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**The Life of the Saint and the Animal:  
Asian Religious Influence in the Medieval Christian West**

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**Abstract**

This paper seeks to challenge the notion that European Christianity was untouched by Asian religious influence during much of the Common Era. Rather, I propose that certain Indian ethical tenets were incorporated into Christian ascetic practices as a consequence of interaction with heretical intermediaries. In medieval Europe, the spiritual kinship of animals and humans was widely taken for granted by common folk and heretical clerics. Indic religious doctrines on this subject may have diffused gradually into Western popular religion even while the Church worked systematically through official channels to prevent their transmission. Inspired by the work of Graeme MacQueen, I examine evidence of saint-animal interactions in several medieval hagiographies. These saints' lives model ethical responsibility toward nonhuman life. I argue that Buddhist *Jātaka* stories provide the prototype for these characters. Ultimately, similar ethical tenets were integrated into orthodox Christian asceticism by Saint Francis of Assisi. Some of Francis's inspiration may have originated in Asia, later carried to Europe along the Silk Road as doctrines of the Manichees: secretive, syncretistic heretics continuously persecuted by the Church over the better part of a millennium.

*Introduction: Eurocentrism and the History of Religions*

In his seminal critique of Eurocentric historiography, the geographer James Blaut suggested that *Eurocentrism* is a term of relatively recent origin (Blaut 1993: 47). Nonetheless, it was one century ago that religion scholar Albert Edmunds coined the term *Romocentrism* to describe the ignorance of European scholars about the extent of Asian influence upon Western religions and cultures (Edmunds 1908: I, 12). Edmunds states

that 'the Mediterranean culture [is] a cage for the historical mind' (1908: I, 149), and further suggests that knowledge of the Greater Asian religious milieu is crucial background for Near East history. Edmunds's scholarship repudiated Eurocentric views assuming that Western religions developed in isolation from Asia.

Despite advances by historians of religion, a subtle bias persists, prompting Indian theologian R.S. Sugirtharajah to write: 'Eurocentrism works on a double premise. It looks to Greece for its intellectual roots, and dips into its Judaic heritage for its religious origins' (1999: 113). He applauds contemporary historians of religion for opening biblical scholarship to other disciplines' critical methods (such as anthropology), and for acknowledging longstanding biases of Christian interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Sugirtharajah is sharply critical of the same scholars for assuming the religious primacy of the Near East, and ignoring the multi-cultural context of Greater Asia. Sugirtharajah, Edmunds, and other scholars favor a revised paradigm for the study of early Christianity allowing for the possibility that some Eastern religions (especially Buddhism) were intimately involved in the formation and development of Western religions (especially Christianity; see also Garbe 1911; Bruns 1971; Hanson 2005). However, this movement has sparked a century of polemic opposition from scholars in both Eastern and Western traditions (Derrett 2002).<sup>2</sup>

This essay extends the revisionist critique (in favor of Buddhist influence) to the European High Middle Ages (c. 1000–1300 CE). In contrast to Classical Antiquity, the study of medieval Christianity is still a sphere thoroughly pervaded by Eurocentric biases, despite the longstanding recognition that several major Buddhist texts underwent gradual Christianization through numerous medieval translations, obscuring their Buddhist origins. Thus, Buddhist scriptures in translation were popular Christian hagiographies, circulated in many languages throughout medieval Europe. The legend of Barlaam and Josaphat is the most

1. Sugirtharajah applauds the recent 'history of religions' approach to biblical scholarship for a healthy recontextualization of early Christianity within the Hellenistic and Judaic contexts. He criticizes the exclusion of Asian religions from this recontextualization.

2. Derrett notes an enduring stand-off between specialists on opposite sides of this debate: 'The protagonists in this warfare can be classified as: "maximalists", who find a Buddhist idea beneath innumerable Christian verses; "minimalists", who grudgingly admit that some "influence" must have occurred; and "nihilists", who deplore all suggestions of contact' (Derrett 2002: 518). I advocate a middle way between maximalism and minimalism.

famous of these; Saint Josaphat is actually Gautama Buddha, whose name gradually morphed into that of Josaphat.

The widespread popularity of such texts need not indicate corresponding sympathy toward Buddhist doctrines on the part of the medieval Church. The enforcement of Christian doctrinal orthodoxy resulted in subtle revisions of the Christianized Buddhist texts favoring radically different interpretations, even contrary to Buddhist teachings (see MacQueen 1998, 2002). But the reason for such animosity toward Buddhist ideas was not mere contempt for an unfamiliar, alien, foreign religion. Rather, the Church was profoundly antagonistic toward its most familiar and local rivals, proponents of various European heresies originating in the East, loosely termed *Manichaeian* or *neo-Manichaeian*. Certain Manichaeian doctrines resonated strongly with corresponding Buddhist doctrines. Thus, the revision of Buddhist texts by orthodox Christian translators required that certain portions deemed heretical were either stricken or altered. Foremost among these problem areas, according to MacQueen (2002), were the shared Manichaeian and Buddhist ethical teachings regarding the spiritual kinship of living beings.

This essay has three sections. Section one covers the role of Manichaeism as intermediary between Buddhism and Christianity and the controversy surrounding the relationship between European Cathars and Asian Manichees. Section two reviews European Christian hagiographies of Buddhist origin and evidence that the Manichees introduced these texts to Christendom. Church officials identified heretics by their refusal to slaughter animals, and descriptions of such episodes are found in early examples of medieval Buddhist-Christian literature, but not in later examples, indicating possible revisions designed to combat heresy.<sup>3</sup> The third section investigates the significance of heresy in the transmission of Buddhist ethical tenets to medieval Europe, concluding that the Franciscan tradition represents a compromise between orthodox theology and heretical ethics.

### *Manichaeism in the Crossroads of Eurasia*

Persia and neighboring Armenia, as Silk Road buffer states between Europe and Asia, are of crucial importance in the comparative history of religions (see Edmunds 1908: II, 266). Most significantly, the third-century Persian prophet Mani founded Manichaeism, the quintessential religion of the Silk Road. Manichaeism assumed the cosmological order of the strict Judeo-Christian Gnostic Baptist sect of Mani's birth; thus he

3. Section two is indebted to the work of Graeme MacQueen (1998, 2002).

claimed to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. The young prophet was also profoundly influenced by the dualistic theology of Zoroastrianism (the state religion of Persia) and by the ethical teachings of Buddhist missionaries. As one of the most intentionally syncretistic faiths in history, Manichaeism claimed to be the fulfillment of all true religions: rivers feeding the universal ocean of Manichaeism (see Jonas 1963: 207-208). The adherents of this new faith could adopt the guise of any one of these recognized religions, depending on the circumstances. This chameleonic character was rooted in a sincere universalist orientation. It also served as an adaptive mechanism in the face of perennial adversity. Christian, Zoroastrian, and later Muslim authorities viewed the religion as subversive and imposed strict punitive measures when Manichees were discovered. Intentional syncretism, combined with the secretive nature of Gnostic initiation, meant that Manichees were difficult to distinguish from neighboring religionists.

