hearer feeling completely at the mercy of her hallucinations, without any sense of control and helplessness. This is in stark contrast to Joan’s experience with her voices where she, although compelled to obey them through her allegiance to God, never felt threatened with noncompliance. Jenny feels like she must answer these voices, giving them a divine-like power in her response “you are my God” but does not indicate she believes they are from a divine source.

*“In the meantime, in the real world a figure appeared who would have conditioned me in the years to come: my abuser, disguised as a family friend at first started stalking and deceiving me and in the end abused me.”*

The appearance of the voices in relation to experienced abuse is a clear difference between religious and psychotic voices as well. It is very common that voices begin after the voice hearer has suffered some sort of trauma, and worsens if the suffering continues. Therefore, Jenny’s reference to the past abuse in her life indicates that these voices are likely a manifestation of a deeper psychological issue with regards to her life experience.

### **Indications of Spirituality**

*“I had many good voices performing a lot of activities.... All of them had the function to advise me and protect me.”*

This quotation is an indication of benevolent voices that contributed to a sense of direction for Jenny. Similar to Joan’s voices, they offered her advice and counsel, as well as a sense of safety. This could, therefore, be interpreted as a spiritual voice sent for guidance and support in Jenny’s time of need.

*“The contact with my voices and visions did not scare me at all: instead, it was reassuring me; it made me feel I was existing for somebody.”*

This quotation exemplifies the positive and reassuring qualities of Jenny’s original voices. These voices were able to provide her with a greater sense of value and belonging, allowing her to experience peace and inclusiveness which are indicative of spiritual voices.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence of both religious and psychotic elements to each of the testimonies provided in this analysis clearly demonstrates the complexity in trying to draw a clear line between what is pathological and what is spiritual. However, this analysis provides evidence for the potential legitimacy of a spiritual interpretation of voices, given the high incidence of St. Joan of Arc's voices fitting within the religious criteria I theorized in combination with their deviation from typical diagnostic criteria for psychotic voice hearing. Similarly, Jenny's testimony indicates how certain elements of voice hearing can be indicative of the psychological onset of hallucinations, which clearly follow DSM-V diagnostic criteria. Therefore, the analysis of these two testimonies demonstrates the complexity of creating a clear, objective delineation between religious and psychotic voices, but has the potential, with further studies, to give credence to both of these experiences as valid.

## **Chapter 4: Moving Forward: Implications of Religion as a Method of Interpretation**

Religion and spirituality are powerful influences in the lives of many people all around the world, offering peace and joy in times of happiness, and solace and hope in times of pain. Religious beliefs offer a sense of meaning and purpose when people do not know where else to turn, providing answers to questions that seem unanswerable. They promote a positive outlook on the world that fosters optimism and hope for the future, even in the darkest of times (Ai, Peterson, Tice, Bolling, & Koenig, 2004; Maholmes, 2014). The scriptures offer a community of role models, saints and sinners, who have come before and speak of their own suffering, as well as their ability to accept the inevitability of suffering. In many ways, religious beliefs help people to feel like they have indirect control over the circumstances in their lives, accentuated by the faith that God's will is beyond their own comprehension (Schuster, Stein, & Jaycox, 2001; Watters, 2010). This reduces the stress associated with the need for personal control over one's destiny. Most importantly, religion and spirituality grant people the solace

in knowing that they are never alone, reducing the stresses of isolation and loneliness and providing an interminable support system (Sheikholeslami, Masole, Rafati, Esmaeili Vardanjani, & Yazdani Talami, 2012; Epely, Akalis, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2008). The beauty of using religion as a coping system is that unlike other coping mechanisms like counseling or medication, the spiritual experience is available to anyone at any time regardless of their financial, social, or mental circumstances.

Despite the seemingly positive side effects, it is important to ask if religious beliefs play a role in successfully managing neurochemical voices or if they adversely affect or become a barrier in the treatment and outcomes of these voice hearers? Considering the vast majority of the general population copes with adverse life events by turning to religion (Schuster, Stein, & Jaycox, 2001), it is no surprise that this reliance on religious or spiritual beliefs carries over to the medical realm as well. More than 60 studies spanning two decades have documented high rates of religious coping in patients with an assortment of medical disorders (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). This includes psychiatric patients with persistent mental illness, of which more than 80% used religion to deal with their diagnosis. Interestingly, in a survey of psychiatric patients, people with schizophrenia and major depressive disorder found religious coping to be the most successful form of coping. This was in comparison to other mental illness diagnoses such as bipolar I and anxiety, pointing to potential significance of religion in assisting with the experience of voice hearing, in particular (Tepper, Rogers, Coleman, & Malony, 2001).

With these high rates of religious coping strategies, it is critical to understand the benefits to these methods, while also taking a critical analysis of the ways these adaptations can be detrimental to voice hearers in dealing with their diagnosis. The following section lays out the pros and cons to this method of coping.

## **Religious Interpretation as a Positive Method**

Utilizing religion as a coping method can lead to a variety of positive results often associated with meaning making and as an alternative to medicating. However, many of these effects have yet to be empirically tested. As an obvious benefit, religion can offer an alternative explanation for individual voice hearers who are not satisfied with the medical explanation. This may offer an opportunity for individuals to understand their voices on a more personal level, which can be more meaningful and aid with coping (Cockshutt, 2004). Taking into account the voice-hearers' spiritual worldview can offer a coherent framework for the interpretation of these voices, increasing the sense of agency over these experiences, which in turn can reduce distress and anxiety (Mohr et al., 2006; Watters, 2010). In a westernized system where pharmacological responses are the norms, religious coping allows for the adaptation of spiritual techniques as alternative strategies for handling voices (Romme et al., 2009). By practicing mindfulness, prayer, and bodily awareness through activities like yoga, meditation, or spiritual reflections, voice hearers are "able to let go of the voices, and to disengage from dysfunctional patterns of interactions with them... or profitably engage, explore, or dialogue with the voices which may have a beneficial effect" (Bach & Hayes, 2002;p 249).

Not only is religious coping potentially useful for the individual themselves, but it also has the ability to provide access to a greater support system through the faith community. Being a part of a community may allow the voice hearer to find a spiritual advisor, and possibly even others who also have similar experiences, who can assist the individual in their process of meaning making (Dein & Littlewood, 2007). Longitudinal studies have suggested that religious activity can improve long-term prognosis, especially if patients with psychotic disorders regularly attend church (Schofield et al., 1954) or practice religious worship (Chu & Klein, 1985). If the voice hearer is supported and accepted by people of their faith, it can help normalize the experience, reduce the stigma, and subsequently

decrease the distress and self-defeating attitude that can be a result of isolation. Because guilt and shame play a key role in the etiology of some voice hearing (Dodgson & Gordon, 2009; McCarthy-Jones, 2012), a spiritual interpretation of voices could allow voice-hearers to disassociate themselves from the stigma surrounding psychosis and mental illness and find social support amongst friends with similar beliefs and spiritual worldviews (Yangarber-Hicks, 2004). In turn, it may even help people feel less “guilty” for potential abuse or trauma they experienced which could have triggered the voices in the first place, allowing them to release some of the responsibility and hurt they might feel in relation to the voice and its power over them (Coleman, 2000).

Using religion as an alternative to internalizing “victim guilt” is supported in another longitudinal study of patients with psychosis. Religious belief was found to be a significant protective factor against suicide and self-harm (Jarbin & von Knorring, 2004). Therefore, religious coping offers alternative positive methods for dealing with the experience of hearing voices which can be beneficial for those who accept a spiritual worldview, giving them access to greater opportunities for meaning making and a community who will support them as who they are without the label of insanity that so often is associated with a psychological interpretation (Watters, 2010).

### **Religious Interpretation as a Negative Method**

Although religious practices and beliefs can be useful to some, the use of religion as a method of interpretation does not always lead to positive results. Most notably, a recent study by Cottam et al. (2011) found that of the 24% of patients with schizophrenia who consistently experience religious delusions, the vast majority also have more severe symptoms, hallucinations, poorer functioning, longer duration of symptoms, and higher doses of antipsychotic medication than those whose delusions do not have a religious quality (Siddle, Haddock, & Tarrier, 2002). When looking at these outcomes, it is a possibility that people who experience voices that could potentially, in other circumstances, be



interpreted as spiritual suffer so greatly (e.g., severity, dysfunction, side effects from medication) that they lose the ability to fit these experiences within their faith framework. This is exacerbated when voice hearing is the result of childhood abuse, and even more so when this abuse was perpetrated within the individual's faith community (McCarthy-Jones, 2011).

Religious interpretation can also lead to the dangerous interpretation of voices as all-knowing and all-powerful, resulting in the increased risk of harm to self or others in the presence of malevolent voices (Watkins, 2008). For example, someone might not be inclined to obey a voice if they believe it is all in their head, but might struggle to disobey a voice that they believe to be from God. If the individuals going through these experiences lack a more medical perspective, they are unlikely to regard these voices as unusual, allowing for the unchecked development of worsening symptoms, which only leads to further isolation. Similarly, by doing this, voice hearers might resist seeking out help for potential trauma or emotional distress underlying the experience because they are convinced they are hearing a divine voice (Longden & Corstens, 2013).

In some cases, this faith community might actually exacerbate the issues by treating voices as spiritual if they are really pathological, preventing the voice-hearers from receiving the treatment they need or adhering to prescribed medical treatment (Borras et al., 2007). This is especially challenging if the voices first experienced are benign and attributed to the divine, since the development of more malevolent and manipulative voices later on may be given the same respect or trust (McCarthy-Jones et al., 2013). Therefore, there is a very fine line between the helpfulness of interpretation of voices as the word of God and the point where it begins to impede valuable treatment options.

## **Moving Forward: Recommendations for Treatment**

Because of the complex and potentially overlapping nature of religious and psychotic voices, I have recommendations, influenced by the work of Johnson and Friedman (2008), for how clinicians should approach voice hearers in order to present a more holistic methodology to treatment. The recommendations provided below are based mainly on my own interpretations of the research and the concepts presented in this thesis, rather than empirically tested treatment protocol. However, I feel there is benefit to taking a close look at how clinicians approach the experiences of voice hearers, something that needs to focus on a more holistic approach rather than considering a psychological diagnosis as the most valid interpretation.

