

# **Guthlac**

translated by Charles W. Kennedy

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# Guthlac

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## Part A

Many are the orders under heaven, upon the earth, which mount among the pure of heart. And we may be of these if we will do the holy bidding. A man of prudent heart may joy in bliss and happy hours, longing for his spirit's going forth. The world is troubled; love of Christ groweth cold and many a temptation is come upon the world; as God's heralds spake of old, foretelling all as now it falleth true. The fullness of all the bounty of earth waneth, every kind of fruit fadeth in beauty, and in its later time every seed is of lesser worth. Wherefore man need not bethink him of this changing world, that it may bring us winsome joy, beyond those evils that we suffer here, ere every creature perish, which in six days He wrought, and which bring forth their kinds under the sky, the strong and weak. The world is Sundered into parts. The Lord perceiveth where they dwell who keep His law; He beholdeth every day the statutes which He stablished by His word droop and decline from justice. Many He findeth, but few are chosen.

Some would win the fame of high estate by words alone; the deeds they do not. Rather than everlasting life their highest hope is worldly weal, which should be alien to every man of those who dwell on earth.

Wherefore they scorn the thoughts of holy men, who set their hearts on heaven, knowing that dwelling-place abideth ever for all that throng who serve the Lord throughout the earth, by their deeds striving unto that lovely home. So that earthly treasure is changed into a greater good when they shall crave it upon whose heads the fear of God inclineth. By that exalted power they are curbed, by His behest enjoy this life, longing and yearning for the better things. Glory they buy by giving alms, by comforting the wretched. Of their just treasure are they bountiful, with gifts fostering those of less estate, and daily serving God. He witnesseth their works.

Some who sojourn in the wastes, of their self-wills seek out and have their dwellings in darksome caves; these await their heavenly home.

Often he who envieth them life bringeth loathsome dread upon them, whiles revealing unto them some horror, whiles idle glory. The cunning murderer hath craft of both and harrieth these hermits. Yet angels stand before them, armed with weapons of the soul, heedful of their safety, guarding the lives of holy men, knowing their hope is in the Lord.

Chosen champions are they, serving the King who never holdeth back reward from them that know His love.

II. Now may we narrate what was told to us by holy men a little time ago, how Guthlac informed his heart according to the will of God and scorned all sin and worldly weal; was ever mindful of the realms above, a home in heaven. Therein was all his hope, since He who maketh ready unto souls a way of life, first gave him light,

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bestowed celestial grace upon him, so that he went to dwell alone in a mountain house, humbly devoting all his soul to God, which, 'tis said, in youth he marred with earthly joys. A holy Warden guarded him from heaven, steadfastly strengthening his pure heart in ghostly good.

Lo! often have we heard how the holy man in earliest youth loved many froward deeds. Yet came a time by God's decree when He sent His angel unto Guthlac's heart, that he might still his love of sin. The time was nigh at hand; and wardens twain held watch about him, waging strife, the angel of the Lord and the foul fiend. Unto his secret thought in many an hour they brought their unlike counsels. The one said that all this world is fleeting under heaven, and praised the eternal good on high, where in triumphant glory holy souls have portion in the joys of God. He granteth graciously reward of deeds to such as fain with thankful hearts will have His grace, and rather let this world escape them than the eternal life. The other tempted him to seek by night the gathered band of robbers, win worldly gain by deeds of violence, as outcasts do who reck not of the life of any man who bringeth booty to their hands, if so they may win spoil.

So they incited him on either hand, till that the Lord of hosts decreed an end of strife unto the angel's honour. The fiend was routed and the Spirit of Comfort abode with Guthlac for his succour, and cherished him and taught him long and eagerly, so that the land's delights, his mountain dwelling, grew dear to him. Oft there came horror awful and unknown, the hate of olden foes, mighty in cunning craft; and unto him they showed their face. There they had held aforetime many a seat, but shorn of honour went their way, wandering wide, beating through the air.

That spot of land was hid from men till that the Lord revealed the hill within the wood, when the builder came who raised up there a holy house, recking no whit in greedy lust of fleeting worldly gain, but fairly set apart that land to God, what time the champion of Christ prevailed against the fiends. With temptation was he tried within the times of men who still remember, who even now revere him for his ghostly wonders, and cherish the glory of his wisdom which that holy servant won by mighty deeds what time he bode alone in that secret place where he proclaimed and lifted up the praise of God. God's errand oft he spake by word to those that loved the life of martyrs whenas the Spirit unveiled to him wisdom of life so that he kept his body free from joys and worldly bliss, from soft abodes and days of feasting, likewise from the eyes' vain delights, and splendid raiment. The fear of God was greater in his heart than that he should be fain to seek a worldly splendour.

III. Guthlac was good; in his heart he bore a heavenly hope and sought the healing of eternal life. And nigh him was an angel faithfully guarding him who thus dwelt lonely in that borderland, where he was a pattern unto many a Briton, what time he went up upon his hill a blessed champion and brave in battle. Eagerly he girt himself with ghostly weapons and blessed the plain... And as an aid he lifted high the cross of Christ. There the champion prevailed o'er many a danger. Many of God's martyrs waxed bold of heart; wherefore we attribute unto God the goodly state of Guthlac. He granted triumph unto him and prudence, a strong defence, what time there came a host of fiends with fatal darts to stir up strife. Yet might they not forsake their enmity, but many a trial they brought to Guthlac's soul. Succour was nigh at hand. An angel stablished him with courage when wrathful and bold of heart they threatened him with surge of flame, and in bands stood round about him saying that he should burn upon that barrow, and fire consume his frame, that all his woe and wretchedness should come upon his kinsmen unless from that torment he would seek worldly joy, and among men with eager will and greater craft observe the ties of kinship, and let that strife abate. Thus he poured forth his wrath who spake for all that host of fiends. Nor was the heart of Guthlac a whit the more afraid, but God gave him courage against his fear so that the sinful forces of the olden Foe were put to shame. Then were those evil-doers filled with ire, and said that Guthlac only, save for God himself, had wrought them most of woe, since in his pride he broke his way among the mountains in that wilderness where they aforetime, wretched adversaries, at times might dwell in peace after their torture, when worn with wanderings they came to rest after their journeys; they rejoiced in respite which was accorded them a little space.