Manichaeism was messianic in outlook and ascetic in character, similar to both Buddhism and monastic Christianity. Mani was viewed simultaneously as the Second Coming of Christ and the Future Buddha Maitreya. Resembling Zoroastrianism, Mani's religion described both a good God and an evil one. Manichees believed in two eternal opposite principles, Light and Darkness. Light is consubstantial with God and Jesus Christ and all creatures' living souls. Darkness is likewise with the material world and the false God (Gnostic Demiurge) who created this world to imprison the light. The eventual total separation of the two principles will lead to the restoration of the original cosmic order. Presaging Mohammed and Islam, Mani was hailed as 'Paraclete', 'Messenger of God', and 'Seal of the Prophets' (Welburn 1998: 35).<sup>4</sup>

India's contribution to Manichaeism is strongly reflected in the ethical tenets of nonviolence toward all life and vegetarianism.<sup>5</sup> Manichaeism became the most successful Gnostic church in history because of its transformative ability. Claiming both Buddhist and Christian identities, Manichees on the medieval Silk Road acted as intermediaries between Buddhists and Christians (Scott 1995: 151; Klimkeit 1981: 50). The

4. Islam also resembles Manichaeism in its claim to be the fulfillment of all true religions, whether Jewish, Christian, or Sabian (lit. 'Baptist', i.e. Persian Gnostic).

5. Buddhist tenets of nonviolence do not always include vegetarianism. However, the merits of vegetarianism are frequently espoused within East-Asian Mahayana texts, and the question is manifest in the debate about whether the Buddha's last supper consisted of pork or mushrooms. The discrepancy first appears in Chinese sources after the fifth century (Obeyesekere 2003: 33-34). A possible Manichaean association with Jain doctrines of nonviolence is suggested by Richard C.C. Fynes (1996).

doctrinal flexibility allowed it to transmit ideas between the orthodox systems from which it borrowed. Furthermore, the Manichaean canon included texts of Buddhist *and* Christian origin.

Classical Manichaeism was briefly popular in the Mediterranean region during the fourth century, where the most famous Manichee was Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE). With the establishment of Nicene Orthodoxy by Emperor Theodosius at the ecumenical council of Constantinople in May of 381 CE, Manichaeism was officially declared a heresy and monks were subject to execution. Augustine subsequently produced vitriolic anti-Manichaean rhetoric after his conversion to Roman Catholicism c. 386 CE. Thereafter, the heresy was vigorously suppressed, and disappeared for several centuries. It is from Augustine's writings that Western civilization has inherited an overwhelmingly negative view of Manichaeism.<sup>6</sup>

Further east along the Silk Road in Central Asia, classical Manichaeism was practiced continuously for more than a millennium, until it faded away after about the fourteenth century CE. The resurgence of Gnostic Christian dualism in the European High Middle Ages was commonly called Manichaeism by its contemporaries. Like the earlier Gnostic dualists of the same name, these Manichees were led by a class of initiated preachers who practiced strict vegetarianism. But most historians prefer the term neo-Manichaean, arguing that historical links to classical Manichaeism are tenuous. Nonetheless, obfuscation of these links is consistent with the shape-shifting nature of Manichaeism. Furthermore, there is possible historical continuity between the classical Manichaean communities of late medieval Asia, and the numerous neo-Manichaean communities of Asia Minor, the Balkans, and Western Europe. Stemming from this vast network of heretical congregations were the widespread popular religious views regarding the spiritual merits of vegetarianism and the kinship of living beings.

#### *On the Question of the Authenticity of Neo-Manichaeism*

The revival of Gnostic Christian dualism in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Western Europe was fueled by the migration of heretical clerics from the Balkans, who founded churches in France and Italy (Lambert

6. I never use the term 'heresy' in the pejorative way that those who designated Mani and his followers as heretics have done. I use it as a term to refer to religious beliefs and practices out of favor/vilified by state religious institutions, who established and enforced what they considered to be truth (the orthodox position). By this definition, Manichaeism was a heresy throughout most of its career, with the exception of the ninth-century Uyghur kingdom of Turfan (in modern Xinjiang) where the tradition attained the status of state religion (orthodoxy).

1998: 1-3). European neo-Manichaean sects were similar to classical (Asiatic) Manichaeism in theology and organization, and their adherents were called Manichees by their contemporaries, but they apparently did not pay reverence to the person of Mani. Because of this lack of emphasis on Mani, it is debatable to what extent these medieval Manichees had authentic Manichaean roots, or whether, alternatively, they represented an independent European variety of Christian dualism.<sup>7</sup> In his 1998 opus *The Cathars*, Malcolm Lambert argues vehemently for the latter view.

The Cathar or Albigensian dualist heresy of France and Italy was the most notorious of the neo-Manichaean sects in this period. Lambert attributes the growth of Western European Catharism directly to the influence of missionary activity by the contemporaneous Bogomil dualist heretics of Bulgaria. Lambert's theory is incomplete because he refuses to consider the possible Asiatic origins of Bulgarian Bogomilism. Lambert claims that classical (Asiatic) Manichaeism is irrelevant to the study of neo-Manichaeism. Thus, neo-Manichaeism was allegedly indigenous to Europe and did not draw strength from sources beyond European Christendom. In calling dualism 'one of the perennial religions of mankind', Lambert (1998: 314) implies that Manichaean theology is akin to a psycho-spiritual archetype and may appear spontaneously anywhere. Yet he argues that despite the Cathars' sincere claims to Christian apostolic succession, their Christian dualism had little in common with authentic Christianity, but much more 'with Eastern religious teachers, the bonzes and fakirs of Japan and India or the adepts of the Orphic Mysteries' (1998: 314). Lambert's Orientalism denies common ground between Eastern and Western religions, erecting a conceptual wall between Near East and Far East, precisely what scholars like Sugirtharajah (1999) and Edmunds (1908) warn against.

Steven Runciman, in *The Medieval Manichee*, is less severe in separating Asian and European spheres, but classifies European dualism as a distinct movement from classical or Asiatic Manichaeism (Runciman 1961: vii). In his view, the vocabulary of the medieval Church included the use of *Manichee* as an epithet for *heretic* because of memories of the Manichees of Late Antiquity, not in recognition of authentic Manichaeism. But tracing the roots of Bogomilism in the Near East, he notes that

7. Some medieval heretics denounced the prophet Mani. This does not disprove their Manichaean affiliation, as there were bona-fide Manichaeans who anathematized Mani. Fifth-century Manichaean author Aristocritus called Mani 'a wicked man' (Obolensky 1948: 43). This behavior is rational in a climate of persecution. Public dissociation between the vilified heresiarch and his followers allowed them greater liberty.

the movement had roots in Armenia, among the Paulician sect closely aligned historically to Manichaeism in neighboring Persia. Runciman does not deny this Manichaean influence, but suggests it was greatly diluted, downplaying the Manichaean legacy. Just because Manichaean roots are remote, however, does not mean that the later European flowering of neo-Manichaeism is unrelated, any more than the pedigree of modern American evangelicalism should be called into question by virtue of its remoteness from first-century Palestine.

