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Hagiographical Demon or Liturgical Devil? Demonology and Baptismal Imagery in Cynewulf's *Elene*

David F. Johnson

In the course of his exposition of the Book of Job, Gregory the Great delineates three periods in the 'mundane career' of the Devil. In the first, Satan had a rightful dominion over all men. At the outset of the second period, Christ binds Satan in Hell at the Harrowing. Henceforth his power on earth is curtailed, but he still holds the hearts of unbelievers. In the third period, at the end of the world, he will be loosed from his bonds to return as Antichrist.¹

When portraying demonic agency at the literal level in their narratives, early medieval poets and hagiographers – especially Anglo-Saxon ones – seem to have respected the narratological restrictions inherent in these divisions. Thus literal, literary demonic activity as portrayed in narratives situated in the second Gregorian period is almost exclusively attributed to subordinate demons, not the Ancient Adversary himself. Early medieval poets and hagiographers adhered to this 'rule' when they wrote their narratives, either because they had Gregory's periodic divisions in mind, or because they were conscious of the literal fact of Satan's state of bondage after the Harrowing. Another factor of some influence may have been the *Life of St. Anthony*; so many conflicts with demons in hagiography having been patterned to some extent on the Antonian model. On the literal level Anthony's combat in the desert is waged against Satan's subordinate demons, not the Devil himself. Demonic agency in early medieval hagiography, then, is most frequently represented by what we might call the 'hagiographical demon', by which we always mean a subordinate demon.²

In the light of this widespread tendency in early medieval hagiography, the appearance of Satan in the Old English *Elene* is clearly an anomaly. In this adaptation by Cynewulf of the *Acta Cyriaci*, it is the Devil himself who confronts both the Empress Helen and the Jew Judas in a narrative that is squarely and

unambiguously situated in the second Gregorian period.³ Satan's appearance in *Elene* remains a narratological problem, and it invites resolution.

The text closest to what must have been Cynewulf's main Latin source does not identify the devil appearing there as Satan. Judas has just revealed which of the crosses found in the earth is the True Cross when this devil makes his appearance:

Sed omnium
bonorum semper inuidus diabolus cum
furore uocis ferebatur in aera, dicens: 'Quis
iterum hic est qui non permittit me susci-
pere animas eorum? Ihesu Nazarene, omnes
traxisti ad te et lignum tuum manifestasti
aduersus meos. Iudas, quid hoc fecisti? Non-
ne prior per Iudam traditionem faci? et ecce
nunc per Iudam hinc eicior. Inueni et ego quid
faciam aduersus te: Suscitabo alium regem
qui derelinquat crucifixum et meis sequa-
tur consiliis et iniquis tormentis et nunc
crucifixum negauis.'⁴

(287-98)

While the Latin 'diabolus' is an ambiguous term that could refer equally well to Satan or to any one of his subordinate *dæmones*, the contents of the devil's speech suggest that we are dealing with Old Nick himself. Here he refers to the betrayal of Christ which 'he' had brought about through Judas Iscariot. Moreover, the devil mentions the souls that Jesus denies him, which suggests that indeed the 'he' alluded to here is the head of the impious, i.e. Satan himself. Finally, the demon's plot to raise up an apostate king against Judas as described by this devil may strike one as being of the magnitude one would expect only Satan could accomplish.

This identification is not, however, as straightforward as it may first seem. In another confrontation between saint and devil adapted by Cynewulf, the devil captured by St Juliana in the poem of that name appears as well to be none other than the Ancient Adversary himself. The list of fiendish accomplishments to which he confesses certainly points in this direction. These crimes include the wounding of Christ on the Cross, the instigation of various persecutions and the martyrdoms of Peter, Paul, and Andrew. A leaf is missing from the Exeter Book

at just the point where the devil begins his catalogue of evil deeds, so the text containing his earliest efforts is missing. From the Latin analogue, however, we learn that this devil had led Adam to fall, Cain to slay Abel, and had himself incited Judas to betray Christ.⁵ Just as in the *Acta Cyriaci*, then, we would seem to be dealing with none other than the Author of Sin. And yet this devil reveals, in both the Latin and Old English versions, that he is not the *hellwarena cyning* at all, but merely one of his 'sons'.⁶ Thus while the context and nature of his actions would seem to mark the devil in *Juliana* as Satan, the subsequent narrative reveals him to be nothing more than a subordinate demon.⁷ In the Latin analogues to *Elene* our identification could arguably go either way. We seem to be dealing with Satan himself, but a certain amount of ambiguity remains which only the epithet *Satanas* could dispel altogether.

Cynewulf, however, has done much to disambiguate this identification, as his adaptation of the scene illustrates. Judas has just identified the True Cross through a miracle of resurrection: having raised up the other two crosses in the presence of a dead youth with no visible effects, he does the same with the third, whereupon the boy springs immediately to life. Those witnessing the event offer suitable thanks and praise to the glory of God. This is the point at which the devil appears:

Ongan þa hleoðrian helledeofol,
eatol æclæca, yfela gemyndig:⁸
(898-99)

The absence of the definite article in Cynewulf's introduction of the devil leaves this reference, taken in isolation, open to ambiguous interpretation. 'Helledeofol' might equally designate *the* devil of hell, or *a* devil of hell. Thus far, then, the matter remains unresolved.

