

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

BIBA KAYEWICH

Responsibilities

— Trump —

Rites

Marking the moments
that turn adolescents
into adults



Getting married, buying a first house, and having a baby are life events that have traditionally symbolized a major step into the world of adults.

JEFF MINICK

The online Britannica defines a rite of passage as a “ceremonial event, existing in all historically known societies, that marks the passage from one social or religious status to another.”

In the same article, the authors offer more specifics: “Many of the most important and common rites of passage are connected with the biological crises, or milestones, of life—birth, maturity, reproduction, and death—that bring changes in social status and, therefore, in the social relations of the people concerned. Other rites of passage celebrate changes that are wholly cultural, such as initiation into societies composed of people with special interests—for example, fraternities.”

In Western culture, a good many of these rites have traditionally involved a religious ceremony. For centuries, for example, a baby was baptized, adolescents received first communion and confirmation, a man and a woman married in a church, priests and religious brothers and sisters went through training and a ceremony confirming their new status, and the dying left this life with the last rites. In the Jewish faith, boys at about 13 years old underwent their bar mitzvah, a period of training in their faith followed by a ceremony that recognized their maturity and their ability to take part in religious services.

But what about today? Is there a ceremony or some sort of test which, in our more secular world, marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood?

Some Modern-Day Initiations

A rite of passage typically involves a journey from the familiar to the new, an expedition marked by education or some sort of ordeal or major event, and a transformation of the individual involved.

Our society has a plentitude of such rites, although they rarely go by that name. A 16-year-old studies the rules of the road, passes a test, and earns her driver’s license, thereby acquiring the legal right to drive two tons of metal, plastic, and rubber at 70 miles per hour on the highway.

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THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

Recollections of a Smoke Jumper Pilot

Ken Herrick flew many firefighters who parachuted down into wild, remote areas impossible to reach by vehicle



DEENA C. BOUKNIGHT

This past summer, 71-year-old Ken Herrick relived the eight years he spent as a smoke jumper pilot. As a volunteer with Yellowstone Nature Connection (YNC), a 2012-founded nonprofit in the town of West Yellowstone, Montana, and housed in the original, early 1900s-built ranger cabins, Herrick’s “job” was to share with children, individuals, and families about the importance of protecting our nation’s wilderness.

He showed visitors films about smoke jumping training, allowed anyone interested to put on a smoke jumper suit, and offered youngsters an opportunity to receive junior smoke jumper wings. And when

they found out that Herrick flew planes that actually carried smoke jumpers, eyes widened.

“It definitely was the most rewarding aspect of my career as a professional pilot,” said Herrick, who retired six years ago.

Although a full-time pilot for 40-plus years, Herrick flew his last “fire season” (typically May through September) as a smoke jumper pilot in West Yellowstone in 1984, opting for better financial security as a commercial pilot for the remainder of his career. He remembers the time fondly: “I just have so much respect and gratitude for smoke jumpers.”

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ALL PHOTOS BY DEENA C. BOUKNIGHT



Ken Herrick helps a family visiting Yellowstone Nature Connection try on smoke jumper gear, in Yellowstone, Mont., in June 2022.

ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

HISTORY

A Military Historian's Break From Tradition to Get the History Right

Historian Michael Livingston details groundbreaking work in “The Battle of Crécy: A Casebook”

DUSTIN BASS

As with any story, over time, the facts can become distorted, turning the truth into a fantasy. In everyday conversation, we call it gossip or hearsay. Perhaps there are remnants of the truth, but the entirety of the story is far from an honest retelling. History, even academic history, can suffer from the same errant problems. Michael Livingston, secretary general for the U.S. Commission on Military History and a professor at The Citadel, one of the nation's six senior military academies, is known for setting historical records straight, even records that have stood or been accepted for centuries. His book “Never Greater Slaughter: Brunanburh and the Birth of England,” about the Battle of Brunanburh, placed him on the map of historiography as a voice of intellectual and historical reason, as well as a strong backstop against historical hearsay.

From Agincourt to Crécy

His work on Brunanburh, a battle that took place in 937 and ultimately unified England, was one of controversy, as there were conflicting camps on exactly where the battle happened. But it was a theory about the Battle of Agincourt that caused his most recent discovery and controversy. This battle is one of the three most famous from the Hundred Years' War between England and France and is arguably most known for being one of the settings in William Shakespeare's “Henry V.” It's on the eve of this battle that King Henry V gives the fictional, yet memorable St. Crispin's Day speech.

Livingston, along with colleagues and fellow historians Kelly DeVries and Robert Woosnam-Savage, wished to test his theory regarding Henry V and the battlefield, but within minutes, his theory fell apart. The trip to northern France, however, wasn't a complete waste, as it was near the site of another famous battle of the Hundred Years' War that DeVries had some concerns about.

