CHAPTER 6

Revolt in Heaven: Lucifer's Treason in *Genesis B*

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The account in the tenth-century Old English poem *Genesis B* of Lucifer's revolt against God has attracted much praise and scholarly attention.* The dramatic presentation of Lucifer's *superbia* is integrated both thematically and structurally into the poem's account of the fall of Adam and Eve, so that the largely apocryphal story of the revolt in heaven, with its particular focus on Lucifer's motivations, stands in direct causal relation to the human fall.[1] Critical responses to this striking presentation have often analyzed Lucifer's role in the poem against the heroic ideals of loyalty familiar from the cultural world of Old English traditional poetry.[2] The idealized *comitatus* model of society depicted in this poetry is centered upon the competitive interactions of "a multitude of petty hierarchies, each self-sufficient, self-justifying, and opportunistic," within which hierarchies the lord "operates with a band of freely sworn but loosely committed followers for his own advantage in a situation of universal competition and equality among war bands."[3] The literary ideals of loyalty and

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1 Thomas D. Hill, "The Fall of Angels and Man in the Old English *Genesis B*," in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese, 279–90 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975); Renée R. Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 90–96.

2 Most influentially, R.E. Woolf, "The Devil in Old English Poetry," *Review of English Studies* 4 (1953): 1–12. See also: J.M. Evans, "*Genesis B* and its Background," *Review of English Studies* 14 (1963): 1–16, 113–23 at 116–23; Alain Renoir, "The Self-Deception of Temptation: Boethian Psychology in *Genesis B*," in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. R.P. Creed, 47–67 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1967), 51–53; Michael D. Cherniss, "Heroic Ideals and the Moral Climate of *Genesis B*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 30 (1969): 479–97; Joyce M. Hill, "Figures of Evil in Old English Poetry," *Leeds Studies in English* 8 (1975): 5–19 at 5–6; Peter J. Lucas, "Loyalty and Obedience in the Old English *Genesis* and the Interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A*," *Neophilologus* 76 (1992): 121–35; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 134–39; Fabienne L. Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 64–65.

3 *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. A.N. Doane (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 123. The text of both *Genesis B*

fellowship upon which such relationships depend, largely abstract and essentially timeless, provide one important context against which an audience—medieval or modern—might evaluate and condemn Lucifer's behavior. It is equally possible, however, to read the account of Lucifer's treasonous behavior in a more explicitly historicist manner as an expression of recurrent early medieval concerns with both the ideologies and the practical realities governing the operation of royal power. The unusual provenance of *Genesis B*—demonstrably a translation or adaptation of an Old Saxon exemplar of which only fragments now survive—offers both challenges and opportunities for such an approach. In its surviving form, the poem is a product of tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England, but as a partial instantiation of an earlier Old Saxon *Genesis* poem, the text reflects developments and disputes regarding the operation of royal authority current in Francia in the first half of the ninth century.[4]

The poem's account of Lucifer's revolt closely aligns with realities of treasonous behavior contemporary with the composition of the Old Saxon poem. As a result, the moral and ethical expectations of early ninth-century Francia provide an alternative framework for evaluating Lucifer's actions; in turn, the poetic account normalizes these same expectations, establishing Lucifer as a benchmark against which all subsequent traitors might be measured. The centrality of these ideas relating to royal authority and treason in the account of the revolt in heaven may also explain the interest in the Old Saxon text in Anglo-Saxon England—specifically in Wessex—in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. West Saxon political life was significantly shaped during this period by problematic negotiations of royal authority that coincided with an increasingly-evident interest in imperial-style rule and a concern with the articulation of treason as a legal concept. The moral and political subtext of the account of Lucifer's revolt would have particularly resonated in such an environment. This is likely to have been a factor behind the West Saxon engagement with the poem during this period.

The Old English text of *Genesis B* is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, an anthology of biblically-inspired Old English verse probably produced during the years c. 960–990, in which it comprises an interpolation

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and the Old Saxon *Genesis* is cited by line number from this edition. Translations are my own.

4 The importance of the ninth-century Frankish context is similarly emphasized by Doane in *Saxon Genesis*. For a recent discussion of how the account of the temptation of Adam and Eve in the poem "reflects the intellectual milieu of the Carolingian mid-ninth century" (16), see: Daniel Anlezark, "The Old English *Genesis B* and Irenaeus of Lyon," *Medium Ævum* 86 (2017): 1–21. For a reading of the poem in light of contemporary Carolingian penitential theories and practices, see: Alexander J. Sager, "After the Apple: Repentance in *Genesis B* and its Continental Context," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112 (2013): 292–310.

into the longer Old English poem *Genesis A*.[5] The interpolated text begins *in media res* with God's prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree before departing from the biblical source to describe the apocryphal revolt and fall of Lucifer and his followers. The poem then continues with a highly idiosyncratic account of the temptation, fall, and expulsion from Eden of Adam and Eve. Linguistic evidence suggests that the process by which the Old Saxon source was transformed into the extant Old English poem probably began in Wessex around the year 900, with the text being revised and recopied over a number of decades before its inclusion in Junius 11.[6] How or when the Old Saxon text arrived in England is unknown.[7] The composition of the original Old Saxon poem can, however, be dated with a fair degree of confidence to a relatively precise historical moment. Three surviving fragments of this poem are preserved, alongside a single extract from the *Heliand* (a ninth-century Old Saxon poetic Gospel harmony), as marginalia in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Palatinus Latinus 1447. These verse fragments were copied in three different hands, each of which is usually dated to the third quarter of the ninth century.[8] The poem's composition is likely to have taken place some years earlier than this. The Old Saxon poem is generally held to have been written after the *Heliand* (to which it seems to allude), which is unlikely to have been written before 819 at the earliest.[9] A plausible date range for the composition of the Old Saxon *Genesis* can thus be established as c. 820–850. The poem's place of origin is unknown, though it was presumably composed within one of the Frankish centers of learning. The Old Saxon poem partially preserved in the text of *Genesis B* was composed, therefore, within the Carolingian empire, either during the often-turbulent reign of Louis the Pious (r. 814–40), or during the years of dynastic struggle that followed his death.

