

# The Holy Ascetic as a New Adam



# The Holy Ascetic as a New Adam:

*From Byzantium to Britain*

By

Chris Baghos

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For Lydia, Gabriel, and Elleni, with all my adoration and affection.



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# BIBLE ABBREVIATIONS

## **Old Testament: Latin Vulgate and Septuagint (LXX)**

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
1 Sam	1 Samuel
1 Ki	1 Kingdoms
3 Ki	3 Kingdoms
4 Ki	4 Kingdoms
Tob	Tobit
2 Mac	2 Maccabees
Ps	Psalms
Job	Job
Prov	Proverbs
WSol	Wisdom of Solomon
Mal	Malachi
Isa	Isaiah
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel

## **New Testament**

Mt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
Lk	Luke
Jn	John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Romans
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
Eph	Ephesians
Col	Colossians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
Heb	Hebrews
1 Jn	1 John
Rev	Revelations

All Scriptural references in this book have been taken from: *Septuaginta*, 2nd edn, ed. Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th edn, ed. the Institute for New Testament Textual Research Münster/Westphalia under the direction of Holger Strutwolf (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012); and *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, 5th edn, ed. Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007). All translations of the references are my own.



# INTRODUCTION

From September 2019 to February 2020, the Commonwealth of Australia experienced one of the worst bushfire seasons in its history. On the 4th of February, the former Prime Minister of Australia, Scott Morrison, confirmed in a speech to Parliament that thirty-three people had died because of the natural disaster. Among these deaths were those of nine firefighters, as declared by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC). On the 28th of February, an announcement by AFAC through social media verified that a total of three thousand and ninety-four homes had been destroyed across the states of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (VIC), Queensland (QLD), Western Australia (WA) and South Australia (SA), in addition to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). On this occasion, AFAC also revealed that the fire had consumed over seventeen million hectares of land throughout the states and territory. Earlier, on the 12th of February, the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) reported that two thousand, four hundred, and thirty-nine homes had been devastated within its jurisdiction alone.<sup>1</sup>

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment revealed that by the 28th of January, the fires had consumed five million, three hundred thousand hectares (6.7%) of its state, including two million and seven hundred thousand hectares (37%) of the national parks contained therein. The Department also disclosed that the fires in NSW had affected more than 80% of the Greater Blue Mountains Area, as well as 54% of the NSW components of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, both of which are recognised as World Heritage sites. In its Annual Climate Statement, published in January 2020, the National Bureau of Meteorology posited that the fires in NSW had been the largest in scale within the state's history, also confirming that the widest area of eastern Australia had been scorched in a single recorded fire season. Soon after, on the 8th of February, the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) stated that the fire in the Orroral Valley within the ACT was approximately eighty-six thousand, five hundred, and

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Richards, Nigel Brew, and Lizzie Smith, "2019–20 Australian Bushfires— Frequently Asked Questions: A Quick Guide", accessed 26 Jan. 2024, [https://www.apf.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1920/Quick\\_Guides/AustralianBushfires](https://www.apf.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1920/Quick_Guides/AustralianBushfires).

sixty-two hectares in size. Moreover, on the 31st of January, the SA Country Fire Service (CFS) reported that two hundred and ten thousand, six hundred and six hectares of the land (approximately 48%) of Kangaroo Island had been enveloped. On a similar note, the SA Department for Environment and Water stated on the 7th of February that over ninety-thousand hectares of its state's national parklands had been destroyed. Finally, on the 28th of February, the VIC Country Fire Authority (CFA) noted that the flames had consumed more than one and a half million hectares of land in its jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup>

Without doubt, the tragedy had a catastrophic effect on Australia's native wildlife, with conservative estimates based on NSW and VIC alone having projected the death of over a billion mammals, birds, and reptiles. Meanwhile, hundreds of billions of insects were considered lost. Lisa Richards and Nigel Brew of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, together with Lizzie Smith of the Department of Science, Technology, Environment and Resources, reported on behalf of the Australian Government the number of animals that had perished in the fires. In short, they agreed with Chris Dickman (a specialist in the ecology, conservation, and management of mammals in Australia) that the nation's fires had killed more than one billion animals, including more than eight hundred million within NSW. The authors highlighted that Dickman's calculations were intentionally conservative, with the mortality rate likely having been far higher. Based on the relevant modellings, Richards and her colleagues underscored that the fires had adversely impacted many animals, insects, and plants previously declared rare and threatened, with some losses feared to be permanent.<sup>3</sup>

On the 20th of January, the Federal Government's Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment released a preliminary record of threatened and migratory species that had over 10% of their known or predicted distribution within regions adversely affected by the bushfires, specifically in southern and eastern Australia. In short, early results indicated that forty-nine of the species formally listed as threatened had more than 80% of their modelled distribution within the said areas. Building on this analysis, on the 11th of February 2020, the Department distributed a provisional list of one hundred and thirteen animal species that the relevant experts had identified as requiring urgent assistance following the disaster. Most of these animals likely had 30% or more of their range burnt. The list included multiple species of birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs, invertebrates,

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<sup>2</sup> Richards et al., "2019–20 Australian Bushfires".

