

Fascinating Figures in World Religion

An Overview

By Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

<http://outofbodytravel.org>



St. Francis of Assisi

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For information, write to:

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

<http://outofbodytravel.org>

MarilynnHughes@outofbodytravel.org

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Having worked primarily in radio broadcasting, Marilynn Hughes spent several years as a news reporter, producer and anchor before deciding to stay at home with her three children. She's experienced, researched, written, and taught about out-of-body travel since 1987.

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The Early Life of St. Francis of Assisi

The Unsaintly Beginnings of a Great Man

Many people don't realize that St. Francis of Assisi lived a very controversial life before his conversion.

Born in 1181, St. Francis of Assisi lived a short life which has gone on to affect all ages. His death occurred on October 3, 1226. Some writers have called St. Francis of Assisi's youth idle, but it is humorous how his own best friend referred to the life he'd lived before his profound conversion.

Thomas of Celano Writes the First Authoritative Life of St. Francis of Assisi

After explaining the times in which St. Francis of Assisi was born and lived; a time of debauchery, arrogance, vanity, excess, lewdness – Thomas of Celano calls his generation 'slaves of sin.' According to this examination of the times of St. Francis early years, Thomas of Celano writes:

“This is the wretched early training in which that man who we today venerate as a saint – for he truly is a saint – passed his time from childhood and miserably wasted and squandered his time almost up to the twenty-fifth year of his life. Malicious advancing

beyond all of his peers in vanities, he proved himself a more excessive inciter of evil and a zealous imitator of foolishness." Thomas of Celano

St. Francis of Assisi's Vain and Naïve Youth

His father was a cloth-maker by trade and very wealthy. Throughout his youth, St. Francis saw no problem with this situation. He followed the ways of his friends in attending to drinking in bars and disrespecting women - with the exception of one - Clare.

Clare and Francis were friends from an early age and would together become one of the most holy duos in Christian history.

St. Francis of Assisi's Call to War

When the freedom of Assisi was threatened by the usual aristocracy, St. Francis gathered his friends and convinced them that they must fight for their freedoms. In his naiveté, he felt very proud and full - even bringing into the battle a young boy who had not even reached the age of majority. But he felt so certain of his cause that there was no stopping his conviction, and he was so popular amongst his friends, that they all followed him into what would become an unsuccessful, bloody and horrific war.

St. Francis of Assisi's Conversion Began on a Battlefield

Watching many die senselessly and horribly on the battlefield, St. Francis's conversion began – but would not come to completion for quite some time – on that battlefield. He realized that he had made a profound error in judgment and many people had died because of it.

Perhaps only by the grace of God, the majority of his loyal friends survived their injuries. But St. Francis was presumed dead.

St. Francis of Assisi Spends Years in Prison

The Sordid Fruits of War

St. Francis of Assisi underwent profound hardship and suffering to come by his conversion.

Taken as a prisoner of war, St. Francis of Assisi was thrust into a horrifying dungeon with others who had fought in the battles, but also many who had been there for years.

St. Francis of Assisi's Cellmate

Very injured upon arrival, St. Francis of Assisi had a cellmate whose name is still unknown. But without this man, Francesco would have remained and died a naïve and stupid young man.

Instead, this anonymous saint had hidden a copy of the Holy Bible within his cell which was illegal at the time. Nursing St. Francis back to health with the garments from his own body to nurse the saint's wounds, St. Francis only learned of his cellmate's secret book when the guards came to execute him for having it.

Before they arrived, he placed the Holy Bible deep within the bandages upon St. Francis of Assisi's

ravaged body as the saint heard the refusal of our unknown hero to renounce his faith as he died.

St. Francis of Assisi Utilizes Scripture to Maintain Hope

Days passed before St. Francis realized what the old man had put deep within his bandages. But when he found it, he began to read it ferociously, memorizing the scriptures that contained the hope that would keep him alive in this awful hell hole where people died every day horrific deaths. As he recovered from his wounds, the words of the bible became emblazoned in his mind and spirit and he knew them by heart.

St. Francis of Assisi's Father Learns of His Son's Survival

A couple of years passed before somebody who knew of Francesco's whereabouts was released from the prison. Immediately, he sought out Francesco's father and Clare whom Francesco had spoken so highly about. When they learned he was alive, St. Francis of Assisi's father took a journey to the prison to find his son almost dead - already placed upon a pile of bodies; worn, battered and weary from torture and starvation.

He took him home to nurse him back to health. St. Francis remained unconscious and incoherent for a very long time. It was uncertain whether he would

ever be restored to health. When he did finally awake, he raved like a madman and his family didn't know if they would ever be able to have him back the way he had been before his ordeal.

St. Francis had gone through a profound change in his life which would manifest soon in his call to conversion.

St. Francis of Assisi Receives his Call

Illness Becomes Revelation

On his sick bed, St. Francis was called by God.

Still raving like a madman, the people of Assisi tried to keep St. Francis in bed during his recovery. But his call was to come in a 'voice' that spoke to him in his dreaming, that led him to seek out the sunlight and in what some biographers call the voice of 'love.'

St. Francis of Assisi hears the Voice

In a state of deep sleep, St. Francis of Assisi heard a voice. Thomas of Celano records the moment in the first written biography of the saint – by one who lived alongside him and knew him well.

"Who can give you more?" The Voice Said. "The master or the servant?" "The Master!" "Then why are you abandoning the master for the servant and the prince for the vassal?" And Francis said, "What do you wish me to do, Lord?" "Return to the land where you were born, and you will be told what you must do. Return home . . ." The words were harsh, but the voice was gentle, because it was the Lord's voice." *God's Fool: The Life and Times of St. Francis of Assisi*, By Julien Greenby

St. Francis Renounces the Wealth of His Father

In a frenzy of passion, St. Francis of Assisi took to taking the money from his father's coffers and distributing it to the poor and homeless people who lived outside the gates of their placid estate. But this angered his father to no end and led St. Francis of Assisi and his father to a showdown before the town prelate.

In this moment, St. Francis of Assisi stripped himself of all his clothing and gave it back to his father saying that he did not want it. He wanted to be like the poor in the street and the beggars.

It was at this moment that he left his home, his family and his friends and embraced what he would later call 'Lady Poverty.' He esteemed 'Lady Poverty' above all else, and never strayed from that path from that moment forward.

The Prayer of St. Francis

The Prayer of St. Francis sums up the life he then began to lead and followed throughout his life:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
 Where there is hatred let me sow love.
 Where there is injury, pardon.
 Where there is doubt, faith.
 Where there is despair, hope.
 Where there is darkness, light.

And where there is sadness, joy.
Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”
St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis of Assisi Embraces Asceticism

A Rich Man Chooses Poverty

Having lived a life of profound opulence, St. Francis of Assisi gave it all up to beg on the streets.

Attaining for himself a simple and much worn frock, St. Francis ventured off into the wilderness at the time. He lived off of the land, ate only what the Lord provided either through almsgiving of others or the berries of the field.

St. Francis of Assisi Embraces 'Lady Poverty'

In his search for peace and this higher truth that he felt for a moment in his vision of God, he became very close to nature, the animals, the plants and even the elements and the seasons. St. Francis of Assisi was alone now, living off the land and seeking God in the simple beauty of the world around him.

War had tarnished his view of humanity forever. He felt that there must be a better way, and he felt that only in relinquishing all worldly goods could a man find peace and almost in a sense lose the madness.

'Lady Poverty' becomes St. Francis of Assisi's Bride

He had often spoken of how when he got married he would choose the most beautiful and worthy bride to be his wife. At the time, no one knew that in his holy madness he was referring to his love of 'Lady Poverty' which was the name he gave to the state of life he had chosen.

'Lady Poverty' was the most beautiful thing to St. Francis of Assisi, and as the years would go by, it became absolutely vital to him to live in complete poverty at all times. Once he had embraced her as his bride, he never wavered in his entire life.

The Holy Gospels and 'Lady Poverty'

'Lady Poverty' represented to St. Francis of Assisi the pure and unsullied path the gospels laid out for all Christians. And though many told him it was impossible to live this way, he never accepted that as being true. And somehow, he had the interior discipline to weather and accept all manner of hardship brought on by nature and all the elements around him, including hunger, thirst and lack of shelter.

In the accounts of St. Francis of Assisi's life, it was said of him that he would become like an angel when he spoke of 'Lady Poverty.'

'The Sacred Exchange Between St. Francis and Lady Poverty'

St. Francis of Assisi so loved 'Lady Poverty' that he wrote about it in a document entitled *'The Sacred Exchange Between St. Francis and Lady Poverty'* wherein he has a discussion with his bride about her immense beauty to the Lord:

"How great must be your dignity, then, and how beyond compare your stature! He left behind all the ranks of angels and the immense powers - of which there is a great abundance in heaven - when he came to look for you in the lowest regions of the earth - you who were lying in the mud of the swamp, in darkness, and in the shadow of death. All living beings held you in great contempt. All people ran from you and, as far as they could, cast you aside. Even though there were some who couldn't escape from you, you were no less contemptible and despicable to them." He went on to say, "But after the Lord of lords came, taking you as His own, He lifted up your head among the tribes of the peoples. He adorned you as a bride with a crown, exalting you above the heights of the clouds. Yet, even though a number of people, ignorant of your power and glory still hate you, this takes nothing away from you because you live freely on the sacred mountains, in the strongest dwelling-place of Christ's glory." *'The Sacred Exchange Between St. Francis and Lady Poverty'* - St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis of Assisi Rebuilds San Damiano

God Speaks through a Worn Crucifix

The Church that St. Francis of Assisi rebuilt brick by brick still stands today in Assisi, Italy.