5 On the date of the manuscript, see: Leslie Lockett, "An Integrated Re-Examination of the Dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11," *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 141–73.

6 *The Later Genesis*, ed. B.J. Timmer (Oxford: Scrivener Press, 1948), 19–42; Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 47–54. On the process of adaptation, see especially: Michael J. Capek, "The Nationality of a Translator: Some Notes on the Syntax of *Genesis B*," *Neophilologus* 55 (1971): 89–96; René Derolez, "*Genesis*: Old Saxon *and* Old English," *English Studies* 76 (1995): 409–23; A.N. Doane, "The Transmission of *Genesis B*," in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. Hans Sauer and Joanna Story with the assistance of Gaby Waxenberger, 63–81 (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011).

7 For speculation on this point, see: Barbara Raw, "The Probable Derivation of Most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Saxon *Genesis*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976): 133–48 at 148; Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 52–53.

8 For a full description of the manuscript, see: Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 9–28.

9 Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 46.

In the early ninth century, the legacy of the expansion and consolidation of Carolingian power during the reign of Charlemagne was an empire so vast as to be beyond the scope of purely centralized authority. The situation upon the emperor's death in 814 resembled, in the words of Janet Nelson, "a conglomeration of *regna*—regions, formally independent kingdoms, and sub-kingdoms [...] all of which had a great deal of autonomy."[10] This regionalism was a potential source of tension and dissent that could be exploited by individual members of the ruling elite, whether aristocrats dissatisfied by the ill-defined and largely *ad hoc* nature of power-sharing arrangements within the polity or ambitious members of the royal family, divisions and rivalries amongst whom were exacerbated by the Frankish tradition of partible inheritance. In such circumstances, individual acts of treason, consisting of a breach of fidelity towards the emperor, could (and did) lead to serious revolts requiring a swift and usually violent response.[11]

The succession of Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious in 814 coincided with an increasingly visible attempt to assert an explicitly Christian ideology for the operation of power within a unified empire. On the one hand, the promulgation in 817 of the *Ordinatio imperii* articulated this developing ideology by establishing the formal basis for the division of royal authority within a unified imperial framework. The *Ordinatio* simultaneously established or consolidated sub-kingships for Louis' three eldest sons and, in a break with the tradition of partible inheritance, laid out Louis' vision for the continuation of imperial rule after his death. According to the *Ordinatio*, Louis' eldest son Lothar was appointed co-emperor during Louis' lifetime and was to succeed his father as Emperor after the latter's death; his younger brothers, Pippin and Louis the German, though distinguished by the name of king (*regiis insigniri nominibus*), were to hold power in their kingdoms subject to Lothar's overall imperial authority (*sub seniore fratre regali potestate potiantur*).[12] On the other hand, the ideological developments of Louis' early reign also sought to implicate royal followers—whether ecclesiastical or secular—within the operation of an imperial *ministerium*. A series of cartularies issued throughout the 820s, including, most significantly perhaps, the *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines* (823–25),

10 Janet L. Nelson, "The Frankish Kingdoms, 814–898: The West," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History Vol. II c.700–c.900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, 110–141 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 111.

11 See further: Jennifer R. Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), esp. 152–57, 339–40.

12 *Ordinatio Imperii*, 817, prologue in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Capitularia Regum Francorum*, vol. 1, ed. Alfred Boretius (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1883), 1: 271.

describes how this *ministerium*—defined in terms of defending the Church and upholding peace and justice throughout the Empire—resides in its totality in the person of the Emperor, but is nevertheless shared in degree by each of his followers.[13] The concept of *ministerium* encapsulates what Mayke de Jong has described as the "corporate identity" of clerical and lay magnates, bound together by "a religiously articulated sense of 'ministry' and service to a public cause embodied by royal and imperial authority."[14]

These attempts, early in Louis' reign, to formalize the operation of imperial power, though intended to secure "perpetual peace" (*perpetuam pacem*) within the empire, were an inevitable cause of resentment, dissent, and treason.[15] The centralization of the resources of political authority in the hands of Louis and his sons was opposed by others with expectations of royal power, such as Louis' nephew Bernard, whose hereditary sub-kingship of Italy was conspicuously disregarded in the *Ordinatio*. Bernard responded with a revolt intended to secure the secession of Italy from imperial control. On the failure of this revolt, Bernard was tried for treason and condemned to death. Louis commuted his punishment to blinding, although Bernard nevertheless died from the resulting trauma. The *Ordinatio* was no more successful at preventing discord between Louis and his sons. From the beginning, the subordination of Pippin and Louis the German under Lothar's imperial authority was a source of resentment, and tensions were exacerbated when, in 829, Louis attempted to overturn the provisions of the *Ordinatio* in order to provide a kingdom for his youngest son, Charles the Bald (b. 823). Together with Louis' unwillingness to allow his sons total administrative freedom within their respective *regna*, the ongoing disputes regarding arrangements for the imperial succession led to a series of conflicts between Louis and his three eldest sons, both individually and separately, and between the sons themselves. These campaigns, which twice led to the emperor's capture and temporary deposition (in 831 and 833), marked the final decade of Louis' reign.[16]

