

**“Holy Dogs and Asses: Stories Told Through Animal Saints”**

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Saint Anthony, the founder of monasticism, thought he was the first monk to live the solitary life until he heard of Paul the Hermit. In the third century CE, Paul left human society and headed for the desert where he lived in a cave for sixty years. Anthony decided to find the Hermit. As the legend goes, a wolf “came to meet him” and proceeded to lead him to Paul’s cave. The Hermit refused to speak to Anthony, but finally convinced, the two embraced. Soon, another animal entered the scene.

When it was time for food, a crow flew down, carrying a loaf formed of two halves. Anthony wondered at this, but Paul told him that God provided him daily with food: this day the quantity was doubled to take care of the guest.<sup>1</sup>

Somehow the crow knew of Anthony’s presence and brought enough food for both of these early Christian saints.

During his time in the wilderness, Paul’s companions had all been animals. They knew his location, led the wandering Anthony to the Hermit, provided Paul with nourishment and served as his only companions. Paul died shortly after the encounter with Anthony. When Anthony returned and found him dead, he determined to bury him even though he lacked the means. But animals again came to his service. Two lions appeared, “dug a grave, and, when the saint was buried, went back to the forest.”<sup>2</sup>

This account is one of the rare appearances of other-than-human animals in the hagiography, edifying stories of saints, of the Christian tradition.<sup>3</sup> But are these animal epiphanies rare or, rather, rarely noticed. A careful probing of the stories of the Christian

tradition reveals more animals than this religion, often classified as extremely anthropocentric, would seem likely to incorporate. This paper seeks to recover a lost strand of silenced animal voices in the history of Christianities.<sup>4</sup>

After studying many written texts and examining numerous visual representations, a framework for understanding the inclusion of animals emerges. Animals appear as saints, as sacraments, as revealers of the divine, as bearers of God or as *imitatio Christi* – imitators of Christ. In these roles animals act, are acted upon, and enact the will of the divine. Amazingly, their agency and power, their action as subjects in their own right, is prominent in myriad stories and is central in numerous images.

As the history of Christianity intertwined with that of patriarchal and imperialistic Mediterranean and European powers, the dominant forms of Christianity became increasingly anthropocentric. Animals and their stories ceased to have a significant “voice” in the Christian “choir.” During and after the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, Christianity, along with the majority of interlocked European cultural systems, severed ties with the rest of nature. Thus an alienation from any being other than the human, or the human-like divine, set into these dominant forms of Christianity. This intense, dualistic transformation suppressed the holy animals within the religious tradition and its history. Whereas the presence of animals had been integral to some aspects of various forms of Christianity in their earlier manifestations, the proclamations of such theologians and philosophers as Rene Descartes struck the final blow to the efficacy and inclusion of animals in the circle of religious dialogue. Humans, ascendant for centuries, began to understand themselves as the only subjects worthy of divine consideration. All other animals were simply tools for human use.

Of course, this hierarchical ranking of humans over animals interlocked by myriad systems of oppression that traveled with European imperialism to the rest of the world. The binaries that place male over female, the European “race” over all “races” of “color,” and mind over body, just to name a few, connect directly to the ranking of humans over all (other) animals. As long as one of these systems of domination remains, none of them are truly subverted.

Articulating the significant role that animals have played throughout the scope of Christian history strengthens the process of ending the interlocked dominations. It also provides one of many perspectives that have the potential to influence the development of a renewed, biocentric Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

### **Representation and Animals in Christianity**

Distinct cultural patterns and symbol systems shape human experiences of and relationship to other living beings in our environments. Patterns are encoded in visual representations (a pig is presented as a strip of bacon), in language (animals are referred to as “it” rather than as “he” or “she”) and in daily, pragmatic ritual performances (a homeless animal is often “put to sleep” and treated as a nuisance).<sup>6</sup> The societies that have formed around, influenced and been influenced by Christianity in its European and North American settings have informed many of these cultural patterns and symbol systems in profound ways. Animals are regarded as subordinate, irrational, soul-less beings whose primary purpose is based on a theory of utilitarianism that places human beings at the top of a hierarchy. Animals exist for human consumption, labor and aesthetic or emotional pleasure alone. Intrinsic value and direct relationship between animals and the sacred is denied.

