THE CONTINENTAL SAXONS

FROM THE MIGRATION PERIOD TO THE TENTH CENTURY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

Edited by

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The Old Saxon *Heliand*, like the Franconian *Evangelienbuch* by Otfrid von Weissenburg, presents a life of Christ in epic form in the vernacular. Both works are related, directly or not, with the monastery of Fulda and together they represent the beginning of German literature proper in the ninth century. But each work stands at an intersection, each looks backwards as well as forwards. The *Heliand* looks backwards in a double sense, since it continues, even to an extreme, the tradition of alliterative verse characteristic of Germanic oral poetry of the past, but its epic form, as a vessel for Christian content, resembles Otfrid’s in being inspired by the early Christian model of adapting the Virgilian epic to the Christian message (Kartschoke 1975, *passim*). These Christian Latin models (Juvenecus, Arator, Prudentius) are expressly mentioned by Otfrid, but there is no reason to think that their example was not known to the author of the *Heliand* as well. Seen from the point of view of classical literature (and of classical scholarship) these Christian biblical epics represent the end of a line dominated by Virgil. Of the public recital of Arator’s Christian epic based on the Acts of the Apostles, taking place in San Pietro in Vincoli and extending over four days, it has been said that, as a Christian Virgil, he provided a last example of classical *recitatio*, the means by which Roman authors made their works known to a larger audience (Kartschoke 1975:132; Green 1994:32). Because such works represent the conclusion of classical literature and also, for all their claims, a decline from Virgil, they have attracted relatively little attention by scholarship, so much so that E. R. Curtius has condemned the whole genre of the biblical epic as hybrid, because untrue (Curtius 1948:459; Kartschoke 1975:130 f.). By contrast, the *Heliand* and Otfrid’s work, like their counterparts in Old English literature, have attracted much more scholarly attention because of their position at the start of vernacular literature in Germany and England.

It will not, I hope, be held against me as a mark of insularity or even chauvinism if I begin my comments on the Old Saxon work by looking back across the North Sea at what Bede earlier reported of Caedmon and the beginning of Christian vernacular literature which he represented. The justification for this lies in the parallels between Bede’s account and what is conveyed to us of the conditions under which the Old Saxon epic was composed.

According to Bede, Caedmon, an uneducated layman attached to the monastery of Whitby, received divine inspiration to compose poetry of Christian content, an ability which he had signally lacked before divine intervention in the form of a dream (Plummer 1896:259). The prose *Praefatio* says in similar terms of the
author of the *Heliand* that he too was commanded in a dream to transpose the teachings of the Bible into poetic form in his own tongue (Behaghel 1933:2). The legendary nature of this parallel conveys something of the shock which these two undertakings must have caused and helps to justify them: the novelty of using a poetic diction, previously at home in the heroic tradition of a barbarian pagan past, to convey the new Christian message. Whereas Christian Latin authors had had to confront antique paganism, but in the same Latin language, the Anglo-Saxon and Old Saxon authors had to deal not merely with Germanic paganism, but with the immense task of finding a linguistic vessel for the new message. Admittedly, we may find it difficult to believe Bede’s statement literally that the poem on the creation of the world which he gives in a Latin rendering was the first to be composed by Caedmon, but something of the sense can be rescued if we take it instead as a representative example of the earliest attempts to bring together a native poetic tradition and Christian content (Kartschoke 1975:139). The same would hold true of the verse *Praefatio* to the *Heliand*, with its depiction of the poet’s sudden adoption of Christian themes for his composition in obedience to God’s command (Behaghel 1933:3, v. 21-30).

Other points made by Bede include the fact that Caedmon memorized the verses which his dream had inspired in him and that, if we are to believe his account, they cannot have made up a poem much longer than that given by him in translation and preserved in the vernacular (Plummer 1896:260; Kartschoke 1975:136). It is also clear that, far from being composed for any missionary purpose, Caedmon’s work was addressed to an audience which was primarily the Latin-trained members of the monastery who had provided him with his religious raw material and who were mainly of aristocratic rank (Kartschoke 1975:136). This restriction to a clerical educated elite has its parallel in the *Heliand*, likewise intended also for learned readers and commissioned by imperial authority (as was Otfrid’s Franconian epic). That is certainly no novelty for the classical or Christian Latin epic: Virgil wrote for Augustus, just as Juvenecus did for Constantine and Arator for Pope Vigilius (Kartschoke 1975:137). Such parallels between Bede and what the Old Saxon poem’s *Praefatio* tells us have been worked out in greater detail and they suggest that Bede’s report on Caedmon was known to whoever composed the *Praefatio*.

This raises the question of the connection between Old English biblical literature (of which Caedmon may be regarded as the initiator) and its Old Saxon counterpart (including a *Genesis* epic alongside the *Heliand*) (Schwab 1988 *passim*). The conventional view, granting precedence to the insular examples and seeing the continental ones as under Old English influence, has been challenged by Hofmann even to the extent of suggesting the possibility in the opposite direction, from the continent to England (Hofmann 1959:173-190). In arguing thus he largely ignores the other evidence for Anglo-Saxon influence on northern Germany and is

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1 Here the poet is said to be *adhuc artis huius penitus...ignarus*, like Caedmon, even though he is earlier (page 1) referred to as *apud suos non ignobilis vates.*
even driven to admit that the impetus (if not the actual literary model) for composing the *Heliand* may well have come from England. By that he means that the idea may have been provided for the continental author or for whoever commissioned his work by Bede’s account, together with his Latin version of Caedmon’s poem, perhaps even together with the vernacular version, added in some of the Bede manuscripts. Bede’s work was well known on the continent at this time, and a copy of the eighth century was present at Fulda, admittedly only a fragment, but one including precisely the account of Caedmon’s activity (Baesecke 1945:43; Hofmann 1959:189).