The three historians walked the traditional site of the Battle of Crécy, which led to an odds-defying victory for England and King Edward III while at the same time espousing the legend of Edward IV, famously known as the Black Prince. As the three walked the battlefield, it became painfully obvious that there were problems with the site, or as Livingston stated in an interview in an episode of “The Sons of History” podcast, problems that were “disastrous.”

“

A battle is its ground. You cannot understand the field of conflict until you understand the field.

—Michael Livingston, historian

Engraved depiction of the Battle of Crécy, one of the most important battles of the Hundred Years' War, fought on Aug. 26, 1346.



One question that Livingston and DeVries looked to answer was how the French lost the battle despite heavily outnumbering the English.



While legend states that the Black Prince Edward IV emerged from the Battle of Crécy a hero, Michael Livingston reveals a different reality.

'A Battle Is Its Ground'

“The more we walked the field, the more I was convinced that this isn't something where we need to rotate the battle, or if we turn it a little bit it will work,” he said. “It was like, ‘It's not here. Nothing about this makes sense.’”

From that point, Livingston and DeVries began their research into disproving the agreed-upon location and much of the folklore narratives that stemmed from the errant site. It didn't take long to begin formulating his thesis for disproving the centuries-old belief. He began by getting online.

“When I got back to my hotel, I got on the internet and looked up a dozen public and English translated sources and read them, and they said the battle was somewhere else,” he said.

In the ensuing months, DeVries and Livingston researched and walked the battlefield dozens of times, even in attempts to disprove their theory. The work culminated in their groundbreaking work titled “The Battle of Crécy: A Casebook,” which won the Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Military History. Just as with his work on Brunanburh, Crécy proved a point that Livingston hopes will echo throughout the history industry as much as it echoes throughout his classroom.

“A battle is its ground. You cannot understand the field of conflict until you understand the field,” Livingston said. “If you're on the wrong ground, then you don't know anything about the battle.”

More Than a Location Change

Proving that the battle took place somewhere else didn't merely change the battle's location; it changed much of the way we must look at the battle itself and the overall Hundred Years' War, especially how we view the English and the French.

“The main conclusion that people have come to with Crécy is that the French were stupid. They were getting mowed down for hours like they were Orcs in ‘The Lord of the Rings,’ just wandering into the line of fire,” the historian said. “That tainted people's understanding of the rest of the war.”

One question that Livingston and DeVries looked to answer was how the French lost the battle despite heavily outnumbering the English. Much of the credit has traditionally gone to the technological advantage that the English had against the French with their longbowmen. Although this did play a crucial role, it doesn't fully answer the question. The field, however, does.

“The way I reconstruct it is that the big-

gest thing here is that Edward III took a great position and the French king (Philip VI) lost command and control,” he said. “If you are a leader on the battlefield and you lose command and control, good things usually don't happen. It was an amazing storm of things going really well one way and really bad the other way.”

A Legend Is Born

Concerning the Black Prince, there's a legend that has grown over the centuries that Edward IV was a teenage Hercules of sorts, rushing from the frontlines into the fray of battle and killing countless French soldiers. The legend suggests that English knights warn the king that his son is hard pressed in battle and should be rescued, to which the king famously responds, “Let the boy earn his spurs [i.e., knighthood].” When the knights decide to disobey the king and rescue the prince anyway, they find him standing on the bodies of dead French soldiers, unharmed.

In reality, the Black Prince was indeed placed on the frontline, but apparently made the foolish decision to charge into the French despite the English longbowmen displaying their distinct advantage. Livingston said the reality was that the English prince was supposed to act as bait to lure the French into the firing line of the longbow. His decision to order a charge into the French, ultimately cutting off his own bowmen and placing himself in harm's way, nearly cost England the battle and the war.

The Black Prince was actually captured by the French during the melee. It was during this time, while the French soldiers and nobility were arguing about who would claim the ransom, that Edward IV began to sneak away and English soldiers came through to rescue him.

“The Hundred Years' War, for the minutes he was captured, was effectively over. He almost cost his father the entire thing,” Livingston said.

Nonetheless, the Battle of Crécy ended with an English victory and a young prince shrouded in a false, yet glorious myth.

The Choice Between Myth and Truth

“It makes sense why we get that story about earning his spurs because what we're getting is what we would now call spin,” Livingston said.

He said there was a truth that was deflected and devolved into a myth. The fact that this story is mere legend goes well with the fact that the battlefield is wrong, too. Livingston said when the location of the battle was corrected, several other things became corrected, too, such as the military

PUBLIC DOMAIN



King Edward III led the English to victory at the Battle of Crécy. Painted circa 1430–1440 by William Bruges.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



King Philip VI led the French troops in the Battle of Crécy, where he suffered an odds-defying defeat. He is depicted here with his first wife, Joan of Burgundy, 14th century, anonymous artist.

tactics and strategies from both sides, as well as the Black Prince story.