Following Louis' death in 840, the division of the empire between Lothar, Louis the German, and Charles the Bald was ultimately secured after three years of fraternal conflict by the Treaty of Verdun in 843 (Pippin having predeceased his father by two years). Despite this apparent fragmentation of the Empire, the decade following the death of Louis the Pious is marked in

13 *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines*, 823–25, ch. 3, in *Capitularia*, 1:303.

14 Mayke de Jong, "The Empire that was always Decaying: The Carolingians (800–888)," *Medieval Worlds* 2 (2015): 6–25 at 13.

15 *Ordinatio Imperii*, 817, prologue in *Capitularia*, 1:271.

16 Cf. Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817–876* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 59–77.

contemporary sources by a recurrent "Christian-imperial discourse."[17] As de Jong points out, this discourse tends to respond to the turmoil of the 830s and 40s by invoking a concept of *imperium* that privileges unanimity amongst those "participating in imperial rule" over the unity of the Empire as a territorial entity, so that *imperium* came to refer to "the exercise of imperial authority by the senior member(s) of the Carolingian dynasty."[18]

The concern with correctly articulating royal authority in an imperial context evident in the reign of Louis the Pious and in the decade following his death provides a telling context for the depiction of Lucifer's treason in *Genesis B*. In the poem, Lucifer's betrayal is founded upon his conception of his own authority as ruler. In his first speech, Lucifer declares "ic hæbbe geweald micel / to gyrwanne godlecran stol, / hearran on heofne" [I have great authority to prepare a better throne, higher in heaven] (280b–82a). Lucifer's claim to possess *geweald micel* is not simply a presumption of ability: the noun *geweald* means not only "*power* to do" but also "*power* of one in authority, *rule*, *dominion*, *sway*."[19] It is in this latter sense that the cognate noun *giwald* is used twice in the surviving fragments of the Old Saxon *Genesis*. The treasonous behavior of Lucifer, represented in *Genesis B*, contrasts pointedly with the idealized loyalty displayed by Abraham in the Abraham and Sodom fragment of the Old Saxon poem.[20] Not only does Abraham kneel before the Lord's angelic messengers, professing his loyalty in a form of commendation, but in his subsequent intercession on behalf of the inhabitants of Sodom, he is careful to acknowledge God's absolute authority over his creation:

> all bi thinun dadiun sted
> thius uuerold an thinum uuillean. thu giuuald hauas
> obar thesan middilgard manna kunnias […]
> Thu ruomes so rehtæs, riki drohtin,
> so thu ni uuili that thar antgeldan guoduuillige mann
> uuamscaðono uuerek thuoh thu is giuuald habes
> te gifrummianna. (192b–94, 198–201a)

> [Through your works this world stands according to your will. You have authority over the race of men throughout this middle-earth […] You strive so on behalf of justice, powerful lord, so that you do not wish that

17 De Jong, "The Empire that was Always Decaying," 15.

18 De Jong, "The Empire that was Always Decaying," 17, 14.

19 T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908–21), s.v. "ge–weald," I:4, 4a.

20 Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 169–70.

men of righteous intention should have to pay the price for the deeds of the wicked, although you have the authority to do this].

In contrast to Abraham's humility before divine authority, Lucifer's claim to possess *geweald micel* represents a vainglorious refusal to recognize that the foundation of this authority lies not in himself, but in God.[21] The poet has already emphasized this point in the initial account of Lucifer's creation as the preeminent angel:

> ænne hæfde he swa swiðne geworhtne
> swa mihtigne on his modgeþohte, he let hine swa micles wealdan,
> hehstne to him on heofona rice, hæfde he hine swa hwitne geworhtne,
> swa wynlic wæs his wæstm on heofonum: þæt him com from weroda drihtne.
> gelic wæs he þam leohtum steorrum. lof sceolde he drihtnes wyrcean,
> dyran sceolde he his dreamas on heofonum and sceolde his drihtne þancian
> þæs leanes þe he him on þam leohte gescerede þonne læte he his hine lange wealdan. (252b–58)
>
> [He had created one of them so great, so mighty in his intellect, permitted him to wield authority so extensively, highest after Him in the kingdom of heaven, had created him so radiant, so beautiful in heaven was the form that came to him from the Lord of hosts, that he was like the shining stars. He ought to have performed his Lord's praise, ought to have valued his joys in heaven, and ought to have thanked his Lord for the rewards that He gave him in that radiance—then He would have permitted him to wield authority over what was his for a long time].

The patterns of repetition in this passage express Lucifer's obligation to his lord. The reiterative progression "swa swiðne … swa mihtigne … swa micles … swa hwitne … swa wynlic" establishes the extent of God's generosity towards his follower; the subsequent sequence "lof sceolde … dyran sceolde … sceolde

21 Alcuin describes how the vainglorious man "non dat Deo honorem sed sibi: nec divinae imputat gratiae quidquid boni facit, sed quasi ex se habeat vel saecularis dignitatem honoris, vel spiritualis decorem sapientiae" [gives honor not to God but to himself; and credits whatever good he does not to divine grace, but as though he has from himself the dignity of secular honors or the beauty of spiritual wisdom]. *De virtutibus et vitiis liber*, ch. 34, in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*, vol. 101, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1851), 635.

