



romantic medieval gothic style appeared as a backlash to the symmetry of Palladianism, and such buildings as Fontm Abbey were built. By the middle of the nineteenth century, as a result of new technology, construction incorporated steel. One of the greatest exponents of this was Joseph Paxton, architect of the Crystal Palace. Stonehenge is believed by many English people and foreigners alike to hold an iconic place in the culture of England. Other built structures such as cathedrals and parish churches are associated with a sense of traditional Englishness, as is often the palatial 'stately home'; a notion established in part by English author Jane Austen's work *Pride and Prejudice*. The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe, Vol.10 (2007). Abstract. Analysis of the variations introduced into the hagiographic corpus, both textual and iconographic, for a saint's cult over the course of the medieval era demonstrates the vitality of that corpus, reveals the cultural significance of the variations introduced, and offers insights into (re)conceptualizations of sainthood. Such analysis elucidates, for example, the 'evolution' of St. Guthlac from ascetic solitary to promoter and defender of a wealthy religious establishment.

## Tradition and Transformation in the Cult of St. Guthlac in Early Medieval England

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**Abstract:** Analysis of the variations introduced into the hagiographic corpus, both textual and iconographic, for a saint's cult over the course of the medieval era demonstrates the vitality of that corpus, reveals the cultural significance of the variations introduced, and offers insights into (re)conceptualizations of sainthood. Such analysis elucidates, for example, the 'evolution' of St. Guthlac from ascetic solitary to promoter and defender of a wealthy religious establishment.

§1. Despite the widespread popularity and enduring importance of saints' cults in medieval Christian culture, their study has often suffered from a perception that the *lives* and other representations of the saints are static and unchanging. Far from being either dismissible or immutable, however, the stories and images of the saints, while perhaps appearing deceptively stable, are in fact dynamic—colored and enlivened by an abundance of variation in the details of their representations in text and in image.<sup>1</sup> For example, the seventh-century 'version' of a saint is often considerably different from the thirteenth-century 'version.' In reference to this wealth of versions in various *vitae* and other medieval hagiographic representations, E. Gordon Whatley has observed that, "[e]ach recension represents a different interpretation of the inherited legend, and to speak of *the* life or passion of a particular saint becomes meaningless in the light of [the] textual variety revealed..." (1996, 12). This abundant variation in text and image raises a number of questions. What influenced the changes? Do the variations reflect changes in purpose, patronage, doctrine, liturgy, or intended audience? Are they due to differences in authorship, geographical origin, or regional preferences? Analysis of the variations introduced into the corpus of materials, both narrative and visual, for a given saint over the course of the Middle Ages in England can elucidate the social, cultural, and historical significance of these changes. Exploration of the manner in which these variations reflect, for example, changes in doctrine, shifting pastoral concerns, or the growth of the power of patronage demonstrates that texts and images of the saints, contrary to being static, are 'living,' vibrant 'documents.' Analysis of such variations allows us to trace, for example, how the role of St. Guthlac of Crowland changes from that of ascetic solitary to that of promoter and defender of a wealthy religious establishment. Through such analysis, we can gain insights into Anglo-Saxon conceptualizations of sainthood and into the evolution of those concepts over the course of the early Middle Ages.

## Guthlac: History and Background

§2. Guthlac (c. 673-714) was born of Mercian royal stock and brought up under the heroic code of the Anglo-Saxon elite (Farmer 2003, 239-240). However, about 697 (at

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the age of twenty-four) he rejects the warrior's life and enters religious life at Repton, an important Mercian royal and monastic center. After living, and apparently flourishing, under communal monastic rule for several years, Guthlac withdraws (c. 701) to Crowland, a secluded, desolate, elevated spot in the midst of the wild fens of East Anglia, to pursue the life of the religious hermit. For about thirteen years, he lives under a harsh, self-imposed ascetic rule, having St. Bartholomew as his guide and comfort.<sup>2</sup> During his time at Crowland, Guthlac, as *miles Christi*, becomes known throughout the region for his holiness. At Crowland he is ordained as a priest (c. 705) by Haedda, Bishop of Lichfield, and gathers a few disciples, including his sister, Pega, before his death in 714.

§3. The cult of Guthlac, who is often regarded, after Cuthbert, as Anglo-Saxon England's most popular hermit saint, blossomed early. According to his hagiographer, Felix, a monk of Crowland, the saint's body was found incorrupt in 715, one year after his death (Chapter LI). Later, spurious tradition holds that the following year (716) King Æthelbald founded a monastery at Crowland in Guthlac's memory.<sup>3</sup> About 740, scarcely twenty-five years after the saint's death, Ælfwald, King of the East Angles (†749), commissioned Felix to write Guthlac's *vita*. Several vernacular versions followed in succeeding generations. Oral tradition suggests that the saint's tomb was popular with pilgrims from as early as the ninth century. Later sources document the growth of his cult: centered at Crowland, it became relatively widespread by about 900 beyond Mercia, to Westminster, St. Alban's, Durham, and then subsequently, more generally throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Translations in 1136 (at the dedication of a new Abbey, built on the site of Guthlac's cell) and 1196 are reported to have found the saint's body incorrupt, which further fueled the cult's rise. A wide range of artifacts and texts are associated with these translations (Roberts 1970), many of which will be discussed below. As a further indication of Guthlac's popularity, fourteen pre-Reformation churches were dedicated to the saint, all within the wider geographical range of what was once Mercian-influenced territory.<sup>4</sup> By the fourteenth century, however, the historical record suggests that the popularity and notability of the saint's cult had begun to wane precipitously. In contrast, for example, to Cuthbert, whose popularity Guthlac's once rivaled and whose cult is still celebrated, Guthlac merits scarce, if any, attention in the modern liturgical calendar. In tracing the evolution of Guthlac's cult as represented in text and image, this essay attempts to elucidate its waning.

## Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*

§4. Much of what we know of Guthlac is derived ultimately from Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, the earliest extant *vita* of the saint, composed in Latin about 740. In his opening chapters, Felix comments on Guthlac's distinguished lineage (Chapters 1-3), the auspicious circumstances of his birth—a hand, "shining with gold-red splendor," extends from the heavens to family's house (Chapters 4-8)<sup>5</sup>—and the saint's upbringing (Chapters 10-15). True to the royal heroic code of Anglo-Saxon England, Guthlac excels at fighting and, by the age of twenty-four, has gained renown throughout the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. After Guthlac has followed the warrior way of life for nine years, however, an unsettling vision acutely imprints upon him the transitory nature of life and, in particular, his own mortality. Thereupon, Guthlac rejects his established way of life (Chapters 18-19), to the consternation of many, as