One outstanding difference between Caedmon’s poem and the *Heliand* concerns their length: whereas the former comes down to us with only ten lines (its original total length is not held to have been much greater) the *Heliand*, as we have it, consists of 5983 long-lines (the conclusion is missing). This epic expansiveness (as opposed to Caedmon’s hymn-like concision) was dictated partly by the extreme ‘wordiness’ of the Old Saxon poem’s style (a multitude of variations, long drawn-out sentences, repetitions), partly by the theme it treats, beginning with the birth of John the Baptist and following Christ’s life and teaching through to His resurrection and ascension. In doing this the Saxon author based himself on the gospel harmony (*Diatessaron*) of Tatian, translated and available at Fulda, as well as on the commentary on Matthew by Hrabanus Maurus, abbot of the same monastery, in addition to other possible sources. At various points in his narrative, if not at excessive length or so explicitly as is the case with Otfrid’s *Evangelienbuch*, the author branches off into exegetical commentary, thus passing beyond the historical sense of the gospels or Tatian’s harmony (Kartschoke 1975:197-213). Where such commentaries are of a length to make this possible they can be traced back to specific sources or parallels, as with the (not completely correct) interpretation of the gifts brought to Christ by the three wise men (Hrabanus Maurus and Bede). From the nature of these sources and from their multiplicity it follows that the author of the *Heliand* was almost certainly not a layman, but like his colleague Otfrid a theologically trained cleric, addressing fellow clerics as his potential audience (Kartschoke 1975:168; Fromm 1998:144). In this educated status the Old Saxon author differed significantly from Caedmon. Whereas the Northumbrian poet was dependent on the learning of monks at Whitby for the material he was to treat, the Old Saxon poet appears to have had direct access both to the *Diatessaron* (in its Latin form or in its Old High German rendering, both available at Fulda) and to learned commentaries. From behind the parallels drawn between the two authors a significant difference begins to emerge.

A number of pointers, admittedly all circumstantial, suggest that the monastery of Fulda may have been the place where the *Heliand* was composed. The author’s known dependence on Tatian (in whatever linguistic guise) and on the commentary of Hrabanus Maurus makes good sense at this centre in particular. Bede’s account of Caedmon was known there as a possible stimulus to such an undertaking. The relatively rapid spread of copies of the work suggests an organizing authority behind it, as might be expected from Hrabanus Maurus, first as abbot at Fulda
Dennis H. Green (822-842), then as archbishop of Mainz (847-856) and as an associate of the Emperor's court circle (Haubrichs 1995:279 f.). Moreover, since the beginning of the conversion of the Saxons, Fulda had been closely involved with ecclesiastical affairs in northern Germany, and was a major focus of Anglo-Saxon activity in this region and elsewhere. By contrast, the other centre which has been proposed, Werden, is in my view nothing like so probable. Werden was admittedly a centre for Old Saxon literature at the time, but as such it is not to be compared in importance with Fulda. The features which have been adduced in its favour are primarily linguistic (the language of the Heliand contains features pointing to the south-west of the area in which Old Saxon was spoken, isolated words in its vocabulary have parallels in the Rhineland or the ecclesiastical province of Cologne) (Haubrichs 1995:281). However, it does not follow from this linguistic location that the author must also have been active in that area, so that the evidence for Fulda, for all its circumstantial nature, has rather more to be said for it.

Locating the Heliand in time depends largely on how we interpret and find a historical context for the reference to the ruler Ludowicus piissimus Augustus in the prose Praefatio who is said to have commissioned the work. (It may be observed in passing that even if this suggests, as is also the case with Otfrid, an imperial alongside a clerical reception of the work this emphasizes on another level the high-ranking, exclusive nature of the audience for biblical epics in the vernacular, as also for their Christian Latin predecessors.) The Ludwig referred to could be either Ludwig the Pious (814-840) or Ludwig the German (833-876), but the close philological and historical analysis to which Haubrichs has subjected the text of the Praefatio points more persuasively to the latter (Haubrichs 1973:400-435). Of itself it may not be an additional proof, but it certainly points in the same direction that Otfrid composed his Franconian biblical epic in the 860s under the impetus of this same ruler (Green 1994:271). Ludwig the German was actively interested in the intellectual life of his time, vernacular as well as Latin. The two biblical epics he is thought to have promoted were composed in the vernacular because this was the language of the regnum in orientali Francia, establishing itself after the dissolution of Carolingian unity. Works in the vernacular, instead of Latin, underlined the wide spread of the Empire and the sense of unity of the tribes east of the Rhine, whilst their ambitious literary nature was an attempt to rival the cultural superiority of the West under Charles the Bald.

A final general feature of the Heliand which deserves to be stressed from the start is one which it shares with the Latin biblical epics in whose literary tradition it stands. Both were confronted with the need for accommodation, the reconciliation of the old with the new, as far as this was possible without betrayal (Kartschoke (1975:186-197). Christian Latin authors had to pour Christian wine into the old pagan bottles of classical rhetoric and Virgilian tradition, whilst the author of the Heliand, in seeking vernacular equivalents for Christ as leader of a chosen band of followers, had little choice but to make use of Old Saxon conventional terms at home in the context of the Germanic war-band or comitatus. For too long in the past, in the nationalist hankering after an idealized Germanic
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antiquity in the nineteenth century or in the neopaganism of National Socialism in the twentieth, this choice of vocabulary has been seen in terms of a so-called ‘Germanization of Christianity’, a slanted view which has unfortunately been recently given a new lease of undeserved life by an American publication which is largely derivative, uncritical and quite outdated in its starting-point (Russell 1994; Murphy 1989 specifically on the Heliand). Rejecting such talk of a Germanization of Christianity does not mean denying that an accommodation had to be found between Christianity and native traditions, not in terms of a syncretism which could never be acceptable to the monotheistic claims of the new religion, but with an order of priorities in which the old was clearly subordinate to the new. In the fundamental task of devising a Christian vocabulary in the Germanic vernacular it was precisely the Anglo-Saxons, at home as well as in the continental mission-field, above all with the pagan Saxons, who followed a policy of linguistic accommodation in striking contrast with what we find, for example, in the Christian vocabulary of Wulfila’s Gothic (Green 1998:357-373). This linguistic policy has been seen as comparable with what Bede reports of the letter sent by Gregory the Great to Mellitus, laying down how Augustine of Canterbury was to proceed in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons (Kahl 1956:190-200; Markus 1970:29-38; Green 1998:367 f.). The Pope regarded it as unrealistic to think that pagan beliefs could be uprooted at once, rather than gradually, and accordingly ordered that pagan temples in England were not to be pulled down, but that their idols were to be replaced by altars so that the people, coming to these centres as before, would gradually acknowledge God. What starts by looking like a Christian concession (pagan temples are maintained) conceals a radical break (altars in place of idols) and is meant to lead to the victory of the new (acknowledgement of the Christian God). In this case, as with the linguistic policy of the Anglo-Saxons at home and with their continental kinsmen, the ultimate goal, so far from amounting to a Germanization of Christianity, was in effect a ‘Christianisierung des Germanenturns’. We shall see that the same order of priorities is preserved in the Heliand in connection with two key doctrines of Christianity in headlong opposition to the beliefs and values of Germanic antiquity.

