



Lives of the Saints

James David Audlin

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I think the time has come to embalm these stories and commit them to the museum of the written word. I beg you, though, to bear in mind that these stories are meant not at all to be read silently. Try reading them aloud, especially before a good campfire, and see if the mummies do not escape their wrappings and walk about in the firelight, as strange and beautiful as when first they came to me. These stories frequently border on the improbable, if not the outright fantastic; I have been lifelong a writer of stories that leave behind the mundane, ordinary, “realistic” world of our everyday experience, and I believe that such stories can pull our minds out of the ruts of culturally conditioned thinking and propel us into new ways of understanding and perhaps even of being. The common theme, I believe, is the idea of sainthood. But a saint, to me, is the same as a bodhisattva or a medicine man or woman – such a person is not necessarily associated with a certain particular religious tradition, or any at all. Such a person, rather, is one who knows how to walk the “pathless path” and guides others on it. A saint is one who has left behind the sound and fury of this physical world, who has transcended self entirely, and who thus can guide others on the path to transcendence. The stories herein partake of motifs from several spiritual traditions, however I do not mean any of them to be representative, or even evocative, of any particular tradition, but rather of the universal theme of transcendence that is found at the deepest level in all traditions, at the level where particularities of creed and dogma are left far behind and one approaches the unspeakable Truth that underlies all being. I mean this collection to resemble somewhat, and to serve as my humble bouquet offered to, those wonderful Mediæval “Lives of the Saints”, and similar fantastic gatherings of tales found in sacred traditions worldwide, as well as the parables of Jesus and others, and traditional Talmudic, Sufi, Taoist, Native African, and Native American stories. As Gautama Buddha said, “To reach a destination you have never found, you must take a path you do not know.” --from the Introduction

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