INTRODUCTION

In Python, Joseph Fontenrose suggested an approach to a reading of Beowulf which had many promising insights and one apparently insurmountable difficulty.

The insights were the consequence of his contention that the Anglo-Saxon poem developed from the "combat myth" - the story of battle between god or hero against chthonic being which he had traced in Delphic and Indo-European myth. The difficulty was that this view ran counter to the widely-held position which maintains that Anglo-Saxon poetry was founded upon the principles of Christian exegesis; that Beowulf was either allegorical or typological, but in any case fundamentally Christian. There was simply no way in which the views of Fontenrose, which proposed an essentially mythical interpretation of the poem based upon pagan cosmology, could co-exist with the allegorical, thoroughly Christian view.

1. see Python, Appendix 5, pp. 521ff. Throughout this study, I have taken a functional view of myth, although reference will be made to other theories. My view is best summarised by the following statement from Ian G. Barbour's Myths, Models and Paradigms:

"(Myths) are a cohesive force binding a community together and contributing to social solidarity, group identity and communal harmony. They encourage cultural stability...Myth sanctions the existing social order and justifies its status system and power structure, providing a rationale for social and political institutions - from kinship to kingship. A common morality is supported by a mythical tradition, which perpetuates both value attitudes and specific behavioural recommendations." pp. 23-24.
However, Python remained eminently plausible.

One of the outcomes of the tension between the two approaches to the poem was the necessity to examine both in detail; the principal consequence of this examination was a growing disquiet with some of the key assumptions made by the allegorical school of criticism. This was occasioned by the fact that certain views expressed as fundamental to Beowulf did not, beyond a superficial resemblance, relate to my perception of basic theological tenets of the Catholic faith. In particular, I was not able to accommodate Catholic demonology with the figure of Grendel; nor could I concur with Klaeber's assertion that Grendel's mere was manifestly linked to Hell by the tenor of its description. Both these assertions are integral to an allegorical reading of Beowulf, since both emanate from the theology of good and evil which the Christian faith had developed before the conversion of the English. If, in fact, the Anglo-Saxon poem fails to follow Christian dogma on the question of good and evil, it is impossible to believe that it is a Christian poem at all, beyond a superficial colouring.

The "colouring" of Beowulf as pagan poem is of course a critical view which has largely fallen from grace. It had been advanced by Blackburn, and in modified form by H.M. Chadwick, but their approaches had been apparently discredited. Klaeber,

1. Beowulf, p. 183 (note to 11.1357ff.)
Tolkien and Whitelock had argued for a poem which was essentially Christian; Stanley had been able to write a series of articles which suggested that if anything, the paganism of the poem was a "colouring", thus neatly inverting the argument of Blackburn.

It was these critics who had promoted the view of Beowulf which had formed the platform for the allegorical approach to the poem which has dominated post-war criticism. Indeed, it would be hard to argue that the poem does not, as it stands, contain some Christianity. But is there sufficient evidence of an implicit Christianity to argue that the poem's vagueness in theological terms is therefore a hint that allegory is present? This study suggests that there is not.

Moreover, it seems undeniable that the allegorical interpretation of Beowulf has not yielded the same certain conclusions which it has when applied to other Anglo-Saxon works. The examination of Dream of the Rood by Rosemary Woolf; F.C. Robinson's work on Exodus; Huppe's analysis of the influence of Augustinian thought on Old English poetics - these have provided important new insights. But the same is not true for the Christian allegorical reading of Beowulf, a fact which has been observed by several recent critics of the approach.

John Halvorsen, for example, in a trenchant attack upon

2. E.G. Stanley, "The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism".
3. "Doctrinal Influences on The Dream of the Rood".
4. "Notes on the Old English Exodus".
5. Doctrine and Poetry.
several recent critical works, sees the consequences of the allegorical approach as:

an extraordinary, and perhaps unprecedented, critical disarray - ranging from minor text-bending to something close to sheer fantasy. Untenable assumptions about both the poem and its audience are accepted with regularity and without question, and even very careful and scholarly writers resort to specious argument, far-fetched parallels, and rhetorical legerdemain.\(^1\).

Similarly, Michael Cherniss has posed questions which must be answered before accepting the conclusions of the more extreme allegorical approaches:

If...an allegorical reading of any work of literature is to be at all convincing, the analogy must hold true consistently and continuously for the entire work, and in allegorical readings of Beowulf the various analogies do not...Isolated bits of supposed Christian symbolism in a literary work do not convincingly support coherent readings of the work as a whole, especially when the various symbols may depend upon fortuitous similarities...The critic must prove that the author is using typology and intends his audience to recognize his Christian symbolism if his argument is to be credible.\(^2\)

Cherniss then goes on to voice a doubt about the allegorical or typological approach which emanates from his perception that it is:

a rather subjective critical method; scholars employ the same basic methods upon the same materials and emerge with readings diametrically opposed to one another.\(^3\).

As will be evident in subsequent discussion of various readings of Beowulf, Cherniss's point is well-made. It seems difficult to arrive at a conclusion that will satisfy all

2. Ingeld and Christ, p. 130.
3. Loc.cit.
scholars using basically the same approach. This does not, of
course, invalidate the approach, but merely suggests that it is
not yet proven. However, it seems at least possible that the
difficulty experienced by scholars intent upon producing a
coherent allegorical interpretation of Beowulf may be the
consequence of the fact that the poem is meant to be read
literally. Problems remain in the text which no Christian
interpretation has yet resolved, and these problems are in the
core of the poem — the nature of heroism and of the hero himself;
the nature of the evil which Grendel, his dam and the dragon
represented to the Anglo-Saxon audience; even the vital question
of the faith of the humans in the poem — none have been resolved.

Because this is so, I have set out to question the
assumption that Beowulf is the product of a Christian mind
operating in a Christian milieu. It seems to me that the
assumption is no more than that, and thus remains open to
challenge.

To do so, I have elected to test Beowulf against a
fairly reliable touchstone, its view of good and evil. I have
done so because I believe that whatever else Beowulf is "about",
it is "about" good and evil, and that the "mere fabulous
adventures" which lead Klaeber to speculate that Beowulf is
emblematic of Christ^1 are in fact the real matter of the story.

1. "It would indeed be hard to understand why the poet
contented himself with a plot of mere fabulous adventures so
much inferior to the splendid heroic setting, unless the
narrative derived a superior dignity from suggesting the
most exalted hero-life known to Christians". Beowulf,
Introduction, p. li.
I will argue that the "fabulous" elements which Klaeber devalues are vitally important to the poem, as they stem from the fundamental beliefs of the pagan period on the nature of the cosmos.

The Christian position on good and evil is very well-attested in Anglo-Saxon Christian literature: though but little examined by critics, it provides a more certain touchstone than the vagaries of Augustinian allegorical technique. My assumption is that works written by Christians for Christian audiences are less likely to deviate from dogma on the crucial issue of good and evil than in any other area: not only because the dogmatic position was so clear, but also because it was so profoundly important to the Christian mind.

The problem of evil was a key theological issue from the very beginnings of Christianity. The doctrine had been hammered out over centuries and tenaciously defended against even the most apparently insignificant deviations. As we shall see, even Origen, one of the most influential thinkers of his time, was anathematised because he had preached the theory of apocatastasis, the restoration of the demons to their first state of grace at the end of time.

For the sake of brevity, this study confines itself to an examination of two specific areas of the theology of good and evil: demonology and eschatology. These areas of Christian dogma are favoured in patristic and Old English literature, and together provide a broad picture of contemporary beliefs about the causes and nature of good and evil. In terms of Old English
eschatology, I have narrowed the field somewhat to deal with the
depiction of Hell rather than the wider concerns of the doctrine
of last things. Moreover, I have, of necessity, been forced to
select from the large number of works dealing with these topics,
since many are merely elaborations or paraphrases of others.
Those selected for study are those which provide the most
coherent expressions of dogma, or which record any aberration
from the orthodox stance.

The results of studying these areas of Anglo-Saxon
Christian dogma yield interesting comparisons with the depiction
of Grendel and the other antagonists of man in Beowulf.

If, however, there were areas of Christian
interpretation of Beowulf which demanded closer scrutiny, it was
also necessary to examine the assumptions made by Fontenrose in
depicting Beowulf as an example of the order-chaos motif in myth.

For example, was it appropriate to suggest that the
Anglo-Saxon pagans subscribed to the idea that evil was connected
with disorder in the cosmos? What are the implications of a
folk-belief in an order-chaos cosmic dualism for the literature
of the folk - did, for example, pagan cosmology influence moral
and ethical pronouncements as profoundly as its Christian
counterpart?

In answering these questions, it has been necessary to
turn to a number of areas of human activity, amongst them
myth-making, folk-lore and law. Each of these fields is properly
a study in itself, but as each yields vital perspectives on
literature, all must be referred to as manifestations of folk
belief. For, as I will show, deep-seated cosmological principles
underlie the belief systems of any society, and these systems in turn are the mechanisms which direct even mundane activities. This view of the importance of myth is supported by the studies of a number of mythological researchers who have demonstrated that myth has a vital function in the conduct of social life.\textsuperscript{1}

Of course, notoriously little is known of Anglo-Saxon pagan myth, and even the processes of postulating English mythology from the records of cognate groups such as the continental German and Scandinavian tribes is fraught with difficulty. Nevertheless, with tentative comparisons with the myths of the latter groups and their social structures, it is possible to argue back from Anglo-Saxon social institutions to a form of paganism similar to that flourishing on the continent. To this hypothetical system may be brought the direct historical records of Anglo-Saxon paganism - the linguistic, iconographical and archaeological evidence - to flesh out the mythological beliefs of the Old English.

It is at this point that a key assumption must be made. If the history of the conversion of the English followed the pattern of the conversion of other societies, then we can assume that paganism survived for a considerable period. It is not likely that paganism vanished overnight: rather, it is probable that the beliefs of the folk in the pagan deities and the practices associated with the worship of those deities

\textsuperscript{1} Notably Emile Durkheim, in \textit{The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life}. 
continued for many years after the nominal conversion, and that residual paganism continued in isolated areas for centuries. For the missionary process seldom creates a tabula rasa upon which the tenets of the new faith may be written. This fact presents the "audience" of Beowulf in a very different light to that suggested by Dorothy Whitelock.

Indeed, as we shall see, this assumption is borne out in the literary records of the Anglo-Saxon church.

If, then, it can be shown that Beowulf is truly meaningful in purely pagan terms; if the poem is founded upon pagan ideas of the nature of the cosmos and the struggle of good and evil; and if these ideas are inimical to Christian thought, then serious doubt is cast upon much recent criticism.

For if these things are shown, then what can be made of the Beowulf poet? Can we legitimately argue that a mind steeped in paganism is capable of elaborate Christian allegory? Is the Beowulf poet another Augustine of Hippo? Or should we argue, instead, that the entire fabric of allegorical interpretation of the poem is seriously flawed?

Again, can we accept any theory which proposes that the poem had its genesis in a monastic library? Would we not incline, rather, to the oral composition theory of the poem and perhaps even re-examine the interpolation theory apparently so thoroughly discredited?

1. The ebb and flow of critical theories on mode of composition and authorship are summarised by W.F. Bolton in his revision of C.L. Wrenn's Beowulf, pp. 62ff.
Finally, if it can be demonstrated that the poem rests upon pagan ideas of good and evil, then the "meaning" of the poem must ultimately rest upon those ideas as well. Only by a similarity of type could critics argue for a Christian "meaning" of the poem, and even then, such an argument would hold good only for the critic, and not for a pagan audience.

I believe that the following study will show that all the conditions set down above can be met, and that a thorough-going pagan reading of Beowulf is not only practicable, but indeed the only possible reading of the poem.
I

GOOD AND EVIL, ORDER AND CHAOS

In man's characteristic search for causes, one of the most important riddles he has sought to solve has been that of the cause of evil. Throughout his history, man has tried to explain the origin of the evil which he sees all about him; to explain in terms which will enable him to obviate that evil and bring a permanent peace and security to his life.

In the multitude of moral codes which this search has thrown up, one reiterated feature has been the belief that good is connected with order, and evil with chaos. The view is succinctly put by Hobbes in Leviathan, where he describes the tensions of civil war and its accompanying anarchy, concluding that, under this condition, the life of man is "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short". (1,13)

The link between order and good is perhaps more evident to primitive man than to those more sophisticated minds which regard order as a dead hand upon the expression of individuality. For primitive man, order is a necessity. Without it, society collapses, and with it falls the security of the individual who becomes a weakling in a savage world. Only man's social instinct has enabled him to avoid extermination in a world in which he is the natural prey of powerful beasts. Only his capacity to organise himself into groups has enabled him to move beyond the role of the permanent victim.
His perception of the necessity for order within his own ranks is confirmed for the primitive tribesman by his observations of nature. These observations, fundamental as they are to his survival, are carefully and diligently recorded and passed on to successive generations. From them also come the first myths of a group, and the first laws. Myth and law are indissolubly bound in primitive society. Myth enshrines in metaphor the permanent metaphysical truths glimpsed by society; law is based upon those truths, and is justified by reference to myth. The Mosaic code, for example, is the product of minds steeped in a particular myth system, and is given authority by the Divinity from which it has been received. It is an example of a common phenomenon:

Again and again we find the hierophant of justice conceived not as the "giver" but as the "finder" of the law. Even the semi-divine legislator, in whom we now see the codifier of the existing law, is to primitive faith a receptacle of inspiration rather than an inventor of social rules.1

The ascription of divine law to the worlds of man and nature is a consequence of man's habit of personifying the forces of nature.

Each natural phenomenon is an exertion of force, seen by men as power in motion. The process of mythologizing imbues each phenomenon of nature with the independent will to exert this power. But this attribution of independent will to an event of nature demands an identification of the "one who" exercises this will, or a personification.2

One of the forces which man sees about him is the order of things, the cosmic law, which becomes the divine law by personification. This divine law (Gk. logos) is clearly the product of an intelligence which values order: for the universe is bound by laws to behave according to fixed principles. All the powers of nature seem, for the most part at least, to be caught up in a complex system in which all parts move in fixed patterns. The seasons come and go with predictable timing; the celestial bodies move in observable patterns; even the beasts of the earth are ruled by these cosmic laws. Thus an over-riding intelligence controls all of the cosmos. This belief is not confined to small groups of primitives, but forms the basis for the mythology and law of many highly cultured and sophisticated societies. It has been held true since the earliest times:

There seems to lie a profound conviction on the part of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia that there was a law or principle according to which all things must conform. They naturally sought to associate the gods, who were for them the embodiment of the order of the universe, with the creation or determination of this law...

Because man himself is a part of the cosmos, he too must be ruled by the logos. His own laws (Gk. nomos), may, as we have seen, originate from the logos itself; but even where this is not so, the doings of man in the cosmos must conform to the observed laws which govern his own nature. Thus his nomos faithfully reflects his idea of the logos. This is the view of Heraclitus:

If we speak with intelligence, we must base our strength upon that which is common to all, as the city on the law, and even more strongly. For all human laws are nourished by one, which is divine.1

Similarly, Needham observes of ancient Chinese legal thought that:

all crimes and disputes were looked on in ancient China, not primarily as infractions of a purely human, though imperial, legal code, but rather as ominous disturbances in the complex network of causal filaments by which mankind was connected on all sides with surrounding Nature...2

Thus, even highly sophisticated societies see a close link between the laws which govern the natural world and the basic principles which underpin their social code. But even as man enjoys the fruits of social order and the peace of the divine will at work, forces erupt in the world which throw into chaos the ordered rhythms of nature. It is these great forces of destruction which, by bringing to an end man's security in a regulated world, become themselves the personification of evil.

It is this evil which man seeks to explain, and that with considerable urgency. Why is it that storms or plagues, fires or earthquakes, suddenly burst upon the world of man? For these are evil things, which may sweep away man as being beneath their notice. All the security of the group, the peaceful growth of the tribe, is suddenly wiped out: the survivors of catastrophe cling together, pathetic and desperate, to contemplate the nature of evil.

What causes these events? Their nature is clear

enough, but what causes the sudden onset of chaos? Moreover, what part does the deity play in the loosing of chaos?

It is at this point that mythologies begin to differ sharply. For the solution to the problem of evil lies in the cosmology which each society proposes, and which shapes its laws.

If a society has argued in its cosmology for an omnipotent being, such as the Jewish Jahweh and Christian God, then the evil which man sees about him must of necessity be ascribed to his wrath. No other force is capable of the power which man sees loosed in the world.

If, on the other hand, cosmology holds that there are other forces in the universe than those which shaped the logos, then to these forces may be imputed all the evils of the world. In such a system it is still possible to have as a tenet of faith the belief that the ordering deities can control the chaos forces, and so again it is possible to seek within man's society for the event which has angered the gods so as to allow the advent of evil.

This is, of course, the doctrine of sin, growing from a belief that the nomos and the logos are bound up. Breaches of the nomos anger the deities, or create weaknesses in the logos which permit evil to enter the world. Only with expiation for this sin, and the elaborate rituals of purification, may the gods be appeased, the logos restored, and order replace chaos.