<sup>3</sup> Richards et al., "2019–20 Australian Bushfires".

freshwater crustaceans, and fish. The animals were identified based on the extent to which their range had potentially been engulfed by the fires and how vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered they were considered before. This is in addition to the physical, behavioural, and ecological traits which made them prone to fire.<sup>4</sup>

The fires in the abovementioned states and territory appear to have been caused accidentally by nature and certain products of human culture (termed *techné* in the Greek philosophical and patristic traditions). For instance, the NSW RFS reported that lightning had started the Gospers Mountain fire on the 26th of October 2019, with the flames burning through more than five hundred and twelve thousand hectares in the local government areas of Lithgow, Hawkesbury, Hunter Valley, Cudgegong, Blue Mountains, and the Central Coast. On the 3rd of February, the local media agencies reported that the fire in Kangaroo Island stemmed from the same phenomenon. In fact, according to VIC CFA and NSW RFS, most of the bushfires in their respective states were caused by lightning. Meanwhile, the Binna Burra fire in the Gold Coast hinterland in September 2019 is believed to have resulted from a discarded cigarette, while the Orroral Valley fire of January 2020 was likely started by a landing light from a helicopter belonging to the Australian army (as the aircraft was stationed on the ground).<sup>5</sup>

It is worth mentioning that a group of four hundred and forty-six scientists attributed the bushfires to climate change which they maintained stemmed from the industrial emission of greenhouses gases. In an open letter to the Australian Government, the scientists suggested these gases worsened the nation's fire-weather during the season mentioned above, particularly in its southern and eastern regions. According to the researchers, there had been a trend towards more frequent and extreme fire-weather conditions during summer, including an earlier start to the fire season. Subsequently, the group affirmed that the nation's yearly climate variability had been exacerbated by warming on the part of humanity. Hence, together with the limited regional rainfall in late 2019 and the dry fuel loads related to the prevailing drought, the harsher climate resulted in the volatile bushfire conditions just discussed. Furthermore, the scientists claimed that Australia's fire-weather was set to aggravate due to the ongoing climate change generally induced by governments and corporations, thus making fire management more challenging. While Australia is part of the Paris Agreement and committed to limiting warming to 1.5°C above the pre-industrial levels—thereby reducing the nation's risk of having bushfires by

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<sup>4</sup> Richards et al., “2019–20 Australian Bushfires”.

<sup>5</sup> Richards et al., “2019–20 Australian Bushfires”.

a significant margin—the scientists described its emission reduction targets (and of the world more broadly) as inadequate, affirming that humanity’s warming would inevitably increase to 3°C or more.<sup>6</sup>

It is also important to highlight that another large-scale tragedy involving animals emerged during this time, specifically the ongoing global pandemic of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) first identified in Wuhan, capital city of the Hubei Province of China. In short, this highly contagious and severe acute respiratory syndrome consists in flulike symptoms, such as fever, cough, and fatigue, and may result in pneumonia and other, sometimes fatal, complications.<sup>7</sup> By the 22nd of June 2020, close to nine million cases of COVID-19 were reported in more than one hundred and eighty-eight countries and territories, including hundreds of thousands of deaths.<sup>8</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) identified COVID-19 as a zoonotic virus (i.e., an infectious illness transmissible from animals to humans) on the basis of phylogenetics analyses undertaken with available full genome sequences. In short, bats appear to have been the reservoir of the COVID-19 virus, although the intermediate host creature has not yet been identified. For this reason, WHO investigated cases with symptom onset in Wuhan throughout December 2019, conducting environmental sampling from food markets purported to have sold creatures not normally intended for human consumption.<sup>9</sup>

The current investigation will not explore the causes of the 2019–2020 bushfire tragedy or the COVID-19 pandemic, nor any local Australian or international responses to these crises. Rather, its purpose is to examine how our Christian forebears of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages experienced and articulated the perennial tension between nature and *techne* which lies at the heart of these problems.

Subsequently, this book will explore the Late Antique and early medieval understanding of each person’s responsibility to care for their

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<sup>6</sup> Tanya Lippmann et al., “There Is No Strong, Resilient Australia Without Deep Cuts to Greenhouse Gas Emissions: An Open Letter on the Scientific Basis for the Links Between Climate Change and Bushfires in Australia”, accessed 26 Jan. 2024, <https://australianbushfiresandclimatechange.com>.

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization, “Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, accessed 26 Jan. 2024, [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/report-of-the-who-china-joint-mission-on-coronavirus-disease-2019-\(covid-19\)](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/report-of-the-who-china-joint-mission-on-coronavirus-disease-2019-(covid-19)).

<sup>8</sup> Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU), “COVID-19 Dashboard”, accessed 22 June 2020, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization, “Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission”.

fellow humans, animals, and the environment. This was approached as an extension of Christ's salvific ministry by the early patristic authors and hagiographers, who at the same time underscored the need for human beings to prudently traverse the technologies defending them against the catastrophic consequences of the Fall manifested in nature. My intention is to demonstrate that this perception of the positive ecological function of the human person was shared by wider Christendom, being featured (at the very least) in numerous hagiographies composed by the peoples of Byzantium, Gaul, Italy, Ireland, and Anglo-Saxon England during the first thousand years of the Church (i.e., before the "Great Schism" of 1054). The portrait of the ideal Christian who performs this function—that is, the practical ascetic and contemplative who arrives at the vision of God and the restorative powers which this enables—finds its expression in the "New Adam" and "garments of skin" motifs featured in a range of early hagiographical texts. These interrelated hagiographical themes will serve as the primary subjects of my investigation.

