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THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST IN OLD ENGLISH PROSE AND POETRY

By JOYCE HILL

A recent article by Claude Schneider began with a useful summary of the assumptions that lie behind much of the criticism of Old English Christian poetry:

A not infrequent observation in criticism about Old English Christian poems holds that a body of diction which was inherited from a Germanic, military and heroic past forced the poets to describe Christian characters inappropriately in terms belonging to the ideals of a warrior society.¹

The truth of Schneider's summary is borne out by Derek Pearsall's survey of Old and Middle English poetry published a year earlier:

The adaptation of traditional verse-form, style and vocabulary to religious purposes involved the transfer of a good deal of military terminology, since most heroic poetry dealt with battles . . . . . Clearly, such language would often be inappropriate, when the poet was speaking of battles, even of metaphorical battles against the forces of darkness: even Bede can speak of Cuthbert as 'the soldier of Christ.'²

It is true that Pearsall goes on to say that the retention of traditional poetic vocabulary and style does not mean that the controlling ethic is Germanic, but he is acutely aware of "a strong residual heroic quality in the vocabulary and in the handling of certain themes" (p.28) and of what he believes to be the poets' attempts "to fulfil the potential of the heroic style by diverting it from useless fictions to profitable truths" (p.28).

Such assumptions arise from the critic's highly developed sense of the conservative nature of Old English poetic diction which includes the persistence of certain items of vocabulary particularly from the battle language of the heroic tradition. If, however, awareness of the strength of the heroic battle tradition in Old English were matched by an equal awareness of the strength of the image of the saint as miles Christi, the critic might recognize more easily that we do not always have in poetic hagiography a simple redeployment of traditional poetic diction, with its traditional, heroic connotations often inappropriate to the Christian matter.
being presented, but an informed response to the Christian warrior metaphor, in which the poet may be both explicit about his aims and selective in his use of battle vocabulary.

The first part of this paper, therefore, will attempt to define the Christian metaphor as known in Anglo-Saxon England by surveying the use, nature and presentation of the miles Christi imagery in Old English prose; the second will reconsider Guðlac A and Juliana and, for purposes of contrast, The Fates of the Apostles and Andreas in the light of this tradition. Much of the extant prose post-dates the poetry and so cannot be used as direct commentary on it, but it can appropriately be used to define the general tradition available to Christian poets, since it closely reflects that found in patristic and Anglo-Latin writings. There is the important additional advantage in defining the miles Christi imagery through its vernacular expression of seeing what details and even, at times, what vocabulary were favoured by those who were using the imagery for people whose linguistic and cultural assumptions must have been similar to those shared by the people who enjoyed poetic hagiography.

PROSE

1. The monk as miles Christi.

From the early Christian era the imagery of warfare was used for the ordained members of the church. It is not surprising, therefore, that from the beginnings of formalized monasticism we find the imagery of warfare being used for monks, who were also especially committed members of the spiritual community. The prologue to the Benedictine Rule, in explaining the nature of the monastic life, does so partly through the image of the armed soldier of the Lord:

Ad te ergo nunc mihi sermo dirigitur, quisquis abrenuntians propriis uoluntatibus domino Christo uero regi militaturus oboedientiae fortissima atque praeclara arma sumis. 

Ergo praeparanda sunt corda et corpora nostra sanctae praeceptorum oboedientiae militanda. Et quod minus habet in nos natura possibile, rogemus dominum, ut gratiae suae iuueat nobis adiutorium ministrare. (pp.7-8)

When a novice was admitted, the Rule was to be read to him and the following words were to be said in conclusion:

Ecce lex, sub qua militare uis; si potes obseruare, ingredere, si uero non potes, liber discede. (p.134)

The cloistered monk is conceived of as fighting within the community under the guidance of the Rule and the abbot (p.17). An anchorite, however, having learnt how to resist the devil, may leave the battle line and face single combat, "ex acie ad singularem pugnam" (p.17), defending himself with his own arm and God's help against the sins
of body and soul. For the more usual monastic *miles* who remains within the community, the weapons to be used are the arms of obedience.

Mohrmann⁶ and Manning⁷ have shown the extent to which this ideal of monastic military service differed from the secular and from the concept of the more active *miles Christi* fighting incarnate demons, which is characteristic of the eremitic life. By the time of Sulpicius Severus (c.360-c.420), *militia* had become a technical term for monasticism and the military terminology in this context underwent a semantic shift so that *militare* was equivalent to *servire* and military service was performed through obedience to the commands of the Rule and the abbot. Mohrmann believes that Benedict was able to use the military vocabulary in this sense because in the secular world its exclusively warlike connotations had partly been eroded owing to its use to designate civil service in the imperial palace, as well as straightforward army service.

The Old English interlinear gloss exactly observes this semantic shift by giving "efne her is under bare peowian pu wilt" for "ecce lex, sub qua militare uis" (Logeman, p.96, my italics). Elsewhere *militare* is glossed by *campian*: *militaturus*, *to campiende* (Logeman, p.1); *militanda*, *to campiende* (Logeman, p.5); *militans*, *campiende* (Logeman, p.9); *militatur*, *si gecampod* (Logeman, p.102). The Old English prose translation of the Rule uses *campian* once¹⁰ and twice, where the syntactical structure differs, uses *gecamp* (Schröer, pp. 5, 9). In translating the opening sentences of the prologue, however, where the battle imagery occurs for the first time, the translator, whilst keeping close to the Latin in giving *wapnum* for *armas*, and *hyrsumnesse* for *oboedientiae*, does not translate *militaturus*, but paraphrases its essential meaning in the context by a further reference to obedience (Schröer, p.1). Similarly elsewhere *militatur* is interpreted as *peowdom* and *gehyrsumod* (Schröer, p.111) and *seruitutis militiam* by *peowdom* (Schröer, p.23).

Thus, at least within the context of the Benedictine Rule, the transferred sense of *militare* was thoroughly understood in England in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries¹¹ by translator and glossator alike, and it may be significant that, where they do not give direct expression to the transferred sense, by using *peowian*, *hyrsumian* or *peowdom*, they independently choose, from the range of "fighting" words in Old English, *campian* and *gecamp* as suitable vernacular equivalents of *militare*,¹² a preference that we find in a great many uses of the *miles Christi* image in Old English prose.