Hwæt is þis, la, manna, þe minne eft
þurh fyrngesflit folgaþ wyrdeð,
iceð ealdne nið, æhta strudeð?
þis is singal sacu. Sawla ne moton
manfremmende in minum leng

æhtum wunigan. Nu cwom elþeodig,
þone ic ær on firenum fæstne talde,
hafð mec bereafod rihta gehwylces,
feohgestrona. Nis ðæt fægær sið.⁹

(902-10; italics mine)

In typical fashion, Cynewulf has expanded one line of the Latin source ('*Quis iterum hic est qui non permittit me suscipere animas eorum?*') to nine in Old English. But his expansion embraces more than mere embellishment. It serves above all to clarify the identification of this devil as Satan. Note Cynewulf's amplification of 'iterum': this is not just another encounter between a saint and a hagiographical demon, but the renewal and perpetuation of an ancient strife, the *fyrngeflit*, the 'ealdne nið' between Christ and Satan. Moreover the 'possessions' (*æhta*) being denied here are laid claim to by the devil as his own in much more emphatic terms than is the case in the Latin analogues. In the devil's words, Judas is destroying his following ('*minne* [. . .] *folgað*'), and the souls he refers to are suddenly no longer in *his* possession ('*in minum* [. . .] *æhtum*').¹⁰

Moreover, ll. 907b-10a ('*Nu cwom elþeodig* [. . .] *hafð mec bereafod rihta gehwylces*') constitute a reference to the doctrine of the 'devil's rights', which holds that after the fall of man, but before Christ's sacrifice, Satan held sway over mankind as the Prince of the World. The loss of these 'rights', together with the binding of the Devil in hell, mark the transition from the first Gregorian period in Satan's mundane career to the second.¹¹

Cynewulf's addition of this material to the devil's speech establishes the unambiguous identification – on the literal level – of this devil as Satan himself. If this identification seems by now obvious, then we may well ask why Cynewulf chose to develop a potentially incongruous characterization in his poem. Normal hagiographical convention would have called for the appearance of the 'hagiographical demon', rather than the 'hellwarena cyning' himself. I shall argue that he recognized in his sources a framework for a reading of the events that stresses its symbolic and spiritual meaning, as opposed to its literal significance. The main thrust of my argument here is that with the appearance of Satan at this juncture in the narrative, the historically chronological framework of the literal account of the legend gives way to the 'timeless' aspect of the baptismal liturgy. It is the Old Adversary himself who appears in the Christian baptismal rites; consequently, instead of the 'hagiographical demon', Cynewulf has given us the 'liturgical Devil'.

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I am not the first to argue that Cynewulf recognized in his sources the potential for a symbolic and spiritual treatment of the Finding of the True Cross legend, as opposed to a historically literal one. Many critics have read the poem in this way. Catherine Regan emphasizes Cynewulf's concern with the spiritual dimension of the poem, and concludes that *Elene* is a poem 'about the Church and its mission to lead men to salvation through acceptance of the Cross, the symbol of the redemptive act'.¹² Her study is also the most discerning discussion of baptismal allusions in the poem. She finds at the narrative level of the poem sufficient – and I think convincing – parallels for a thematic reading that allows for some fairly pervasive baptismal imagery, and it is this imagery that establishes the basis for our identification of the demon here as the 'Liturgical Devil'. For example, Regan reads the interrogation and disciplining of Judas by Elene – which leads to his acceptance of the faith and cooperation in her search for the True Cross – in terms of Catechesis:

Elene is preparing Judas for Baptism. Judas is at first an unwilling Catechumen, but Cynewulf's audience must have recognized in the instructional and ascetic pattern of the action that Elene's aim is to guide Judas to a profession of faith. When Judas' instruction is described as preparation for Baptism, it is important to recall that Baptism was the center of the sacramental system of the early Church and that the administration of the sacrament was merely the climax of the baptismal liturgy. That liturgy included the long process – the duration could be weeks, months, even years – by which the candidate was gradually liberated from the bonds of darkness and brought into the light of the Christian community. In terms of the liturgy of the early Church, the scene can be described more exactly as a representation of Judas' Catechumenate. There are meaningful correspondences between Elene's treatment of Judas and the early Church's role in forming the Catechumen.¹³

Regan makes a number of insightful observations concerning the associations between this scene and the baptismal liturgy, but I shall limit citation here to just a few of the most important ones. She notes, for example, how the first dialogue between Judas and Elene is thematically the most significant because it demonstrates that Cynewulf is thinking in symbolic terms: 'Elene offers Judas the moral instruction of the Catechesis in the form of the Two Ways'.¹⁴ Such instruction appears in the earliest catechetical treatise as preparation for Baptism.¹⁵ Commenting on the well-known 'bread and stone' passage (ll. 611-18),¹⁶ Regan points out how richly ironic and meaningful are the allusions here in the context of Baptism:

The candidate for Baptism was believed to share in the temptation of Christ. Because the early Church placed great emphasis on the soul's conflict with Satan, it held that the soul remained in the power of Satan until it was infused by the Holy Spirit. In fact the baptismal liturgy can be thought of as a continual struggle to free the soul from the bonds of Satan. Hence both Christ and the candidate struggle against the temptations of Satan. [. . .] When Judas replies to Elene, he alludes to a Biblical passage traditionally linked to Baptism (i.e. Matthew 4. 1-11, D.J.). The poet's audience must have made this connection and recognized in the response an ironic foreshadowing of Judas' Catechumenate.¹⁷

Likewise Judas' imprisonment in the dry pit (ll. 691-98) may be interpreted as preparation for Baptism: 'Judas prepares for Baptism by his fast and in the week-long period is purged of his sins'.¹⁸ Regan expounds more fully on Judas' ordeal and its relation to Baptism:

In terms of his potential sanctity and Elene's role in that spiritual growth, Judas' pain is specific preparation for his Baptism. It must be remembered that one did not simply 'join' the Church. The candidate underwent a traumatic change in his life. He was required to throw off old ways and reform his habits in keeping with his new ideals. He was obliged to die with Christ so that he might rise with him. Fasting was one of the principal means used by the

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Church to free the Catechumen from the bonds of Satan—and by his defiance of Elene, Judas has shown how firmly those bonds enslave him. The hunger he suffers is the physical pain known to every Catechumen. Elene's prescribed fast is a necessary step in Judas' spiritual development and is in accordance with early Church teachings on how to prepare the Catechumen for Baptism.¹⁹

Judas' subsequent submission to Elene's wish (ll. 699-708) may seem at first sight to be crass capitulation under duress.²⁰ Regan demonstrates that in fact it constitutes his acceptance and confession of faith: he finally perceives the 'truth' about the Tree of Life, i.e. the truth of Christianity, not just the Cross's location. Such pre-baptismal instruction and acceptance of the truth of faith are of course essential elements in the process of joining the Church. Alcuin stresses both in a letter to Arn, archbishop of Salzburg:

Ite, docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.' Huius vero praecepti ordinem beatus Hieronimus in commentario suo, que in evangelium sancti Mathei scripsit, ita exposuit: 'Primum docent omnes gentes, deinde doctas intingunt aqua. Non enim potest fieri, ut corpus baptismi accipiat sacramentum, nisi ante anima fidei susceperit veritatem'²¹

The actual raising of the Cross is another scene which illustrates Cynewulf's emphasis on the spiritual meaning of the legend. As Regan remarks, 'If *Elene* were to be read merely as a recounting of the finding of the Cross, we could reasonably expect that the poet would give special attention to the actual finding of the Cross'.²² This scene, however, receives none of the elaboration that characterizes other passages, and instead of focusing on the Cross itself, as one might have expected, Cynewulf concentrates on the *effect* that the miracle of the resurrection of the dead youth has on the Jews who witness it. Thus the finding of the true Cross is not the discovery of a mere relic, but more importantly the unveiling of a spiritual truth: 'Finding the true Cross is only important insofar as it is a symbol of the spiritual discovery of the Cross which each man must make for himself'.²³

That Cynewulf seems consciously to have avoided portraying the Cross merely as a powerful relic is borne out by a detail that Regan overlooks. In a subtle departure from his source text, Cynewulf further defuses any such associations. In the Latin analogues, each cross is tested by laying it upon the body of the dead youth ('posuit super eum singulas cruces,' and 'imposita autem tertia cruce dominica super mortuum'),²⁴ but in *Elene* the crosses are not placed on the body, but raised up over it (ll. 878-81 'ond [he] up ahof [. . .] þara roda twa'; ll. 883-83: 'þa sio þridde wæs ahafen halig²⁵'). This difference in action is paralleled by a difference in the nature of the miracle Cynewulf intends to convey. Traditionally the efficacy of a relic is made manifest through contact in one form or another (either directly, as in touching, or slightly more indirectly, as in washing with or ingesting pulverized bits of a given relic mixed with water). Here, however, the power of the Cross as spiritual symbol emanates outward and touches all those present, not just the dead youth, but Judas and (eventually) the Jews as well. Consequently, the 'raising' of the Cross brings about recognition of its spiritual significance among many of the Jews present.²⁶

Once the true Cross has been identified and the crowd has praised God, Satan himself appears before Judas and delivers the speech we have dealt with above. Regan recognizes this moment as an important one in terms of baptismal imagery, yet she underestimates the significance of Satan's advent: 'The Devil commonly appears in saints' lives when good deeds are being performed by the hero, and such an appearance thus becomes a common symbol for the triumph of good over evil'.²⁷ This statement is accurate only in a general sort of way, and it clouds the issue precisely because it is not Satan who commonly appears in the saints' lives, but rather the members of his corporate body, his subordinate demons. The devil appears in those narratives only in so far as the minions he sends forth to plague mankind are equated with him.²⁸ Rather, the appearance of the Devil (i.e. the liturgical Devil) is a virtually certain sign linking the episode to the liturgy of Baptism and foregrounding the figurative, symbolic dimension of the narrative's meaning.

Yet another passage in *Elene* exhibits baptismal associations in an oblique kind of way, and it, too, is without counterpart in the *Acta Cyriaci*. In ll. 918b-21a, Satan laments:

ic þa rode ne þearf
hleahre herigean; hwæt, se hælend me
in þam engan ham oft getynde,
geomrum to sorge!²⁹

Now the binding of Satan in Hell by Christ is a ubiquitous motif, but Satan's remark on his binding by Christ in these lines is not without interpretive problems. How are we to reconcile the contradictory views of Satan's historical binding by Christ at the harrowing, and Satan's clear allusion here to Christ's 'repetition' of the same act? Some critics have sought to do so by positing – at a literal level – frequent and multiple appearances of Satan before the saints.³⁰ But this is a view that would be untenable to any who believed in the historicity of the harrowing of hell.³¹ The point is, of course, that taken literally the reference in these lines to a 'periodic' binding of Satan does not make sense, but read figuratively and interpreted in a different temporal context, it may. It is important to realize that the catechumenate and subsequent baptism of the convert was viewed as a symbolic re-enactment of Christ's Temptation, Passion, and Resurrection; thus each time a new Christian is baptised, the struggle between Christ and Satan is symbolically renewed, and Satan loses a soul over which he previously had control. Only in terms of the ritual and figurative catechumenate and baptism of Judas does the appearance of Satan and the allusion to his being 'often bound' by Christ make sense. The apparent narrative incongruity is dispelled once we realise that Satan appears here in a scene which parallels his only official role in the Christian liturgy: the Devil in Baptism.