So much by way of general introduction to the Old Saxon Heliand. We come now to the three aspects of this work which I have chosen for discussion: first, the manner in which this work was delivered to its audience and received by them (by public recital to listeners or as a text meant for individual readers); secondly, the question of the relationship between a pagan view of fate and the Christian idea of providence; thirdly, a question of burning importance for any society living by heroic values, the attitude of Christianity to warfare. Apart from the fact that I have previously worked on each of these themes, their conjunction now may seem arbitrary or fortuitous. In fact, however, they belong together in illustrating different aspects of the impact of Christianity on a recently pagan, still imperfectly christianized society. It was after all the Church that brought writing, as we know

2 Against this approach see Rathofer 1962:51-194 and Schäferdiek 1984:521-524.
it, to a hitherto oral society; in confronting not merely the Germanic gods, but also the pagan view of fate, the Church had to repeat in northern Europe a conflict which it had earlier waged in the Mediterranean world; in coping with Germanic heroic values Christianity was likewise facing the problem of warfare with which it had been confronted from the beginning.

Our first task is therefore to see the *Heliand* against the background of orality and literacy, of listening and reading, an interplay which lasts with changing emphasis throughout the Middle Ages and beyond and for which this work represents the first sustained example in northern Germany (Green 1994, passim). In this interplay between two quite different modes of reception the *Heliand* is in stark contrast with Caedmon’s hymn, exclusively at home in the world of orality and meant for recital to others. (That his work was preserved by Bede in Latin, the language of literacy, or that the vernacular version happens also to have been rescued in writing has no bearing on the recital which Caedmon the *illitteratus* had in mind for it.) How thoroughly Caedmon’s work belongs to the realm of orality can be seen in the three stages which can be extracted from Bede’s account (Plummer 1896:260). In the first place, as an *illitteratus* Caedmon was dependent on what religious instruction educated monks at Whitby could pass on to him by word of mouth (*cuncta, quae audiendo discere poterat*). Secondly, he retained what he had heard in his memory, turning it over and over in his mind as if chewing the cud (*rememorando secum, et quasi mundum animal ruminando*). Thirdly, the vernacular poem which resulted in this way without benefit of writing was recited by him, converting those who had previously instructed him into his listeners (*suavius resonando doctores suos vicissim auditores suifaciebat*). From beginning to end, then, Caedmon’s poem is fully oral: it was short enough to be composed mentally and memorized for later recital, and it is worth bearing in mind that the digestive image of chewing the cud was in common use in the Middle Ages for the act of contemplation and memorization (West 1976:217-226; Carruthers 1990:164-169).

On the face of it, the *Heliand* appears also to be at home in the same oral tradition. If we accept, with whatever reservations, the Parry/Lord thesis of extemporizing oral recital relying on a stock of conventional formulas to be called on in the joint process of composition-in-performance (Lord 1960), it is clear that the Saxon poem includes a large number of stock phrases, constantly repeated with slight variations according to context, which it shares with Old English. This does not imply that Old Saxon is here dependent on Old English (or *vice versa*), but rather that both draw on a common West Germanic formulaic fund, available to any oral performer. The poetic style of the *Heliand*, formulaic and alliterative, is unthinkable without a preceding oral tradition (Haubrichs 1995:272 f.), although it does not follow from this that the *Heliand* was still part of that tradition (in the sense in which Caedmon’s poem still was), rather than that it made use of the tradition for new ends.

What with Caedmon, as with the author of the *Heliand*, is depicted in legendary terms as a miracle, is not merely an attempt to convey something of the shock of
novelty conveyed by the fusion of disparate entities such as Germanic tradition and Christianity, it has also been explained in other terms, as an account of the way in which oral poetry, with a specifically Christian theme, could arise. Caedmon’s poem has therefore been analysed by Magoun, with a large measure of apparent success, in terms of the Parry/Lord theory of oral composition-in-performance, but the same is far from being true of the reception given to a similar attempt with the Heliand (Magoun 1953:446-67; 1955:49-63; Kellogg 1965:66-74). What is at issue here is not so much oral performance as such, but rather the Parry/Lord theory that extemporizing composition took place in the act of performance itself. Against this universalist theory of oral poetry attention has been drawn to evidence from outside Europe that works could be composed orally before performance and then committed to memory, but also, from within Germania, to suggestions that works for oral performance could be memorized beforehand (Jabbour 1968:174-90; Lönnroth 1971:1-20; Finneg 1977:16-24, 79 f.; Harris 1983:210-42). Even in the case of Caedmon Bede reports that he ruminated on his poem and memorized it before reciting it. With a work of the length of the Heliand memorizing is out of the question, so that another basis for its oral performance will have to be sought.

That the performance of the Heliand was nonetheless oral cannot be doubted, for a number of different reasons. In the first place, the prose Praefatio states as one of the reasons for the use of the vernacular the wish to spread the religious theme beyond the circle of literati atque eruditi, implying therefore an appeal to those who not merely had no Latin, but could not even read. These addressees can therefore be explicitly termed illiterati, they are described as those who hear and understand (audientibus ac intelligentibus): they understand because of the use of the vernacular which they do not have to read, but can listen to in recital (Behaghel 1933:1, 2). An oral dimension of quite a different nature, but still presupposing listeners, is suggested by two further types of evidence. The prose Praefatio mentions cantilena and modulatio, technical terms suggesting not merely oral, but sung performance, a fact borne out by the presence of musical notation, neumes, in one manuscript (M), implying that parts of the work, if not the whole, were meant for a recital of this kind (Taeger 1978:184-93). Other manuscripts make use of a more thorough-going accentual system as an aid to recital (Bischoff 1979:171-80; Taeger 1981:410-3; Schwab 1988:151-72). The fact that similar evidence is forthcoming in manuscripts of Otfrid’s biblical epic suggests that recital of this nature was by no means confined to the Heliand (Green 1994:182). What is present here, as the prose Praefatio explicitly states, is a work intended as a sacra lectio, a paraliturgical recital to an assembled audience (Behaghel 1933:1; Haubrichs 1995:276). A final reminder of oral tradition, going back to Germanic antiquity rather than to Christian liturgical practice, is provided by a formula recurring in the Heliand: Thô gifragn ic (v. 367, 510, 3347; cf. Green 1994:102). Variants of this formula recur elsewhere in Old High German and in Germanic literature at large, meaning not simply that the author learned of a detail by hearsay, but more particularly that he learned of it in listening to oral recital. Such
a phrase places the author (in regard to his source) within an oral tradition, if not his listeners (as recipients of his work), but the formula used in the Heliand differs significantly from that found in the Hildebrandslied. The words of the latter work (v. 1: *Ik gihórta dat seggen*) make it certain that the author heard an account recited, but the phrasing of the Heliand is more ambiguous, suggesting that the author learned of a detail, leaving it unspecified whether this was by hearing or, conceivably, by reading. This particular formula could therefore belong to oral transmission (at home in the Christian liturgy or in the monastic practices of *collatio* or recital in the refectory) (Green 1994:34), but equally to the dimension of reading a written text. To this possibility with the Heliand, by which it differs markedly from the exclusively oral nature of Caedmon’s hymn, we now turn.