We must bear in mind that the patterns of morality which are enshrined as taboos are so diverse—even, from tribe to tribe, flatly contradictory—that we must seek in cosmology
for the origin of the beliefs. Taboos exist because men believe that their morality is that of their deity:

Primitive people's behaviour in conforming to the social order, especially the observance of the numerous prohibitions called taboos is determined ... by fear of the grievous evil with which the superhuman authority reacts against every violation of traditional custom.1

Thus, the onset of evil days may well be caused by a breach of taboo. In this case, society provides a set of rituals which must be observed in order to placate the offended gods: the very nature of ritual, its ordered and time-honoured form, is a part of the restoration process. It is not enough to kill the sacrificial victim; the forms prescribed by custom must be followed. It is not enough to drive out the scapegoat; the expulsion must follow the ritual pattern, even where the meaning of the ritual itself has been lost in time.

It need not be, however, that any guilt is the cause of evil. For in many cosmologies, the truth is held to be that the forces of evil are not controlled by the deity at all, but are rather in constant conflict with the divine order by virtue of their implacable hatred of that order.

This belief is, as Neiman has pointed out, quite characteristic of paganism:

The powers of nature to whom [primitive man] could appeal but from whom he could not expect an answer, being subject to their whims and vagaries, were all-powerful. ...They could crush and annihilate him in an instant. When he thought of the creation of the universe, it seemed to him that it was a process in which all the forces of nature were involved in a conflict, much like that which he usually observed, but on a vaster scale, with no holds barred and no mercy

shown. The forces of nature in great conflict; this is the basic premise of all pagan cosmologies.1

This is the belief which forms the basis of classical Greek religion, the system which Fontenrose used as the foundation for his examination of the combat myth. According to Fontenrose, the forces of chaos, which he called "chaos demons" were the remnants of the chaos being defeated by the gods at the creation.

The chaos demon [or demons] represented not only primeval chaos, but all dreadful forces that remain in the world and periodically threaten the god-won order: hurricane, flood, fire, volcanic eruption, earthquake, eclipse, disease, famine, war, crime, winter, darkness... striving for disorder and a return to primal inactivity.2

These beings were not amenable to sacrifice or any other placatory ritual, since ritual itself was a product of the order which they bitterly opposed. The only method of combating these evils was to confront them, to pit strength against strength, fury against fury. In this context, man could play his part in the divine order by ridding the cosmos of these antipathetic demons and monsters. This was precisely Heracles' role, that of the champion of order.

Fontenrose's thesis is developed from a study of the large number of combat myths, distributed over much of ancient Europe and Asia. He takes as the specific example of this myth Apollo's combat with Python, and examines variants of the motif in such tales as that of Zeus and Typhon.

The key to this study is, as Munz has pointed out, that the combat myth may be traced as an example of "typological seriality" in which the non-specific original myth of the war of order and chaos as a principle for explaining the cosmos becomes more and more specified, until every aspect of the fight is detailed, from the names of the combatants, through the location of the fight, to its duration.

This is an example of what MacCormac calls a "root-metaphor", an example of a mythic motif which originates from an hypothesis about the nature of the world. In Python, Fontenrose shows how the "root-metaphor" becomes the shaping principle of an entire mythological motif, which, however, never completely conceals its basic assumptions. The metaphor is attractive precisely because it accurately sums up a deep belief in the world as battleground, a belief which rests on the assumption of a force of independent and potent evil. Thus, the combat myth has value to the study of any tale in which a hero is pitted against a monster, since it serves to illuminate the assumptions about good and evil which were held by the society in which the tale originated. For it is true, as we shall see, that tales of heroic combat are to be found in the literary stock of societies which had no truck with pagan cosmology. But the crucial matter of the form of these tales shows that either they are imitations of the tales of other races for whom the combat myth was a living thing, or that

1. Peter Munz, When the Golden Bough Breaks, p. 29.
2. Earl R. MacCormac, Metaphor and Myth, passim.
they represent an entirely different combat which cannot be connected, beyond the merest superficial resemblance, to pagan mythic tales. The difference in form is an integral part of the nature of myth itself, which has a function in shaping society, but which is in currency because it is felt to be "true":

Myth has a comprehensive cultural role and is not limited to etiological stories nor to certain archetypal symbols. Rather, myth has the function of organizing the beliefs and practices of a society. Its stories justify moral and ritual practices...Myth functions to order and codify beliefs and moral practices; its main function is not to explain. Nor is the purpose of a myth symbolic as it does not create forms of reality but has a very practical and pragmatic nature...men accept myths [because they believe]...the myth does describe the actual state of the world.1

Thus, we should find that the pagan combat myth, in its form which is the "root-metaphor" for warring states of order and chaos, is present in religious systems sympathetic to the view of evil enshrined in an order-chaos dualism, but not in those to which such a dualism is inimical.

Let us turn, then, to an examination of mythologies founded upon such a dualism, before proceeding to discuss the development of the Christian dogma of evil. We shall begin with Norse myth.2

In Norse mythology, chaos predates order: the chaos-demon Ymir, slain by the gods, furnishes the materials for the new order of Odin and the Aesir. But Ymir lives on in the

2. The account of Norse mythology is based upon the translation of The Poetic Edda, by Lee Hollander; Myths of the Norsemen by H.A. Guerber; and Myth and Religion of the North by E.O.C. Turville-Petre.
shape of his descendants, such as the giants of Jotunheim. These beings are personifications of chaos forces, that is frost and fire, and their abode in Jotunheim is manifest chaos: there the order of the seasons is held in abeyance, and the inhabitants plot constantly against the Aesir. Other chaos beings inhabit the cosmos, many the offspring of the ambivalent figure of Loki: Fenrir, the great wolf; Nidhug, the dragon which gnaws away at the roots of the world-ash Ygdrasil; the wolves Skoll and Hati (Managarmr, "Moon-hound"), tirelessly pursuing the sun and the moon in order to devour them—they are the cubs of Fenrir and the Witch of Ironwood, another figure of chaotic evil; and the great Midgard Serpent beneath the ocean.

All these beings, and the trolls of the mountains against whom Thor wages war with Mjollnir the great hammer, will come together at the end of days in a loose confederation against the gods. The aim of this force is not the overthrow of the gods alone, but of the entire creation. At Ragnarok, the order of the world will be swept away as the gods and their opponents slay each other, and for a time at least the universe will come to an end.  

Man's role in the cosmos was vitally important, since it was from the heroes of men that the god Odin selected warriors to fight at the end of days. This is, men were conceived as a

1. Snorri believed that after a time the universe would be re-born, this time without the malevolent figures of chaos, and the new creation would be flawless. A clear depiction of the advent of chaos is given in the "fimbulwinter" which portends Ragnarok. This is a period of unprecedented cold and storm, which by its severity and duration is obviously "chaotic".
part of the order of the Aesir, and their enemies were therefore all the beings of the chaos group, whose activities, although directed against the gods, affected the society of man.

Early Celtic myth also shows its debt to a dualist cosmology, although the relatively early Christianisation of the Irish submerged a good many motifs of a dualist mythology in Christian dogma.

The earliest stages of the Irish mythos are clearly dualist. The forces of chaos are represented by the Fomhoire, great mishapen beings who were driven off the Irish mainland by the Tuatha da Diannan: the Fomhoire re-appear at intervals to harry the inhabitants of Ireland, as in the Feis Tighe Chonain. This tale relates the depredations of a giant, who steals children until his arm is torn off by the "Strong Man", a companion of the hero Fionn. Other chaos beings lived in the lakes and streams of Ireland until they were vanquished by various Celtic saints, or, like the triple-headed Ellen which lived in the celebrated Cave of Cruachain, were put down by heroes, in this case Amargein. Kin of the Fomhoire were to be found in Wales; a huge monster in humanoid form was dragged out of the River Conwy by Hu the Mighty; Peredur slew another water monster called "The Avanc of the Lake".

The cosmos as it described in early Irish myth reveals that the struggle between order and chaos had not fully resolved

1. See Myths of All Races, iii, Part 1, (Celtic).
3. T.F. O'Rahilly, Early Irish History and Mythology, p. 300.
4. Lewis Spence, Minor Traditions of British Mythology, p. 124.
itself — it is a continual cycle of change, in which there is "an alternation of opposites, light and darkness, warmth and cold, life and death". And, as we shall see to be the case with Heorot, the seat of the kings at Tara "originally symbolized the cosmos of the gods as opposed to the chaos of the demons".

In these mythologies, and others springing from dualistic views of the cosmos, evil is not a spiritual force — that is, it does not operate upon the soul of man. It is a moral problem, one affecting man and his society on the mundane plane. It is particularly, however, the consequence of the activity of demons. As we shall see, very early Christian views, such as those put by Origen, included the belief that demons interfered with nature, in the same way that chaos-demons did; however, Origen was to be thoroughly discredited.

The chaos demons bitterly resented the advent of order, of which human society was a highly visible emblem: any disruption in that society — such as the death of the king — provoked demonic activity since, in the primitive view, a breach in the order of human society was a weakness in the cosmic order, and hence an appropriate time to strike.

Heroism was, therefore, the willingness to pit oneself against the forces of chaos which had erupted in society, not merely for personal gain, but for the benefit of the group — the redemptive hero, of which Christ is one of the types, was also very much the scapegoat as well. It was he who was sent, often by devious means, into battle against very potent beings. If he

1. Rees, op.cit., p. 84.
2. Ibid., p. 163.
died, at least the beings were satisfied for a time. The victorious hero may well gain personally from his victory - chaos demons were often associated with treasure - but the victory is social in its fruits. It brings the restoration of the social order, which is good, and ends the evil which chaos has visited upon mankind as a whole.

Similarly, the kings of these myths are heroic in a very real sense: they maintain the _nomos_, and are often its promulgators since they are, in the nature of the cosmic order, close to the gods and the _logos_. But this proximity brings with it the hazard of attracting the attentions of the chaos demons. The king also has a sacred obligation to fulfil customary rites, without any deviation from the pattern laid down in the _logos_, since breaches of ritual were also very disruptive to the cosmic order. Frazer list a number of such sacral kingships.\(^1\)

But the principles of Greek, Norse and Celtic pagan cosmology are not those of Christianity. Any theory which held that there were beings of chaos which inhabited the Judaeo-Christian cosmos was profound heresy. The lynchpin of the mythological system is the Eternal God, who created the universe _ex nihilo_. There could be no dualism in such a system, no co-eternal force of evil to struggle with the Creator.\(^2\)

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2. A thorough discussion of evil and sin is given in G.C. Berkouwer, Sin. He describes the dualistic system as one which proposes "a fatal shadow which falls upon our world. That shadow is the shadow of an original evil in cosmic form, apart from man and apart from the sphere of his own responsibility." (pp. 70-71)
Yet there was evil abroad in the universe of God. Nature sometimes turned against mankind, sending plagues or famine to decimate the folk. Evil men worked their malice upon the faithful, and even the strictest adherence to the laws did not give protection, it seemed, from disease, or death.

The only possible solution to this problem of evil was that God had sent it upon the folk as a punishment for sin of some sort: evil was the consequence of man's transgression against the logos. Yet this itself was the cause of further difficulty: whence came sin?

It was clear to all that sin could not be explained by monism (Deus causa et auctor peccati), for God was by definition Good in all respects. He did not rule that man would sin, but He did rule that man could sin. In giving man free will, God permitted evil to exist in the world: but it was the fault of man himself that it continued to work within his society, together with the blemish in man's will which was the result of Adam's sin.

Therefore, the Christian position was that if there was evil in the world, that is moral evil, it was the consequence of spiritual evil, and it was man's sinfulness which was the source of this spiritual evil. The earliest coherent discussion of evil is that of Augustine, whose personal acquaintance with dualism gave him an insight into the problems posed by such systems as Manicheism.\textsuperscript{1} His thesis, deriving ultimately from the philosophies of the Greek school of Neo-Platonism, held that the

\textsuperscript{1} See F.C. Burkitt, \textit{The Religion of the Manichees}. 
phenomenon of evil, as it was perceived by man, was the deprivation of good. But before this calm, rational view prevailed, the Christian church embraced a number of views which were not entirely consonant with its professed monotheism. This was the result of two forces, the residual paganism which permeated the congregations of the early church, and the characteristic desire for numinous experience to give support to an infant faith.

The superstitious nature of the times is described by Bonner; the Romans of the Late Empire lived in:

a spiritual void, a dark world peopled with demons and hostile powers, always waiting to seize their victims. The unseen dominated men's lives. They were haunted by magic and fear of the Evil Eye...Astrology...exercised a terrible fascination, despite the denunciation of men of science and divines....The members of Augustine's congregation lived their lives under a continual threat of attack by unseen forces, numerous, powerful and inspired by hostility to mankind. And behind these demon armies was the inexorable deity Fate...whose unalterable decree could be read in the stars by those who had the skill, and the unforeseeable element Chance...whose intervention could suddenly fling a man into the power of Fate.¹

It was precisely because the Gospel preached salvation from these forces that the early patristic writers were so eloquent in their discussion of demonology, and the defeat of these beings in spiritual combat with the saints. On the other hand, the Fathers would have felt that the hagiographies and martyrologies would be strengthened by judicious descriptions of apparitions, exorcisms,

¹. Gerald Bonner, St. Augustine of Hippo, pp. 34-35. I am indebted to this work for much of the discussion of Augustinian doctrine which follows. For the superstitious legacy of Hellenistic philosophy, see G.L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics, p. 82.
hauntings and visitations. These would have served to reiterate the message of salvation, as well as to generate dramatic effect in the narratives.

The early works skirted the edges of unorthodoxy, and many were excluded from the canon for this reason. The Recognitions and Homilies of Pseudo-Clement were such works. They hint at an evil of which the roots were in the creation itself, for the demons were, according to this writer, born of the mixture of elements available at the creation. The chief of these spirits was not a rebel at all, but a punitive force operating within the cosmos at the direct instigation of God. A more orthodox approach is taken in Recognitions (iv, 23-25), in which the author attempts to deal with the question of evil by asserting that, had God refrained from creating those beings which He foresaw would be evil, then His creation would have been subject to, because modified by apprehension of, evil. To bolster this unconvincing piece of sophistry, the writer adds that the evil in the universe was permitted to allow the faithful to exercise their free will and choose good over evil.

Pseudo-Clement also contributes to the theory that the demons can cause diseases, a belief which, as we shall see, Origen and others shared. This theory is evidently based upon the healings conducted by the apostles. Spirits of disease

1. These are contained in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, viii. In the ensuing discussion, unless otherwise specified, all Greek texts are given in translation from this series (A-N.F.), identified by book, chapter, A-N.F. volume and page. All Latin texts are from the Patrologia Latina (P.L.). Book, chapter, P.L. volume and column are given.
are not, however, particularly dangerous to the baptised and faithful Christian:

all disease-producing spirits, being awed in some natural way, honour and flee from him who has had recourse to God, and who carries right faith as His image in his heart.¹

The tradition of the figure of evil as a God-appointed tempter and accuser of man, which includes the Satan of Job, has been examined by Van der Hart.² He concludes that this is the real function of Satan in the cosmos: Satan is, as it were, (to borrow Van der Hart's legalistic terms) a court official similar to a prosecuting attorney. His function is to lay bare before the Judge the sins of the human spirit in the dock - although why it should be necessary for an omniscient Deity to have such a process of revelation of sin Van der Hart does not explain.

Early Christian demonology is founded upon two further traditions of the origins of demons. The first of these, the tradition of Lucifer and the fallen angels, is too well known to need iteration here; suffice it to say that this was to become the accepted theory in later dogma.³ It is evident in the Anglo-Saxon poems Genesis, Christ and Christ and Satan, where the view is held that Lucifer was hurled from Heaven because of his envy of the creative powers of God.

But this theory came later. The earliest view of Satan

3. The myth of the fallen angels is part of a number of mythologies. See A.J. Carnoy, Iranian Mythology (Myths of All Races vi) pp. 277ff.; M. Grunbaum, Neue Beitrage zur Semitischen Sagenkunde, pp. 56ff.; and especially L. Jung, Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mahomedan Literature, passim.
and the demons springs from Jewish apocalyptic literature, itself
the result of a fusion of traditions garnered from other Middle
Eastern cosmologies. The cornerstone of this theory was that the
demons were originally set over the earth as guardians, the
"Watchers" of the Book of Enoch. Their fall is alluded to in the
notorious passage in Genesis 6; a late version of this is that of
Commodianus:

When Almighty God, to beautify the nature of the world,
willed that the earth should be visited by angels, when
they were sent down they despised his laws. Such was
the beauty of women, that it turned them aside; so
that, being contaminated, they could not return to
Heaven... from their seed giants are said to be born.
Rebels from God, they uttered words against him.
Then the Highest uttered His judgement against them;
and from their seed giants are said to have been born...
and to [the giants] when they died, men erected
images. But the Almighty, because they were of an evil
seed, did not approve that, when dead, they should be
brought back from death. Whence wandering now they
subvert many bodies, and it is such as these especially
that ye this day worship and pray to as gods. 1

The theological difficulties of this view are manifest. How is
it possible that angelic beings could duplicate the miracle of
Christ's Incarnation? What precisely does Commodianus mean by
the statement that "they should [not] be brought back from
death"? Why does God permit these beings to inhabit the bodies
of men? What was the nature of God's "judgement" on the sinful
angels?