One of the central themes in the baptismal liturgy is the catechumen's renunciation of the Devil, and at least two critics have justly compared Judas' response to Satan's speech in these terms.³² Cynewulf has again taken one line of text from his source, and expanded it greatly. 'Qui mortuos suscitavit, Christus ipse te damnet in abyssum ignis aeterni!'³³ becomes in the Old English:

Ne þearft ðu swa swiðe, synna gemyndig,
sar niwigan ond sæce ræran,
morðres manfrea, þæt þe se mihtiga cyning
in neolnesse nyðer bescufeð,
synwyrccende, in susla grund
domes leasne, se ðe deadra feala
worde awehte. Wite ðu þe gearwor

þæt ðu unsnyttrum anforlete
leohta beorhtost ond lufan dryhtnes,
þone fægran gefean, ond on fyrbæðe
suslum beþrunge syððan wunodest,
ade onæled, ond þær awa scealt,
wiðerhygende, werðu dreogan,
yrmðu butan ende.³⁴

(939-52)

Regan compares Judas' renunciation here with the early forms of the baptismal liturgy, such as that found in the third-century text, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*. These early versions of the renunciation took the form of a statement uttered directly at Satan, using first and second person verbs:³⁵

9. And when the presbyter takes hold of each one of those who are to be baptized, let him bid him renounce saying:

I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy service and all thy works.³⁶

The later formulas typically take the form of dialogues between catechumen and presbyter:

Abrenuntias satanae.

Rx. Abrenuntio.

Et omnibus operibus eius.

Rx. Abrenuntio.

Et omnibus pompis eius.

Rx. Abrenuntio³⁷

But these renunciatory formulas do not closely resemble Judas' speech in either form or content. A survey of the liturgy for baptism in some early texts as well as the later Sacramentaries shows a closer affinity between Judas' speech and the formulas for *exorcism* spoken by the priest *after* the catechumen has been signed. The liturgy for Holy Saturday in the Gelasian Sacramentary, for example, has the following exorcism:

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Be not deceived, Satan: punishment threatens thee, torment threatens thee, the day of judgement threatens thee, the day of punishment, the day which shall come as a burning furnace, when everlasting destruction shall come upon thee and all thine angels. And, therefore, accursed one, give honour to God, the living and the true, give honour to Jesus Christ his Son, and to the Holy Spirit, in whose Name and power I command thee. Come out and depart from this servant of God, whom this day our Lord Jesus Christ has deigned to call to the gift of his holy grace and of his blessing and the fount of baptism: that he may become his temple, through the water of regeneration unto the remission of sins, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall come to judge the quick and the dead and this world by fire.³⁸

The correlations between this and the passage in *Elene* are not, of course, exact, but it should be obvious that the above exorcism has more in common with Judas' retort than do the renunciation formulas current during his day. The exorcism is addressed directly to Satan; he is reminded of the torments and punishment that threaten him; he is adjured to honor the Lord, and finally there may be some parallel between Judas' statement that Christ will come to thrust him down into hell and the last sentiment in the exorcism: that Christ 'shall come to judge the quick and the dead and this world by fire'. I hasten to add that I claim no connection between this text and *Elene*; I offer it merely as a suggestion for the kind of liturgical formula that Cynewulf may have been familiar with.

The above parallels suggest a subtle shift in Judas' role from catechumen to 'priest'. In effect Judas combines aspects of two separate yet related symbolic roles. If Cynewulf derived inspiration from the baptismal liturgy, and if it is reasonable to infer from our analysis of his speech that he did indeed find a pattern for it in the exorcisms from that liturgy, then we may be justified in seeing an additional dimension to Judas' character emerging at this juncture. Judas, symbolically a catechumen, already imbued with the Holy Spirit and the 'higher wisdom of *sapientia*', foreshadows with this retort his later role of Bishop, a role that will demand of him that he guide other catechumens through the initiation rites of Christian baptism. Read in this way, Judas' speech is a form of exorcism not only of the boy just raised from the dead, but also of all of those witnessing

the event. In this capacity it forms one of the stages in the catechumenate of the Jews who later receive baptism: they are 'signed' by the raised Cross (ll. 883-89a), they confess their faith and offer praise to God (ll. 889b-98a); are exorcized by Judas (ll. 939-52), and finally they accept the truth of the faith in a subsequent symbolic declaration at the miracle of the finding of the nails (ll. 1120-25).