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### **Recommendations for Holistic Treatment of Voice Hearers**

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- Accept the reality of religious and spiritual experience
  - Refrain from passing judgement about a client's experience without exploring multiple avenues of interpretation
  - Include questions about patient's religious history and background during intake interviews as a part of holistic biopsychosocial history
  - Include religious affiliation and level of religiosity (if applicable) in patient medical charts
  - Provide a coping assessment like the Brief COPE to determine the role of religion as a positive coping mechanism (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989)
  - Understand that psychopathology cannot be determined solely by the content of client's experiences (Johnson & Friedman, 2008)
  - Gain a comprehensive understanding of the client's openness to exploring spiritual experiences
  - If client reports voices that have a religious element, determine the nature of the religious or spiritual problem (Lukoff et al., 1992, 1996):
    - Purely religious
    - Mental disorder with religious content
    - Religious problem concurrent with mental disorder
    - Religious problem not attributable to mental disorder
  - If the primary issue of distress is religious, consider consulting the appropriate clergy or a spiritual advisor for a second opinion
-

## **Chapter 5: Are We All a Little Mad?**

It was January 23, 2016. I awoke to three missed calls from my dad and another missed call from my mom, which I thought was rather odd. Little did I know that when I picked up my phone to return those calls, my life was about to change drastically in many ways. In the conversation that followed, I learned that my brother, while on a training ride with his cycling team, had been hit by a car going 50 mph, launching him 20 feet through the air, leaving him to collide with enormous force into the ground. The collision resulted in a severe traumatic brain injury, leaving my brother in a coma for two weeks, without the ability to talk, walk, or even control basic functions like sitting up or swallowing. The day he opened his eyes again was a day of celebration, and slowly but surely, he began to rejoin reality from his unconscious world.

Let me first provide a little bit of background. My brother and I grew up in a Catholic household with parents who were very involved in the Church. Faith, therefore, was a significant part of our lives, providing a foundation for many of our values and shaping our worldview in a very particular way. After my brother's accident, faith, and our religious community played a crucial role in the recovery process, as well as the meaning making process, that followed. More often than not, people I didn't even know approached my family to say that they had been praying for him. I mention this because I firmly believe that there was something spiritual that became an integral part of my brother's recovery.

It took a month and a half before my brother was able to start communicating with us, which came with an entirely new set of challenges. Because he was still intubated, he was unable to speak to us, resorting instead to writing phrases on a small whiteboard. However, his first words were in Spanish. My brother was not fluent in Spanish, did not have any family members who spoke fluent Spanish, and had only taken an introductory Spanish course up until this point. The presence of this language baffled

both my family and the medical staff who could not fully understand the neurobiological causes behind this strange phenomenon. It was not until his breathing tube was removed and he began to speak in basic sentences that we learned the source of this. When asking Nathan why he had preferred to speak Spanish instead of his first language, English, he responded that his angels had spoken to him in Spanish. These angels had stayed by his side during his period in the coma and once he had awoken, they provided him with assurance and love. I don't remember what they told him, and when I recently asked him if he remembered any of the exact dialogue, he replied that many of the experiences he had during that time were fuzzy, but he remembers that he heard them clearly and they informed his thought process. This was the first time that I came face to face with the possibility of voice hearing in its non-pathological form.

To this day, I have no doubt that the spiritual interpretation of the experiences that my brother had were legitimate, but I also have an inclination that there was a neurological aspect that played a role in these voices as well. For example, there are rare accounts of a side effect of brain injury called polyglot aphasia where injury to Broca's area inhibits the native language, but a secondary language, even one learned on a basic level, becomes the primary language (Paradis, 2001; Mehrpour et al., 2014). My brother no longer hears voices, though his experiences clearly influenced his views of faith and healing. But there is something to be said about the power of prayer and the solace that it brought to my family and to him knowing that there was a higher power that was watching over him during his recovery process, allowing us to be at peace with the power of God. Maybe we latch onto this spiritual interpretation of spiritual voices simply because it is easier than comprehending the truth. But then again, maybe there are times when the truth is not meant to be comprehended.

## **Conclusion**

There are several conclusions which have become evident to me in my research on the interpretation of voices as religious experience or auditory hallucination. From the beginning, something as simple as defining auditory hallucinations becomes complicated, given that voices are experienced differently by different people, can appear at different times, cease for a while, and then return at random, and have various tones and messages to share with the voice hearer. Despite the fact that research has allowed for the conceptual classification of these experiences based on their content, perceived source in space, and perceived vivacity, we are faced with the inevitable truth that although science has a beautiful way of answering questions, there is still much about hearing voices, and mental health in general, that we do not understand.

I would like to say that the criteria I provided comparing religious voices to psychotic voices adds a new way in which these experiences can be interpreted, but even those basic distinctions have many limitations. For example, not all spiritual voices are from a benevolent and supportive figure, and therefore cases of demonic possession overlap even more closely with the malevolent, nagging voices often associated with psychotic voice hearing. As this adds yet another level of complexity to the conversation, it is a topic that I could not address in this analysis, but is one that needs to be considered in the future as well if we truly want a holistic view of the diverse experience of voice hearing. Another limitation is the reliance of many scientific articles and testimonies alike on personal accounts which are fraught with bias, inconsistencies, and unintentional omissions given the subjective nature of this data. Until there is a reliable, objective way to diagnose voices as psychotic or religious, we are limited to the vocalized experiences of individuals as interpreted through their worldview. A final limitation is the underlying belief that there is a spiritual world where God or a divine being chooses to interact with people on a personal level. My assertions and recommendations are undoubtedly influenced by my bias

that there is a God and that there is true value in learning how to discern His voice from the many others that we hear every day. For those who do not believe in a divine being, offering to interpret what they consider to be a neurological impairment as something that they themselves do not believe or cannot conceive is challenging. However, being open to meeting voice hearers where they are in their lived experience without judgement or preconceived notions of what is possible and what is not is paramount in providing care that fits with the voice-hearers worldview rather than our own.

Future clinicians should consider the value of *cura personalis*, care for the whole person, which is limited not just to the physical nature of our being, but the mental and spiritual aspects as well. A biopsychosocial approach to the understanding of voices allows for voice hearers to relate to their voices not as simply religious or psychological, but in relation to their whole person. While there is still so much to be learned about voice hearing and mental health in general, we must continue to seek out the *Magis*, the more, in our research, our theories, our questions, and the lived experience of those whose lives have been unalterably changed by the voices which, in the end, are theirs alone.

### **Reflections**

As I was attempting to pull together the chapters of my thesis, I was surprised to find that I did not feel as though I had reached a place of conclusion. There still seemed to be so many loose ends, so many questions that hadn't been answered, so much research still to be done. I was not satisfied with where I had left my work, but didn't really understand why. However, after rereading and reflecting, I realized that my original attempt in completing this research was, maybe consciously or unconsciously, to use science to prove that the voice of God was legitimate. In essence, I fell into the trap so many before me have become victim to, the underlying assumption that science can be used to prove the validity of God and spiritual experience. Unfortunately, this simply cannot be done. Therefore, my thesis failed in

its original purpose, having set out at the start of its creation as a defiant response to a world that attempts to disvalue the need to understand the spiritual facet of human nature.

As a double major in religion and psychology, I have always felt this pull in two seemingly opposite directions, trying to justify my passion for faith with a scientific community that often asserts that the only truth that exists are is discovered in replicable findings and p-values. As someone who is never satisfied with “that’s the just the way it works” mentalities, who deeply desires a clarity about why the world works the way it does and in what way the human experience adds to that complexity, science has been a welcome answer. One of the beautiful things about learning is that the more you know, the more you realize how much you don’t know. Each answer leads to a dozen more questions as I delve more deeply into the intricacy of what it means to be humans rooted deeply in the fleshiness of worldly existence, a combination of tissues, bones, and firing neurons, but be touched by the presence of something that is far outside ourselves. Science, in itself, seeks to answer some of the seemingly unanswerable questions that come from this deep dive into the human experience. For me, I love that research provides us with the opportunity to use evidence in support of our claims that we understand why people interact a certain way, or hear and see things that others don’t. In fact, I have found, more often than not, I buy into the mindset that truth must have scientific evidence to back it up. How else are we able to stand by the things that we believe?

But here’s the thing with faith. If we could prove faith, if we could prove that voices and visions were unequivocally sent from God, if we could ultimately prove the existence of God, then we wouldn’t need faith. Instead, it is important to recognize that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:11). If at the end of this thesis I could conclude by saying that I have undeniably identified the voice of God, I would have eliminated the ability for individuals to seek out meaning in an experience that varies significantly from person to person. Not all people’s

relationship to God is the same, so it is crucial that they seek Him out rather than being given a codebook that tells them what God is and what God is not. Therefore, as I reach the end of this process, I have come to realize that I cannot prove that voices are from God. I cannot prove that all malignant voices are pathological or that all positive voices are divine. As much of a struggle as this is for me, and as much as it has challenged my faith in the process of doing this research and reaching these kinds of conclusions, I take heart in knowing that I have at least provided a framework for understanding or meaning making. So although my thesis failed in its original intention, it has resulted in a change in the way that I view the world. My love of science and love of religion no longer feel so at odds. Instead, with these two placed into the same worldview, it has taught me to question everything, even those things that are seemingly concrete, for although I seek out answers, it is less about the proof than it is about the journey to discover it.



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## Appendix A

### St. Joan of Arc Trial Testimony\*

Asked if she confessed her sins once a year, she said yes, to her own cure; and when he was prevented, she confessed to another priest, with his permission. Sometimes, too, twice or thrice perhaps, she confessed to mendicant friars: but that was in the town of Neufchâteau. And she received the sacrament of the Eucharist at Easter.

Asked if, at other feasts than Easter, she received the said sacrament of the Eucharist, she told the interrogator to continue to the next question. Afterwards she declared that at the age of thirteen she had a voice from God to help her and guide her. And the first time she was much afraid. And this voice came towards noon, in summer, in her father's garden: and the said Jeanne had [not] fasted on the preceding day. She heard the voice on her right, in the direction of the church; and she seldom heard it without a light. This light

[43]

came from the same side as the voice, and generally there was a great light. When she came to France she often heard the voice.