### Objectives of This Investigation

Numerous influential authors have examined the first millennium of Christianity using the divisional categories "Greek East" and "Latin West". To be sure, such terminology is of value insofar as it distinguishes between the episcopal centres of Constantinople and Rome, and the administrative and theological *linguae francae* of their respective jurisdictions. However, the use of such terms has risked giving uninformed audiences the impression that the Greek and Latin Christian communities followed fundamentally divergent paths from as early as Late Antiquity, which extended to the foreign peoples that they in turn converted.<sup>10</sup> Yet their representations of renowned ascetics and their religious successors very often reflect the same spiritual values, aspirations, and worldviews across the Greek/Latin divide. The shared vision of many different Lives of saints

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<sup>10</sup> Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West: A Study in the Christian Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West: The Church AD 681–1071* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007); Ivor J. Davidson, *A Public Faith: From Constantine to the Medieval World, AD 312–600*, Vol. 2 of *The Monarch History of the Church* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2005), 69–132; Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 115–87; Frend, W. H. C. "Old and New Rome in the Age of Justinian". In *Relations Between East and West in the Middle Ages*, ed. Derek Baker (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 11–28.

is especially evidenced by the same transformative effect on animals and the environment ascribed therein to ascetics considered to have taken on Christ's soteriological role as the New Adam. As shall be demonstrated throughout this exploration, the eremitic and coenobitic forms of asceticism that were transmitted from the East to the West constituted a highly influential spiritual movement; one which contributed to a common articulation of what it meant to be a fully realised Christian in perfect harmony with the created order. In truth, the legacy of Christianity had shared routes, with monasticism especially cutting across the basic heritage of the faith.

Certain scholars have examined to different extents the traditional Christian perception of the saints' contribution to the preservation and renewal of the created order, especially as it is reflected in monastic literature pertaining to the Eastern desert outskirts of the Roman Empire. Benedicta Ward, for instance, considered how some ascetics in the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, and St. Jerome of Stridon's *Life of Paul the Hermit* were presented as positively transforming the environment through their humility and self-denial.<sup>11</sup> Henry Chadwick considered the same point specifically in relation to John Moschus' *Spiritual Meadow*, which details the ascetical efforts and various interactions of the monks of Palestine during the sixth century, including their compassionate behaviour towards different animals.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it has always been assumed that Eastern motifs directly influenced similar ones featured in Celtic hagiography, so I will attempt to expand on these earlier analyses. I intend to build on the assessments by outlining how the Eastern Christian understanding of the positive ecological function of the ascetic—dubbed “New Adam” in this capacity by modern scholarship—was transmitted to the Insular (i.e., Celtic and Anglo-Saxon) peoples. I will attempt to illustrate how the Continental and Insular Christian communities adopted and developed this theme via a close reading of numerous hagiographies composed from the fourth to ninth centuries. I will thus attempt to show how the Continental sources were instrumental in the transmission of the motif to Britain and Ireland.

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<sup>11</sup> Ward, Benedicta. “The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers”. In *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, eds. Peter Tyler and Richard Woods (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 42–53, esp. 51–52; Benedicta Ward, trans., introduction to *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), xii, xxiii notes 14–16.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Chadwick, “John Moschus and His Friend Sophronius the Sophist”, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 25, No. 1 (1974), 68.

Only a handful of publications have been produced on the New Adam theme in the context of the Byzantine hagiographical tradition. While the motif has been noted in several pioneering studies concerning Insular hagiographies—including Ward’s chapter from 1989 on two Lives of Cuthbert and a more recent article by Elizabeth M. G. Krajewski on the *Life of Brigit of Kildare* (c. 650–690) by Cogitosus—it awaits a fuller treatment.<sup>13</sup> This fuller treatment is a major objective of the present study. To reiterate, the New Adam motif is in fact present within Late Antique and early medieval hagiography, although it was not explicitly referred to as such in relation to ascetics until modern times. To my knowledge, it has only been used in relation to persons other than Christ in the studies mentioned above (although it was certainly acknowledged by the patristic authors and hagiographers of the wider Church of the first millennium that the saints directly participated in his restoration of the environment).

The role of influential authors from Western European regions, such as Gaul and Italy, in the dissemination of the concept from Byzantium to the Insular world has yet to be fully examined. In fact, the Byzantine, Continental, and Insular hagiographical traditions have generally been considered independently from one another, with most scholars making only passing references to their interrelationship in assessments of other themes/concepts. Except for a few promising studies, such as by Walter Berschin and Caroline Brett, markedly little comparison has been made between the Insular and Continental Lives.<sup>14</sup> Comparisons between Insular and Eastern material mostly stop short of the Byzantine period. Much more can be discovered regarding the interinfluence and similarities of these hagiographical traditions. Comparative study will also shed light on the cosmology, spirituality, and ecclesiology of the different communities from which they stem.