The written transmission that could possibly lie behind the formula *Th6 gifragn* is made explicitly clear at the start of the Heliand where the biblical source, or rather the gospel harmony, on which it rests is put forward in the shape of the four evangelists, presented as writing their books under divine inspiration. What they produce is termed a book (v. 8, 14) which they write with their own hands (v. 7, 14, 32) under divine guidance (v. 10-12, 20-23) in place of the inspiration of the Muses on which the authors of classical epics had relied. By this means the author seeks legitimation for his task (which needed such justification in transposing the bible both into the vernacular and into poetic form), showing himself to be dependent on book sources, always more trustworthy than oral tradition, especially when going back eventually to the evangelists as the first writers in this tradition. This confirms from a different angle the judgment made long ago by A. Heusler, basing himself on purely stylistic grounds, that the Heliand was essentially a book epic (Heusler n.d. [1923]:182-190).

A book epic implies not only an author who writes and thereby repeats what, at the exposed opening of his work, he shows the evangelists as having done, it also suggests the possibility of readers. The *studiosus lector*, the careful and interested reader, is in fact mentioned in the prose Praefatio, where it is said that the work has been equipped with headings so that any particular episode may be found more easily (Behaghel 1933:2; Kartschoke 1975:233). On this passage it has been commented that it presents us with a diligent reader who wishes to learn more, not merely with a *lector* in the sense of someone reciting from a written text. Even if the latter were involved we should still have to say of him what has been claimed for Otfrid’s comparable use of the word *legentes*: that he is regarded here more in his function of reader than as a reciter (Patzlaff 1975:50). That the *studiosus lector* of a biblical text in the vernacular has to be seen in this light is also confirmed much later by Willilram von Ebersberg, who uses this same phrase to guide his reader to an earlier passage marked out for him by the sign X (Green 1994:144).

To suggest that the Heliand was meant both for listeners and for readers is not so self-contradictory as it might seem to be, for there is ample evidence, throughout the Middle Ages and to be found in medieval Latin as well as a range of vernaculars, that many literary works, including biblical literature and such a close parallel to the Heliand as Otfrid’s work, were meant for a twofold reception
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That Ludwig the German encouraged both these works might suggest recital at his court alongside the individual reading that could be expected at a monastery, but even in the latter context there was ample need for recitals in the vernacular: for lay brothers (revealingly known as illitterati), for conversi (laymen called to a religious life, but not fully monastic) and for monks who had taken vows too late in life to learn Latin and to read. The Heliand and Otfrid by no means stand alone in this respect.

We come now to the second aspect of the Heliand as a work intended for a society only freshly and imperfectly won from paganism, the relationship between the Germanic conception of fate and Christian providence. Against the background of the classical pagan belief in fate we have to set St Paul’s words about men earlier being ‘in bondage under the elements of the world’ (Gal. 4.3.) as an allusion to the slavery brought about by the pagans’ belief in astrological deities. The opposition of Christianity to such beliefs, not merely in the Mediterranean world, but also elsewhere when, as in Germania, it encountered comparable views, rested on two complementary arguments (Green 1998:381 f.). On the one hand, belief in the overwhelming power of the planetary deities (a daily presence in the names of the days of the week, so that it could be held that a particular day was under the control of a particular planet and of the deity associated with it) was demeaning to the omnipotence of the Christian God. On the other hand, belief in the control of events on earth by the planetary gods was demeaning to man’s freedom of action, as St Paul had argued, and to his sense of moral responsibility. At this point fatalism impinges upon ethics, for if the early Church had not overcome such beliefs its doctrine of sin and redemption from sin would have been disastrously undermined.

This victory had to be won in Germania, too, where, even if in different ways, the barbarians held similar views, as in their consultation of oracles and casting of lots, practices already attested by Caesar and centuries later still attracting the criticism of missionaries (Green 1998:382). The Germanic languages disposed of a fair number of terms for fate. Their variety is testimony to how widespread was the persistence of such beliefs, but it also allows us to reconstruct something of these beliefs and of how the Church dealt with them. I shall confine myself to three terms, all of which are particularly well attested in the Heliand (Kauffmann 1926:389 f., 394, 403-8; von Kienle 1933:81 f., 88f., 90f.; Ilkow 1968:292 f., 293-5, 434-8). The first of these, metod, is absent from Old High German, but present in Old English and Old Saxon (metod and metodigiskaJt ‘fate’, metodogiskapu ‘decrees of fate’). The word was formed as a nomen agentis from the verb metan ‘to measure out, apportion, judge’, so that the underlying function of the noun is to refer to the decrees of a power which disposes of men’s lives, frequently in the negative sense of death. The second term, represented by Old Saxon wurd, is attested throughout West and North Germanic and is cognate with the Old High German verb werdan ‘to become’, but also ‘to happen’ in the sense of being destined by fate. The third word, as in Old Saxon giskapu, is again West and North Germanic and conveys the idea of ‘shaping’ or ‘creating’ a life and its course.
The tension between the pre-Christian implications of these terms for fate and the new use to which they had to be put throughout Germania and, in our case, in the Heliand produced different possibilities of adjusting them to Christian ideas, to ‘accommodating’ them in the sense of making them acceptable to the new religion. To illustrate this we may group these possibilities under four headings, plotting a progressive adaptation to Christian ends.

The starting-point is still essentially pagan, since it represents the view that fate is superior to the gods, as in Old Norse mythology where ragna rök means not just the end of things, but more precisely the fate which overtakes the gods (Green 1998:385). One of the arguments recommended by Daniel of Winchester to Boniface for effective use in the mission-field rested on the fact, conceded by the pagans, that the gods had a beginning and an end, for this raised the possibility of an independently existent power which, in Daniel’s eyes, was none other than the eternal God of the Christians. One Old English gnomic text, however, knows nothing of this argument, for it transfers unthinkingly to the new religion what had been true in the old, maintaining that Christ’s power is great, but that fate (wyrd) is strongest (Brandl 1936:82-97; Helm 1953:284; Rathofer 1962:136). To my knowledge this example remains isolated and there is certainly nothing corresponding to it in the Heliand.

Such a case suggests, however, that at times no attempt may have been made to christianize possible survivals of the Germanic conception of fate, most commonly in a negative view of fate, involving death or destruction. This is apparent when in the Heliand men’s death is expressed by their being taken away by wurd (v. 3633), when wurdegiscapu approaches its victim (v. 3354 f.) or when wurd is at hand (v. 4619 f.) as Christ prophesies Judas’s betrayal. Similar constructions recur in Old English, so that this formulaic fund testifies that the view of fate bringing death was common West Germanic. Other terms for fate can be employed in a similar way. Thus, the widow’s son may be taken from her by wurd, but also by metodogescapu (v. 2189 f.). In the equally negative context of destruction wurdegiskefti is used in application to the downfall of Jerusalem (v. 3692). Although in his prophecy Christ may know of its future destruction, nowhere is any connection between this fate and God’s will expressed in linguistic terms. By contrast with this array of negative examples fate is only rarely seen positively in such cases, as active at the outset of life rather than at its close. Thus, Elizabeth’s expectation of a child is described as her waiting for wurdigiscapu (v. 197), an example which may reflect the Germanic belief that the norns (cf. Old Norse Urðr) assisted at the act of birth.

A decisive step in christianizing this terminology is taken when fate is expressly equated with God. The culmination is reached when Notker renders fatum by gotes uuillen, but already in the case of the Heliand it has been said that its view of fate did not determine the conception of God, but instead illustrated a providential aspect of it (Schrt & Starck 1933/34, I, 3:295, lines 6 f.). In contrast to the Old English gnomic text which was our starting-point fate is no longer stronger than God, but equated with Him. In the passage where Elizabeth is expecting a child the
term *wurdgiscapu* is correlated with the power of God, *maht godes* (v. 192). A similar correlation is also possible when death is involved, as long as this can be shown to be God’s will, as when on the occasion of Christ’s death *wurd* is described approaching at midday, but is then shown for what it is by the variation *māri maht godes* ‘the resplendent power of God’ (v. 5394 f.). Other terms for fate could be likewise reinterpreted. In the announcement to Zachariah that the birth and course of life of his son have been preordained by *wurdgiscapu* and *metod*, these terms are then summed up as *maht godes* (v. 127 f.). In this passage all three of these Old Saxon terms for fate are shown as synonymous with the Christian God’s power.

The attraction of this terminology into the sphere of God’s providential dispositions made possible their occasional semantic, as opposed to stylistic equation. This is especially so with *metod*, also used in Old English and Old Saxon with the meaning of ‘God’ (Green 1998:387). An even more successful Christianization occurs not with the noun *giskapu*, but with its verbal form *skeppian* ‘to create’, not merely in Old Saxon, but in all the Germanic languages. The original meaning of the verb, ‘to shape, to fashion’, was sufficiently close to the concept ‘to create’ and to God as *artifex*. In addition, some examples of the usage of *giskapu* in the *Heliand* occur in the context of birth, they hint at the power of fate exercised at the outset of life and suggest the possibility of linking the stem with the idea of creation (v. 336 ff., 367 ff. on the birth of Christ, v. 4064 with regard to the raising of Lazarus to new life). It was the same question (what creative force existed before the Germanic gods came into existence?) that Daniel of Winchester advised Boniface to bring before potential converts. Whereas the term *wurd* was generally seen as a destructive force and was only partly christianized in Old Saxon, the positive, creative implications of *skeppian* assisted its Christianization throughout *Germania*.

A last step is to suggest that God is superior to fate, which is therefore demoted to being an attribute of providential omnipotence. Once more, this argument finds its clearest expression towards the end of the Old High German period with Notker in translating Boethius, when he says that fate comes from providence (*fatum chumet fone providentia*) (Sehrt & Starck 1933/34, I, 3:298, lines 15 f.), but it is also suggested earlier, if less explicitly. When a term for fate is combined with the Christian God in the genitive (e.g. v. 336, 547: *godes giscapu*) the implication is that God possesses or disposes of fate, that its decrees are in fact His. Even in one case in the *Heliand* where *metodigiscaft* retains a negative function, making it inaccessible to Christian reinterpretation, Christ is ultimately shown as superior to fate and capable of imposing His will upon it. The passage in question deals with the healing of the widow’s son and shows Christ offering protection against fate (v. 2210: *mundoda uuier metodigiscefitie*). Here the compound ‘fate’ incorporates the destructive power of the demons who are successfully driven out by Christ.

Placing these examples from the *Heliand* in a theoretical sequence, plotting more or less successful ways of adapting the terminology of fate to Christian ends, reveals one thing in particular. Apart from the isolated and quite untypical case of
the Old English gnomic text, the direction taken by the Saxon author is clear. Where the implications of the vocabulary of fate were too negative it was left severely alone, but in all other cases the terminology was either expressly equated with the new God or even more decisively subordinated to His overriding power. In this field the movement was towards an adaptation to Christian ends wherever possible, there can be no talk of a ‘Germanization of Christianity’.

One of the reasons for unwavering Christian opposition to belief in the power of fate was, we saw, that it deprived man of moral responsibility and thereby called into question the moral virtues which the new religion sought to substitute for those previously acknowledged in the pagan world. The focus of these values in *Germania* was the kindred and the war-band, both involved in warfare, so that the Church faced here a head-on collision between the pacific views of the Sermon on the Mount and the heroic qualities of a tribal society almost permanently engaged in warfare. The problem of warfare and how to deal with it, however, was nothing new to Christianity, for it had encountered it long before it was brought to northern Europe (Harnack 1905). I leave on one side, because not relevant to the *Heliand*, the various attempts made by the Church to find a positive justification for (defensive) warfare (Erdmann 1935:1-29), in order to concentrate on the opposite tendency, attested both in the *Heliand* and in Otfrid’s biblical epic, to criticize the central heroic values of the Germanic world.

Already in the Pauline Epistles the concept *militia Dei*, varied by *militia spiritualis*, is used metaphorically to denote the spiritual battle waged by the Christian against demons or vices and in contrast with *militia saecularis* (Green 1965:323). Sulpicius Severus sums up this contrast in the words which he attributes to Martin of Tours: *Christi ego miles sum, pugnare mihi non licet*, where *miles* is meant metaphorically or spiritually, but *pugnare* literally (and therefore to be rejected). Moving into the Germanic world, when Alcuin fulminates against *ira* and what follows in its train (including *tumor mentis, rixae, contumeliae*, but also *sanguinis effusio, homicidia, ulciscendi cupiditas, injuriarum memoria*) he is criticizing as a Christian precisely those heroic qualities which were accepted as ideal in *Germania* (Green 1965:323 f.). Likewise, Boniface is said to have forbidden his companions to defend themselves when attacked by the pagan Frisians, describing the Christians attacked by their foes with heroic terms such as *viri* and *fortis animus*, used metaphorically for what is presented as a spiritual *militia Dei*, a passive willingness to accept martyrdom (Green 1965:324). In what follows I wish to discuss selected passages from the *Heliand* (corresponding ones from Otfrid would not be far to seek) which betray a similar attitude, rejecting heroic ideals in favour of peacefulness.

The author of the *Heliand* has Christ enjoin the disciples to be *mildi* ‘kind, merciful’ in their dealings with other men (v. 2491 ff.), but the terms applied to these other men (*heliðos*, literally ‘heroes’, but also *hardan strid* ‘harsh conflict’ and *uureðan uuilean* ‘angry frame of mind’) show that the quality to be shown by the disciples is opposed to such heroic pugnacity. Nothing like this is to be found in the biblical source for this passage (Mt. 13), so that we may attach particular
importance to this addition. Even more telling is a case where the heroic terminology is applied not to those opposed to the disciples, but to one of Christ’s followers, Peter. The passage is one which has frequently been invoked (if only in part) by those in favour of a ‘Germanization of Christianity’ and concerns the episode, with good biblical support, in which Peter draws his sword in would-be defence of Christ, his leader, at the moment of His arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. Here it is Peter who, corresponding to a scene which seems to call them forth and justify them, is referred to by standing heroic terms like *snel suerdthegan* ‘brave sword-warrior’ (v. 4866) and *suido thristmòd thegan* ‘exceedingly brave warrior’ (v. 4870) and is described by such epithets as *gibolgan* ‘angry’ (v. 4871). These are the points which have been seized upon to establish a ‘Germanic’ dimension to the *Heliand* author’s presentation of Christianity, but it needs to be stressed that the action in this scene agrees with what the bible says. If the *Heliand* is more repetitive in its pile-up of terms and epithets this is a characteristic feature of its style throughout, inflated by constant variations on a key concept, and not necessarily an indication that the author attached any particular importance to the warlike implications of this scene. If he did at all, it is much more likely to have been in the negative sense, for Peter’s warrior stance is immediately undermined, again as in the bible, by Christ’s rebuke, condemning anger and rejecting warfare (v. 4882 ff., 4895 ff.). In other words, the passage in which Peter is apparently presented in terms of the Germanic warrior ideal (and has been interpreted as such) is in fact the occasion for the repudiation of this ideal. The very accumulation of heroic terms and epithets renders their subsequent deflation all the more effective.

Another passage which has been subjected to what I feel tempted to call Germanomaniac interpretation concerns the rendering of Thomas’s words on behalf of all the disciples: *eamus et nos, ut moriamur cum eo* (John 11.16). This willingness of followers to die together with their lord is rendered into Old Saxon in such a way as to bring out a readiness to suffer with their king (v. 3996: *thuoloian mid ùsson thiodan*), a warrior’s obligation (*thegnes cust*) to stand firm with his lord and to die with him at the decisive moment (v. 3996 ff.). The heroic atmosphere is clear, but what precisely is its function? Although the situation is conceived as military, the actual heroic terminology is applied only to Christ’s enemies: they are a *stridiga thioda* ‘warlike band’, they are seen as *fiund* ‘the enemy’ and as *erlos obarmuoda* ‘proud men’ (v. 3990 ff.). By contrast, the designation of Thomas as *drohtines thegan* (v. 3994) in this context describes him more in his service and subordination to Christ than in any military function (Green 1965:103). For the rest, any heroic death in fighting on behalf of Christ is converted into a passive willingness to suffer with Him as a deliberate Christianization of a Germanic feature no longer acceptable to the author. As such, this corresponds closely to the stress laid by Boniface on passive willingness to accept martyrdom at the hands of the Frisians. In both cases heroic terms applied to enemies of Christ or of Christianity were meant literally and therefore condemned, whilst their use of Christians was meant passively or spiritually. This
attitude derives further support from the fact that what is demanded of the individual Christian is an imitation of Christ's own behaviour, a passive acceptance of the hatred of enemies, a readiness to accept what they may inflict on Him, as expressed in the rebuke to Peter for being so quick to take to the sword (v. 4892 ff.) (Green 1965:338).

Passivity in the face of violence, rather than a display of heroic virtues in combat, is what all these passages in the *Heliand* convey. In these apparently military contexts, as in the employment of the vocabulary of fatalism, it is the Christian message which imposes itself upon Germanic tradition, rather than vice versa. In these two respects, as with the interplay between orality and literacy, the *Heliand* marks the first steps in the transition from a pagan Germanic society to early medieval Christendom.

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The Old Saxon *Heliand*, lines 1 – 15

Manega uuâron, the sia iro mōd gespôn,
that sia bigunnun reckan that girûni, that thie rîceo Crist
undar mancunnea māriđa gifrumida
mid uuordun endi mid uuercun. That uuolda thô uuísara filo
liudo barno lobon, lèra Cristes,
hēlag uuord gōdas, endi mid iro handon scriban
berehtlîco an buok, huô sia is gibodscip scoldin
frummian, firiho barn. Than uuârun thoh sia fiori te thiu
under thera menigo, thia habdon maht godes,
helpa fan himila, hēlagna gêst,
craft fan Criste, – sia uurâun gicorana te thio,
that sie than êuanegelium ënan scooldun
an buok scriban endi sô manag gibod godes,
hēlag himiliśc uuord.

English translation

There were many, whose mind enticed them
to begin to tell forth the mystery that the mighty Christ
accomplished glorious things amongst mankind
in words and in deeds. Then many wise
sons of men wished to praise Christ’s teaching,
God’s holy word and to write with their hands
clearly in book form how they should carry out
his commandment, the sons of men. There were then
four amongst many, who had authority from God,
assistance’from heaven, the Holy Ghost,
power from Christ – they were chosen to that end
so that they alone should write the gospel
in book form and so many commandments of God,
the holy heavenly word.
Discussion

HINES: At the beginning of your paper you discuss the traditions, in the plural, in which one can locate the production of the Heliand, and talk about how the tradition of alliterative verse is characteristic of Germanic poetry of the past. But the "epic form, as a vessel for Christian content, resembles Otfrid’s in being inspired by the early Christian model of adapting the Virgilian epic to the Christian message", and you refer to Christian Latin models in Juvencus, Arator and Prudentius. Do you then discount the Germanic epic tradition as being relevant to the composition of the Heliand?

GREEN: By Germanic epic tradition do you mean an antecedent Germanic epic?

HINES: Yes.