... [t]he flame of divine grace burned so fiercely in him that he not only disregarded the reverence due to his royal blood, but he also spurned his parents, his fatherland, and the comrades of his youth. For when he had completed the twenty-fourth year of his age, he renounced the pomps of this world, and kept his unwavering faith and trust fixed in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Having made this profession of faith, Guthlac takes the tonsure under the direction of Abbess Ælfthryth at Repton. Unpopular at first because of his abstention from alcohol, Guthlac eventually wins over the brothers at Repton through his humility and good nature (despite his troubling abstemiousness). Living at Repton for two years (Chapters 20-23), he distinguishes himself in the practice of monastic disciplines and "sought to imitate the individual virtues of each one of those who dwelt with him..."<sup>7</sup> During his time at Repton, Guthlac reads about the solitaries of former days and is inspired to follow their model. Thus, having obtained the consent of the elders in his community at Repton, he determines to become a hermit at Crowland (also spelled 'Croyland') in the East Anglian fens, settling there on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24). Felix goes to some effort to portray vividly the harshness, bleakness, and

remoteness of the Crowland fen (Chapters 24-26), "...a most dismal fen of immense size...consisting of marshes, now of bogs, sometimes of black waters overhung by fog, sometimes studded with wooded islands and traversed by the windings of tortuous streams,"<sup>8</sup> to which the saintly Guthlac had committed himself, but also emphasizes that Guthlac "loved the remoteness of the spot seeing that God had given it him, and vowed with righteous purpose to spend all the days of his life there."<sup>9</sup>

§5. The bulk of Felix's *Vita* (i.e., Chapters 27-50, or about three-fourths of the text) is devoted to Guthlac's life, struggles, and death at Crowland. Felix repeatedly emphasizes the ascetic tone and solitary nature of Guthlac's life (Chapter 28), noting:

Now there was in the said island a mound built of clods of earth which greedy comers to the waste had dug open, in the hope of finding treasure there; in the side of this there seemed to be a sort of cistern, and in this Guthlac the man of blessed memory began to dwell, after building a hut over it.<sup>10</sup> From the time when he first inhabited this hermitage this was his unalterable rule of life: namely to wear neither wool nor linen garments nor any other sort of soft material, but he spent the whole of his solitary life wearing garments made of skins. So great indeed was the abstinence of his daily life that from the time when he began to inhabit the desert he ate no food of any kind except that after sunset he took a scrap of barley bread and a small cup of muddy water. For when the sun reached its western limits, then he thankfully tasted some little provision for the needs of this mortal life.<sup>11</sup>

During his hermitage at Crowland, Guthlac is beset by temptations and subject to tortures and beatings at the hands of the demons who alone had formerly occupied the fens, but the saint relies on his trust in Christ, on the intercession of St. Bartholomew, and on his knowledge of the Scriptures to defend himself (Chapters 29-34, 36). Having been transformed from the secular warrior into *miles Christi*, Guthlac—the spiritual warrior and athlete—is clearly focused on spiritual concerns and resolutely girds himself for battle. Felix vividly describes these episodes in terms of individual spiritual struggle (Chapter 27), writing that, Guthlac "took the shield of faith, the breastplate of hope, the helmet of chastity, the bow of patience, the arrows of psalmody, making himself strong for the fight" in his solitary struggle.<sup>12</sup> In these episodes, Guthlac's prior training as warrior serves him well, but clearly, the talents, strength, perseverance, and loyalty previously used to amass lucre are now employed for a higher purpose. In his new struggles, Guthlac is *miles Christi* (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 29), *miles veri Dei* (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 27 and 36), *famulus Christi* (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 29, 31, 36, and *passim*), *vir Dei* (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 30 and *passim*), and *athleta Christi* (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 33). Here, in the heart of his account of Guthlac, Felix emphasizes the saint's new career as the hermit warrior who makes a place for himself in his "new" kingdom by embracing the ascetic life and rejecting the comforts of community and civilization.

§6. In subsequent chapters, Felix relates episodes involving Guthlac's preternatural encounters with birds and nature (Chapters 37-40), his gift of healing (Chapters 41, 42, 45), his prescience and gift of prophecy (Chapters 35, 42, 44, 46, 47, and 49), his receiving the office of priest from Bishop Haedda of Lichfield (Chapter 47), and his consoling of the exile Æthelbald, future king of Mercia (Chapter 49). One of Felix's lengthiest chapters (50) is devoted to Guthlac's premonition of his own death and to his holy dying itself, with accompanying signs. The *Vita* concludes with accounts of the discovery of the saint's body incorrupt one year after his death (Chapter 51) and the posthumous miracles at Guthlac's tomb (Chapters 52 and 53).

§7. Felix thus emphatically presents Guthlac as hermit. While drawing on the venerable traditions of the Irish ascetics, such as St. Kevin, and Desert Fathers, such as St. Antony—on whom Guthlac is clearly modeled, as Kurtz has effectively shown (1925-26, 103-46)—Felix nonetheless shapes his presentation to fit Anglo-Saxon sensibilities. For example, Guthlac rejects his lofty status under the Anglo-Saxon heroic code—an action parallel to Antony's, yet immensely more significant and relevant to Anglo-Saxon audiences. Furthermore, Guthlac's eremitism is tempered in contrast to that of recluses in the more rigorously ascetic tradition. He does not reject entirely the company and accoutrements of society, ecclesiastical or secular. In addition to entertaining angels (Chapter 50) and St. Bartholomew (Chapters 29 and 32), Guthlac also welcomes on several occasions human guests who have sought him out for spiritual guidance (Chapter 49). Although resolutely ensconced in his eremitic niche at Crowland, he does not disdain to enter the priesthood, nor to do so in the usual manner (i.e., within the structural hierarchy of the church) in his

ordination at the hands of the Mercian bishop, Headda of Lichfield (Chapters 47). In addition, Guthlac molds disciples (Chapters 35 and 50), counsels the solicitous (Chapters 48 and 49), and, when his life draws to its end, does not seek to die in solitude, preferring instead to embrace the company of others (Chapter 50). To recommend temperance in spiritual expression more explicitly, Felix, as if to highlight the potential for hubristic excess in severe eremitism, also uses an episode in the *Vita sancti Guthlaci* to portray the promoters of extended fasting and harsh asceticism as tempting devils (Chapter 30). Thus, Guthlac's eremitism is not as extreme as that of the early Desert Fathers; instead, Guthlac follows the more tempered, attractive, and palatable expression of eremitism embraced by the Romanized Anglo-Saxon church. Thus moderated, eremitism is promoted, even glorified, while at the same time "controlled" and folded into the landscape of the institutional church.

§8. The tempering and institutional approbation of eremitism notwithstanding, Felix conspicuously emphasizes the saint's new career as the hermit warrior who embraces the ascetic life. Although Guthlac does receive guests, he does not seek them out; in his pursuit of eremitism Guthlac eschews the comforts of community and civilization. For Felix, Guthlac is clearly *miles Christi*, solitary warrior. He is not communal monk, not pastor. And, most important to note—contrary to later, spurious manipulations of Guthlac's cult—Felix's Guthlac neither plants nor promotes a monastery at Crowland. Guthlac's concern is not with the growth of a community or an institution, but with the growth of a life in the spirit.

## Old English Treatments of Guthlac's Life

§9. The popularity of Guthlac's cult among the Anglo-Saxons is indicated not only by the relatively large number of surviving manuscripts of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, but also by the number and rich variety of forms of additional treatments of his life extant in Old English (Roberts 1970). Vernacular accounts or excerpts of Guthlac's life are found in the *Old English Martyrology*, the Old English poems *Guthlac A* and *B*, an Old English prose *Life*, and Vercelli Homily XXIII, representing a wide range of genres, focuses, and purposes.<sup>13</sup> In general, however, as the following sections will show, the Old English versions are conservative, promoting eremitism and perpetuating Felix's vision of Guthlac as ascetic, not as institutional founder, promoter, and defender.