The theory of the fallen Watchers is the basis of many
Old Testament apocrypha. Enoch I, 15, holds that the giants

1. Instructions of Commodianus, iii, A-N.F. iv, p. 201. I have
elected to use this translation of a Latin text, since the
original, as Roberts points out, p. 201, is "very crabbed,
and (the) diction is the wretched patois of North Africa".
disappeared in the Deluge, but that their spirits lived on to
afflict, destroy, oppress, do battle and work
destruction on the earth: they take no food, but
nevertheless hunger and thirst and cause offences. ¹

To these beings is assigned a place in the atmosphere, whilst
Satan and the rebellious angels are shut up in the second
firmament (Enoch II; Ascension Isaiah). What the Jewish
Christian apocrypha suggest, then, is that there are two orders
of demons. The "higher" of these, both in location in the
firmament and place in the hierarchy at the creation is the group
of angels which fell with Lucifer to become Satan and his demons.
The "lower" position is held by the spirits of the giants spawned
by the illicit union of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of
men". This group was, in fact, eradicated from later Catholic
dogma, by the assertion that the "sons of God" were the men of
the tribe of Seth; the Douay Bible notes of Genesis 6,2:

The descendants of Seth and Enos are here called sons
of God from their religion and piety: whereas the
ungodly race of Cain, who by their carnal affections
lay grovelling upon the earth, are called the children
of men. The unhappy consequence of the former marrying
with the latter, ought to be a warning to Christians to
be very circumspect in their marriages; and not to
suffer themselves to be determined in their choice by
their carnal passions, to the prejudice of virtue or
religion.

1. References to the Old Testament apocrypha and pseudepigrapha
are from R.H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of
the Old Testament. The theory of demon origins is
thoroughly discussed in J. Danielou, The Theology of Jewish
Christianity, pp. 187ff. Danielou's account ends with the
Clementine Homilies. It traces as well the origins of the
confusion as to the location of the evil angels, who are
variously described as aerial and subterranaean - a real
difficulty in terms of the theology of Christ's descent into
Hell.
Another source of the theology of demons was the influence of local pagan myth upon early Judaean cosmology and demonology. For, just as the waters of primordial chaos are alluded to in Genesis, 1, 2, "and darkness was upon the face of the deep", so too did other aspects of Canaanite and Iranian myth enter into the Judaean doctrine. The Canaanite god Baal becomes an adversary of the early Judaeans (3 Kings 18; 4 Kings 23); the cognate Babylonian deity Bel becomes a symbol for the oppression of the Hebrews (Isa. 46,1; Jer. 50,2). More importantly, demons of the dualistic chaos enter into Judaean Christianity: the demon Asmodeus, who in the story of Tobit makes it a practice to throttle bridegrooms, is originally an Iranian wrath-demon (lit. \textit{Aesma Deva}). Leviathan enters myth as the Canaanite chaos monster, slain by Baal.

Later developments in Judaean dogmatics saw the playing-down of the physical side of demonic activity, and a corresponding emphasising of the spiritual. Thus, in the apocryphal testaments of Reuben and Dan, spirits are the personifications of various vices, the forerunners of the Seven Deadly Sins. Reuben identifies six: the spirits of obsequy, fornication, fighting, lying, injustice and insatiableness (\textit{Test Reub}; 3, 1-6); Dan calls the spirits subservient to Beliar "spirits of anger" (\textit{Test Dan} 1, 6-8). The view that spirits were capable of inciting man to evil through affecting his carnal appetites is the position taken in the New Testament by Matthew

1. See NCE entries for these beings: Asmodeus, i, p. 958; Leviathan, viii, p. 683.
Given the immense confusion of dogma caused by the diversity of opinion contained in testamental, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature, it is hardly surprising that early exegetes found it hard to agree upon a single, comprehensible theory which would accord with developments in other areas of dogma. It was not until the fourth century that the Enoch account of the Watchers was finally anathematized, and even then its influence was felt in later literature.

Gradually, however, the view which held that the demons were the rebellious angels who had fallen from Heaven predominated. The fallen angels, whose precise abode was still disputed (either beneath the earth or in the ether) were permitted by God to exist until Doomsday, when their sentence would be carried out. For now they were permitted to tempt mankind to commit sin: an activity which, naturally enough,

1. see CDT ii, p. 169.
2. The NCE notes (iv, p. 754), "the impact of the apocryphal Book of Enoch on early Christian demonology cannot be overestimated." See also J. Pelikan, The Christian Tradition, i, pp. 135ff.; and J. Hick, Evil and the God of Love, pp. 90ff. A particularly lucid account of the subsequent history of the Enoch account is given by Ruth Mellinkoff in two recent articles on "Cain's Monstrous Progeny in Beowulf": part one dealing with "Noachic Tradition" and part two with "Post-diluvian Survival".
3. See Danielou, Jewish Christianity, pp. 190ff., and Werner, The Formation of Christian Dogma, pp. 98ff. The problem is that Pauline eschatology located the demons in the lower reaches of the ether, whilst the decensus doctrine in such works as the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus claimed that the demons were in Hades. The latter account of Jesus' descent and victory implied that it was over the powers of Hades alone, whilst Pauline doctrine was that Christ's triumph was over all the angels and spirits of the cosmos, not merely over the power of Death.
they relished because they envied the favour bestowed by God on man, who would, at the end of days, share the beatific vision forever denied the demons. This doctrine, which emanated from the core dogma of Christianity, was favoured by later theologians. Tertullian, for example, argued that the fallen angels had only one purpose, the destruction of mankind through its seduction from Divine grace:

sic malitia spiritualis a primordio ausplicata est in hominis exitium. Itaque corporibus quidem, et valetudines infligunt, et aliquos casus acerbos, animae vero repentinae et extraordinariae per vim excessus.1

These beings, says Tertullian, are both invisible and intangible; he compares them to the blight which descends unseen upon crops, a taint in the very atmosphere. As pestilence descends upon the fields,

daemonum et angelorum mentis quoque corruptelas agit furoribus et amentiis foedis, aut saevis libidinibus cum erroribus variis; quorum iste potissimus ... falsae divinationis.2

Origen, whose demonology was to have a profound effect upon subsequent theologians, was most eloquent upon the subject. In the Contra Celsum, a refutation of paganism, he specifically attacked the theory of daemones which was a consequence of Greek pantheism. For Origen all daemones (which included pagan gods and heroes) were evil beings, spirits infesting the earth, who held no terrors for the Christian. God himself had limited the capacity of the daemones to interfere with mankind by the provision of the true faith; but the daemones, being themselves

2. Ibid., col. 466.
possessed of free will, could insinuate themselves amongst the
pagans:

It is not according to the law of God that any demon
has had a share in worldly affairs, but it was by their
own lawlessness that they perhaps sought out for
themselves places destitute of the knowledge of God and
of the divine life, or places where there are many
enemies of God. Perhaps also, as being fit to rule
over and punish them, they have been set by the Word,
who governs all things, to rule over those who
subjected themselves to evil and not to God.¹

Origen retreats slightly from the second proposition in this

passage when he adds:

We do not, then, deny that there are many demons upon
earth, but we maintain that they exist and exercise
power among the wicked, as a punishment of their
wickedness. But they have no power over those who
'have put on the whole armour of God.', who have
received strength to 'withstand the wiles of the
devil', and who are ever engaged in contests with them,
knowing that 'we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers, against the
rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual
wickedness in high places.'²

Origen argued that it was the weakness of the individual which
allowed man to fall prey to the demons. The Christian was made
invulnerable to Satan by faith in Christ. He argued from the
analogy of hunger and thirst to show that the cause of sin was
immoderation. When we succumb to the urges of greed, when we
have indulged our sensual appetites:

1. Contra Celsum, viii, 33, A-N.F. iv, p. 651. Origen was
   particularly concerned to show that the daemones of the
   Greek pantheism were either non-existent or disguised
devils, in order to refute Celsus's demands that the spirits
   of nature were worthy of worship.

2. Contra Celsum, viii, 34, p. 652. Origen is quoting
   Ephesians 6, 11-12, the Pauline military imagery of which
   was to dominate Christian iconography for centuries.
Beyond what is proper, and have not resisted the first movements to intemperance, then the hostile power, seizing the occasion of this first transgression, incites and presses us hard in every way, seeking to extend our sins over a wider field, and furnishing us human beings with occasions and beginnings of sins, which these hostile powers spread far and wide... Thus, when men at first for a little desire money, covetousness begins to grow as the passion increases, and finally the fall into avarice takes place. And after this, when blindness of mind has succeeded passion, and the hostile powers, by their suggestions, hurry on the mind, money is no longer desired, but stolen, and acquired by force, or even by shedding human blood.1

Because Origen believed that the Divinity had absolute mastery, he argued that the various calamities which befell individual or collective man could be only understood as the consequence of sin. Demons did not attack man by accident. For every disaster which befell man, there was an explanation in sin, so that faced with calamity "every believer ought to say (to the demons), 'Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.'"2

This view was elaborated in his attack on paganism, Contra Celsus. For example, he likens the demons to 'public executioners', whose purpose is to reveal the faith of true believers (viii, 31). The demons thirst continually for the freedom to wreak havoc amongst men, but are restrained. In a confused passage in viii, 32, he leaves open the question as to whether the demons ever exceed their authority, or whether they ever operate independent of Divine command: he simply says, "we cannot understand".

2. Ibid, p. 334.
Nevertheless, Origen believed that the first movement towards sin was made by man himself, and that God had decreed that men of true faith would never fall victim to Satan. He dismissed as naive the belief that all the sins which men have committed are caused by the persistent efforts of these opposing powers exerted upon the minds of sinners, because in that invisible struggle these powers are found to be superior [to man]. For if, for example, there were no devil, no single human being would go astray.  

Thus Origen based his theology of demons upon the principle that these beings were not given power over physical man except where Divine permission was granted. His theory of spiritual evil depended upon man's free will, as Danielou summarises:

There is [for Origen] no evil except in men's wills... in so far as evil acts against its author it is sin; in so far as it acts on others, it is suffering.  

Harnack concurs:

[Origen] is convinced that evil in the proper sense is only evil will...accordingly he makes a very decided distinction between that which is bad and evils...

The problem for believers was that, as Origen had demonstrated, Satan was the master of guile, and it was difficult to detect all of his snares or to anticipate the darts of sin. Origen warned against the weakness of the flesh; Augustine cautioned against false omens and divinations; Gregory's Dialogues were, as we

1. De Principiis, III, ii; p. 329. cf. Berkouwer, op. cit., p. 112: "No power of darkness causally 'explains' our sin, and no inexorable force compels us to do evil. There is no ex ophere operato 'in malam partem'."
2. J. Danielou, Origen, p. 277.
shall see, a virtual field manual of demonic tactics. But the ultimate handbook of spiritual warfare is undoubtedly the pseudepigraphal Clementine literature, the Recognitions and the Homilies.1

On the topics of demonology and sin it is the extent of the discussion and the elaboration of the demonic technique which is most striking. The works are from an age in which the victory of Christianity over paganism was not yet manifest, and the association of the demons with idols and pagan worship is the core of the writer's belief. In the Recognitions, man's free will is urged as a defence against the demons; man has the capacity to resist the threats and blandishments of the beings who disguise themselves as pagan gods to lead man to sacrifice to heathen idols:

...to some, the demons appearing visibly under various figures, sometimes throw out threats, sometimes promise relief from sufferings, that they may instil into those whom they deceive the opinion of their being gods...But they are not concealed from us... [we do not know] for what reason it is permitted to the demons to do these things in the present world; how it is allowed them to transform themselves into what figures they please, and to suggest evil thoughts, and to convey themselves into the minds and bodies of those who partake [of meats sacrificed to "gods"].2

In the Homilies the dangers of paganism are further articulated. Sacrifice to pagan deities is spiritual suicide;

1. A-N.F., viii. The author favours a modified Watcher theory: "Certain angels, having left the course of their proper order, began to favour the vices of men and in some measure to lend unworthy aid to their lust..." (Recognitions IV, xxvi, p. 140). In Homily viii, 12-16, the author elaborates on this view.

2. iv, 19, pp. 138-139.
in the temporal world the practice leads to demonic possession -

after death it leads to eternal damnation:

not indeed by God's inflicting vengeance, but because such is the judgement of evil deeds. For the demons, having power by means of the food given to them, are admitted into your bodies by your own hands...[for such people] upon the dissolution of their bodies, their souls being united to the demon, are of necessity borne by it into whatever places it pleases...When at the end of all things the demon is first consigned to the purifying fire, the soul which is mixed with it is under the necessity of being horribly punished, and the demon of being pleased. For the soul, being made of light, and not capable of bearing the heterogeneous flame of fire, is tortured; but the demon, being in the substance of his own kind, is greatly pleased...1

This curious doctrine suggests that the demon is somehow untouched by the fires of hell, or at home in it - an obvious departure from the doctrine of Augustine and Origen. The argument is, as one may perceive, developed from the idea that demonic possession takes place with the connivance of the misguide victim, and hence must be punished. The demons are interested in possession because they enjoy the suffering of the damned. Another reason is advanced in the next section of the work. Here, the incorporeality of the demons prohibits them from carnal pleasures:

Being spirits, and having desires after meats and drinks [a contradiction in terms in Augustinian theology] and sexual pleasures, but not being able to partake of these by reason of their being spirits, and wanting organs fitted for their enjoyment, they enter into the bodies of men, in order that, getting organs to minister to them, they may obtain the things that they wish, whether it be meat, by means of men's teeth, or sexual pleasure, by means of men's members. Hence, in order to the putting of demons to flight, the most useful help is abstinence...but inasmuch as some, being of a more malignant kind, remain [in] the body

1. ix, 9, p. 276.
that is undergoing punishment, though they are punished with it, therefore it is needful to have recourse to God by prayers and petitions. 1

This then, was the position of Christian doctrine on evil and demons before Augustine: a confused *melange* of conflicting theories owing as much to Essenism, Platonism, pagan cosmology and individual fancy as to an orthodoxy. It required a mind of prodigious capacity, and a keen analytical faculty, to resolve the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in early Christian demonology and eschatology.

St. Augustine of Hippo possessed these qualities in abundance.

St. Augustine took as his basis the assumption that the work of God were all, by definition, good: he did not accept the arguments of such neo-Platonists as Plotinus for an evil of necessity; to do so would have been to turn from the evidence of Genesis, "And God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. 1, 31). Augustine was anxious to distance Christianity from the Manichaean position, a viewpoint which he had once taken. Therefore, he argued, in *De Natura Boni (Contra Manichaeos)*, that everything created was by definition endowed with a natural good springing from the Creator, and defined by a propriety of order, species and form. "Evil" in this framework was relative "lack of good", but it was not possible to talk about something which lacked any vestige of goodness.

1. ix, x, p. 277.
Omnia enim quanto magis moderata, speciosa, ordinata sunt tanto magis utique bona sunt: quanto autem minus moderata, minus speciosa, minus ordinata sunt, minus bona sunt. Haec itaque tria, modus, species et ordo, ut de innumerabilibus taceam, quae ad ista tria pertinere monstrantur; haec ergo tria, modus, species, ordo, tanquam generalia bona sunt in rebus a Deo factis, sive in spiritu, sive in corpore. ...Et rursus ubi haec tria magna sunt, magnae naturae sunt: ubi parva sunt, parvae naturae sunt; ubi nulla sunt, nulla natura est. Omnis ergo natura bona est. 1

In the next chapter of this work, Augustine goes on to argue that "malum est corruptio modi, speciei aut ordinis"2: that what man perceives as evil is the distance from the ideal form, species or order; but he fails to supply an adequate account of the process which creates that distancing, that is, the essence of "malum". Augustine perceived that his thesis failed to answer the problem to the satisfaction of the common man. For to conceive of evil as the lack of good, to accept for the sake of theological argument that evil has no positive existence, is little comfort to man who sees a disagreeably positive evil at work in the world about him. Augustine did not develop this view of evil by himself3, but he formulated it with such clarity and force that it has generally been attributed to

1. De Natura Boni (Contra Manichaeos), iii, P.L. xlii, col. 553.
2. Loc. cit.
3. As H. Marrou has pointed out in "The Fallen Angel", the Greek Fathers had also spoken on the subject independently of Augustine. Marrou cites St. Basil's sermon on the origins of evil, in which the patriarch said, "Do not imagine that evil has a real substance, hypostasis — perversity does not exist in the same way as a living thing. You can never have its substance, ousia, really there before your eyes, because evil is the privation of good." (p.79) Marrou goes on to paraphrase Gregory of Nyssa's Catechetical Discourse, "Good is present in our nature. Evil, on the other hand, is non-existent, anyparkton, and only appears because of the withdrawal, anachoresis, of good." (Loc. cit.)
him. Moreover, perceiving that his argument was cerebral - perhaps too much so for his audience - he added two qualifications to his argument, which elaborated upon the reasons why good was ever absent.