As much as he understands why there was spin from the English side, he said he also understands why the traditional battle sites such as those of Brunanburh and Crécy have been accepted for centuries.

“Traditions are hard to shake,” he said. “Somebody put a location on the map in the 17th century saying this is where the Battle of Crécy happened and everybody just assumed that that was right. If you get enough people repeating a lie often enough, people begin to believe that lie.”

He said historians have a difficult task of pushing back on what he terms “received knowledge.” This is perpetuated information, which may be incorrect, that historians pore over and then regurgitate, often unaware that it isn't true. And when a historian pushes back on such a notion, even with compelling evidence, the pushback from traditionalists is inevitable. Livingston has received pushback on both the Brunanburh and Crécy investigations. He even received death threats about the Brunanburh research. One of the moments of disagreement with Crécy, which was far less dramatic than the death threats of Brunanburh, was from one of his colleagues.

“One of my colleagues said, ‘In the end, the reason we know Mike can't be right is because if he is, that means we're all wrong,’” he said with a laugh. “I was like, ‘I don't think that's the winning argument you think it is.’ But I get it at the same time. As a historian, you are somewhat trained to build on the previous generations' work: ‘We know this, so let's build on that to get closer to finding out what happened.’ But that only works if the foundation is good.”

Livingston said he isn't concerned about the disagreements, nor is he ever concerned about what other historians or traditions say about a historical subject. He followed up the award-winning book he co-authored with DeVries with his solo work “Crécy: Battle of Five Kings,” which reiterates their findings and sets the argument on an even more solid foundation.

“The only thing that kept entering my mind was, ‘Is there something I'm missing? Surely they know something I don't.’ But it became more and more clear that, ‘No, they don't. They're just all assuming,’” he said. “It's not a competition; it's just that we need to get it right. I want to get the history right. I don't want to be right. I want to get it right.”

Dustin Bass is an author and co-host of The Sons of History podcast.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



A view of the beautiful Visby Cathedral in front of the Baltic Sea. The cathedral is made of limestone from Gotland and was designed as a three-aisled Romanesque basilica, influenced by German models (particularly from Rhineland). It's composed of a square chancel, a square western tower, and two octagonal towers. The domes of all three towers burned down in the 18th century and were replaced with the current ones.

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

Visby Cathedral

Gotland Island's Merchant Church

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

Once a strategic point for European merchants due to its proximity to the Baltic Sea, the old medieval town of Visby is filled with beautiful architecture. On the Swedish island of Gotland, one building in particular stands out: the Visby Cathedral.

Originally built as a church dedicated to St. Mary in the 12th century, it was rebuilt in the 13th century by the Hanseatic League, an organization formed by German merchant guilds. At that time, it dominated commercial activity in Northern Europe, and many Ger-

mans lived in Gotland.

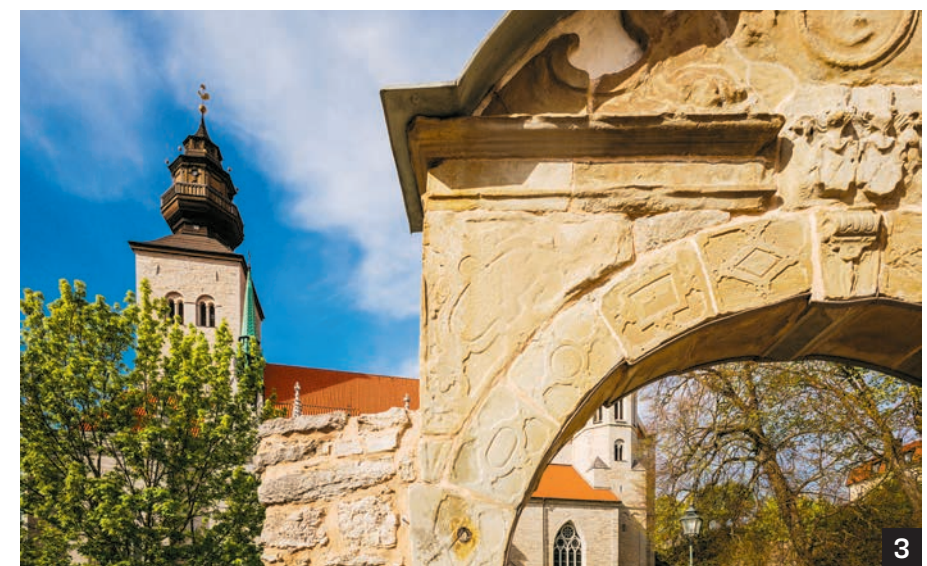
Used both as a place of devotion and as a warehouse for the merchants' goods, what makes the Visby Domkyrka (cathedral) special is that it survived an attack in 1525, when all the other churches of Visby burned down.