§10. The earliest extant Old English treatment of Guthlac is found in the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*. The brief entries regarding saints in the martyrology, presented according to the cycle of the liturgical calendar, seem to be intended to refresh or spur the memory of readers or listeners already well-acquainted with the stories rather than to inform the uninitiated.<sup>14</sup> It is thought that the entries were often read, as is appropriate to this purpose, before or on the respective saint's feast day, possibly as an introduction to a sermon, most likely for a monastic audience for the *Martyrology* (Herzfeld 1900, x-xi). For Guthlac, the martyrology reads:

On the eleventh day of the month [April] is the departure of St. Guthlac, hermit in Britain, whose body rests in the place called Croyland. His name is in Latin *belli munus*, and his holiness was instantly shown at his birth by signs from heaven. Men saw a beautiful hand coming from heaven, and marking with a cross the door of the house in which he was born, and returning to heaven again. About a year after he began to live as a hermit, he deserved it that an angel of God spoke to him every evening and again early in the morning and told him heavenly mysteries (*Old English Martyrology*, April 11).<sup>15</sup>

The details presented in the *Martyrology's* entry for Guthlac—his departure from this life, the resting place of his body, the signification of his name, the miraculous signs accompanying his birth, and his visits twice daily from an angel who related to him "heofonlico geryno"—appear to be derived from Felix, either directly (Herzfeld 1900, xxxviii) or indirectly through liturgy (Roberts 1970, 204). Felix's interest in Guthlac's background and in his temptations and struggles is nowhere echoed; the martyrologist focuses instead on the saint's native status, noting that Guthlac's resting place is Crowland and that he lived in Britain,<sup>16</sup> and also on the miraculous signs and events that seem to confirm his saintliness. However, while the perspective of the *Martyrology* is decidedly different from that of Felix's *vita*, overall it shares with Felix an over-arching celebration of Guthlac as solitary ascetic, as exemplified in its closing assertion in lines 11-13 that, "About a year after he began to live as a hermit, he deserved it that an angel of God spoke to him every evening and again early in

the morning and told him heavenly mysteries" (*Old English Martyrology*, April 11).<sup>17</sup> Such selective focus is perhaps all the more deliberate and notable given the brevity of the entry. Of the many noteworthy aspects of Guthlac's life and struggles appropriate for a martyrological entry, the martyrologist chooses to focus on those perpetuating the characterization of the saint as solitary hermit.

§11. About 890, or roughly one hundred and fifty years after Felix, two anonymous poems about Guthlac, now conventionally referred to as *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*, were composed in Old English.<sup>18</sup> Both appear to be derived, but perhaps only indirectly, from Felix's text (Roberts 1970, 201). *Guthlac A* offers a selective narrative focus on the temptations and struggles of Guthlac as solitary *miles Christi* in the Crowland fens. In this focus, and also through its emphases and its omissions from and additions to the received tradition, the poem attends even more intently than does Felix to Guthlac's eremitism. The images and language of the poem mark Guthlac as 'other' and 'separate.' While Guthlac does strive with the demons over land, his quest is for a secure rustic hermitage, not an impressive foundation. His hermitage is situated on a hilltop (lines 173b-176b),<sup>19</sup> and he erects a solitary cross in the midst of the wilderness (lines 178b-181a).<sup>20</sup> With similar effect, *Guthlac A* details the saint's pointedly solitary struggles: in the poem, Christ and Bartholomew are the saint's only companions as he battles fiends and temptations.<sup>21</sup> In addition to this sharpened focus on the saint's solitary asceticism, *Guthlac A* also pointedly indicts communal monasticism, where "men in monasteries" revel in "worthless possessions, superfluous vanities, and ostentatious adornments" (lines 412-420).<sup>22</sup> This presentation of Guthlac contrasts glaringly with later attempts to glorify him as founder and promoter of a religious foundation. Instead, from its opening address on the themes of *læne*-ness (or the transitory nature of things) and the rejection of earthly pleasures to its closing focus on Guthlac's heavenly reward, *Guthlac A* is a celebration of ascetic eremitism.

§12. *Guthlac B* forms a fitting counterpoint and complement to *Guthlac A*. As *Guthlac A* is an account of Guthlac's holy living, *Guthlac B* is an account of his holy dying. As Guthlac, the solitary warrior in the prime of his life, battles temptations and fiends in *Guthlac A*, so the solitary hero, passing into the eternal, wages a solitary battle against Death in *Guthlac B*. In both poems, the imagery of solitude is pervasive and overwhelming. Guthlac is "the Lord's soldier" (lines 889a, 901b),<sup>23</sup> his solitary and holy warrior, and a saint who, "through God's will..., is blessed among the English" (lines 878b-880a).<sup>24</sup> In *Guthlac B*, even Guthlac's death is, apart from the presence of one anonymous young servant, solitary (lines 932 ff.). For the poet, Guthlac's death and ascension appear to be the fulfillment of the hero's rejection of earthly things (lines 1076-1093), the culmination of his embrace of ascetic eremitism. Thus, as is consistent with Felix's account, in both *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B* the hermit's way is glorified; Guthlac is lauded, not as the champion of a monastic foundation, but as the champion of God, working out his salvation individually in fear and trembling.

§13. About the year 900, an anonymous prose *life* of Guthlac was composed in Old English.<sup>25</sup> Primarily a condensed and simplified vernacular rendition of Felix's Latin *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, it retains the original's concerns over monastic ways of life. Differences from Felix's version are evinced mainly in omission, in simplified style, and in lack of concern regarding sources. The Old English version lacks, for instance, some of the stylistic flourishes of the Latin and omits the Latin's references to Gregory the Great and Donatus, as well as some of its Biblical quotations and classical references. The nature of these changes suggests that the revisions were made specifically for a more secular and perhaps less ascetically-inclined and less-learned audience.

§14. As a fairly conservative and faithful version of Felix' *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, the Old English Prose *Life of St. Guthlac* presents a saint who follows a tempered expression of eremitism. He is clearly focused on spiritual concerns and resolutely girds himself for spiritual battle (3), but nonetheless (also as in Felix) does not pridefully reject secular or spiritual company. In the Old English prose *life*, Guthlac entertains angels (20) and St. Bartholomew (4 and 5) and also welcomes on several occasions human guests who have sought him out for spiritual guidance (19). He does not undertake rashly or unilaterally the hermit's life at Crowland, but, instead, obtains permission from his superior at Repton to enter into solitude (2). His ordination as priest, during his solitary life in the fens, comes not as the result of some supernatural intervention, but in the usual manner (i.e., within the structural hierarchy of the church) at the hands of the Mercian bishop (27). By virtue of his holiness, the afflicted are healed

(12, 13, and 15) and enlightening prophesies regarding his visitors (7 and 13-14) are offered, all to the benefit of those who fraternize with him.

§15. While the treatment of Guthlac in the Old English prose version may have the effect of mitigating the harsher asceticism seen in other versions, it primarily serves nonetheless to transmit many of the original's themes and emphases into a version accessible to vernacular audiences. In the Old English Prose *Life*, the larger themes of Felix's version some one hundred and fifty years earlier still predominate: that Guthlac is a solitary champion of God is nowhere undermined, and while his eremitism is moderated in comparison to that of the early Desert Fathers, there are no additions in the Prose *Life* which attempt to bring Guthlac "into the fold" of a more cenobitic or routinely institutional existence. This persistence of historical memory indicates the abiding relevance not only of concerns over the expression of monasticism, but also of what Guthlac himself represented—the solitary hermit espousing the tenets of church-sanctioned asceticism, living as a solitary outside any community, and promoting/defending no foundation or institution.