GREEN: I think, my question then is, "What do you mean by an epic?" Do you mean a lengthy narrative as opposed to a short heroic or encomiastic lay?

HINES: Well, let’s be very simple. Let’s say that the classic example must be Beowulf, which is lengthy.

GREEN: I think it is the general view in German scholarship that epics came about within the German area only under the influence of Latin Christian tradition. Before this there were in existence relatively short poems, 160 lines or so, but little more, orally composed or mentally composed and then learned by heart and recited. But of the kind of length of Beowulf there is no evidence whatsoever in Germanic tradition.

HINES: Do you mean German tradition?

GREEN: German, yes.

HINES: Because there is an intense dispute over the date of Beowulf, a poem of about 3,000 lines, in which there are two schools of thought. One dates the poem to the eighth century, the other would date the poem to the tenth century (see Chase (ed.) 1981; Newton 1993). Certainly something similar to the Beowulf that we have can be dated to the eighth century. Within the Germanic literary world at least, there is an example of something that the term ‘epic’ seems fully appropriate to.

GREEN: There is also a debate, even if we date Beowulf to the eighth century, as to how far it itself is under Christian Latin influence.

HINES: I accept that. Meanwhile, in the Old English poetic tradition we also have the teasingly elusive Cædmonian group of poems. These are paraphrases of the Bible in Old English poetry, substantial poems representing the books of Genesis and Exodus, one on the story of Daniel, and perhaps a little later on also the story of Judith as well. I certainly wouldn’t be as happy to talk about a possible eighth-century date for any of those as I would be for Beowulf. But Bede, talking about Cædmon in the first half of the eighth century, writes about him producing versified vernacular versions of Old Testament history.

AUSENDA: Which were written down?

HINES: Bede does not explicitly says so. This is actually something that went into the paper I did for the Anglo-Saxon symposium. Bede says that the scholars
who taught Cædmon these stories were those *litterati* who could read the Bible, and told Cædmon what was in it. But they learned from him by listening to his recital. In the tenth-century Old English translation of this text, this is changed to say that those who taught him, the *lareowas*, the *doctores* in the Latin, wrote down and learned from what he said. This is an interesting change between the eighth-century and the tenth-century version. Meanwhile, there is no evidence, apart from Cædmon’s hymn that gets added to the manuscripts of Bede in the mid-eighth century, for an actual written tradition of the work attributed to Cædmon.

AUSENDA: In a general way, oral poetry has to ‘mature’ to become popular enough that people think that it should be written down, as happened for the *Chanson de geste* and so on. In other words, it doesn’t become written down immediately.

SIEGMUND: Only to learn from you: you used the term *recitatio*. Does one know what kind of orality there was? Did they play music during the *recitatio*?

GREEN: Ideas, yes. But hard and fast facts, no. Unless one accepts the fact of a monastic context for *recitatio*. Then we know a lot about that in Benedictine tradition, namely *recitatio* in the refectory, during the course of a meal, and also after the meal the so-called *collatio*, where a text was recited in fragments and then an exegetical discussion took place on what had been read out. Those are the two main types of Benedictine *recitatio* in the early Middle Ages.

AUSENDA: Frank [Siegmund] wanted to know whether it was sung.

GREEN: There is evidence from the Straubing manuscript of the *Heliand* that parts of it, at any rate, must have been sung, because there are neumes notated in this manuscript. The same is true of Otfrid’s *Evangelienbuch*; parts of that are musically notated, and there is also reference in the Latin preface to Otfrid’s work that it was meant to be sung.

SIEGMUND: Archaeology brought up some musical instruments; the most prominent example would be the ‘Grab des Sängers’, in Cologne-St. Severin (Päffgen 1992:481 f.) I am asking now whether he was a singer or someone who recited texts like the *Heliand*. Your answer could help archaeology to come close to an idea of how old this tradition was.

GREEN: Yes, there are linguistically a number of references in early Germanic poetry to the recital of a work. These are shorter works, but one can perhaps extrapolate from shorter works to longer works like this, where the recital is accompanied by a harp. It is a harp above all which is the instrument used. One gets alternations between a word indicating a singer and in the same context, applied to the same person, a harp player. That suggests, therefore, that the player of the harp was also the singer. Although it is equally possible, of course, that these were two different people. But where the two words or the two terms are used as alternatives in the same context, that suggests that the one person performs both functions in ‘Personalunion’.

SPRINGER: Oh, but people used to read aloud, they read aloud.

GREEN: In that sense what I suggested in the way of individual reading is in fact also to some extent orality; it belongs to the sphere of orality because it was read aloud by one person to himself.
SPRINGER: One could hear somebody read.
GREEN: That is why the Benedictine rule suggests that when monks retire for individual reading, they should murmur only softly to themselves so that they would not interfere with their neighbour [laughter]. Which is why, incidentally, some of the earliest college statutes from Oxford and Cambridge laid down that reading must be done silently. It was still necessary, therefore, as late as that to insist on this fact.
SPRINGER: Still in the time of Martin Luther, people used to read aloud. He translated, "somebody heard him reading".
AUSENDA: Do they have any notion of the size of the harp which was used to accompany the reciter?
GREEN: There is a tentative reconstruction of the harp from Sutton Hoo. I can't tell you anything about it musicologically. I am not an expert in that field. But do you know anything about this, Ian?
WOOD: No, it was about that size (50 cm).
GREEN: How many strings has it got?
SIEGMUND: The harp from Cologne is about 50 cm high and it had six strings (Päffgen 1992:483 fig. 170).
HINES: Three or four, I think. Fragments of more than one harp or lyre of this kind have been found, and there are manuscript illustrations of what is quite consistently a relatively simple instrument.
GREEN: That is also the case with the Utrecht psalter.
HINES: Alger Doane, who has edited the Old Saxon Genesis poems, has an extensive discussion of the origin of these poems, and he comes down to preferring Louis the Pious to Louis the German as the ruler who commissioned them (Doane 1991:2). Have you looked at that and rejected those arguments?
GREEN: Yes, I am happier with Louis the German, but I admit that the question is still open. I think myself that the weight of evidence is slightly in favour of the argument put forward by Haubrichs.
HINES: The Genesis poem is very interesting because some fragments survive in Old Saxon, and there is also a more extensive Old English translation of parts of the original poem. From the date of the Old English translation it is by no means implausible that Louis the Pious could be the right man. Being earlier than Louis the German, it is just slightly more comfortable from an Old English point of view.
GREEN: Yes, but in addition to that one should state that there is no evidence that the author of the Old Saxon Genesis was the same author as of the Heliand.
HINES: Yes, I do accept that.
GREEN: What was true of one may not be applicable to the other.
HINES: The significance of the production of literature in a particular vernacular instead of Latin underlining the separateness and sense of unity of the tribes east of the Rhine is in my view a very important proposition. What I would be interested in exploring is the possibility that, within what we perhaps would call Carolingian imperialist theory or policy, there was actually a cultivation of this sort of diversity because it reflected the width of the Empire. There seemed to be some
cachet to having your Irish scholars who wrote Irish in the manuscripts and the Anglo-Saxons coming there as well.

