

## Hagiology of the Halo

History has it that Tibetan monks, fleeing persecution or simply seeking a life of solitary meditation, hid in the myriad caves of the Himalayas -- but there, while studying their sacred scrolls, were unable to keep candles burning amid the relentless winds.

Deprived of light, they concentrated on reading their scriptures in the dark.

At first, nothing.

Monks embedded in endless onyx. Yet they never ceased trying to light the darkness with themselves.

Then, beyond the limits of patience, they felt the heat of their bodies pool in their feet; rise through their legs and torsos; channel into their chests; and, at last, fuse into their heads -- forming a dim illumination around their faces: a lamp of the self to see the word of God.

Later, the halo drifted from the caves, crossed the mountains and scattered into the attendant landscapes of its reappearance.

Now the halo remains its own sign -- announcing and anointing the presence of the venerated.

Simply put, a halo is produced by compressing darkness and squeezing out the juice of light, which, when exposed to air, paint, and the heat of adoring gazes, congeals to a residue of eternity: God's fingerprint left pressed against a face.

Children on their way to martyrdom, it is said, produced the greatest light from their frail forms. In many cases, they caused torches to drop and swords to veer away, blinded by a reflection brighter than their blades.

Even today, a halo can be found concealed within our lives, such as inside a restaurant, waiting for someone to sit down and notice it.

The plate is merely a pretext for having a halo to contemplate, and to evoke light in the darkness we huddle inside.