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<sup>13</sup> Ward, Benedicta. “The Spirituality of St Cuthbert”. In *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to A.D. 1200*, eds. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), 71–73; Elizabeth M. G. Krajewski, “Kildare and the Kingdom of God: A New Reading of Cogitosus’ *Vita Sanctae Brigitae*”, *Peritia* 28 (2017), 91–112. For more on the date of Cogitosus’ Life, see Richard Sharpe, “*Vitae S. Brigitae*: The Oldest Texts”, *Peritia* 1 (1982), 86–87.

<sup>14</sup> Berschin, Walter. “Radegundis and Brigit”. In *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, eds. John Carey, Máire Herbert, and Pádraig Ó Riain (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 72–76; Brett, Caroline. “The Hare and the Tortoise? *Vita Prima Sancti Samsonis*, *Vita Paterni*, and Merovingian Hagiography”. In *St Samson of Dol and the Earliest History of Brittany, Cornwall and Wales*, ed. Lynette Olson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2017), 83–101.

I repeat, my objective is to verify whether the Byzantine, Continental, and Insular portrayals of the ascetic as a redeemer of the created order all attest to a shared spirituality and common perception of reality on the part of two vast regions often categorised independently. Despite the theological and administrative divisions that emerged between the different traditions in these regions after the “Great Schism” in 1054, there was free movement of ascetical ideas both before and afterwards. As concerns Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, influential monks—including Sts. John Cassian, Martin of Tours, and Benedict of Nursia—transmitted the common spiritual experience of the hermits and coenobites of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia to the forests and mountainous areas of the European Continent, and, in turn, the Irish bogs and English marshlands.

The significance of ascetical and hagiographical literature in the transmission of the Eastern ascetical ideal and related theological concepts—especially the New Adam motif—can hardly be overestimated. The following texts are especially noteworthy: (i) Evagrius of Antioch’s translation of the *Life of Antony* by St. Athanasius of Alexandria; (ii) the Blessed Rufinus of Aquileia’s translation of the *History of the Monks of Egypt*; (iii) Jerome’s *Life of Paul the Hermit*; and (iv) John Cassian’s translation of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. As will be shown below, Sulpicius Severus’ *Life, Dialogues*, and letters on Martin are equally important in this regard, as are St. Gregory the Great’s *Dialogi* on the holy ascetics of Italy, particularly the second book on Benedict.<sup>15</sup> It is also important to note that the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon peoples were especially drawn to the Lives of saints on account of their common fondness for hero narratives.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Carolinne White, trans., general introduction to *Early Christian Lives* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), xi–liii, esp. xxxv–xxxviii; Andrew Cain, trans., introduction to Tyrannius Rufinus, *Inquiry About the Monks in Egypt*, Vol. 139 of *Fathers of the Church* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 3–55; A. M. C. Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–15, 119–60.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Richard K. Emmerson, trans., introduction to *Anglo-Saxon Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 41; Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn., Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 220–39. The interest of the Irish in profound philosophical and theological ideas is evidenced by Augustinus Hibernicus’ treatise *On the Miraculous Things in Sacred Scripture* (seventh century). See MacGinty, Gerard. “The Irish Augustine: *De mirabilibus sacrae Scripturae*”. In *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission*, eds. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 70–83.

In my examination of the New Adam motif featured in the writings of Sulpicius Severus, Gregory the Great, St. Adomnán of Iona, and the Venerable Bede (among others), I hope to demonstrate that the Continental and Insular Christians of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages intended to: (i) attain the same superior existential mode of holiness as their Byzantine counterparts; and (ii) remedy the disastrous consequences of the Fall on the remainder of creation via similar ascetical practices. I will thus seek to verify whether these peoples from different regions generally perceived themselves as: (i) inhabiting the same physical and spiritual worlds with similar/identical duties; and (ii) belonging to the same Church. My investigation therefore has the potential to assist current environmental protection initiatives that seek and embrace insights from theology, in addition to contemporary ecumenical efforts (particularly between the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican Churches).

# CHAPTER ONE

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### 1.1. Navigating the Conceptual Landscape

#### 1.1.1. The Holy Ascetic as a “New Adam” and Related Concepts

It is significant that Ward considered the saints’ positive ecological function as the result of their having taken on Christ’s role as the New Adam. Her most thorough, though still short, treatment of this theme is featured in her assessment of the spirituality of Cuthbert. Ward examined two accounts (by the anonymous author and Bede, respectively) of a monk who observed otters ministering to Cuthbert in a humanlike fashion. She revealed that the anonymous author presented Cuthbert in a manner reminiscent of the Old Testament figure of Daniel, implying that the former, too, was an image of Christ (the prophet being a type of Christ according to patristic exegesis). Furthermore, Ward demonstrated that Bede evoked the Transfiguration by citing Cuthbert’s order to the monk not to immediately reveal what he had just witnessed, as well as the latter’s frightened reaction (Mt 17:1–13; Mk 9:2–13; Lk 9:28–36). In Ward’s interpretation, Bede suggested that the monk bore witness to an epiphany of Christ in the person of the saint, whose prayers had led to a transfiguration reflecting the restoration of the created order.<sup>17</sup> Ward in turn affirmed that Bede considered Cuthbert: “the New Adam, once more at peace with all creation, naming the animals, who were the first servants and the first friends [of humanity]”.<sup>18</sup>

Ward reiterated this idea in the introduction to her translation of the Latin thematic collection of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. She cited two stories from the *History of the Monks of Egypt* that convey the idea that Christ re-established humanity’s authority over nature by his salvific economy: i.e., his complete triumph over sin and death through his Incarnation, mission, Passion, and Resurrection. These two stories involve St. Macarius of Egypt and the monk known as Abba Bes, respectively. Ward

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<sup>17</sup> Ward, “The Spirituality of St Cuthbert”, 71–73.