But God was mindful of that hidden place, waste and barren and void of folk, and it abode the coming of a better shepherd of whom those olden foes had hate. So they endure a ceaseless woe. Neither may they find a

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dwelling—place on earth, nor doth the air soothe them into rest of body, but lacking home and shelter they moan their wretchedness and long to die, yearning for God to grant to them an end of sorrows in the throes of death. Nor might they work a harm to Guthlac's spirit, nor sever soul from body by any grievous wound; yet by their cunning guile they wrought afflictions. Mirth they put away and sighed in sorrow, what time upon the plain a mightier warden prevailed against them; as exiles must they leave their mountains green with heavy hearts. Yet they spake words of menace, these foes of God, and furiously threatened that he should know the severing pangs of death, if there he abode longer a more bitter contest when they, who recked but little of his life, should come again with mightier hosts. And Guthlac spake and gave them answer that they needed not to make vain boasting of their deeds against the power of God. "Though ye have menaced me with death yet He who doth decree your misery will save me from this hatred. There is one Almighty God who easily may shield me. He doth preserve my life. I would speak many a truth to you. This seat may I alone with no great pains defend against you. And as I stand here before you I am not so devoid of help, lacking a host of men; but for me abideth and increaseth a greater portion in the mystic secrets of the spirit, which doth uphold me with its succour. For myself alone, full easily shall I rear a house and place of refuge; for me is counsel present in the heavens. Little doubtful seemeth it to me that an angel shall lead me unto all auspicious issue both of word and deed. Depart, ye cursed! ye of wretched soul, from this spot whereon ye stand! Flee on far paths! At God's hand will I seek for peace, nor shall my spirit suffer evil among you; but His hand will uphold me with its might. Here shall be my earthly dwelling—place no whit longer yours."

IV. Then was a tumult roused; the exiles stood in hordes about the hill. A shriek arose, the wail of woeful souls. Many a fiendish advocate cried out aloud, made evil boast: "Oft between the oceans twain have we beheld the ways of men, the onset of the strong, of such as led their lives in happy issues; yet have we never met through all the world such arrogance of any man. Thou vowest thou wilt gain a home among us!

Thou art God's pauper! Though thou win the land, wherewith shalt thou live? No man will bring food hither unto thee. Hunger and thirst shall be thy hardy foes, if thou, like the wild beasts, depart lonely from thy home. Vain is the venture! Depart from this place. No man may teach thee better counsel than all this host. We will be gracious unto thee if thou wilt hear us, or once more will we come against thee all unready, with greater strength, so that one need not to lay hand upon thee, nor shall thy body fall by wounds of weapons. But we may crush this dwelling under foot; a throng of folk shall press against it, with mounted force and moving hosts. With wrath shall they be swollen who beat thee down. They shall trample thee and rend thee and wreak their wrath upon thee and carry thee away with bloody tracks, if thou think to bide our coming. With hatred shall we come against thee. Take thought of refuge. Flee where thou mayest look to find friends if thou reck aught of life."

Guthlac was ready. God wrought him strong in answer and in courage; he shrank not for their words but to his foes spake woeful tidings; full well he knew the truth.

"Wide is this wilderness; many its outcast dwellings, the secret seats of miserable spirits. Devils are they who dwell in these abodes! And though ye muster all of these, and though ye work a wider strife, yet in your welling wrath ye shall wage a hopeless war. Neither do I think to bear the sword against you with angry hand, the weapon of the world; this plain shall not be won to God by bloodshed. But with a dearer gift I think to please my Lord. Now that I am come unto this land, with empty words ye offer many dwellings. My heart is neither troubled nor dismayed, but He who in his works hath rule of every power upholdeth me in peace beyond the race of men. No love is there between us, neither may ye work me any whit of harm. I am God's vassal, and often by His angel He sendeth comfort unto me. Wherefore yearnings come to me but little and sorrows seldom. A heavenly Shepherd shieldeth me; my hope is in God. Nor reck I any whit of worldly weal, nor long for much in heart. But every day God granteth me my wants by the hand of man."

Thus boldly did he bear himself who stood against that host, a champion of glory, worthily upheld by angels' power. Then went away that throng of fiends. Yet was the time not long which they thought to grant unto Guthlac. Valiant was he and of humble heart, and bode upon the hill and loved his dwelling, and put aside desire of fleeting

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joys. He withheld not mildness unto men, but prayed for every soul its welfare, what time within the wilderness he bowed his face unto the ground; his heart was cheered from heaven above by a blithe spirit. Nigh him was an angel, and often he took counsel how least he might have joy in body of this world's delights. His troth wavered not for fear of wretched spirits, neither did he put off the time when he must suffer for his Lord, lest first repose of sleep or slothful mood should win away his valour. So ever in his heart a champion must fight for God, and stir his spirit oft to hate of him who willeth to work harm to every soul whereso he may affect it.

And ever they found Guthlac constant in the will of God when they who held those secret dwellings came flying fiercely through the murky night to spy out if his pleasure in that plain was minishing. Fain were they that a yearning might steal upon his heart for human love, so that he might go his way again unto his home. Such was not the purpose when in the wilderness the angel gave him eager greeting, and granted him grace that yearning might not thwart him in the will of God; but he remained in covenant with his Teacher. And oft he spake:

"Lo! it behooveth one whom the Holy Spirit guideth unto bliss, and stablisheth in his work, inviting him with gentle words and promising life's rest, that he hearken to his Teacher's counsels and let that olden Foe not turn his heart again from God. How may my Spirit come to peace save that I offer unto God an obedient heart, so that the thoughts of my mind (may turn unto) Him!

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early or late may come an end, that ye may not longer harry me with portents. Nor may my flesh alone of all the fleeting world shun death, but it must perish even as all this earth whereon I stand. Though with savage heart ye lay hold upon my body, with surging fire and greedy flame, never shall ye turn me from these words while my mind endureth.