But has this cultural pattern been static, or has some transformation of understanding occurred? Did animals once engage humans and God, within Christianity, differently? If so, why would it matter or what could it affect?

The thesis that I offer is based on recovering an understanding of the relationship between humans and animals within the history of Christian traditions. Do certain patterns suggest cultural continuities and shared symbols? Are animals legitimized or denigrated in the sacred history of this multi-faceted religious tradition? What developments are linked to changes in these representations and experiences of human and animal? What transformations take place in these relationships and how do these point toward other historical patterns? In this paper I will address the first two questions in particular and suggest possible directions for continued research and analysis.

Christianities grew out of the various religious traditions found in the Mediterranean world two thousand years ago. Judaism, mystery religions, myriad pagan traditions and the official religion of the Roman Empire, to name just a few, provided the primary sources for early forms of Christianity. As they develop, Christianities incorporate various aspects of these traditions and their belief systems. From this process a rather ambiguous place is forged for animals in Christian traditions. Each of these religious traditions included and excluded animals in various ways, thus influencing the foundations for the inclusion and exclusion of animals in Christianities.<sup>7</sup>

But Christianity, in its formalized, official and primarily patriarchal structure takes no real account of other-than-human animals. The major theological works of such figures as Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin and Karl Barth, the central doctrines and creeds of the both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches as well as the primary themes of the Protestant world

focus on human beings and the human relationship with the divine. Humans are of ultimate concern, with little or no regard for other animals. The culmination of the anthropocentric model in constructive theology and philosophy, as well as anthropocentric scriptural exegesis, melded with the philosophy of the Enlightenment to conclude that a fundamental, essential, divinely ordained difference exists between humans and animals.

Yet various sources tell a different story, reveal a different image. The artwork, hagiography, oral traditions (later recorded in written form) and important legends reveal a close connection between humans and the natural world. Stories and images of animals abound. I contend that these animals are not always or only symbolic or metaphoric but are often subjects, agents in the complete sense. Images and narratives contain multiple encodings and decodings. Oftentimes the animals presented in words and images are sacred, they exhibit agency and play an active role in the unveiling of the holy.

What is the context for animal saints and why, over the course of the last few centuries, have these stories disappeared? It could be argued that most of the examples I present here are stories of animals with saints, not animals as saints. However, when one attends to the roles of the actors, particularly the active roles of the animals in these stories, the roles are often reversed. Through their agency animals subvert the “power” and “control” of the human saint and elevate the status and piety of the animal saint. Who is the saint or who are the saints in each story? That is sometimes left to the interpretation of the hearer of the story, seer of the image or witness to the event.

The primary sources for these stories are the lives of saints from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE and religious images throughout the Christian areas of Europe during the same period. The religious imagery on which the paper, as well as my other work, focuses is popular

art, displayed in churches where masses of common people see and interpret its meaning. A tracing of these stories and images suggests that certain patterns reveal cultural continuities and shared symbols. The four patterns that I address are: animals as exemplars of piety, animals as sources of revelation, animals as saintly martyrs, and animals as the primary intimate other in relationship.

### **Animals as exemplars of piety**

Lions abound in Christian legend and symbol. For centuries lions stood on either side of many bishop's seats in cathedrals and framed the doors of many churches, including the church in which the young St. Francis was baptized—San Ruffino in Assisi, Italy. One of the most amazing lions appears in the *Acts of Paul*.<sup>8</sup> An early fragment, in Coptic, tells of a lion approaching Paul as he prayed. The lion lay down at the apostle's feet and Paul, never missing an opportunity to convert, asked the lion what he wanted. The lion replied, "I want to be baptized." Paul took him to a river and immersed him three times. The lion then greeted Paul with "Grace be with you." The lion then departed into the countryside.<sup>9</sup> Baptism, the Christian sacrament that confirms an active choice of belief and that initiates one into the Christian community, is requested by and granted to a lion.

Lions also provide protection for Thecla, a companion of Paul in his journeys. Incident related to her martyrdom.

