



Old English Poetry in Medieval Christian Perspective: A Doctrinal Approach

Judith N. Garde

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In this doctrinal appraisal Dr Garde contends that English religious poetry in the early medieval "age of faith" was intended to convey conventional Christian teaching to unlearned audiences. In this reading, Old English religious verse is dominated by the Christus Victor tradition, the exegetical perceptions often assumed in modern criticism are not justified. The tradition of Christ's triumphant Descent into hell, regarded as apocryphal by many critics, is discussed in the context of the Resurrection and Christian expectations of eternal life in the Advent lyrics, the Descent poems, Christ II and Phoenix. The Dream of the Rood, Elene and Christ III are seen as describing Christ's Incarnation, death, Descent, Resurrection and Ascension, the Pentecostal phenomenon and the Church in the world. Expectations of judgment, the future resurrection of flesh, and the prospect of eternal bliss for righteous Christians complete the credal sequence. The author suggests that unstated, wholly familiar perceptions of salvation in Christ underlie all Old English religious verse, and that interpreters ignore these traditions at their peril. JUDITH GARDE's published work includes contributions to the Journal of Literature and Theology and Neophilologus.

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