AUSENDA: “Importance of a society dealing with heroics, the attitude of Christianity to warfare” (page 251). That seems a strange approach. What is the attitude of Christianity to warfare?

GREEN: Not one attitude, but a multiplicity of attitudes. And there I am basing myself primarily on work done a long time ago by Harnack, in the 30s by Erdmann, in looking at the genesis of the Crusading idea. As far as I know, these arguments have not being invalidated since. Work has been done since, but along the same lines, not contravening it. In a way I don’t feel it is my obligation to go into a treatment of the Christian attitude towards warfare. I am merely expressing that this was an old problem to Christianity which it confronted in northern Europe in a different guise.

AUSENDA: You say, “...the Church has brought writing as we know it to a hitherto oral society” (page 251-2). I am very pleased, because you bring grist to my mill there when you talk about an oral society.

GREEN: Yes, yes. I said “literacy as we know it”. That is my ‘let out’ for admitting a form of runic literacy before the introduction of writing in the Latin alphabet.

AUSENDA: You say (page 252), “If we accept, with whatever reservations, the Parry/Lord thesis of extemporizing oral recital relying on a stock of conventional formulas to be called on in the joint process of composition in performance, it is clear that the Saxon poem includes a large number of stock phrases”. And I am very happy to see that you seem to rescue the Milman Parry and A. B. Lord approach.

GREEN: No, I do not. I say “With whatever reservations”.

AUSENDA: Well, OK, but you seem to rescue it because you talk about stock phrases.

GREEN: Certainly there are stock phrases which are drawn upon in oral compositions. But that is not the only method of oral composition, as Milman Parry and Lord suggested. There are other methods, namely memorial tradition, where work is composed mentally, memorized by the composer and then delivered by memory, rather than by performance-in-composition as Parry and Lord suggested. There is a lot of work being done, not merely worldwide, but also for medieval Europe of this form of memorial performance, in addition to the oral-formulaic performance put forward by Milman Parry. What I am suggesting is not that Lord and Parry are wrong in arguing thus, but that they are wrong in postulating this as the sole method of oral performance.

AUSENDA: All right. You have already softened your approach, because the last time we discussed it, you said that they were wrong. You have veered somewhat from your original position.

GREEN: That can happen.

HINES: Open minded.

GREEN: It sounds good, doesn’t it?

AUSENDA: You say that the prose Praefatio mentions cantilena and modulatio, technical terms suggesting sung performance, as we discussed before. I just want
to observe that minstrels were active in the hamlets of the Italian Alps until World War I.

GREEN: And active still in the 30s in the Balkans, where Parry drew his theory from.

AUSENDA: And it is interesting that the subjects of their songs were what we would call ‘police and accident reports’ conveying news that are now common in newspapers. The reason I asked about the harp is because they harmonize the cantilena with the harp and then they sing, and between stanzas they strum the harp ‘forte’ or ‘piano’ according to the mood of the stanzas they have just sung. There is an alternation between the refrain of the harp and the singing of stanzas.

GREEN: What Parry registers from the Balkans is a continuous accompaniment of some recital by a ‘goslar’, by the same man.

MEIER: “Ik gehôrta dat seggen”, is that the way it is pronounced?

GREEN: It is a standard formula which survives right through to the thirteenth century.

AUSENDA: When you say (page 254), “in place of the inspiration of the Muses...” you draw a parallel between the inspiration of the Muses and the inspiration of God.

GREEN: I make not a parallel but a contrast.

AUSENDA: All right, a contrast: one replaces the other. Do you think it is deliberate or do you think it is happenstance?

GREEN: I think this is a deliberate Christian replacement of what was regarded as a pagan tradition. Which is not to say that inspiration from the Muses cannot be called up much later in a secular context, in the Middle Ages, as in Gottfried von Strassburg in his Tristan. But at this early point there is certainly no possibility of invoking not merely a secular but a pagan inspiration.

AUSENDA: On the relationship between the Germanic conception of fate and Christian providence, again are you making a parallel or a contrast there?

GREEN: I am saying that, however different the Mediterranean or, shall we call it, Roman conception of fate was from the Germanic conception of fate, nonetheless both represent a view with which the Church collided insofar as it could not be reconciled with its concept of divine providence. And then I give later the reasons why the Church was so antagonistic towards this view.

MEIER: I don’t like the word barbarian too much, “The victory had to be won in Germania” (page 255). The word barbarian is a typical way of Christian people describing others, or of Greek people describing other people as ‘barbarian’. They look like primitive people.

GREEN: There is a deficiency here in the English vocabulary. In German you can talk about ‘die Germanen’, but there is no corresponding word in English. What I’ve done in publications when referring to them is to fall back on the Latin term Germani. I felt that I would try to keep in English as far as possible and that is why I used ‘barbarians’. But you would be happier with Germani.

MEIER: Germani is better than ‘barbarians’.
AUSENDA: I like 'barbarians', because 'barbarians' were not necessarily primitive, they just were people who 'stammered'.
GREEN: And they were not necessarily simple.
AUSENDA: Not necessarily 'simple'. Even the Persians were 'barbarians' as far as the Greeks were concerned.
MEIER: Outside the Greek world all people were 'barbarians'.
GREEN: And outside the Slavonic world even the Germans are 'barbarians', 'niemec', 'someone who cannot speak'.
AUSENDA: "The barbarians...in their consultations of oracles and casting of lots, practices already attested by Caesar and centuries later still attracting the criticism of missionaries" (page 255). Which means that even five or six or seven or eight hundred years later they did the same things that they did before. So certain practices did continue and last, and did not change that fast, so that one can fish out some 'stuff' that went on from Caesar's times.
GREEN: May I put a qualification of my own remark in there. I don't think it undermines it, but qualifies it. Frequently what is criticized as Germanic pagan practices turns out in the end to have been a view by the Church which simply sees all pagans lumped together. What has often been shown to happen is that pagan practices from the Mediterranean world are blithely attributed to the Germanic world. Even when account is taken of that, though, enough remains to make it clear, especially when Germanic words are quoted in the context, that some of these practices are clearly Germanic and not just imported from elsewhere by a Church that makes no distinction between one paganism and another.

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