<sup>18</sup> Ward, “The Spirituality of St Cuthbert”, 72.

cited another two stories—from the *History* and the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, respectively—in which St. Antony the Great positively interacts with mythological creatures, specifically a centaur and a faun. She rightly contended that the compilers of the *History* and Jerome similarly adopted Classical images to convey the notion that Christ, as master of time and space, redeemed creatures of all ages through his Resurrection.<sup>19</sup>

In these analyses we can see Ward moving toward a strong identification of the “New Adam” motif. A key figure in modern study of the church fathers, Ward here employed patristic hermeneutical categories to interpret a major scene featured in two Lives of Cuthbert attesting to the ascetic’s spirituality.<sup>20</sup> Her focus on the spiritual practices and vision of Cuthbert and his community was highly innovative, considering that most scholars who came before focused instead on the figure’s historical significance as a pastor and solitary, and on the origins of his cult. I shall imitate Ward’s patristic, rather than the historical, approach, highlighting the faith, morals, and ascetical disciplines described and alluded to in the chosen primary sources. I will examine other key scenes featured in the Lives of Cuthbert and another major Insular text which they directly influenced, namely, the *Life of Guthlac* by Felix.

Tim Vivian has undertaken a similar investigation—though comparatively limited in scope—with respect to the *Virtues of Macarius*, a Coptic monastic collection which has gained limited attention from scholarship. This compilation consists of proverbs and stories by and about Macarius of Egypt which date from the fourth to seventh centuries.<sup>21</sup> Vivian identified five stories from the *Virtues* in which the church father has been presented as commanding, understanding, and/or healing wild animals by the grace of God. These animals include: a useful crocodile, a grieving sheep, a starving wolf, disfigured antelopes, and a snake with a wounded eye.<sup>22</sup> Vivian further compared and related the *Virtues* with other important sources composed around the same time: i.e., the *Life of Macarius of Alexandria*, the *Lausiac History*, and the *History of the Monks of Egypt*. In fact, he cited one story from the Life in which the Alexandrian Macarius has been depicted like his elder Egyptian contemporary of the same name. Vivian accurately observed

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<sup>19</sup> Ward, introduction to *The Desert Fathers*, xii, xxiii notes 14–16.

<sup>20</sup> See Mattos, Dominic. “Benedicta Ward, SLG, in a Few Words: Nun, Scholar, Teacher”. In *Prayer and Thought in Monastic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Benedicta Ward S. L. G.*, eds. Santha Bhattacharji, Rowan Williams, and Dominic Mattos (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 329–33.

<sup>21</sup> Tim Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom: Animals as Parables in the *Virtues of Saint Macarius*”, *Anglican Theological Review* 85, No. 3 (2003), 480.

<sup>22</sup> Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom”, 480–81, 483–87, 489.

that the story attests to “wonderful symbiosis and reciprocity” between Macarius and a certain deer which sustained him with its milk as he returned to his cell from the tomb of Jannes and Jambres.<sup>23</sup> Vivian also examined similar stories—concerning the Alexandrian in the *Life and Lausiatic History*, and Macarius the Great in the *History of the Monks of Egypt*—in which the respective subjects compassionately heal a hyena’s cub and ultimately compel it to forsake its hunting and consumption of other creatures, thereby humanising it.<sup>24</sup>

Vivian’s comparative treatment of his chosen primary sources will also provide a model for my approach. To be more exact, I will highlight the patristic and hagiographical antecedents of the chosen Lives, paying close attention to early monastic compilations and histories of Late Antiquity. It is noteworthy that Vivian also indicated that the abovementioned stories from the *Virtues* feature the New Adam motif, even though he did not use this terminology. Moreover, he contended that the obeisance offered by the created order towards Macarius in the *Virtues*: “represents only the first, most superficial level of relationship between the early monks and animals”.<sup>25</sup> He therefore chose to focus on what he perceived to be two “deeper levels” of meaning with regard to these stories: “animals as parables, and monks and animals together as enacted parables”.<sup>26</sup> For example, Vivian examined how the eagle serves as an image of the soul in *Virtues* 28.<sup>27</sup>

In examining the positive interactions between saints and animals in the chosen Byzantine, Continental, and Insular Lives, I intend to highlight how these episodes were taken both theologically and, to a considerable extent, literally by their authors and early audiences. This does mean that I deny the allegorical representation of animals and ascetics as images of the spiritual life within monastic literature. Vivian has certainly offered a valuable assessment of the *Virtues* in this regard. I too shall distinguish between the literal and analogical representations of animals in various Byzantine, Continental, and Insular hagiographies where necessary. However, it must be emphasised that the numerous encounters between holy ascetics and animals still have great didactic value when taken at face value; as is often the case with patristic exegesis, they are intended to be read at more than one level and not singularly. Take, for example, Gregory the Great’s

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<sup>23</sup> Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom”, 487.