The church isn't only of archaeological importance, but it's also an architectural gem. The three-aisled Romanesque church seen today has had a few renovations over the years, most recently in 1985. Two towers and a choir were added between 1230 and 1250. In 1572, the church became a cathedral. Stylistically, the cathedral resembles

medieval German and French models in its Gothic architecture, as seen in the vaulted ceilings, pointed arches, and stained glass windows. Other church highlights include the organs, religious artwork, gargoyles, chandeliers, and modern stained glass windows.

Bright, spacious, and airy, it isn't only the most important church in Gotland, but it's also one of the best-preserved medieval churches in Sweden.

Ariane Triebswetter is an international freelance journalist, with a background in modern literature and classical music.



1. The facade of the great chapel on the south side of Visby Cathedral distinguishes itself with its extensive decoration on top of its undecorated walls. Original buttresses, pinnacles, and gargoyles combine to form an exquisite Gothic facade. In the upper part of the church's facade, most elements date from the 1903 renovation of architect Axel Haig.

2. None of the original medieval stained-glass windows remain. Here, we have three colorful stained-glass windows, framed by pointed arch windows and wooden flying buttresses. At the right of these Gothic windows is one of the church's six organs.

3. The south entrance of the cathedral is in the baroque style with a portal that contains the monogram of Christian IV of Denmark and the coat of arms of Jens Hög, a former governor of Gotland.

4. The church's interior, composed of two aisles and a central nave, is as beautiful as its exterior. Yellow plaster covers the walls and the vaults, and the rest is covered with white limestone. The interior is irregular because of renovations throughout the centuries.

TRUTH and TRADITION
In Our Own Words

The Woman Behind the Hotline (Part 2) A Ray of Hope



“It finally seemed like there was someone out there listening to me—to my parents—and hearing us.”

Teresa You
Manager, Customer Service

Dear Epoch VIP,

To say that The Epoch Times is a special media to me would be an understatement. It's been there for me ever since I was a little girl in China, and one of the few places where I know I can read the truth, regardless of what the government's media outlets may say or do.

When I was nine, my parents were arrested before my own eyes from our home in Beijing. They weren't criminals: just Falun Gong practitioners.

My mother, a hospital worker, had just been looking for a spiritual practice, a way to live around her many illnesses. My father, a professor and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) member, followed suit after he saw my mother's improvement in health.

When I was younger, my mom would tell me stories about how people would commit suicide during the Cultural Revolution because they were so humiliated. And before that, how the landlords had all of their money taken away, simply because everyone had to be "the same."

My parents used to tell me these stories about other people, but when the Falun Gong persecution began, **it finally happened to them too—even though my dad was a Party member who taught communism, socialism, and Marxism in school.**

In an instant, my parents were handcuffed and taken away from me to a labor camp, to a place I had no idea about. A place that the news never talked about. I had no idea what the authorities would do to my parents and it worried me.

I saw the brutal treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in labor camps for the first time in the Chinese-language edition of The Epoch Times (via a VPN). Though this knowledge made me extremely scared and gave me nightmares, it also brought a sense of security in finally knowing the kind of place my parents were taken to and that people like my parents were not forgotten. They wouldn't just disappear, no matter how much the CCP wanted them to.

Having lived through this experience, I can say there's no platform in China that gives a voice to the human rights victims. **For all the people who are persecuted and their loved ones—it's really a very alienating experience.**

But because there was a media like The Epoch Times, I felt less alone. It finally seemed like there was someone out there listening to me—to my parents—and hearing us.

When I was in high school, my parents (who had returned from labor camp by then) sent me to the United States as an exchange student. They told me to enjoy the freedom in America since by then, we all knew too well what a country without freedom for its people was like.

The American people that I've come across since then have been very nice, friendly, and helpful, and it's had a wonderful effect on me. But at the same time, it's always felt like some of them didn't really know what was going on outside of America.

In China, all of the elites and intellectuals—including those I saw on the news when I was younger—always said that due to differences in ideology, sooner or later there will be armed conflict between China and America. If you watch Chinese state-run news, the narrative (though it fluctuates based on the CCP's diplomatic needs) has always been anti-American.

It's not the Chinese people themselves, of course, that have something against America. But many Chinese people live in this environment where they're being brainwashed, and every day they're being told that America is the enemy. It was so strange to me that Americans, and the American government, didn't seem to have any reaction to this at all.

A media doesn't just keep things that people know about from being forgotten, like with my parents; it also brings into view things that people didn't previously know about, that they should know. That is why I take my job at The Epoch Times very seriously—so that the people I've met in America can have the knowledge they need to protect their freedom, and the people living in fear in China can have the knowledge they need to win it back.

In Truth and Tradition,

Teresa You
The Epoch Times



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