And though ye sorely smite my body, yet may ye not lay hand upon my soul, but ye shall advance it to a better state, wherefore I will abide whatever my Lord shall judge unto me. I have no care of death. Though my bones and blood shall be for the increase of the earth, that part of me which is eternal shall come to bliss and there enjoy a beauteous dwelling.

Nor less nor greater is this hillside home than seemeth for a man who day by day worketh the will of God in suffering. A servant of the Lord must not have in heart greater love of worldly wealth than his own share alone, that he may have wherewith to feed his body."

Then as aforetime was the jealous hate of olden fiends and strife stirred up. Another frenzied shriek rang forth when rose the wail of woeful spirits. Ever the grace of Christ abode in Guthlac's noble heart, and grew, and the God of hosts befriended him on earth as he preserveth every man in safety, whose spirit thriveth in good deeds. He was one of these; he sought not after worldly things, but fixed his heart's delight on heavenly bliss. What man was mightier than he, the single champion, the one great warrior known within our times, so that for his sake Christ manifested more of wonders upon the earth! He shielded him against the grievous onslaughts of scathing, woeful fiends; savagely they yearned to press against him with greedy grasp. But God willed not that this soul should suffer that sore woe in body, but brooked that they might lay their hands upon him, and yet his safety be secure against them.

They raised him up on high into the upper air, and bestowed power upon him beyond the race of men, so that he saw before his eyes all the bearing of those cloistered men under the sway of holy shepherds, who have passed their lives in vain delight with idle wealth, and gathered treasure and splendid raiment, as is the way of youth when fear of old age doth not bridle it. Yet might the fiends not rejoice. Speedily they failed in that success that was granted unto them a little time, so that they might not longer vex his body with evil torture. Naught worked him harm of that which they had wrought for his affliction. Then from the air they led him to his well-loved home, so that again he climbed the hill within the grove. These murderers grieved and wailed with mourning that

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thus a child of men prevailed against them in their deeds of evil, and thus alone, a helpless wight, had come to be their bane, unless in vengeance they might repay him with some greater woe.

V. Guthlac set his hope on heaven, and in salvation put his trust. With life had he endured the fiends' attack. So was the first temptation of those woeful spirits overcome. Blithely the hero bode upon the hill; his bliss was in God. It seemed to him in heart that he of all the race of men was blessed, who cherished here his lonely life, so that no hand of fiend might work him harm in the last end, when that the power of God should guide him to the last farewell of death. Natheless, of evils mindful, the demons menaced him with sore distress in words of wrathful insult. Truly was it seen that God had granted unto Guthlac strength and honour, so that alone he overwon. The weary spirit spake to him in word:

"We need not thus afflict thee grievously hadst thou been fain to hearken to the counsels of thy friends, what time, humble and helpless, thou camest first to torment, declaring that the Holy Ghost might easily defend thee against affliction by reason of that token which would avert the hand of man from thy noble face. In that kinship liveth many a man resigned to sin, no whit pleasing unto God; but they delight the lustful flesh with joys of revelry. Thus ye do honour unto God with idle pleasure. Much that ye devise in heart ye hide from men, yet your deeds shall not be secret though ye do them secretly. We bore thee up into the air, withdrew thee from the joys of earth. Fain were we that thyself thou mightest see that we with right accused thee. All this torment hast thou suffered for that thou mightest not avert it!"

Then it befell that God was fain to give him thanks after his suffering for that he loved martyrdom in his heart. And God granted him judgment in the thoughts of his heart, and a steadfast soul. Against many an olden fiend he stood, confirmed in courage, and to their sorrow said that they, defeated, must yield that meadow green.

"Ye are dispersed! Sin lieth on you! Ye cannot pray to God for blessing, nor meekly seek His mercy. And, though He suffered you a little time to wield your power over me, ye were not fain to accept that patiently, but bore me up in wrath on high, so that from upper air I might behold the dwellings of the earth. Radiantly was the light of heaven revealed to me, though I endured adversity. Ye made it my reproach that laxly I condoned the easy rules and brutish hearts of young men in God's temples. Thus would ye bring the praise of holy men to scorn! Ye sought the weaker out. The better ye judged not according to their deeds. Yet shall they not be secret. Now will I speak the truth. God shaped youth and man's joy, nor in their early vigour may they bear themselves as aged men, but they exult in all the world's delights, till that a round of winters passeth o'er their youth, so that the soul loveth the mien and presence of a more mature estate, whereto many a man throughout the earth is meetly subject in his ways. Men show their wisdom to the world and lose their pride when the soul fleeth from the fickleness of youth. This ye reveal not. Ye recite the evil deeds of the sinful and will not praise the quality and way of life of righteous men. In sin ye joy and have no hope of comfort that ever ye may win respite from your exile-journeys. Often are ye found in stealthy deeds, then cometh reckoning from heaven. He sendeth me, who moved among us once as man and doth decree the end of every life."

Thus spake the holy champion; that martyr was sundered from the sin of men. Yet once again must he endure a deal of sore distress, though the Lord had power over his affliction. Lo! that seemed a marvel unto men that He should longer let those wretched fiends lay hold upon him, with savage onset. And yet that came to pass. Greater still was it that He came down to earth, poured out His blood at murderer's hands, though He had dominion of both life and death, what time He suffered willingly on earth in meekness the hatred of oppression. Wherefore is it meet that we rehearse the deeds of godly men, and give praise unto God for all those patterns, wherewith His Books have shown us wisdom through His wondrous works.

VI. And grace was found in Guthlac in godly strength. Long is it to rehearse in order due all that he suffered valiantly, whom the Almighty Father Himself had set as a first champion against those secret foes.

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There his soul grew pure and proven. Widely is it known throughout the earth that his heart throve doing the will of God; still are there many things to tell of what he suffered in the narrow thralldom of those alien foes. He scorned his sore distress and ever joyed exceedingly in that Protector of his soul ... who preserved his spirit, so that in his heart his true faith faltered not, neither did complaining mar his soul, but his heart abode steadfast in holiness till he had overwon his woe.