§16. The account of Guthlac preserved in Homily XXIII (folios 133v-135v) of the Vercelli Codex (c. 1000) represents the adaptation of Guthlac's story into yet another genre—the vernacular homily (although, to the degree that it is a "preaching" text, it is more technically a sermon than a homily).<sup>26</sup> Vercelli Homily XXIII focuses on that portion of Guthlac's life spent as a hermit in the Crowland fens (roughly equivalent to Felix, Chapters 28-32). After opening with an account of Guthlac building a dwelling for himself in an ancient barrow (lines 1-4),<sup>27</sup> the bulk of the homily chronicles Guthlac's solitary spiritual journey in the wilderness, vividly detailing his temptations and torments at the hands of fen-land devils and then recounting his ensuing despair (lines 5-93). With demons on the verge of throwing Guthlac into Hellmouth (lines 94-112), St. Bartholomew intervenes, consoling and rescuing Guthlac (lines 112-116). The homily ends abruptly (and rather unconventionally) as both Bartholomew and Guthlac fly upward into heaven:

And then, after that, the holy Guthlac flew with the apostle Saint Bartholomew to the glory of heaven's kingdom, and the Savior received him there, and he lives there and reigns in the glory of the kingdom of heaven always without end in eternity. Amen (lines 117-119).<sup>28</sup>

While the dramatic apotheotic denouement contrasts startlingly with Guthlac's return to the fens in Felix's Chapter 32 (Nicholson 1991, 11), Vercelli Homily XXIII is similar to the other early accounts of Guthlac in its overall emphasis on Guthlac as solitary ascetic. Indeed, the apotheosis of Guthlac serves as explicit approbation of the hermit's life. Thus, despite its various differences in form, function, and focus from the received tradition, Vercelli Homily XXIII perpetuates the conceptualization of Guthlac as the individual warrior hermit.

§17. Regardless of the variety in genres and degrees of comprehensiveness in which the story of Guthlac is presented in the Anglo-Saxon era, all treatments of the saint share a common focus on the essential nature of Guthlac as saint: ascetic eremitism, his original charism. The emphasis on the *via sancta* shared by each of the Anglo-Saxon era accounts of the life of Guthlac reinforces the currency and import of the issue in early medieval England. While the presentations of Guthlac selectively promote an eremitic choice, they nonetheless also serve to highlight the vitality of the broader issues of expressions of spirituality and of the Christian community's approaches to them. Guthlac, in honoring, yet rejecting, aristocratic warrior codes while he simultaneously honors, but remains outside, communal Christianity, navigates a wide range of audiences and sympathies, rising so as to become, as Mayr-Harting phrases it, "the culmination of English 'heroic' Christianity" (1991, 229). In contrast, as we shall see in the following sections of this article, the concept of Guthlac as solitary spiritual warrior becomes a lesser focus of the religious devotion to the saint in post-Conquest England.

## Crowland Abbey and the Cult of Guthlac in Post-Conquest England

§18. The creative variety of forms and genres in which the legend of the patron saint of Crowland was conveyed in Anglo-Saxon England is replicated in post-Conquest treatments of the saint. From incorporation into an ambitious, comprehensive

*chronicon*, to a rich panel of roundels, to elaborate stonework on an abbey façade, Guthlac is commemorated in a wide range of media. However, while the variety of treatments in Anglo-Saxon England transmitted the tradition of Guthlac itself conservatively, the explosion of handlings of the saint in post-Conquest England exhibit adaptations of the legend that go far beyond the merely formal. While the manuscript tradition for Felix's *Vita* indicates that the work was still being transmitted and circulated during this period, the wide range of 'new' versions of the saint's life suggests that the tradition of the saint found in Felix, and in the other Anglo-Saxon works derived from it, was no longer deemed entirely suitable or satisfactory. In the adaptations to the tradition, the Post-Conquest treatments of Guthlac reflect a shift in the cult's emphasis.

§19. The explosion in treatments of Guthlac in post-Conquest England mirrors the cultural upheaval of the era, an upheaval that finds a localized expression in the tumultuous history of Crowland Abbey in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a period during which the Abbey was directed by several dynamic Anglo-Norman abbots. Under the abbacy of Geoffrey (1119-1124), an ambitious written history of the Abbey was authorized. Also in this period, Henry de Longchamp, active, ambitious, and well-connected, served as abbot (1191-1236) of the Abbey during a series of land disputes pitting Crowland against royalty. As Colgrave and Kelly (1989) have noted, it is quite likely that many of the new treatments of Guthlac arising during this time, most of which derive from Crowland itself, were undertaken in an effort to maintain and increase the prestige, authority, and venerability of the foundation, as a means of safeguarding the Abbey and its holdings during the course of these legal disputes.<sup>29</sup> One outcome of this turmoil is that the cult of Guthlac is adapted and transformed. Documentation for the cult suggests that, in contrast to an earlier focus on the *via sancta* and the efficacy of asceticism, the saint comes to be promoted primarily as the defender of a religious foundation.

## Odericus Vitalis's account of Guthlac

§20. One of the earliest extant post-Conquest accounts of Guthlac is an epitome of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci* found in Book 4 of Ordericus Vitalis' *Ecclesiastical History* (c. 1120).<sup>30</sup> The core of what would evolve into Vitalis' *Ecclesiastical History* is thought to have been undertaken c. 1110 as a history of his monastery at St. Evroul, Normandy (Chibnall 1969, 327). This was later expanded into a history of the Church in Normandy and subsequently incorporated into a more ambitious universal history of the Church, a project to which Vitalis dedicated the last thirty years of his life (Chibnall 1969, xiv-xv). Under the auspices of Geoffrey, the Anglo-Norman abbot of Crowland, Vitalis is invited (c. 1120) to Crowland in order to help preserve the traditions of the foundation. It is in this context that the narratives concerning Crowland, and hence Guthlac, become incorporated into Vitalis' church chronicle (Chibnall 1969, xxvi). Within this ambitious work, the section concerning Crowland and Guthlac "is of particular importance to the historian of Crowland Abbey because it is the earliest surviving epitome of [Crowland's] monastic history from the time of Guthlac to the late eleventh century" (Chibnall 1969, xv).

§21. Vitalis' account provides for a complex transition of the saint's cult into Anglo-Norman England and serves as an example of the shift in the cult's emphasis. Overall, Vitalis' account of St. Guthlac itself is, as an epitome, not remarkably different from the received tradition, transmitting, as it does, much of the content and tone of Felix. However, four small but very significant variations in content are worthy of note in Vitalis' treatment of the legend:

- Vitalis omits Felix's mention (Chapter 28) of the conversion of a ruined burial mound into Guthlac's hermitage (Vitalis, *EH* 4).
- Vitalis adds that, when Æthelbald ascended the throne (c. 716), he ornamented the tomb of Guthlac (not mentioned in Felix, Chapter 52; *Vita sancti Guthlaci* composed c. 740).<sup>31</sup>
- Vitalis adds that Crowland, where the body of St. Guthlac rested, became a site of numerous healings (in addition to that mentioned by Felix, Chapter 53) and pilgrimage.<sup>32</sup>
- Vitalis adds that Æthelbald granted Guthlac extensive land holdings, exempt from all obligations (not mentioned in Felix).<sup>33</sup>

As diverse as these four details are, they nonetheless can be seen to support a

common cause—the promotion of Crowland as an ancient, venerable, and powerfully allied foundation, one worthy of pilgrimage and one entitled to its time-honored privileges.