These parallels to the baptismal liturgy are, again, inexact and rather impressionistic ones, and I am by no means arguing that Cynewulf adhered in any kind of strict fashion to the liturgy for baptism set out by the Sacramentary with which he was familiar.³⁹ Cynewulf was, after all, following the narrative of the legend he used as his source, not providing a blow-by-blow account of the catechumenate and baptism of a new Christian. I do, however, believe that he capitalized on and expanded certain details, most of which I have touched on here, which his contemplation of the sources led him to associate with the baptismal liturgy. The multivalent and overlapping roles of Judas as catechumen and baptismal exorcist may be just one result of Cynewulf's awareness of the symbolism and liturgical overtones he perceived in the *Inventio Crucis* legend. By dispelling any doubt concerning Satan's presence and role in the confrontation with Judas, by bringing out in full relief all of the baptismal imagery present in his source text, Cynewulf "'marks", as it were, the meaning of this episode by significant allusion'.⁴⁰

I have by no means exhausted the baptismal imagery that the poem *Elene* might be shown to reveal, but it is time to move on to my final point. It has long been known that certain Old English religious poems were modelled in whole or part on the liturgy, and Kenneth Sisam's conclusion concerning Cynewulf's choice of subject matter for his poems is relevant: 'All that can safely be said is that his subjects are suggested by the calendar and the services of the Church'.⁴¹ But which day in the Christian calendar or which services influenced Cynewulf? The feast that naturally suggests itself in this context is that of the Invention of the Cross, which, as Sisam observes, derived from France and was established in England before the end of the eighth century. Both Sisam and Regan imply that it was this feast which exerted the main influence on Cynewulf's adaptation, though neither scholar comments explicitly on liturgical echoes.⁴² Indeed, the poem itself mentions this feast, following its source in reporting how Helen called upon all Christians to honour the day on which the Cross was found: 'Wæs þa lencten agan / butan vi nihtum ær sumeres cyme / on Maias Kl.' (1226b-28a: Spring had approached to within 6 days of Summer's arrival in the month of May). While the feast of May 3rd and *Elene* are obviously concerned with the same legendary

material, there is very little in the service of the feast of the Invention of the Cross to recommend it as any but the most casual dramatic 'source' of inspiration for Cynewulf's poem.

There are, however, indications in the poem that Cynewulf may have been influenced by the liturgy for Holy Saturday, not least of which is the baptismal imagery discussed so far, for certainly in the early Church Holy Saturday was (together with Pentecost) the day set aside for baptism. Another possible connection is the emphasis Cynewulf places in his poem on the imagery of light versus darkness.⁴³ Nowhere in the liturgy does this imagery seem so prevalent as in that for Holy Saturday, for it is there that the service for the Easter Vigil opens with the lighting of the new fire and the blessing of the paschal candle, a ritual omitted in the liturgy for the other great day of baptism, Whitsunday.

And then there is Cynewulf's pointed emphasis on the miracle of the resurrection of the youth taking place at the ninth hour. Whereas the *Acta Cyriaci* mentions this but once, Cynewulf includes it twice, the first instance (not present in his source) being much embellished. In the Latin, the crosses have been carried into the city, when the narrator simply reports: 'Et circa ora nona ferebatur mortuus quidam iuuenis in gravatum'.⁴⁴ Cynewulf again expands on the original, chiefly by means of repetition, but moreover stages the witnesses to this miracle in a way that is suggestive of a liturgical situation:

Gesæton sigerofo, sang ahofon,
rædþehtende, ymb þa rode þreo
oð þa nigoðan tid, hæfdon neowne gefean
mærðum gemeted.⁴⁵

(867-70a)

A few lines later Cynewulf mentions this detail again, this time in the spot corresponding to the source. The possible connection of this detail with the liturgy for Holy Saturday pertains to the Easter Vigil service. As Kelly remarks, this service originally began after dark, but by the eighth century it was anticipated in the afternoon, and eventually moved back into the morning.⁴⁶ In at least one sacramentary, the *Ordo romanus*, this vigil was specified to begin a little after the ninth hour.⁴⁷ It deserves notice here that the *Regularis concordia* stipulates that the aforementioned lighting of the new fire and the blessing of the paschal candle was to commence on Holy Saturday at the ninth hour: 'Sabbato Sancto hora nona, ueniente abbate in ecclesiam cum fratribus, nous, ut

supradictum est, afferatur ignis. Posito uero cereo ante altare, ex illo accendatur igne'.⁴⁸ Finally, to these potential associations we might add the one suggested by Stepsis and Rand, who call attention to the ceremony re-enacting the burial (on Good Friday) and discovery (on Holy Saturday) of the Cross as described in the *Regularis concordia*. It is 'this association of the finding of the Cross with the symbolic illumination of the world' presented in the drama of the liturgy that may have prompted Cynewulf to develop these important themes in *Elene*.⁴⁹

The issue throughout this discussion has not necessarily been 'what did Cynewulf add to his sources that was not there before?' but rather 'what did he recognize in his sources, in terms of potential for thematic development?'. It is the answer to this question that takes us closer to a better understanding of his use of demonology in this poem. With the appearance of Satan immediately following the raising of the Cross, the narrative shifts as it were to spiritual, liturgical time. Cynewulf is likely to have recognized the anomaly of Satan's personal appearance before Judas in his source, but it seems similarly clear that he recognized as well the symbolic force of that appearance. In any other saint's life or legend the situation might have called for the appearance of the 'hagiographical demon'. But in Cynewulf's treatment of the legend, which he perceived as being concerned primarily with the power of the Cross to effect spiritual revelation and salvation, the poet goes to great lengths to demonstrate his concern 'with various aspects of the larger spiritual implications of this history of the discovery of the Cross'.⁵⁰ He does this by presenting the conversion of Judas in terms of figural narrative. It is in just such a narratological situation that the appearance of the liturgical Devil is both logical and effective.