Grievous were his tortures, grim the thanes, all menacing his life with bane. Yet might these shepherds of sin not doom him unto death, but his soul within the body abode a better hour. Clearly they saw that God would grant him refuge against their hatred, and harshly judge their persecution. Thus may the one Almighty Lord easily shield each blessed soul against adversity.

Wrathfully those savage exiles brought the glorious hero, the holy hallowed soul, unto the door of hell, where the doomed ghosts of guilty men, after the throes of death, seek out an entrance to that foul abode, that bottomless abyss beneath the earth. Impiously they brought terror against him, and menaced him with torment, with hate, and horror, and a fearsome journey, as is the way of fiends when they are fain to trick the souls of righteous men with sin and cunning guile. Savage-hearted they began to vex the soul of God's champion, and fiercely said that he should come to that grim horror; that he should be brought low and turn aside among the habitants of hell, and there in bondage suffer burning torment. The woeful monsters were fain, with wrathful words, to bring the champion of the Lord unto despair. It might not so befall. Fulfilled with care the wretched foes of Christ spake grimly unto Guthlac.

"Thou art not deserving, neither art thou clearly shown a servant of the Lord, no good champion of holy heart well proven in his words and works! Thou shalt sink deep in hell, nor any whit shalt thou possess the radiance of the Lord in heaven, celestial dwellings, nor a home in glory, for that in the flesh thou hast accomplished overmany sinful deeds. We will requite thee now for every guilt, as may be most grievous unto thee, in grimmest torment of the soul."

But the blessed man Guthlac gave them answer with God's power in his soul:

"This do ye, if that Christ the Lord, the Prince of life, and God of hosts, will suffer you to lead his servant to that loathsome flame. That resteth in the power of the King of glory, the Saviour Christ, who brought you low and cast you into thralldom in binding chains. I am His humble slave, His patient bondman; I will endure His judgments everywhere in all things, and eagerly be subject unto Him in my secret thoughts forever. Truly will I hearken to my Saviour in all my ways with honour, and give Him thanks for all the gracious gifts which God shaped first for angels and those that dwell on earth. With blithe heart will I bless the Lord of life, and sing His praises day and night, with seemly reverence, and in my heart adore the Warden of the heavenly realm.

Never from on high in joy of light shall it be given you to sing praise unto God, but ye in death shall wail with weeping your heavy woe. In hell shall ye have lamentation, no whit the holy praise of heaven's King.

All my days will I do honour to that Judge in word and deed, and love Him during life. Thus are rede and honour brought to ready speech for him who in his deeds worketh His will. Faithless fiends are ye.

Wherefore ye have lived long, on exile paths, engulfed in flame, darkly misled, bereft of glory, despoiled of joy, delivered unto death, held fast in sin, hopeless of life, that ever ye might find healing for your blindness.

"Much ye scorned in days of old the fair creation, the ghostly joys of heaven, when ye withstood the holy Lord. Ye might not dwell in blissful days forever, but in your shame and guilt, by reason of your pride, were ye cast into everlasting fire, where ye shall suffer death and darkness, eternal lamentation. Respite shall ye never win. But I have put my trust in the Lord of life, the eternal God of every creature, that in His loving-kindness and abundant power because of my good deeds the Saviour of mankind will not forsake me; since I, in body and in soul, have



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battled long for God with mystic deeds of wondrous might.

"Wherefore I set my trust upon that brightest Glory of the Trinity, who by His decrees holdeth in His hands the heaven and earth, that never with your hatred and wrathful hearts may ye cast me into torment, ye murderers, ye sinful scathers, infamous and doomed to ruin! Truly am I fairly filled in heart with radiant faith and love of God, stirred in my soul unto that better home, and lighted by His rays unto that loveliest eternal dwelling where is a blissful, beauteous native land in the Father's glory. Then before the Saviour's face shall never ray of light nor hope of life be given you in God's domain, by reason of that overweening pride which sprang up overmuch within your hearts in idle boasting. Fain were ye in your stubborn hearts, and hoped to be like God in glory. Then worse befell you when the Ruler smote you down in wrath unto that darksome torment, where fire was kindled to receive you, with venom blended, and bliss taken from you by an awful edict, and angel's fellowship.

"So shall it be always forever that ye shall suffer curse and surging flame, no whit of blessing. Shorn of glory ye may not hope with sin and shame, by guileful cunning, to hurl me to that darkness; neither drag me down into the fiery flame, into the house of hell, where a dark home is evermore prepared for you, torment without an end, grim pangs of spirit. There shall ye moan and suffer death, and I shall know the joy of joys in the celestial kingdom of the heavens among the angels, where is the Righteous King, help and healing for the race of men, glory and fellowship."

Then came God's holy herald from on high, who spake and proclaimed terror from above upon those wretched fiends. He bade them lead back quickly the guiltless champion of glory from that place of exile, whole of limb, so that that dearest, steadfast soul, in God's keeping, might come to bliss. Then was the throng of fiends smitten with terror; the mighty herald spake, the well-loved thane of God, and shone with radiance as the day. A strong Preserver, rich in power, held rule over Guthlac's soul, and bound those thanes of darkness with bonds of misery, and laid constraint upon them and charged them well:

"In him let not a bone be broken, neither be any bloody wound, nor bruise of body, nor any whit of hurt, of all that ye may do unto his injury. But do ye set him hale in that same spot from whence ye took him. He shall wield the plain nor may ye gainsay him to hold those dwellings. I am the judge; the Lord hath charged me swiftly bid you that with your hands ye heal his every hurt, and hearken unto Him in His majesty. Nor may I hide my face before your multitude. I am a thane of God. One of the twelve am I whom in heart He loved as truest, when He took on human shape. He sent me hither from the heavens, for He beheld that ye on earth, in jealous hatred, brought torment to His servant. He is my brother and his misery doth bring me sorrow. I shall bring it to pass, where this friend dwelleth in his holy refuge (for I would fain hold friendship with him, now that I may bring him help), that ye shall often see my face. Often will I visit him, and I will bear witness of his words and works to God. He knoweth his deeds."