<sup>24</sup> Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom”, 488–89.

<sup>25</sup> Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom”, 481.

<sup>26</sup> Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom”.

<sup>27</sup> Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom”, 482–83.

multilayered interpretation of the Scriptures, comprised of the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical.<sup>28</sup>

From a traditional Christian perspective, therefore, the reverence displayed by different creatures towards the monks reflects the latter's arrival at the state of holiness and restoration of paradise, as repeatedly acknowledged by Vivian himself.<sup>29</sup> Hence the stories have no "superficial" level. They immediately reflect the Church's conviction that the Kingdom of Heaven can be experienced in the here and now—otherwise termed "realised eschatology"—while illustrating the actual relationship that God has envisioned for humans and other creatures.<sup>30</sup>

Krajewski examined certain biblical allusions featured in the *Life of St. Brigit of Kildare* written by Cogitosus. She identified how Cogitosus has placed the former in clusters centred on major geographical and spiritual locations cited in the Scriptures, specifically: the Garden of Eden featured in Gen 1 and 2; the cities of refuge recorded in Num 35, Deut 19, and Josh 20 and 21; and the "Peaceable Kingdom" depicted in Isa 2 and 11. Furthermore, she described how the hagiographer has likened the monastery at Kildare with the New Jerusalem described in Rev 21 through chiasmic structural patterning. To this end, Krajewski highlighted how Cogitosus has presented the monastic community of Kildare as the focus of God's renewed creation in his own time. Krajewski chose to read this Latin *Life of Brigit* primarily as a collection of parables that present Kildare as a sacred sanctuary and locus of the Kingdom of God; a place to which Christians from all of Ireland were flocking, partly in imitation of the tribes of Israel that ventured to the Jewish Temple.<sup>31</sup> In her analysis, Krajewski identified

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, DeGregorio, Scott. "Gregory's Exegesis: Old and New Ways of Approaching the Scriptural Text". In *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, Vol. 47 of *Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 269–90.

<sup>29</sup> Vivian, "The Peaceable Kingdom", 479, 489–91.

<sup>30</sup> It is surprising that Vivian examined the allegorical aspect of the abovementioned stories at the expense of their literal/theological meaning given that he rightly drew a connection between the monks' positive relationship with animals, on the one hand, and the eschatological "peaceable kingdom" referred to in Isa 11:1–19, on the other. At any rate, Vivian correctly perceived love as the chief virtue of the kingdom alluded to in the *Virtues* and similar texts. He provided a brief though useful analysis of St. Isaac the Syrian's *Ascetical Homilies*, in which the latter has described the altruistic compassion that monks such as himself develop towards all creatures. Interestingly, Vivian cited a passage in which Isaac has affirmed that wild animals perceive the truly humble person as a restorer of creation's prelapsarian harmony. Vivian, "The Peaceable Kingdom", 479, 489–91.

<sup>31</sup> Krajewski, "Kildare and the Kingdom of God", 94–109.

how the hagiographer has depicted Brigit as having taken on Adam's role as a God-appointed steward of creation by virtue of her purity, altruism, and obedience to God. Like Ward, she explicitly referred to the holy ascetic as a "new Adam", revealing that, throughout the *Life*, Cogitosus has depicted his patron saint "in harmony with nature, filled with charity, able to tame wild creatures and protect those who seek her aid".<sup>32</sup> For Krajewski, Cogitosus has presented Brigit at "the centre of a flourishing pastoral and agricultural enterprise [...] a new creation, surrounded by the winsome innocence of paradise".<sup>33</sup> Krajewski also noted the influence of Gregory the Great's *Dialogi* on the text, although she did not identify the latter's essential contribution to the New Adam motif.<sup>34</sup> She nonetheless made room for a wider and more thorough analysis of the theme as featured in *Continental and Insular Lives*.

Subsequently, Ward, Vivian, and Krajewski discussed how traditional Christian communities have attributed the saints' reordering of the natural world to their participation in the grace of Christ, the New Adam *par excellence*. I intend to build on their assessments by investigating how the theme of the ascetic as a redeemer of nature was adopted and developed by other Continental hagiographers and their Insular successors, who—as will be shown—similarly applied it to their local hermits, coenobites, bishops, and missionaries. I am obliged to mention here that the first person I have found to have used the appellation "New Adam" in relation to the saints is, in fact, Ward. I have adopted her extension of this terminology because it has value for understanding the place of the saints in the pre- and post-lapsarian vision of the world shared by the Eastern and Western Christian communities owing to the Scriptures. The term is also useful and productive for understanding how the communities perceived themselves and their relation to one another.

Returning to the theme of the saint as a restorer of paradise by virtue of their imitation of, and participation in, Christ, I am required to offer a brief reflection here concerning its pattern of transmission from the fourth to the eighth centuries. Throughout the course of this analysis, I will attempt to demonstrate—based on the findings of Colgrave and other influential editors—that, aside from the common Scriptural and early patristic inheritance, the New Adam motif—although not originally labelled as such—was transmitted from the Greek East to the Latin West through John Cassian's translation of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, in addition to trade and migration (the latter factors remaining outside the scope of this

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<sup>32</sup> Krajewski, "Kildare and the Kingdom of God", 94.