Asked how she could see the light of which she spoke, since it was at the side, she made no reply, and went on to other things. She said that if she was in a wood she easily heard the voices come to her. It seemed to her a worthy voice, and she believed it was sent from God; when she heard the voice a third time she knew that it was the voice of an angel. She said also that this voice always protected her well and that she understood it well.

Asked what instruction this voice gave her for the salvation of her soul: she said it taught her to be good and to go to church often; and it told her that she must come to France. And, Jeanne added, Beaupère would not learn from her, this time, in what form that voice appeared to her. She further said that this voice told her once or twice a week that she should leave and come to France, and that her father knew nothing of her leaving. She said that the voice told her to come, and she could no longer stay where she was; and the voice told her again that she should raise the siege of the city of Orleans. She said moreover that the voice told her that she, Jeanne, should go to Robert de Baudricourt, in the town of Vaucouleurs of which he was captain, and he would provide an escort for her. And the said Jeanne answered that she was a poor maid, knowing nothing of riding or fighting. She said she went to an uncle of hers, and told him she wanted to stay with him for some time; and she stayed there about eight days. And she told her uncle she must go to the said town of Vaucouleurs, and so her uncle took her.

Then she said that when she reached Vaucouleurs she easily recognized Robert de Baudricourt, although she had never seen him before; and she knew him through her voice, for

[44]

the voice had told her it was he. And the said Jeanne told Robert she must come to France. The said Robert twice refused to hear her and repulsed her; the third time he listened to her and gave her an escort. And the voice had told her that it would be so.

Then she declared that the duke of Lorraine ordered that she should be taken to him; and she went to him and told him she wished to go to France. And the duke questioned her about the recovery of his health; but she said she knew nothing about that; and she spoke to him little concerning her journey. She told the duke nevertheless to send his son and some men to escort her to France, and she would pray to God for his health. She visited him with a safe conduct and returned to the town of Vaucouleurs.

She declared that, on her departure from Vaucouleurs, she wore the habit of a man, and carried a sword which Robert de Baudricourt had given her, but no other arms; and accompanied by a knight, a squire, and four servants, she reached the town of Saint Urbain, where she slept in an abbey.



She said that on her journey she passed through Auxerre, and she heard Mass in the principal church there; and from that time she frequently heard her voices, including the one already mentioned.

Required to say by what advice she took to man's dress, she several times refused to answer. Finally she answered that she charged no one with that; and several times she answered variously.

She said that Robert de Baudricourt had sworn those who accompanied her to conduct her well and safely. "Go," said Robert to Jeanne, as she departed, "Go, and come what may."

Jeanne said furthermore that she knows very well that God loves the duke of Orleans; and so she had more revelations concerning him than any man alive, except him whom she

[45]

calls her king. She said also that it was altogether necessary to change her women's clothes for men's. She believed that her counsel said well.

She said that she sent to the English at Orleans letters telling them to depart, as shown in the copy of the letters which had been read to her in this town of Rouen, except two or three words in the copy: for example, where in this copy it read Surrender to the Maid it should read Surrender to the King. There are also these words, body for body and chieftain of war, which were not in the original letters.

After this the said Jeanne told that she went without hindrance to him whom she calls her king. And when she had arrived at Ste. Catherine de Fierbois, then she sent first to Chinon, where he who she calls her king was. She reached Chinon towards noon and lodged at an inn; and after dinner she went to him whom she calls king, who was at the castle. She said that when she entered her king's room she recognized him among many others by the counsel of her voice, which revealed him to her. She told him she wanted to make war on the English.

Asked whether, when the voice showed her her king, there was no light, she answered: "Pass on to the next question." Asked if she saw no angel above the king, she answered: "Spare me that. Continue." She said also that before the king put her to work he had several apparitions and beautiful revelations.

Asked what revelations and apparitions the king had, she answered: "I will not tell you. It is not now the time to tell you; but send to the king and he will tell you."

Then Jeanne said that her voice had promised her that as soon as she should come to the king he would receive her. She said also that those of her party knew well that the voice was sent to Jeanne from God, and they saw and knew this

[46]

voice. She said further that her king and several others heard and saw the voices which came to the said Jeanne; and there were present Charles de Bourbon, and two or three others.

Then Jeanne said that there is not a day when she does not hear this voice; and she has much need of it. She said she never asked of it any final reward but the salvation of her soul. The voice told her to remain at Saint-Denis in France, and the said Jeanne wished to remain; but against her will the lords took her away. However, if she had not been wounded, she would not have left; she was wounded in the trenches before Paris, after she left Saint-Denis; but recovered in five days. Further she confessed that she caused an assault to be made before Paris.

And when she was asked if that day were a feast day, she answered she thought it certainly was.

Asked if she thought it was a good thing to do, she answered: "Pass on." When this was over, as it appeared to us sufficient for one day, we postponed the affair until the following Saturday, at eight o'clock in the morning.

[47]

February 24th. Third Session

On the following Saturday, February 24th, we the said bishop repaired to the same room in the castle of Rouen where Jeanne appeared in judgment before us in the presence on many reverend fathers, doctors and masters, namely: Gilles, abbot of Ste. Trinité de Fécamp, Pierre, prior of Longueville-Giffard; Jean de Châtillon, Erard Emengart, Jean Beaupère, Jacques de Touraine, Nicolas Midi, Jean de Nibat, Jacques Guesdon, Maurice du Quesnay, Jean Le Fèvre, Guillaume Le Boucher, Pierre Houdenc, Pierre Maurice, Richard Prati, Jean Charpentier, Gerard Feuillet, and Denis de Sabrevois, doctor of sacred theology; Nicolas de Jumièges, Guillaume de Ste Catherine, Guillaume de Corneilles, abbots; Jean Garin, doctor of canon law and Raoul Roussel, doctor of canon and civil law; Nicolas Coupequesne, William Haiton, Thomas de Courcelles, Jean Le Maistre, Nicolas Loiseleur, Raoul Le Sauvage, Guillaume de Baudribosc, Nicolas Lemire, Richard Le Gagneux, Jean Duval, Guillaume Le Maistre, and Guillaume l'Ermite, bachelors of sacred theology; the abbot of St. Ouen, of St. Georges, and of Préaux; the priors of St. Lô and of Sigy; also Robert Le Barbier, Denis Gastinel, and Jean Le Doulx, bachelors of canon and civil law; Nicolas de Venderès, Jean Pinchon, Jean de la Fontaine, Aubert Morel, Jean Duchemin, Jean Colombel, Laurent Du Busc, Raoul

[48]

Anguy, Richard des Saulx, bachelors of canon law; André Marguerie, Jean Alespée, Geoffroy du Crotay, Gilles Deschamps, Nicolas Maulin, Pierre Carel, Bureau de Corneilles, licentiates in civil law; Robert Morellet, and Jean Le Roy, canons of the cathedral of Rouen, and Nicolas de Foville.

We first of all required the aforementioned Jeanne to speak the simple and absolute truth on the questions put to her, and to make no reservation to her oath; and we thrice admonished her to do this. The said Jeanne answered: "Give me Leave to speak" and then said: "By my faith, you could ask me things such as I would not answer." She said also: "Perhaps I shall not answer you truly in many things that you ask me, concerning the revelations; for perhaps you would constrain me to tell things I have sworn not to utter, and so I should be perjured, and you would not want that." And she added, "I tell you, take good heed of what you say, that you are my judge, for you assume a great responsibility, and overburden me." She said also that she thought it should be enough to have twice taken the oath.

Moreover, asked if she would swear, simply and absolutely, she answered: "You may well do without it! I have sworn enough, twice"; adding that all the clergy of Rouen and Paris could not condemn her, but by law. She said that of her coming to France she would willingly speak the truth, but not the whole truth; and a week would not be enough for that.

But we, the aforementioned bishop, told her to take the advice of the assessors, whether or not she should swear. To that she replied that of her coming she would willingly speak the truth, and not otherwise; and that we must not speak of it to her any more.

We said that she lay herself open to suspicion if she would not swear to speak the truth. She replied in the same way as

[49]

before. Again we required her to swear, precisely and absolutely. Then she answered that she would willingly say what she knew, but not all. She said also that she came from God, and that there is nothing for her to do here, and asked to be sent back to God, from whom she came.

Required and admonished to swear, under pain of being charged with what was imputed to her, she answered: "Continue."

A last time we required her to swear, and urgently admonished her to speak the truth in matters concerning the trial, telling her she exposed herself to great danger by her refusal. Then she answered: "I am ready to swear to speak the truth of what I know concerning the trial." And in this manner she took the oath.

Then, at our order, she was questioned by the distinguished doctor Jean Beaupère above-mentioned, who first asked her when she had last taken food and drink. She answered that since yesterday noon she had not taken either.

Asked when she had heard the voice come to her, she answered: "I heard it yesterday and to-day."

Asked at what hour yesterday she had heard this voice, she answered that she had heard it three times: once in the morning, once at vespers, and once when the Ave Maria was rung in the evening. And often she heard it more frequently than she said.

Asked what she was doing yesterday morning when the voice came to her, she said she was sleeping and the Voice awakened her.

Asked if the voice woke her by touching her on the arm, she answered that it was without touching her.

Asked if the voice was actually in the room, she said she did not know, but it was in the castle.

Asked if she did not thank it and kneel down, she answered

[50]

that she thanked it, but she was sitting on the bed, and she put her hands together; and this was after she asked counsel of it. Whereupon the voice told her to answer boldly.

Asked what the voice had said when she was awakened, she answered that she asked the voice to counsel her in her replies, telling the voice to beseech therein the counsel of Our Lord. And the voice told her to answer boldly and God would comfort her.

Asked if it had not spoken certain words to her before she questioned it, she replied that the voice spoke certain words, but she did not understand them all. However, when she awakened from her sleep, the voice told her to answer boldly.