… þancian" similarly establishes the reciprocal obligations that such generosity imposes upon Lucifer. The poet's emphasis on this point removes any possible mitigation for Lucifer's treasonous behavior, but it also conveys that, despite his exulted position, whatever *geweald* the angel possesses is derived from and subordinate to God's overall authority. In the statement that God "let hine swa micles wealdan" [permitted him to wield authority so extensively], the verb *lætan* has a precise and quasi-legalistic force. The verb is used in this sense shortly before this passage, in the opening lines of *Genesis B*. Following God's (fragmentary) injunction regarding the tree, Adam and Eve—like Abraham—bow humbly before God. It is after they have performed this obeisance that God bestows upon them the land of Eden: "he let heo þæt land buan" [he permitted them to occupy that land] (239b). That this beneficence represents a royal prerogative is suggested by a similar usage of cognate *latan* in the Old Saxon Abraham and Sodom fragment. In that fragment, Abraham petitions the Lord to operate his prerogative of mercy and grant the sinful city-dwellers life and land: "latan te liua that sia muotin that land uuaran" [grant them life that they might occupy the land] (216). The implication here is that the crimes of the Sodomites have led them to forfeit their lives and possessions to the Lord, who alone has the authority to grant them back—as he subsequently does.[22] The sense of a formal grant evident in these two passage pertains also in the use of the verb *lætan* in the account of Lucifer's devolved authority in *Genesis B*.

Each of these examples presents God as a gracious lord conferring *honores* on his followers. Lucifer, in contrast to Abraham, disregards this act of patronage, seeing his *honores* as his own inalienable possession rather than a mark of divine favor. In fact, the bestowal of *honores* is explicitly conditional. Adam and Eve will enjoy the land granted to them so long as they are loyal to God's word: "ðenden heo his halige word healdan woldon" [while they would obey his holy word] (245). So, too, Lucifer's *geweald* is conditional upon his obedience: "þonne læte he his hine lange wealdan" [then He would have permitted him to wield authority over what was his for a long time] (258b). The poem presents a divine polity in which authority is divisible but remains dependent upon the superordinate power of God. Lucifer, God's preeminent follower, holds office second only to God himself. In terms of contemporary Carolingian politics, Lucifer occupies a privileged position in the polity as a prominent participant in a divine *ministerium*. The poem makes clear, however, that this par-

22 Cf. *Genesis*, 220–23 and 234–42. On the juridical force of line 216, see: Doane, commentary in *Saxon Genesis*, 337.

ticipation is predicated upon his continued obedience and fidelity to God, the ultimate source of this *ministerium*.

Lucifer's rejection of this dependent position can also be understood in terms of the realities of early ninth-century Carolingian politics. A notable feature of the *Ordinatio* of 817 is the stress that it places upon Lothar's status as elder brother (*senior frater*) and the corresponding juniority of Pippin and Louis (*iuniores fratres*). In so doing, the language of the *Ordinatio* reflects contemporary Carolingian conceptualizations of the moral basis of hierarchical relationships, according to which *iuniores* were required to show humility as well as obedience in their behavior towards their *seniores*.[23] As well as restricting the younger brothers' freedom to wage war, receive envoys, or even marry without Lothar's consent, the *Ordinatio* also required them to mark their fidelity to Lothar each year by coming to him for a ceremonial exchange of gifts. Such conditions were, according to the account of Thegan of Trier, perceived by Pippin and Louis as an affront to their royal dignity (*ceteri filii ob hoc indignati sunt*), and they contributed to the political unrest in the decades following the promulgation of the *Ordinatio*.[24]

The *indignitas* felt by Pippin and Louis on account of their subordination to Lothar offers a striking parallel to the proud resentment that leads to Lucifer's treason in *Genesis B*. Indeed, the language of the poem appears to draw upon precisely the same discourse of juniority and seniority. The first words spoken by Lucifer in the poem constitute a statement of his own self-sufficiency: "'hwæt sceal ic winnan?' cwæð he. 'nis me wihtæ þearf / hearran to habbanne'" ["Why must I toil?" he said, "There is no need for me to have a superior"] (278–79a). The Old English noun *hearra* is a relatively rare poetic word for a lord. Of the twenty-nine recorded usages of the word in the surviving corpus of Old English verse, all, save three, are found in *Genesis B* wherein the Old English term appears as an "assimilation" of the more common Old Saxon noun *hêrro*.[25] The frequent recurrence of the term, and its repeated collocation with

23 Cf. Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 212–13. Stone cites Alcuin's formulation of the virtues proper to different ranks in society: "potestatibus et iudicibus iustitiam et misericordiam; iunioribus oboedientiam humilitatem et fidem in senioribus" [for the powerful and for judges, justice and mercy; for subordinates, obedience, humility, and fidelity to their superiors]. *Epistola 184*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae*, vol. 4, ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 310.

24 Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, vol. 64, ed. Ernst Tremp (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1995), 210. On Thegan's use of the term *indignati*, see: Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 31.