Dimitri Obolensky convincingly argues the alternative view that *authentic* Manichaeism was the direct ancestor of neo-Manichaeism in its various manifestations including Paulicianism in Armenia, Bogomilism in Bulgaria, and Catharism in Western Europe. The Paulician reform and simplification of Mani's teachings brought neo-Manichaeism much closer to orthodox Christianity, yet Obolensky notes this process was consistent with the *modus operandi* of Manichaean syncretism whereby persecuted Manichees blended with the dominant religious community (Obolensky 1948: 43-45).<sup>8</sup> Bogomilism and subsequently Catharism both grew from this Paulician seed, and Obolensky concludes that Bogomils are the missing link between the Cathars of France and the Manichees of Asia (1948: 289). Obolensky establishes the historical influence of classical Manichaeism upon later European Christian dualism.

At the twelfth- and thirteenth-century peak of the neo-Manichaean movement, there was a network of dualist churches from France to the Balkans, and Eastern missionaries were largely responsible for the revival of this designated heresy in Western Europe (Lambert 1998). It is helpful to note the possible continuity of Manichaean ideas in Western Europe from the time of Augustine, who actively proselytized as a Manichee in France during the fourth century (Barnstone and Meyer 2003: 729). In 385, Priscillian, a southern French Manichaean ascetic, was the first on record to be executed for heresy in Europe (Drees 1992: 26). It might not be a coincidence that the revival of neo-Manichaean heresy took root in the soil of Southern France, where earlier Manichaean communities had flourished.

Finally, heresy has influenced the rhetorical position of orthodoxy. Despite Augustine's thorough rejection of heretical doctrines, he brought a pseudo-Manichaean dualism to the Western Church via his

8. Related processes during the same period transformed Manichaeism in Central Asia into what may be accurately characterized as a heretical form of Buddhism (Klimkeit 1981). Curiously, Obolensky's work supports parallel phenomena in Asia Minor, while still discounting Buddhist influences in this Paulician syncretism of Manichaean, Christian, Jewish, and pagan traditions (Obolenski 1948: 139).

interpretation of the book of Genesis. His teachings on Original Sin, for example in his work *Confessions* (c. 397–401 CE), portray human flesh as essentially corrupt. The Augustinian origin of the doctrine is clear because it is not common to Jewish or Eastern-Christian interpretations of the Hebrew Bible (Palmer 2001: 175–76). Original Sin is a doctrine that might appeal to a former Manichee. Augustine's writings were intended to persuade a Manichaean audience to convert, as he himself had. As a rhetorician, Augustine identified with his audience and employed Manichaean terminology (like the title *Paraclete* for Holy Spirit), hoping to win over his former co-religionists (Konzé 2001: 129). A similarly pragmatic use of heretical ideas by the Church, particularly by Saint Francis of Assisi, occurred during the neo-Manichaean revival of the High Middle Ages.

*The Manichaean Legacy: Christian Sainthood of the Bodhisattva*

In the most profound case of Buddhist influence on medieval Christianity, the Buddha himself (Siddhartha Gautama) became a popular saint in both the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. A discussion of the Manichaean role in this process follows.

An adaptation of Gautama Buddha's life story was holy scripture among the Manichees of Central Asia. The precise age and pedigree of this version is unknown but fragments were found in the mid-twentieth century in the former Uyghur (Old Turkish) Manichaean kingdom of Turfan, in Chinese Turkestan (Lang 1967: xvii). Translated into Arabic by heterodox Arab monotheists in the eighth or ninth century, it retained strong Manichaean influences (Ikegami 1999: 17–19). It kept an essentially Buddhist character but was 'creatively recast...in a Near Eastern monotheistic mold' (MacQueen 1998: 154).

The further Christianization of this Life of Buddha took place when it was translated into Georgian, in the ninth or tenth century, probably by a monk in one of the Caucasian monastic Christian communities of the plateau between Armenia and the Black Sea (Ikegami 1999: 20). Armenia was a stronghold of Paulicianism (reformed or Christianized Manichaeism) between the seventh and ninth centuries (Obolensky 1948: 17). Thus, both the Manichaean-Buddhist scriptures, and Manichaeism itself, became Christianized in Armenia during the same era. Paulicianism subsequently spread throughout Asia Minor, and influenced the later development of Bogomilism and Catharism. Simultaneously, the diverse Christian communities of Asia Minor were instrumental in the transformation of the Buddha into a Christian hero and saint. From Armenia, the famous story, likewise the heresy, were transmitted westward throughout European Christendom.

During the tenth or eleventh century, the text was translated from Georgian into Greek, and in the mid-eleventh century from Greek into Latin and subsequently many other European languages. The Arabic 'Budasaḥ' (Bodhisattva) became Georgian 'Yudasaph' or 'Iodasaph', because of confusion between Arabic 'B' and 'Y/I'. This name became Greek 'Ioasaph', and then Latin 'Josaphat' (Ikegami 1999: 19). MacQueen (1998: 145) characterizes a gradual transformation from a narrative of emancipation through enlightenment to one of salvation through faith in God. The Buddha, Josaphat, became a pagan prince of India, converted to Christianity by a wandering monk named Balahvar (Greek) or Barlaam (Latin). This figure corresponds to the traditionally anonymous monk, the fourth sight of Siddhartha Gautama, who inspired the Bodhisattva to follow his righteous path.<sup>9</sup> 'Balahvar' is a corruption of Buddhist Sanskrit vocative '*bhagavān*' applied to saints (Ikegami 1998: 19).

During this period, orthodox Christian translators were conscious that certain passages contained heretical doctrines, and deleted them. Notably, references to nonviolence toward animals were omitted, likely because they appeared Manichaean in the eyes of the translator (MacQueen 2002: 127-34). Manichees and Cathars were strict vegetarians, and, like Buddhist monks, they refrained from killing animals. Orthodox Christian monks lacked similar prohibitions against killing animals. Christian authorities used this knowledge to find dualist heretics hidden in their midst; a group of heretics was condemned to death in 1051 in what is now Germany for refusing to kill chickens (Lambert 1998: 9).<sup>10</sup>

As Graeme MacQueen points out, a similar killing test has a long history in combating Manichaeism, employed in Persia by Zoroastrian authorities in the fourth century and by Muslim authorities in the ninth century.<sup>11</sup> The original Manichaean-Arabic version of the life of Josaphat contains a passage where the Budasaḥ refuses his father's directive to sacrifice a sheep; the Manichaean significance of this scene would not have been lost on orthodox translators, and the conspicuous absence of the passage from Christianized versions of the text is not coincidence but a deliberate omission, according to MacQueen (2002: 127-34). Josaphat

9. The first three sights were the old man, the sick man, and the corpse.

10. Vegetarianism was relatively common among orthodox Christian ascetics, but not because of sympathy toward animals. Therefore, for orthodox monks, killing animals was acceptable even though eating them was not necessarily. This prevented Church authorities from using the consumption of meat as a litmus test (MacQueen 2002).