VII. And Guthlac's heart was gladdened when Bartholomew had announced God's word. Those bondmen stood ready with submissive hearts; they little broke the Holy One's behest. Then the noble champion of the Lord began to go a joyous journey unto that pleasant spot of earth.

They carried him and did him service; in their hands they bore him up and warded him from falling. Their ways were in the fear of God, easy and pleasant. Thus in his triumph came the builder to the hill. And many kinds of beasts blessed him with mighty voices. The tribe of forest-birds with their notes proclaimed the coming of the holy man unto his home again; oft he held out food to them and they were wont to fly in hunger round about his hand, in great desire, rejoicing in his succour. So that kindly soul, severed from mankind's delights, served the Lord, having joy in wild things after he forsook the world.

Fair was the pleasant plain and his new dwelling; winsome the call of birds. The earth put forth her blossoms, cuckoos proclaimed the year.

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And Guthlac, that blessed steadfast man, might have joy of his abode; in God's keeping lay the meadow green. The guardian who came from heaven had driven out the fiends. What joy has ever been more fair than this in the life of men, of those our fathers had in memory or we ourselves have known. Lo! these wonders have we seen. All these befell within the times of our own day. Wherefore may no one of the race of men throughout the world misdoubt, but thus God worketh to make strong the life of souls, that they may less, with feeble heart, mistake His witnesses when they themselves enjoy the truth with their own eyes.

So the Almighty loveth every creature under heaven in the flesh, the tribes of men through all the world. The Ruler willeth that we should ever wisely drink in knowledge, that His truth may be always among us in requital of those gifts which He giveth us, and sendeth us in mercy for our enlightenment, and for our souls ordaineth gentle life-ways, graced with light. Nor is this the least of all that love doth give when it setteth divine grace in the heart of a man.

So in His majesty He magnified the days and deeds of Guthlac. That goodly man was steadfast in his hatred to the fiends, set against sin. In his faithfulness he lessened little. Oft in lowliness he lifted up his voice to God, and let his prayer float upward to the glorious heavens, and thanked God that he might abide in suffering till when, by God's will, a better life should be granted unto him.

Thus was Guthlac's soul borne in angels' arms to heaven above; they led him tenderly before the face of the eternal judge. And in reward was given him a home in glory, where he might dwell alway forever and abide with blithesome heart. The Son of God was his mild Protector, the Lord of might, the holy Shepherd, Warden of heaven's realm.

Thus may the souls of righteous men mount upwards to their everlasting home, the heavenly kingdom, whoso in their words and works keep the lasting counsels of the King of glory in the days of their life, and win on earth eternal life, a home on high. Hallowed men are they, chosen champions, dear to Christ, bearing in their bosoms radiant faith, a holy hope and a clean heart. They magnify the Lord and have wise thought, journeying onward to their Father's homeland. They set their spirit's house in order, with prudence overwin the fiends, curbing in their souls all evil lusts and eagerly in the will of God cherishing brotherly love. Themselves they chasten and grace their souls with holy thoughts, keeping on earth the commandments of the King of heaven.

Fasting they love, and hold far from them baleful hatred, seeking prayer, striving against sin, and cherishing righteousness and truth.

After their going hence it shall not repent them when they journey to the holy city, coming to Jerusalem, where in peace, in joyful vision, they may happily behold forever the face of God, where truly it abideth everlastingly, beauteous and glorious in the rapture of that land of living souls.

## PART B

It is widely known unto the tribes of men, famed among the peoples, that the God of first fruits, the Almighty King, wrought the first of all the race of man of cleanest earth. That was the first beginning of the breed of men, a winsome ordering, fair and lovely. By God's favour was our father Adam brought forth in Paradise, when was no dearth of any pleasant thing, neither decay of wealth, nor languishing of life, nor death of body, nor wane of joy, nor coming of death; but in that land he might live free from sin, enjoying long those unaccustomed pleasures. Nor need he in that radiant home look for any end of life or happiness, but after a time body and limbs together and the spirit of life might journey to the fairest bliss of the heavenly kingdom, and there in everlasting joy abide forever without death, if he would keep the bidding of Holy God bright in his heart, and keep his counsels and do them in that land.

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But all too soon they wearied in doing the will of God; and at the serpent's counsel his wife took of forbidden increase, and from the tree plucked the forbidden fruit against the word of God, the King of glory.

And by the Devil's wiles she gave her husband of that fatal food, so that it led the wedded pair to death. Then that radiant land passed from Adam and Eve; that choicest of dwellings was taken from them and from their children and after generations, so that, fleeing in shame, they were driven to an alien land, unto a world of care. And they made requital by the throes of death for their deed, their grievous sin, which in their folly they wrought aforetime. In that punishment for sin, guilty in the sight of God, must man and maid by death atone their guilt, their grievous sin, their great transgression. Death forced his way among the tribe of men; the fiend was mighty in the earth. Nor was there any man in that noble race ever again so eager in the will of God, so wise of heart, that he might shun that bitter drink which of old Eve gave unto Adam, which the young bride poured out. To both it brought affliction in their dear dwelling-place. Death ruled the world, though there were many holy men of heart who did the will of God in diverse homes of men, in sundry spots throughout the meadow-plains. Some early, some late, some by reckoning within the memory of our own times, sought rewards of victory.

Books tell us how Guthlac by the will of God grew blessed in Anglia.

For himself he chose eternal might and patronage. Mighty were his wondrous works, famed far and wide throughout the cities, within the land of Britain; how by the might of God he often healed of sore distress many men sick of heart. Grievously afflicted with disease they sought him out, coming from far, heavy-hearted and sad of soul. And ever they found ready comfort at the hand of that champion of God, and help and healing. There is no one of men who may rehearse or know the number of all those wonders which he wrought for men in the world by the grace of God.