Then she said to us, the aforementioned bishop: "You say that you are my judge; take good heed of what you do, because, in truth, I am sent by God, and you put yourself in great peril," in French 'en grant dangier.' Asked if the voice sometimes varied in its counsel, she answered that she had never found it utter two contrary opinions. She said also that that night she had heard it tell her to answer boldly.

Asked whether the voice had forbidden her to answer everything she was asked, she said: I will not answer you that. I have revelations concerning the king which I shall not tell you.

Asked if the voice had forbidden her to tell of the revelations, she answered: "I have not been advised upon that. Give me a fortnight and I will answer you." And as she had again asked for a delay in her reply, she said: "If the voice forbade me, what would you say?"

Asked again if that had been forbidden her [by the voice], she replied: "Believe me, it was not men who forbade me." She said that she would not answer that day; and that she does not know if she ought to reply, or not, until it has

[51]

been revealed to her. She said she firmly believes, as firmly as she believes in the Christian faith and that the Lord redeemed us from the pains of hell, that this voice comes from God, and by His command.

Asked whether this voice, which she says appears to her, comes as an angel, or directly from God, or whether it is the voice of one of the saints, she answered: "This voice comes from God; I believe I do not tell you everything about it; and I am more afraid of failing the voices by saying what is displeasing to them, than of answering you. For this question, I beseech you to grant me a delay."

Asked if she believes it displeasing to God to speak the truth, she answered: "My voices told me to say certain things to the king, and not to you." She saw that that night the voice told her many things for the good of the king, which she wished he might know forthwith, even if she had to go without wine till Easter! For, as she said, he would eat the more happily for it.

Asked if she could not so influence the voice that it would obey her and take news to her king: she answered she did not know whether the voice would obey her, unless it were God's will, and God consented thereto. "And if it please God," she said, "He will be able to send revelations to the king; and with this I shall be well pleased."

Asked why this voice no longer speaks with the king, as it did when Jeanne was in his presence, she answered that she did not know, if it were not the will of God. And she added that but for the will of God she could do nothing.

Asked if her counsel revealed to her that she should escape from prison, she answered: "Must I tell you that?"

Asked whether that night the voice had not counseled and advised her upon what she should reply, she said that if the voice revealed such things she did not understand them.

[52]

Asked whether, on the two last days that she heard the voices, she had seen a light, she answered that the light comes in the name of the voice.

Asked if she saw anything else with the voices, she answered: "I will not tell you everything, I have not leave, nor does my oath touch on that. This voice is good and worthy; and I am not bound to answer you." She asked that the points on which she did not straightway answer should be given her in writing.

Asked whether the voice, of which she asked counsel, had sight and eyes, she answered: "You will not learn that yet"; and said that there was a saying among little children, "Men are sometimes hanged for telling the truth."

Asked if she knows she is in God's grace, she answered: "If I am not, may God put me there; and if I am, may God so keep me. I should be the saddest creature in the world if I knew I were not in His grace." She added, if she were in a state of sin, she did not think that the voice would come to her; and she wished every one could hear the voice as well as she did. She thought she was about thirteen when the voice came to her for the first time.

Asked whether in her youth she had played in the fields with the other children, she answered that she certainly went sometimes, but she did not know at what age.

Asked if the people of Domrémy sided with the Burgundians or the other party, she answered that she only knew one Burgundian; and she would have been quite willing for him to have his head cut off, that is if it had pleased God.

Asked if at Maxey the people were Burgundians or enemies of the Burgundians, she answered they were Burgundians.

Asked if the voice told her in her youth to hate the Burgundians, she answered that since she had known that the voices were for the king of France, she did not like the Burgundians

[53]

She said the Burgundians will have war unless they do as they ought; she knows it from her voice. Asked if it was revealed to her in her early years that the English should come to France, she answered that the English were already in France when the voices began to come to her.

Asked if she was ever with the children who fought for her party, she answered no, as far as she remembered; but she sometimes saw certain children from Domrémy, who had fought against those from Maxey, returning wounded and bleeding.

Asked whether in her youth she had any great intention of defeating the Burgundians, she answered that she had a great desire and will for her king to have his kingdom.

Asked if she had wanted to be a man when it was necessary for her to come to France, she said she had answered elsewhere.

Asked if she took the animals to the fields, she said that she had answered elsewhere; and that since she had grown up, and had reached understanding, she did not generally look after the beasts, but helped to take them to the meadows and to a castle called the Island, for fear of the soldiers; but she does not recall whether or not she tended them in her youth.

Then she was questioned about a certain tree growing near her village. To which she answered that, fairly near Domrémy, there was a certain tree called the Ladies' Tree, and others called it the Fairies' Tree; and near by is a fountain. And she has heard that people sick of the fever drink of this fountain and seek its water to restore their health; that, she has seen herself;

but she does not know whether they are cured or not. She said she has heard that the sick, when they can rise, go to the tree and walk about it. It is a big tree, a beech, from which they get the fair May, in French le beau may; and it

[54]

belongs, it is said, to Pierre de Bourlemont, knight. She said sometimes she would go playing with the other young girls, making garlands for Our Lady of Domrémy there; and often she had heard the old folk say (not those of her family) that the fairies frequented it. And she heard a certain Jeanne, the wife of mayor Aubery of Domrémy, her godmother, say that she had seen the fairies; but she herself doesn't know whether it is true or not. As far as she knew, she said, she never saw the fairies at the tree. Asked if she saw them elsewhere, she does not know at all. She had seen the young girls putting garlands on the branches of the tree, and she herself sometimes hung them there with the other girls; sometimes they took them away, and sometimes they left them there.

She said that since she learned that she must come to France, she had taken as little part as possible in games or dancing; and did not know whether she had danced near the tree since she had grown to understanding. Although on occasions she may well have danced there with the children, she more often sang than danced. There is also a wood, called the oak-wood, in French le Bois-chesnu, which can be seen from her father's door; not more than half a league away. She does not know, nor has she ever heard, that the fairies repair there; but she has heard from her brother that in the country around it is said she received her message at the tree; but she says she did not, and she told him quite the contrary. Further, she says, when she came to the king, several people asked her if there were not in her part of the country a wood called the oak-wood; for there was a prophecy which said that out of this wood would come a maid who should work miracles; but Jeanne said that she put no faith in that.

Asked if she wanted a woman's dress, she answered: "Give me one. I will take it and go: otherwise I will not have it, and am content with this, since it pleases God that I wear it."

[55]

Whereupon we put an end to all interrogation for this day, and assigned for the next session the following Tuesday, so that at the same hour and in the same place the whole convocation should assemble and proceed to the subsequent interrogations.

[56]

Tuesday, February 27th. Fourth Session

On Tuesday, February 27th, we repaired as on the previous days to the room in the castle of Rouen where the tribunal had been hitherto sitting: there were also present master Gilles, abbot of Ste. Trinité de Fécamp Pierre, prior of Longueville; Jean Beaupère, Jacques de Touraine, Nicolas Midi, Pierre Maurice, Gerard Feuillet, Jean de Nibat, Jacques Guesdon, Maurice du Quesnay, Jean Le Fèvre, Guillaume Le Boucher, Pierre Houdenc, Jean de Châtillon, Erard Emengart, Giovanni da Fano, Denis de Sabrevois, Nicolas Lemire, and Jean Charpentier, doctors of sacred theology; Nicolas de Jumièges, Guillaume de Ste. Catherine, abbots, and Jean Garin, doctor of canon law; Raoul Roussel, doctor of canon and civil law; William Haiton, Nicolas Coupequesne, Guillaume de Baudribosc, Richard de Grouchet, Pierre Minier, Thomas de Courcelles, Jean Le Maistre, Jean Le Vautier, bachelors of sacred theology; the abbot of Préaux Guillaume Desjardins, doctors of medicine; Robert Le Barbier, Denis Gastinel, Jean Le Doulx, Nicolas de Venderès, Jean Pinchon, Jean Basset, Aubert Morel, Jean Duchemin, Jean de La Fontaine, Jean Colombel, Jean Bruillot, Raoul Anguy, bachelors of canon law; Jean Alespée, Geoffroy du Crotay, Gilles Deschamps, Nicolas Caval, Pierre Carel, Nicolas Maulin, licentiates in civil law; Nicolas Loiseleur and Robert Morellet, canons of the cathedral of Rouen.

[57]

In their presence we first required the said Jeanne to take an oath to speak the truth on whatever concerned the trial. To which she replied that she would willingly swear to answer truly everything that concerned her trial, but not everything she knew.

Then we required her to swear to answer truthfully everything she should be asked. She replied as before, saying: "You ought to be satisfied, for I have sworn enough."

Then at our instruction, master Jean Beaupère aforementioned, began to examine her. And first he asked her how she had been in health since the preceding Saturday. She answered: "You see well enough how. I have been as well as possible."

Asked if she would fast every day during this Lent, she answered by this question: "Is that in your case?" And as she was answered that it was, she said: "Yes, truly. I have fasted the whole of Lent."

Asked whether since Saturday she had heard her voice she answered: "Yes, truly, many times." Asked if on Saturday she had heard it in this hall, where she was being examined, she answered: "That is not in your case." And then she said she had heard it.

Asked what the voice had said on Saturday, she answered: "I did not altogether understand it, I understood nothing I could repeat to you, until I went back to my room."

Asked what the voice said to her in her room, when she went back she answered: "It told me to answer you boldly." And she said she asked counsel from her voice on the questions we should ask her. She said further that she will gladly tell whatever she has Our Lord's permission to reveal; but concerning the revelations about the king of France, she will not tell without permission from her voice.

[58]

Asked if the voice forbade her to tell everything, she answered she did not quite understand that. Asked what the voice said to her on the last occasion, she said she asked counsel of it upon certain points of our interrogation.

Asked if the voice had given her counsel upon these points, she answered that on some she had advice, and on others we might question her and she would not reply without leave. And if she replied without permission, perhaps she would not have the voices for warrant, in French "en garant"; when she had leave from Our Lord she would not be afraid to speak, for she would have a good warrant.

Asked whether the voice which spoke to her was that of an angel, or of a saint, male or female, or straight from God, she answered that the voice was the voice of St. Catherine and of St. Margaret. And their heads were crowned in a rich and precious fashion with beautiful crowns. "And to tell this," she said, "I have God's permission. If you doubt it, send to Poitiers where I was examined before."