The first of these is what may be called the "long-term view". Augustine argued that man was not capable of seeing the grand design of God's cosmos, either spatially or temporally; all that the individual sees is a tiny fragment of the totality. What displeases him is not necessarily evil when looked at from the perspective of God. It is this perspective which is important:

Nam nec ipse ignis aeternus, qui cruciaturus est impios, mala natura est, habens modum et speciem et ordinem suum, nulla iniquitate depravatum; sed cruciatis est damnatis malus, quorum peccatis est debitus. Neque enim est lux ista, quia lippos cruciat, mala natura est.¹

The second reply was that evil is the consequence of the defective will of man, and his inability to see behind the superficial pleasures of the flesh to the eternal joys of the spiritual life with the Creator. Sin is the cause of evil, and sin is the result of the turning of man from the truth. Free will is not evil, but it permits the existence of Augustine's anhypostatic evil:

...malum sit aversio ejus ab incommutabili bono et conversio ad mutabilia bona: quae tamen aversio atque conversio, quoniam non cogitur, sed est voluntaria, digna est justa eam miseriae poena subsequitur.²

Sin, according to Augustine, was only true sin when it was a breach of the eternal logos of God. His defence of the Old Testament patriarchs against the polemic of Faustus was based on the clear distinction between the transient customs and precepts of societies, and the immutable moral law of God. His description of this law gives a clear insight into the total control which the Christian God has over all the natural world, and the difference between this view and dualism:

...peccatum est factum vel dictum vel concupitem aliquid contra aeternam legem. Lex vero aeterna est ratio divina vel voluntas dei ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans (my emphasis)

It was only mankind which possessed the free-will to choose whether to obey this law or not; the rest of the cosmos was irrevocably bound by its nature to the eternal law.

Man turned away from the natural law because his flesh prevented his free will from operating properly. Only by Divine Grace could man exercise this free will to its fullest, a belief which threw Augustine into direct opposition with Pelagianism, and which sparked one of the most dangerous heresies of the early Christian period.

While he accepted that evil was anhypostatic in origin, Pelagius argued that all activity, and thus all moral activity, depends upon three conditions - posse, velle, esse - that is,

1. See, for example, the defence of Abraham in Contra Faustum xxii, 30, and Jacob, xxii, 47, P.L. xlii, where all "sins" must be tested against the eternal law.
2. Contra Faustum xxii, 27, col. 418.
3. A lucid account of the clash between Pelagian and Augustinian thought is given by Bonner, op.cit., pp. 312ff.
the capacity for action, the desire to act and the performance of the action. Posse is the consequence of man's nature, and hence is from God, but velle and esse were the consequence of free will. The latter two conditions depend upon the first, but posse does not depend upon them. Man may have the capacity without utilising it, the possibility of sinning without any desire to do so. Thus, whenever man chose not to sin, his action was praiseworthy because, and precisely because, he had the freedom to do so. Although this doctrine appears innocuous, it had momentous implications which particularly concerned Augustine.1

The latter emphasised the operations of Divine Grace in the choices made by man because he had a keen sense of the failure of man to avoid sin. It was clear to him that man's capacity to exercise his choice between good and evil was limited by the powerful promptings of the flesh, promptings spurred on by the operations of the evil spirits in the cosmos. Without Grace to provide man with truly "free" will, man would continue to sin, and continue to fall into the snares of the Enemy. This is a consequence of the doctrine of original sin: all men since Adam, as a consequence of his first act of defective will, have been afflicted with a flaw in their wills which turns them from the good to the lesser "goods" of temporal pleasures.2

Pelagius threw doubts upon the operations of the Divine Grace, which was the inspiration for the process of choosing rightly. The Pelagian heresy thus lay in devaluing the daily

1. Ibid., pp. 358ff.
2. See De Civ. Dei, xiii, 14.
operations of the Divine Grace, by suggesting that moral rectitude was not informed by God, but merely permitted, because free will was simply the possibility of sinning or not sinning. The consequences of this view for the doctrines of original sin and baptism were incalculable. For if sin was an action, how could it be passed down through the generations since Adam; and if it was an action, why baptise children who have not yet acted? The defeat of Pelagianism by the orthodox, led by Augustine, prevented a cataclysm. For Augustinian thought prevailed. The doctrine that sin was only avoidable by Grace became dogma. The dogma, which depended upon free will, was supported by the acceptance of Augustine's demonology, which as expounded in De Civitate Dei is founded upon the theology expressed in the preceding discussion. The essence of Augustine's position was that the demons were permitted by God to have dealings with men, in order that the free will of man could be put into operation. The demons carried out their functions by appealing to the baser impulses of man, or by posing as gods to encourage the gullible to embrace idolatry. They entered the mind of the pagans to foster persecution of true believers, but this persecution too was part of the Divine plan to enrol martyrs and saints in Heaven. (x, 16)

The idols of the heathen were the images of demons:

deos falsos, quos vel palam colebant, vel occulte adhuc colunt, eos esse immundissimos spiritus et malignissimos ac fallacissimos daemones.\textsuperscript{1}

Augustine's attack on idolatry was scathing. Since all pagan deities were demons in disguise, it was ridiculous to offer to them, mere "animals of the air" that they are:

Quanto minus nunc honore divino aeria digna sunt animalia, ad hoc rationalia, ut misera esse possint, ad hoc passiva, ut misera sint, ad hoc aeterna, ut miseriam finire non possint?¹

Thus, whilst the demons populated the atmosphere, and made the moral struggle difficult for mankind, man had been endowed with a rational faculty, and was capable of making the correct choice in any moral decision, Dei gratia. In addition, the struggle was lightened because there were good angels assisting man at every point.² His demonology reflects the assumptions of human freedom and Divine Grace and omnipotence which he had made throughout his other works.

He stood absolutely firm on his principle that all things made were good, and that hence Satan was at first good, but chose evil. He denies

si quae aliae pestes ita sentiunt, quod suam quamdam proprium tamquam ex adverso quodam principio diabolus naturam mali...non dixisse Dominum, 'A veritate alienus fuit'; sed 'In veritate non stetit': ubi a veritate lapsum intelligi voluit.³

On the debate of the origin of the demons, he favoured the scriptural account of Peter (2;2,4), of the demons being hurled down to "darkness", where they now lead a turbulent existence in the air deprived of the Divine light (xi,33).

1. Ibid, viii, 16, col. 241.
He deals with the Enoch account with considerable diplomacy. In Book XV he skirts the theological problem of a fruitful union between incorporeal and corporeal beings, acknowledging that scripture and the testimony of many respectable men confirms the existence of incubi ("Silvani et Pans"), but remaining silent on the question of fruition of these liaisons. He is deferential to the Book of Enoch, but points out that the apocrypha are not canonical, and that it is best for the theologian to revert to authorised materials in cases of doubt. Finally, he argues that the "sons of God" were the men of the tribe of Seth, and, observing that the term "angel" is sometimes used in the Bible for men (as in Malachi 2,7 and Mark 1,2) and secondly that there are "natural" giants anyway, concludes:

\[\text{Igitur secundum Scripturas canonicas hebraeas atque christianas, multos gigantes ante diluvium fuisse, non dubium est, et cos fuisse cives terrigenae societatis hominum; Dei autem filios, qui secundum carnem de Seth propagati sunt, in hanc societatem deserta justitia declinasse.}\]

That is, in short, the entire Enoch-inspired theory of the spirits of demons was decidedly unauthoritative, and should be dropped in as seemly a fashion as possible.

The historical climate in which he worked, the political influence of Augustine, and the depth of his thought, each ensured that his philosophy was to become the dominant position of Church dogmatics. He and the later theologians who developed his thesis were the primary influences on Christian theology until the middle ages. Dionysius the Areopagite, for

1. Ibid., xv, 23, col. 471.
example, was an extremely competent polemicist for the Augustinian view, and his theories are cited by, or evident in, the works of such prominent theologians as John Scotus, St. Bonaventure, Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales and Robert Grosseteste. Dionysius on the nature of demons differs very little from Augustine:


Dionysius may have regarded the demons as fallen angels of light, blinded to the truth by their rebellion, but his views, and those of Augustine, are basically sophisticated, and do not really come to grips with the tradition of demons which had grown in the popular mind. What was the relationship between Satan and his cohorts and the evil which man perceived in the mundane world? Did man have any defence against these beings? These questions demanded a less intellectual response than Augustine's, for the real problem which faced the early Christian church was that the popular imagination of the nature of evil indissolubly connected evil and Satan.

Thus, whilst the Church theologians gradually clarified the confusion of Christian demonology over several centuries, popular taste demanded that the demons be vividly portrayed (even

to the edge of gross sensationalism). The nature of the stories
of demonic activity was predicated by the twin considerations of
theological rectitude and narrative impact, and the latter
sometimes, as we shall see, caused poets and homilists to
transgress the theological boundaries into heresy. Hagiography
and martyrology were also influenced (as were both Manicheism and
Gnosticism) by the dichotomy of body and soul and the connected
dualism of light and darkness: these elements of Christian
thought led to the theories of carnal mortification and the
foundation of Western asceticism.

For if Satan attacked man through the weakness of the
flesh, then any of the demands of the flesh were suspect as the
stirrings of Satanic desire. We have seen this idea in the
patriotic writings discussed above; Origen put his theories into
bitter practice and mutilated himself in an effort to stave off
sexual desire. Therefore, the legends of the early Christian
saints and martyrs carry a distinct strain of severe self-denial,
including voluntary exile, rigorous fasting, and strict sexual
abstinence.

The impulse for hagiography was very strong in the
early Church. The story of the remarkable fidelity of saints or
martyrs served as a vivid realisation of the abstract warfare
conducted on the invisible, spiritual plane between man and
demon. Saints replaced the pagan heroes as the foci of social
aspiration, and indeed there is a distinct similarity between the
typical saint's life tale and the archetypal heldenleben.
Margaret Arent notes "a close structural correspondence between a
heldenleben and a saint's life" on such points as the stories of childhood and lineage, involving unusual strength or virtue; the preliminary stages of the tale in which the hero/saint proves his worth; the accumulation of comrades or disciples; the farewell address and the fateful end and so on.1

Thus, the saint's life served as a replacement for pagan heroic story by presenting the virtues of courage, fidelity, self-sacrifice and so on in a Christian framework, within which the Church could simultaneously entertain and instruct. But the two categories of tale diverge at one significant point, which is that the Christian hero is most often conceived of as passive within the action of the story, whilst the pagan hero is active. Bluntly speaking, the saint has things done to him; the pagan hero does things to others. I shall return to this point in my chapter on heroism.

A second important reason for the burgeoning of saints' lives is the move to establish the departed saints and martyrs as intercessors to the Divinity for mankind:

...as early as the time of Hippolytus we find unmistakeable traces of a belief in the power of the holy dead to intercede for those on earth....The strongly marked desire to be buried near the martyrs is no doubt to be attributed to a hope of protection. It was a matter not so much of logic as of a deep and primitive instinct - the same which in pagan times had led to the development of hero-worship.2

As Charles Fuqua has pointed out, it as at this point that the analogy between the classical hero and the Christian saint becomes strained, for the former was not regarded as an intercessor to the divine, but as a power in his own right. That is, the cults which sprang up around figures like Heracles expected to receive favours directly from the quasi-divine hero; the Christian saint cults regarded the saint as a channel to Divine power.

The hagiographical tradition, then, was concerned with the conflict between man and Satan. Athanasius's Life of St Anthony is a suitable starting point for an analysis of the patterns of hagiography in the early Christian period, as it served as a model and source for many subsequent lives. In keeping with the tradition of spiritual combat of Pauline origin, Anthony's torments are mental and spiritual, not physical (despite the depiction of physical conflict by medieval artists). The Devil plagues the saint with a succession of apparitions and visitations, either to terrify him into a weakening of faith, or to seduce him from his virtuous conduct. In one crisis, a horde of spectral demons, in the shape of a whole menagerie of animals, hovers around the saintly hermit:

Truces omnium vultus, et vocis horridae dirus auditus.
Antonius flagellatus atque confossos sentiebat quidem asperiores corporis doloris...

1. See Charles Fuqua, "Heroism, Heracles and the Trachiniae", I have paraphrased his comment on p. 3, which he draws from M.P. Foucart, Le culte des heros chez les Grecs, Paris, 1918, pp. 77-78.
The use of physical terms in this description is misleading: the bodily pain felt by the saint is belied by a subsequent comment that the saint makes; in response to the attack, he says:

"Si quid valetis si vobis in me potestam Dominus dedit, ecce praesto sum, devorate concessum. Si vero non potestis cur frustra nitimini?"

Now, this may well be bravado: but whatever the case, it becomes clear that any physical pain which the hermit suffered was temporary. Moreover, the entire description is put in terms of illusion, suggesting that Athanasius did not believe that the attack upon Anthony's physical being was actual.

St Anthony and his struggle with the demons became the basis for the movement towards asceticism in Christianity, a movement which was very influential both in terms of Church history, where asceticism and monasticism were often at loggerheads, and in literature. Much subsequent hagiography was the direct offspring of the trials of the hermit saint in his spiritual battle against the devil. St Anthony had given literary expression to the dictum of St Paul:

Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. (Ephesians, 6, 11-12)

1. Loc. cit.: cf. the comments made by Guthlac in Felix's Life: "Si vestrae potentiae sit istic me tradere poenis, en presto sum; ut quid falsivomis pectoribus vanas minas depromitis?" Felix's 'Life of St Guthlac', trans. and ed. B. Colgrave, p. 106.
The pattern laid down by Anthony, and contemporaries like Pachomius, was followed by innumerable Christians who left the safety of town and kin to seek virtue in the wilderness, a wilderness where the forces of Satan were known to abound: Christ himself had struggled with the tempter in the desert.

The records of the Desert Fathers are vivid accounts of the war fought against the evil tempter:

They said of the Abbess Sarah that for thirteen years she was fiercely attacked by the demon of lust. And she never prayed that the battle should be stayed. But she used to say only this: 'Lord, grant me strength.' They also said of her that the same demon of lust was once attacking her menacingly, and tempting her with vain thoughts of the world. But she kept fearing God in her soul and maintained the rigour of her fasting.

As the struggle of Sarah indicates, the demons were concerned with a specific vice: they took it in turns to launch spiritual assaults upon the Christian. Every approach was tried:

[Saint Syncletice] said: "When the devil does not use the goads of poverty to tempt, he uses wealth for the purpose. When he cannot win by scorn and mockery, he tries praise and flattery."

The language of these accounts is normally metaphorical, employing as in the Ephesians passage military imagery to convey


2. Western Asceticism, pp. 62-63.

3. Ibid., p. 85.
the idea of spiritual struggle:

Do you fast for four or five days on end and then lose your spiritual strength by eating a feast? That gladdens the devil. Everything which is extreme is destructive. So do not suddenly throw away your armour, or you may be found unarmed in the battle and easily made prisoner. Our body is like armour, our soul the warrior. Take care of both, and you will be ready for what comes.  

The apothegmata of the Desert Fathers, then indicate very clearly the developing idea of evil in the cosmos of the Christian God. Evil springs from the antagonism of Satan to those who aspire to God, and evil is brought into being through the wiles of Satan's emissaries, rather than through brute force. It is the cunning of Satan which is the most deadly weapon that is brought to bear upon the virtuous: it is the weakness of the flesh which allows the cunning of Satan to operate:

An old man said: 'Satan has three powers, which lead to all the sins. The first is forgetfulness, the second negligence, the third concupiscence. If forgetfulness comes, it begets negligence: negligence is the mother of concupiscence: and by concupiscence a man falls. If the mind is serious, it repels forgetfulness, negligence does not come, concupiscence finds no entry and so with help from Christ's grace, he shall never fall.'

And:

It is a bigger miracle to eject passion from your own body than it is to eject an evil spirit from another's body. It is a bigger miracle to be patient and refrain from anger than it is to control the demons which fly through the air......The soul is more important than the body, its salvation more urgent. The more precious the material, the more destructive is the fall.

1. Ibid., p. 121. This passage is one of several on over-enthusiastic mortification of the flesh: the literature shows that such restraint was often not observed.
2. Ibid., p. 139.
3. Ibid., p. 262.
The evil forces marshalled against the ascetics of the deserts outside Alexandria became the norm for demonic beings in later times: the demons of Guthlac have a direct lineage from the demons of Anthony:

[The demons] were not to be recognised by the horns and other characteristics they were alleged to possess in the Middle Ages, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onwards, but preferably chose either the usual or hybrid forms of animals, such as bulls, leopards, bears, lions, scorpions and serpents, that with evil intent prowled around the anchorites. They also tended to appear as visions of voluptuous females. They very often disguised themselves as a little black Ethiopian, coming from the mysterious regions to the south. They all behaved and danced around in the same kind of way, sometimes artful enough only to play little pranks, for a saint who would smile at these was already half won over......

All these devilries were part of a literary style that had its laws, its procedure, and its protagonists. Its authors merely had to remember the symbolic representations in the idolatrous temples all around them, to detach them from the walls in order to provide themselves with a ready made gallery of devil images.¹

This was the system of good and evil inherited by the Anglo-Saxons: a system in which the Augustinian view of the nexus between moral evil and spiritual evil in the shape of human Sin was the central prop; in which also the figure of Satan, and the demonic horde which had fallen from the Divine Grace, preyed upon the weakness of mankind. For man was the real cause of evil - it was his inability to choose between the desires of the flesh and the needs of the spirit; between the two Cities of Man and God; between the innate goodness of spiritual inclination and the

¹. J. Decarreaux, Monks and Civilisation, pp. 87-88.
evil whisperings of Satan, which brought about all evil in the world.