VIII. Oft to his abode came hosts of fiends, a deadly band, bereft of majesty, thronging in multitudes where the holy thane with steadfast courage held his dwelling. There bereft of beauty, shorn of joy, in many diverse voices, in that wilderness they raised a wailing, a deafening battle-cry. The champion of the Lord, this bold folk-captain, mightily withstood those thronging fiends. The hour of those woeful spirits was not far off, nor was the waiting long till that these evil-doers lifted up their shrieks. Joylessly they wailed and changed their cries; whiles raging like wild beasts they howled together; whiles these foul and sinful scathers turned again to human form with mightiest tumult; whiles the cursed, faithless fiends, vile cripples of the flame, turned into serpent shape and spewed forth venom.

Ever they found Guthlac ready and wise of thought. And he abode steadfast though the throng of fiends menaced him with pain of body.

While all the kind of birds, oppressed with hunger, flew unto his hands where they found sure relief, extolling him with ardent voices. While human heralds came to him in lowliness, and there, after their journey, found help and comfort of heart at the hand of that holy servant in that blissful plain. No one there was indeed, who went away cast down in heart, wretched or hopeless. But the holy man by his noble power healed every mortal, every man racked with pain or sick at heart. He healed both soul and body as long as the Warden of life, Eternal and Almighty, would grant him that he might enjoy bliss and life in the world. Then, when he had held his dwelling in the wilderness for fifteen years, was the last day of his toil and sorrow on the earth come nigh to him by reason of his necessary end. Then was the Spirit of comfort sent in holiness from heaven unto that blessed preacher of the gospel. His spirit glowed within him, hasting to set forth. Sickness came suddenly upon him. Yet in courage all undaunted he bode those bright commands, blithe of heart in his dwelling-place. In the gloom of night ... it racked his body; his spirit grew feeble; his blithesome soul was eager to be gone. Nor would the Father of angels grant this sinless man to dwell in the life of this unhappy world any longer time than he had already been pleasing unto Him by his works in the days of his life, in deeds and eager valour.

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Then the Almighty let His hand descend where His holy servant, strong of heart and noble, stout and valiant, dwelt secretly. Hope was renewed and bliss within his heart. His frame was burning with disease, fast in inner bonds, his flesh enfeebled; his limbs were heavy, vexed with grievous pains. He knew the truth, that Almighty God had visited him in His mercy; he made strong his heart against the perils of the fiend's assaults. No whit was he dismayed, neither was the pain of sickness nor the parting of death grievous to his spirit, but the praise of God glowed in his heart, in his soul triumphant, fervent love which ever mastered every pang. He knew no sorrow in that fleeting hour, though his body and his soul, two dear united friends, were severing their union. Days passed away, the shadows of the veil of night. The hour was nigh when he must fulfil that olden edict by the coming of death, and meet his doom; even that same doom our fathers, the eldest of the race of men, met grievously of old according as they wrought aforetime.

IX. In that bitter hour the strength of Guthlac was wasted; yet was his spirit all undaunted, of steadfast courage. Grievous was his sickness, hot and merciless. His heart surged up within him; his body burned. The drink was now at hand that Eve brewed for Adam in the beginning of the world. The fiend first served it to the woman and she then poured out that bitter potion to Adam, her well loved man; whose children since that day have grimly made requital for that olden deed; so that from the beginning there has not been a man on earth, nor one of human race, who might shield himself or shun the livid draught of Death's deep cup; but in that bitter hour, all suddenly, the door unlatcheth of itself and openeth an entrance. Nor may any man compassed about with flesh, neither of the great nor of the lowly, withstand with his life, but Death rusheth on him with greedy grasp. So that constraining, solitary Warrior, greedy of slaughter, after the falling of nights' shadows was present unto Guthlac, nigh at hand.

With him dwelt a serving–thane who every day did visit him. Wise of heart, of understanding mind, he went unto God's temple, wherein he knew the noble preacher bode, his dearest, chosen teacher, and there he entered in to speak unto the blessed man. Fain would he hear the counsels of the holy one, the conversation of that mild–hearted man. He found his lord spent with sickness; heavily it pressed upon his heart.

Heart–sorrow smote him, grievous care. And his servant began to ask:

"How hath it thus befallen thee, my father, my dearest master, thou refuge of thy friends, that thou art thus distressed in life and sorely troubled? Never aforetime, dearest Prince, have I come upon thee thus, in such wise broken. Hast thou still power of words to speak? To me it seemeth true that in this night gone by, in the courses of thy sickness disease hath come upon thee and vexed thee with painful wounds. For me is this the greatest of sorrows in my breast. except thou cheer my soul and spirit. Knowest thou, my noble lord, how this disease may find an end?"

Slowly he spake to him; he might not draw his breath with ease; a bitter, baneful sickness rested on him. Yet with blessed patience he bravely spake, and gave him answer:

"I will say to you that pain hath taken hold upon me, affliction hath assailed me in this darksome night, and loosened all my frame. My limbs are heavy, sorely racked with pain. This house of the soul, this doomed fleshly raiment, these clay wrappings of the limbs, enfolded in the grave and fast upon the bier, must sleep the sleep of Death. That Warrior cometh nigh, unremitting in his strife. Nor may the parting of the soul longer delay than seven nights time, when my life faring hence upon this eighth, this coming day, shall seek its end. Then shall all my days on earth be over and my sorrow shall be healed. Then before the knees of God may I have part in new gifts and rewards, and in everlasting bliss follow always evermore the Lamb of God. Now is my soul turned thither and yearning to be gone. Now thou knowest clearly of my body's death. Long is this lingering of earthly life."

Then was weeping and wailing; his servant's soul was sad, his heart was sorrowful when he heard that the man was destined to fare hence.

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By reason of those sudden tidings he had great woe, heavy in heart, because of his dear lord. His spirit was darkened within him, his soul grieved that he saw his master going from him. Nor might he use restraint, but ardently let tears of wretchedness flow forth, wave-drops gush. Wyrð might not hold the life, that precious treasure, within the doomed one longer than was decreed to him.