Asked how she knew they were these two saints, and how she knew one from the other, she answered she knew well who they were, and easily distinguished one from the other.

Asked how she knew one from the other, she answered she knew them by the greeting they gave her. She said further that a good seven years have passed since they undertook to guide her. She said also she knows the saints because they tell her their names.

Asked if the said saints are dressed in the same cloth, she answered "I will tell you no more now; I have not leave to reveal it. If you do not believe me, send to Poitiers!" She said also that there were some revelations made directly to the king of France, and not to those who question her.

[59]

Asked if the saints are the same age, she answered that she had not leave to say.

Asked if the saints spoke at the same time, or one after another, she answered: "I have not leave to tell you; nevertheless I have always had counsel from both."

Asked which one appeared first, she answered: "I did not recognize them immediately; I knew well enough once, but I have forgotten; if I had leave I would gladly tell you. It is written down in the register at Poitiers." She added that she had received comfort from St. Michael.

Asked which of the apparitions came to her first, she answered that St. Michael came first.

Asked whether it was a long time ago that she first heard the voice of St. Michael, she answered: "I do not speak of St. Michael's voice, but of his great comfort."

Asked which was the first voice which came to her when she was about thirteen, she answered that it was St. Michael whom she saw before her eyes; and he was not alone, but accompanied by many angels from heaven. She said also that she came into France only by the instruction of God.

Asked if she saw St. Michael and these angels corporeally and in reality, she answered: "I saw them with my bodily eyes as well as I see you; and when they left me, I wept; and I fain would have had them take me with them too."

Asked in what form St. Michael appeared, she answered "There is as yet no reply to that, for I have not had leave to answer."

Asked what St. Michael said to her the first time, she answered: "You will get no further reply to-day." She said the voices told her to answer boldly. She said she had indeed once told her king everything that had been revealed to her, since it concerned him. She said, however, that she had not yet leave to reveal what St. Michael said. She added that she

[60]

wished her examiner had a copy of the book at Poitiers, provided that God desired it.

Asked if the voices told her not to tell her revelations without their permission, she answered: "I will not answer you further about that; and what I have permission to, that I will gladly answer. If the voices forbade me, I did not understand."

Asked what sign she gives that this revelation comes from God, and that it is St. Catherine and St. Margaret who speak to her, she answered: "I have told you often enough that it is St. Catherine and St. Margaret; believe me if you will."

Asked if it is forbidden for her to tell, she answered: "I have not quite understood whether that is permitted or not."

Asked how she can distinguish such points as she will answer, and such as she will not, she answered that on some points she had asked permission, and on some points she had received it. Furthermore she said she would rather be torn asunder by horses than have come to France without God's leave.

Asked if God ordered her to wear a man's dress, she answered that the dress is a small, nay, the least thing. Nor did she put on man's dress by the advice of any man whatsoever; she did not put it on, nor did she do aught, but by the command of God and the angels.

Asked whether it seemed to her that this command to assume male attire was lawful, she answered: "Everything I have done is at God's command; and if He had ordered me to assume a different habit, I should have done it, because it would have been His command."

Asked if she did it at the order of Robert de Baudricourt she said no.

Asked if she thought she had done well to take man's dress, she answered that everything she did at God's command she

[61]

thought well done, and hoped for good warrant and succor in it.

Asked if, in this particular case, by taking man's dress, she thought she had done well, she answered that she had done nothing in the world but by God's commands.

Asked whether, when she saw the voice coming to her, there was a light, she answered that there was a great deal of light on all sides, as was most fitting. She added to the examiner that not all the light came to him alone!

Asked whether there was an angel over her king's head, when she saw him for the first time, she answered: "By Our Lady! if there was, I do not know and did not see it."

Asked if there was a light, she answered: "There were three hundred knights and fifty torches, without counting the spiritual light, and I seldom have revelations but there is a light."

Asked how the king gave credence to her words, she answered that he had good signs, and through the clergy.

Asked what revelations the king had, she answered: "You will not learn them from me this year." She said that for three weeks she was examined by the clergy, at Chinon and Poitiers; and her king had a sign touching of her mission before he believed in her. The clergy of her party held that there was nothing but good in her mission.

Asked if she had been to Ste. Catherine de Fierbois, she answered yes; and there she heard Masses three times on the same day; and then went to Chinon. She said she sent letters to her king, to the effect that she was sending to find out if she should enter the town where her king was; and that she had journeyed a good hundred and fifty leagues to come to his aid, and that she knew many things to his advantage. And she thought these letters said she would be able to recognize the king among all others. She said she had a sword which she took to the town of Vaucouleurs. She added that when she

[62]

was at Tours or Chinon she sent for a sword which was in the church of Ste. Catherine de Fierbois, behind the altar; and immediately it was found there all rusted over.

Asked how she knew that this sword was there, she answered that the sword was in the ground, rusted over, and upon it were five crosses; and she knew it was there through her voices, and she had never seen the man who fetched it. She wrote to the clergy of the place asking if it was their pleasure that she should have the sword, and they sent it to her. Nor was it buried deep behind the altar, but she believed she wrote saying it was behind. She added that as soon as the sword was found the priests rubbed it, and the rust fell off at once without effort; a merchant, an armorer of Tours, fetched it. The local priests gave her a scabbard, as did those of Tours also; they made two in all, one of crimson velvet, in French "de velours vermeil", and the other of cloth of gold. She herself had another made of very strong leather. She added that when she was captured she had not this sword with her.

She said also that she carried it continually from the time she obtained it until her departure from St. Denis, after the assault on Paris.

Asked what blessing she said or asked over the sword, she answered that she neither blessed it herself, nor had it blessed; she would not have known how to do it. She loved the sword, she said, since it had been found in the church of St. Catherine, whom she loved.

Asked if she had been to Coulange-la-Vineuse, she answered she did not know.

Asked if she ever put her sword on the altar, and if she did so to bring it better fortune, she answered no, as far as she knew.

Asked if she ever prayed for her sword to have better fortune, she answered: "It is well to know that I could have

[63]

wished my armor (in French "mon harnois") to have good fortune."

Asked if she had her sword when she was taken, she answered no; but she had one which had been taken from a Burgundian.

Asked where this sword was, and in what town, she answered that she offered a sword and armor at St. Denis, but not this sword. She said she had this sword at Lagny; and from Lagny to Compiègne she had worn the Burgundian's sword, which was a good weapon for fighting, excellent for giving hard clouts and buffets (in French "de bonnes buffes et de bons torchons"). But she said that to say where she had lost it did not concern the case, and she would not answer now. She added that her brothers have her goods, her horses and swords, as far as she knows, and other things worth more than 12,000 crowns.



Asked whether, when she went to Orleans, she had a standard or banner, in French "estandard ou banière" and what color it was, she answered she had a banner, with a field sown with lilies; the world was depicted on it, and two angels, one at each side; it was white, of white linen or boucassin, and on it were written, she thought, these names, Jhesus Maria; and it was fringed with silk.

Asked if these names Jhesus Maria were written above, or below, or at the side, she answered, at the side, she believed.

Asked which she preferred, her standard or her sword, she answered she much preferred her standard to her sword.

Asked who persuaded her to have this painting on her standard, she answered: "I have told you often enough that I have done nothing but by God's command." She said also that she herself bore the standard, when attacking the enemy, so as not to kill any one; she never has killed any one, she said. Asked what force her king gave her when he set her to [

[64]

work, she answered that he gave her 10 or 12,000 men; and she went first to Orleans, to the fortress of Saint-Loup, and then to the fortress of the Bridge.

Asked to which fortress she ordered her men to retire, she says she does not remember. She added that she was confident of raising the siege of Orleans, for it had been revealed to her, and she had told the king so before going there.

Asked whether, when the assault was to be made, she did not tell her men that she would receive arrows, crossbolts and stones hurled by catapults or cannons, she answered no; there were a hundred wounded, or more. But she had indeed told her men not to fear and they would raise the siege. She said also that at the assault upon the fortress of the Bridge she was wounded in the neck by an arrow or crossbolt but she received great comfort from St. Margaret, and was better in a fortnight. But she did not on account of that give up her riding or work.

Asked if she knew beforehand that she would be wounded, she answered that she did indeed, and she had told her king so; but that notwithstanding she would not give up her work. And it was revealed to her by the voices of the two saints, namely the blessed Catherine and Margaret. She added that she herself was the first to plant the ladder against the said fortress of the Bridge; and as she was raising the ladder she was wounded in the neck with the crossbolt, as she had said.

Asked why she had not concluded a treaty with the captain of Jargeau, she answered that the lords of her party replied to the English that they would not get the delay of a fortnight which they asked for, but must go away, they and their horses, immediately. She added that for her own part, she told the people of Jargeau to retire if they wished, with their doublets or tunics, and their life safe; otherwise they would be taken by assault.

[65]

Asked if she had any conversation with her counsel, that is to say with her voices, to find out whether or not to grant the delay, she answered she does not remember.

At this point the examination was postponed to a later date, and we fixed the following Thursday for the continuation of the inquiry and subsequent interrogations.

[66]

March 1st Fifth Session

On Thursday, March 1st we the said bishop repaired to the accustomed place in the castle of Rouen, where the said Jeanne appeared before us in the presence of the reverend fathers, lords and masters: Gilles, abbot of Ste. Trinité de Fécamp; Pierre, prior of Longueville-Giffard, Jean de Châtillon, Erard Emengart, Jean Beaupère, Jacques de Touraine, Nicolas Midi, Denis de Sabrevois, Pierre Maurice, Gerard Feuillet, Maurice du Quesnay, Guillaume Le Boucher, Pierre Houdenc, Jean de Nibat, Jean Le Fèvre Jacques Guesdon, doctors of sacred theology; Nicolas de Jumièges, Guillaume de Ste. Catherine and Guillaume de Corneilles abbots; Jean Garin, doctor of canon law; the abbots of St. Ouen and of Préaux and the prior of St. Lô; William Haiton, Nicolas Coupequesne, Thomas de Courcelles, Guillaume de Baudribosc, Jean Pigache, Raoul Le Sauvage, Richard de Grouchet, Pierre Minier, Jean Le Maistre, Jean Le Vautier, bachelors of sacred theology; Nicolas de Venderès, Jean Bruillot, Jean Pinchon,

Jean Basset, Jean de La Fontaine, Raoul Anguy, Jean Colombel, Richard des Saulx, Aubert Morel, Jean Duchemin, Laurent Du Busc, Philippe Le Maréchal, bachelors of canon law; Denis Gastinel, Jean Le Doulx, Robert Le Barbier, bachelors of canon and civil law; André Marguerie, Jean Alespée, Gilles Deschamps, Nicolas Caval, Geoffroy du Crotay,

[67]

Pierre Cavé, Nicolas Maulin, licentiates in civil law; Robert Morellet, and Nicolas Loiseleur, canons of the cathedral of Rouen.