As St. Francis had come upon a broken down old church, he stayed to pray within it. He noticed near the altar a bit of shrubs that were covering something, but he knew not what. When he uncovered it, it was the cross of San Damiano which is so well known today. But at that moment, it was a unique and fairly worn crucifix done in iconish form with moments from the life of Christ painted upon it.

St. Francis of Assisi Prays Before the San Damiano Crucifix

St. Francis of Assisi took up residence in the old broken down church without a roof, with plants growing in the place where pews had once been, and spent many hours praying before the crucifix he unearthed under a pile of weeds.

God Speaks to St. Francis of Assisi Through the San Damiano Crucifix

As St. Francis of Assisi was praying one day, he had an amazing revelation occur to him. During his

prayer, he heard the voice of God speaking to him through the crucifix. Looking up to see, the image of Christ spoke to him and asked him to rebuild his church. After hearing this a few times, St. Francis of Assisi realized that God wished for him to rebuild San Damiano, which had once been a thriving church but had been left to rot and ruin many years before.

St. Francis of Assisi Rebuilds and the Brothers Begin to Arrive

In response to the call of God, St. Francis of Assisi began gathering one rock at a time and rebuilding the San Damiano Church slowly. There was a profound amount of work, especially for one man. But interestingly, something began to happen.

Many of his former friends had gone through periods of their own reflection. They now felt that St. Francis of Assisi was not crazy, but correct. One by one, they came to join him and asked to embrace the life of poverty he had embraced. Within a short amount of time, there were ten to fifteen brothers all working on the rebuilding of San Damiano Church.

San Damiano Opens for Mass

Despite the fact that the Franciscans had a long way to go before becoming an order, they were quickly drawing members from many different areas. When the San Damiano Church was complete, St. Francis of Assisi went to a childhood friend of his who had

become a priest and begged of him to celebrate a Mass at the new - but old - church. Hesitant to accept his wishes because the brothers were still considered a rogue order, he wasn't sure if he'd come. But all the brothers who had joined St. Francis of Assisi to build the church went door to door in Assisi announcing that the first Mass would be held and that ALL were welcome. The street people, the lepers - everybody was invited to attend.

And at the last minute, St. Francis of Assisi's friend arrived and happily celebrated the first Mass at the newly restored San Damiano Church. Although it appeared that no one might come, at the last minute, a host of people came - mostly the poor and the church was filled.

St. Francis of Assisi Sees the Pope

An Unexpected Revelation

When St. Francis of Assisi went to see the Pope, he was not greeted with enthusiasm.

After realizing that without the Pope's approval, the order that had just begun could not continue in concert with the Magisterium of the Church, St. Francis of Assisi boldly set forth with a group of his brothers to Rome to meet him. It was during this trip that he also brought his beloved St. Clare to the convent. She would later found her own convents who would become the Poor Clare's who exist until this day.

St. Francis of Assisi's Initial Reception with the Pope

Arriving in tattered rags and bowing before the Pope, all the Pope's legates appeared disgusted by their appearance. St. Francis of Assisi made a moving appeal to these men who were adorned with such luxury and wealth. The Pope very patiently told St. Francis that he, too, once wished to live the gospel ideal when he was young. But realized it was not possible as he grew older and followed his path in the church.

St. Francis of Assisi replied that if we are to say that it is not possible to live the Gospel, then why do we have a church? Those present were shocked at his blunt and aggressive approach. But St. Francis of Assisi maintained his status, completely prostrate before the Pope on the floor, referring to him reverentially but asking for his blessing upon their order. The Pope stood up and walked out.

The Cardinals and Bishops had made their objections known to the Pope about the order and he played devil's advocate again and asked, "How will you live? What will you live on without money?" To which St. Francis of Assisi replied, "Lord, I leave it to my Lord Jesus Christ. If he has promised to give us eternal life, he will certainly not deny us, when the time comes, the indispensable necessities for our material life on this earth." The Pope excused him and told him to come back only if he had a sensible plan for his order.

St. Francis of Assisi's Parable and Second Reception with the Pope

St. Francis returned the next day and told the Pope a parable that he had been inspired to share. A rich king had married a very beautiful but poor woman in the desert who had given him many children, but she had stayed in the desert. When the sons grew up, they complained that they had nothing to her reply that they were sons of a king and if they needed

something they should go to him and ask. Going to the palace of the king, he was stricken by how glorious these sons appeared and asked them where they had come from and who they were. They replied that they were the sons of the poor woman in the desert to which the king said, "Have no fear, you are my sons. Those who are nothing to me are nourished at my table, all the more reason why I shall take care of you."

Francis concluded his story by saying, "There is no danger that the sons and heirs of the eternal king will die of hunger, for the king in the parable was Christ, who would provide for everything; and it was he, Francis, who had given birth to them."

Silence pervaded the Cathedral hall.

The Pope Speaks of a Dream

Walking towards the man covered in mud lying prostrate on the floor before him, Pope Innocent IIIrd looked him straight in the eye and related a dream he had the night before which he shared had left him feeling disquieted. Sleeping on a bed, he saw himself with a tiara on his head. The Lateran Basilica, a church, was tilted to one particular side at an angle, dangerously close to collapse. But in his dream, a little beggar, a monk, leaned against the pillars of the church with his shoulder. And this little mud-covered man wearing rags held up the Church and kept it

from collapsing. The man, Pope Innocent IIIrd said, was Francis.

Historical Differences

According to St. Bonaventure's account, the Pope approved the Franciscan order at that moment, although there are other accounts which say there was a delay. But in popular stories, St. Francis left Rome as the new founder of the Franciscan Order of the Lesser Brothers.

The Canticle of the Creatures

The Order of Franciscans is Approved

After leaving Rome with the approval of the Pope, St. Francis of Assisi recited the Canticle of the Creatures surrounded by birds and animals.

Legends tell us that St. Francis of Assisi wandered off into a tree and began to sing this canticle as birds swarmed towards him and began singing with him. History says this canticle developed more gradually in a cycle of three stages.

The Canticle of the Creatures of St. Francis of Assisi

“Most High, all-powerful, good Lord
 Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honour, and
 all blessing,
 To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
 And no human is worthy to mention your name.
 Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
 Especially Sir Brother Sun
 Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
 And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
 And bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
 Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and
 the stars,

In heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
And through the air, cloudy and serene, and every
kind of weather,
Through whom You give sustenance to Your
creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
Who is very useful and humble and precious and
chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom You light the night,
And he is beautiful and playful and robust and
strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother
Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And who produces various fruit with colored flowers
and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give
pardon for Your love,
And bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace
For by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily
Death,
From whom no one living can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most
holy will,

For the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks

and serve Him with great humility.”

The Canticle of the Creatures – By St. Francis of Assisi

The Canticle of the Sun

A Praise to Creation

Next only to the Canticle of the Creatures in popularity, this Canticle is the second most well-known of the writings of St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Francis of Assisi was known to just shout out praises to the Lord as he walked the fields, traveled to and fro and worked in building the San Damiano church. The Canticle of the Sun became one of the more popular of these spontaneous recitals.

The Canticle of the Sun of St. Francis of Assisi

“Most high, omnipotent, good Lord, to thee,
All glory, honor, praise, and blessing be.
Thou only art deserving of the same;
No man is worthy to pronounce thy name.

Praised be my God for creatures, every one;
And praised be thou, my Lord, for Brother Sun,
Thy gift to us that he our day may light.
Most beautiful is he, and passing bright;
Radiant in splendor – for in him we see
Displayed to us a glorious type of thee.

Praise to my Lord for Sister Moon be given,
For all the clear and lovely stars of heaven.

Praised be my Lord for Brother Wind and Air;
 For clouds, and weather – be it dark or fair;
 For by their ministry thou e'er dost give
 The sustenance whereby all creatures live.

Praise to my Lord for Sister Water be;
 Most useful, humble, precious, chaste is she.

Praised be my Lord for Brother Fire, so bright,
 By whom thou dost illuminate the night;
 For he is lively, and most beautiful,
 And most robust withal, and powerful.

Praised be my Lord and God for Mother Earth,
 Who governs and sustains us; who gives birth
 To all the many fruits and herbs that be,
 And colored flowers in rich variety.

Praised be my Lord for those who pardon wrong
 For love of thee, enduring sorrow long,
 Bearing their woes in peace – blessed are they!
 By the Most High they shall be crowned one day.