25 *Dictionary of Old English: A–H*, s.v. "hĕarra, hĕrra": <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> (accessed May 29, 2018.)

the noun *hyldo* [favor], establishes a thematic concern with the operation of lordship that runs throughout the narrative of both the angelic and human falls.[26] More specifically, however, the Old Saxon word *hêrro* represents a substantivized form of the comparative of the adjective *hêr*, the original meaning of which was "old," and seems to have been formed by direct analogy with, and as a vernacular counterpart to, the Latin term *senior*.[27] Like the Latin term, it denotes not lordship *per se*, but seniority within a hierarchical social structure.

By contrast, Lucifer's own subordinate position within the heavenly polity is characterized in *Genesis B* by the use of the Old English term *geongra* [subordinate] and the related (and unique) forms *geongordom* [subservience] and *giongorscipe* [service], reflecting the cognate Old Saxon words *jungiro*, *jungardom*, and *jungarskepi*. The Old Saxon noun *jungiro* represents the "logical complement" of *hêrro*, being similarly formed by analogy with Latin *iunior*.[28] The use of the nouns *hearra* and *geongra* (and related forms) in the surviving Old English text of *Genesis B* thus preserves an echo of terminology associated with formal power in early ninth-century Francia, expressing the hierarchical distinction between *seniores* and *iuniores*. The hierarchical relations depicted in the original Old Saxon poem were governed by a precise, formal vocabulary that encoded both moral and social obligations. As the example of the *Ordinatio Imperii* shows, this vocabulary was socially freighted in ways that could intersect destructively with conceptions of personal *dignitas*. Thus, the poem's emphasis on the rejection of a subordinate position as a motivation for Lucifer's actions places his treason within a recognizable moral framework, according to which his pride is condemned as a specifically social evil.

According to the poet, God created the race of angels precisely that they might fulfill the role of royal followers: "þæt hie his giongorscipe fyligan wolden" [so that they would perform his service] (249). It is this obligation that Lucifer rejects. At first, Lucifer lacks the desire to serve the Lord: "ne meahte he æt his hige findan / þæt he gode wolde geongerdome, / þeodne þeowian" [he could not find it in his heart that he would serve God, the Lord, in subservience] (266b–68a). Subsequently, he expresses doubts about his continued

26 Cf. Tom Shippey, "Hell, Heaven, and the Failures of *Genesis B*," in *Essays on Old, Middle, Modern English and Old Icelandic in Honor of Raymond P. Tripp, Jr.*, ed. Loren C. Gruber with Meredith Crellin Gruber and Gregory K. Jember, 151–71 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 165–66.

27 D.H. Green, *The Carolingian Lord: Semantic Studies on Four Old High German Words: Baldor, Frô, Truhtin, Hêrro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 405–87.

28 Green, *Carolingian Lord*, 440–41. Margaret J. Ehrhart, by contrast, thinks that these terms indicate a relationship based on "discipleship" rather than "service." "Tempter as Teacher: Some Observations on the Vocabulary of the Old English *Genesis B*," *Neophilologus* 59 (1975): 435–46.

obedience—"him tweo þuhte / þæt he gode wolde geongra weorðan" [it seemed doubtful to him that he would be a subordinate of God] (276b–77)—and questions his need to serve—"hwy sceal ic æfter his hyldo ðeowian, / bugan him swilces geongordomes" [why must I serve him for his favor, bow to him with such subservience] (282b–83a). His first speech culminates with the outright rejection of his subservient role: "ne wille ic leng his geongra wurþan" [I no longer intend to be his subordinate] (291b). The progress from initial unwillingness to this disavowal of his position as God's subordinate marks Lucifer's descent into treason. The driving force behind this movement is Lucifer's *superbia*, but this sinful pride is manifest in social terms as a sense of *indignitas* at his dependent position. Lucifer frames his complaint in terms of justice—"me þæt riht ne þinceð" [that does not seem just to me] (289b)—and characterizes his service to God as a form of flattery (*oleccan*) (290a). This account of Lucifer's pride recalls Alcuin's influential definition of *superbia* as contempt for divine authority (*contemptu mandatorum Dei*), which manifests in social relations as an arrogant and disruptive disobedience: "Fit etiam per contumaciam superbia, quando despiciunt homines senioribus obedire suis. Ex ipsa vero nascitur omnis inobedientia, et omnis praesumptio, et omnis pertinacia, contentiones, haereses, arrogantia" [*Superbia* also arises from arrogance, when people despise obeying their *seniores*. Truly, from that is born all disobedience, and all presumption, and all obstinacy, disputes, heresies, conceitedness].[29] This understanding of the moral and social ramifications of pride is closely mirrored in *Genesis B*, wherein Lucifer's treason is inseparable from his *superbia*, expressed as an arrogant rejection of his subordination within the social hierarchy of heaven.

In rejecting the role of God's *geongra*, Lucifer appeals to the strength of his following:

> bigstandað me strange geneatas þa ne willað me æt þam striðe geswican,
> hæleþas heardmode. hie habbað me to hearran gecorene,
> rofe rincas. mid swilcum mæg man ræd geþencean,
> fon mid swilcum folcgesteallan. frynd synd hie mine georne,
> holde on hyra hygesceaftum. ic mæg hyra hearra wesan,
> rædan on þis rice. (284–89a)

> [Strong companions stand beside me, resolute heroes who will not betray me in the conflict. They have chosen me as their lord, brave warriors.