In their presence we summoned and required the said Jeanne to swear to speak the truth, the simple and absolute truth on what she was asked. She answered that she was ready to swear to answer truly everything she knew, concerning the trial, as she said before. She said she knows many things which do not concern the trial, and there is no need to tell them. Then she said: "Everything I truly know concerning the trial I will gladly tell." Summoned and required as before, to swear, she answered: "What I can answer truly, I will willingly tell concerning the trial." And she took the oath in this manner, with her hands on the holy gospels. Then she said: "Of what I know concerning the trial I will willingly tell the truth, and will tell altogether as much as if I were before the Pope of Rome."

Asked what she said concerning our lord the Pope and whom she believed to be the true Pope, she answered by asking if there were two of them.

Asked if she had not had letters from the count d'Armagnac, to ask which of the three sovereign pontiffs he should obey, she answered that the said count did write a certain letter to this effect, to which she replied, amongst other things, that she would give him an answer when she was in Paris, or anywhere where she was at rest. And she was going to mount her horse when she gave this answer.

At this juncture we had read in court a copy of the letters from the count and from Jeanne; and she was examined to see whether this was a copy of her actual reply. She answered that she thought she had made this reply in part, but not all of it.

Asked if she had professed to know, by the counsel of the

[68]

King of Kings, what the count should hold in this matter, she answered she knew nothing about it.

Asked if she entertained any doubt concerning whom the count should obey, she answered that she did not know how to instruct him to obey, since the count asked whom God wanted him to obey. But as for herself, Jeanne thought we should obey our Holy Father the Pope at Rome. She added that she said other things to the count's messenger which are not in the copy of the letter; and if the messenger had not gone off at once he would have been thrown into the water, but not through her. She said that to the count's inquiry concerning whom God wished him to obey, she answered that she did not know, but sent him several messages not put into writing. And as for herself, she believed in Our Holy Father the Pope at Rome.

Asked why she had written that she would give an answer at some other time, since she believed in the Pope at Rome, she answered that it had reference to another matter than the three sovereign pontiffs.

Asked if she had said that she would have counsel on the question of the three sovereign pontiffs, she answered that she had never written or caused to be written anything concerning the three sovereign pontiffs. This, she swore by her oath, she had never written or caused to be written.

Asked if she was in the habit of putting in her letters the names of Jhesus Maria with a cross, she answered in some she did, and in some she did not; and sometimes she put a cross to warn some one of her party not to do as her letters said. The tenor of the letters which the count and Jeanne wrote to one another is included below among the articles of the prosecutor.

And then she was read the letters that she addressed to our lord the King, to the Duke of Bedford, and to others.

[PAGE 69: NOT AVAILABLE - GRAPHIC]

[70]

The tenor of which letters is to be found below in the articles of the prosecutor.

And then she was asked if she recognized these letters; she answered yes, excepting three words; to wit where it was written Surrender to the Maid, it should read Surrender to the king; then there was chieftain of war and thirdly body for body, which were not in the letters she sent. She added that none of the lords ever dictated these letters, but she herself dictated them before they were sent; though they were indeed shown to certain of her party. She said that before seven years are past the English will lose a greater stake than they did at Orleans, for they will lose everything in France. She adds that the said English will suffer greater loss than ever they did in France; and it will be a great victory which God will send the French.

Asked how she knew this, she answered: "I know by a revelation made to me, and within seven years it will happen and I am much vexed that it should be so long postponed." She said also that she knew it by revelation as well as she knew we were at that moment before her.

Asked when it will happen, she said she knew neither the day nor the hour.

Asked in what year it will happen, she answered: "You will not learn that: nevertheless I heartily wish it might be before St. John's Day."

Asked whether she said it would happen before Martinmas in winter, she answered that she had said that before Martinmas in winter many things would be seen; and it might be that the English would be overthrown.

Asked what she told John Grey, her guard, about Martinmas, she answered: "I have told you." Asked through whom she knew that this would come to pass, she answered that she knew through St. Catherine and

[71]

St. Margaret. Asked if St. Gabriel was with St. Michael when he came to her, she answered she did not remember.

Asked if since the last Tuesday she had not spoken with St. Catherine and St. Margaret, she answered yes, but she does not know at what time.

Asked on what day, she answered, yesterday and to-day; "there is no day but I hear them."

Asked if she always saw them in the same dress, she answered she always sees them in the same form; and their heads are richly crowned. Of their other clothing she does not speak: of their robes she knows nothing.

Asked how she knew whether her apparition was man or woman, she answered she knew for certain, she recognized them by their voices, and they revealed themselves to her; nor did she know anything but by revelation and God's command.

Asked what part of them she saw, she answered the face.

Asked if the saints which appeared to her had hair, she answered: "It is well to know that they have."

Asked if there were anything between their crowns and their hair, she answered no.

Asked if their hair were long and hung down, she answered: "I do not know." She added that she did not know whether they appeared to have arms or other members. She saw they spoke very well and beautifully; and she understood them very well.

Asked how they spoke if they had no other members, she answered: "I leave that to God." She said the voice was gentle, soft and low, and spoke in French.

Asked if St. Margaret spoke in the English tongue, she answered: "Why should she speak English when she is not on the English side?"

[72]

Asked if on the crowned heads there were not rings of gold or other substance, she answered: "I do not know."

Asked if she herself did not have some rings, she replied to us, bishop: "You have one of mine; give it back to me." She said the Burgundians have another ring; and she asked us, if we had her ring, to show it to her.

Asked who gave her the ring which the Burgundians had, she answered her father or her mother; and she thought the names Jhesus Maria were written thereon; she did not know who had them written; she did not think there was any stone in it; and she was given the ring at Domrémy. She said that her brother gave her the other ring which we had and she charged us to give it to the Church. She said she never cured any one with any of her rings.

Asked if St. Catherine and St. Margaret spoke to her under the aforementioned tree she answered: "I do not know."

Asked if the saints spoke to her at the fountain near the tree, she answered yes, she heard them there, but what they said to her there she did not know.

Asked what the saints promised her, there or elsewhere, she answered that they made no promises to her, except by God's leave.

Asked what promises they made, she answered: "That is not in your case at all." And amongst other things, they told how the king would be reestablished in his kingdom, whether his enemies wished it or not. She said also that they promised the said Jeanne to bring her to Paradise, and she had asked it of them. Asked if she had received any other promise, she answered she had, but she will not tell, since it does not concern the trial. And she said that in three months she will reveal the other promise.

Asked if the voices had told her that within three months

[73]

she would be delivered from prison, she answered: "That is not in your case; however, I do not know when I shall be delivered." And she said that those who wish to get her out of the world might well precede her.

Asked if her counsel had not told her that she would be delivered out of the present prison, she answered: "Ask me in three months' time; then I will tell you." She added: "Ask the assessors, on their oath, if that concerns my trial."

Asked afterwards, when the assessors had deliberated, and unanimously concurred that it did, she said: "I have already told you that you cannot know all. One day I must be delivered. But I want leave if I am to tell you; that is why I ask for a delay."

Asked if the voices forbade her to speak the truth, she answered: "Do you want me to tell you what is the sole concern of the king of France? There are many things that are not in the trial."

She added that she knows for certain her king will regain the kingdom of France, as certainly as she knows that we are seated before her in judgment, and but for her revelation, which daily comforts her, she would be dead.

Asked what she had done with her mandrake, she answered that she has no mandrake, and never did have; but has heard that near her village there was one, though she has never seen it. She said also she had heard it called a dangerous and evil thing to keep; nor does she know its use.

Asked where the mandrake grows, of which she has heard speak, she said in the earth, near the tree, but she does not know the spot. She said that over the mandrake, she has heard, a hazel grows.

Asked what she has heard about the mandrake, she answered that she has heard it attracts money, but she does not believe it. And the voices never told her anything about this.

[74]

Asked in what form St. Michael appeared, she answered that she did not see his crown, and she knows nothing of his apparel.

Asked if he was naked, she answered: "Do you think God has not wherewithal to clothe him?"

Asked if he had any hair, she answered: "Why should it be cut off?" She added that she had not seen St. Michael since she left the castle Crotoy, and she does not often see him, or know, she added, whether he has any hair.

Asked whether he had his scales, she answered: "I do not know." She said she was filled with great joy when she saw him; and she felt, when she saw him, that she was not in mortal sin. She said St. Catherine and St. Margaret gladly heard her in confession, from time to time, and each in turn. She said that if she was in mortal sin she was not aware of it.

Asked if, when she made her confession, she felt as if in mortal sin, she answered she did not know whether she was in mortal sin, but she believed she had not committed such deeds. "Please God, she said, I never was in such sin, and if it please Him, I never shall commit or have committed such deeds as burden my soul."

Asked what sign she gave her king that she came from God, she answered: I have always told you that you will not drag this from my lips. Go and ask him."

Asked if she had sworn not to reveal what was asked concerning the trial, she answered: I have already said that I will not tell you what concerns or touches our king; and what touches our king, I shall not tell you."

Asked if she did not know the sign she gave the king, she answered: "You will not learn from me." And as she was told it concerned the trial, she answered: "What I have promised to keep secret I shall not tell you." And added: I promised and I could not tell you without perjury."

[75]

Asked to whom she made this promise, she answered that it was to St. Catherine and St. Margaret, it was shown to the king. She promised it without their asking, and did so at her own desire, for too many people might have questioned her had she not so promised to the saints.