11. Ironically, similar methods were employed by earlier pagan Romans to condemn Christians to death; a refusal to eat meat sacrificed before an idol constituted proof of Christian blasphemy against pagan gods.

passed the test by Manichaean standards, by refusing to do harm to another living creature. The same refusal would have revealed Manichaean sympathies and constituted a failure in the eyes of orthodox Christians (MacQueen 2002: 130).

Keiko Ikegami reveals that Christian translators again purged Buddhist elements from the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat when the text was translated into Japanese in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Jesuit translators obviously recognized the affinity between Buddha and Josaphat when they changed the structure of the text to avoid direct reference to the four Buddhist sights.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it was difficult to ignore the commonality between Josaphat and the Buddha, when the two figures were directly compared. Ironically the translators used 'Fonzon', a Japanese word for Buddha, to refer to the pagan gods that Josaphat rejected (Ikegami 1999: 121, 127).

Although Christian translators purged conspicuously Manichaean and Buddhist elements from this story, the text remained very popular among the neo-Manichaeans of Western Europe. As D.M. Lang notes:

...the alacrity with which the Cathars or Albigensians of southern France—themselves a late offshoot of the Manichaean world movement—adopted the Christian Barlaam romance as one of their own favourite tracts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries provides further testimonies to the work's affinities with Mani's own authentic teachings (1967: xviii).

The popularity of this Manichaean-Buddhist text among the Cathar faithful reflects common ground between neo-Manichaean and classical Manichaean thought. Runciman likewise notes the popularity of this 'Buddhist-Gnostic' story among the Cathars, calling it 'almost holy writ' (Runciman 1961: 21). 'But the religious import must not be ranked too high', he insists, because the story contains 'a practical but not a theological moral' (1961: 186). With an overriding concern for theological morals, Runciman reveals a Eurocentric obsession with theology. On the contrary, Buddhism is not primarily concerned with issues of theology per se, dealing with questions of ultimate origins.<sup>13</sup>

12. Apparently the earliest evidence of explicit recognition of the affinity between Josaphat and Buddha was in a Venetian editor's notation of Marco Polo's thirteenth-century manuscript. Noteworthy is that this resemblance was detected immediately after Polo's reference to the four sights of the old man, sick man, corpse, and monk (Polo 1958: 283).

13. Buddhist distaste for theological speculation is demonstrated in the parable of the poison arrow in the *Samyutta Nikaya*. A fool seeks the identity of his attacker as he lays dying of a poison arrow. Likewise, suffering and death progress ceaselessly as mortals speculate about unknowable theological matters (Smith and Novak 2004: 26).

*The Bodhisattva's Many Incarnations: Jātaka Tales in the West*

Runciman's professed doubts about the extent of Buddhist influence in Europe would be more compelling if the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat were alone among the Buddhist stories transmitted to medieval Christendom. Such is not the case. The life story of Josaphat is only the most important example of the fusion of Buddhist and Christian ideas, possibly facilitated by Manichaean intermediaries. A number of popular religious stories in medieval Europe were of Buddhist origin, including Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* and its numerous analogues, derived ultimately from a Buddhist birth-story, the *Vedabbha Jātaka* (Rawlinson 1975: 440).<sup>14</sup> *Jātaka* tales are a standardized genre of Buddhist literature in which the 'story of the present' provides the framework for the 'story of the past', followed by a prophetic revelation or vow; the Buddha typically describes the details of his past lives to a present audience.

The biographies of Saint Christopher, Saint Eustace, and Saint Hubert also have Buddhist *Jātaka* precedents, demonstrated in iconography and texts (Amore 1978: 123-25; Garbe 1911). Parallel to MacQueen's (2002) sagacious analysis of Josaphat's killing test, I suggest that the shared dramatic narrative of Saints Eustace and Hubert also illustrates a gradual inversion of the Buddhist moral of the original tale concerning the spiritual kinship of living beings. Both Christian versions (Hubert and Eustace) adopt the plot of the Indian narrative, where an irreligious royal hunter is humbled and converted while pursuing a radiant deer. And while the plot itself resembles a killing test, the later Christian version (Hubert) nonetheless deletes the moral of the Buddhist original; that the killing of animals is inherently unjustifiable. A second killing test was also conspicuously omitted from this later Christian version, suggestive of waning Manichaean influence over time. A summary follows:

## Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka:

*The Tale of King Brahmadata and the Banyan Deer*

Once upon a time, when Brahmadata was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born a deer. At his birth he was golden of hue; his eyes were like round jewels; the sheen of his horns were as of silver... Attended by five hundred deer, he dwelt in the forest under the name of King Banyan Deer... In those days the king of Benares was passionately fond of hunting, and always had meat at every meal... At first sight of the bow, the deer would dash off trembling for their lives, but after receiving two or three wounds they grew weary and faint and were slain. The deer told this to the Bodhisatta,...who said 'the deer are being destroyed in great

14. The 'Ass in the Lion's Skin' or *Sīha-Chamma Jātaka*, appears in Shakespeare's *King John*, and in *Aesop's Fables* (Rhys-Davids 1880: iv-vi).

numbers; and, though they cannot escape death, at least let them not be needlessly wounded'... And therewithal he went himself to the place of execution and lay down... 'I could not pass the doom of one on to another...' 'My lord the golden king of the deer' the king said 'never yet saw I, even among men, one so abounding in charity, love and pity as you' (Cowell 1895: 39-40).<sup>15</sup>

The silver-horned deer then persuaded the king to spare the lives of all four-footed creatures, birds, and fish in the vast kingdom. 'After thus interceding with the king for the lives of all creatures' only then did the bodhisattva reveal the fullness of his teachings to the newly converted sovereign. Returning on successive days for tutelage in the subtleties of the Law with 'the grace and charm that marks a Buddha', the king was directed: 'Walk in righteousness...so that when this earthly body is dissolved, you may enter the bliss of heaven' (Cowell 1895: 40-41). Two medieval European Christian hagiographies are derived from this *Jātaka* tale composed at an uncertain date around the beginning of the Common Era.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Legend of Saint Eustace*

In the reign of Trajan there lived a king named Placidus, who was commander-in-chief of the Emperor's armies. He was of a very merciful disposition, but a worshipper of idols... As he was one day following the chase, he discovered a herd of deer, amongst which was one remarkable for the beauty and magnificence of its form. Separating itself from the rest...the stag at length scaled a lofty precipice, and Placidus approaching to it as near as he could, considered how to secure it. But, as he regarded it with fixed attention, there appeared, impressed upon the centre of the brow, the form of a cross, which glittered with greater splendour than a meridian sun. Upon this cross there was an image of Christ suspended; and...utterance was supplied to the stag, which thus addressed the hunter: 'Why dost thou persecute me, Placidus? For thy sake have I assumed the shape of this animal; I am Christ'... Placidus, filled with terror, fell from

15. I cite an accessible Pāli version, which is unlikely to be the actual source adopted for transmission by the Manichees, since Buddhist literature in Central Asia was translated from Sanskrit, Gāndhārī, and possibly other Prakrit languages besides Pāli.