<sup>33</sup> Krajewski, "Kildare and the Kingdom of God", 94.

<sup>34</sup> Krajewski, "Kildare and the Kingdom of God", 93.

study, which is mostly theological and literary in its focus). It was subsequently taken up by another highly influential author residing in Gaul, namely, Suplicius Severus, in his representation of his mentor, Martin, who was directly inspired by the hermitic form of monasticism that had spread to the Continent from the outskirts of Byzantium. The motif was then assumed by Gregory the Great, on the one hand, and Admonán of Iona, on the other, who both had access to all the sources mentioned above. Gregory—even more than Admonán—helped to pass on the theme to the wider Insular Christian world, exerting special influence on the anonymous monk from Lindisfarne who composed the original *Life of Cuthbert* and, more importantly, Bede. Bede’s *Life of Cuthbert* then served as literary prototype for Felix’s *Life of Guthlac*.

As mentioned above, Ward examined the theme of the holy ascetic as a facilitator of paradise as featured in several compilations pertaining to the Eastern monastic experience. She repeatedly affirmed that anchorites during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages were held to effect a positive transformation of the desert and its wildlife through their “daily death” (i.e., their humility and self-denial) in a manner reflecting Christ’s redemption of creation through his Passion and Resurrection. Indeed, Eastern Christians (Byzantine, Coptic, and Syriac) maintained that this effort enabled hermits to “relate to all creation”—as God originally intended for humanity—“naming the animals, enjoying them, not dominating and using them”.<sup>35</sup> Ward therefore noted different animals that hermits are recorded to have cared for and been venerated by, such as crocodiles and hyenas. We can also find this in the following story from the *History of the Monks of Egypt* regarding Theon of Oxyrhynchus, which to my knowledge has not been discussed in such a connection by Ward or other scholars. Here, the theme of the ascetic’s arrival at a paradisaal/Edenic state is most apparent:

*Dicebant autem, quod et noctibus ad eremum progrediens comitatu uteretur plurimo eremi bestiarum. Ipse vero hauriens aquam de puteo suo et praebens eis pocula obsequii earum remunerabatur laborem. Huius autem rei manifestum dabatur indicium, quod vestigia bubalorum caprumque et onagrorum circa eius cellulam plurima deprehendebantur.*<sup>36</sup>

They used to say, moreover, that also in the nights as he was going out to the desert, he would enjoy [the company/friendship of] a great band of beasts of the wilderness. He himself, in truth, while drawing out water from his well and

<sup>35</sup> Ward, “The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers”, 51.

<sup>36</sup> Tyrannius Rufinus, *Historia monachorum sive De vita sanctorum partum* [hereafter *History of the Monks of Egypt*] 6.9, Vol. 34 of *Patristische Texte und Studien*, ed. Eva Schulz-Flügel (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1990), 285.

offering to them cups of complaisance, used to reward their effort. Of this occurrence, indeed, clear evidence was given, because the tracks of stags and he-goats and wild asses around his little chamber were perceived [to be] very many.

As noted earlier, Ward's most intensive treatment of this theme is featured in her assessment of the spirituality of Cuthbert, as reflected in the *Anonymous Life* and that of Bede.<sup>37</sup> Bertram Colgrave dated the former to c. 699–705 and the latter to c. 721. Colgrave outlined how Bede closely modelled his text on the anonymous earlier source, adding six miracle stories to it and generally improving its arrangement and lucidity.<sup>38</sup> The earlier *Life*'s depiction of the otters is worth citing:

*Dum autem de mare ascendens, et in arenosis locis litoris flectens genua orabat, uenerunt statim post uestigia eius duo pusilla animalia maritima humiliter proni in terram, lambentes pedes eius uolutantes tergebant pellibus suis, et calefacientes odoribus suis. Post seruitium autem et ministerio impleto accepta ab eo benedictione, ad cognatas undas maris recesserunt.*<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, while he was rising from the sea, and bending his knees on the sandy spots of the shore, he began to pray; immediately there proceeded after his footsteps two very little marine animals humbly bending downward towards the ground; while licking his feet, they began to cleanse [them], turning about with their hides, also warming [them] with their exhalations. After the service—indeed, when their ministry was also fulfilled, when a blessing was received from him—they went back to their kindred waves of the sea.

The anonymous author states that the witness of this encounter related the story to his fellow monks after Cuthbert's repose. It is significant that the author has also likened Cuthbert in this instance to the Prophet Daniel, whose pacification of ferocious lions was widely known and celebrated (Dan 6:16–23). As mentioned above, Ward rightly contended that, by associating Cuthbert with Daniel, the hagiographer implied that the Northumbrian saint should likewise be considered an image of Christ,

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<sup>37</sup> *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo* [hereafter *The Anonymous Life of Cuthbert*] 2.3. In *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 78–82; Bede the Venerable, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* [hereafter *The Life of Cuthbert*] 10. In *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 188–90.