§22. In addition to the changes in content that Vitalis works on the received tradition, the context in which he places his episode concerning Guthlac appropriates the cult even more profoundly. Rather than the independent account found, for example, in Felix and *Guthlac A* and *B*, Vitalis' account is interpolated between two tendentious episodes and is thereby subsumed both literally and metaphorically into Book IV's larger agenda of promoting the foundation at Crowland. The section concerning Guthlac in Vitalis' *Ecclesiastical History* is occasioned by and follows an account of the politically controversial execution of Earl Waltheof (†1076), patron of Crowland, who was subsequently buried there (Book IV). Although this event was scarcely fifty years past in Vitalis' day, Waltheof's tomb had already become remarkably popular with pilgrims. In placing the account of Waltheof immediately prior to and thus linked by association to the account of Guthlac, Vitalis fosters Crowland as the resting place of not one, but two, powerful saints, and also draws on the cache of a popularly venerated eleventh-century figure (a martyr, in the estimation of some) to update the appeal of Guthlac for a later medieval audience. In both cases, the effect is to ensure Crowland's contemporary glory and its fame as a pilgrimage site.

§23. Similarly, Vitalis' epitome of Guthlac is followed in the *Ecclesiastical History* by an account of the building of Crowland Abbey (Book 4). According to Vitalis, who draws on fortuitous but unreliable sources for this episode (Chibnall 1969, xxviii), Æthelbald grants a donation of land for a foundation at Crowland about 716, has a stone church built there, and establishes a monastery at the site.<sup>34</sup> As there is no corroboration for this assertion in any other early Guthlac materials, it is generally held to be spurious, as noted by Chibnall in her edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* (1969, xxvi-xxviii). Nonetheless, by portraying Guthlac as friend of Æthelbald and as priest to royalty and by establishing Æthelbald as patron for an elaborate eighth-century foundation in the barren fens, Vitalis primarily uses the account as evidence for an ancient and venerable institution at Crowland, deserving of its lands and other holdings and worthy of fame, respect, and pilgrimage. Thus, Vitalis does preserve the story of Guthlac, the solitary hermit, but, as a result of his contextualization of the account of the saint, the virtue inhering in Guthlac's cult is brought into service to promote Crowland. Guthlac the solitary 'seeker' becomes Guthlac the popularly 'sought after,' figuratively enlisted in the beckoning of pilgrims to Crowland and in the struggle to defend the Abbey.

## The Guthlac Roll

§24. The visual record for a saint, growing out of the same cultural impetus as the written record (and immensely significant for a medieval audience), may also evince transformations in the cult of the saint. The unique Guthlac Roll, probably made for Crowland Abbey c. 1210, offers an example from the visual record that is consistent with textual evidence in reflecting a change in emphasis in the cult of Guthlac in the thirteenth century.<sup>35</sup> While selected aspects of the compositions in the various roundels of the Guthlac Roll echo important episodes from Felix's account, it is noteworthy that many of the episodes in Felix central to Guthlac's persona and charismata and essential to his life as hermit are nowhere depicted among the eighteen carefully designed roundels.<sup>36</sup> For instance, no roundels depict the austere existence and solitary ascetic spiritual struggles at the core of Felix's account (21-24). This is perhaps especially perplexing given the routine portrayals of other solitaries, such as St. Jerome and St. Antony (a 'model' for Guthlac), in prayer or as fasting penitents. Similarly, many scenes depicting Cuthbert's ascetic inclinations are featured in twelfth-century illuminated manuscripts of Bede's prose *Vita sancti Cuthberti*.<sup>37</sup> Would the portrayal of Guthlac's asceticism, a feature central to the saint's charism, have been seen as inconsistent with or antagonistic to twelfth- and thirteenth-century priorities at Crowland?

§25. Omissions from the traditional accounts, however, are not the full extent of the Roll's manipulations of Guthlac's cult. More significantly, the compositions depicted in the Roll introduce several conspicuous additions to and variations from early textual accounts. Roundel 5, for example, depicts a major construction project underway immediately following Guthlac's arrival at Crowland. The *titulus* reads, "Guthlac builds himself a chapel" (*Guthlacus edificat sibi capellam*). The project consists of an



elaborate, stone Romanesque chapel featuring archways, windows, and an altar—the construction of which requires tools of the trade and assistant laborers. This contrasts glaringly with the account in Felix 28 of Guthlac converting a ruined burial mound or tumulus into his rustic ascetic cell. The elaborate chapel or oratory is repeatedly emphasized, appearing, for example, in Roundels 6 and 7.

§26. Although these variations may seem plausible and innocuous on the surface, they nonetheless also reflect a profound transformation of the Guthlac hagiographic tradition that serves very pragmatic ends—ends which seem, at best, only marginally "devotional." These pragmatic ends may be at least partially illuminated by the Abbey's tumultuous history in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Kelly 1989). The Roll, with its conspicuous changes in iconography, was probably produced under the auspices of Henry de Longchamp, the abbot of Crowland from 1191-1236. Given the aforementioned land disputes in which Crowland became embroiled, the Guthlac Roll and other commissions, with their pronounced variations from the traditional presentation of the saint, would have served not only to enhance the status and appeal of the Abbey, but also to defend its holdings. In this transformation, Guthlac, formerly revered as the champion of God, is now regarded as the champion of a rich foundation, no longer battling against demons and temptations in a spiritual struggle, but now figuratively waging war against opposing political interests intent on encroaching upon Crowland Abbey's assets.

§27. In addition to validating the Abbey's legal posture, the Roll also would have enhanced the appeal of Crowland as a destination for pilgrims. While the development and growth of Crowland as pilgrimage site may well also reflect popular piety and devotion for St. Guthlac, overall the variations seen in the presentation of Guthlac suggest that the creator of the Roll was concerned less with conveying the significance of Guthlac's holy living and holy dying (note again the lack of roundels devoted to Guthlac's ascetic spirituality, despite the ample iconographic tradition for asceticism on which the artist might have drawn), than with depicting moments of miraculous healing, the official act of ordination, and the accoutrements of sanctity made visible (e.g., the scourge, books, and buildings)—that is, with objects of pilgrimage draw and with visual associations which would serve to validate Crowland's prestige.<sup>38</sup>

## Guthlac 'Etched in Stone' at Crowland Abbey

§28. The treatment of Guthlac in the West Façade of Crowland Abbey (twelfth through fourteenth centuries) also invites our scrutiny. While now sadly in disrepair, it nonetheless remains among the most impressive of all extant visual representations of Guthlac.<sup>39</sup> Figures of Guthlac were featured in two areas of the Crowland West Façade—a niche in the portal and a quatrefoil above the West Door. While little detail can be discerned in the portal niche sculpture, careful drawings made in the eighteenth century, when the sculpture was in better condition, assist in clarifying to some degree the admittedly ambiguous details of the quatrefoil.<sup>40</sup>