16. The core of the *Jātaka* narratives was established by the third century BCE, and continued to develop organically until circa the fifth century CE. Thus, it is an important genre within both the Theravada and Mahayana canons. Chakravarty cogently describes the difficulty in dating *Jātaka* literature, which is 'attributable mainly to its many layers. A collection of stories is intrinsically open-ended, and can grow (as the *Jātakas* clearly did) over many hundreds of years' (1993: 44). The genre is also associated with a lack of sectarian dogma, lending itself to transmission beyond particular schools.

his horse... Christ explains his divinity [and said] 'Go into the city and be baptized; return on the morrow hither, where I will appear again' (Gaster 1894: 336-37).

This story is set in the second century CE, but it was composed in the ninth century, most likely in Syriac, the liturgical language of both Manichaeism and Persian Christianity.<sup>17</sup> This story was included along with the legends of Saints Baarlam and Josaphat, Christopher, and Francis, in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, a popular thirteenth-century novel. Furthermore, just like the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat, the first Christian version of the legend of Eustace is popularly attributed to the eighth-century scribe, John of Damascus (Heffernan 1975: 65). Fully Christianized versions of both legends were extant by the ninth or tenth centuries.

Moses Gaster (1894: 337, 340) and Richard Garbe (1911: 544-45) succinctly summarize the sequence of motifs shared by the Buddhist and Christian deer-hunter legends. The king is a keen hunter and of a merciful disposition but ignorant of true religion. A glorious deer with sparkling horns departs from the herd and exposes itself to mortal danger in order to speak to the king, revealing itself to be the incarnation of the world-savior. Meeting with the deer on successive days, the king is converted and receives religious instruction from the animal, and upon death attains heavenly reward.

The second section of Eustace's hagiography is borrowed from a different *Jātaka* tale, the *Visvantara-Jātaka*, whereby King Placidus (Eustace) is cast in the role of Prince Visvantara, the penultimate incarnation of the bodhisattva. The common elements of both stories are summarized as follows. A subordinate royal of a supreme empire loses his position, wealth, wife, and children, surrendering all valued possessions and submitting willingly to a series of tests by the king of heaven (God or Indra), and ultimately having his family returned to him (Garbe 1911: 548-49). The traditional view of Western scholars has been that the model for this story is the biblical book of Job (for example, Heffernan 1975).<sup>18</sup> Contradicting this view, Garbe identifies a suggestive reference

17. The oldest extant copies of many hagiographies are Syriac texts, which 'crossed and re-crossed linguistic boundaries' with great facility (Brock 2008: 181). Despite the fact that Syriac is 'the third-largest surviving literature of late antiquity', it has been neglected by Classics departments with Greco-Roman orientations, disinterested in 'Oriental' languages of the Eastern Mediterranean (2008: 181). This has obvious implications regarding the paucity of work on historical diffusion via medieval Asia Minor.

18. Heffernan (1975: 69) argues that the virtuous stag is a Judeo-Christian symbol, and that the second part of the Eustace narrative emulates Job. Jobian parallels were

to India in the Christian version. The Roman General, Placidus, has his children restored to him on the banks of the River Hydaspes—in the Punjab!<sup>19</sup> This river was known to the Hellenistic world because of Alexander's victory at the Battle of Hydaspes c. 325 BCE; however, the Roman Empire never extended beyond Parthia (modern Iran). It is anachronistic that Trajan ordered Placidus to quell an insurrection so far beyond the Roman Empire. It seems an unlikely coincidence that Visvantara's father's kingdom, Sibi, is located between the Rivers Hydaspes and Indus. Garbe writes 'the scene of the Buddhist tale has been transferred in an entirely mechanical way to the Christianized redaction where it stands as an impossibility' (Garbe 1911: 549-50).

In the third and final section, King Placidus is ordered by pagan superiors to sacrifice an animal to the gods. He refuses and is brutally executed along with his family, who collectively achieve martyrdom and heavenly bliss. A Buddhist source for this concluding passage is unknown, and this inconvenient fact is brushed aside by Garbe:

For the conclusion of the Christian legend, the martyrdom of St. Eustace and his family, we naturally may not look for a Buddhist source. It is a matter of course that we have here to deal with an independent addition of the Christian redactor (1911: 550).

It seems more likely that the original was a Syriac Manichaean addition, like the roughly contemporaneous Manichaean killing test within the prototype for the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat (MacQueen 2002: 126-27).<sup>20</sup> Such a Manichaean addition does not alter (but strongly reinforces) the Buddha's ethical teachings about the sanctity of animal life, and distinctly reflects the climate of persecution facing Manichees who historically underwent such trials. Buddhist originals had fewer bases for such tests, and the pagan Romans' sacrifice tests (used against Christians) were different in one crucial aspect:

...in the sacrifice test as recorded in Christian martyrdom literature...the tested person does not actually kill the victim. The tested person is merely

clearly emphasized by Christian redactors. Heffernan admits that Gaster's (1894) case is strong, 'appreciating the significance of the narrative aspect (the speaking stag)', but doubts his conclusions. However, Heffernan was evidently unaware of Garbe's (1911) substantiation of the hypothesis.

19. The River Hydaspes (modern Jhelum) flows between modern Kashmir and Pakistan.

20. Whereas translators evidently censored this scene from the Josaphat legend (see MacQueen 2002), such is not the case for the Eustace or Christopher legends. Both hagiographies describe a killing test (in contrast to the more common eating test), where the saints are martyred after refusing to take animal life (see de Voragine 1998: 176-77, 242).

pressured to taste of the already immolated victim. There is, in this literature, very little interest in the death of the sacrificed animal (MacQueen 2002: 127).

The negative connotations of animal sacrifice in Buddhist literature are different than the orthodox Christian accounts; it is injury to animal life, rather than the worship of idols, which is contrary to spiritual progress:

Historically, the refusal to kill animals has certainly been linked to the refusal to eat meat, but I believe we must distinguish the two refusals. The abstention from meat found among Christian ascetics typically had little to do with a refusal to kill animals. Buddhist refusal to kill animals was usually not manifested in strict vegetarianism (MacQueen 2002: 129-30).

Parallel to the Manichaean original of the Legend of Josaphat (Budasafo), the Eustace legend bears stark resemblance to a Manichaean-Buddhist document in that it has characteristically Buddhist ethical implications that are interpreted within a Christian monotheistic framework. Although Placidus's (Eustace's) primary sin is the practice of Roman pagan idolatry, he is also guilty of persecuting Christ in the form of a deer; he repents, and furthermore proves himself holy by his refusal to take animal life in Roman pagan sacrifice. I believe this story is unique among Christian hagiographies in that Christ does not merely appear as an apparition above the deer, but Christ *is* the deer, and persecution of the deer is explicitly connected with persecution of Christ. Thus, a sharp distinction can be made between this early story and the later Christian redaction of the same story in the hagiography of Saint Hubert.