NOTES

¹ See C. Abbtmeyer, *Old English Poetical Motives Derived from the Doctrine of Sin* (New York: Wilson, 1903) p. 23. Abbtmeyer's analysis, with citations from Gregory's *Moralia* is as follows: 'Gregory distinguishes three periods of Satan's dominion. Before Christ he had a rightful claim upon all men, they all followed him freely, being bound in sin and guilt (*Mor.* II. c. 22). God from just cause gave this dominion to the wicked one. (*Mor.* II. c. 10). The second period begins with Christ. Through Him the devil loses his right in man and his power over him (*Mor.* I. c. 24, 26; III c. 15, 16). God curbs his power (*Mor.* XXXII. c. 15). He can no longer rule over saints as his possession, but can only persecute them outwardly (*Mor.* XVII. c. 32). But he still holds the hearts of unbelievers. To this extent he is bound. In the third period, at the end of the world, he will be loosed again and return as Antichrist to attack men with all his fury (*Mor.* IV. c. 9). Antichrist is a man of the tribe of Dan (*Mor.* XXXI. c. 24), in whom the devil fully dwells. He is thus the counterpart of the incarnate Logos. He is therefore "reprobis, perditus, damnatus homo, quem in fine mundi apostata angelus assumet" (*Mor.* XIII. c. 10). He is the greatest of sinners, the personification of sin, the vessel of perdition (*Mor.* XIV. c. 21)'.

² For a different interpretation of demonic agency in early medieval narrative, see Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), especially chapter 5, 'The Devil and the Demons', in which he argues that 'Writers exhibit no anxiety over identifying the devil with multiple demons or indwelling spirits; the texts reflect a complete integration of the two basic models for the expression of evil in the world (i.e. its embodiment as the devil vs. its manifestation as a horde of demons)'; p. 90. The plasticity and figurative valence of such references notwithstanding, an early medieval writer or reader, when pressed, would have distinguished between the ultimate source of evil (Satan) and demonic agency at the literal level of any given narrative (one demon, a horde of demons, Satan himself).

³ That is, after Christ's passion and Harrowing of hell, but before the advent of the Anti-Christ.

⁴ I cite the text from A. Holder, *Inventio Sanctae Crucis* (Leipzig: In aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1889), p. 10; the punctuation is my own. 'But a/the devil, always envious of all good things, shouted with furious voice into the air, saying, "Who is this who again will not allow me to receive their souls? Jesus, Nazarene, you have drawn all men to you, and you have uncovered your tree against me. Judas, what have you done? Was it not through a Judas that I first brought about betrayal? Behold, now through a Judas I am cast out of here. I shall find some way to oppose you: I will raise up another king who will forsake [Christ] crucified and follow my counsels, and having suffered grievous torments you will forsake Christ crucified"'.

⁵ AA SS. XVI Februarii, 'Acta auctore anonymo,' vol. 2, p. 875.

⁶ *The Exeter Book*, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetry Records, 3 (New York: New York Columbia Press; London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1936), pp. 122, ll.311b-44. The Latin *Vita* is even more explicit: 'B. Juliana dixit: Quis te misit ad me? Dæmon respondit: Satanus pater meus'. [Juliana said: 'Who sent you to me?' The demon responded: 'Satan, my father.'] Quoted after Rosemary Woolf, ed., *Juliana*, Methuen's Old English Library (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966), p. 35, note to l. 321. In the Latin this creature is referred to from the outset as *dæmon*, and he is even named: 'Ego sum Belial dæmon, quem aliqui Iopher Nigrum vocant' [I am am the demon Belial, whom some call Iopher Nigrum] (*Acta Sanctorum*, XVI Februarii, p. 875).

⁷ This state of affairs becomes less confusing to the modern reader once we recall Tyconius' seventh rule, regarding the Devil and his Body: 'Sometimes things are said concerning the Devil which may be understood not with reference to himself, but rather to his body'. See my 'Old English Religious Poetry', in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. by Henk Aertsen and Rolf H. Bremmer (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), pp. 159-75, and Dendle's discussion of this at pp. 87-92.

⁸ 'Then a false, flying fiend rose up into the air there. The hell-devil, a terrible monster intent upon evil [. . .].'

⁹ 'Then a false, flying fiend rose up into the air there. The hell-devil, a terrible monster intent upon evil, cried out: "Lo! What man is this who once again destroys my following through ancient strife, who increases old animosity and plunders my possessions? This is everlasting persecution. Evil-doing souls may no longer remian in my possession. Now a stranger has come, one whom previously I reckoned to be bound fast by sin, and he has robbed me of all my rights, my treasures. This is no fair undertaking."'

¹⁰ Three of the five manuscripts collated by Holder have the reading *eorum* in this line, while the other two read *meorum* (Holder, p. 25). Naturally there is no way of knowing which Cynewulf saw, but the existence of this variant renders it at least possible that Cynewulf changed the line to give possession of the souls to Satan. Whether he saw *eorum* or *meorum* in his original, he certainly emphasized this telling detail in his Old English adaptation.

¹¹ In a chapter devoted to this theme in Cynewulf's *Elene*, Earl R. Anderson succinctly summarizes the two soteriological theories current in the early Middle Ages (Earl R. Anderson, *Cynewulf: Structure, Style and Theme in His Poetry* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983) pp. 141-42). On the one hand there was the 'satisfaction' theory of atonement (based on Hebrews 10. 1-25) in which the crucifixion was seen as a *sacrifice made* by Christ on behalf of man. This view stresses, as Anderson observes, the relationship between God and man. The devil's-rights theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the relationship between Christ and Satan, and allows for portrayal of the crucifixion as a conflict between the two, the

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Devil ultimately being tricked and stripped of his 'rights' by Christ's triumphant victory on the Cross. For more on the coexistence of these two seemingly contradictory theories, see Rosemary Woolf, 'Doctrinal Influences in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Medium Ævum*, 27 (1958), 137-53 (pp. 142-43). One example from a text with which the Anglo-Saxons were certainly familiar should suffice to illustrate the Devil's Rights theory: Gregory's *Mor.* II, ch. 22, ¶ 41 (on Job 1. 7):