There was no room in this system for the chaos-demons of pagan legend. The only demons were the fallen angels, and although these beings deluded themselves that they could win the struggle against God, their ultimate defeat was assured from the beginning of time. Nevertheless, for the individual man, these adversaries were frightful, for they could bring about the worst evil of all - exclusion from the beatific vision at the end of days.
By the time that the Augustinian mission to Britain had begun its evangelism, the theology of Augustine and the patristic writers of the orthodoxy had overcome the threat of the great heresiarchs. Pelagianism, Priscillianism and Gnosticism had been anathematised, not only by the writings of Augustine and Jerome, but by a succession of councils which had delineated the dogma of evil. For example, the Council of Braga in 563 had declared:

Whoever denies that the devil was originally a good angel created by God, contending instead that he rose from the chaos and the darkness and has no creator but is himself the substance and the principle of evil...let him be anathema. \(^1\)

The Synod of Constantinople in 543 had likewise thundered against heretical opinions concerning the origin of the world and the hierarchy of spirits:

If anyone says that spiritual beings, in whom divine love grows cold, are covered in grosser bodies like ours and named men, whilst others who reached the summit of evil had received cold and dark bodies and are called now demons and evil spirits, let him be anathema. \(^2\)

\(^1\) From J. Pelikan, The Christian Tradition (Vol. i, 100–600ad), p. 136. This was directed particularly against Origenism, and its doctrine of the apocatastasis (ultimate restoration) of demons. Origen had been declared a heretic at the Oecumenical Council of Alexandria in 400ad but his teachings persisted. See D.P. Walker, The Decline of Hell, pp. 11ff; D.Knowles The City of God, p. 455n., and J. Danielou, Origen, p. viii and passim.

Thus the line of great Anglo-Saxon churchmen drew their inspiration and dogma from a firmly established orthodoxy, and their theology was unquestionably correct. It was, as we shall see, from the writings of St. Augustine, Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory the Great that much of their material was to come. It is not surprising then that their view of evil in the cosmos is unimpeachably orthodox, or that the Anglo-Saxon devil is the Satan of Clement of Alexandria:

Fraud, craft and subtlety are the distinctive features by which the devil and his minions skilfully work their mischief....when this fails, the enraged deceiver resorts to force and submits his victim to a 'stormy blast'. Thus man must undergo conflict in every conceivable form before the heinous powers relent and 'admire' the victim for his constancy. Yet in all this, Clement is mindful that the demonic activity over the victim is restricted. Demons are only capable of performing those actions which are allowed to them by the omnipotent deity...they are unable to manipulate the human will directly so as to force man to succumb to their temptations.1

Not unnaturally, it was Gregory the Great whose work had the most direct influence upon the Anglo-Saxon church writers, particularly the Dialogues, which Battifol calls: "the City of God rewritten for the simple"2 Harnack, whose general opinion of Gregory is qualified, calls his work: "a motley farrago of Augustinian formulas and crude work-religion"3 and

1. W.E.G. Floyd, Clement of Alexandria's Treatment of the Problem of Evil, pp. 69-70. The precise nature of the "stormy blast" is unclear, although it appears in the Homily of St. Andrew (see below). It suggests metaphysical rather than physical violence. Indeed, Clement's account of demons is generally subdued, and strictly spiritual in scope.
2. P. Battifol, St. Gregory the Great, p. 182.
stresses Gregory's contribution to the doctrine of devils by tagging him "Doctor Angelorum et Diaboli."

His monkish fancy dealt...actively in conceptions about the devils and demons, and he gave new life to ideas about Antic'rist...As the logos had assumed human nature, so the devil would be incarnate at the end of the world...Before Christ appeared the devil possessed all men of right, and he still possesses unbelievers. He raged through the latter, but as regarded believers, he was a powerless and cheated devil.

Gregory's stress on miracles, and his development of Augustinian demonology, were to set the pattern for much of the Anglo-Saxon period, in writings in both Latin and the vernacular. As we shall see, hagiography becomes one of the most popular topics of English literature: a genre in which the spectacular and the grotesque become almost obligatory.

His favoured Christian hero was the exorcist, rather than the ascetic or the martyr. In some senses this shift of interest is comprehensible in terms of the triumph of Christianity over paganism, and the cessation of the great persecutions: but the exorcism theme which Gregory used throughout the Dialogues is also a consequence of the interests of the writer himself in the more spectacular side of the Christian war with evil.

1. Ibid., p. 263.
2. Ibid., p. 264. Harnack's comments suggest that his objectivity is less than perfect: for example, he says of the idea of Christ's deception of Satan: "The deception theory is thus given by Gregory in its most revolting form. The devil is the fish snapping at Christ's flesh, and swallowing the hidden hook, his divinity." (p. 264, n.i) But in thus attacking Gregory's imagery, (Moralia, xxxiii, 7-9) Harnack omits to point out that the idea occurs in Job 40, 25 and was something of a commonplace by Gregory's time.
For Gregory, the Christian hero was a channel for the power of Christ; the victims of demonic possession were no more than pawns in a cosmic game. Hence Gregory devalues physical man, for the heroic attribute is faith, not strength nor courage.

Moreover, since all heroism is explicable only in terms of faith, and the object of that faith is the Omnipotent, evil itself is trivialised. Gregory's demons are often less dangerous than they are pathetic. Although the victims of the assorted demonic possessions suffer, the audience is keenly aware that the suffering is both merited and transient. All evil will fail in the face of Christian good, manifested in the person of the holy bishops and monks who are Gregory's heroes.

Evil in the post-persecution era is, therefore, liable to surface through the lapses in virtue of Christians unwary enough to relax their vigilance against Satan. The protagonists of evil are not the prefects and governors of the Roman Empire suborned to Satan's purposes; they are the demons themselves, who haunt the ruined temples of paganism, or throng invisible in the ether.

One of Gregory's heroes is Bishop Fortunatus, the central figure in a number of exorcisms described in Book i of the Dialogues. Fortunatus is paradigmatic of the Christian hero.

1. In the ensuing discussion, the version of the Dialogues is the Alfredian text of Bishop Waerferth of Worcester (the "C" Ms. of H. Hecht's Dialege Gregors der Grossen). The numbering in the Anglo-Saxon version is incomplete: in the ensuing discussion, dialogues are allocated the number they occupy in Waerferth's "Table of Contents" for each Book. See K. Sisam, Studies in the History of Old English Literature, pp. 201ff. and 225ff., for his view that the work is by Wulfjsige, Bishop of Sherborne.
of the Dialogues, stern, ascetic, his powers deriving from the
God in whom he keeps absolute trust and faith.

The apparent reason for most possessions by demons is
an error of judgement, which accords with the Pauline image of
the warrior of Christ in so far as the watchfulness of the spirit
against error is part of the armour worn in the spiritual fight.
The difficulty is that the errors may be trivial on the surface;
so watchful is Satan, and so ubiquitous his minions, that even a
momentary lapse may cause one to be possessed.

Thus, in i, 29 a woman who attends church after sexual
intercourse is possessed, initially by one demon but after an
attempted exorcism by "magicians" by a "mycel mæniu deofla".
The point of the second possession is that the woman's relatives
are the cause by bringing in pagan sorcerers. As Gregory and his
contemporaries knew, any recourse to paganism was an invitation
to the demons. Similarly, in i, 30, the son of a man who has
mistakenly invited a demon into his home is possessed. The nub
of this story is that the demon had already been exorcised from
another victim by Fortunatus, and had been wandering the streets
crying,

"gehyrap nu, hwæt se halga werr dyde Furtunatus se
biscop. Nu he adraf me alpeodigne man of his huse,
ond ic forpon sece hwær ic me gerestan scyle, nu
ic on his cæstre nana ne fand."

The reader could be forgiven for thinking that the charity of the
man who shelters this unfortunate is rudely repaid. However, as
Gregory tells us, his act was fairly rewarded, since it was no
true act of charity, but an example of presumptuousness in that
he wolde þæt for mannun gesewn ðære, þæt he betran
lifes ðære þonne se bisceop, þa he þone man onfeng
þe se drihtnes wer Furtunatus ær onweg adraf.

In terms of the strategy of the war with evil, the
demonic habit of advising the bishops of the Dialogues of their
intention to launch an assault is particularly helpful. The
precise idea behind this motif is not at all clear: in several
cases it has no plot relevance at all. For example, in the story
of the collapsing wall (ii, 11) Bishop Benedict's envoy, sent to
warn of the impending attack, arrives too late; in the story of
the drunken monk (ii, 30), the bishop is warned by a demon
(disguised, oddly enough, as a doctor) that he will attempt to
sell alcohol to the monks, but the attack falls on an old monk
who was out fetching water and could not be warned.

In line with the general condemnation of heathen
worship which was a major theme of early Church writing, Gregory
sets a number of the Dialogues in ruined pagan temples; other
stories, such as that of the illusory fire (ii, 10) involve the
relics of paganism. As we have seen, the heathen gods were in
reality demons who had deluded the heathen worshippers, so it is
hardly surprising to find that the focal points of demonic evil
are the old sacrificial sites, or that the idols may be used to
invoke demons.

1. This tale ends rather humourously: the old monk, "swiþlice
geswæntce" by Satan (i.e. alcohol) is prostrated.
Benedict's method is brusque, but effective - he beats the
drunken monk "mid his bradre hand, ond sona he adraf þone
awyrhdan feond of þam monce, swa þæt he ne dorste ofer
þæt to þam eft gecyrran." There is little wonder.
In a long story which deals with the tempting of a bishop, a Jew puts up for the night in a temple dedicated to Apollo which is infested with demons. In the ensuing narrative, the Satanic hierarchy is seen in action:

"geseah {the Jew} mycle mænigu awyrgdra gæsta, þa wæron fore gangende, swylce he on þegnunge wæron sumes hlaforðes ond he þa geseah, þæt se þe heora yldost wæs, in sumum dæle þære stowe gesæt. Da ongan he acsian synderlice þara þegnlaendra gasta gehwylcne, hwæt he gedon hæfde ond he witan wolde, hu mycelne nip hi hæfdon menniscum cynne æteowed." (iii, 7)

In another haunting story, (ii, 4) the protagonist is Datius, Bishop of Mediolanum, who stays overnight in a house which has been deserted for years because of the demons which throng there. During the night the bishop is woken by a weird cacophony:

[as] leona grymetunge ond hrybra gehlowe ond eosola gehyld ond nændrena hwistlunge ond swyna grununge ond musa hwicunge...

Datius is unmoved; he responds with a brilliant gibe which puts the devil to flight in confusion and shame:

"wel is þe gelumpen, þu earma, þe iu cwaede: 'ic sette min heahsetl to norðdale heofena rices, ond ic beo þam hehstan Gode gelic.' Geseah nu, þæt þu for þinum oferhigde eart geworden swynum ond musum gelic, ond þu, þe ware unwyrpe ond hwæþre woldest þinne drihten onhyrgian, nu, swa saw þu wyrþe eart, þu onhyrest wilddeor."

In these stories, and throughout the Dialogues, Gregory's demons are, with the exception already noted, beings which attack mankind on the spiritual level through possession or temptation. Possession is the consequence of sin, for sin weakens the spiritual defences and permits access to demonic
forces. But these strategems are useless against the faithful, nor are the powers of the demons sufficient to oppose the power of the truly faithful whose weapons are the Cross and purity of spirit. There is no question of an equality of the opposing powers - indeed, Satan and his cohorts are weakened to the verge of inefficacy, at least in the long term.

The Dialogues also contains tales which show that Gregory believed that the demons could bring about natural disasters. This idea, which we have seen in Origen, was not favoured by later theologians. For example, Clement of Alexandria did not seriously entertain the thought that, say, plagues, famines, hail-storms, floods and other evil phenomena are prompted through the anger of demons and bad angels. These are solely the consequence of natural effects...¹

But in the Dialogues, the demons bring a wall down upon some monks, severely injuring one (ii, 11); they start landslides and forest fires to inconvenience a holy hermit (iii, 14). This aspect of demonic interference with nature is generally neutralised by the prompt action of an exorcist, or by the fact that the natural phenomenon does not affect the intended victim at all. That is, Gregory uses such stories, not as warnings about the powers of the demons, but as exempla of the peaks of sanctity reached by his heroes. The issue of physical attack upon man is thus pushed gently aside by the miracles of healing and exorcism with which Gregory is chiefly concerned.

¹ Floyd, op.cit., p. 42.
Gregory was no theologian, despite his eminence in the early Church: this did not, of course, prohibit his work from influencing other writers.

Bede was one of these: he regarded Gregory's work very highly, and utilised it in a number of his own writings, but Bede did not allow the sensationalism of Gregory's accounts of numinous experience to dominate his own calm historicism. There is an observable difference in tone between the detached, objective hagiography of Bede and the spectacular but dubious miracles attested by Gregory.

It is typical of Bede to seek to play down the powers of Satan and to emphasise the virtues of his saintly subjects. For example, in the *Ecclesiastical History* account of the illness of Brother Baduthegn (iv, 31), Bede describes the illness as paralysis, where we would have expected Gregory to attribute the illness to possession. Similarly, in v, 13, a dying man describes how demons appeared to him with a weighty volume which detailed his sins ('codicem horrendae visionis, et magnitudinis enormis...'). The demons then sank two darts into him:

qui videlicet modo cum magno tormento irrepunt in interiora corporis mei, moxque ut ad se invicem perveniunt, moriar....

Whilst this suggests that the darts of the demons are causing the man to die, it is clear from the account that the man was ill before the vision, and that the demons are his rationalisation of his illness.

Bede makes no comment to clarify this peculiar account of demonic evil, beyond an acknowledgement of its source:

Hanc historiam, sicut a venerabilis antistite Pecthelmo didici, simpliciter ob salutem legentium, sive audentium, narrandam esse putavi.

The point is that this tale is alien to the tenor of Bede's demonology: its implication is that the devils can somehow actually cause the man to die - not even Gregory went this far. It must be either that Bede records the account faithfully, unaware of the dangerous theology, or that Bede understood that the visionary quality of the account cleared the story from the heretical position it otherwise would occupy, and expected the reader to do the same. I have no doubt that the latter is the case, especially as in the same story, the dying man speaks of the characteristic style of demonic attack, "daemonica fraude seductus".

It is possible, but unlikely, that the story is an echo of pagan folklore tales about elf-shot, as Colgrave and Mynors suggest. Although I will argue subsequently for a survival of pagan belief in England until very late in the Anglo-Saxon

1. Ibid., col. 253.
2. Ibid., col. 254.
period, I do not believe that Bede would have transmitted pagan beliefs knowingly, and that therefore, he must have seen the story told by the dying man strictly in terms of the symbolism of dreams. Even if Bede himself did not know that the belief was pagan (which is a very remote possibility), he would have known that the notion of demons actually killing men was heretical, if only from his reading of Job: "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in thy hand; but yet save his life'" (2, 12).

Bede's Martyrology reflects the historian's view of good and evil; a view in which the forces of evil are represented more by wicked men than by demons. 1

The accounts of martyrdoms which Bede wrote are signally different from those of either Gregory or later hagiographers: Bede is more concerned with the miracles which surround martyrdom then the horrors of the martyrdoms themselves.

One of the motifs which Bede uses is the idea, which was to become a commonplace in later hagiographies, that the forces of nature were firmly on the side of good. Gregory had used this motif in a number of the Dialogues: for example, in the story of the hermit Martin (iii, 16), an adder sent by Satan to kill the hermit becomes a hearth-companion to the saint.

The failure of nature to co-operate with evil is, I believe, part of the movement towards the position of Clement of Alexandria cited previously, away from the theory of Origen that nature could be influenced by Satan.

1. Martyrologium, P.L. xciv. All readings are from the Editio Coloniensis.
In Bede, martyrdom is often postponed by the failure of nature to do the expected. For instance, in the tale of Benignus, the martyr is shackled with lead and locked up with no less than twelve wild dogs for six days without harm.\(^1\) Similarly, in the account of the deaths of the Forty Eight Martyrs, animals will not kill the intended victims; after preparatory tortures:

Tertio quoque die religata ad stipitem atque in crucis modum distenta, bestiis pabulum praeparatur. Quam cum nulla ex bestiis auderet tangere, rursum revocatur ad carcerem...\(^2\)

Bede's hagiography need concern us no further: the view of good and evil contained in the stories is consistent throughout. The forces of evil are relegated to a less prominent position in these writings than in the works from which Bede drew his material. Evil is present in the universe, certainly, and it includes the evil wrought by the malice of the demons - however, much of the evil which may be observed is the consequence of the malice of wicked men, with no reference to the machinations of Satan.

In part, Bede's emphasis upon the powers of the saints and martyrs is probably due to a growing taste for miracles amongst Christians:

If the early martyrs were seen as paradigms of Christian living, they were also seen as the locus of spiritual power...for the early Christian, the great attraction of the martyrs rested on their ability, both in life and especially after death, to manifest supernatural power on behalf of the Christian community. The intercession of the martyrs or the

1. Ibid., col. 1089.
2. Ibid., col. 933.
application of the martyr's relics could cure illness, forestall disaster, shield from antipathetic forces, cause conversion, forgive sins, or avert calamity.¹

Anglo-Saxon homiletic literature developed from the Gregorian tradition of spectacular accounts of evil, for this was undoubtedly an important part of the message to the audience. Thus, in the Blickling Homilies,² much space is devoted to descriptions of Satanic evil at work.