#### *Saint Hubert: Saint Eustace's Doppelgänger*

The related story of Saint Hubert (c. 656–727 CE) is set against the background of Dark Age Christian Europe, long after the subsidence of pagan imperial Rome, which formed the backdrop of the Eustace legend. Nonetheless, Hubert's hagiography is technically older than that of Eustace, which was deliberately set in the distant past. However, since the early versions of the Hubert story lack any of the specific details of the Eustace story, it is commonly accepted that the two saints became conflated sometime after the introduction of the Eustace story during the High Middle Ages.

Prince Hubert was grandson of Charibert (king of Toulouse), heir to the Duchy of Aquitaine, and successor to Saint Lambert, Bishop of Leige. The earliest accounts of Hubert's life, which include the *Jātaka* elements, date from circa the thirteenth century CE or later, but his enshrinement as the patron saint of hunters is at least as old as the eleventh century (Englebert 1951: 418). This suggests that although the Hubert version of

the story might be an independent redaction of the Buddhist source material, it is also reasonable to assume that the common elements represent a slightly later medieval European adaptation of the story of Saint Eustace. Hubert is venerated in Belgium and in the nearby regions of Germany and France (historical Austrasia), where he allegedly fled to escape a tyrannical ruler in Toulouse (later a Cathar stronghold). Like King Brahmadatta, he was an irreligious royal, and an everyday hunter.

On Good Friday morn, when the faithful were crowding the churches, Hubert sallied forth to the chase. As he was pursuing a magnificent stag, the animal turned and...he was astounded at perceiving a crucifix between its antlers, while he heard a voice saying: 'Hubert, unless thou turnest to the Lord, and ledest an holy life, thou shalt quickly go down into hell'. Hubert dismounted, prostrated himself and said, 'Lord, what wouldst Thou have me do?' He received the answer, 'Go and seek Lambert, and he will instruct you' (Brown 1913: 507).

After receiving religious instruction from Lambert (the elements of Hubert's hagiography derived from the *Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka*), the story follows with material derived from the *Visvantara-Jātaka*. Hubert, a subordinate sovereign, was cursed with the unfortunate death of his wife, and (like Visvantara) he subsequently renounced all of his worldly possessions, even his young son, leading the austere life of a hermit (Brown 1913).<sup>21</sup> Hubert's subsequent career was spent extirpating the practice of idolatry from the forest-folk, evoking another theme of the earlier Eustace version. However, the conclusion of the killing test and the saint's martyrdom does not appear anywhere in the Hubert version. This version's lack of reference to the quintessentially Buddhist and Manichaeic themes of the earlier Eustace story is a testament to how problematic the Church viewed such themes. The Church, therefore, may have favored revisions to conceal Manichaeic implications regarding the sanctity of animal life.

*The Telling Difference between Eustace and Hubert: What the Deer Tells!*

Whereas Eustace was initially an idol-worshiper, his most grievous sin was seeking to slay the person of Christ, physically embodied in the form of a talking deer. Like the Buddhist original, it is the deer itself who

21. Visvantara likewise willingly gave away his children. Here the Hubert variant is closer to the Buddhist text than it is to the corresponding passage in the legend of Eustace. The Eustace version has here inserted a similar section of the *Patācārā* (related to *Visvantara-Jātaka*), with the sex of the protagonist changed from the female to male (see Garbe 1911: 545-46). The accidental loss of Eustace's children during a river crossing (as in *Patācārā*) contrasts with the deliberate renunciation of family life made by both Visvantara and Hubert.

returns on successive days to instruct the convert (the deer is an agent in the conversion). His martyrdom is precipitated by another refusal to take animal life, in an act closely parallel to the killing test commonly targeting Manichees. Thus, the earliest Christian version of this story keeps the Buddhist ethical content largely intact.

In contrast, Hubert was simply a spoiled Christian nobleman whose transgression was in violating the sanctity of Holy Week through the impious activity of sport. Furthermore, Christ appears as something of an apparition, a disembodied voice in his presence, rather than through the deer itself (the deer is passive, incidental to the conversion). This divine voice further directs Hubert to receive his instruction from a human teacher, Lambert, rather than from an omniscient animal. No final killing test is included, and Hubert is deemed the patron saint and protector of hunters. Hubert's identification with the archetypal master-hunter is evidenced by the stag-crucifix emblem representative of the *Jägermeister* tradition in Germany. The reference to a wicked government in the South of France could be construed as a subtle rejoinder to the medieval ruling elite of the Languedoc who had adopted the Cathar religion of the Bogomil missionaries prior to the Albigensian Crusade.

Nothing in the original Buddhist version can be interpreted as an endorsement of hunting; to the contrary, the entire narrative is a repudiation of hunting as incompatible with salvation, a view shared by the Manichees and the Cathars. The shared Hubert/Eustace hagiography cannot be seen as a simple conflation of the life stories of two saints, but must be seen as an orthodox Christian redaction of the less-than-orthodox Christian story of Eustace. While the earlier Eustace version adds a layer of monotheistic theology to a Buddhist template, this alone cannot disrupt the central message of the story, because the original *Jātaka* is not concerned with theology per se, but with extolling the Bodhisattva's selfless action to save the life of another animal.<sup>22</sup> The newer Hubert version, unlike the older Eustace version, ultimately rejects the core teachings of the Buddhist text on which both subsequent stories were based. This process is parallel to the changing master narrative of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat, elucidated by MacQueen (1998, 2002).

### *Christopher, the Dog-Headed Cannibal*

The legend of Saint Christopher is another apparently *Jātaka*-derived hagiography in Voragine's *Golden Legend*. The allegedly homologous

22. Early characterizations of *Jātakas* as simplistic 'moral lessons' without doctrinal content are erroneous. *Jātakas* could be more than moral lessons within the monastic literary culture in which they were composed and transmitted.

stories are less similar than the others, so this claim is more contentious. Nonetheless, Amore (1978) and Garbe (1911) suggest iconography and oral-tradition, rather than text, was central to the westward diffusion of the story. Is the *story* of the *Jātaka* relevant in such image-based transmission? Garbe responds:

It seems to me that such a disconnection of literary evidence goes too far. Christians would never have been able to derive the material for the legend of St. Christopher solely from pictures. This would only have been possible when the Buddhists gave them the explanation... Without the assumption of the influence of the *story* the dependence of the Christopher legend upon the Buddhist source would to me be unintelligible (1911: 557).

In early icons, Christopher (lit.: 'Christ bearer') is a gigantic dog-headed cannibal, pacified and converted by the Christ-child, bearing the youth upon his back across a river. The partially submerged monster carrying the child-savior is most likely derived from an illustration of the *Maha-Sutasoma Jātaka*, where an animal-headed cannibal demon-ogre named Kalmāsapadā kidnapped the youthful bodhisattva (Prince Sutasoma) while bathing in a river. As in the Christian version, the world-savior then converted the creature, who renounced his former cannibalism and became the savior's bearer, servant, and protector (Amore 1978: 123-25; Garbe 1911: 550-58).