Adam quippe, ante aduentum Domini, omnes post se gentium nationes traxit. Circuiuit et perambulauit quia per corda gentium iniquitatis suae uestigia impressit. Cadens enim a sublimibus humanas mentes iure possedit quia in culpae suae uinculo uolentes astrinxit; tantoque latius in mundo uagatus est quanto a reatu quisque illius liber per omnia inuentus non est. Cui quasi ex potestate mundum circuisse est, nullum hominem qui sibi plene resisteret inuenisse. Sed iam satan redeat, id est ab effectu suae malitiae uis illum diuina constringat, quia iam apparuit in carne qui in peccati contagione ex carnis nil habeat infirmitate. Venit humilis quem et superbus hostis admiretur; quatenus qui fortia diuinitatis eius despexerat etiam humanitatis eius infirma pertimescat. Vnde et mox significatione mirifica, contra eum ipsa humanitatis infirmitas obstupescenda proponitur, etc. (CCSL 143, pp. 84-85)

[For from the time of Adam till the coming of the Lord, he drew after him all the nations of the Gentiles; he went to and fro in the earth, and walked up and down in it, in that he stamped the foot-prints of his wickedness throughout the hearts of the Gentiles. For when he fell from on high he gained lawful possession of the minds of men, because he fastened them as willing captives in the chains of his iniquity; and he wandered the more at large in the world, in proportion as there was no one found who was in all things free from that of his guilt. And his having gone to and fro in the world as with power, is his having found no man who could thoroughly resist him. But now let Satan return back, i.e. let the Divine power withhold him from the execution of his wickedness, since he has now appeared in the flesh, Who had no part in the infection of sin from the infirmity of the flesh. He came in humility for the proud enemy himself to wonder at, that he who had set at nought all the mightiness of His Divinity, might stand in awe even of the very infirmities of His humanity. Wherefore also this very weakness of His human nature is immediately set forth

against him with wonderful significance as an object to confound him, etc.] (translation from *Morals on the Book of Job* by St. Gregory the Great, trans. by James Bliss, 2 vols (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), 1, 96)

¹² Catherine Regan, 'Evangelicalism as the Informing Principle of Cynewulf's *Elene*', *Traditio*, 29 (1973), 27-52. Somewhat earlier, Thomas D. Hill had noted in passing that Judas' confrontation seemed 'patterned on the renunciation of the devil in the baptismal liturgy'. See 'Sapiential Structure and Figural Narrative in the Old English "Elene"', *Traditio*, 27 (1971), 159-77 (p. 175).

¹³ Regan, p. 35.

¹⁴

þe synt tu gearu,
swa lif swa deað, swa þe leofre bið
to geceosanne. Cyð ricene nu
hwæt ðu þæs to þinge þafian wille. (605b-608)
[There are two fates open to you: either life or death, whichever is
dearer to you to choose. Therefore make known right now which of
the two you would choose as your lot.]

These 'two ways' are the Way of Life and the Way of Death. As Regan observes, when Elene offers Judas a choice between life or death, 'she is offering him the wide way of spiritual death or the narrow way – difficult and arduous – of spiritual life' (Regan, p. 37).

¹⁵ 'All Catechetical treatises before Augustine's *De catechezandis rudibus* used the theme of the Two ways as a basis for their moral teaching (Augustine preferred to use the Decalogue), and hence in the early Church pre-baptismal instruction was identified with the theme of the Two Ways' (Regan, pp. 37-38).

¹⁶

Hu mæg þæm geweorðan þe on westenne
meðe ond meteleas morland trydeð,
hungre gehæfted, ond him hlaf ond stan
on gesihðe bu samod geweorðað,
strec ond hnesce, þæt he þone stan nime
wið hungres hleo, hlafes ne gime,
gewende to wædle, ond þa wiste wiðsæce,
beteran wiðhyccge, þonne he bega beneah?

[How may it be for the man who treads the wastelands, tired and without food, gripped by hunger, and who spies both a loaf of bread and a stone, hard and soft, that he should take the stone to stay his hunger but pay no heed to the loaf, turns to deprivation and forsakes plenitude, despises the better of the two when he has the benefit of both?]

¹⁷ Regan, pp. 38-39.

¹⁸ Regan, p. 43.

¹⁹ Regan, p. 44.

²⁰ Ic eow healsie þurh heofona god
þæt ge me of ðysson eorfeðum up forlæten,
heanne fram hungres geniðlan. Ic þæt halige treo
lustum cyðe, nu ic hit leng ne mæg
helan for hungre. Is þes hæft to ðan strang,
þreanyd þæs þearl ond þes þroht to ðæs heard
dogorrimum. Ic adreogan ne mæg,
ne leng helan be ðam lifes treo,
þeah ic ær mid dysige þurhdrifen wære
ond ðæt soð to late seolf gecneowe. (699-708)

[I implore you by the God of the heavens that you let me up out of these torments, laid low by the fierceness of hunger. I will eagerly reveal the holy tree now that I can no longer conceal it because of hunger. This imprisonment is so harsh, the affliction so severe and the suffering so hard with the passing of days. I cannot endure, nor any longer keep the secret of the tree of life, although I was earlier imbued with folly and myself recognized the truth too slowly.]