The homily for Shrove Sunday elaborates upon Luke's description of Christ's healing of the blind man near Jericho. The multitude which endeavoured to stifle the cries of the blind man to Christ are compared to:

\[ \text{ba flæsclican willan ond ba ungereclican uncysta ba cumað ofþ purh deofles sceonessa ær to manna heortan.} \]

This is the familiar figure of Satan as tempter and corrupter, who turns man's weaknesses against him to shut out virtue and cloud judgement. The weak

\[ \text{fylgæþ deofles larum, ond his sceonessum; symle he hie getyhp to eallum uncystum, ond to þære lufan þisse worolde mid his leascraeftum ...} \]

In the succeeding homily, this view is elaborated. It is common knowledge, says the homilist, that Satan is the author or fountainhead of all evils, since wickedness is the very stuff of the demonic nature.

The homily of Saints Peter and Paul is a retelling of the famous confrontation between the apostles and Simon Magus,

2. ed. R. Morris (page references are to the single volume reprint of 1967).
4. Ibid., p. 25.
and affords the homilist ample space to detail spectacular demonic activity. Simon, as a pagan magician, is naturally familiar with demons: the "miracles" he works are the false seemings of all diabolic tricks. Peter points out to the emperor that Simon is composed of two natures, human and Satanic, "ond he þone men gælep ælces gode þurh his þone menniscan dæl." When Simon summons up spectral hounds to frighten the apostles, Peter exorcises them, with a gibe at the poor quality of the "hundlice englas" Simon commands. Of course, there is no question that the hounds could touch the apostles - the martyrdom is conducted by men, as is the tradition.

In keeping with the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition of the hierarchy of Hell as comitatus, the Blickling Homilies present, in the Easter Sunday homily, a portrait of a disgruntled group of thegns and a lord guilty of idelgylp:

"Gehyrstu ure aldor?...þu us æt endestæfe mycel herereaf gehete. Ac hwæt wilt þu (with Christ) nu don?...Eala nu, þu ure aldor, þa þine welan...he hafæn nu on þe genuumene...Tohwon lædest þu þæosne freone ond unsyclidigne hider? Nu he hafæn on his hideryme ealle scyldige fordemde ond gehynede." Satan's presumption is the traditional cause of his fall: Augustine had confirmed this in De Civitate Dei (xiv, 13), coupling this sin of pride with Satan's envy of man in De Genesi ad Litteram (xi, 14: "causa invidenti superbia"). The irony of this pride is that it blinds Satan to his own limitations.

1. Ibid., p. 179.
2. Ibid., pp. 85-87.
In the homily of St. Andrew, this blindness is manifested in a foolish attempt to inflict harm upon the saint. Satan, exasperated by the steadfastness of the saint, rounds up seven devils previously put to flight and urges them to attack the saint. They enter the cell and revile the saint without success. Then, in a singular passage, Satan orders the lesser demons to kill Andrew:

\[ \text{pa deofla pa blæstan hie ofer ðone halgan Andreas, and} \\
\text{hie gesawon Cristes rodetacan on his onsiene; hi ne} \\
\text{dorston hine genealæcan, ac hraþe hie on weg flugon.} \\
\text{ðæt deofol him tocwæþ, "Mine bear, for hwon ne} \\
\text{acwealdon ge hine?"..."We ne mihton, forþon ðe Cristes} \\
\text{rodetacn on his onsiene we gesawon ond we us} \\
\text{ondrædon ...Gif þu mæge, acwel hine; we þe on þissum} \\
\text{ne hersumiþ..."} \]

1. This is, of course, high drama and extreme unorthodoxy. Even though the attack is abortive (one of the key statements being the ironic "Gif þu mæge"), the astonishing narration of an attack upon physical man is quite outside of the orthodox view. The homilist's point is that the "rodetacn" is a talisman against evil, a common enough Christian belief: the attack is therefore never a serious threat to Andrew at all. Moreover, the position of Satan in the story is made invidious by his own implicit

1. Ibid., p. 243. Cf. the "stormy blast" described by Clement, cited above.
cowardice and his folly in attempting what is beyond his powers. Satan is blinded by his own superbia. 1

As the English homiletic and hagiographical traditions develop, the orthodox view of demons is strengthened; tales of demonic attacks upon man disappear, or are heavily qualified and rationalised. The development may be seen in a comparison of such works as the Latin *Vita* of Guthlac and the poetic version of the life.

In the Latin, which is much closer in spirit to the writing of Gregory than the modified English poem, the demons are permitted to inflict physical harm upon the saint. They drag him

---

1. The ultimate source of this passage is the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* (in James, *New Testament Apocrypha*, pp. 453-458) which shares the distinction, with its closely-related companion piece the *Acts of Andrew* by Gregory of Tours (*Ibid.*, pp. 229-249), of being the most unorthodox of all Christian writings outside of the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. Both works deal with the most extravagant demonic tales. In *Andrew*, for example, demons stone people to death outside Nicaea; demonic hounds tear a man to pieces in Nicomedia; in Thessalonica a demon forces a youth to hang himself, and another demon, in the form of a fifty-cubit serpent, terrorizes a household. Every chapter escalates the narrative of demonic assaults. These demons are also particularly fond of water: Andrew tells the Corinthians "The enemy of mankind lies in wait everywhere, in baths and in rivers: therefore we ought always to invoke the Lord's name, that he may have no power over us." (p. 347) (see CDT, ii, p. 169 for an account of the development of the baptismal exorcism of water, and other beliefs connecting demons with the waters of the earth.). Thus the passage makes some sense in terms of its source, but it is difficult to imagine what an orthodox audience of the eighth or ninth century in England would have made of it. Nevertheless, it appears as a detail in the *Andreas* (discussed in detail below) where the imagery of physical battle is appropriate to the poem as a whole.
through the swamp, through briars and brambles which tear his skin, and beat him with iron whips. Whilst these wounds are quickly healed, the injury done to the saint is not mentioned in the poetic Guthlac, where although the demons are permitted to carry the saint through the air they are prohibited from harming him. There is little doubt that the nature of demonic activity is the consequence of Felix's indebtedness to Gregory. Details are lifted bodily from the Dialogues or from that other manual of demonology, Athanasius' Vita of Anthony: both these works are, as we have seen, the extreme positions of demonology in orthodox literature, and obviously colour Felix's account of the trials of Guthlac.

In later hagiography, the activity of the demons is relegated to the background, or retained for the setpiece descriptions of Hell, where the orthodox view of post-mortem torture of the soul permits the inclusion of graphic accounts of torments. The terrestrial activity of the demons is either tempting the flesh or goading the wicked: particularly the pagan officials of the Roman Empire, who ordered the martyrdoms.

The evil which these men do does not go unpunished; often the details of divine retribution are given with a tone of obvious satisfaction. There is, of course, no question that the

1. Felix's "Life of St. Guthlac", p. 103.
2. The poetic version is dealt with in detail in the following section dealing with poetic treatments of evil.
3. For example, the devil's ability to make animal noises, from Dialogues ii, 4, appears in the Vita (xxxvi, p. 115) almost verbatim.
4. Cf. the challenges made to the demons by Anthony (P.L. lxxiii, col. 132) and Guthlac (p. 106).
gruesome punishments meted out to the persecutors of the faithful are evil. As Augustine pointed out, punishment where merited was not evil; even the fire which was to torment the damned was not, of itself, evil.¹

Divine retribution is swift and terrible. The man who ravishes St. Agnes is torn apart by demons, who have been given that power by God Himself.² The death of St. Emerantiana is followed by a succession of thunderbolts which kills most of the onlookers.³ Aurelianus, the author of the torments and martyrdom of Sts. Alexander, Eventius and Theodolus dies on the same night in agony.⁴ When St. Matthew dies, his slayer is visited by Divine wrath which is indiscriminate, but effective: not only does the man himself break out in hideous sores from head to foot, but his son dies and his house is razed to the ground.⁵

It seems that the theme of divine retribution is directly connected with the pacifism of the martyrs: the Christian faith is not, despite the apparent weakness of its adherents, without power; indeed it draws its power from Omnipotence. The theme of Divine non-intervention before martyrdom accommodates itself readily to the theme of post-mortem wrath.

The evil which is represented by magicians, witches, and all exponents of magic is a direct legacy of the refutation

2. Herzfeld, Old English Martyrology, p. 29.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 72.
5. Ibid., p. 175. The motif is very common. Cf. the martyrdoms of Sts. Ananias (p. 25), George (p. 61), James the Lesser (p. 101) etc.
of paganism and the attitude that all divinations and prophecies other than those of Divine inspiration were of the devil. We have already seen that the common man of the Late Empire was deeply superstitious, and that the early Fathers directed much of the energies to the refutation of pagan practices. It did not matter in the slightest what purpose was behind the practice of magic: all purposes were astray because all involved demonic power.

The urgency with which Anglo-Saxon writers attacked pagan belief suggests that the superstitions of antique paganism were very much alive in England, and not merely residual or vestigial superstitions either. Aelfric, who condemns all manner of pagan practices, is particularly urgent on the matter. Whilst Pope suggests that this urgency may have been the consequence of a resurgence of paganism under the influence of the heathen inhabitants of the Danelaw, it seems to be unlikely that this alone would be the cause. Indeed, the very fact of the Danish invasions may have convinced the "Christian" English that the old gods were more powerful. Again, even if Pope's hypothesis is right, the resurgence of paganism would suggest some platform in English belief upon which to re-erect heathendom.

Whatever the case, Aelfric's attack on paganism is thorough and urgent. He attacks the outright paganism of idolatory (in "De Falsis Diis"), as well as such apparently minor infringements as the casting of lots and divination from natural phenomena. All are the "devil's craft", and all carry a severe

penalty: the forfeiture of the soul:

Ac wite ge to soðan þæt se sceocca cow læþþ þyllice
scincraeftas, þæt he eowre sawle hæbbe þonne ge
gelyfæþ his leasbrædnyssé. ¹

It is difficult to grasp the connection between the apparently
innocuous practices of folk superstition, and rampant idolatry.
This is not consistent with modern tolerance (tinged with
amusement, perhaps) of astrology, Tarot, palm-reading and so
forth. But in the context of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, there is
no gradation of superstition, no point at which folk belief ends
and paganism begins. It is a simple, black/white, on/off
situation: any practice not sanctioned by Testamental or
patristic authority was pagan, and all such practices carried the
penalty of spiritual ath. This is a movement beyond the
Augustinian view. He had distinguished between "Goetian" and
"Theurgian" forms of magic, "magia curiositatis...quam vel
magian vel detestabiliore nomine goetian vel honorabiliore
theurgian vocant." ²

No such distinction was attempted by the English
churchmen. The ban was total. Only in the areas of Christian
miracles was there an outlet for the desire for numinous
experience; the relics and shrines of the saints became the focus
of a new superstition.

In Aelfric, the witches and sorcerers are another force
for evil, a "fifth column" within human society, which by its

Saints, ii, pp. 365-383.
2. De Civ. Dei, x, 8; cited by A.A. Barlow, "The Survival of
Magic Arts" p. 104.
arts could dupe the unwary, and render them vulnerable to demonic attack: again the shield against these spiritual evils was faith.

In "De Falsis Diis", Aelfric reiterates the lessons of Origen and Augustine: idols and images are merely demons who have in the past deluded the pagans into devil-worship. In the work, one of the examples chosen (ll. 575ff.) is the haunted shrine of Apollo which appears in Gregory's Dialogues (iii, 7). All pagan gods were demons: indeed, the attitude was that all the beings of folk-lore and myth were merely manifestations of demons. We might consider this attitude excessive, but for the early church, the complete rejection of all aspects of paganism was essential, and this included the minor beings of pagan myth as well as the great gods. Aelfric's attack on these entities may be summarised by the Carmina Burana lyric, which seeks to protect the speaker from "Omnium genus demoniorum", which includes:

Larve, Fauni, Manes,
Nymphe, Sirene, Hamadryades,
Satyri, Incubi, Penates....

The literary exhortation to forsake paganism is given more weight by the number of laws and canons enacted in the period which dealt with pagan practices, such as those of Edward in 905 and Cnut in 1033. The fact that charms and spells were

2. In Helen Waddell, Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 212.
3. These are discussed in detail below.
in fairly common use is evidenced by the number of poetic charms extant. Storms has given a detailed analysis of the amalgam of Christian and pagan belief in both verse and prose charms.

This evidence supports my contention that paganism was still very much a living belief in very late Anglo-Saxon times. We simply cannot ignore the fact that paganism permeated the popular belief-systems in this period. Ælfric's testimony to the multitude of superstitions in "De Auguriis" cannot be separated from his condemnation of thorough-going paganism. His injunction to desist from making prophetic statements from the behaviour of birds, dogs, horses - even from the counting and timing of sneezes - (11. 87-91) is connected to more "serious" threats to Christianity such as the continuance of pagan pantheism in the offering of sacrifices to an "eorþfastum stanæ", to "treowum and to wylspringum" (11. 129-136).

The same pagan practices are condemned in Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar:

16. And riht is þæt preosta gehwylc cristendom geornlice lære and Ælæne hæbendom mid ealle adwæsc; and forbeode wylweþþungas, and licwigelunga, and hwata, and galdra, and treowwurþungas, and stanwurþungas, and þone deofles cræft þe man dryhþ þær man þæ cild þurh þæ eorþban tiþþ, and þæ gemearr þe man driþþ on geares niht on mislicum wigelungum and on friþsplottum and on ellenum, and on manegum mislicum gedwimerum þe men on dreogap fela þæs þe hi ne sceoldan.

1. See ASPR vi.
2. G. Storms, Anglo-Saxon Magic, passim. Cf. F. Grendon, "Anglo-Saxon Charms", and J.F. Payne, English Medicine in the Anglo-Saxon Times. Storms notes, "Elves were accused of causing all sorts of diseases, whose external symptoms were only the visible signs of possession by invisible spirits" (p. 246.) Thus Germanic ælfrir became Christian demons.
And:

18. And riht is þæt man geswine freolsdagum
hæbenra leopa and deofles gamena.₁

Aelfric's condemnation of the magic arts, and his urgent appeal
to the masses to desist from these demonic activities, is
evidence that the mass of the folk had not lost their
superstitions. As Barb comments:

"Even where the clear voices of the New Testament and
the Fathers of the Church were heard, the existence of
evil demons (their legions swelled by all the pagan
deities) and of powerful angels was unequivocally
proclaimed, testifying for the masses to the real
existence of those infernal and celestial powers
invoked by the current magic arts." ₂

If there is an over-riding principle of Aelfric's view of demonic
evil, it is that:

Se hetela deofol, þe syrwþ embe manncynn asent yfele
gepohtas and þwyrlce ongean God on þæs mannes
heortan þæt he mæge hine gebringan on orwennysse...₁

notes upon Item 16, Fowler comments: "No exact source need
be cited for this detailed denunciation of pagan practices,
for the content is familiar in Wulfstan's works. His
repeated condemnations indicate his alarm at what may have
been a desperate revival of paganism under the stress of the
Danish invasions." Fowler also refers to several laws of
the period, concluding: "The precision with which the
penalties are specified is surely evidence that pagan
practices were a serious problem in the eyes of

This is, of course, perfectly orthodox - it is the urgency of the writer which is all-important. 

The homilies of the Vercelli manuscript provide a number of discussions of sin and the devil. The general tenor of the homilies is dramatic, often bordering on the horrific as the homilist details the torments of Hell and the powers of Satan. For example, in Homily ii we are reminded that we all must come to the grave, that the body, laid in the cold earth, will rot to "fulnesse", to become the meat of the voracious grave-worms. But what is worse, the soul will be tormented in hell "in susle ond on sare, on wean ond on wrumum, betweox deadum ond dioflum". (88 - 89)

1. "Quarta Ebdomada Quadragisimae", 11. 284-287; Homilies of Aelfric, i. I have elected not to prolong the discussion of Aelfric's demonology, which is very extensive. See, for other examples, Rubie Warner, Early English Homilies, "De viii Principalis Viciis" (pp. 16ff.) "St Furseus" (pp. 114ff.), "On Exorcism" (pp. 58ff.); Aelfric's Lives of Saints, iii, iv, especially the Oswald and Eustace stories (pp. 139ff. and 197ff.), "St Alban" (pp. 419ff.) etc; Homilies of Aelfric, ii, "Macarius and the Magicians", (pp. 790ff.); and M. Godden, Aelfric's Catholic Homilies, "De Initio Creaturae", (pp. 22ff.). Most of these works are developed from, or paraphrases of the writings of Jerome, Bede, and Gregory, although it is worthy of note that Aelfric habitually tones down some of the more intemperate descriptions of torture and death found in the last source. As Skeat notes, the tenor of Gregory's story of St. Thomas, has "a highly unchristian character and displays a shockingly revolting vindictiveness..." (Lives of Saints iv, p. 455, n. to Homily xxvi). Aelfric's version of the life of Thomas and his martyrdom is quite restrained by comparison.