And when the beasts were exhibited they bound her to a fierce lioness...And the lioness, with Thecla sitting upon her, licked her feet; and all the multitude was astonished...And Thecla...was stripped and received a girdle and was thrown into the arena. And lions and bears were let loose upon her. And a fierce lioness ran up and lay down at her.<sup>10</sup>

A series of animals, some of whom meet their own demise, encounter Thecla during the numerous attempts to execute her. Eventually the lioness dies protecting Thecla. One question, based on Paul's choice to baptize a lion by water, is whether the lioness who dies defending Thecla receives baptism by blood—actual martyr status?

But what about the inclusion of animals in other central Christian sacraments, particularly the Eucharist? Apparently, animals have been invited to partake in this ritual as well. In Donatello's image, the scene is the celebration of the Eucharist, the central act of many forms of Christian worship, and of a mule kneeling before the host, the body and blood of Christ.<sup>11</sup> This penultimate liturgical moment in most Christian worship rituals, this sacrament, is most fully adored by a mule. Saint Anthony of Padua, often dubbed the greatest preacher of his time, is a young Franciscan who preaches to fish much as his predecessor, Saint Francis, preached to the birds. The miracle of the mule suggests the incorporation of animals into both the liturgy and the sacramental life of the Church. The image appears in highly acclaimed works of art, such as Donatello's bronze sculpture in a church in Padua, and on the walls of baptisteries frequented by the most common of people, such as the Baptistery in Siena.<sup>12</sup>

A similar pattern is revealed throughout the stories of the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Myriad animals relate with Francis and many artistic renderings of his life include birds, wolves and donkeys in company with the saint. Even images of Francis in ecstasy, at the height of mystical union with the divine, include animals.

But a particularly poignant tale reveals the piety of the birds:

As St. Francis spoke these words to them, all those birds began to open their beaks, and to stretch out their necks, and to open their wings, and reverently to bow their heads to the ground, and to show by their motions and by their songs

that the holy father had given them very great delight. St. Francis rejoiced with them and was glad and marveled much at so great a multitude of birds and at their most beautiful diversity, and at their attentiveness and fearlessness, for which he devoutly praised the Creator in them.<sup>13</sup>

An “infinite multitude” of birds, Francis addresses them as “little sisters,” gather and attentively listen to Francis as he preaches about their blessedness and their need to praise God.

According to two of Francis’s biographers, he “blessed them, and having made the sign of the cross, gave them leave to fly away to another place...nor did one of them move from the spot until he made the sign of the cross over them and give them leave.” Upon leaving, another symbol of piety emerges as “all those birds soared up into the air with wondrous songs and then divided themselves into four parts after the form of the cross Saint Francis had made over them.”<sup>14</sup> The birds then proceed to announce their own belief:

One band flew toward the East, and one toward the West, and one toward the South and the fourth toward the North, and each company went singing marvelous songs. Thus they signified that, just as St. Francis, the Standard-bearer of the Cross, had preached to them, and made over them the sign of the Cross, according to which they separated themselves toward the four quarters of the world, so the preaching of the Cross of Christ, renewed by St. Francis, was about to be carried through all the world by him and by his friars. Moreover, these friars, like the birds, possess nothing of their own in this world but commit their lives wholly to the providence of God.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the Christian imperialistic implications and difficulties of this passage are apparent, but the amazing indication of birds as committing their lives to God shifts anthropocentric paradigms significantly.

St. Francis was not the first and not the last to recognize that birds and other creatures comprise a congregation worthy of preaching. Not only do they hear the word, but they are capable of response to it. This active response to the Word of God is an important concept in Christianity. The birds are infinitely capable of worship and, apparently, of belief in God.

Another animal whose piety testifies to those around is a cricket. Francis, having risen before the sun for prayer, finds that the world is blanketed in snow. None of the other brothers comes to early morning prayers because of the cold. But a cricket braves the snow, leaving a trail, and joins Francis for prayer. When the other brothers finally awake they see the cricket footprints and find the two – Francis and the pious cricket – attending to their sacred office.