The metaphor is developed extensively in commentaries on the Rule, where attention is focused, not on organizational matters, as it often is in the Rule itself, but on the nature of the religious life in the spiritual sense. One of these commentaries, the so-called *Hexameron* of St. Basil, was translated into Old English by Ælfric¹³ and contains in its prologue, which has no parallel in the Latin, the image of the monks as "Cristes þegnas campiende wið deoflu deges and nihtes" (p.32).¹⁴ The fullest development of the image comes in the second chapter (pp.34-38) where the translator follows his Latin text closely in presenting the traditional
comparison between the soldiers of Christ and the soldiers of an earthly king. Obedience is emphasized as the common factor, but their warfare is fundamentally different both in the weapons with which they fight and in the rewards that they win. Cempa and campian regularly translate miles and militare and in both the Latin and the Old English texts, the same words are used for spiritual and secular states in order to sharpen the contrasts that are so carefully presented in balanced, alternating statements.

One can compare with this the similar contrast between spiritual and physical warfare carefully developed by Ælfric in the lesson that he draws for the benefit of Benedictines from the story of the Maccabees, although there were occasions where one of the few similarities between the two kinds of warfare provided a useful argument by analogy. Ælfric tells of a soldier (woruldcempa) who, after becoming a monk, longed to be reunited with his wife, now a nun. He asked St Martin's permission and was refused on the grounds that women do not go into battle with their menfolk, an analogical argument used also in the Rule of Chrodegang to justify priestly celibacy.

2. The martyr as miles.

Another extreme manifestation of Christian commitment is that of the martyr and here too we find Old English prose writers following Latin models in presenting the martyr in military terms which, in the Christian context, describe behaviour diametrically opposed to what, in other contexts, would be suggested by the use of these same words. In the monastic context, the military vocabulary denotes "service" and "obedience"; in the context of martyrdom it is "suffering". The semantic shift in either case is dramatic, but just as it causes no difficulty in Latin, so it seems to cause no difficulty or confusion in Old English prose. The frequent brevity of Ælfric's allusions to the military metaphor in his accounts of martyrs both in his Catholic Homilies and in his Lives of Saints indicates on his part an automatic association, which he evidently expected his audience to share. It must be remembered, of course, as we consider the examples, that martyrdom was not narrowly defined. A holy man might earn the title of "martyr" if he dies a natural death, as in Guðlac's case, and be called "a soldier of Christ" without ever having confronted a physical enemy or been tortured or killed for the faith:

Witodlice ŏurh geďyld we magon beon martiras. ñe ah ñe we on sibbe gođes gelacunge ure lif geendion.

It is nevertheless true that a high proportion of the saints are martyrs in the narrower sense, and it is revealing that these Christian heroes earn from Ælfric the title of "God's warrior" at the moment when he tells of their suffering and death. Their resistance is physically passive; the endurance of suffering brought about by their fidelity to God and their very willing acceptance of death is what gives these warriors their victory:
In such contexts, the military metaphor is evoked most commonly by the use of *cempa* (with *campian* and *gecamp*), *sigefast* and *sige*, with *gewinn* occasionally being used. The title *Godes cempa* (or *cempa* alone, understood by Skeat as "the Christian warrior") might also be used of the saints at other stages in their lives, sometimes when they were threatened with death without actually being killed, and to designate those who, in the wider definition of martyrdom, demonstrate their faith in other ways. Vercelli Homily V, in a passage commenting on the *pax Romana* at the Nativity and the apostles' preaching of the gospel of peace, nevertheless calls the apostles *cempa*, which would be incongruous were it not that by the tenth century, and possibly earlier, *cempa* had obviously extended its semantic range to include a figurative sense that could be exploited by an unmistakably Christian context.

In the Old English *Martyrology* campode is used, without explanation, as an expression for "was martyred":

On þone fifteog6an dag þas monðes bið sancte Vites prowung; he was seofon geara cniht þa he campode for Criste. (p.94)

On þone seofonteog6an dag þas monðes bið þas halgan cnihtes tid sancti Mommos; se was twelf wintre cniht þa he for Criste campode. (p.148)

There is further confirmation of a semantic shift for *campian* in the alphabetical vocabulary in the eleventh century MS BL Cotton A III, where *campian* glosses *agonizans* (341/21) and *ellencampedon* *browedon* glosses *agonizarunt* (342/15). The first shows clearly the equivalence between fighting and suffering that has been accommodated in *campian* and it is even clearer in the second example. There is no question of mistranslation since *browedon* shows that *agonizare* was properly understood. It is regrettable that we do not know the context from which *agonizare* and its glosses were drawn, but it may have been from a context that used the *miles Christi* image, possibly the account of a martyr, particularly since the only derivatives listed are also glossed as if they formed part of a *miles Christi* (martyr) image: *agonis*, 345/25: *gewinnes*; *agonista*, 338/2: *oretmacga*; *in agonia*, 424/12: *in elne*.

Vernacular writers, in presenting martyrs in this way, were faithful followers of a highly developed Latin tradition that is well represented in Anglo-Latin texts as well as in the earlier patristic writings known to the English. Bede uses it, it is familiar to Alcuin, who recognizes the paradox that Christians must be "milites in passione Christi," and it is used by Boniface and of him in descriptions of his martyrdom. Willibald's account tells how
Boniface's companions arm and rush to his side when he is attacked, but this "egregius Christi miles" exhorts them to lay down their arms and to resist by being heroic in the Lord. With Albertson we may see this final act as "the Germanic comitatus-loyalty in stupendous reverse", but Willibald's account is in fact quite independent of that tradition, as are vernacular accounts of martyrs, despite the military language employed.

3. The siege of the soul.

Presentation of the fight against sin in terms of siege warfare is easily recognized as imagery introduced into Anglo-Saxon England by the Christian Latin tradition, since siege warfare is neither a part of the traditions of heroic poetry, nor a military tactic employed by the Anglo-Saxons. Gregory the Great, on the other hand, was familiar with walled cities that could withstand the frontal attack of besieging armies and that might sometimes be conquered by treachery from within, and he felt free to continue the tradition of using the besieged walled city as an image of the Christian soul resisting the attacks of the devil. But for the Anglo-Saxons the image had literary force only and perhaps for this reason it is scarcely found in extant Old English prose outside the translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, a text which in fact provides few examples of the image and those far less developed than one often finds in Gregory's writings. Furthermore, in both the Latin and Old English versions of the *Cura Pastoralis*, the spiritual significance of the siege image is made explicit, so that there is no possibility of confusion.

4. Single combat against sin and the devil.

Less well defined means of presenting the Christian's fight against sin are potentially more open to misconstruction by modern readers who, often more aware of the heroic traditions of Old English poetry than of the highly developed Christian imagery of spiritual warfare, might be inclined to see the military language as a reflection of, and an appeal to the native traditions rather than to the Christian, from which they so obviously derive. In fact the vernacular writers who present the fights of the Christian in terms of single combat against the devil, sin, or incarnate demons embodying the soul's temptations, are careful to make it clear that these fights are spiritual, so that there is at least an implied contrast with the physical fighting of secular warfare. This is an essential lesson of Christianity and is found in Latin texts also, but the consistency with which it is repeated in Old English removed from the Anglo-Saxons being taught, as it should also remove for us, any thought of connection with the military tradition as embodied in Old English poetry.

The two chief methods by which Anglo-Saxon prose writers signal their intentions are to emphasise the passivity of the Christian soldier's "resistance" either by giving it narrative prominence or by commenting on it directly, and to provide immediate spiritual interpretation of any details, such as weapons and items of armour, that...
are used to elaborate the image.

Examples of the former occur in the Martyrology and in the Dialogues. In the Martyrology's brief summary (Herzfeld, pp.20-22), resists the demons passively and dispels them with the sign of the cross (although, as in the Vita Antonii, there is one exceptional physical incident when the saint is so violently assaulted that he is left unable to speak). In the Dialogues Benedict "fights" se ealda feond when he destroys a grove of Apollo in order to establish a church, but the conflict is verbal and the devil, who can be overcome by prayers, flees before the victorious man of God.

Models for the immediate interpretation of weapons and armour exist in the New Testament Epistles, notably Ephesians vi, 10-18, used in the Anglo-Latin accounts of the lives of Cuthbert and Guðlac and in Old English by Ælfric in one of his Catholic Homilies (Godden, p. 123) and by an unpublished homily in Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 190, p.351. Ælfric abbreviates in quoting probably from memory and in his reference to Æas hihtes helm may have confused the galeam salutis of Ephesians vi, 17 with galeam spem salutis of I Thessalonians v, 8. The Corpus Christi homilist uses I Peter v, 8-9 alongside Ephesians vi, 14 and 17. II Corinthians vi, 7 is used in the Pastoral Care in the interpretation of the priest's surplice as his armour against temptation. The origins of further details, notably the arrows of sin, can be traced to the psalms, where military language is common, and since it was customary to interpret the psalms in relation to the Christian life, they were understood as being rich in examples of spiritual warfare. The familiar patterns of behaviour are present: the psalmist is passive, God fights on his behalf, spiritual protection is provided, and the enemies can be defeated by steadfastness of heart and trust in the Lord.

In Old English homiletic literature, arrows are the devil's weapons and if not named as such, may be alluded to through a verb of shooting. Vercelli Homily IV lists the sins from which arrows are made and here interpretation follows closely upon the military vocabulary, as it does also in more general statements about spiritual warfare when specific "weapons" are not mentioned.

By these various means, then, writers of Christian vernacular prose so consistently modify the significance of the military language employed that, within a Christian context, it becomes a specialized, even stereotyped vocabulary, dependent for its peculiar connotations more on Christian tradition than on any native one for which some of the items of vocabulary were also inevitably used.

5. The fight against human foes.

Christians might also, on occasion, be confronted with human foes. In the early centuries of Christianity the Church had come to accept the idea of a bellum justum and the principle was well understood in Anglo-Saxon England. The evidence has been collected by Cross and there is little point in adding to his examples, particularly since the descriptions of physical battles between Christians and pagans are not properly part of a study of the miles...
It is relevant, however, to extend the discussion to include Christians' confrontations with human foes where there is either direct divine intervention or where physical battle is avoided, even if military vocabulary continues to be used. The purpose of such stories was to emphasise once again, in a particularly striking way, how much the Christian ethic differed from that of secular society.

Cross (p.280) refers to St Martin's statement, "Christi miles sum; pugnare mihi non licet", by which, paradoxically, he at once assumes the rôle of a soldier and withdraws from fighting. Ælfric uses it in his longer life of St Martin (Lives of Saints, Skeat II, p.226) and makes clear the difference between spiritual and physical battle in the shorter life (Catholic Homilies, Godden, p.289) although, in common with the Blickling life of St Martin (Morris, pp.211-17), he does not repeat Sulpicius' neat remark.

The story of another Roman soldier, Gallicanus (Lives of Saints, Skeat I, pp.190-92), sets up expectations of physical battle and it is therefore all the more striking that, when he advances towards the Scythian king, his enemy falls dead at his feet without a fight. The situation is closer to the concept of the spiritual miles than it is to the straightforward bellum justum, since Gallicanus, godes cempa (p.192), does not strike a blow, but is victorious through his faith in God that had been strengthened by the promises of John and Paul and the appearance of armed angels.

Other stories of confrontation with human foes have no particular justification within the narrative for the military language employed, which is thus seen to be imagery only. In this way the story is drawn firmly into the tradition of the spiritual miles Christi and the human opponent, however historical, assumes the rôle of being little more than the embodiment of evil that must be resisted. In the story of the Forty Soldiers, their enemies are at first the judge and the emperor, whose service they renounce, but later their adversaries are seen as the judge, the prefect and the devil, and in this struggle they call upon Christ for aid (Lives of Saints, Skeat I, pp.238-42). Military language is also used in relation to the human confrontations of Laurentius (Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, Thorpe, I, p.418) and of Marcus and Marcellianus (Lives of Saints, Skeat I, pp.118-22). But in both cases the fact that the enemy is human becomes insignificant. The stories conform to the pattern of the spiritual miles in that Laurentius is promised victory in death at the hands of the cruel king, and Marcus and Marcellianus are seen as soldiers of Christ chiefly in their resistance of the tempting pleas of non-Christians to surrender. Finally we may note Ælfric's brief introduction of military imagery in his account of the confrontation between Peter and Paul and Simon Magus (Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, Thorpe, I, p.374). There is nothing in Acts viii to suggest the imagery, which is merely a vivid way of explaining the nature of the saints' spiritual resistance.

Thus, except in the particular case of the bellum justum, military language is employed exactly as it is in explicitly spiritual contexts, for the same purposes and with the same modification of meaning, even when the enemy is human.
POETRY

1. Guðlac A.

Guðlac is the obvious starting point for an examination of the miles Christi imagery in Old English poetry. Felix of Crowland's Vita Guthlac, written probably in the 730's and translated into Old English in the eleventh century, was modelled upon the influential Vita Antonii. Both vitae externalize the anchorites' struggles with tempting thoughts as battles with incarnate demons armed with the arrows of temptation and, as has been noted above (p. 63), the Vita Guthlac also includes a description of the arming of the Christian soldier, based ultimately on Ephesians vi, 13-17, but taken here from the Vita Cuthberti, another Anglo-Latin vita modelled upon the Vita Antonii. Both Anglo-Latin vitae follow the expected pattern of providing immediate spiritual interpretation of the military language employed in the "arming" passages, in presenting the saints' confrontations, with few exceptions, as being unambiguously spiritual, and in making it clear that the saints win by passive resistance based on trust in God.

Guðlac B, dealing mainly with Guðlac's death and therefore of less interest in the present context, is generally regarded as being based on chapter 50 of Felix's Vita. There is less certainty about the relationship of Guðlac A to Felix's work, but we are undoubtedly dealing with a story where the underlying tradition is that of the miles Christi. It remains to be seen how the poet of Guðlac A responds to this tradition within the limitations of traditional Old English poetic diction. Opinions have varied. Kurtz (p. 144) felt that Guðlac A was a poem whose essential spirit differed from the Latin hagiographic tradition:

A militant mind, of a sort, stands behind Guthlac A. No Felix or Athanasius, trained to the Church ideal of humility and long-suffering, praises a patient, much enduring saint as a model for the Christian anchorite. But a mind that delights in epics of conflict and in the heroic ideal of the fighting champion, has converted Guthlac into a mighty man of action, a protagonist, said to be almost contemporary, in the supreme war of the ages.

Shook, on the other hand, argued that the resemblance to secular heroic poetry is only superficial, arising out of the inherited linguistic and stylistic features.

There is no doubt that the poet of Guðlac A saw the story of Guðlac as the story of a miles Christi and that, in making this clear in his poem, he wanted the members of his audience to recognize its relevance to their own lives of resistance to temptation.

The opening lines of the poem, which provide a didactic prologue, draw attention to various ideals of behaviour to which the Christian should aspire, including the need to be obedient to God's commands (32-4). At the end of the prologue, and immediately before introducing Guðlac by name, the poet makes some general comments about dwellers in the wilderness, using military imagery:
Later, after describing one of Guolarc's confrontations, the poet comments approvingly:

Swa sceal oretta a in his mode
gode compian, omd his gæst beran
oft in ondan þam þe eahtan wile
sawla gehwylcre þær he gesælan meæg. (344-47)

Shortly after, he distances himself from the narrative to ask:

Hwylc wes mara þonne se?

An oretta ussum tidum
cempa gecyðeð þær him Crist fore
woruldlícra ma wunder gecyðe. (400-403)

He thus confirms that he sees Guolarc's life as being within the miles Christi tradition, as he does later in the didactic "epilogue" where, in drawing attention to what can be learnt from Guolarc's life, the poet refers to cempan gecorene, Criste leofe (797) who vanquish (oferfeotæð) the fiend and their sinful desires (803). This didactic, homiletic framework, in which the Guolarc A poet makes his understanding of the story explicit, appears to be original with him; it is not found in Felix, nor was it introduced by his Anglo-Saxon prose translator at the end of the period.54

When we consider the nominal expressions used for Guolarc in the poem, additional to the use of his name, we note, with Rosemary Woolf,55 that "phrases such as Cristes cempa or eadig oretta occur with refrain-like insistence"; they are constant reminders of the poet's point of view. But more important, even, than the repetition of such phrases is the selectivity of the poet's vocabulary.56 Despite his clear conception of Guolarc as a miles Christi figure, or perhaps because of it, the poet does not designate Guolarc by nouns or nominal phrases that have unambiguously heroic connotations, as can be seen from the list below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cempa (11 times)</th>
<th>þecw (5 times)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>153 Cristes cempa</td>
<td>157 se halga þecw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 se cempa</td>
<td>314 dryhtnes þecw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324 wuldres cempa</td>
<td>386 se dryhtnes þecw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>402 cempa</td>
<td>*579 dryhtnes þecw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>438 cempa</td>
<td>600 þecw gebyldig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>513 halig cempa</td>
<td>oretta (3 times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>558 wuldres cempan</td>
<td>176 eadig oretta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>576 meotudes cempan</td>
<td>401 oretta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*580 cempa god</td>
<td>569 godes orettan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>688 wuldres cempa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727 dryhtnes cempa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 wer (twice)  ombiehthera (once)
108 se halga wer  599 ombiehthera
590 se eadga wer  
gast (once)
weard (once)  689-90 leofesta gast
230-31 swiðra . . . weard  
fruma (once)
yrming (once)  
*272 godes yrming
martyre (once)
514 se martyr
cempa god (580) and dryhtnes beow (579) are used by the
devils who claim that Guolac is not God's warrior and
servant; they also use godes yrming (272) in a taunting
fashion.
*Cempa is also used twice (91, 797) and oretta once (344) in the
overtly didactic passages to refer more generally to Christian
warriors.

Only cempa and oretta can be claimed as warrior terms; none of
the others, with the exception of weard, which has immediate con-
textual relevance only in referring to Guolac's guarding of his
mound, suggests either the military qualities or the social relation-
ships of the heroic tradition. On the contrary, beow, used here and
commonly in other poems for those who serve God, occurs once only in
Beowulf (2223) in a derogatory sense; yrming is used in Old English
poetry only here and once in the Meters of Boethius (21:17), again in
a Christian context; martyr is a Christian loan word; ombiehthera is
a hapax legomenon; fruma is common in Christian poetry, frequently
with reference to God and occurs rarely as a simplex in heroic poetry
and weard and gast, finally, are so widely used in prose and poetry
that they have no very specialized connotations. Even the two warrior
terms are not those most frequently associated with the heroic tra-
dition. Cempa is widely used in prose in a variety of contexts and,
as we have seen, tended to be the favoured word in ecclesiastical
prose, as it is the favoured word in this poem, to designate the
soldier of Christ.

In other respects too, the poem is more closely related to the
Christian military tradition than to the heroic. Following the usual
practice, Guolac's weapons are clearly stated to be spiritual (177-78)
and we are reminded by the poet's general didactic comments, by his
comments on Guolac's resistance, and by the words he attributes to
Guolac himself, that the struggle is one of the spirit. His courage
comes not from within himself but from the angels and from God (190,
202-3, 292-3), angels and the apostle Bartholomew come to his rescue,
and victory is frequently said to be granted by God.

The poet sees Guolac and those who live like him as martyrs in
the wider sense of the term (161, 182, 470-4, 514-15). We are there-
fore to understand that the saint's victory is properly won through
suffering and through service and obedience to God. The emphasis on
suffering, which we find in prose accounts of martyrs, is present in
the narrative itself; attention is drawn to it also as a means of performing God's will by Guðlac's words in 385-6 and 778-9. Obedience and service, as we have seen, were likewise an integral part of the miles Christi tradition. The prologue to Guðlac A, in establishing a number of Christian values, presents obedience and service as positives within the Christian life (69, 75, 80, 91); Guðlac provides a gloss to all his actions in asserting that man cannot reach God but by an obedient spirit (hyrsumne hige, 368), and in his climactic rejection of the final temptation, particularly in lines 599 following, there is emphasis on service, humility, patience and faithful obedience. These qualities, which are essentially passive, are the accepted and traditional means to success for the Christian hero, but not for the heroic warrior.

The poet rarely leaves us in doubt that he is conforming to the Christian tradition even when he composes lines that seem to recall the heroic. Guðlac, like Beowulf, renounces the use of the sword in his fight against his foes (302-7). His reason, however, is not because he wishes to show his prowess by fighting on equal terms, not because he trusts in his own unarmed strength, nor because he believes that the devil is impervious to weapons, but because he believes that God will protect him; his passivity in the "fight" is striking. Furthermore, if Guðlac's renunciation reminds us of Beowulf's, we must not forget that Beowulf, in making a similar renunciation, was exceptional within the heroic tradition. Earlier, the statement:

_ Gyrede hine georne mid gastlicum waxnum _

(177-78)

may similarly remind one of lines in Beowulf (1441-42). The Christian metaphor is maintained by the explicit _gastlicum_, so that there is no ambiguity, but the feeling, derived from a knowledge of the heroic tradition, that the phrase adds to Guðlac's general heroic stature, may be justified.

The claims that Guðlac fought alone (ana, 245, 450) may also be thought to be a way of enhancing his heroic stature rather than an accurate description of what really happened, since Guðlac receives so much divine aid. But it is, of course, truthful within the Christian tradition, in that Guðlac receives no human aid, and he earns divine aid, essential for the Christian's victory, solely through his individual faith. It is thus no more inconsistent than the fact that God is said to grant Guðlac strength to resist, as a reward (448-450), when in fact Guðlac has merely allowed himself to be defended by God from attacks which themselves were allowed by God. We should therefore give due consideration to the logical inconsistencies that are part of the _miles Christi_ metaphor before criticizing the poet for "projecting effort and triumph when none is clearly visible". 59

I do not wish to claim that Guðlac A is a sophisticated poem theologically, but to show that in most essential details it conforms to the _miles Christi_ tradition. The language is not noticeably heroic and the controlling ethic certainly is not. Derek Pearsall wrote of Guðlac A:
it shows some of the limitations of the adapted heroic style in constantly substituting physical for spiritual confrontation. Inward analysis of the allegorically heroic temper of martyrdom seems imprisoned within the inflexibilities of the inherited style.\textsuperscript{60}

To respond to the warlike situation and language in this way is to fail to notice the poet's avoidance of obviously heroic vocabulary, in so far as it could be done, to overlook his clear and frequent interpretative guidelines, and not to be aware that the poet may be following a well developed tradition that was fundamentally different from the heroic.


Juliana conforms to the warrior-martyr type within the miles Christi tradition who "fights" by enduring a physical passion and who, by that faithful endurance, wins victory in death. There is no reason why, as a female saint, she should not be described in the military terms characteristic of the tradition and clearly, as Schneider has pointed out,\textsuperscript{61} the tradition is exploited within the poem. That being so, it is interesting to notice that there is no noun or nominal phrase in the poem that defines Juliana as a warrior figure, except indirectly in that she shares the fate of the persecuted Christians referred to in line 17 as cempan and is a particular example of the faithful Christians to whom the devil refers in general terms, again as cempan in 383 and 395.

Indeed, the miles Christi imagery is only lightly suggested, except in the relatively elaborate siege-warfare image that is confined to the devil's speech where he explains how he attacks Christians (382-417). Juliana identifies the physical threats of her human foes as hildewoman (136) but since this is in parallel variation to the more accurate witebrogan (135), we should probably not place too much stress on the "battle" element. Uncres gewynnes (190) is given to Eleusius to describe his struggle with Juliana and gewin (421) is used by Juliana to describe the former contest between God and the devil. But gewin is insufficient to suggest an allusion to the miles Christi tradition, nor does it carry any specifically heroic connotations since it is used in varied contexts in both poetry and prose and has a wider semantic range than merely "battle", as the entry in Bosworth-Toller makes clear.

Juliana's behaviour is that of the spiritual miles in her passivity and reliance on God (153-57; 212-15), but it is only in the siege-warfare passage that we are made very conscious of the Christian metaphor. The passage has been carefully examined by Schneider and therefore needs little further attention here. But we do well to remind ourselves that the siege-warfare image owes nothing to native traditions and to notice that, as in the Cura Pastoralis, the details of the image are immediately provided with their spiritual interpretation. One may respond to headuwe (385), bord (385), scyld (386), guœref (387) and guœ (393, 397) as words more familiar in heroic contexts, but there is no room for ambiguity here; scyld is qualified by halig, guœref by gastlic, bord is
unmistakably equivalent to a qualified term, haligne scyld, and so, given the context, the nature of the beadu and guA cannot be mis-understood. A few lines later (397-409), when the devil describes how he tests the strength of the wall that he wishes to breach, and discovers how he can penetrate the tower, the detail of the image never detracts from the fact that it is the citadel of the spirit that may be penetrated when sin attacks the bodily senses, the weakest points of defence. The code of behaviour that brings the warrior protection and victory is again the exercise of virtue, faith in God and a resistance that is physically passive.

The exact source of Juliana is unknown, although it was obviously a Latin text similar to the Bollandists' Acta. It may therefore be worth noting that the siege image, though a close reflection of siege images such as we find in Latin patristic writings, is not present in the Acta. If it is a Cynewulfian addition, it testifies to his familiarity with the Latin tradition and, presumably, to his assumption that the image would make sense to his audience, although it remains a unique image in extant Old English poetry.


With The Fates of the Apostles, in contrast with Guðlac A and Juliana, one cannot argue for a discriminating and selective use of heroic diction, since the opening lines, which act as a prologue, echo heroic poetry and set up expectations, belied by the manner of the apostles' deaths, that the poet is about to describe the warlike deeds of physically active heroes. Linguistically there is much in the poem to sustain this expectation. There is, for example, reference to lóf (6), miht (7), marðo (7), prym (8), guóplegan (22), sigores to leane (62), wiges to leane (74), sigelian (81), tir (86) and the nouns and adjectives used for the apostles are in total much more evocative of the heroic tradition than those used for Guðlac in Guðlac A:

æðelingas (3)           se manna (25)
torhte ond tireadige (4)  bearducraftig beorn (44)
dedum domfaste (5)       collenferó (54)
dryhtne gecorene (5)     se halga (60)
leofe on life (6)         stiðmod (72)
þeodnes þegna (8)        eadig (73)
halgan heape (9)          siðfrome (77)
frame (12)                beornas beadurofe (78)
fyrdþuwate (12)          æele (79)
hildeheard (21)          æðelingas (85)

There is every reason why the martyred apostles should be described in military terms and within the Christian tradition, as we have seen, there is nothing incongruous in representing their passive victories, their physical sufferings and their deaths as battles and as triumphs. Certainly Cynewulf remains faithful to the facts of the apostles' deaths and hence, in using military terminology in what, from a secular point of view, are inappropriate contexts, conforms to the miles Christi tradition. The problem lies
not in seeing the apostles as Christian \textit{milites}, but in the injudicious use of language that arouses connotations of more active warfare and which implies a bravery originating within the warrior, such as characterizes the secular hero rather than the Christian, whose courage comes from God.

The poem thus lacks the stylistic tact that one finds, on the whole, in \textit{Guðlac A} or \textit{Juliana}. Bartholomew is described as \textit{beaducraftig beorn} (44), Simon and Thaddeus are \textit{beornas beadurofe} (78) and Peter and Paul are \textit{fyrdhwate} (12) although, in contradiction to what the language implies, the keynote of each story is suffering and submission to violent death. Peter and Paul are the victims of Nero's plots and however \textit{fyrdhwate} they might be, simply \textit{feorh ofgefon} (12). Similarly, Andrew is \textit{hildeheard} (21) and experiences \textit{guþplegan} (22), but the battle is in fact the martyrdom of crucifixion.

Schaar characterized the poem as one written almost wholly within the heroic tradition and continued:

\begin{quote}
This mission of the apostles is set forth as the fight between bold and steadfast warriors and dark and evil powers, the final death and martyrdom of God's servants is looked upon as the tragic but glorious overthrow of faithful retainers.\end{quote}

This assessment of the poem, however, gives more weight to the connotations of the language than to the essential ideas expressed, which are Christian throughout.\footnote{5} Their deaths are not seen as "the tragic but glorious overthrow of faithful retainers" but rather, and appropriately, as their moment of greatest victory and triumph. Cynewulf's problem was not conceptual, but linguistic, although we may properly ask, with Shippey,\footnote{66} how far the use of one particular style can actually alter the story told. Here it certainly confuses our response.

5. Andreas.

Our response to Andreas is similarly confused and for the same reasons. The poem's stylistic incongruities are widely recognized and have been commented upon in some detail by Cherniss\footnote{67} and Shippey.\footnote{68} The value of considering \textit{Andreas} in the context of this paper, as of considering \textit{The Fates of the Apostles}, is to draw attention to the poets' peculiar difficulties in using the \textit{miles Christi} metaphor and to define contrastively, by reference to relative failures, the means by which the image may be successfully presented, as it is in \textit{Guðlac A} and \textit{Juliana}.

Andreas, in his passivity and in his reliance on God for protection and victory, conforms to the \textit{miles Christi} tradition. He suffers a form of passion (966-72, 1238-78) without quite dying as a martyr, and he defeats the warlike Mermedonians when the sign of the cross appears on his face (1334-40). But the poet does not make reference to the wider perspective of the \textit{miles Christi} tradition in which the hero's struggles may be seen as a pattern and model of the Christian life. The saint's acts conform to those
of the miles Christi only because the nature of his actions and experiences are predetermined in the given narrative, which the poet does not alter. If he was aware of the implications of his narrative, that spiritual warfare is one of obedience to God and calls for a different relationship between God and man than that between lord and retainer, he does not articulate it. The notions of military service suggested by the language of the poem are not modified by concepts of service such as are found in Guðlac A (or in the Benedictine Rule); beow and beowian are not used in Andreas.

In Christian contexts military language, which normally implies physical action, is often used in situations where no action occurs. But if the Christian frame of reference is clearly established, the audience accepts this somewhat paradoxical linguistic and behavioural pattern as a fulfilment of their immediate expectations. With Andreas, however, the situation is quite different in that the audience's response is not conditioned and limited by the poet's direct comments or judicious use of language. On the contrary, his style is so heavily dependent on the heroic tradition that it inevitably arouses the wrong set of expectations with the result that, when inaction follows, as dictated by the narrative, we experience a strong sense of incongruity.

The "set-piece" of Andreas' release of the prisoners (981 ff.), which is not discussed by Cherniss, is a good example of the poet's lack of sensitivity. The hero's advance on the gaol is one of the climaxes of the narrative and the description of his approach is reminiscent of a heroic warrior advancing to battle:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ba \text{ wæs gemynig} & \quad \text{modgebyldig,} \\
beorn beaduwe heard, & \quad \text{eode in burh hraæe,} \\
anræd orsetta, & \quad \text{eine gefyrþred,} \\
maga mode rof, & \quad \text{meotude getreowe,} \\
stop on stræte, & \quad \text{(stig wisode)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Indeed the whole episode can be used to argue a relationship between Andreas and Beowulf. The traditional build-up is completely undercut, however, by the fact that there is no battle, God grants the victory, death mysteriously carries off the warders so that Andreas meets with no opposition, and his bold front as a courageous and resolute warrior is inappropriate since he cannot even be seen. The released prisoners no longer experience guðgebingo (1043) in prison (which is in fact a place of suffering) and the two apostles are called wigend and haleþ higerofe (1053-4) even though, like the rest of those who have left the prison, they are now both hidden by God from their enemies' sight. The experience of suffering, the passive reception of "victory" and of God's protection are compatible with the Christian being called a fighter, but the poet's organization of the passage and his choice of language arouse expectations that are inappropriate for recognition of the Christian metaphor.

Even allowing for the fact that Andreas is twice the length of Guðlac A, the range of terms used to describe Andreas is far greater than the noticeably restricted range used for Guðlac. The Andreas poet exploits the poetic vocabulary in the same way as the Beowulf
poet does for his hero. The unambiguously Christian designations of Andreas are relatively few. Halig, se halga and se halga wer are the commonest (e.g. 168, 359, 382, 467, 831, 893, 996, 1010, 1171, 1222, 1253, 1307, 1315, 1389, 1395, 1478, 1566, 1586, 1607). As an apostle he is recognized as being a begn of Christ (323, 344, along with the other apostles), a begn of glory (1026 with Matthew, 1678) and he is gode leof (1579), ar godes (1647), and ælcyninges ar (1679). The only other explicitly Christian designations are halig ceropa (461) and Cristes cempa (991). These, along with eadig oreta (463), which must also be an allusion to the Christian metaphor, identify Andreas as a spiritual soldier, but in a poem of 1722 lines that is so rich in epithets for Andreas drawn from the heroic tradition, they have little effect in restricting our response to Andreas as a warrior and their relative insignificance does not suggest a consistent attempt by the poet to present his hero as a miles Christi. His effort lies rather in presenting him as a hero of the Germanic tradition since the Christian epithets are surpassed by nouns and adjectives more familiar in heroic poetry, as is indicated by the following representative list (nominative forms only):

- heard ond higerof (233)
- guðe fram (234)
- beorn (239, 1247, 1279)
- wis haleð (624, 919)
- maga mode rof (625, 984)
- wiges heard (839)
- beorn beaduwe heard (982)
- leof leodfruma (989)
- æþeling (990, 1272, 1459)
- hale hildedeor (1002)
- sigerof (1225)
- deormod (1232)
- eorl ellenheard (1254)
- eorl unforcuð (1263)
- deor ond domgeorn (1308)
- brotheard þegn (1391)
- ellenrof (1392)
- stiðhycgende (1429)
- wigendra hleo (1450, 1672)
- se đædruma (1455)
- mungene rof (1469, 1676)
- mihtig ond modrof (1496)
- cene collenferhø (1578)
- se modiga (1632)

The cumulative effect of such vocabulary, reinforced by set-piece descriptions easily recognized as inspired by the heroic tradition, is to contradict the hagiographic narrative pattern. There is no real evidence that the poet was aware of these contradictions and his stylistic insensitivity may be a result of an insensitivity to the real nature of the Christian tradition of spiritual warfare, as exemplified in his presentation of the confrontations between Andreas and the Mermedonians.

The critical stance summarized by Schneider and quoted at the beginning of this paper may thus be justified in the case of Andreas, but we should not generalize from it; for all its vigour, it is naive and unsatisfactory as a Christian poem. It is possible to discriminate between poems and to recognize that not all poets found themselves "forced . . . to describe Christian characters inappropriately in terms belonging to the ideals of a warrior society". The tradition of the soldier of Christ was known in pre-Conquest England and much of the military language in Christian contexts was inspired
by that tradition and not by the inherited traditions of the Germanic heroic world.


The Rule of S. Benet, ed. H. Logeman, BETS, OS 90 (1888).

The related noun militia is glossed by campdom (Logeman, p.14).

Die angelsächsischen Prosabearbeitungen der Benedictinerregel, ed. Arnold Schröer, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosä, Bd. 2 (Kassel, 1885-88), p.97. This is a doublet translation, "winnan wilt and campiam" (correctly campian, as in the Wells Fragment, p.96).


Where the Latin text uses pugnare to describe the more active eremitical struggle against the devil, both the translator and glossator use winnan: Schröer, p.9; Logeman, p.10. For a brief comment on the distribution of campian in Old English prose, see Janet Bately, "The Compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 60 B.C. to A.D. 890: Vocabulary as Evidence", Proceedings of the British Academy 64 (1978), 123.


Elfric's Lives of Saints, ed. W.W. Skeat, II, p.286. See also the anonymous life of Ceolfrith, where the monastic community is seen as a cohors; Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), p.397.

The Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang, the Capitula of Theodulf and the Epitome of Benedict of Aniane, ed. Arthur S. Napier, EETS, OS 150 (1916), pp.67 (Latin) and 68 (OE).

For monks as the successors to martyrs, see Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben, ed. Bruno Assmann, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, Bd. III (Kassel, 1889), pp.35-6 and E. Manning, Revue Bénédictine 72 (1962), 135.


An Old English Martyrology, ed. George Herzfeld, EETS, OS 116 (1900).

Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies, ed. T. Wright and R. Wülcker (London, 1884). The glosses, which are given in vol. I, are referred to here by column and item number.


Epistolae, ed. E. Dümmler, Monumenta Germaniae Historicae, Ep. IV (Berlin, 1896), p.221. For some other uses of the metaphor by Alcuin, see also pp.310-11, 314.


In the military situation in Anglo-Saxon England, siege warfare was neither possible nor appropriate. It is only after the Norman Conquest that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* begins recording the tactic of besieging deliberately fortified areas. Earlier, besieging had been a temporary response to the opportunist seizure of earthworks or river islands by bands of Vikings.


Pearseall, in the quotation above, p. 57, provides an extreme example of the wrong assumptions that can be made in clearly implying a relationship between the native heroic tradition and Bede’s designation of Cuthbert as a “miles Christi”. In fact, as must be clear from what has been said so far, Bede, here and elsewhere, is influenced by the Latin tradition alone. With Old English poetry the situation is less clear cut, but it is obvious that assumptions need to be tested.

There are good examples also in the Old English versions of the story of Guthlac, for which, see below, pp. 65-9.


For presentation of the psalmist's passive situation in military terms, see psalms 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 24, 27, 36, 42, 53, 54, 55, 59, 60, 61, 69, 70, 75, 90, 93, 112, 137, 139 (Vulgate). Exegetes further increased the military imagery of the psalms by interpreting the references to the tabernacula as the tent of the soldier on the march, even when the immediate context of tabernacula was non-military. See for example, Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 38 (1956), pp.517, 218-19, 477.


As, possibly, in Ælfric's Lives of Saints, ed. Skeat, I, p.74. The verb used is torfian, translated as 'shoot' by Skeat, probably correctly on the basis of Ælfric's equation elsewhere of torfian and sceotan (see Bosworth-Toller, p.829, s.v. sceotan). It is unlikely, in the context, that torfian is meant literally as "to pelt with turf".

Die Vercelli-Homilien, ed. Förster, pp.103-5. Note also Ælfric's careful designation of the soldier as "se gastlica cempa" in his explanation of Job 7 v.1, "Militia est vita hominis super terram". He is equally careful to give his military imagery unambiguous spiritual interpretation in another brief reference, Lives of Saints, ed. Skeat, I, p.362.

I consequently also omit Judith later, since it likewise describes, albeit anachronistically and inaccurately, an historical, physical confrontation that is seen as a holy war.

C.L. Smetana, "Ælfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary", Traditio 15 (1959), 191, identifies the Bedan source of the first part of this homily (Thorpe, pp.364-70), but this is not the source for the second part (Thorpe, pp.370-84) despite the fact that Smetana's remarks seem to apply to the whole of Thorpe, pp.364-84. In using military imagery here, Ælfric may be following his unidentified source.


Summaries of the discussion are to be found in The Exeter Book, ed. G.P.


Although both Felix and the Old English Life give the literal meaning of Guolac's name ("belli munus") and describe his conversion from a life of secular warfare, they do not fully capitalize on the military metaphor in presenting it in any developed sense as a conversion to spiritual warfare. Indeed, the Old English Life reduces the military metaphor in sometimes translating miles Christi as "se eadiga wer".


Michael D. Cherniss, Ingeld and Christ: Heroic Concepts and Values in Old English Christian Poetry (The Hague and Paris, 1972), p.232, correctly notes the poet's selection of the non-heroic beow to describe Guolac's relationship with God. But his following remark, that "The poet calls Guthlac God's 'servant' . . . about as frequently as His 'thane' or 'warrior' ", is inaccurate. begm is never used of Guolac, only of the apostle Bartholomew (693, 708) and of the devils, by virtue of their relationship to Satan (547). Further, beow is used five times against a total of fourteen for cempa and oretta together.

For this and similar comments about usage in Old English poetry, see A Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, ed. J.B. Bessinger (Ithaca and London, 1978).

The difference between the two heroes is marked if one compares Guolac's beot (239-61) with those of Beowulf before his major fights.


A citadel image which is obviously related to the imagery of siege warfare occurs in Vainglory, but the citadel is destroyed from within. For the underlying traditions, see C.A. Regan, "Patristic Psychology in the Old English Vainglory", Traditio 26 (1970), 324-35 and, in relation to both Vainglory and Juliana, J.F. Doubeday, "The Allegory of the Soul as Fortress in Old English Poetry", Anglia 88 (1970), 503-508. The only other possible parallel is Beowulf 1740-47, the language of which is generally recognized as deriving from homiletic literature. But here we have no tower or stronghold, only armour, and the positive Christian virtues, such as patience and faith, which normally strengthen the defence, are not mentioned.
Critical Studies in the Cynewulf Group (Lund and Copenhagen, 1949), p.34.

In addition to the underlying emphasis on victory through suffering, see, for example, the reference to the praiseworthy renunciation of transitory earthly wealth (82-84).

Old English Verse, p.119.

Ingold and Christ, pp.171-93.

Old English Verse, pp.114-126.

Other "set pieces" include the hero setting out on a journey (230ff.) and the Mermedonians' attack (1201ff.).

For a summary of the parallels with Beowulf, see Shippey, Old English Verse, pp.115-117.

Kadig oretta is also used for David, 1.879. It is a collocation that occurs also in Guðlac as an allusion to the Christian metaphor but one would not expect it in heroic poetry and it may be taken as unequivocally Christian here. Leóflíc cempe (1446) should also probably be added, though it is a unique collocation in the extant poetry. Cempe in 230 and oretta in 983 are in immediate linguistic contexts that are strongly reminiscent of the heroic tradition and there is nothing to suggest that they are to be understood metaphorically.

The new edition of Guðlac A in The Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book, ed. Jane Roberts (Oxford, 1979), unfortunately appeared too late to be used in this article. The editor does not examine the miles Christi imagery in any detail but her analysis of the poem confirms that the poet was familiar with patristic and hagiographical traditions. She believes too (p.52) that it has a distinctly monastic orientation, a belief that can be supported by what this article has shown of the relationship between monasticism and the image of the miles Christi.