X. The holy soul discerned the mourning spirit of his grieving thane; and the shield of men, beloved of God, with glad heart comforted the younger man, his dearest friend, and spake him thus:

"Be not thou grieved. Though this sickness devour me within, for me it is no hardship to endure the will of God, my Lord; neither in this bitter hour have I aught of sorrow in my heart because of death, neither am I overmuch dismayed for the war-host of those thanes of hell. The first-born Son of sin may not cast blame of any wrong upon me, of any wicked deed or vice of body. But in the flame, in baleful surge of fire, they must wail their woe, in that death-hall mourn their exile, bereft of joys, of every favour, of love and blessings. My dear son, be not too sick at heart. I am bound upon a journey to win a heavenly home, eager for reward in that eternal joy, and by reason of my former deeds to see the Lord of victory, my well-loved son! It is not toil nor strife for me to seek the God of glory, the King of heaven, where is peace and bliss, joy of the just, the presence of the Lord, to whom with yearning, in my secret thought I was pleasing in this dreary time, in my deeds, with heart, and might. I know that my reward is perfect, unceasing requital, holy in the heavens, where my hope mindeth me to seek. My soul longeth from the chalice of the body to come to that eternal joy in blessedness. For me this land hath neither grief nor sorrow; I know that I shall have reward unending after my body's wasting."

Then the man of glory, the stout counsellor, was silent.

Sorrow-hearted he had need of rest. The heavens darkened over the children of men, shadowy nights vanished away for the mortal race.

Then came the day on which the Living God, Eternal and Almighty, the Lord, with joy was resurrected in the body, when he arose in might from death, from out the earth at that Eastertide. He, the Glory of all glories, lifted up to heaven a mighty throng when he arose from hell.

So the blessed man at that holy tide, on that bright day, exulting in its bliss, modest and mild of heart, stoutly with all endeavour put forth his strength. That joy of men arose as he most quickly might, enduring, wise of heart, though feeble from his sufferings. He began to make strong his soul in radiant faith, and deeply musing, with mystic might of spirit, in the temple of the Lord did sacrifice according to the will of God. And as was seemly for that princely man he began with grace of spirit to preach the gospel to his servant, and speak in revelations, and confirm his soul by wonders unto glory in that beauteous world, and unto blessedness; so that never before nor since nor ever in his life, in this fleeting time, did he hear such counsel; nor ever did he hear the mysteries of God revealed so deeply, by any human tongue, in noble wisdom.

Rather it seemed to him to be the word of a celestial angel, a mighty thane from out the bliss of heaven, than the teaching of any man of men on earth. Greatest of marvels that seemed to him, that such craft of wisdom could dwell within the breast of any man of the sons of mortals.

So profound was all his word and wisdom, and the insight of the man, his mind and mighty power, which the God of angels, the Saviour of souls, had given him.

XI. Then were four days gone by in number, since the thane of God abode stout-hearted, smitten with disease and vexed with troubles. But he had no grief, no sorrowing heart, nor mourning spirit by reason of his coming end. Death came nigh to him, walking with stealthy tread, strong and swift sought out his soul-house. Then came the seventh day present to mortal men, since the flickering arrows of disease, in showers, pierced hotly nigh unto his heart, unlocked his life-hoard, and sought it out with cunning keys. The man of wisdom, his attendant thane,

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visited his noble master in his holy home, and found his lord, that holy man of heart, reclining in God's temple, wasted with fever, past relief, destined upon his journey hence. It was the sixth hour at midday; the death of his dear lord was nigh at hand. Smitten with pain and misery, pierced by the darts of death, hardly might he draw his breath or lift his voice in speech. Sorrowful of soul, cold with dread and weary of heart, he gave greeting to his dying master, feeble yet glad of mood, and prayed him by the God of might if he could speak a word or lift his voice, to manifest to him, in flowing word make known, what trust he had of his past deeds and way of life, in the midst of that dark sickness, ere Death should smite him down.

Then the blessed man gave answer, beloved spake to beloved, though the enduring earl might only slowly draw his breath:

"My well-loved son! It is not long now to the last and final parting of death, so that no great while after this, never empty of reward, thou shalt hear the last of my words of counsel in the life of this world. Keep well our covenant and friendship, the words that we two spake together, O dearest of men: 'Never in thine hour of need, O Prince, will I permit the bond of our friendship to perish.' Be thou ready for a journey when body and limbs and the breath of life shall sever their union in death.

Haste thou, therefore, and say unto my sister, that dearest woman, that I have journeyed forth upon a long way, unto the radiant joy, unto my eternal home. And say thou also unto her in my words, that I denied myself the light of her face all the days of my life in the world, for that I yearned that we twain might meet again in heavenly glory, in that unending joy, before the face of the Eternal Judge, all free of sin. There shall our love abide forever; there may we enjoy bliss in that radiant city, and blessedness with angels. Say thou also unto her that she lay my body in the grave, bury my lifeless frame within the earth, in the dark tomb, where it shall abide a time thereafter in its sandy sepulchre."

Then the thoughts of his heart were greatly troubled for that attendant thane, smitten with woe by reason of his master's word; and quickly he perceived the death of his lord, the ending of his days, that it was not far off. Swiftly he began to speak to his beloved master:

"I entreat thee by the Warden of spirits, thou dearest of all the race of men, that thou ease the sadness of my heart, O joy of men! Thine end is not far off, as I have gathered from thy words. Often my brooding spirit, hot at heart, my soul mourning in the narrow watches of the night, admonished me of sorrow; yet never, father, dared I question thee, my comfort. Ever when the gem of heaven, the candle of joy to mortal men, sank into the west, the splendid, heavenly sun at eventide hasting unto its setting, have I heard another thane in counsel with thee. I have heard the words of this prince, this unknown herald, the talk of this friend, coming to thee oft between the stir of day and darksome night, and in the morning eke soul-sorrowful have I heard the speech of some wise spirit in thy home. Verily I know not yet, till thou, my lord, make further known to me, by thine own word, from whence he cometh."