Praised be my Lord for Sister Death, from whom
 No living soul escapes. She brings the doom
 Of endless woe to all who pass away
 In guilt of mortal sin. But blessed they
 Who die in doing thy most holy will.
 To them the second death can bring no ill.

O praise and bless my Lord right thankfully,
 And serve ye him with great humility.”

The Canticle of the Sun – St. Francis of Assisi**Legends about St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun**

Some legends state that St. Francis of Assisi didn't only recite this during life, but as he was nearing his own death in the bed of the church. And as he was reciting the Canticle of the Sun on his death bed, he stopped himself and begged to be returned to his rock that he had slept upon most of his life. He said that he felt complete disgust at being surrounded in such opulence and wished to die as he had lived, with his beloved Lady Poverty on his beloved ground looking up towards his beloved Sun for which had sung this canticle so many times with his brothers before as they walked through the fields and the flowers.

St. Francis of Assisi was a man of profound simplicity and poverty. Having come from great wealth, he had learned throughout his short life that everything that God created around him was beautiful. And he praised every part of creation in his canticles. The Canticle of the Sun is second only in popularity to the Canticle of the Creatures. St. Francis of Assisi died as he had lived, in poverty and in simplicity and still praising God and His creation until his last breath.

Miracles Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

The Innumerable Marvels of a Saint

So many miracles were attributed to St. Francis of Assisi both before and after his death, that volumes have been compiled to contain them.

During the life of St. Francis of Assisi and even beyond crippled were healed, blind received their sight, those possessed were exorcised by his mere walking into the room, terminally ill people recovered, swellings went away, dropsies were cured, arthritis disappeared, paralyzed people began to walk again, lepers were cleansed, mutes began to speak and the deaf began to hear.

Some of the more Unusual Miracles of St. Francis of Assisi

There was a certain monk who noticed that Father Francis would leave the brothers in the middle of the night and come back later. When he asked St. Francis of Assisi about this, St. Francis told him never to follow him and that it was nothing he would speak about.

Despite St. Francis of Assisi's admonitions to this brother, one night he followed St. Francis of Assisi

secretly outside. For a time, he watched as St. Francis prayed in the woods from a distance and luckily St. Francis had not yet noticed he had come.

Suddenly, the most beautiful apparition appeared. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and St. John the Baptist appeared in the skies above St. Francis of Assisi. He spoke with them for a while as the monk watched on in utter amazement.

But St. Francis caught him when the apparition was over and he was returning to his cell. Exhorting him to never tell anyone of what he had seen, the monk kept quiet until after his death when he revealed the miraculous incident he had witnessed.

Apparitions of Christ Amongst the Brothers with St. Francis of Assisi

It is also related in *'The Little Flowers of St. Francis,'* by Raphael Brown that when St. Francis of Assisi would stand in the midst of the brothers and preach, that Christ would appear among them. This was reported by many of the brothers who remembered this profound phenomenon.

The Apparition of St. Peter and St. Paul to St. Francis about 'Lady Poverty'

Praying at a Cathedral in honor of St. Peter and Paul, St. Francis of Assisi was entreating the Lord to give him the grace of Holy Lady Poverty. As he prayed with such fervor, an apparition of St. Peter and St.

Paul arose before him. They told him that Christ honored his wish to live like the apostles in Holy Poverty, and was so pleased with his request, that He had sent them to announce to St. Francis of Assisi that his prayer was granted.

St. Francis Receives the Stigmata

Only Shortly Before His Death

St. Francis of Assisi was the first person to receive the Holy Stigmata, the wounds of Christ manifesting in the flesh of another person.

St. Francis of Assisi was a radical saint. He didn't do anything half way or partial in any form. And thus, when he retired to the mountains knowing that he was ill, he went into deep and profound prayer.

St. Francis of Assisi Asks to Imitate Christ in Prayer

Unbeknownst to St. Francis of Assisi, Brother Leo had disobeyed some instructions given him to not pass beyond a certain point on the mountain where St. Francis was staying due to his illness. Brother Leo overheard St. Francis praying "Who are You, my dearest God? And what am I, your vilest little worm and useless little servant?" Brother Leo says he repeated these prayers over and over again.

"He looked up and gazed at the sky. And while he was looking, he saw come down from the heights of Heaven a torch of flaming fire that was very beautiful and bright and pleasing to the eyes and that descended and rested on St. Francis' head. And he

heard a voice come out of that flame and speak with St. Francis, and the Saint answered the speaker." *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* – by Raphael Brown

Brother Leo stepped aside because he wished to obey his Father in faith. But afterwards, St. Francis of Assisi found him and asked him why he was there.

St. Francis of Assisi explains What Brother Leo has Seen

St. Francis explained many lights that were given to his soul during this apparition. The first two lights consisted of the knowledge and understanding of the Creator and the other of the knowledge of himself. St. Francis of Assisi explained that he was taken into a contemplative state wherein he saw his vileness as a creature and his sinfulness.

The Lord then asked St. Francis of Assisi to give Him three gifts wherein St. Francis explained that he was entirely God's and had nothing but a habit. He explained to God that Heaven, earth, fire and water and everything in the world are from the Lord, so how could anyone actually give anything back to God?

In various symbolic gestures, the Lord gave to St. Francis the gifts which He wished him to return to Him. These three gifts were the Holy Golden Obedience, the Very Great Poverty, and the Very

Radiant Chastity which St. Francis accepted and offered right back to God.

Telling Brother Leo to never disobey him again, he said that God was going to do something to him on the mountain that the whole world would marvel at and he was not to come back.

The Final Prayer to Jesus which Granted the Holy Stigmata

St. Francis of Assisi, after spending many nights in prayer on the mountain, offered one final prayer. "My Lord Jesus Christ, I pray You to grant me two graces before I die: the first is that during my life I may feel in my soul and in my body, as much as possible, that pain which You, dear Jesus, sustained in the hour of Your most bitter Passion. The second is that I may feel in my heart, as much as possible, that excessive love with which You, O Son of God, were inflamed in willingly enduring such suffering for us sinners."

Praying for many hours afterwards, he suddenly saw a Seraph coming down from Heaven with six flaming and glorious wings. It came close to St. Francis so he could see him up close. When the Seraph did this, St. Francis noticed the image of a crucified man. In those moments, he experienced what Christ thought, felt and experienced during the crucifixion and he felt profound grief for His suffering.

And in an instant, the Seraph struck St. Francis and he was immediately imprinted with the stigmata. The light from the vision was said to be so bright that many people saw Mount Alverna aglow most of the night.

St. Francis of Assisi Returns to His Brothers

St. Francis of Assisi was brought back to his brothers as he was dying. He would not live much longer, but because he was the first to experience the phenomenon of the stigmata, people were in awe and amazed by what they witnessed. Many miracles were reported by those who touched the stigmata of the saint before and after his death.

St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi

Childhood and Lifelong Friends

St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi were a profound duo in restoring the original gospel to the Church in their orders.

Both St. Clare and St. Francis were considered saints of profound sanctity. But ironically, it was St. Clare who probably led St. Francis of Assisi to his vocation even though once he found his way she followed him tirelessly.

St. Clare of Assisi was a Woman of Compassion

As children, Francesco and Clare both came from wealthy families, played together and grew up together. Early in their youth, Francesco marveled at watching Clare wander off into the woods. He would follow her to find that she was going to the leper colony to tend to the wounds of those living there. At the time, this disgusted St. Francis. He couldn't stomach the idea of doing such a thing, but he continued to watch her go nonetheless.

St. Francis Comes Back from War

When the war came and Francesco was presumed dead, Clare mourned the loss of her very special friend. But at the time of his return from the dead, and after he had come through all the medical recoveries which needed to happen before he could again romp through the wilderness, he again followed her as she headed for her ritual care of the sick. But he began to find a yearning to help her, join her and he began to see the lepers in a new light. It was Clare who brought this charity to St. Francis's heart, but St. Francis would soon repay the favor.

St. Clare Becomes a Nun

Coming from a wealthy family, Clare's father wished her to marry into a good family and live a good life. But this was not her internal desire, for she, too, wished to give her life to God the way St. Francis of Assisi had done. She had to run away from home to attend the Masses held at the restored San Damiano Church, and in the end, St. Francis accepted her into his order, cut her hair and then personally - along with several brothers - escorted her to a convent to become a nun.

When her father caught up with them, he was angry. To this St. Francis replied, "Could you possibly wish your daughter a better bridegroom than Christ?" She had become a bride of Christ. And years later, she would found the Poor Clare's which were the sister

order of the Franciscans who embraced the simple life of poverty as did the monks who followed St. Francis.

St. Francis and St. Clare were Eternal Friends and Both Profound Miracle Workers

St. Francis of Assisi was not alone in being a miracle worker. St. Clare is known for being behind innumerable miracles herself, and was spoken of very highly by her fellow sisters. She never complained of any of the austerities they had chosen, and embraced it with the same zeal as St. Francis.

A miracle is said of St. Clare that when marauding troops came to invade the monastery, she went into the chapel and took hold of the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament. Displaying it high above her head to the invading soldiers, they immediately retreated and never bothered them again.