A faint echo of Manichaeism may be indicated by the martyrdom of Christopher, like Eustace, which was precipitated by his refusal to take animal life in pagan sacrifice (see de Voragine 1998: 176). As previously noted, this scene is atypical of martyrdom literature, but is typical of the historical persecution of Manichees (see MacQueen 2002: 127). In both European and Asian contexts, cannibalism may be seen as abhorrent ultra-carnivorous behavior, and the renunciation of one's former cannibalism represents great spiritual progress. Christopher's fantastic animalistic qualities (giant; dog-head; cannibal), however, are quite peculiar in Western Christian contexts. Christopher's odd physique is traditionally viewed either allegorically (e.g. signifying 'barbarian' or 'cannibal') or as the visage of some European pagan deity cloaked in Christian guise. Although iconographic representation of the Christ-bearer as beast-man is rooted in ancient Byzantine art, 'the center and kernel of the Christian legend...does not appear at all in the Greek texts nor in the Latin before the thirteenth century' (Garbe 1911: 552). Furthermore:

In no case is the antiquity and the originality of the giant and cannibal and the dog's head to be doubted. These three features cannot be made to fit in the picture of the hero of Christian faith, least of all the dog's head (Garbe 1911: 553-54).

The nonhuman attributes of Christopher were omitted from later Western versions of the legend. This shift may reflect a difference in worldview rather than censorship but it is nonetheless intriguing. Again we observe the westward diffusion of a *Jātaka* tale accompanied by a gradual shift in emphasis. Earlier Christianized versions of the story affirm that the world-savior offers redemption even for the sub-human (i.e. dog-headed demons), whereas the later Western variants affirm no such thing (de Voragine 1998: 173-77).

*How Much Influence Did the Buddha Have in Medieval Europe?*

The work of Graeme MacQueen has inspired my analysis in this paper, which is intended to complement his path-breaking scholarship. I agree with his conclusions on this matter:

The relation of human to nonhuman life is one of the areas of thought where Buddhism is most likely to have exerted a crucial influence on the founder of Manichaeism... Although the Manichaean and Buddhist positions on the kinship of living beings are far from identical, there are important commonalities... This being the case, we may say that the historical killing test was not merely a conscious means of detecting and eliminating Manichaean ideas and values (as well as actual Manichaeans and their institutions), but an unconscious means of eliminating Buddhist ideas and values (MacQueen 2002: 137).

I have attempted to demonstrate that the same historical process of orthodox Christian revision of Manichaean-Buddhist texts, which MacQueen documents in the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat, is also manifested in the legend of Eustace and its successor tradition, the legend of Saint Hubert. The close historical association of Josaphat and Eustace, beginning in Buddhist libraries and ending together in Europe (e.g. in Voragine's *Golden Legend*), further attests to the likelihood that they were transmitted and shaped via parallel socio-historical processes.<sup>23</sup>

That said, I disagree with MacQueen's conclusion regarding the effect of such efforts. Lamenting that the killing test was eliminated from the hagiography in its Christian translation, MacQueen writes:

Buddhist views of the kinship of living beings were prevented, through such means, from being transmitted to the West in the medieval period. As the socio-political filters did their work, parallel textual filters eliminated dangerous Buddhist ideas and values from written sources. The

23. Resonance is also suggested with the Christopher legend, although the textual processes are less clear.

Buddhalegend was in this way kept from speaking its word about the kinship of living beings until its second wave of westward transmission, during the advent of the Romantic period (2002: 137-38).

This seems unsupported by the evidence at hand. Such measures were not obviously employed to prevent dangerous ideas from gaining a foothold in Western Europe, for quite arguably, the 'damage' was already done. Although these 'textual filters' were slow in responding to the doctrinal threat of the Eustace legend (unlike Barlaam and Josaphat), the necessity for combating Manichaeian-Buddhist views on the sanctity of animal life was because such views were already popular among the lay-folk of both Italy and France, and spread by legions of wandering mendicants. That the Church was ultimately unsuccessful in its attempt to halt the progress of these 'dangerous Buddhist ideas' is conclusively proven in Pope Innocent III's reluctant decision to allow an eccentric mystic from Assisi to found an order *within* the confines of the Church.

*The Victory of Manichaeian-Buddhist Ethics through Franciscan Asceticism*  
Did the success of heresy represent the failure of orthodox theology? Not if one considers that the popularity of heresy might derive from something besides its theological tenets. As Andrew P. Roach suggests, it may owe much more to its overtly political dimensions of resistance to formal Church hierarchy and doctrinal authority (2008: 171). It was the *similarities* (rather than the differences) between heresy and orthodoxy that placed the two in direct competition amid devout and sophisticated religious consumers. Heresy was theologically heterogeneous yet remained consistent in its subversive goals. 'In contrast to the Cathars, who followed Manichaeian dualism...there stood groups within the movement for religious poverty and apostolic itinerant preaching who not only did not [follow dualism], but in fact combated it' (Grundmann 2008: 141). The Church nonetheless doggedly pursued all heretics as a monolithic entity, 'not as dualists, but for their "apostolic" claims', which were in direct competition with the Church. Dogma was overshadowed by 'questions of the proper religious life and the true Church' (Grundmann 2008: 141).

Saint Francis (c. 1181–1226) and Saint Dominic (c. 1170–1221) were active in Italy in the early thirteenth century, during the height of the Cathar movement. Roach characterizes their work revitalizing the Church at this time of intense competition from heresy:

The real impact of Dominic and Francis was that they made it once again fashionable to be orthodox. Francis may have led the life of someone who thirty years before would have been considered a heretic, but he insisted on absolute obedience to the Church and to the papacy in particular. The

Dominicans offered a dynamic intellectual alternative to heresy (Roach 2008: 172).

While Dominic and his order attacked Cathar doctrines directly with preaching, Francis and his order attempted to win heretics over by appealing to them with the example of the Franciscan lifestyle, thus defusing Cathar critiques of the Church. While violence was a primary weapon against heresy in France, the struggle was 'more subtle and many layered' in Italy, as Lambert comments:

General use of Franciscans as inquisitors did not occur before Innocent IV's reorganization in 1254; consequently they remained more popular [among a Cathar-sympathizing public] than the Dominicans who were heavily involved in the use of force at an early date (Lambert 1998: 173).

The popularity of Francis and his order was understandable considering his unorthodox patterns of behavior. Franciscans paralleled Cathar practices, utilizing communal meals to interact with the lay-public. Bread specially blessed by Cathar clergy at these meals was highly valued and kept for some time. 'In a similar fashion, people brought loaves of bread for Francis and there was a competitive aspect to the phenomenon' (Roach 2008: 175). The most striking parallel is Francis's famous reverence for all forms of life. 'He would pick tiny worms up off the road in case they were squashed under the feet of passers-by' (de Voragine 1998: 263). Franciscan respect for the lives of animals may have been learned from the Cathars (Runciman 1961: 174, 186). In contrast to the Cathars, Francis would eat meat that was freely offered.