Asked if any one else was with them when she showed the sign to her king, she answered that she thought there was not, although many people were fairly near.

Asked if she saw the crown on her king's head when she showed him the sign, she answered: "I cannot tell you without perjury."

Asked whether her king had a crown when he was at Reims, she answered that she thought the king took with pleasure the crown he found at Reims, but a much richer one was later brought. And he did that to hasten his coronation, at the request of the people of Reims to avoid the burden of the men-at-arms. If he had waited he would have had a crown a thousand times richer.

Asked if she saw this richer crown, she answered: "I cannot tell you without committing perjury. And if I have not myself seen it, I have heard that it is so rich and precious."

At this point we stayed the proceedings for the day; and assigned Saturday at eight o'clock in the morning for their continuation, requiring those present to assemble together in the same place at the said hour and day.

Asked if she was long in the tower of Beaurevoir, she answered that she was there about four months. She said that when she learned the English were to come and take her. she

[85]

was very angry; and though her voices forbade her to jump from the tower, at last, from fear of the English, she leaped and commended herself to God and Our Lady, and in leaping was wounded. And when she had made this leap the voice of St. Catherine told her to be of good cheer [that she would recover] and the people at Compiègne would have aid. She said she always prayed with her counsel for them of Compiègne.

Asked what she said when she had leaped, she answered that some said she was dead; and as soon as the Burgundians saw she was alive, they told her she had tried to escape.

Asked whether she said she would rather die than fall into the hands of the English, she answered she would rather surrender her soul to God than fall into their hands.

Asked whether she was then much vexed, and whether she did not blaspheme the name of God, she answered that she never blasphemed the saints, and it was not her custom to swear.

Asked whether, when she attacked, the bells were rung, she replied that if they were, it was not at her order or with her knowledge; she did not think so, or remember saying they were rung. Asked whether she made the sally at the instruction of her voice, she answered that in Easter week last, when she was in the trenches at Melun, she was told by her voices, namely by St. Catherine and St. Margaret, that she would be captured before St. John's Day; it had to be so; and she should not be distressed, but take it in good part, and God would aid her. Asked if since Melun she had been told by her voices that she would be taken, she answered yes, several times, nearly every day. And she asked of her voices, that when she was taken, she might die quickly without long suffering in prisons; and the voices told her to be resigned to everything, that it must so happen; but they did not tell her when. If she had known the hour, she would not have gone. She had often asked them at what hour she would be taken, but they did not tell her.

Asked whether, if her voices had ordered her to make this attack from Compiègne, and had signified that she would be captured, she would have gone, she answered that if she had known when she was to be taken she would not have willingly gone; nevertheless she would have done their bidding in the end, whatever it cost her.

Asked what persuaded her to summon a man from the town of Toul for breach of promise, she answered: "I did not have him summoned; it was he who summoned me; and I swore before the judge to tell the truth." And moreover, she said, she had made no promise to this man. She added that

[97]

the first time she heard her voice she vowed to keep her virginity as long as it should please God; and she was then thirteen years old, or thereabouts. She said her voices assured her that she would win her case at Toul.

Asked if she had not spoken to her priest or any other churchman of the visions which she claimed to have she answered no, save to Robert de Baudricourt and to her king. She added that her voices did not compel her to conceal them, but she was afraid of revealing them, afraid that the Burgundians might hinder her journey; and in particular she feared that her father would stop it.

Asked if she believed it was right to leave her father and mother without permission, when she should honor her father and mother, she answered that in all other things she was obedient to them, except in this journey; but afterwards she wrote to them, and they forgave her.

Asked whether she thought she had committed a sin when she left her father and mother, she answered that since God commanded, it was right to do so. She added that since God commanded, if she had had a hundred parents, or had been the king's daughter, she would have gone nevertheless.

Asked whether she asked her voices if she should tell her father and mother of her going, she answered that as for her father and mother, the voices were well pleased that she should tell them, but for the difficulty they would have raised if she had done so; and as for herself, she would not have told them for anything. She said the voices left it to her to tell her father and mother, or be silent.

Asked whether she did reverence to St. Michael and the angels, when she saw them, she answered that she did, and kissed the ground where they had stood after they had gone.

Asked if her voices did not call her daughter of God, daughter of the Church, daughter great-hearted, she answered that before the raising of the siege of Orleans, and every day since, when they have spoken to her they have often called her Jeanne the Maid, daughter of God.

Asked whether the leap was made at the counsel of her voices, she answered that St. Catherine told her almost every day not to jump, and God would help her, and the people of Compiègne too. And Jeanne told St. Catherine that since God was going to help the people of Compiègne she wanted to be there. And St. Catherine said: "You must be resigned and not falter; you will not be delivered until you have seen the King of the English." Jeanne answered: "Truly I do not want to see him, and I would rather die than fall into the hands of the English."

Asked what that danger or peril was, she answered that St. Catherine told her she would have aid, and she does not know whether this will be her deliverance from prison, or if, whilst she is being tried, some tumult might come through which she can be delivered. And she thinks it will be one or the other. And beyond this the voices told her she will be delivered by a great victory; and then they said: "Take everything peacefully: have no care for thy martyrdom; in the end thou shalt come to the Kingdom of Paradise." And this her voices told her simply and absolutely, that is, without faltering. And her martyrdom she called the pain and adversity which she suffers in prison; and she knows not whether she shall yet suffer greater adversity, but therein she commits herself to God.

Asked whether, since her voices had told her that in the end she should go to Paradise, she has felt assured of her salvation, and of not being damned in hell, she answered that she firmly believed what the voices told her, namely that she will be saved, as firmly as if she were already there.

Asked whether after this revelation she believed that she could not commit mortal sin, she answered: "I do not know; but in everything I commit myself to God." And when she was told that this was an answer of great weight, she answered that she held it for a great treasure.

Asked whether when her voices came to her she bowed down to them altogether, as to a saint, she answers yes; and if sometimes she had failed to do so, she had afterwards asked forgiveness. Nor could she do them the reverence proper to

[121]

them, for she firmly believes them to be St. Catherine and St. Margaret. And she said likewise concerning St. Michael.

Asked whether, since candles were commonly offered to the saints of Paradise, she has not burnt candles or other things, in church or elsewhere, or had Masses said, to the saints who visit her, she answered no, except at Mass, in the priest's hand, and in honor of St. Catherine. She believes it to be one of them who appear to her; nor has she lit as many candles to St. Catherine and St. Margaret as she gladly would, firmly believing it is they who come to her.

Asked whether when she puts the candles before the image of St. Catherine she does it in honor of her who appears to her, she answered: "I do it in honor of God, of Our Lady, of St. Catherine who is in heaven, and I make no difference between St. Catherine who is in heaven and her who appears to me."

Asked if she always did or accomplished what her voices bade her, she answered that with all her might she accomplished the behest which Our Lord spoke through her voices, as far as she could understand. And they bade her nothing without the good pleasure of Our Lord.

Asked if in battle she had done anything without the permission of her voices, she answered: "You have my answer to this. Read your book carefully, and you will find it." Yet she said that at the request of men-at-arms she made an attack before Paris and also before La Charité at her king's request. This was neither against nor according to the command of her voices. Asked if ever she did anything contrary to their command and will, she answered that she did what she could and knew, to the best of her power. And as for her leap from the tower at Beaurevoir, she did it against their bidding, she could not help herself; and when her voices saw her need, and that

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Now on Thursday, February And, she stated that, when she was about thirteen years, she had a voice from God to help her and guide her. The first time she was much afraid: it came towards noon on a summer's day, in her father's garden, when she was not fasting, and had not fasted on the previous day. She heard the voice on her right, towards the church, and she seldom heard it without a light. This light came from the same side as the voice, and generally there was a great light. When she came

to France she often heard a great voice; and, for the first time, there was a light. She added that if she was in a wood she heard the voices well; and it seemed to her a worthy voice, and she believed it was sent to her from God. After she had heard it three times she knew it was the voice of an angel. She said too that the voice always protected her well, and that she understood it well. Asked what instruction this voice gave her for the salvation of her soul, she answered it taught her to be good and to go to church often, and that she must come to France. And she added that the examiner would not learn from her, this time, in what form the voice appeared to her. Further, the voice told her, two or three times a week, to leave and come to

[157]

France, and her father was to know nothing of her leaving. The voice told her to come, and she could no longer stay where she was; it told her she would raise the siege of Orleans. When she reached Vaucouleurs she recognized Robert de Baudricourt, although she had never seen him; she told him that through her voices it had been revealed to her that she must come to France; she recognized the said Robert through her voice which told her it was he. Now he twice repulsed her, the third time he received her, and gave her an escort as her voice had foretold.

On Saturday, February 24th, asked at what time on the preceding day she had heard the voice, she answered that she had heard it then, and on that 24th of February, three times in all. First in the morning, next at Vespers, and lastly when the Ave Maria was rung; she often heard it more frequently than she said. And the morning before, whilst she was asleep, the voice woke her without touching her, but by speaking to her; she did not know if the voice was in the room, but she was certain it was in the castle; she confessed that when the voice came to her for the first time she was in or about her thirteenth year.

On Tuesday the 27th of the same month she said that it was a good seven years since St. Catherine and St. Margaret undertook for the first time to guide her. Asked if St. Michael appeared first, she answered yes, she had received great comfort from him. "I do not speak of St. Michael's voice, but of his great comfort." Asked which was the first voice to come to her, about the age of thirteen, she answered that it was St. Michael whom she saw before her eyes; and he was not alone, but accompanied by many angels from heaven. She said also that she came into France only by the instruction of God. Asked if she saw St. Michael and the angels corporeally and

[158]

in reality, she answered that she saw them with her bodily eyes as well as she saw the assessors of the trial. And when St. Michael and the angels left her, she wept, and fain would have been taken with them. Asked, on the same day, if there was a light with the voices, she answered there was a great deal of light, on all sides, as was most fitting.

On Thursday, March 1st asked if since the preceding Tuesday day she had not spoken with St. Catherine and St. Margaret, she answered yes, both on that and on the previous day, but she did not know at what hour, but there is not a day but she hears them.