St. Francis preceded St. Clare in death but throughout their lives they maintained their very close and profound spiritual love for one another despite only seeing one another rarely.

St. Francis of Assisi Dies

An Early Death

In part due to his profoundly ascetic life, St. Francis of Assisi took ill early on in life and died at the age of forty five.

St. Francis of Assisi started experiencing unexplained illnesses shortly before he turned forty years of age. His actual death would occur on October 3, 1226 when he was only forty five years of age.

St. Francis of Assisi Retreats to the Mountains

Realizing he was ill as he had started coughing up blood and had other symptoms which he had concern about the brothers seeing, he retreated to the mountains for quite some time. It was in the mountains that St. Francis received the Stigmata.

Brother Leo Comes to Find St. Francis of Assisi and Establish a Rule

The brothers were becoming worried that St. Francis would never return to them and his longtime friend and brother in the order, Leo, decided it was time to go up into the mountains and find St. Francis of Assisi and find out if he was alright.

What he found was a very ill monk lying in the snows, and he had just received the stigmata and was bleeding from his hands, feet and side.

The Church Tries to Take Care of St. Francis in His Final Days

The local bishops and priests wished to take care of St. Francis, because by this time his saintliness was well accepted and well known. St. Francis of Assisi had even had time to reconcile with his father over the years, and at the time of his passing there were already several thousands of brothers around the world who were joining the Franciscan Order.

As he lay in a very ornate and fancy bed, St. Francis of Assisi complained that he did not wish to die in such luxury. He preferred to die outside in poverty as he had lived. His brothers understood, although they wished to give him more comfort, they acceded to his wishes and allowed him to return to the austere San Damiano Church where he would speak his last words.

St. Francis of Assisi Asks for a Reading

As St. Francis of Assisi was now surrounded by a few brothers he chose to be nearby as he prepared for death, he asked that they read aloud to him the Gospel of John. In a moment of intensity, he asked all his brothers for forgiveness and gave his forgiveness to all those present and not present.

When he passed quietly during the reading, one of the brothers said that he saw the soul of St. Francis of Assisi rise over many waters straight to heaven. He proclaimed that it was like a star, but large like the moon, brilliant like the sun and carried up on a white cloud.

Life of St. Margaret Mary

The Saint of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart

St. Margaret Mary was a very humble nun who began receiving visitations from Our Lord who eventually asked her to found a new devotion in the church.

Sickly in her youth, St. Margaret Mary's greatness would never be realized physically, but rather, spiritually later in life when the Lord would begin speaking to her in visions about the special work he had for her to do.

St. Margaret Mary 1647 - 1690

Born on July 22, 1647 at L'Hautecour, Burgundy France, St. Margaret Mary was educated at a school run by the Poor Clare Nuns after the death of her father. The daughter of poor parents, she showed a profound sanctity even at a young age developing a devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and secretly practicing penances.

Developing Rheumatic Fever at the age of 10, she was paralyzed and bedridden for five years. When she was cured of her illness, she chose not to marry and instead entered the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial and became a professed nun in one year's time.

Visions of Jesus Christ

St. Margaret Mary began receiving visions of Jesus Christ in 1673 wherein He began to tell her of His wishes for her to establish a new devotion within the Church. The visions continued for a year and a half in a successive series of great apparitions.

1. December 27th, 1673 - The First Great Apparition
2. Early 1674 - The Second Great Apparition
3. July 2nd, 1674 - The Third Great Apparition
4. June 16th, 1675 - The Fourth Great Apparition

In the second apparition, St. Margaret Mary related "He showed me that it was His great desire of being loved by men and of withdrawing them from the path of ruin into which Satan hurls such crowds of them, that made Him form the design of manifesting His Heart to men, with all the treasures of love, of mercy, of grace, of sanctification and salvation which It contains."

In her visions, St. Margaret Mary was told that she was chosen by Christ as His instrument to spread the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. He also gave her a series of promises that Jesus said would apply to anyone who propagated, honored, performed or displayed the devotions and images of the Sacred Heart.

The Opposition of the Church to St. Margaret Mary's Revelations

Her own Mother Superior, Mother de Saumaise, did not believe in her visions. Her own community and a great many theologians opposed her for many years on her call to bring about this Devotion to the Sacred Heart to the Catholic Church. But this opposition was squelched when she was named Assistant to the Mother Superior (Mother Melin) in 1683.

Observance of the Feast of the Sacred Heart

October 17th is the day wherein the Feast of the Sacred Heart is currently celebrated. It was Blessed Claude La Colombiere, her confessor, who began the process to end the persecutions by openly declaring that her visions were coming from God. The convent began observing the Feast of the Sacred Heart privately in 1683, but it was not formally established within the church until February 6th, 1765 by Pope Clement XIII.

Canonization of St. Margaret Mary

On May 13th, 1920, St. Margaret Mary was Canonized by Pope Benedict XV and on June 16th 1929, Claude de la Colombiere (her former confessor) was Beatified and called 'Blessed.'

St. Margaret Mary passed away on October 17, 1690, her wisdom and purity of life being a subject of discussions for a great deal of time thereafter.

The Promises of the Sacred Heart

Given to St. Margaret Mary by Jesus Christ

In the visions given to St. Margaret Mary regarding the devotion of the Sacred Heart, Jesus made many profound promises to the faithful.

St. Margaret Mary, 1647 – 1690, was a nun in France who received profound revelations from Jesus Christ to found a new devotion in the Catholic Church called the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. She was known for her profound humility and wisdom, much of which has been preserved to this day in such books as *The Autobiography of St. Margaret Mary* and *Thoughts and Sayings of St. Margaret Mary*.

Four Great Apparitions

St. Margaret Mary experienced four great apparitions asking for the Devotion to the Sacred Heart to be founded and spread throughout the world. St. Margaret Mary summarized the twelve promises made by Jesus to her on behalf of all souls who would propagate, practice, further and pray this devotion in a letter to her spiritual director, Father Croiset and Father Rolin, on August 24th, 1685.

Promises of Jesus for those who Practice Devotion to the Sacred Heart

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will console them in all their troubles.
4. They shall find in My Heart an assured refuge during life and especially at the hour of death.
5. I will pour abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in My Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall speedily rise to great perfection.
9. I will bless the homes in which the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honoured.
10. I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts.
11. Those who propagate this devotion shall have their name written in My Heart, and it shall never be effaced.
12. The all-powerful love of My Heart will grant to all those who shall receive Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months the grace of final repentance; they shall not die under My displeasure, nor without receiving their Sacraments; My Heart shall be their assured refuge at that last hour.

St. Margaret Mary summed up her experiences in the same letter saying, "Oh, how sweet is death when one has had a tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ!"

Wisdom of St. Margaret Mary

The Inspired Words of a Mystic

St. Margaret Mary was a very humble nun who began receiving visitations in the night from Jesus who eventually gave her a new Catholic Devotion.

Humble but wise, St. Margaret Mary's many profound sayings have been protected and preserved through this day in *Thoughts and Sayings of Saint Margaret Mary* compiled by the Sisters of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial. Her life was one of humble servitude which resulted in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart and the many promises given by Jesus Christ to those who would practice the devotion, honor the images and live the way of life intended through them.

Wisdom of St. Margaret Mary

Jesus spoke to St. Margaret Mary in four great visions. In His visits, He spoke profoundly of His love for men. "My Divine Heart so ardently loves men that, unable to contain within itself any longer the flames of its burning love, it needs must spread them with your assistance, and thus it will show itself that all men may be enriched with its most precious

treasures..." *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* - Fr. John Croiset

Another subject close to His heart was the ingratitude He felt was shown towards the suffering He had borne for men and their souls. "It is the ingratitude of men which has hurt Me more than all the suffering I underwent during My Passion. If only they would make some return for My love, I should think but little of all I have done for them . . ." *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* - Fr. John Croiset

It was because of this that Jesus chose to present to mankind an image of His physical heart, which felt the pain and abandonment of men's hearts. "Behold this Heart, Which has loved men so much, that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, in order to testify to them Its love; and in return I receive from the greater number nothing but ingratitude by reason of their irreverence and sacrileges ..." *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* - Fr. John Croiset

In St. Margaret Mary's great simplicity, she was easily able to sum up her view of the spiritual life. "Be humble towards God and gentle with your neighbor. Judge and accuse no one but yourself and ever excuse others. Speak of God always to praise and glorify Him, speak of your neighbor only with respect - do not speak of yourself at all, either well or ill. Avoid over-eagerness and strive to model your interior and exterior upon the humble sweetness of the loving

Heart of Jesus, doing each of your actions with the same tranquility as if you had but that alone to do.”
Thoughts and Sayings of Saint Margaret Mary compiled by the Sisters of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart

The Novena Given by Jesus to St. Margaret Mary

A popular Catholic Devotion to this day, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was instituted in 1765 by Pope Clement XIII.