MacQueen notes that 'abstention from meat was an ambiguous symbol for mainstream Christians' because of its early association with Manichaeism (2002: 127). Nonetheless, 'one could abstain from meat for orthodox and acceptable reasons, or for heterodox and unacceptable reasons' (2002: 130). An episode in the life of Francis illustrates the politics of vegetarianism in this context; it is a variation of the food test, historically related to the killing test. Francis was a guest in a house in Alessandria, Italy, where poultry was served. The Bible directs Christians to 'eat what is set before you' (Luke 10.8; see also Matt. 15.10).<sup>24</sup> A Cathar beggar asked for and received some of the poultry, with the intention of discrediting Francis publicly as a meat-eater. But the food was miraculously transformed into fish. Fish, believed not to be the

24. A similar injunction applies to Buddhists, warranting monks to consume meat offerings. The Buddha himself died from eating rancid pork offered by a commoner. But the common Mahayanist position is that it was mushrooms, and many Mahayana texts enjoin vegetarianism, for 'How could the apostle of non-violence die of eating meat?' (Obeyesekere 2003: 33-34).

product of sexual reproduction, was permitted food for Cathar clergy, who were otherwise near-vegan. The crowd, knowing Cathar doctrines, sided with Francis; the beggar asked for forgiveness (Lambert 1999: 173). This illustrates Francis's knowledge of the subtleties of heretical doctrines and his use of this knowledge to win converts:

while Francis could still be holy and eat the chicken, one of the public signs of his holiness, made possible by divine intervention, was that he appeared to abstain from all meat, including chicken. This willingness to satisfy public expectations is striking (Grumett 2007: 453).

Furthermore, when dining with the laity, Francis would handle situations differently depending on the expectations of the onlookers. He was known to feign eating meat so as not to offend his host, unobtrusively disposing of the food elsewhere, abstaining when he appeared to indulge.

In marked contrast to Southern France, heresy in Italy was not exterminated, but faded gradually away. Cathar ethical precepts were absorbed into Franciscan piety. The question then remains: Do Franciscan ethics derive ultimately from Buddhism, via Catharism? Runciman considers but dismisses the possibility:

The Buddhist characteristic of sympathy for all living things, a sympathy based on the doctrine of Metempsychosis—a sympathy that St. Francis of Assisi learned from the Cathars—is again a natural outcome of Dualist beliefs. Occasional Buddhist parables might buttress Dualist doctrines; but the Dualists of Bulgaria and of France were not Buddhists (Runciman 1961: 174).

The tendency 'to place animals' souls on the level of men's' is not fundamentally dualist, however, as Runciman claims. If this were so, one would find the same sympathy in Zoroastrianism and in early Baptist Gnosticism of Persia, the prototypes for later dualist traditions. Indeed, respect for some forms of nonhuman life is expressed in early Zoroastrianism. However, such respect was conditional, not universally affirmed by dualist theology (Foltz and Saadi-nejad 2007).<sup>25</sup> The Persian heresiarch Mani learned his unconditional sympathy from the Indic traditions of Buddhism and/or Jainism, blending Indian ethics with his native Persian dualism. Runciman admits this, but with caveats:

25. Foltz and Saadi-nejad (2007: 413) state this succinctly: 'in the dualistic Zoroastrian worldview, which posits an ongoing struggle between the forces of good and evil, many animal and plant species are seen as being on the side of evil and are thus to be destroyed whenever possible'. This is anathema to Buddhist, Jain, and Manichaean views.

If [Metempsychosis] originally came from India, which is quite possible, that happened too long ago for it to bear with it any strictly theological trappings... It is possible that St. Francis was largely affected by the Cathars... But he would have been horrified by the theology of Buddhism, had he anywhere been able to meet it (1961: 186).

Francis's opinion of Buddhist theology is fruitless speculation. The question is not Buddhist theology, but Buddhist ethics, because the Buddhist contribution to Manichaeism was ethical, not 'strictly theological'.<sup>26</sup> Humane ethical tenets do have a very long history in Europe, as Runciman implies; Manichees were in France by the fourth century CE.<sup>27</sup> If Christian doctrines related to animals and nature ultimately originated in India, this should be acknowledged.

### *Conclusion*

The tragic legacy of Catharism in Europe was the brutality of its eradication. The Albigensian Crusade (1208–26), launched by Pope Innocent III, virtually wiped out Catharism in Southern France. Then, in an ironic reform intended to restrain the blood-lust of crusaders, it spawned the first inquisition in 1231, which led eventually to early modern witch hunts. The brutal massacres of dissenters and nonconformists, repeated over the centuries, are among the darkest chapters in the history of Christianity. Is it possible that, nevertheless, heretics left a subtle and subversive legacy within the Church?

Students of this period should consider whether the heretics were really a monolithic entity or if medieval European Christianity was actually a blend of Cathar and Catholic belief systems. The Albigensian crusaders did not have purely religious motives for embarking on their mission. King Philip IV of France and Simon de Montfort, commander of the invading northern armies, sought 'to annex the semi-independent county of Toulouse to the French Crown and to carve out feudal fiefdoms for themselves' (Drees 1992: 30). Southern French Catholics and

26. An overemphasis on theology has been a common mistake in religion studies. Like Buddhist, Jain, and Manichaean beliefs, it was a standard Cathar belief 'that to kill animals was a great sin' (Lambert 1998: 290). This belief is independent of theological presupposition, and rooted in empathy. Non-violence is fundamental; theology is secondary. See n. 13 above.

27. Franciscan beliefs resonate with those of late third-century Egyptian-Syrian desert monks (Grumett 2007: 451–52). Even presuming that early Christian tradition was the source of Francis's inspiration, one must contend with the possibility that India influenced early Christian monasticism via Persia (Hoddinott 1963: 12–14; Garbe 1911: 559–63).

Cathars united to defend their homeland. Little is known of the fate of Catharism in other regions.

Since the inception of their order, Franciscans have embodied tension between heretical and orthodox impulses. According to tradition, Pope Innocent III would have sent Francis away to menial labor had he not dreamt a vision of humble Francis preventing the collapse of the endangered Papal basilica (Williams 2005: A18). It was the emphasis on obedience and loyalty that counterbalanced Franciscan teachings that flirted with heresy. Innocent III needed a softer touch among the Cathar-sympathizing public in his own backyard, principalities where massacres were not politically advisable. Franciscan obedience to authority was not, however, blind.

In 1221, Francis admonished the brothers to study their superior's conduct, and, if they found it unedifying, to denounce him... They were told to withhold obedience if told to act in violation of the rule of their own souls (Burr 2001: 2).

This was a recipe for schism. In the early 1300s, Franciscan inquisitors under Pope John XXII burned so-called spiritual Franciscan heretics at the stake in Southern France.

Skepticism toward Franciscan tolerance remains strong, as religious conservatives applaud Benedict XVI's actions restraining Franciscan autonomy with regard to interfaith dialog. The order has been harshly criticized for allowing 'imams, rabbis, Buddhist monks, Hindu holy men and followers of Confucius' unrestrained access to the basilica in Assisi during the decades since Paul VI granted the order autonomy, and conservative critic Vittori Messori accuses contemporary Franciscans of caricaturing the great saint as a 'village idiot who speaks with wolves and birds' (Williams 2005: A18). *On the contrary*, the guardians of doctrinal orthodoxy have distorted the images of saints engaged in such dialogs and practices.

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