29 *De virtutibus et vitiis liber*, ch. 27, in *Patrologia Latina*, 101:633.

> With such as these may one devise counsel, make a start with such comrades. They are my eager friends, loyal in their hearts. I may be their lord, rule in this kingdom].

The repetition of the noun *hearra* in these lines establishes a hierarchical relationship between Lucifer and his followers that mirrors that which should exist between God and Lucifer. Lucifer's speech places particular emphasis on the loyalty of his supporters, both positively through the use of the adjective *hold* [loyal] and negatively in the statement that they will not "betray" him (*geswican*) when danger threatens. This appeal to the loyalty of his followers to justify his own treasonous behavior has been frequently understood as a form of irony.[30] A.N. Doane, for example, comments upon "the patent absurdity of one who himself refuses to give service or recognize a hierarchy reaching above but who nevertheless predicates his fortunes on services demanded as his due from a hierarchy reaching below."[31] To an audience familiar with the complex and negotiable operation of power in early ninth-century Francia, however, this seeming absurdity may have looked like pragmatic reality.

Doane's discussion of Lucifer's expectations in terms of hierarchies reaching above and below reflects a familiar historiographical distinction between "vertical" (formal) and "horizontal" (informal) power structures. In recent years, however, the validity of such a binary distinction as applied to the early medieval period has been strongly questioned. Matthew Innes and Stephen Baxter stress that the effective operation of power in this period relied upon the interactional relationship between formal structures of power and informal structures based on local and social bonds of loyalty.[32] As Charles West argues, the construction of aristocratic retinues, such as that described by Lucifer, depended upon such a combination of formal and informal power structures, but it was nevertheless considered "morally binding," implicating

30 Cherniss, "Moral climate," 496, 486; Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 71; Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest,* 85–86; Andrew Lynch, "'Now evil deeds arise': Evaluating Courage and Fear in Early English Fight Narratives," in *Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder*, ed. Susan Broomhall, 17–33 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 26–27.

31 Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 122.

32 Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Stephen Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Baxter defines informal power structures as "networks held together through social ties—lordship, kinship, community, religious affiliation" (11–12).

aristocratic followers in their lord's actions.[33] The existence of such retinues not only facilitated the operation of power at regional and local levels but also played a key role in wider power politics. The active role of aristocratic support networks was an important legitimizing factor that could govern the success or failure of bids for power, even where this involved challenging an existing ruler during his lifetime or disregarding arrangements for the succession after his death.[34]

Lucifer's expectations of support would seem to be based upon such an understanding of the moral bond between himself and his followers, and of the potential for their support to lend legitimacy to his bid for autonomy. Lucifer's speech does invoke formal power structures through the language of fidelity and betrayal and in the references to Lucifer's role as *hearra*. At the same time, however, the language of friendship (*frynd*) and the description of his angelic followers as *geneatas* [companions] and *folcgesteallan* [comrades] invokes informal ties based on friendship, kinship, and personal loyalty that operate at regional and local levels.[35] The repetition of the phrase *mid swilcum* [with such] similarly invokes the strength of his following as a legitimizing factor in his revolt. An audience familiar with the "polycentric" nature of the Frankish polity would surely have recognized in Lucifer's speech a negotiation between formal and informal or local power structures as part of his reconsideration of his role in the heavenly polity.[36] Lucifer's boast reflects pragmatic realities at least as much as much as it does an ironic failure of heroic ideals.

Lucifer's laments following the failure of his revolt also emphasize the local aspect of his bid for power. Addressing his loyal followers, who share his banishment, Lucifer (now Satan) compares their position in hell to the territory they previously occupied in heaven:

> is þæs ænga styde ungelic swiðe
> þam oðrum þe we ær cuðon
> hean on heofonrice þe me min hearra onlag.

33 Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution: Political and Social Transformation Between Marne and Moselle, c. 800–c. 1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 55. On the difficulties that such morally binding loyalties could cause for Carolingian rulers, see: Stone, *Morality and Masculinity*, 198.

34 Janet L. Nelson, "Hincmar of Reims on King-making: The Evidence of the *Annals of St. Bertin*, 861–882," in *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, ed. János M. Bak, 16–34 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

35 Personal ties of affection are also invoked in repeated statement that Lucifer was dear to God (261a, 339b–40a), but the relationship is in this case one-sided.

36 On the "polycentric" nature of the Frankish polity, see: Innes, *State and Society*, 165–250.

> þeah we hine for þam alwaldan agan ne moston,
> romigan ures rices (356–60a)
>
> [This narrow place is very unlike that other with which we were previously familiar high in the kingdom of heaven, which my lord granted to me—although because of the ruler of all we were not allowed to possess it, to strive on behalf of our kingdom].

According to Fabienne Michelet, the phrase *romigan ures rices* here describes Lucifer's ambition to possess the whole of the kingdom of heaven.[37] Yet the lines clearly refer to a specific place (*styde*) within the wider kingdom of heaven (*on heofonrice*) with which Lucifer had been endowed by God. The verb *romigan* has caused confusion on this point. The word is otherwise unrecorded in Old English, but the generally accepted translation of the cognate Old Saxon *romon* is "to strive (for)," which seemingly supports the contention of Michelet and others that Lucifer is concerned here with territorial expansion rather than consolidation.[38] However, the single use of this verb in the surviving portions of the Old Saxon *Genesis* suggests that it requires a more nuanced translation. In Abraham's petition on behalf of the Sodomites (quoted above), Abraham describes how God "strives for justice" (*ruomes so rehtæs*). As Doane notes in his commentary, the meaning of *romon* here cannot be to "strive for" something not already possessed;[39] rather, the meaning must be something closer to "strive on behalf of." A similar meaning can be ascribed to the Old English verb *romigan* in Lucifer's speech. This again points towards the foundations of Lucifer' revolt within a particular, local powerbase—in Carolingian terms, the *regnum* that had been granted to him by God.