Pronounced as an official Feast Day of the Church on February 16, 1785 by Pope Clement XIII to be celebrated on October 17th, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart came about through a series of four great visions of Jesus Christ given to a humble and wise young nun, St. Margaret Mary. Jesus made many promises to those who would practice this devotion and honor any image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There are many prayers to the Sacred Heart, but the Act of Consecration and the Novena are the primary devotions.

Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Thee I consecrate and offer up my person and my life, my actions, trials, and sufferings, that my entire being may henceforth only be employed in loving, honoring and glorifying Thee. This is my irrevocable will, to belong entirely to Thee, and to do all for Thy love, renouncing with my whole heart all that can displease Thee.

I take Thee, O Sacred Heart, for the sole object of my love, the protection of my life, the pledge of my salvation, the remedy of my frailty and inconstancy, the reparation for all the defects of my life, and my secure refuge at the hour of my death. Be Thou, O Most Merciful Heart, my justification before God Thy Father, and screen me from His anger which I have so justly merited. I fear all from my own weakness and malice, but placing my entire confidence in Thee, O Heart of Love, I hope all from Thine infinite Goodness. Annihilate in me all that can displease or resist Thee. Imprint Thy pure love so deeply in my heart that I may never forget Thee or be separated from Thee.

I beseech Thee, through Thine infinite Goodness, grant that my name be engraved upon Thy Heart, for in this I place all my happiness and all my glory, to live and to die as one of Thy devoted servants. Amen.

Novena to the Sacred Heart

I. O my Jesus, You said "verily I say to You, ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you", behold I knock, I seek and I ask for the grace of...

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father. Sacred Heart of Jesus I put all my trust in Thee.

II. O my Jesus, You said, "verily I say to You, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, He

will give it to you", behold in your name I ask the Father for the grace of...

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father. Sacred Heart of Jesus I put all my trust in Thee.

III. O my Jesus, You said, "verily I say to You, heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away", behold I encouraged by your infallible words, now ask for the grace of...

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father. Sacred Heart of Jesus I put all my trust in Thee.

O sacred Heart of Jesus, to whom one thing alone is impossible, namely, not to have compassion on the afflicted, have pity on us miserable sinners and grant us the grace which we ask of Thee through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, your and our tender Mother.

Say the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen) and add, St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, pray for us.

St. Padre Pio

First Stigmatist Priest of the Catholic Church

St Pio, known to his followers as Padre Pio, lived from 1887 to 1968 and bore the wounds of the stigmata for exactly fifty years.

Padre Pio's Youth

Born May 25th, 1897 in a small village in Italy known as Pietrelcina, Padre Pio was born with the name of Francesco Forgione in a large and very poor peasant family. Eight children were born to his parents; Orazio Forgione and Maria Giuseppa De Nunzio, three of whom died while still babies.

Francesco Forgione began having mystical experiences from early childhood seeing the Blessed Virgin, Jesus, St. Michael and his own guardian angels on a regular basis. This was so ordinary to him that he had conversations with them as if they were his playmates

Padre Pio's Call to the Priesthood

Francesco's parents realized his unique call when he was young. The family made the sacrifice of allowing the father to live apart from the family in Italy to work in New York City to earn the money for his education.

Ordained to the Priesthood as a Franciscan Friar on August 10th, 1910, Padre Pio soon became unusually ill and unable to remain in the monastery at Foggia (San Giovanni Rotondo). Throughout his priesthood, he would go back and forth from home to the monastery until much later in his life, when his health would finally sustain him remaining with his fellow Minor Capuchin Friars.

Padre Pio's Strange Illnesses

Padre Pio sustained mysterious illnesses involving nausea and fevers throughout his life. He would sustain fevers of 119 on a regular basis actually causing the old mercury thermometers of his day in the early 1900's to explode

Padre Pio's Stigmata

Padre Pio received the stigmata while praying before the choir loft. According to his accounts, the crucifix came to life as the crucified Christ, wounds bleeding profusely in what St. Pio described as "a terrifying vision." After this image of Christ disappeared, a seraph came towards him brandishing some kind of weapon like a sword. It came upon him and pierced his hands, feet and side, leaving him crying out for help on the chapel floor.

St. Pio was ironically named after St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan Order and the first stigmatist in Church history.

Padre Pio's Other Gifts

Padre Pio was known to have many miraculous gifts, among them

- 1.) A Mysterious Scent of Roses which Emanated from his Wounds
- 2.) Bilocation
- 3.) Miraculous Healings
- 4.) The Ability to Read Consciences in the Confessional

One of the miracles utilized in his canonization involved a young girl born without pupils and blind from birth, who although her eyes never again had pupils, was restored to perfect vision.

He was known for advice he gave to those who came to him regarding the avoidance of Purgatory and Hell. His life involved many austere practices similar to those assumed by the Early Desert Fathers in the *Philokalia*.

Padre Pio's Persecutions

Throughout his life, Padre Pio was persecuted by doctors and by the Church. For a period of ten years, Padre Pio was not allowed to celebrate Mass in public while the Church tried to discern if his stigmata was from God or the devil.

Padre Pio also suffered from violent demonic attacks in his cell wherein he sustained physical injuries.

Padre Pio's Death

September 23, 1968, Padre Pio died from complications of heart failure. Thousands flocked to see his body and still flock today at his tomb to request the prayers of this unusual saint of the modern day.

Jacob Boehme

The Shoemaker who Defined the Heavens

Eventually named the Great Teutonic Philosopher, Jacob Boehme was a simple shoemaker who became one of the greatest mystics the world has known.

Jacob Boehme (1575 - 1624)

An unschooled shoemaker, Jacob Boehme (born in the village of Alt Seidenberg near Goerlitz in Saxony in 1575 and died in 1624) became one of the world's deepest and profound mystics with a huge body of work to his credit including *The Aurora*, *The Way to Christ*, *The Three Principles*, *The Threefold Life of Man*, *Signatura Rerum*, *Mysterium Magnum*, *Forty Questions*, *The Clavis* and *The Incarnation of Christ*, *Dialogue Between an Enlightened and an Unenlightened Soul*.

Born in the village of Alt Seidenberg near Goerlitz in Saxony in 1575 to simple peasants, Jacob spent a great deal of his time alone taking care of cattle. He developed a profound understanding of the scriptures at a young age, but focused his time on his apprenticeship as a shoemaker.

Profound Experience in the Youth of Jacob Boehme

While working the shoe store, Jacob tended to a stranger's shoes who had entered the shop. When he left, he paid well over the asking price for the service

and as he was walking away shouted out, "Jacob, come hither." Surprised that this stranger knew his name, Jacob went outside as the man looked upon him quite deeply and said, "Jacob, thou art yet but little, but the time will come when thou shalt be great and become another man, and the world shall marvel at thee. Therefore be pious, fear God and reverence His Word; especially read diligently the Holy Scriptures, where thou wilt find comfort and instruction, for thou must endure much misery and poverty, and suffer persecution. But be courageous and persevere, for God loves and is gracious unto thee." *Three Famous Mystics: Martin, Boehme, Swedenborg*, By W.P. Swainson

The Aurora, Considered Jacob Boehme's Most Pivotal Work

The Aurora: That Is, the Day-Spring is considered by many scholars to be Jacob Boehme's most important work. Fascinating in its structure, the table of contents reads like a divine guide to heaven, hell and the angels. Also contained within *The Aurora* is a great deal of information on sin and to which end each might bring the individual soul.

Jacob Boehme's Intended Banishment

Because of the popularity of *The Aurora* in particular, a certain nobleman had several copies made which unintentionally fell into the wrong hands. Jacob Boehme was ordered by the city council to leave town. In a moment of remorse, they rescinded the

order the next day but confiscated all copies of *The Aurora* instructing him to write no more.

Because of this incident, however, the city council's actions had a totally different effect in that they brought more attention to his writings. He did not write anything more for seven years, but then resumed his work with similar fervor.

Later in his life, persecutions were renewed, but this time Jacob fought back with a written defense. Asking him to leave Goerlitz, the city council feared he might be burned as a heretic if he did not. He left under cover of disguise to Dresden.

Jacob Boehme's Death and Last Words

Predicting the date of his own death, Jacob Boehme had his friends take him back to Goerlitz and had his son, Tobias, called to his bedside on November 21st 1624. Asking his son if he "heard the beautiful music," he requested that he "open the door that it might be heard more plainly." After instructing his wife about her impending death, he quietly stated, "Now I go hence into Paradise." *Three Famous Mystics: Martin, Boehme, Swedenborg*, By W.P. Swainson

St. John Vianney

The Cure' of Ars

The Patron Saint of Priests who barely made it through the seminary!

Intellect was not the greatest gift of St. John Vianney, but rather, a profound humility which gave him insight into the matters of life in a simple way that ordinary people could understand and which moved them.

St. John Vianney, Cure' of Ars 1786 - 1859

Born in 1786 in France, John Vianney was born as the third of six children to humble parents. Spending most of his youth working on the farm, he left at the age of nineteen to be tutored in the way of the priesthood by M. Balley, the Parish Priest at Ecully. Teaching in Latin, John's youth had given him little time for the learning he would further need, but his profound desire and call to the priesthood along with the patience of his teacher resulted in him eventually catching on.