§29. According to the conventional designation of the compartments of the quatrefoil, Scene I (in the lower foil) depicts Guthlac's arrival at the hillock among the fens which was to become his hermitage at Crowland. (This corresponds generally to Felix, Chapters 24-26 and to Roundel IV of the Guthlac Roll.) Scene II (in the central panel) depicts Guthlac, wielding his scourge, interacting with the demons of Crowland. Alternatively, it has been proposed that the image is of Guthlac compelling the demons to bear heavy blocks of stone to assist with a building program at Crowland (Bolton 1958, 295). The quatrefoil's third scene (in the left foil) portrays two figures, one seated, the other standing, in front of an elaborate chapel. Art historian George Henderson has tentatively interpreted this as a depiction of Guthlac's ordination (corresponding to Felix 47 and Guthlac Roll Roundel 11); alternatively, he has also suggested that the scene may illustrate Pega (Guthlac's sister) visiting Crowland at the saint's death (Felix 50 and Guthlac Roll Roundel 16), or Æthelbald or other nobility visiting and paying homage to the saintly Guthlac at his Crowland hermitage (Felix 52 and Guthlac Roll Roundel 17) (Henderson 1985, 90-92). The remaining two foils of the quatrefoil appear to portray episodes related to Guthlac's death. In the right-hand foil (Scene IV), a body lies prone on an ornate, raised slab as another figure leans over it. This is typically thought to represent either the death of Guthlac (Felix 50 and Guthlac Roll Roundel 14) or the discovery of his body incorrupt one year after his death (Felix 51; not depicted *per se* in Guthlac Roll, but perhaps

suggested by the composition in Roundel 16). Henderson, however, has interpreted what is generally seen in the image as Guthlac's body to be, instead, his effigy upon a sarcophagus (1985, 90). The related image (Scene V), in the upper foil, depicts two standing figures, one on either side of the scene, with a body stretched out between, while yet another figure hovers over the others. This has generally been interpreted as the apotheosis of Guthlac, an episode not found in Felix, but related in Vercelli Homily XXIII and *Guthlac B*, and perhaps part of local oral tradition (Henderson 1985, 92).

§30. Overall, the compositions depicted in the Crowland Abbey quatrefoil suggest the same sort of re-orienting of Guthlac's cult as seen in the Guthlac Roll. In Felix and in the Old English versions of the life of Guthlac, the saint's ascetic eremitism and his solitary devotion to God are emphasized. Here, however, the Crowland Abbey sculptural program draws the viewer's attention to other considerations. Instead of depicting the major aspects of the Guthlac's spirituality and linking him by iconographic tradition to his spiritual 'compatriots,' the images selectively emphasize Crowland as a divinely ordained holy place (Scene I), link miraculous relics and saintly body explicitly to Crowland (Scenes II and V), illustrate pilgrimage to Crowland by bishop, king, and nobility (Scene III), and assert early stone structures for an ancient foundation (Scene IV). This interpretation of the images suggests how the quatrefoil would have advanced the standing of Crowland Abbey, serving to defend its claims in legal disputes and concomitantly strengthening the prestige of the foundation by promoting it as a destination worthy of pilgrimage. Regardless of the specific interpretations of the details of the relief, the deliberate selection of episodes depicted in the quatrefoil, in which several central events in Guthlac's life are chosen, but other crucial ones (fully developed and readily available in the Guthlac tradition—episodes in Felix, for example) are omitted, also suggests purposeful appropriation of Guthlac's cult in an attempt to validate Crowland's assertions and status.

§31. Thus, while the sculptural program at Crowland Abbey is a glorious, relatively permanent record of the life of St. Guthlac—one etched in stone that serves to celebrate and promote the saint—it may very well also reflect the destiny of the cult in a more ironic way. Beyond its literal physical rigidity as stonework, it is also rigid symbolically, perhaps tying Guthlac too specifically to one particular place, Crowland Abbey, and to one particular role, defender and promoter of the Crowland foundation. Ultimately, the effect of such over-specialization and hyper-definition is to localize and marginalize the appeal of Guthlac's cult.

## Subsequent Tradition

§32. While other factors, such as competition from other cults (e.g., Edmund's or Cuthbert's) or the influence of oral tradition, may well play a role in Guthlac's transformation, pragmatic concerns over the need to bolster and defend Crowland Abbey's position in disputes over holdings also seem to promote the shift in the presentation of Guthlac. An example from c. 1390 serves to crystallize this re-formation: an illumination from the Crowland Abbey Charter (MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1831) portrays Guthlac anachronistically seated between Richard II of England (†1399) and King Æthelbald of Mercia (†757) (Wormald 1954, 191-203 and pl. 28a). In displaying Crowland's 'ancient' charter to the abbot and monks of the abbey, this image seems intended to honor the foundation. In reality, the image is a late-fourteenth century forgery from Crowland—the effect of which is to validate an assertion of ancient privilege. Once spiritual companion to Bartholomew and spiritual counterpart to St. Antony, Guthlac now becomes symbolic patron of Crowland and ideological partner to English kings. Taken on a literal level, Guthlac is 'drawn' in to participating in a blatant fiction.

§33. In addition to his limited presence in the later medieval visual record (in contrast to, for example, St. Cuthbert; see below), Guthlac's status with compilers of late medieval hagiography also seems to corroborate over-specialization of the saint's niche at Crowland. Guthlac is conspicuously absent from the *Legenda aurea* (c. 1260), the era's premier international legendary, and his inclusion in England's own *South English Legendary* (*SEL*) seems an afterthought: an entry for Guthlac is added to some manuscripts of the *SEL*, but only c. 1380, approximately one hundred years after the proposed date of composition for the collection (D'Evelyn and Mill 1959, 3:3ff.). It bears noting that the *SEL* account of Guthlac is remarkably silent on the saint's persona as *miles Christi*, the very role which helped popularize him in the early

medieval period. This marginalization of the cult suggests that Guthlac may have been seen by this time as a local saint—too localized perhaps for an enduring veneration.

## Conclusion

§34. The trajectory that Guthlac's cult follows in the Middle Ages is not universal among the saints. The medieval evolution of Cuthbert's cult serves as an illuminating contrast.<sup>41</sup> While Cuthbert, like Guthlac and most other saints, is indeed transformed in late medieval English hagiography, Cuthbert's re-formation and reconceptualization is more profitable to his cult's enduring popularity and vitality. While Cuthbert is also absent from the *Legenda aurea*, his reputation and popularity nonetheless continue in later medieval England and afterwards, perpetuated at home, by a flourish of hagiographic treatments in the late medieval period, and abroad, by the success of Bede's early transformative account of the saint, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, in "internationalizing" Cuthbert's appeal. In contrast to multiple richly illustrated *vitae* of Cuthbert from the late medieval period, it appears that, apart from those in the Guthlac Roll, only one image featuring Guthlac—the illustration for the spurious Crowland Charter—survives from the era. While in his transformation, Cuthbert, formerly conscientious *pastor* and dedicated monk, becomes a powerful ecclesiastical and political figurehead widely-celebrated, Guthlac is metamorphosed from inspiring hermit to patron of a localized abbey.

§35. Thus, while early accounts of Guthlac emphasize his role *asmiles Christi*, his spiritual athleticism, his severely ascetic lifestyle, and his solitary, single-minded pursuit of holiness (offering a model which transcends the particulars of time and place), the saint becomes, in later medieval England, primarily the defender of a religious foundation in its battles to retain holdings and power. In later sources, to some degree Guthlac is made to become worldly warrior again, just as in his pre-conversion days, but now for the purpose of defending a different *comitatus*. While this 'recasting' of Guthlac was, arguably, successful in achieving these ends from a thirteenth-century perspective, it seems ultimately to have been counter-productive. In order to make Guthlac most effective as protector of Crowland, he is appropriated so narrowly and explicitly by the Abbey that the cult becomes geographically exclusive and localized, ultimately stymieing its appeal and making itself largely irrelevant to other communities and other prospective devotees.