<sup>38</sup> Colgrave, introduction to *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 13–16.

<sup>39</sup> *Anonymous Life of Cuthbert* 2.3, 80.

especially bearing in mind patristic typology.<sup>40</sup> However, it should also be noted that Christ is traditionally considered the New Adam *par excellence* on account of his perfect realisation of human destiny, having lived entirely without sin (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:45–49).

Much more can be extracted from this episode by relating it to the Eastern Christian tradition as it endures within the Eastern Orthodox Church. As mentioned above, Ward referred to Cuthbert's paradisaical state within the *Anonymous Life* and that composed by Bede. She asserted that this generally implies a certain responsibility towards the environment in hagiographical literature, including processes such as "naming" animals. "Naming" in the Scriptural and patristic sense denotes the identification of a creature's true function (i.e., that intended by God), and has been discussed by the recently departed Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia, Archbishop Stylianos Harkianakis, in his evaluation of what the Genesis narrative reveals about the sacredness of creation.<sup>41</sup> Harkianakis affirmed that Adam's invitation by God to name all creatures in Gen 2:19 signifies the divine call of humanity to recognise their unique qualities and relation to one another. He also stated that the giving of names presupposes affection leading to authentic knowledge on the part of the human person. Appealing to the etymology of the Greek verb *καλεῖν* and its relation to the noun *ἐκκλησία*, the author interpreted the Septuagint rendition of this verse as suggesting that the human being is responsible for drawing all creatures to unity within the context of the Church.<sup>42</sup> This is precisely what Theon and Cuthbert are depicted as having accomplished in the aforementioned sources, not by "naming" any animals per se, but by recognising their inherent worth as fellow sensible beings fashioned by God and subsequently tending to them; whether through prayer, feeding, or healing. This is likely what Ward intended to mean with respect to the two Lives given that Cuthbert does not dub or refer to the otters in any unique way. At any rate,

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<sup>40</sup> Ward, "The Spirituality of St Cuthbert", 72. Aphrahat, a Syriac patristic author of the late third/early fourth century, was among the first to explicitly identify Daniel as a type of Christ, likening the respective persecutions which these figures endured. More precisely, the author affirmed that just as Daniel had been cast into a lion's den and come up uninjured, so had Christ descended to the abode of the dead and ascended in glory; just as Daniel's ascent had been doubted, so had that of Christ; just as Daniel had closed the mouth of destructive lions, so had Christ sealed the jaws of death; just as Daniel's pit had been secured and guarded, so had Christ's tomb; just as Daniel's accusers had been shamed after his return, so had those of Christ. Aphrahat, *Demonstrations II* 21.18, trans. Kuriakose Valavanolickal (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2011), 220–23.

<sup>41</sup> Stylianos Harkianakis, "The Sacredness of Creation", *Phronema* 5 (1990), 5–13.

<sup>42</sup> Harkianakis, "The Sacredness of Creation", 10.

the process of unification becomes more evident when we consider the ecclesial conviction that ascetic solitaries are never isolated from the faithful. Rather, they ensure the safety of both the natural and inhabited worlds through their prayers; a point made clear in one of St. Barsanuphius of Gaza's letters (sixth century) and the *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* (early seventh century), traditionally attributed to St. Sophronius of Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup>

Subsequently, developing the approach of Ward in particular, I intend to help fill the interpretative gap in the contemporary study of the early Insular Lives by appealing to the wider articulation of the common monastic experience from which their authors have drawn. Moreover, I will reflect on how this experience has been interpreted by modern and contemporary scholars of different denominational backgrounds in the disciplines of history, patristics, and systematic theology (as in the preceding paragraph). Ward's complementary assessments of the spirituality of the desert fathers, on the one hand, and Cuthbert, on the other, reveal that the Byzantine and Insular hagiographers of the first millennium had a similar understanding of the experience of holiness and its effects on the environment.

Despite being separated by an entire continent and multiple centuries, Cuthbert's chroniclers, on the one hand, and the compilers of the *Sayings* and *History of the Monks of Egypt*, on the other, perceived their ascetical paragons as inhabiting the same physical and spiritual worlds with identical duties. Yet this common perception stems from more than a shared exegetical tradition. It attests to a spiritual movement that spread from the deserts of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor to the woods and mountains of the Continent and onwards to the Irish bogs and English marshlands. As I shall demonstrate in this investigation, monastic authors such as Jerome, Evagrius of Antioch, John Cassian, Sulpicius Severus, and Gregory the Great were especially important in the transmission of the monastic ideal and common articulation of the existential and cosmological consequences of the "angelic life". There was a common exegesis and shared influence of these and other church fathers so that religious life was considered to be a continuous development throughout the East and West, with animals and nature having a vital role at all times.

Let us now consider other examinations of hagiographical and patristic material which have touched upon the theme of the holy ascetic as a divinely appointed pacifier of wild creatures. Colgrave indicated that both the

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<sup>43</sup> Barsanuphius of Gaza and John the Prophet, *Letters, Volume 2*, Vol. 114 of *Fathers of the Church*, trans. John Chryssavgis (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 146–47; *The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete and The Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, eds. and trans. Mother Katherine and Mother Thekla (Rev. edn., Finnian Books, 2013), 118.