War in the Life of St. John Vianney

St. John Vianney's life was sorely interrupted by the French Revolution. Although those studying to the priestly life at the time were not meant to serve in the army, he was accidentally overlooked and called to

service. Sick and alone, nurses brought him back to health. Sent back to his barracks, he got lost, but was led to a communal village in the mountains of Le Ferez, staying there for fourteen months.

Brutal Weather kept people from coming to the outpost for months at a time, and during spring, he'd hide behind stacks of hay in a barn. But a short time of respite came from 1806 - 1810 wherein he was able to leave the community and return freely.

A Remarkable Transformation

Struggling to finish his seminarian formation, he barely passed the tests required to become a priest. No one would have imagined the saint in their midst - until he began giving sermons. When his childhood father in faith died (M. Balley), St. John Vianney was named as Cure' of Ars.

Despite his difficulty with learning, he quickly began to draw large crowds to his powerful sermons. 20,000 visitors a year were coming to see him speak by 1855, he had a special gift that drew people to him: "The People noticed that he prayed with great recollection and celebrated Mass with deep devotion. They noticed, too, his mortified way of life, his love for the poor and the sick, his mild words to everyone. Very soon he had won the hearts of all." John Cooper

Death and Incorruptibility

St. John Vianney was 73 when he died and because miracles had been reported throughout his life; his incorruptibility did not come as much of a surprise. He remains incorrupt until this day. Canonized in 1925, his feast day is August 9th.

Sermons

Many of his sermons are available today and are listed in the sources. Although *The Sermons of the Cure' of Ars* contain more of a series of sermons, *The Little Catechism of the Cure' of Ars* is written in catechism format with a definitive flavor of mystical theology in the format and teachings. Both are valuable sacred texts.

John Wesley – Methodist and Wesleyan Founder

The Origins of ‘Slaying in the Spirit’

Among the over 32,000 Protestant denominations to have emerged since the 16th century, the story of the founder of the Methodists is one of the most profound.

John Wesley (1703 – 1791)

John Wesley was born in the small town of Epworth in North Lincolnshire as the fifteenth child of nineteen. Ten survived the term of infancy. He came from a long line of clergymen in the Church of England, his great-grandfather, grandfather and father all such. Studying at Oxford, he led a pretty typical life for one called to such a life. Becoming a missionary after college, he underwent many trials and tribulations in that life before he settled into an evangelistic lifestyle which also included many and varied trials throughout his life.

What Made John Wesley and Wesleyanism Profound

The Wesley family was so endowed with deeper and profound experiences of God, that many of those who attended their preaching were struck down or

'convicted.' They would tremble and shake, many falling to the floor suddenly becoming aware of the overwhelming sense of their sins. Conversions were rampant because of this phenomena attributed to the Holy Spirit, and even many who came to their meetings as complete unbelievers would often leave completely changed and converted to God.

John Wesley, not unlike many Catholic Mystics throughout history, was gifted with profound interior and exterior mystical experiences wherein the power of the Holy Spirit came down upon him and sometimes friends who were with him and he was instructed in his ministry through such deep experiences.

John Wesley's Writings Compared to the Early Church Fathers

Because John Wesley was a prolific writer and his works fill volumes of material, his place in theological history will remain secure. Known as an evangelist, reformer and a brilliant man, he wasn't always given proper credit for his profound gifts by Protestants of his day. However, Alexander Knox, a contemporary of his time, said of him that he was a major theologian who managed to bring out the best of St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom, both writers contained in the *Writings of the Early Church Fathers*.

John Wesley tried to bring simplicity into his work and was known to have said of his own writings that they were "plain words for plain people."

John Wesley's Contribution to the Idea of Revival

The old-fashioned idea of revival that continues to this day was born in the time of John Wesley and his fathers and grandfathers. The modern understanding of being 'convicted in the spirit' was born on the day of Pentecost, but revived in the days of John Wesley and his fathers due to their unique gift of making Pentecost present in their own day.

John Wesley's Dying Words

At eighty eight years of age, John Wesley passed away on Wednesday, March 2, 1791. His last words were spoken twice, with great fervour, "The best of all is, God is with us." He lifted his arms and said again, "The best of all is, God is with us."

The True History of King Arthur

And the Knights of the Round Table

The true stories behind the legends of King Arthur are coming to light from new anthropological and archaeological evidence.

The true story behind the legend of King Arthur is actually quite different than the one we have all grown up to know. Rather than being a King, Arthur was one of a group of knights who were legendary in their time for their bravery in fighting for the causes of the church.

King Arthur

According to the new evidence being discovered by historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, it is believed that the legend of King Arthur did not originate in the 15th century, but rather, about 1,000 years before in the story of a brave knight. Arthur had been traumatized in his youth by the violent death of his mother, and according to these new sources, the sword *Excalibur* was pulled from a rock during a siege of Arthur's hometown when he sought to defend his innocent and helpless mother from those who had come and taken their hometown. He was unable to save her life, and it haunted him.

Becoming loyal to the church and the Holy Mass, Arthur was set up for many disappointments which would lead to the moment of destiny. An avid follower of Pelagius, who he believed preached in the natural born freedom of every man, he would be crushed to learn that the church he fought for and loved excommunicated and murdered Pelagius in Arthur's absence after Pelagius was denounced by St. Augustine.

In the true story, Merlin plays a very small role as a dark sorcerer in ancient Britain who is highly at odds with Arthur. In history, he never really takes on the exalted role he was given in legend.

The Knights of the Round Table

In 300 A.D., Rome easily covered the lands all the way from Arabia to Britain, but they wanted more. In the time of Arthur, they wanted the land to the East - the land of Sarmatia. When the Romans went into Sarmatia, they killed everything in sight. But the few who survived were legendary Sarmatian Calvary. Ironically, it is these prisoners of war who were taken in as captives of the Roman Empire to become knights with Arthur, among them Galahad and Lancelot.

Arthur, who held firmly to the belief that everyone at the table was equal, created the round table to demonstrate this fact so that no one could claim a head seat.

The slaves were told that they would be taken for fifteen years and then would be again granted their freedom after serving Rome. But on the eve of their freedom, they were sent on a profoundly dangerous mission to rescue a young man who was considered destined to become a bishop who was deep in Britain which was being overcome by Saxon armies who were destroying all towns and villages in their path and killing every man, woman and child.

It was meant to be a suicide mission and the church knew this, but asked it of Arthur and his knights anyway.

Guinevere and Lancelot

When the knights arrived at their destination, they had only a little time for escape before the Saxons would be upon them and overtake the entire party. A small village lived outside the vast palatial estate of the man whose son was meant to be bishop and Arthur, a man of high integrity, honor and courage, refused to leave a single one behind. When he discovered that there was a prison hidden beneath the castle walls, he released all the prisoners who were still alive and brought out a young boy and a young woman. That prisoner woman was Guinevere.

Another fascinating aspect to Guinevere that has been discovered in this new evidence is that she was a profound warrior, and she participated in battle with

Arthur and his knights. Arthur was a man of high character and integrity, whereas Lancelot, although he was attracted to her, also, could not compete with a man who had become legend through his heroic deeds and conscience.

The Final Showdown at Badon Hill

The Saxons pursued them relentlessly. While they managed to put them off through a series of brilliant moves, such as luring the other army onto a lake covered over with ice which subsequently broke through as they came upon it, the army did reach them at the wall. They had no choice but to engage in one final showdown. The Saxons lived, breathed and died destruction. It was fight or be annihilated.

Everyone fought bravely in this bloody battle including Guinevere who was a master marksman and much more of a ruffian than she is remembered in legend. But Lancelot died in this battle.

Arthur and Guinevere Marry

The marriage of Arthur and Guinevere occurred on Britain's soil because Arthur had chosen to reclaim the land of his birth for 'free' men. He had learned of the betrayal of the church against one of his close friends, Pelagius, who had taught this and realized that his destiny was to protect his homeland now - no longer the church.

He became known at this point in his life as King Arthur and immediately proclaimed all men under his reign 'free.'

Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus

The Divine Pymander

Although there are many works attributed to Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, the Divine Pymander is one of the forty two works he is believed to have written.

Trismegistus, Meaning Thrice Great

Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus was referred to as the 'thrice great,' which is the translation of Trismegistus. Hermes received this title in the Twelfth Aphorism of *The Emerald Tablets*. In this text, he was said to have contained within him three aspects of all wisdom known to the world.

Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus's Alter Ego - Thoth

Hermes is most often considered synonymous with the Egyptian God, Thoth. In some accounts, he is considered to be the reincarnation of Thoth, while others the two are one in the same having lived at the same time. It is unknown historically which of these, if either are actually true.

Why are there so Many Books Attributed to Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus

After the time of Hermes and his forebear, Thoth, many wisdom schools adopted the tradition of titling every manuscript written in the Hermetic tradition to Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus. There are two texts known to certainly have been written by him, *The Divine Pymander* and *The Virgin of the World*.