\*This is only a summary of the complete trial transcript. To see complete version, visit

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/joanofarc-trial.asp>



## Appendix B

### Contemporary Testimony from Intervoice

I am 28 now and I have seen and heard voices since I was 4. I hear them in a telepathic way in my own mind. My childhood has been difficult, dotted with painful and traumatic experiences for a helpless baby girl alone in this world. My family consisted of an alcoholic and depressed mother and a violent father. At the onset of my experiences with voices and visions, my parents had only just divorced and I totally blamed myself for this whole catastrophe. And so, almost by magic, my pain led me to create a sort of parallel universe of my own, where I could find a shelter for something otherwise unbearable for a little girl: the loss and shattering of her only family; her only safe place in respect to the rest of the world.

There, in my loneliness and isolation, forced by the events... there, in my anguish and fear to feel abandoned, suddenly something new, enveloping and reassuring: my own world of voices and visions.

I remember my first contact had been at the nursery school, during recreation time. I was a kind of uncommunicative and self-effacing child, I would stay invisible to the eyes of adults and other children alike. This is the reason why I was given a special place in the school: the small wooden hut in the courtyard. It was here, in this place, where I could feel protection and safety, that a voice found its way in my heart. The beginning of my wandering between two worlds.

The contact with my voices and visions did not scare me at all: instead, it was reassuring me; it made me feel I was existing for somebody.

I had many good voices performing a lot of activities: for example, there was the lawyer, the doctor, the policeman, the wise man and many more. All of them had the function to advise me and protect me. The protraction of neglectfulness and isolation at emotional level brought out a change into my parallel world. Feeling invisible and guilty for what was happening to my family, led me to project my huge pain and helplessness feelings outside of me. All of a sudden, my visions and voices became aggressive against me. I remember precisely the instant in which the Evil joined my world: a scene of utter suffering appeared before my very eyes in which I was the only one surviving person. Even in my own world I was alone in the face of the Evil.

Since that very moment my voices began commanding and dominating me. They were male voices with different identities and ages. These voices considered me their property and compelled me to obey them, otherwise they would threaten and torture me with horrible and gruesome sights whilst I was tied up. They would call me as a number and forced me to pay respect to them. through a series of questions. For example, my voice would ask me who they were and I had to answer: "You are my bosses, you are my God, you are the Law". The sense of powerlessness and anguish I was feeling led me to a total sensation of being unable to defend myself. I was absolutely and totally passive. I was a prisoner of myself.

There were times when the burden oppressing my soul was so big that since I was a child I had suicidal ideas. Reality would have had new challenges and attacks in store for me to face. During my adolescence, given the abandonment and neglect state in which my parents left me, I was forced to leave my family. I ended up in a rehabilitation center for young people. In this place I had no contact with my world of voices... and the anguish from being separated from my family dropped me into an abyss of suffering.

As soon as I went back home, my visions and voices reappeared, angrier than ever before. They were just unmanageable.

I was totally at the mercy of my world and my emotions of rage, powerless and frustration. Yet, I did not feel I was ready to seek for help. I thought I could manage this just by myself. In those moments I could lose myself in my world for hours and hours. My soul was racked by pain.

In the meantime, in the real world a figure appeared who would have conditioned me in the years to come: my abuser, disguised as a family friend at first started stalking and deceiving me and in the end abused me. At that time I was just 14 /15 and both physical and psychological violences continued until I was 22 / 23.

This experience had the result of making me feel distorted from who I was and totally annihilated me both as a being and as an identity. From this point onwards, the abyss below my feet opened up and I went through a period of deep sadness that led me to the idea of attempting suicide.

All on my own I was trying to put into discussion my visions and voices: for instance, I used to throw objects to them in the vain attempt to detach me from the way I was feeling. From adolescence, I grew up into a young woman preserving these secrets hidden inside herself. Nobody knew what I had been through and the way I was feeling.

If on one hand these secrets made me a special person who was different from others, on the other hand they were digging up myself in depth day after day, as a result of which I became more and more detached from reality. When I was 18 I started University and such an important event for me caused a sense of disorientation, in that in the real world I was expected to make choices.

Such a thing had long being forbidden to me; both in my imaginary and in the real world. In my 3rd year at the University I had a very strong crisis following a period in which I tried on my own not to hear and see my own internal characters, but without success. I came to the point of not sleeping, eating and drinking, leaving myself completely overwhelmed and absorbed in voices and visions. At that time I was experiencing strong internal conflicts. It was from these signals I understood by myself that I needed some help.

So, I went to my practitioner and simply said to him I was talking to myself. It was the most difficult day in my life, as I was deciding to take care of myself. A real feat of courage and acknowledgement. The beginning of my journey in search of myself.

So I went to my mental health department where I met the man who would then become my psychiatrist who started suggesting psychotherapy and medication. I welcomed immediately this

opportunity to engage in psychotherapy: there were so many things inside me that needed to be listened by someone.

With my psychologist, who in the course of the years would have proven very helpful and comforting, we have created a relationship of truth and mutual affection that till today follows me on my path of consciousness.

After 2 years of psychotherapy someone suggested to attend the day center. For me, this moment marked a definite passage. In fact, it was the beginning of a change: I had to open myself to the world. To me, it was like a very good training ground to learn how to relate with others. During my path there have been difficult moments. Especially in the beginning the different approaches I noticed within the staff in respect to voices and vision were confusing me. And this made me feel jolting regarding my experience. When my voices were just seen as a symptom of illness I was feeling “mad” and powerless.

The Day Centre marked the meeting with a person who has become important in my life: Alessandra, my educator, who today I can proudly state to be the person who was able to listen and inspire me with love and hope and most of all to give a meaning not only to my own experience but also to me as a person. To me, she is like a fellow traveler; we travel together as peers along this path, supporting each other. She taught me how to find inside me the ability to love myself and the others and with her I started my journey of discovery of the meaning of my voices and visions.

I understood for example, that the various places where my visions occurred had a symbolic meaning that it was possible to understand. For example I found out that when I saw a vision of myself in a prison it occurred when for some reason some ancient feelings of guilt came up ; when I was in an hospital kind of environment as a vision, it meant a part of me felt the need to stop and listen to what in my real life is scaring me for some reason and therefore that I have to listen to my need of taking care of myself, my fragile parts my fears and my need to ask for some help. Or if I see myself as a vision, in a sort of strange family where weird beings command me and make me feel at the same time protected but also very passive, this means I’m confronting myself with some inner conflicts or some scary or difficult emotions for me to handle. Very often in this place I met my most profound fears of being abandoned. These three dominant places where my voices and visions occurred , what my voices used to tell me and how they made me feel are messages that talk about me and my story of life and feelings.

In 2009 eventually I voluntarily decided to leave my family and now I am living in a sheltered apartment with other girls. I earned autonomy and consciousness of my experience and this allowed me to decide to ask and get my psychiatrist to reduce my medication.

Now, when writing I haven’t been taking medications for 8 months. Untying myself from the role of victim, both in the real world and my parallel world of visions and voices has been very hard but worthwhile even if sometimes, I still hear a part of me saying I deserved all this suffering to atone the grievous weight of my heart and soul.

Meeting people along my journey who were able to listen and inspire me with hope has strengthened my own consciousness to hold the right to exist and love.

Thanks to this I started to expand the circle of my friends. Now I'm learning I can receive love and unconditioned affection from my fellow travelers.

In January 2011 I started to attend the voice hearers group of my mental health center and there, in the group, I felt immediately accepted and unjudged, but deeply understood. Also helping other voice hearers is a good remedy for my soul. As well as feeling an active part of the organization of the Hearing Voices Italian website, for which, together with Alessandra, I am taking care of the movies section.

Not only this, but also attending workshops and meetings about hearing voices made me free and conscious and let me understand that my experience, apart from having sense in itself, is also a great resource, both for me and others, walking like me on the road leading to rebuilding themselves. All these things put together have made me stronger and increased my self-esteem and love for myself. Presently I completed my course of study and the same time also discovering the meaning of standing side by side with special persons who have endured suffering and descended into the Netherworld of themselves. But the biggest thing in all this is that I'm understanding inside myself what love is and its invincible force, thanks to which all of us get ahead with our lives.

I understood that reconstruction must pass through acceptance of oneself in all our different parts. My voices and visions are there in my everyday life but the relationship with them has decidedly changed compared to what it was before. I've learnt how to manage them, control them and I have the power of choice, no longer the contrary.

Now it is 8 months that I don't have voices and visions but even if I heard them again I would not be scared anymore by them because I understand that they are voices and visions telling me what I experience, what I feel in my soul. With courage and love I would look into their eyes and no longer fear what they are: they are just many parts of me echoing in the distant past and the near present. And now I raise my voice in the real world, I am no longer invisible but I have a body, a heart and a soul to donate to the world.

I believe that what allowed me not to succumb to the Netherworld have my vitality and joy of living.

In all these years of suffering and annihilation of myself I always activated helping strategies: earlier it was prayers or formulas I repeated to pluck up my courage. Then I learned, gradually thanks to psychotherapy, to recognize to myself my own emotions, even the ugliest and unpleasant, listen and welcome them without prejudice. Eventually, I discovered thanks to Alessandra, the group and a hearer girl friend of mine to reply, put questions and dialogue in a conscious and controlled way with my voices.

Sometimes I find it hard to acknowledge all the steps ahead made in these years, but thanks to the trust and love I learned to seek inside myself, I get along my journey of discovery and learning about myself.

I am happy, only now I know to exist and have found my tiny place in the world, supported by people able to get beyond the appearance. Now I know that what I have been through could not scratch my internal diamond.

I'm also grateful to a special person I met recently, my lover. Our relationship is bringing me forward on another step on the path of acceptance and love for myself in this case as a woman. As anybody else, I'm looking for a job to be able to leave the sheltered apartment and live independently on my own.

I wish to say that love and determination bring us far but also near and very close to our inner self and it is not just a question of will power but for me it meant to learn how to look into my soul's mirror in order to find my answers and go towards my dreams.

Source: <http://www.intervoiceonline.org/4198/voices/personal-experience/glenda.html>