Then follows a catalogue of sins for which man is condemned to the torment:

\[
\text{eallra } \text{beawa } \text{be dioflu on him sylfum onstealdon. (1.100)}
\]

Similar sentiments are expressed in Homily iv, where Satan is called the "dragon": the damned will be haled off to Hell, and

\[
\text{ne cuma$p$ n&fre of b&ra wyrma se&be ond of } \text{p&s dracan ceolan, } \text{he is Satan nemned. (11.52-53)}
\]

Satan's technique for corrupting man is expressed in the familiar terms of his bow and arrows in the same homily. The homilist elaborates on the image by explaining what the bow and the arrows are:

\[
\text{Donne h&$f$p } \text{b&$t$ dioful geworht bogan ond str&$a$la . Se boga b&$b$ geworht of ofermettum; ond } \text{p&a str&$a$la bi$b$p swa manigra cynna, swa swa mannes synna bi$b$p. Sumu str&$a$l by$b$p geworht of ni$p$e ond of } \text{f&$f$ste, sumu of gebelge ond of } \text{hateortnesse, sumu of stale ond of } \text{wr&$a$nesse, sumu of druncennesse ond of dyrnum geligre, sumu of } \text{&$w$bryce ond of gedweollcra&$f$tum, sumu of lyblace ond of gytsunge, sumu of giferne ond of } \text{g&$r$e, sumu of reallace ond of scincra&$f$tum ond of morborcwale, sumu of } \text{peofunga ond of feounga. Swa manige str&$a$la syndon, swa nis } \text{&$r$gnes. mannes gemet, } \text{b&$t$ hit asecgan } \text{m&e$g$e } \ldots{} \ldots{} (11.340-349)
\]

This catalogue of sins is matched by a list of virtues (11.355ff.) which are the shields against these specific vices. Since the devil comes from Hell every day to shoot at the unwary, it behoves all Christians to maintain these shields at all time, and, with the sword of faith, put the devil to flight. But it is the continual nature of the devil's attacks which concerns the homilist most: Satan is always ready to fire an arrow into the unwary. All of the homilies have this sense of urgency: the devil is no fictitious enemy, but a real danger to man, and
although the shafts of sin are understood to be spiritual, the wounds they inflict lead to eternal death and they are therefore far worse than any war-shaft.

Turning to the poetry of the period, we find that with one or two exceptions, evil is seen as the consequence of man's corruptibility, and that the demons possess the same qualities as their prose counterparts. Where there is a difference which is remarkable it is in the depiction of Satan himself: a portrait which blends, with the dogmatic view of his powers and aims, a singularly heroic quality which is undoubtedly a product of the Germanic poetic tradition.

Thus, in Genesis, Christ, Andreas or Christ and Satan, we are given a portrait of the devil which reflects the status of the early Germanic kings. The devil becomes the leader of a comitatus, his abode resembles a Germanic hall, and his thegns take on the character of their worldly counterparts. There is a fine irony in all these descriptions: Satan's hall is hardly an ideal; his thegns are generally surly and mutinous, receiving little from their master in the way of hringsbege, and serving him, not out of a sense of admiration or loyalty, but with a sort of desperate fear of his wrath. Nevertheless, they serve, coming to the world of men to tempt or torment, to sway men from the true path. And Hell itself is but a bitter mockery of the courts of men, and ipso facto of the Celestial Kingdom: in Hell the companies of the damned and their demonic tormentors writhe in

1. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from the texts in The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records.
the alternating fire or cold, beleaguered by the greedy and undying worms and adders, shrouded in sepulchral darkness.

This is the evil kingdom described by the poets, and the malice which emanates from it is calculated to ravish man away from the eternal bliss which he has been promised, and which is forever denied to the architect of the Great Rebellion. It is an evil which, although garbed in the military jargon of Paul and the patriarchs, is nevertheless spiritual, an evil which works within the soul of the weak and of the corrupt.

Thus in Genesis A, the entry of evil into the world is with the seductive serpent of Eden, the epitome of smooth guile which corrupts through deluding the first couple. He knows 'spreca fela/wora worda' (445-6) and his intention is to:

\[
\begin{align*}
dearnunga & \text{ drihtnes geongran} \\
mid mændædum & \text{ men beswican} \\
forlædan & \text{ and forlæran... (450-452)}
\end{align*}
\]

The poem provides an account of the orthodox view of the Fall through the arts of Satan, and the emphasis throughout is on the mismatch between the gullibility and corruptibility of man and the persuasive cunning of the fiend:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Lædde hie swa mid ligenum and mid listum speon} \\
\text{idese on þæt unriht, oppæt hire on innan ongan} \\
\text{weallan wyrmes gebeat...} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{þa meahte heo wide geseon} \\
\text{þurh þæs laban læn þe hie mid ligenum beswac} \\
\text{dearnenga bedrog... (588-602)}
\end{align*}
\]

The account of the fall of Lucifer and his fellow rebels is dealt with in terms of the lord-comitatus relationship: thus, Lucifer's primary sin is to break the bonds of this relationship by intending to set up his own dominion, with himself as the lord of a new comitatus. The catalyst for this is his superbia, from which a number of other evils evolve: envy, strife and vainglory. However, in the opening of the poem, there is little attempt to separate the leader of the angelic rebellion from his fellows: the group of angels is the main subject of the discussion. It is not until we pass to the section known as Genesis B that we are given a close-up of Satan. Undoubtedly this is a consequence of the poet's intention in Genesis A to give a reasonably close rendering of his Biblical source material without much embellishment: moreover, since the accent in the opening of the poem is upon the might of the Creator, it is the ease with which He crushes the rebellion which is the main thrust of the poet's approach to the topic. Quarrelsome and blinded by pride, the angels are put firmly in their place in Genesis A - there can be no attempt to extract sympathy from or even excessive interest in their plight.

1. As in Christ and Satan, where the devil describes his fall:

"Ic wæs iu in heofnum halig ængel, dryhtene deore; hefde me dream mid gode, milcelse for meotode, and þeos menego swa some. Da ic in mode minum hogade þæt ic wolde towerpan wuldres leoman, bearn helendes, agam me burga gewald eall to æhte, and þeos earme heap þe ic hebbe to helle ham geledde." (81-88)

2. See J.M. Evans, "Genesis B and its Background".
On the other hand, the poet of Genesis B has seized the opportunity to dramatise the consequences of rebellion against the Lord, by enlarging the view of the arch-rebel. Apart from the celebrated depiction of the Satanic mind, which is not fully to the point in this discussion, the vision of the hierarchy of Hell is the most interesting aspect of the poem, together with the elaborated discussion of the temptation of Eve.

The Satanic hierarchy is, as we have seen, a common view of the organisation of Hell, springing from the belief that Hell is a parody of the Celestial City, an anti-Paradise in which the conditions of existence are inverted and perverted. Thus, the followers of Satan are regarded as a comitatus, but their reward for their perverted fidelity is not the reward of the faithful thegn on Earth, nor of the blessed in Heaven. The "joys of the hall", so celebrated in Anglo-Saxon poetry, are torment in the flames and the cold; Satan's offer of reward for the demon who will tempt Eve is, ironically enough, a place beside him on his fiery throne. Yet the appeal which Satan makes to his followers is couched in terms which would have been appropriate to any Germanic chieftain. He appeals to his demons to recall past favours; he attempts to evoke their warrior instincts; he offers rewards for a dangerous undertaking. And, of course, the appeal is answered.

11.409-413: Gif ic ænegum þægne þodenmadmas
geara forgeafe, þenden we on þan godan rice
gesælige sæton and hæfdon ure setla geweald,
þonne he me na on leofran tid leanum ne meahte
mine gife gyldan...
The Mermedonians are a cruel people, amongst whom wicked sorcerers hold sway; but throughout the nation moves the figure of Satan, who is the real motivator of all this evil. In the apocryphal Acts of Andrew and Matthias, from which this tale derives, Satan appears to the people as an old man, but in the poem, he appears in a hideous form:

Da for þære dugopæ deoful ætywde,
wan ond whileleas, hæfte weriges hiw. (1168 - 1169)

Presumably the poet felt that the devil did not need to be disguised amongst the Mermedonians, who were so steeped in evil that they did not feel fear at Satan's appearance. Certainly they show no reluctance to obey his behest to put Matthew and Andrew to torment.

Satan is again presented as the leader of a gesip in the poem. In his second appearance to Andrew, he is accompanied

1. See James, op. cit., pp. 456ff. There are a number of other differences between the two works which are not only details. The Andreas maintains a system of military imagery which is not in evidence in the apocryphal Acts: the poet sees the conflict between good and evil as an unending battle, with the saints in the front line. This produces some unfortunate epithets for the Mermedonians, who are variously: "Beornas....on mearum modige" (1094-6); "hildfrome heriges brehtme...cune under cumblum" (1202-4); even the man who offers his child as a substitute for the cannibalistic feast is described as "colfenferhþ" (1108). We can only see these epithets as being the product of a conventional heroic diction, here used rather thoughtlessly.
by six devils whom he urges to attack the saint:

"Swa ic nu bebeode bearnum minum, 
þegnum þryþfullum, þæt hie þe haægen, 
gingran æt guðe. Lætab gares ord, 
earth ætre gemæl, in gedufan 
in fæges ferþ."

(1328 - 1332)

This detail is drawn from the apocryphal Acts:

The devil took seven other devils, whom Andrew had driven out from places in the neighbourhood... and they came to Andrew, and the devil said: Now we will kill you like your master whom Herod slew. And he said: Now my children, kill him. But they saw the seal on his forehead and were afraid, and said: Do you kill him, for we cannot. (James p. 457)

Neither the apocryphal account nor the poem explain why the devil believed that he could in fact kill Andrew, since, as I have shown, such physical attacks were prohibited by God. In terms of both accounts, the fact that the devils fail in their assault solves the difficulty for the authors: the central point of the attack is rather the power of the Cross than the temerity of the demons in planning an attack. The recoil of the demons is elaborated in the poem, again in military terms: the devil asks his demons:

"Hwæt wearp eow swa rofum, rincas mine, 
lindgesteallan, þæt eow swa lyt gespeow?"
Him þa earmseacen ægef ondswæc, 
fah fyrdseacan, ond his fæder oncwæþ: 
"Ne magan we him lungre laþ æftæstan, 
swilt þurh searwe. Ga þe sylfa to! 
.......We þe magon eafþe, eorla leofost 
æþ þam scecgplegan selse gelæran; 
ær þu gegninga guðe fremme, 
wiges woman, weald, hu þe sæle 
æþ þam gegnslege......" (1343 - 1356)

The view of evil in Andreas is complicated in this, as in other passages, by the conventional diction of heroic verse. The warriors of Satan, "rincas", "lindgesteallan", speak to him in terms of the traditional comitatus relationship. Satan is the
"eorla leofost", and the father of the demons (cf. John viii, 41,44). 1

It is possible that the passage is heavily ironic, but it seems more probable that the poet is unable to visualize the hierarchy of demons in terms other than those of his own, familiar, social organisation.

Whatever the case, the point is that the demons are incapable of harming Andrew. To an orthodox Christian audience, it is the folly of the demons in believing that they might kill Andrew, which is the key to the passage. The absurdity of their attack and the ignominy of their failure are evidence of the essential demonic nature.

The advice which they offer Satan is to taunt Andrew with his plight, a detail from the apocryphal work which is developed in the poem into a charge of witchcraft against Andrew. This is quite nonsensical in this context, and why the poet should have included this detail is a mystery. He is, as I have said, elaborating on his source. Some clue to the problem is provided by Prete, who points out that one of the topoi of Latin hagiographies is a charge of witchcraft or sorcery laid against the saint by his or her accusers:

... it is not the Christian view of paganism as an institution of magic, to which the passiones witness, that is of interest here, rather it is the reverse of this. i.e., the pagan charge against the martyrs of practising magic (artes magicae) ...Christ was considered by the pagans as a magician and wonder-worker... The pagan society itself, saturated

1. For a discussion of the flood and the significance of the subsequent baptisms, see Marie M. Walsh, "The Baptismal Flood in the Old English Andreas".
with magical practices and beliefs, which were proscribed by many laws; the idea of the sacred Christian books, deemed secret or unknown by the pagans; the conduct of the martyrs themselves, calm and heroic under torture, which appeared superhuman and due to occult powers; and finally the common gossip which was current about the Christian gatherings, as sullied with moral excesses and offences are some of the principal causes which concurred in creating this type of myth. 1

The story of Guthlac gives an extremely clear account of the methods used by demons to attack the spirit of humans. The young saint, we are told:

"in þa ærestan ældu gelufade frecnessa fela!" (109-110)

but was saved from the consequences of the early blemishes on his soul by the intervention of an angel, who vanquishes the spiritual urging of the fiend:

Swa by hine trymedon  on twa healfa
oppæt þæs gewinnes  weoroda dryhten
on þæs engles dom  ende gereahte.
Feond wæs geflymed........ (133-136)

Guthlac's sojourn in the wilderness is a constant struggle against the exiled demons who have taken up their abode there. 2

1. Serafino Prete, "Some Loci in Ancient Latin Hagiography", pp. 313-315. Perhaps our poet, casting about for the appropriate subject for the devil's abuse, recalled such hagiographies: Prete points out that such charges occur in a number of well-known Lives - Sebastian, Hilarion, Agnes, Anastasius, etc.

2. I agree with Wentersdorf that the scene of the action is a barrow rather than with Reichardt, who believes it is a mountain, "representing a degree of ascetic perfection which in fact sets Guthlac apart from non-eremitic monastics as well as from mankind in general", P.F. Reichardt, "Guthlac A and the Landscape of Spiritual Perfection", p. 338; see K.P. Wentersdorf, "Guthlac A: the Battle for the Beorg".
Throughout the struggle, the emphasis upon the spiritual torment of the demons is paramount, although there are passages in which the poet suggests that the physical man could be attacked by the demons. These passages are made complex by the use of terms which are physical, for what are clearly spiritual assaults: the "feonda færsycytum" of 1186, for example, cannot be taken literally.

The operations of the fiends of Guthlac are quite spectacular, but there are several problems in dealing with the poet's conception of the nature of demons. The limits placed upon the powers of the demons are hazy: there are three references which indicate that the agents of Satan could inflict physical harm, but the precise situation is at best opaque.

In the first instance, the assembled demons threaten the saint with Hellfire ("fyres wylme", 191):

\[ \text{cwædon þæt he on þam beorge byrnan sceolde ond his lichoman lig forswelgan} \] (192-193)

But this threat is called into question by the statement which immediately precedes it:

\[ \text{Ne meahton hy æfeste anforlætan, ac to Gulpaces gæste gelæddun frasunga fela.} \] (187-189)

1. cf. Aelfric's St Furseus (Warner, p. 114): in which Furseus is burnt:

"Hwæt þa deofle þa scutum ond fyræ ond awurpen ane unrihtwise sawle beornende uppenn骨 eadigen Furseum swa þæt his sculdre and his hlear wurden ontende mid þan winngendlicen fyr."

As this takes place in Furseus' soul-journey, the fire is clearly spiritual, not physical - although it causes torment (see Aelfric's "In Octavis Pentecosten Dicendus", 1.476ff).
The latter suggests that the threat of fire is designed to instil fear into the saint, thus weakening his faith in God and, as a consequence, driving him from Croyland. In the poet's eyes, the urge to take flight is as much a temptation as any blandishment subsequently offered by the demons. The saint is, however, firm: buoyed by an angelic presence, he dismisses with scorn the threats against him.

Subsequently, the view that the attack of the evil creatures will be spiritual is expressed more clearly:

Ne mostun hy Guthlaces gæste sceppan,
ne þurh sarstlege sawle gedælan
wip lichoman, ac hy ligesearwum
ahofun hearomstafas... (226-229a)

This is an important statement of the central theological position of the poem: the forces of evil are unable to harm either soul or body with Divine permission and must use the weapons of deceit ("lige searwum") to snare the spirit of man. Man betrays his own soul to Satan: against the firmness and resolve of the truly virtuous spirit, the devil is ineffectual. The attack by fire is referred to by Guthlac himself. As can be seen there is no question that the attack has taken place at all:

Guthlac's speech is a statement of position, dismissing physical pain as a real torment to the virtuous; his speech is hyperbolic and hypothetical; he accepts death as a necessary conclusion to life, and dismisses pain as irrelevant:

Ne meg min lichoma wip þas lænan gesceaf
deþ gedælan, ac he gedreosan sceal,
swa þeos eorþe eall þe ic her on stonde.
Beah ge minne flæschoman fyres wylme
forgtípen gromhydge gifran lege,
næfre ge mec of þissum wordum onwendæþ þædan mec min
gewit gelæstæþ.
"Deah þe ge hine sarum forsæcan, ne motan ge mine sawle gretan, ac ge on betran gebringaþ .....

(371-379a)

Ultimately, the fiends literally get their hands upon the hermit. Again, however, the poem leaves room to speculate upon the real situation. The incident is that of the first vision of Guthlac, when the saint is transported into the air to witness from that vantage point the corruption of the monks in the wealthy monasteries.

The detail of the corrupt monks is an interesting sign of the growing tensions between the monastic and eremitic lives, as well as the criticisms levelled against the monks who "according to Bede, were of use neither to men nor to God".

This ravishment, too, takes place only with Divine indulgence:

"...... No god wolde þæt seo sawl þæs sar þrowade in lichoman, lyfde sepeana þæt hy him mid hondum hrinan mosten, ond þæt friþ wiþ hy gefreobad wære."