One of the primary scenes attesting to animals as exemplars of piety is also one of the most powerful symbolic-visual sets of images in Christian history – stories of the nativity of Jesus. These stories include images of adoring animals surrounding the manger. Cattle, sheep, donkeys and the occasional dog or horse, prove uncanny in their ability to recognize the revelation of incarnation of the nativity.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, some images depict humans as much less aware of the nature of the incarnation than were the animals. Images carved in marble, ivory and stone from the earliest generations of Christianity show the donkey and the cow nuzzling the baby Jesus. In one of these, the donkey is obviously kissing him. Others depict all of the humans in the scene turned away from the infant, but the cow and donkey still gaze at him attentively, often they are smiling. The animals' affinity for the sacred is obvious, and their incorporation into scenes of piety is dramatic.

### **Animals as sources of revelation**

Animals have also been direct sources of revelation—messengers of the divine to human beings. Most particularly, animals have been the bearers or carriers, of the incarnation of the sacred—the bearers of Christ.

While hunting one day, a Roman soldier, Placidus, came upon a herd of deer. One of these, a large stag, impressed the soldier with his incredible size and beauty. As the stag ran into the dense woods, the soldier approached pondering how to capture this animal. Suddenly he noticed a cross with the image of Jesus between the antlers of the deer. The voice of the divine came from the stag's mouth and said:

“O Placidus, why are you pursuing me? For your sake I have appeared to you in this animal. I am the Christ, whom you worship without knowing it. Your alms have risen before me, and for this purpose I have come, that through this deer which you hunted, I myself might hunt you.”<sup>17</sup>

The next morning, the vision appeared to him, again with the stag as the vehicle for revelation. The soldier changes his name to Eustace and becomes Christian. His tale relates yet another animal saint. Years later when Eustace was placed in the arena for martyrdom, a ferocious—and very hungry—lion served as the imperial death weapon of choice. But the lion came out peacefully, lowered his head and adored the soon-to-be martyrs rather than kill them.

A similar story is told of Saint Julian, who had “unwittingly” killed his parents:

When this Julian, noble by birth, was young, he went out one day to hunt and began to chase a stag whose trail he had picked up. Suddenly, by the will of God, the stag turned to face him and said: “Are you tracking me to kill me, you who are going to kill your father and mother?” Filled with dread at hearing this, and

fearing that what he had heard from the stag might indeed happen to him, he left everything and went away secretly.

Needless to say, the young man did, accidentally, kill his parents. But this horrid act led him to establish a hospice in order to work out his penance. He and his wife spent their lives “full of good works and almsgiving.”<sup>18</sup>

St. Francis Xavier tells of a related vision of the divine. During a mighty storm in the Moluccas, Xavier tried to calm the waves by holding his crucifix over them, but a huge wave swept it overboard. Once safely on shore, Francis saw a large crab coming towards him, carrying the cross in his pincers—the bearer of the most sacred symbol of the divine.<sup>19</sup>

In more general visual presentation, the image of the donkey, already a focus in the nativity images addressed above, is central again. The donkey, referred to as the bearer of the salvation of the world, carries Mary, the mother of Jesus, when she is pregnant and traveling to Bethlehem. Next, the donkey carries Mary and Jesus to safety in Egypt when the infant is being pursued by Herod the Great. Various images show Mary and Joseph feeding the donkey and gazing at him attentively.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the donkey bears Jesus on his back during the triumphant entry into Jerusalem before Jesus’ execution. The depiction of this scene is one of the most prominent in early Christianity. It could be argued that Christianity, as a whole, elevated the status of the ass. When others mock Jesus or fail to notice the signs of revelation, the donkey comes through – adoring, worshiping and carrying the incarnate god.

### **Animals as martyrs and servants**

The most striking images of animals in the hagiography are those of animals as martyrs and animals as servants. The martyr, or witness, was and is elevated as the most faithful of all Christians. Following the example set by Jesus, martyrs claimed a second and ultimate baptism

in blood. Their stories were told throughout Christianities to strengthen the commitments of believers facing oppression. But some of these martyrs are, not just symbolically but literally, sacrificial lambs.