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## Notes

1. Among numerous other medieval scholars, Dominic Marnier has noted the importance of examining both written and iconographic source material in the study of the saints, stating that, "Images [in hagiography] were not simply illustrations but provided an arena for developing thought-provoking and meaningful visual/textual dialogues." See [Marnier 2000](#), 48. [\[Back\]](#)
2. Bartholomew, sometimes identified with Nathaniel, was one of the original Twelve Apostles. Thus, both Guthlac and (later) Crowland benefited from the patronage of a saint who, despite being less well-documented than other Apostles, nevertheless enjoyed high status in Christian hagiology. According to tradition, Bartholomew wields a scourge for repelling demons, resists numerous dramatic temptations, tramples devils, descends into Hell, and is ministered to by angels, all of which are echoed in the Guthlac tradition. For an account of Bartholomew, see [James 1924](#). [\[Back\]](#)
3. The rise of this assertion is closely linked with the post-Conquest evolution of Guthlac's cult, as will be discussed in subsequent sections of this article. [\[Back\]](#)
4. Bolton notes fourteen (1958, 257). Thirteen of these he cites from [Arnold-Foster's](#) extensive late-nineteenth survey: Crowland Abbey; Marholm, Northamptonshire; St. Pega's, Peakirk, Northamptonshire; Market Deeping, Lincolnshire; Astwick, Bedfordshire; Passenham, Northamptonshire; Branston, Leicestershire; Little Ponton, Lincolnshire; Deeping St. James, Lincolnshire; Stathern, Leicestershire; Fishtoft, Lincolnshire; Swaffham, Norfolk. The other—the Priory of St. Guthlac, Hereford—he finds attested in Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (c. 1830). [\[Back\]](#)
5. "Igitur cum nascendi tempus advenisset, mirabile dictum! Ecce humana manus

croceo rubric nitoris splendore fulgescens ab aethereis Olympi nubibus ad patibulum cuisudam cruces ante ostium domus, qua sancta puerperal futurae indolis infantulum enixa est, porrecta videbatur" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 5). [\[Back\]](#)

6. "Ita enim in illo divinae gratiae inflammation flagrabat, ut non solum regalis indolentiae reverentiam despiceret, sed et parentes et patriam comitesque adolescentiae suae contempsit. Nam cum aetatis laribus pompis, spem indubitatae fidei fixam in Christo tenebat" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 19). [\[Back\]](#)

7. "...proprias singulorum secum cohabitantium virtutes imitari studebat. Illius enim oboedientiam, istius humilitatem; ipsius patientiam, alterius longanimitatem; illorum abstinentiam, utriusque sinceritatem; omnium temperantiam, cunctorum suavitatem; et ut brevius dicam, omnium in omnibus imitabatur virtutes" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 23). [\[Back\]](#)

8. "Est in mediterraneis Britanniae partibus immensae magnitudinis atterrima palus, quae, a Grontae fluminis ripis incipiens, haud procul a castello quem dicunt nomine Gronte nunc stagnis, nunc flactris, interdum nigris fusi vaporis lactibus, necnon et crebris insularum nemorumque intervenientibus flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus, ab austro in aquilonem mare tenus longissimo tractu protenditur" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 24). Mayr-Harting wryly notes that, "Hieronymus Bosch would have felt at home in Crowland" (1991, 230). [\[Back\]](#)

9. "Igitur, adamato illius loci abdito situ velut a Deo sibi donato, omnes dies vitae suae illic degree directa mente devoverat" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 25). [\[Back\]](#)

10. The rustic, ascetic nature of Guthlac's place of hermitage should be borne in mind for comparison in subsequent discussion in this article. The symbolism of the tumulus is also significant: here Guthlac finds heavenly treasure, whereas other men had vainly sought material treasure; here Guthlac 'entombs' himself, dying to worldly temptations and preparing himself for eternal life. [\[Back\]](#)

11. "Erat itaque in praedicta insula tumulus agrestibus glaebis coacervatus, quem olim avari solitudinis frequentatores lucri ergo illic acquirendi defodientes scindebant, in cuius latere velut cisterna inesse videbatur; in qua vir beatae memoriae Guthlac desuper inposito tugurio habitare coepit. Vitae scilicet illius haec inmotae orthonomia fuit, ita ut tab illo tempore, quo heremum habitare coeperat, non laneo, nec lineo vestimine, nec alterius cuiuscumque delicatae vestis tegminibus usus est, sed in pellicis vestibus omnes dies solitariae conversationis suae exigebat. Cotidianae ergo vitae ipsius tanta temperantia fuit, ut ab illo tempore, quo heremum habitare coeperat, excepta ordeacei panis particular et lutulentae aquae poculamento post solis occasum, nullius alicuius alimenti usibus vesceretur. Nam cum sol occidius finibus vergeretur, tunc annonam parvam mortalis vitae cum gratiarum actione gustabat" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 28). [\[Back\]](#)

12. "Deinde praecinctus spiritalibus armis adversus teterrimi hostis insidias scutum fidei, loricae spei, galeae castitatis, arcum patientiae, sagittas psalmodiae, sese in aciem firmans, arripuit" (*Felix Vita Guthlaci*, 27). [\[Back\]](#)

13. It bears noting, especially in light of Guthlac's popularity and Ælfric's prolixity, that no account of the saint is included in the latter's corpus. It seems reasonable to speculate that Ælfric, a leading light of the Benedictine Reform of the tenth and eleventh centuries, would have had difficulty formulating a presentation of Guthlac consistent with the reformist program without ignoring the saint's essential charismata. [\[Back\]](#)

14. All Old English citations are from [Kotzor 1981](#). English translations are from [Herzfeld 1900](#). [\[Back\]](#)

15. "On þone ændleftan dæg þæs monðes bið sancte Guðlaces geleornes þæs ancran on Brytone, þæs lichoma resteð on þære stowe ðe is cweden Crowland. His nama is on Læden *belli munus*, ond his halignes wæs sona getacnad æt his acennisse mid heofonlicum tacnum. Men gesegon cuman fægre hand of heofonum ond gesegnian þæs huses duru ðe he wæs on acenned, ond eft to heofonum gewat. Ond ymb an gear ðæs þe he on ancorsetle wunade, he geearnade ðæt him spræc an Godes engel to æghwelce æfenne, ond eft on ærnemergen, ond him sæde heofonlico geryno" (*Old English Martyrology*, April 11). [\[Back\]](#)