Although there are two versions of *The Emerald Tablets*, one attributed to Hermes and the other to Thoth, the actual dating of the manuscript attributed to Hermes currently lies in about 1100 A.D., and remains uncertain as to its antiquity or authorship. *The Emerald Tablets of Thoth* are of much more recent origin (1925 A.D.), translated by a mysterious man who calls himself Doreal of the Great White Brotherhood. He claims to have found the 36,000 year old texts in the early twentieth century somewhere around the region of the Great Pyramid and that they were made of an indestructible alchemically altered emerald green stone.

Despite the uncertain origin of both versions of *The Emerald Tablets*, they contain a similar philosophy and theology to that of *The Divine Pymander*.

The Theology of the Divine Pymander

Surprisingly, the teachings contained within *The Divine Pymander* are very monotheistic despite the

Egyptian Pantheon of Gods. Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus describes God as Father, not unlike early Christian tradition and the writings of the Early Church Fathers, and in the tradition of many mystics since his time, he demonstrates a world containing many layers of light and darkness wherein the most important mission of each individual man is to purify himself in this world and the next to meet a high and holy God, a belief not dissimilar to the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory:

“For this only, O Son, is the way to Truth, which our Progenitors traveled in; and by which making their journey, they at length attained to the good. It is a venerable way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body. For first it must war against its own self, and after much strife and dissension, it must be overcome of one part; for the contention is of one against two, whilst it flies away, and they strive to hold and detain it. But the victory of both is not like, for the one hasteth to that which is Good, but the other is a neighbour to the things that are Evil; and that which is Good desireth to be set at liberty, but the things that are Evil love Bondage and Slavery.” *The Divine Pymander of Hermes*, Translated by Dr. Everard

The Origins of Alchemy and Chemistry

Hermes has been given the honorable title of the father of chemistry in that he originated many of the earliest forms of alchemy and the chemical sciences, but there are many books attributed to Hermes

Mercurius Trismegistus on theology, astronomy and medicine, as well.

Dr. Everard, Translator of the Divine Pymander

Dr. Everard was a well-known minister who was believed to be removed from his pastoral position due to accusations of heresy.

Milarepa – Sinner to Saint

Tibet's Most Famous Yogi

The story of Milarepa tells a tale of intrigue, betrayal, catastrophic events, unparalleled evil . . . and then redemption.

Milarepa, the Story of a Sinner Become a Saint

Not unlike many of the great stories of redemption like that of St. Augustine, an Early Church Father, who practiced a life of sin only to undergo a radical conversion later in life and become a saint, Milarepa was Tibetan Buddhist who practiced sorcery in his early years engaging in radically evil paths until one day:

“I was filled with remorse for the evil I had done by magic . . . My longing for the teaching so obsessed me . . . At night sleep escaped me. I asked myself unceasingly and passionately by what means I might practice the true teaching.” *The Life of Milarepa*, By Lobsang Lhalungpa

Milarepa's Unusual Life

Born in the eleventh century, Milarepa learned about hardship young when his father was reaching death. His Uncle and Aunt pledged to his father to look over his wealth and make sure his family was okay, but as soon as he had died, they seized his properties

leaving Milarepa and his family homeless and penniless.

A Mother's Vengeance

Milarepa's mother showed no difficulty in directing vengeance against these relatives who had suddenly become wealthy and left them penniless. Leading him to find the black lama's who practice evil sorcery, Milarepa became their disciple and learned to use his mind and will to cause destruction to his relatives 'down to the ninth generation,' a not unbiblical concept.

Using sorcery, Milarepa caused a building to fall down upon his Aunt and Uncle and all their guests at a wedding. All the guests were killed. The townspeople tired of Milarepa's sorcery, vowed to stop him, but Milarepa called upon their crops hailstorms.

Milarepa's Conversion of Heart

Milarepa awakened one morning with a profound realization of the karmic consequences of his evil actions. With the same fierce determination he originally pursued the black sorcerers, Milarepa now turned his intense quest to search for enlightenment and liberation from the consequences of all that had come to pass.

His drastic renunciation is described as being in sharp contrast with the renunciation of other Buddhists,

because typical Buddhists see a benefit to giving up sensory pleasures, whereas Milarepa's conversion was coming from a profound place of self-centeredness. Lobsang Lhalungpa describes this moment as a "shock treatment."

Milarepa Meets Master Marpa and Devotes his life to the Good

Milarepa eventually met his future Master, Marpa, at a country home. But Marpa saw the great difficulty with which this soul was imbued and came up with an alternative means for training. Sent out on a variety of humiliating tasks, Milarepa tried to be deceptive but was unable to fool the Master Marpa.

It wasn't until Milarepa reached the brink of suicide that Master Marpa granted Milarepa the teaching and his great sins were erased. At this moment, his selfishness dissolved.

Milarepa Leave the Life of the World and Enters into Asceticism

The remainder of Milarepa's life was lived in a tower and at times a cave where he engaged in total renunciation and a life of utter, destitute poverty, very much like the early desert fathers of the Philokalia. Becoming a profound example in every generation of Tibet, the life of Milarepa is a great testament of redemption and forgiveness.

In the end, Milarepa found that even in the face of injustice and hardship, the path of goodness was unequalled in all worlds.

“Perceiving the innate emptiness of your awareness, and dwelling in a non-conceptual state induced by mind, even though the two appear alike, beware of misjudgment.” *The Life of Milarepa*, By Lobsang Lhalungpa

Earth Store Bodhisattva - Ksitigarbha

The Bodhisattva who went to Hell

One of the least known figures in Buddhist history, Earth Store Bodhisattva is perhaps one of the most fascinating mystics in the world.

What is a Bodhisattva?

A Bodhisattva is a Tibetan Buddhist Monk who takes the vows laid out in the text *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, also known as the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. In this text, a Bodhisattva will take a vow to reincarnate until the end of time or until living being have been liberated from this world of suffering, illness, disease and death.

Buddhist Cosmogony

Although many would be surprised to know this, Buddhist Cosmogony is not that different from Catholic Cosmogony. In Catholicism, there is a heaven, hell and a purgatory, an intermediate world wherein a soul is purified before entering the all holy heaven of God. Hell being reserved for those who have not made the grade so to speak, a place of eternal torment.

In Buddhism, there is a similar cosmogony; heaven, hell and an intermediate world not unlike purgatory. But in Buddhism, heaven is not the highest goal. Heaven is considered a world where sense pleasure is still the goal; therefore, it is Nirvana which far surpasses it in attainment.

Earth Store Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva who was sent to Hell

Earth Store Bodhisattva is a literal translation from the name – Ksitigarbha, and in the Buddhist world, he remains one of the most popular bodhisattvas.

Shortly after he took the vows of the Bodhisattva's, he began contemplating the karmic conditions of living beings and he was called to an unusual service in that he began taking mystical journeys into the various hells. In his experiences, he found that there were many hells which corresponded to the various sins, again very much like the doctrine of purgatory in Catholicism or the cosmogony taught by Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus in *The Divine Pymander* of Egyptian Religion. But in his unique experiences, it was his job to liberate souls from the hells.

“The Great Iron Ring Mountain is one of the mountains outside Mount Sumeru, and beyond it is hell. Hell exists and is not merely a human fiction. The only ways to reach hell are through spiritual penetrations and virtuous conduct or by committing

offenses." *The Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*

Much of his time was spent in examining what would be required of individual souls in order to liberate them from their time in the lower regions. He said of them:

"The Three Karmic Vehicles are the body, the mouth and the mind. There are three evils enacted by the body: killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. There are three of the mind: greed, hatred and stupidity. The mouth can commit four foul deeds: vulgar speech, false speech, harsh speech and duplicity." *The Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*

The Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva

Although the primary writing of Earth Store Bodhisattva is nearly unknown in the West, it is a primary Buddhist Scripture in Tibet. The unique journeys of Ksitigarbha are laid out in picturesque detail and allow a reader to truly experience the hells as he saw them.

His whole life was dedicated to going into the hells and lower worlds to liberate souls from these places and teach the rest of humanity the reasons for various hells, the means in which we get there, and the path to liberate ourselves from such misconduct.

St. Joseph Calasanz, The Piarist Order

The Early Origins of Priesthood Sexual Abuse

St. Joseph Calasanz, founder of the Piarist Fathers in 1617 and later named 'Heavenly Patron of Christian Schools,' was involved in covering up sexual abuse by priests.

St. Joseph Calasanz, Founder (Piarist Fathers 1617, Pious Schools, 1621)

Pious throughout his life, Calasanz founded an order of priests who provided for the educational needs of the poor children in Spain. His efforts led to the institution of the Piarist Fathers in 1617 and 'The Order of Pious Schools' in 1621.

Expansion of the Pious Schools

The Piarist Fathers served the poorest of the poor children, and as a result of their great works they expanded into Italy and Europe. Galileo, Mozart and others of historic note attended including future political figures. At a time when education had been for the rich, the Piarist Father's provided an incredible service to the poor.