One of the most fascinating martyr-saints is Saint Guinefort. The stories of his heroic martyrdom and of the healings that took place at his shrine influenced generations of believers in southern France. Guinefort, a trusted dog, was left alone with an infant. When the father returned he saw blood covering the room and surrounding the infant's crib. Guinefort sat next to the crib, blood around his mouth. Immediately the man took an arrow and shot Guinefort in the heart. Approaching the crib, he saw that his child was unharmed. Below the crib was the body of a dead snake who had been trying to get to the infant. Guinefort saved the child's life.

The primary textual traditions about Saint Guinefort come from *De Adoratione guinefortis Canis*.

This recently happened in the diocese of Lyons where, when I preached against the reading of oracles, and was hearing confession, numerous women confessed that they had taken their children to Saint Guinefort. As I thought that this was some holy person, I continued with my enquiry and finally learned that this was actually a greyhound, which had been killed in the following manner...[T]he peasants, hearing of the dog's conduct and of how it had been killed, although innocent, and for a deed for which it might have expected praise, visited the place, honoured the dog as a martyr, prayed to it when they were sick or in need of something...<sup>21</sup>

Etienne de Bourbon, an inquisitor, recorded the above account in his narrative supporting Guinefort's designation as a heretic. He had the dog "disinterred, and the sacred wood cut down

and burnt, along with the remains of the dog.” Apparently a dog cannot be an official saint, though he can be an official heretic.

Records vary, but some indicate that sick children were brought to the dog’s shrine until the nineteenth century. Saint Guinefort, a martyr, received the popular designation of “saint,” a title usually reserved for human animals.

In the year 406, Paulinus, a monk and a priest, read a poem honoring St. Felix on his birthday. The poem features animals as the principal characters in a series of miracle tales. Christianity had denounced animal sacrifice, primarily as a mode of differentiation from Roman religious systems. But the ritual continued, particularly in rural areas. At the tomb of St. Felix, in southern Italy, the practice had been Christianized and served as a way to distribute food to the poor who would gather at the tomb to collect meat from the sacrificed animals.

The first tale is of a horse “seemingly endowed with human reason” who provided a “holy sign” and became a “source of wonder for those in attendance.”<sup>22</sup> This inspired horse intervened as his master attempted to take the best portions of a hog that he had sacrificed rather than leave them for the poor. The horse threw the greedy one to the ground and, then, this equine saint carried the sacrifice back to the tomb. Power and compassion are central to this horse-saint’s piety.

A second story comes from this same tradition and relates the miracle of a rather plump pig. She had been vowed to Felix at birth, but because of her girth she is unable to walk the distance to the shrine. Her masters take two smaller piglets in her place, but when they arrive the pudgy pig was on the altar offering herself as sacrifice. Obviously, the sacred had been revealed in and through the pig who, by some accounts, placed her throat on the blade willingly offering her life as food that others might live. A similar story tells of a heifer who walks without a

harness to the altar and “undefiled by the yoke and offering its neck to the axe, about to provide food for the poor from its slaughtered body, joyously it poured out its blood in fulfillment of its masters’ vows.”<sup>23</sup> Parallels between the sacrificial role of these animals and that of the figure of Jesus, particularly in their theological connotations, prove both striking and potentially controversial.

Of course, the lamb is a pervasive visual and liturgical symbol of sacrifice and piety, oftentimes replacing the figure of Jesus and other disciples. A beautiful example is the seventh century apse of Sant’ Apollinare in Classe that portrays all of the twelve traditional disciples as sheep.<sup>24</sup> So the symbol of animals as sacrificial victims and even as savior is central to Christianity. But the stories of St. Felix move these animals into active roles, symbolic and actual in their life of sacrifice.

Another common theme of animals as servants comes at the time of death and burial. A story similar to that of Saints Paul and Anthony tells of another lion assisting in the burial of a saint. St. Mary of Egypt, a hermit and ascetic, had lived in the desert for years, eating only the lentils and meager supply of bread to which she had access. A monk, Zosimus, came across this figure of holiness as he traversed the desert. One year, he served her the Eucharist and promised to bring this sacrament to her the next year as well. When he came back, he found her dead.