16. This parallels very closely the opening of the entry on November 11 for St. Martin of Tours, the paradigmatic warrior-become-saint. See entry in *Old English Martyrology*, November 11. [\[Back\]](#)
17. "Ond ymb an gear ðæs þe he on ancorsetle wunade, he geearnade ðæt him spræc an Godes engel to æghwelce æfenne, ond eft on ærnemergen, ond him sæde heofonlico geryno" (*Old English Martyrology*, April 11). [\[Back\]](#)
18. The standard edition for the poems is [Krapp and Dobbie 1936](#). See also [Roberts 1979](#). The poems survive in only one manuscript, Exeter Cathedral 3501, dating from the latter half of the tenth century. [\[Back\]](#)
19. "...Þam þe feara sum  
mearclond gesæt. Ðær he mongum wearð  
bysen on Brytene, siþpan biorg gestah  
eadig oretta, ondwiges heard" (*Guthlac A*, ll.173b-176b). [\[Back\]](#)
20. "wong bletsade,  
him to ætstælle ærest arærde  
Cristes rode, þær se cempa oferwon  
frecnessa fela" (*Guthlac A*, ll.178b-181a). [\[Back\]](#)
21. Bartholomew refers to Guthlac as "min broþor" (*Guthlac A*, l.714a); Guthlac is also called "oretta" or "lone warrior" (*Guthlac A*, ll.401a-402a). [\[Back\]](#)
22. "Hy hine þa hofun on þa hean lyft,  
sealdon him meahte ofer monna cynn,  
þæt he fore eagum eall sceawode  
under haligra hydra gewealdum  
in mynsterum monna gebæru,  
þara þe hyra lifes þurh lust brucan,  
idlum æhtum ond oferwlencum,  
gierelum gielplicum, swa bið geoguðe þeaw,  
þær þæs ealdres egsa ne styreð" (*Guthlac A*, ll.412-420). [\[Back\]](#)
23. "godes cempa" (*Guthlac B*, ll. 889a, 901b). [\[Back\]](#)
24. "Us secgað bec  
hu Guðlac wearð þurh godes willan  
eadig on Engle" (*Guthlac B*, ll. 878b-880a). [\[Back\]](#)
25. The standard edition is [Gonser, 1909](#). See also [Goodwin, 1848](#). The text is preserved in a single manuscript, Cotton Vespasian D. xxi, from the latter part of the eleventh century. [\[Back\]](#)
26. Vercelli Homily XXIII is edited in [Szarmach 1981](#). See also [Nicholson 1991](#). [\[Back\]](#)
27. "Wæs þær in þam sprecenan iglande sum mycel hlæw of eorþan geworht, þone ylcan hlæw iu geara men bræcon [and] dulfon for feos þingum. Ða wæs þær on oðre sidan ðæs hlæwes gedolfen swylce mycel seap. On þam seape ufan se eadiga wer Guðlac him hus [and] eardungstowe getimbrode" (*Homily XXIII*, ll. 1-4). Translations primarily from [Nicholson 1991](#), supplemented by my own. [\[Back\]](#)
28. "[And] þa æfter þam fleah se haliga Guðlac mid þam apostle sancte Bartholomei to heofonarices wuldres [and] hine se Hælend þær onfeng [and] he þær leofað [and] rixap in heofonarices wuldre a butan ende on ecnesse. Amen fiat" (*Homily XXIII*, ll. 117-119). [\[Back\]](#)
29. These disputes and the historical documents recording them are referenced and discussed in [Kelly 1989](#) and in [Colgrave](#), who asserts that, "On the whole one may say that [Guthlac's] cult in these later centuries was largely inspired by the constant efforts of the Crowland Abbey authorities to keep his fame as widely spread as possible, not only to encourage pilgrims but also to give them a strong and early claim to the lands which they fought for so strenuously all through the Middle Ages" ([Colgrave 1956](#), 15). [\[Back\]](#)
30. The standard edition, including discussion of manuscript tradition, is [Chibnall 1969](#). While none of the surviving manuscripts of the text are of English provenance,

Chibnall notes that, given the significant attention devoted to Crowland, it is reasonable to expect that Vitalis left a copy, at least of the portions relevant to Crowland, at the foundation on his departure (1969, xxvi). [\[Back\]](#)

31. "Unde idem Edelbaldus postquam regnum adeptus est, miris ornamentorum structures mausoleum venerabilis Guthlaci decoravit" (Vitalis, *EH* 4). [\[Back\]](#)

32. "Multi quoque alii diversis infirmitatibus gravati, auditis rumoribus miraculorum beati Guthlaci, plaustrem Crulandiam ubi sanctam corpus quiescit adeunt, eiusque meritis sanitatem integram adepti Deo gratias referent" (Vitalis, *EH* 4). While it might be argued that Felix composed his *Vita* too soon after Guthlac's death for such additional healings to be incorporated, a similarly brief span of time between Cuthbert's death (687) and the composition of the Anonymous *Vita sancti Cuthberti* (c. 710) did not preclude inclusion of numerous posthumous healings attributed to Cuthbert. [\[Back\]](#)

33. "Nam quodam tempore dum idem rex causa visitandi patronum suum antequam migaret, Crulandiam adiret, et vir Dei quietam mansionem in eadem insula sibi ab eo concede postulet, quinque milia ad orientem id est ad fossam quae Ascendi dicitur et tria ad occidentem duoque ad meridiem et duo ad aquilonem concessit, et ab omni reddito atque consuetudine saeculari omnibus modis absoluit, et inde cartam sigillo suo signatam in praesentia episcoporum procerumque suorum confirmavit" (Vitalis, *EH* 4). [\[Back\]](#)

34. "...præfatus rex ingentes...et sic lapideam quia sacer Guthlacus oratorio contentus est ligneo basilicam coepit et consummavit. Deinde religiosos ibi viros aggregavit coenobium condidit, ornamentis et fundis aliisque divitiis locum ditavit ad honorem Dei et sancti anachoritæ quem valde dilexerat, pro dulci consolatione quam ab eo dum exulabat multoties perceperat" (Vitalis, *EH* 4). [\[Back\]](#)

35. The Guthlac Roll is MS London, British Library, Harley Roll Y.6. For a full discussion of the history of the Roll and a thorough description of its roundels, see Warner 1928; the roundels are reproduced in *A Second Appendix to the History of Croyland* and in Kelly 1989. [\[Back\]](#)

36. Sixteen images from the Roll are available online at <http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary/controller/textsearch?text=guthlac>. [\[Back\]](#)

37. MS Oxford, University College 165 and MS London, British Library Additional 39943 (*olim* Yates Thompson 26). [\[Back\]](#)

38. Even the nature and layout of the Guthlac Roll recall the pilgrimage impetus. In its sequential, episodic roundels, the Roll echoes the stational, episodic, and devotional aspects of the Via Crucis. [\[Back\]](#)

39. The standard studies of the stonework are: Henderson 1985; Bolton 1958; and Cockerell 1851. [\[Back\]](#)

40. See Bolton 1958. The quatrefoil image is also available online at <http://croylandabbey.co.uk/Guthlac%20Door.jpg>. [\[Back\]](#)

41. For a brief discussion of the role of changing representations of Cuthbert in reflecting the evolution of Cuthbert's cult, see Black 2002. [\[Back\]](#)

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Guthlac built a small oratory and cells in the side of a plundered barrow on the island, and he lived there until his death on 11 April in AD 714. Felix, writing within living memory of Guthlac, described his hermit's life: "Now there was in the said island a mound built of clods of earth which greedy comers to the waste had dug open, in the hope of finding treasure there; in the side of this there seemed to be a sort of cistern, and in this Guthlac the man of blessed memory began to dwell, after building a hut over it." Black, John R. (2007), "Tradition and Transformation in the Cult of St. Guthlac in Early Medieval England", *The Heroic Age*, 10. Cubitt, Catherine. "Memory and narrative in the cult of early Anglo-Saxon saints" *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed.