



How Can Guthlac's Belt Restore Liberty?

In writing his lives of noble Greeks and Romans, the historian Plutarch declared that his purpose was to pay “more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men” in order to “furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men.”

Anyone who has read Plutarch's *Lives* knows that he accomplished this goal in a masterful way. But, are we still studying the lives of the great men of the past and taking from them lessons of the benefit of embracing virtue and rejecting vice?



Although he lived hundreds of years after Plutarch, there is something very instructional in the life of one such extraordinary individual from the distant past: St. Guthlac of Crowland.

St. Guthlac was one of the earliest Christian saints from England. He was not a Briton, but was an Anglo-Saxon, born into an aristocratic family; he served in the army under King Ethelred of Mercia. At the age of 26, Guthlac decided to devote himself to a life of complete dedication to God and became a hermit.

Guthlac's piety and adherence to asceticism became renown throughout the kingdoms of the Saxons and his wisdom and spiritual insight were sought by many, including future kings of Mercia. People for miles and miles were aware of Guthlac's steadfast commitment to his covenants and to God, and chroniclers report that he was always happy to help those struggling with sin.

One such soul was Ecgga. Ecgga, it is recorded, was a man who had become possessed by demons and would spout nonsense and curses day and night. Although once a man of some repute and held in high regard by his fellows, Ecgga had been transformed into a madman by the evil spirit that bedeviled him, reviled by those who were once his friends.

When he came across Ecgga, St. Guthlac is reported to have healed the poor man of his madness by “wrapp[ing] his belt around Ecgga until the demon flew out of his mouth.” From that moment on, Ecgga never returned to his evil ways, his language was once again virtuous, and his behavior was as it was before — commendable.

Ecgga, now healed, was so grateful for St. Guthlac's aid that Felix reports that he never removed the belt and his former madness never returned.

While the story of St. Guthlac's belt and Ecgga is worthy of reading and studying for the benefit it could be to those struggling with sin and those anxious to emulate the saints and their unfaltering commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is something in this remarkable tale that is applicable to our own present political situation.

Constitutionalists, devout in our commitment to the Constitution of the United States and the principle of federalism upon which it is built, have all come across a “madman” who, though once respectable, is



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now in the habit of making ridiculous statements, cursing good and virtuous things, and doing crazy things that he was originally forbidden from doing.

Ecgga is, of course, the federal government. From unconstitutional and unwise military interventions to the enslaving expansion of the welfare state, the federal government has gone mad and must be returned to its former restrained, respectable demeanor.

So, how is this miracle to be performed? Americans can take our own modern-day St. Guthlac's belt and force the evil out of the federal Ecgga. That belt, as everyone already can see, is the cinch of the Constitution.

If we, like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, wish to express our "warm attachment to the Union of the States," we must do as they counseled in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, namely, "watch over and oppose every infraction of those principles which constitute the only basis of that Union."

By performance of this practice, we, like the good St. Guthlac, can wrap the belt of the Constitution around the possessed federal government and force the evil out.

Then, if we continue with "a faithful observance" of this duty and responsibility, keeping the belt of the Constitution wrapped tightly around the federal government, then our "Ecgga" will never be overcome with the evil of consolidation again and its mad, unconstitutional acts so destructive to liberty and contrary to good government will be gone once and for all.

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