(407b-411)

This visit concludes with a failure by the demons to harm the hermit: though we are told:

þæt hy his lichoman leng ne mostan witum wælan ...

the following, parallel statement

ne him wiht gescod þæs þe hy him to teonan purhtogen hæfdon

(424b-426)

throws into doubt the precise nature of the torment. It seems safe to conclude that the torment is mental, though physical pain

is suggested by the word "lichoman". As for the accounts of
demonic activity for the early ascetics, the poet here uses a
literary convention, in which spiritual and mental anguish are
described in physical terms (as they are today - "heart-rending",
"nerve-wracking", "heart-breaking" etc.). This seems clear when
we consider that the purpose of the flight into the heavens is
designed to dismay the saint, to weaken his spiritual resolve by
showing to him the corruption in the heart of the Church. A
later comment confirms this view:

Wæs seo æreste earmra gæsta
costung ofercumen. (437 - 438a)

The entire episode has been a spiritual test. The demons attest
to this as well, in lines 451-469:

Him se werga gæst wordum sægde:
"No we þe þus swiðe swencan þorftan
þær þu fromlice freonda larum
hyran wolde, þa þu hean ond earm
on þis orlege ærest cwoæe,
þa þu gehete þæt þec halig gæst
wip earfeþum eape gescilde,
for þam myrcelse þæþ þec monnes hond
from þinre onsyne æpelum alwyrfde.
In þam mægwhite monge lifgāþ
gyltum forgiefene; nales gode þigāþ,
ae hy lichoman fore lufan cwemāþ
wista wynnum. Swa ge weorþmyndu
in dolum dreame dryhtne gieldāþ.
Fela ge fore monnum miþāþ þæs þe ge hy in mode gehycgāþ;
ne beob eowre dæda dyrne, þæan þe ge hy in dyglice gefremme.
We þec in lyft gelæddun, oftugon þe londes wynna,
woldun þu þe sylfa gesawe þæt we þec soþ onstæeldun.
On a second occasion, the demons are given leave to seize the saint: the poet himself is unable to refrain from commenting on the strangeness of the ways of the Lord:

Sceolde he sares þa gen
dæl adreogan, þeah þe dryhten his
witum weolde. Hwæt, þæt wundra sum
monnum þuhte, þæt he ma wolde
afrum onfengum earme gæstas
hrinan leton, ond þæt hwæþre gelomp!
(515b – 521)

In this, as in the first episode, the demons are restrained, their power over Guthlac strictly limited:

No hy hine to deápe deman moston,
synna hyrdas, ac seó sawul bad
in lichoman leofran tide.
(549 – 551)

On this trip they take Guthlac to Hellmouth, with the evident intention of terrifying the saint with a vision of that dire place, by promising that it is there that his soul will be conveyed upon death.

Hy hine bregdon, budon orlege,
egsan ond ondan arleaslice,
frecne fore, swa biþ feonda þeaw,
þonne hy sobfæstra sawle willaþ
synnum beswican ond searcraetum.
(564 – 578)

1. The treatment handed Guthlac in the vernacular poem stays within the limits on demonic power in orthodox literature. In the Latin prose life, in keeping with the heightened emotional tone of the piece, and probably as a direct result of the influence of the Anthony story, the physical handling of the saint is extremely violent: "They plunged him into the muddy waters of the black marsh. Then they carried him through the wildest parts of the fen, and dragged him through the dense thickets of brambles, tearing his limbs and all his body". (Colgrave, op. cit., p. 103) They also beat him with iron whips (loc. cit.).
Naturally, Guthlac refuses to be cowed by the demons, or by the vision of Hell. He is not harmed by the demons at all:

"Ne sy him banes bryce ne blodig wund,
lices læla ne lapes wiht,
হএস হে গি হিম টো ডারে গেডন মোতান,
ac ge hine gesundne asettaβ হের গি হিনে সিলফো গেনোমান."

(698 - 701)

This statement is, I believe, explicable as a rationalisation of the failure of the demons to harm the hermit when they have him in their power. Although this restraint is expressed as the result of the visit of an angel (Bartholomew) to the demons, this, and the first episode - on which Guthlac gibes at the demons for missing their opportunity have the air of post-hoc rationalisations. Moreover, we are told unequivocally that the devils could only lay hands upon Guthlac with direct permission from Cod - clearly, then, the poem, for all its spectacular demonology, takes the orthodox view. Supernatural evil, as it appears in Guthlac is directed at the soul, not the body. When the spirit is weak, fear replaces faith, and the soul is lost. There is neither warrant for, nor point in attacking the body, since martyrdom, as Guthlac is quick to point out to his opponents, is welcome, for "ge on betran[me] gebringα".(378)

In Christ II, the Germanic and Pauline traditions of imagery result in the depiction of Satan and the demons as a band of defeated warriors. The imagery employed is of a physical conflict in which man is the target for the familiar "shafts" of the devil. These are "idle lustas", against which faith and the angels:
...us gescildæ... wæp sceþpendra
eglum earhfarum, þi læs unholdan
wunde gewyrcen, þonne wrohtbora
in folc godes forþ onsendæ
of his brægdþogan biterne stræl.

(756 - 765)

I believe that the point of the images of attack with missiles is that they are the weapons of stealth and ambush. As opposed to hand weapons, arrows and darts are therefore particularly apt images for the weapons of an unseen, treacherous enemy. Thus there may well be an imputation of cowardice in the employment of this mode of attack, as against the favoured heroic mode of fighting in hand-to-hand combat, with sword and shield.

Certainly in Christ III, the poet labours the point of the guile and subtlety of Satan. Thus the dead in Hell are chastised because they followed the seductive urgings of the fiend:

[þu] min bibod bræce be þines bonan worde.
Fæcnum feonde furbor hyrdes,
sceþpendum scapan, þonne þinum sceppende.

(1393 - 1395)

This is the old tale of mankind's folly, for, deluded by his pride in intellect, man is particularly vulnerable to the Satanic mastery of words. This is reiterated throughout Anglo-Saxon literature. The pattern set by the seduction of Eve is followed by all subsequent temptations: whenever man deals with the urgings of Satan, he must do so in terms of faith. The human intellect is particularly self-blinding, just as Satan's fall was the consequence of his moral faculties being atrophied by his superbia. The dichotomy between mind and heart is as pronounced,
then, as is the body and soul distinction favoured by the debate-poets. In Christ III, it is the will of Satan which brought him down (1519-1522); as for Satan, so for man. The will is the product of mind and thus of body; faith comes from the soul and is the only response to Satan. This view is summarised by Berkouwer, who, in his discussion of the tree of knowledge and the Adam story says:

Exegetes have said that it is not concerned with a purely intellectual knowledge of good and evil, but with a deciding for oneself what good and evil are. In that view the tempter seduces man to a self-determination and autonomy, which could then be exchanged for his own creaturely and dependent "listening" to the commandment of God. 1

In Christ II, the idea of pride in intellect is expressed during a discussion of the gifts of man:

\[\text{Nyle [God] ængum anum ealle gesyllan gæstes snyttru, be læs him gielp sceppe}
\[\text{þurh his anes craft ofer opre forþ. (683 - 685)}\]

It is characteristic of Satan's blindness that in Elene his opening speech 2, typically a lament for his lost power and glory, reflects his continuing rebellion, his refusal to face the fact of his defeat. He has plans to come from Hell; he will wreak evil on mankind:

\[\text{Gen ic findan can}
\[\text{þurh wrohtstafas wiþercyr sippan}
\[\text{of þam weartreafum, ic æcrece wiþþe}
\[\text{operne cyning, se ehtþ bin,}
\[\text{ond he forlæþþ lare þine,}
\[\text{ond manþeawum minum folgap,}
\[\text{ond þec bonne sendeþ in þa sweartestan}
\[\text{ond þa wyrrestan witebrogan... (924b - 931)}\]

2. See Catherine Regan, "Evangelicalism as the Informing Principle of Cynnewulf's Elene", p. 50, for a comment upon the motif of Satan's appearance at critical moments of the saint's life.
Juliana is an interesting development in the Old English treatment of evil and demons, on two counts. The first of these is the poet's perception that a consequence of the fall of demons is the inversion of the traditional comitatus. The demonic thegn grasped by Juliana is a terrified being, as discomfited by the sanctity of the girl as by the prospect of his lord's anger at failure. The hierarchy of Hell is ruled, not by a benevolent and generous king, but by a demonic Heremod.

The second aspect of Juliana which is of prime interest is the description of demonic activity.

Juliana is the one poem in the Anglo-Saxon tradition which offers a significant variation from the doctrine of evil developed in this study. In this poem (469ff.), the devil who visits the saint gives an elaborate account of the activities of demons in the world which includes direct demonic murders. This passage differs, not only from other Anglo-Saxon writings, but from the doctrine of evil in the rest of the poem. Rosemary Woolf has observed:

The precise theological doctrine behind this is not made clear, but it might be suggested that it sprang from a belief in a divine permission to the devil to afflict the good, such as was granted to Satan when he tormented Job, and in a divine commission of the evil into the hands of Satan.¹

This does not, however, seem the most likely explanation for what is a remarkable departure from dogma, if only because the Job passage states unequivocally that Satan was

not permitted to take Job's life (1,12), even though he was permitted to inflict Job with an ulcer (2,7). The connection between diseases and demons was, as we have seen, an orthodox belief. But the Job passage does not supply warrant for the Juliana passage; if anything, the reverse is the case, for as Berkouwer has noted of the book of Job:

> If anywhere it is certainly clear in these chapters that the power of the evil one is no "overwhelming force". Even the most dismal of human tragedies and emergencies are under God's control. "Only spare his life...". The fact that Satan could not touch Job's life is an indication of the border beyond which he was not able to go.1

We are led, inevitably, to the conclusion that the Juliana passage is rather the consequence of the Cynewulfian imagination, than the use of any doctrinal source.

This conclusion is strengthened by an analysis of the structure of the poem. The three accounts of demonic activity are in order of ascending violence. The first (290-315) details the orthodox position; the devils use guile and seduction to snare men of intellect like Simon Magus and Aegeas, who become the human exponents of demonic magic. The second passage (352-417) escalates the drama by giving an account of the demonic

1. Op.cit., p. 119. Amongst the list of demonic slayings, the devil numbers drownings. The only comparable passage to this is in the Peterborough Chronicle entry for 431, where "diabolus, in Creta Iudeis in specie Moysi appares ad terram repromissionis per mare pede sicco perducere promittit; sicque plurimis necatis, reliqui ad Christi gratiam convertuntur." Here, as can be seen, the deaths are the result of the Satanic ability to shape-change; but the real point of the story is that it was the Jews who were the victims - this race is traditionally the victim of Satanic deception; as a consequence of their role in the death of Christ, they seem to have been considered fair game for Satan by the Fathers.
fostering of carnal weaknesses, such as lust. The orthodox response to these temptations is given:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Gif } & \text{ ic ænigne ellenrofne} \\
\text{gemete } & \text{ modigne metodes cempan} \\
\text{wip } & \text{ flanbræce, nele feor þonan} \\
\text{bugan from beaduwe, } & \text{ ac he bord ongean} \\
\text{hefep } & \text{ hygesnottor, haligne scyld,} \\
\text{.... } & \text{ ic sceal feor þonan} \\
\text{heanmod } & \text{ hweorfan, hroðra bidæled} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(382 - 390)

The final confession then "caps" both these passages by giving a lengthy and dramatic description of physical attacks, which have not merely harmed men, but encompassed their deaths:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Surne, } & \text{ þa ic funde} \\
\text{butan Godes tacne, } & \text{ gymelease,} \\
\text{ungebletsade, } & \text{ þa ic bealdlice} \\
\text{þurh mislic cwealm } & \text{ minum hondum} \\
\text{searoþoncum slog.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(490b - 494a)

Thus the three passages form an escalating series in which the dramatic intention is obvious. The conclusion is that all wars, all great calamities, are the direct result of Satan's power. This account of demonic activity has further application to the poem by endowing Juliana with truly heroic stature: here is one of the powerful agents of evil vanquished by the faith of a mere girl.

Shippey suggests that the doctrine of Cynewulf in his poems is somehow an improvement upon the accepted treatment of evil, in the broader hagiographical tradition:

1. The protective power of "Godes tacne", the Cross, naturally recalls the thwarting of the demonic attack in Andreas. It is possible that this incident was recalled by the poet of Juliana and elaborated.
Though Cynewulf translates these stories ...at times with remarkable fidelity, he also bends them away from their dangerous naivety... His technique, essentially, is to build up the forces of evil from the inadequacy of their Latin originals to a state in which, though finally overcome by miracles, they have a reasonable being and a certain strength. The poems turn into choices, conflicts of will, in which the side of right is exalted only through its demonstrations of power, after challenge. 1

The same admiring tone is heard in Wrenn's appraisal of the poetic technique and achievements of Cynewulf:

Passing from the heroic paraphrasing of Old Testament material of the Caedmonian school, Cynewulf seems to have led the way in a great expansion of religious verse, treating hagiographical and homiletic sources along with Gospel themes with freedom, and sometimes showing a very real poetic "enlargement". 2

It is certainly true that Cynewulf has changed the nature of hagiography, although perhaps the admiration of poetic individuality which inspires the comments of Wrenn and Shippey is somewhat misapplied to theological writing. I would certainly dispute the contention that the evil represented by Aelfric or the Genesis B poet lacks "strength". But the point is that the demons in Juliana far exceed the brief given them by Cod in all other Christian works. This "freedom" is far more dangerous in doctrinal terms than any "naivety" which may colour the demonology of the first-millenium church.

1. T.A. Shippey, Old English Verse, p. 168. His modernism is perhaps best summed up by his comment that early hagiographies display "a totally uncritical attitude to the miraculous" (loc. cit.).

2. C.L. Wrenn, A Study of Old English Literature, p. 129. On the development of the poetic treatment of Christian doctrines, from Caedmon to Cynewulf, see Rhea Workman's dissertation "The Concept of Hell in Old English Poetry". J.M. Garnett, in "The Latin and the Anglo-Saxon Juliana" comments upon the free treatment of the Latin source by Cynewulf, and concludes that all differences are the result of the "poetic imagination" of the writer. (p. 293)
Juliana is an artistic rather than a theological construct. The poem possibly reflects a growing tendency, in the hagiographical tradition, to elaborate upon the original as Shippey suggests. But this elaboration has removed Juliana from its source by a considerable distance, and it is a matter of no small wonder that the poem has survived. The very fact that it is a poem may well have been the critical factor in that survival. The dogma of evil, expressed in homiletic material, must have been under considerable scrutiny, whilst the poetry (in which the view of Germanic heroism, the comitatus and the elaborated Pauline battle imagery are predominant), may have escaped close theological scrutiny. However, this departure from doctrine is important, for it may well be a symptom of a radically different theological basis which underpins Cynewulfian verse. This may well prove a profitable study at a later date.

This survey of Anglo-Saxon demonology is by no means exhaustive of all the sources available, but the examples given are representative of the doctrine of demonic evil which Anglo-Saxon writers developed from their Latin models. In particular, we may observe the Gregorian hagiographical style, running through the saint's lives of the Old English tradition, and influencing the conception of evil. The central tenets of Gregory's beliefs are those of the Anglo-Saxons: these are the ubiquity of demons, the efficacy of faith and the dangers of self-reliance when combatting demonic power.

Evil in this world is, for the Anglo-Saxons, the result of human frailty and demonic envy. Human frailty is the cause of
the original fall of mankind from grace, and continues to provide Satan and his watchful agents with innumerable opportunities to strike at man. Sin, the consequence of these two realities, is the permanent state of mankind without faith.

As to the demons themselves, we have seen that, with the notable exception of Juliana and Felix's Life of Guthlac, strict limits are placed upon the power of the demons to harm physical man. This is the direct result of a firmly held doctrine which is developed from Job and from the patristic discussion of evil. In Felix's work, the harm done to the saint is swiftly repaired by angelic intervention; in Juliana, the men slain by demons remain dead, the only example of this in Anglo-Saxon literature, except for the Peterborough Chronicle entry for 431 (see above).

Thus the rule that the demons were incapable of killing men, considering that there are so very few exceptions in the vast number of accounts of demonic activity, is clearly an important part of dogma in the Anglo-Saxon church.

The characteristic description of the demons in action, in which they flit through the air, fire their unseen darts into the soul, change their shapes to delude the gullible, is perfectly orthodox. Thus, as I shall argue in a subsequent chapter, it is impossible to believe that Grendel is a demon in the Christian tradition.

Spiritual evil is manifested in sin. Thus, whilst the Old English homilists were keenly aware that the world was not morally perfect, they attributed this to the sins of men. There
is no suggestion that the creation itself is less than perfect. All the evil in the world is the direct result of sin, the fruit of free-will united with carnal appetite spurred on by Satan. In the context of this evil, even great tragedies such as the Viking invasions are the Divine punishment for sin; Wulfstan sees an England fallen into chaos, in which the traditional bonds of society have irreparably broken down, and English virtues vanished, all "þurh Godes yrre, and flotmen swa swa strange þurh Godes geþafunge þæt oft on gefeohhte an feseþ tyne and hwilum læs and hwilum ma, eal for urum synnum."  

1. Sermo Lupi ad Anglos, 11. 126-129.