²¹ 'Go, teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'. The order of this precept is expounded by Blessed Jerome in his Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel: 'First, the disciples teach all nations, and then, when they have been taught, the nations are baptized. For it is impossible that the body receive the sacrament of baptism, unless the soul have previously received the truth of faith'. Text and translation adapted from Gerald Ellard, *Master Alcuin, Liturgist*, Jesuit Studies (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956), p. 73.

²² Regan, p. 49.

²³ Regan, p. 52.

²⁴ 'and he raised up [. . .] the two crosses'; 'then the third one was raised up in holiness'. F. Holthausen, ed., *Cynewulfs Elene* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1905), p. 35.

²⁵ 'he placed the crosses upon him one by one'; 'also the third, the cross of the Lord, was placed upon the dead man'.

²⁶ See especially ll. 889-898a.

²⁷ Regan, p. 50.

²⁸ See note 29, below.

²⁹ 'I need not praise the Cross in exultation. Lo, the Savior has often shut me up in the narrow home, to the sorrow of us wretched ones'.

³⁰ One such is Anderson, *Cynewulf*, p. 139.

³¹ In his study of the development of Christian baptismal rites and the Devil's role in them, Henry Ansgar Kelly comments on the tendency to see the Devil as capable of being in many places at once. Discussing an exorcism from the Byzantine liturgy for baptism contained in the eighth-century *Barberini euchologium*, Kelly says the following:

The nature of the devil's presence and mode of operation is variously stated. We can deduce from the injunction not to hide in the candidates that he is regarded as being able to dwell within many persons simultaneously. This trait illustrates a common tendency in Christian discussions of the devil, which can in fact be seen in the New Testament itself, namely to speak of Satan as if his power were virtually unlimited in carrying out his evil designs in various parts of the world at the same time. Sometimes, no doubt, the devil is simply taken as a collective term for all evil spirits. (Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 165)

This is also what I take Dendle to be arguing in the passage referred to in note 7, above. I think it is important to distinguish between 'discussions' of the devil, that is to say theoretical ones in which doctrine is formulated; liturgical ones, which by their very nature are highly symbolic; and narratives in which demonic agency is embodied as a literary character. In a literary narrative, then, a reference to the 'devil' may in fact be meant in the collective sense noted by Kelly.

³² Hill, 'Sapiential Structure', p. 175 and Regan, p. 50.

³³ 'May he who awakened the dead, Christ himself, damn you to the abyss of eternal fire!'

³⁴ 'You need not, mindful of sins, so forcefully renew the pain and raise up strife, crime-lord of death. The mighty King, who by his word has raised many of the dead, will thrust you, sin-working one, deprived of glory down into the gulf, into the abyss of torments. May you recognize more clearly that you have foolishly foresaken the brightest light and the love of God, the fair joy. Since then you have dwelt in a fiery bath, surrounded by torments, consumed by fire, and there forever in your hostility you shall suffer punishment, misery without end'.

³⁵ Regan p. 50.

³⁶ This is the translation of *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus offered by E.C. Whitaker, ed., *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 2nd edn (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p. 5.

³⁷ Whitaker, *Documents*, p. 183.

Dost thou renounce Satan?

Rx. I renounce.

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And all his works?

Rx. I renounce.

And all his pomps?

Rx. I renounce.

³⁸ Whitaker, *Documents*, p. 183. See also Kelly, *Devil at Baptism*, pp. 220-23.

³⁹ Whichever one that may have been. Our knowledge of the exact forms of the liturgy used during this period (and indeed the period during which Cynewulf lived) is inexact and fragmentary. For the purposes of this discussion I have referred to the collection of baptismal documents cited by Regan (Whitaker, *Documents*). My comments on perceived parallels between the liturgy and *Elene* are based on the contents of the Gelasian Sacramentary, which is known to have been in use in England during the eighth and ninth centuries. For more on liturgical books in Anglo-Saxon England, see Helmut Gneuss, 'Liturgical books in Anglo-Saxon England and their Old English Terminology', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 91-141. On the Gelasian Sacramentary, and its relationship to the Gregorian, in the England of Cynewulf's day, see Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Batsford, 1972), pp. 168-90 and Appendix II.

⁴⁰ Hill, 'Bread and Stone: Again *Elene* 611-18', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 81 (1980), 256.

⁴¹ Sisam, Kenneth, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 12-13, note 1.

⁴² Sisam, *Studies*, p. 14, and Regan, p. 28. Regan misquotes Sisam and transposes the modern day of the feast (May 4th) for that of the medieval feast (May 3rd) in her article.

⁴³ See Robert Stepsis and Richard Rand, 'Contrast and Conversion in Cynewulf's *Elene*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 70 (1969), 273-82.

⁴⁴ 'And at about the ninth hour a certain dead youth was carried in on a litter.'

⁴⁵ 'The judges, men of renown, sat there; they raised up their song around the three crosses until the ninth hour: they had in glory discovered a new happiness.'

⁴⁶ Kelly, *Devil at Baptism*, p. 223.

⁴⁷ Kelly, *Devil at Baptism*, p. 223, note 64.

⁴⁸ Thomas, Symons, ed., *Regularis Concordia* (London: Nelson and Sons, 1953), p. 47. 'On Holy Saturday at the hour of None, when the abbot enters the church with the brethren, the new fire shall be brought in, as we said before, and the candle which has been placed before the altar shall be lit from that fire.'

⁴⁹ See p. 282, note 1; for the relevant passage in the *Concordia*, see Symons, p. 44-45.

⁵⁰ Hill, 'Sapiential Structure', p. 177.