Suspension of the Pious Schools

The Piarist Fathers were suspended in the year 1646 due to the innumerable scandals, both sexual and financial, and were shortly thereafter followed by the death of their founder, St. Joseph Calasanz, at a ripe age of 92 in 1646. The order was reformed in 1656 and given status as a congregation again in 1669 and remains in service around the world today.

Sodomy and Sexual Abuse in the Pious Schools

Although there are many extremely well-intentioned men who follow the vows and example left behind by Calasanz of poverty, chastity, obedience and dedication to the education of youth, in the time of Calasanz, many men of high station in the order were openly engaged in sodomy and sexual misconduct towards children which was handled in a manner not unlike the recent abuse scandals of our day. There were several priests given positions of high station who lived lives of great opulence on the money given to the schools by the poor. St. Joseph Calasanz was actively involved in the cover ups of these and other abuses according to documentation held in the *Vatican Secret Archives*.

Political Coups to avoid Allegations of Priesthood Sexual Abuse

A seriously concerning event occurred when Fr. Mario Sozzi, a priest known for his sodomistic

activities who had been promoted repeatedly as a remedy to this problem, came to such a high station in the order that he made a charge stating that Calasanz was no longer capable of running the order due to his age. With full knowledge of hierarchy, he became the superior general of the order. Upon his death, a Father Cherubini followed in his footsteps condoning continued corruption of the order in sexual abuse and financial matters, but repented of his misdeeds upon his deathbed and reconciled with Calasanz.

Promotions and Cover-ups of Priesthood Sexual Abuse in the Vatican and Beyond Regarding the Piarist Order

Cardinals, bishops and the pope actively engaged in the cover up of the behavior of clerics by engaging in transfers and promotions for the biggest offenders. Unfortunately, many of these promotions resulted in equal or more contact with other children, many of which became future victims. "The complicity of abuse went as far as the pontiff himself, when Pope Innocent X appointed a man known to be a prolific child abuser in charge of an order dedicated to the education of children [Piarist Fathers]." (*Fallen Order*, Karen Liebrich, Grove Publishing, New York, 2004)

Writings about the Activities of the Piarist Fathers in the Vatican Secret Archives

This complaint was leveled by Father Melchiorre, another priest also widely known for his sodomization of children from tribunal letters in the

Vatican Secret Archives: "Brother Gasparo della Assumptione di Norcia: I am told that he has been with children, unobservant of the Constitutions, glib of tongue, although appears to be improving." In *Fallen Order*, Karen Liebreich states that "If we are to believe Father Melchiorre, the school in Palermo was a fermenting pit of lust, sodomy and child-sex."

Noble Ideal of St. Joseph Calasanz, the Piarist Fathers and the Pious Schools

St. Joseph Calasanz had a noble ideal and many priests today follow it heroically. But the fact that the 'Heavenly Patron of Christian Schools' openly and knowingly participated in a cover-up of sodomy and sexual abuse against children is something Catholics and society should know.

Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley - The Gospel of the Holy Twelve

A New Testament Received by Reverend Gideon
Jasper Richard Ouseley

Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley rewrote from the Aramaic a gospel long thought to be lost through spiritual communications from beyond.

Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley

A priest with unusual gifts, Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley began to receive 'illuminations' which resulted in a NEW 'New Testament,' a book which Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley claimed to be the lost *Gospel of the Nazarenes* referred to repeatedly by innumerable Early Church Fathers before it disappeared shortly after the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. to all future written records after the books of the New Testament were to be formalized and canonized.

The Gospel of the Holy Twelve or the Gospel of the Perfect Life

In legends held for almost 2,000 years, the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* contained a different gospel of Jesus Christ which was distorted and changed by the bishops

during the Council of Nicaea to suit political ends. This gospel is believed to contain a much different Christianity than the one that has survived.

The Vegetarian Jesus

In the *Gospel of the Holy Twelve*, Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley rewrites the story of Christ in a Biblical format. But his Christ is vegetarian and supports a different theology of compassion than is currently taught in the church. As a result, in Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley's time (1870's), his work was condemned as blasphemy by the church.

But this view of Jesus Christ as a supporter of the vegetarian lifestyle is supported by other recently translated documents that had been held in the *Vatican Secret Archives* until the late 1940's. *The Essene Gospel of Peace* in four volumes holds a similar view of Jesus Christ and shares the vegetarian image of a Jesus who encourages a love for all creatures.

Jesus Christ, Emanuel Swedenborg, Anna Kingsford, Edward Maitland, Placidus

Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley claims that the text which resulted in the *Gospel of the Holy Twelve (or the Gospel of the Perfect Life)* was given to him in nightly 'illuminations,' dreams and visions in the night wherein Jesus Christ translated the text from the original Aramaic along with the help of several well known historical mystics - among them Emanuel

Swedenborg, Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland - and a Franciscan priest named Placidus.

Euthanasia as Taught by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of the Holy Twelve

Reverend Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley's Christ also supports Euthanasia, but only in the cases of extreme suffering, a view not held by the church today or in ages past.

The Original Image of Jesus Christ

While the origins of the *Gospel of the Holy Twelve a.k.a. The Gospel of the Perfect Life* remain mysterious, their contents are fascinatingly similar to the combined stories of the four gospels in the current New Testament with these and a few other simple differences in the picture of Christ.

As a gift to the publishers of this interesting work, Mr. Samuel Hopgood Hart sent a picture to them of what is considered to be the most accurate portrait of Jesus Christ. The image was copied from a carving made on an emerald owned by Tiberius Caesar. The Turks later gave this emerald to Pope Innocent VIII a copy of which is shown below.

Other Transmissions of 'Biblical' Texts

There are other texts of similar origin which claim to be rewritten versions of biblical texts such as *Oahspe*.

Dr. John Ballou Newbrough - Oahspe: A New Bible

The Unusual Work of Dr. John Ballou Newbrough

Dr. John Ballou Newbrough, created the unusual biblical type text entitled *Oahspe* - which means Sky, Earth and Spirit and released the work in 1881.

Dr. John Ballou Newbrough and Spiritualism

To say that Dr. John Ballou Newbrough was a unique man would be an understatement. A medical doctor and dentist, his life took an unusual turn when he began to notice a natural gift of extra sensory perception which he wished to pursue to a much greater degree. Dr. John Ballou Newbrough's work came during the time of the great Spiritualist movement, and many of his philosophies are similar to those found within that movement and another which came about during the same time period, that of Theosophy.

Experimenting with spiritualism, he found himself unimpressed with the vague and sometimes meaningless impressions given by mediums. But he also noted that in his own contacts with out-of-body intelligences, he was concerned that he was making contact with a low grade of spiritual being.

Living Asceticism to Reach a Higher Plane of Consciousness

Because of Dr. John Ballou Newbrough's desire to reach purer and higher consciousness, as well as, attain to higher planes of existence, he felt that he himself needed to be purified. Undergoing ten years of intensive spiritual purification, he began reaching higher planes of consciousness and was instructed to purchase a typewriter.

Oahspe is Born

The messengers who had come to him informed him of his mission to write a book, but made it clear that he was not to read any of it until it was finished. A year later, he was told to publish the work with the title *OAH SPE: A New Bible*.

What is Oahspe?

Defining *Oahspe* is not an easy task. It contains an unusual new history of the world, but also claims to complete many of the sacred traditions throughout the world, to give keys to the secrets which have not been known until the present time through *Oahspe*. Dr. John Ballou Newbrough discusses the why of religion: What brought about Confucianism in China, what brought Brahmanism to Hindus and Buddhists and why it was necessary for the western migrations to become Jewish and Christian.

Books of Oahspe

There are thirty six books in *Oahspe* covering such a wide range of topics as the history of the world and religion, but also painting an image of the heavenly realms and God's Kingdom utilizing terms that are new and unique to *Oahspe* and Dr. John Ballou Newbrough. *Oahspe* is a very large text written with similar scriptural notations as the *King James Bible* which also gives it a biblical appearance and feel.

The Faithists (a.k.a. Essenes of Kosmon) of Dr. John Ballou Newbrough and Oahspe

Dr. John Ballou Newbrough and the Oahspe movement still have followers today in a small group who calls themselves 'The Faithists,' or 'The Essenes of Kosmon.' Kosmon was a name Dr. John Ballou Newbrough received and described in *Oahspe* as the ancient name for the Earth.

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Fascinating Figures in World Religion

An Overview

By Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

<http://outofbodytravel.org>

Many of our most fascinating figures in World Religion are misunderstood and little known. Their true stories are more fascinating than all the legends that have erupted around them. Get to know the real St. Francis of Assisi, St. Margaret Mary, St. Padre Pio, Jacob Boehme, John Wesley, Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, Milarepa, Earth Store Bodhisattva - Kstigarbha, St. Joseph Calasanz (Founder of the Piarist Order), Gideon Jasper Richard Ouseley (The Gospel of the Holy Twelve), Dr. John Ballou (Oaspe) and the fascinating true story of King Arthur. These people were real people, real historical characters and the truth is more fascinating than the legends. This book gives you an overview and insight into a subject otherwise only understood through lengthy study.

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For more Information!

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