The language Lucifer uses to describe his ambitions is consistently comparative. He aims to provide himself with a throne to rival that of God—more splendid, stronger, higher in heaven (272b–74a, 280b–82a). He believes that his following is more powerful than that of God (268b–271a). He can, he says, be as good as God himself: "ic mæg wesan god swa he" [I can be as good/as godlike as he] (283b). In one sense, this comparative language simply highlights Lucifer's essential miscomprehension of the nature of God. As Doane explains, Lucifer's mistake is to imagine that God's power is relative when it is, in fact, absolute.[40] In another sense, however, this language also points to the poet's particular

37 Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, 66–67.
38 Cf. Alain Renoir, "'Romigan Ures Rices': A Reconsideration," *Modern Language Notes* 72 (1957): 1–4.
39 Doane, commentary in *Saxon Genesis*, 335.
40 Doane, introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 123–24.

understanding of Lucifer's treasonous behavior. Lucifer's actions do not constitute a rebellion against a particular system of governance or an attempt to overthrow or disrupt the operation of power *per se*. As Paul Fouracre points out, such rebellions were rarely seen in the early medieval period.[41] Lucifer's revolt instead follows a more familiar ninth-century paradigm in aiming primarily at the redistribution of power amongst the members of an elite group rather than challenging the authority upon which such power was based. Lucifer seeks to redraw the balance of power within the heavenly polity. By providing himself with a higher, better throne, he effectively intends to re-center this polity upon his own particular geographical powerbase. Once again, the revolt in heaven mirrors the struggles that characterized the political life of Francia in the first half of the ninth century, as brother competed with brother and father with son in an ongoing struggle to maximize their own share of imperial power.

Lucifer's punishment also reflects contemporary practices of power. His relocation to hell is repeatedly characterized as a movement from light into darkness. The poet places great emphasis on the brightness of Lucifer's person before his fall (254b, 338b–39a), comparing him to the light of the stars: "gelic was he þam leohtum steorrum" [he was like to the bright stars] (256a). Lucifer's first boast concerns this brightness of his person: "cwæð þæt his lic wære leoht and scene, / hwit and hiowbeorht" [he said that his form was light and shining, white and bright-hued] (265–66a). This brightness is associated also with the kingdom of heaven itself. The poet plays on the polysemy of the word *leoht*—which, like its Old Saxon counterpart *lioht*, can carry an expanding meaning of "world" or "life"—in order to contrast heaven and hell. Lucifer is endowed with gifts "on þam leohte" [in that light/in heaven] (258a), but following his revolt, is condemned to dwell "on wyrse leoht … on þa sweartan helle" [in a worse light … in that dark hell] (310b; 312b). Though it is filled with fire, hell is "leohtes leas" [deprived of light] (333a). Lucifer twice complains of being cut-off from the light of heaven—"þæs leohtes bescyrede" [392b; 394b]—and despairs of ever regaining that light: "Ne gelyfe ic me nu þæs leohtes furðor" [I now no longer have hope of that light for myself] (401a). Hell is repeatedly characterized by adjectives denoting darkness: *þrosm* (326a); *þystro* (326a, 389b); and *sweart* (312b, 345b, 391a).

41 Paul Fouracre, "The Incidence of Rebellion in the Early Medieval West," in *Making Early Medieval Societies: Conflict and Belonging in the Latin West, 300–1200*, ed. Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser, 104–24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). My use throughout this article of the term "revolt" to describe Lucifer's treason reflects Fouracre's distinction between "revolt" and "rebellion."

The poet's references to Lucifer's brightness relates, of course, to the usual interpretation of his name as "bearer of light," while the contrast between the light of heaven and the darkness of hell is so conventional that it might almost pass unnoticed. In the context of the poem's presentation of Lucifer treason, however, the stress that the poet places upon this aspect of Lucifer's punishment—the move from light to dark—calls to mind the use of blinding as a political punishment in Carolingian Francia. Geneviève Bührer-Thierry provides compelling evidence not only that this punishment increased in prominence during the reign of Charlemagne and his successors but also that it seems to have been specifically connected with the crime of treason.[42] As a supposedly merciful alternative to the death penalty, blinding is well attested as a punishment for revolt in this period, as in the case of Bernard of Italy. Similarly, Carloman, son of Charles the Bald, was blinded on his father's orders as punishment for his own failed revolt in 873.[43] The emergence of this form of punishment for treason coincided, moreover, with a growing tendency—especially in the reign of Louis the Pious—to conceptualize *imperium* in terms of radiant light, whose source was the person of the emperor himself, and in which participants in the *ministerium* could, to a degree, share. Bührer-Thierry explains the connection between this ideological trend and the rise of blinding as a punishment for treason:

> by revolting against the king or trying to usurp his functions, these men lost the capacity to participate in his *ministerium*; and the punishment that deprived them of their sight, which only the legitimate emperor had the right to pronounce, demonstrated that they had been cast forever into the world of darkness, incapable at one and the same time of seeing the king who radiated splendor and of reflecting the portion of brightness that had once been confided to them.[44]

In this context, Lucifer's representation of himself as a source of light gains added significance: he presents himself as the source of the radiance of *imperium*, failing to acknowledge that this brightness is rightly a reflection of the divine light. He is punished for his treason in a fitting manner by being cast into darkness, not through blinding, but through his fall. The depiction of his

42 Geneviève Bührer-Thierry, "'Just Anger' or 'Vengeful Anger'? The Punishment of Blinding in the Early Medieval West," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein, 75–91 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

43 Janet L. Nelson, "A Tale of Two Princes: Politics, Text and Ideology in a Carolingian Annal," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 10 (1988): 105–41.