Then the blessed man gave answer to his well-loved comrade, after a long time, since, feeble in his strength, he might but slowly draw his breath:

"Lo! thou dost speak to me, my friend, questioning me who am about to die of that which never before in all my life would I reveal to any man on earth, nor any thane among the people, save now to thee alone, lest that men and women marvel at it, and in their folly publish it; and sing it in their songs, within my lifetime. Verily I had no wish by boastful speech to work my spirit harm, neither to rouse the wrath of God, my Father. Ever my Victor-Lord, Giver of life to men, from that time when first I came to dwell within this hidden, lonely home, hath sent to me a holy spirit, a heavenly angel, a mighty thane of God, who every evening and again at dawn came radiantly to me, and healed my pain and every woe of heart. And in my heart that messenger of glory locked grace of wisdom, more manifold by much than any man might know in this life here on earth; which it is not granted me to disclose to any one of living men throughout the paths of earth, how no man might cloak from me what he

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mused in secret in his soul, in the thoughts of his heart, when he stood visible before my eyes. Always until this day have I held secret in my heart from every man the glorious coming of that herald, thou dearest of men. But now because of thy love and the fellowship that we twain of old have always held for one another, I would not leave thee sad after my death, nor troubled, nor sick at heart, nor sunk in sorrow's surges; but I will always have affection for thee. Now from my breast the soul striveth unto true joy. The hour is nigh at hand; this body crumbleth, this earthly frame groaneth, and the spirit hasteth forth unto its everlasting home, eager for its journey hence to fairer dwellings. Now am I overworn with suffering."

Then he sank back against the wall and bowed his head, yet he still held strength within him, and whiles he drew his breath, mighty in vigour. From his mouth came forth the sweetest of odours, even as the flowering herbs are fragrant in the summertime, firmly standing in their places in the meadows, joyously blooming, blowing, honey-sweet. So all that long day until the evening that holy man drew breath.

Then the noble gleam sought its setting wan under the clouds darkened the northern heavens, mapping the world in mist, enfold- ing it in darkness. Over the moving earth, the beauties of the world, the night came down. Then in holiness from heaven came a mighty radiance, shining with light and lustre over the homes of men. And there the blessed man with valour abode the ending of his days, racked with pangs of death. A glorious splendour all the long night shone brightly round about that noble man; the shadows waned, dissolved beneath the heavens. That brilliant light, that heavenly candle- gleam, lay round about the holy house from evening twilight till from out the east over the deep- sea path came the stir of dawn, the warm sun. The blessed man of glory, mindful of his valour, spake to his attendant thane, brightly to his faithful follower:

"Now is it time that thou fare hence, bethink thee of thine errands all, and quickly bear the message to that dearest lady as I aforesaid gave thee bidding. Now is my spirit parting from the body, eager for the joys of God."

And strengthened by the sacrament, that holy food, he lifted up his hands in humbleness, and opened eke his eyes, the holy jewels of the head; glad of heart he lifted up his gaze unto the heavenly kingdom, to rewards of grace, and sent his spirit, beauteous in its works, unto the bliss of glory.

XII. Then was Guthlac's soul led blessedly upon its upward way; angels carried it unto its eternal joy. The body grew cold, empty of life under the upper air. Then a radiance shone forth, brightest of beams. All that beacon, that heavenly brilliance, lay round about the holy house from the ground upward like a tower of flame, raised upright to the roof of heaven, seen brighter than the sun under the sky, a beauty as of noble stars. And bands of angels chanted songs of triumph; the sound was heard in the air under heaven, the harmony of noble voices.

So that dwelling- place, the blessed man's estate, was filled within with bliss and pleasant odours, the wondrous sound of angel voices.

There was it fairer and more winsome than any voice of earth may tell of, how that perfume rose, and harmony heavenly strains and holy song were heard the glory of God, peal after peal. The island rocked, the plains of earth were moved.

Then was the herald smitten of fear, reft of his valour, and most quickly the unhappy man hasted away and mounted in a ship, and onward spurred his ocean- stallion. Swiftly sped the ship under the urging of the woeful wight. The sky shone hot and gleaming over the homes of men. The speeding ship hasted lightly on its way; the sea- horse with its freight swept onward to the haven, so that after the wave- sport the bark touched upon the sandy shore, grated on the shingle.

Hot at heart he knew great woe, a mourning spirit and a jaded soul, since full well he knew his friend, dear to his heart, abode behind in death. Of that his bursts of weeping bitterly admonished him. His tears welled gushing forth, hot drops upon his cheeks, and in his breast he knew great sorrow. He must bear those grievous tidings, that

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message all too true, unto the maid.

Then, chill of heart, he came where was the damsel, handmaid of glory. He hid not Wyrð, the doomed man's death, but, mourning his friend, chanted and spake this word:

"Best is an enduring heart for him who often suffers great afflictions, deeply musing on the bitter death of a friend, when the hour cometh, woven with Wyrð's decrees. That he knoweth who must wander sorrow-hearted. He knoweth that his gracious treasure-lord is buried in the earth. He must fare hence with mourning, downcast in soul. For him is lack of joy who often in his groaning heart must bear such sufferings.

Verily I have no need to exult in his death. For my lord, the prince of men, and thy brother, the best between two seas, whom we in England have ever known, of all those born in childhood's image of the race of men, he the comfort of the weary, the joy of kinsmen, the bulwark of his friends, hath departed from the joys of this world unto the majesty of God, unto the glory of the heavenly state, to seek those courts and dwellings on his upward way. Now his earthly part, the shattered, fleshly frame, within his dwelling sleepeth the sleep of death, and the celestial part from out the chalice of his body, in the light of God, hath sought its glorious reward. And he bade say to thee that ye twain, with that peaceful company, may ever have abode together in that eternal joy, in glorious recompense of your deeds; and according to your heart's desire have blessedness and bliss. Eke he bade say to thee, my victor-lord as he was hasting on his journey, that thou, O dearest maid, bury his body in the earth. Now full well thou knowest all the purpose of my coming. With woeful heart, downcast in soul, I must depart. My drooping spirit . . .