Zosimus tried to dig a grave but could not. Then he saw a lion meekly coming toward him and said to the lion: “This holy woman commanded me to bury her body here, but I am old and cannot dig, and anyway I have no shovel. Therefore you do the digging and we will be able to bury this holy body.” The lion began to dig and prepared a suitable grave, and when that was finished went away like a gentle lamb.<sup>25</sup>

With care and tenderness, the lion dug a perfect hole for St. Mary, the ground was blessed, and she was buried there.

Animals, even arachnids, seem to hear the voice of God without hesitation. Another story connected to a saint named Felix includes spiders as heroes. While preaching, Felix, a bishop, found himself being pursued by persecutors, so he proceeded to hide:

...he slipped through a narrow opening in the wall of a ruined house and hid there. In a trice, by God's command, spiders spun a web across the space. The pursuers, seeing the web, thought that no one could have gone through the opening, and went on their way.<sup>26</sup>

Later Felix was killed by a group of boys he taught, apparently they were less compassionate than the spiders.

### **Animals as primary other in relationship**

Finally, there are numerous stories of animals as the primary other in relationship to humans throughout the Christian tradition. Obviously many of the hermits and desert dwellers mentioned throughout are in the company of an animal or animals. In addition, anchoresses who lived cloistered, often as solitaries, would be permitted one cat in their cell. But one of the most popular stories of saint-animal companionship is that of St. Jerome, a Father of the Church.

St. Jerome lived in the wilderness, probably close to Bethlehem, while translating the Bible from Greek into Latin. He lived with some other monks, and many animals including dogs, hens, sheep and donkeys. On an otherwise normal day, a great lion came into the monastery courtyard. Needless to say, all the monks scattered, except for Jerome. He noticed that the lion was limping and welcomed him in the spirit of hospitality that pervades most monasteries. Jerome healed the lion, who decided to remain with Jerome. The adventures of Jerome and the

lion continue, but suffice it to say that on the death of the saint, the lion, a saint in his own right, is said to have grieved without ceasing.

This is not the only such account. The story of St. Giles and the hind is tender and tragic. Giles, who had cured many, became a solitary living in a cave close to a beautiful spring. But he was only a solitary in terms of his relationship with people, because as the story goes “for some time he was nourished with the milk of a hind” or doe. Eventually, a group of hunters pursued her and she took refuge with St. Giles in his cave. She was “whining and whimpering ... not at all like her” so Giles went out and, hearing the hunt, prayed that God would save this doe, the “nurse” God had provided.

This happened again and again, until finally, on the third day, the king brought a bishop along with him to survey the situation. This time “one of the huntsmen shot an arrow into the cave,” wounding St. Giles as he knelt in prayer for the life of the doe.<sup>27</sup>

St. Blaise, a bishop, also decided to live the life of a hermit. He “retired to a cave” where “birds brought him food, and wild animals flocked to him.” These animals would not leave “until he had laid hands on them in blessing.” This action indicates that Blaise understood the animals worthy of blessing and the animals understood the significance of the ritual. In addition, Blaise offered them healing and “if any of them were ailing, they came straight to him and went away cured.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Can animals be counted among the saints in Christianity? They have served as the locus for revelation, been exemplars of piety, offered themselves as martyrs and servants, and, in their relationships with others, have been the source of agape—the love of the divine. Thus, the sacred history, though often obscured, suggests that animals may indeed be counted among the holy

ones in the Christian tradition. Of course, the functional worldview for these animal-human-divine relationships reveals a significantly different historical context in many cases. Humans and animals were intimately related in everyday life during the periods when these stories were developed. In contrast Euro-American culture of the early twenty-first century is a culture alienated from the natural world and other animals in most manifestations. Popular images of animals have morphed into human projections on a vast scale—from *The Lion King* to cult-like pedigree dog shows to mass produced flesh for food, with the actual dead animal being an utterly absent referent. These differences could, arguably, render the relevance of such animal stories impotent.

But even in those different cultural contexts saints provided an alternative relationship. Andrew Linzey, one of the few contemporary theologians to address the issue of animals, suggests this possibility in his book *Animal Theology*:

We need to remember that the challenge of so many saints in their love and concern for even the most hated of all animals, was in almost all cases *against* the spirit of their times. Christian authorities have been forgetful or indifferent to the claims of animals, or perhaps more accurately, simply misled by *ad hoc* theological speculations.<sup>29</sup>

Such subversive stories of liberation for animals were required throughout the first sixteen centuries of Christianities. Interestingly, these stories of animals are connected to the stories of the most pious, the holiest, of all—saints.

I suggest that re-telling stories of animals as saints could evoke radical attempts at reconstructing Christianities and could help to promote critical reflection on human-animal relationships. In her introduction to a volume of women's writings in American religion,

Rosemary Skinner Keller states, “[U]ntil history is revised, neither the writer nor the readers can imagine how a different story of the tradition will change their lives or the shape of history itself. When history is revised, the writer and the reader are led to new beginning points for interpreting their heritages. Neither person can accept the old story as it was told before!”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend Readings on the Saints*, Princeton UP, 1993. vol. 1, 84-85.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, 84-85.

<sup>3</sup> For ease of discussion I use the term "animal" to refer to "other-than-human" animals throughout this paper while acknowledging that human beings are animals as well. I also acknowledge that, in so doing, I am perpetuating the hierarchical ranking of "humans" over "animals." This is not intended, but our language limits me at this point.

<sup>4</sup> I refer to "Christianities" (in the plural) because there are so many varieties of Christianity in the world, and this has been the case since the first century CE. One "Christianity" has never existed. Attempts to over-simplify the traditions by placing them into one category have led to broad generalizations and misunderstandings of diverse Christianities.

<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Christianities are the primary religious system for approximately 1/3 of the human population—2 billion of the earth's 6 billion people. Biocentric Christianities, therefore, are requisite to shift religious sensibilities in the midst of the impending, and already present, environmental crisis. Numerous theologians are contributing this transformation: Sallie McFague, Jay McDaniel, John Cobb, Andrew Linzey, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Karen Baker-Fletcher, Larry Rasmussen, and many others.

<sup>6</sup> Carol Adams, in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, does an outstanding analysis of representations of animals in the "meat" industry and of the connections between these representations and the female body.

<sup>7</sup> An entire chapter in the book that I am currently writing covers the influences of these religious traditions and their views of animal-human connections on Christianities.

<sup>8</sup> The *Acts of Paul* exists only in large fragments. A widely accepted compilation is available in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. J.K. Elliott (Oxford UP: 1993).

<sup>9</sup> *Acts of Paul* in C. Schmidt, Praxeis Paulou (Hamburg: Augustin, 1936), 38-43, p. 5 of the Hamburg papyrus; first English translation by B.M. Metzger, "St. Paul and the Baptized Lion," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 39 (1945), 11-21. Also cited in Robert Grant, *Early Christians and Animals*, London: Routledge 1999.

<sup>10</sup> *Acts of Thecla*, chapters 28, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Donatello, *Miracle of the Mule*. Bronze, parcel gilt, Basilica del Santo, Padua.

<sup>12</sup> These images have been gathered during research sessions in Italy.

<sup>13</sup> *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Armstrong, 59.

<sup>15</sup> *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> As I write this particular version of this paper, in March 2001, cattle and sheep in Europe, Argentina and in some part of the U.S. are being slaughtered en masse because of the fear of the potential impact of contagious diseases on the profits of the livestock industry. Few, if any, of the slaughtered animals are proven to carry these diseases, some of which are not even fatal to the animals, they just destroy their "market value."

<sup>17</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 2, 266-267.

<sup>18</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, 127-128.

<sup>19</sup> *Flammarion Iconographic Guides*, 154.

<sup>20</sup> The cathedral of Siena is adorned with thirteenth century sculpture of Nicola Pisano. Animals are portrayed throughout his series of sculptures depicting scenes from the life of Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, 5.

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<sup>22</sup> Dennis Trout, "Christianizing the Nolan Countryside," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 286.

<sup>23</sup> Trout, 287

<sup>24</sup> This fabulous basilica is located south of Ravenna on the eastern coast of Italy.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, 229.

<sup>26</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, 91.

<sup>27</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 2, 148-149

<sup>28</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, 151.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology*, Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1995.

<sup>30</sup> Ruether and Keller, *In Our Own Voices: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writing*, p. 3.