44 Bührer-Thierry, "'Just Anger,'" 87.

punishment in terms of a move from light to darkness literalizes the symbolic conceptualization of punitive blinding in cases of revolt and treason.

Lucifer's fall in *Genesis B* demonstrates how consistently and how meticulously the poetic account invokes the ideologies and realities of early ninth-century Frankish power politics to explicate Lucifer's behavior. The effects of this poetic strategy are two-pronged. On the one hand, contemporary ideological developments regarding the nature of imperial rule, together with an ideal of a corporate, Christian *ministerium* in which the aristocratic elite participated, provide the ethical and moral basis according to which Lucifer's actions can be condemned as treasonous, as well as the justification for his particularly appropriate punishment. On the other hand, by presenting Lucifer as an aristocratic lord or sub-king in revolt, the poem invites its audience to view any such treasonous act within the world as participating in Lucifer's originary sin, and it implicates those perpetrating such acts in Lucifer's punishment through immediate temporal penalties (such as blinding) and through the threat of coming damnation.[45] In this way, the poet both draws upon and simultaneously propagates the dominant political ideologies of the period.

The effectiveness of this strategy depends, crucially, upon presenting Lucifer in realistic and recognizable terms as a contemporary aristocratic figure—a dissatisfied subordinate, indignant at his inferior position and lack of autonomy and seeking to increase his share of imperial power.[46] Critical interpretations of Lucifer's behavior that rely solely on the timeless values of heroic verse, though valid in their own terms, potentially mask this specific and historical valence. Scholars have long been used to thinking about *Genesis B* in terms of abstract oppositions of ideals of loyalty and disloyalty, or obedience and disobedience.[47] Contextualizing the poem's account of Lucifer's fall in relation to its early ninth-century Carolingian provenance situates *Genesis B* within a specific, historically-grounded, and ideologically developed depiction of treason that is central to its interpretation of Lucifer's foundational act of sin for a contemporary audience.

45 Cf. *Genesis B*, 297b–99a.

46 Compare Doane's interpretation of the revolt in terms of a fundamental opposition between a developing imperial ideology and an older, *comitatus*-based model of society. Introduction to *Saxon Genesis*, 123; "Transmission," 80. In my reading, the poet does not present Lucifer as an outmoded adherent of an outdated, superseded social model. Rather, the poet assumes the operation of an imperial ideology in which power works along both vertical and horizontal lines (that is to say, by negotiation of formal and informal structures) and positions Lucifer as an active player within the imperial *ministerium*.

47 Cf. J.R. Hall, "*Geongordom* and *Hyldo* in *Genesis B*: Serving the Lord for the Lord's Favor," *Papers on Language and Literature* 11 (1975): 302–07; Ehrhart, "Tempter and Teacher"; Lucas, "Loyalty and Obedience."

The kings of Wessex in the late-ninth and early-tenth centuries faced problems relating to the division of political authority and the ambitions of claimants upon royal power that parallel, albeit on a smaller scale, those faced by Louis the Pious and his sons. The career of Æthelwulf of Wessex (d. 858) parallels the Carolingian practice of sub-kingship. Following the successful expansion of West Saxon authority into areas previously under Mercian control during the reign of his father Ecgberht in the mid-820s, Æthelwulf ruled as sub-king of Kent until his father's death in 839. During this period, Æthelwulf issued charters as king, and may also have issued his own coinage, apparently enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy. Following his succession to the overall kingship of Wessex, Æthelwulf followed his father's example by appointing his own eldest son Æthelstan as sub-king of Kent, followed, after Æthelstan's death in the mid-850s, by his third son Æthelberht.[48] In contrast to his own relative autonomy within the region, however, Æthelwulf appears to have prevented his sons from either issuing charters or minting currency in their own names, a policy which Joanna Story interprets as a means of "restricting his sons' ability to establish their own patronage networks" comparable to the attempts made by Æthelwulf's contemporary Charles the Bald to limit his own sons' abilities to construct aristocratic powerbases.[49]

The adoption of this policy shows that, in the mid-ninth century, Anglo-Saxon rulers were as worried as their Frankish counterparts about the threat posed by ambitious subordinates backed by local networks of aristocratic support. With good reason. When he departed for Rome in 855, Æthelwulf apparently committed the kingdom of Wessex to Æthelbald. Asser, in his *Vita Alfredi regis*, records how, on Æthelwulf's return in 856, newly married to Charles the Bald's daughter Judith, Æthelbald moved to prevent him from regaining his kingdom:

> Nam Æthelbaldus rex, [*Æthelwulfi regis filius,*] et Ealhstan, Scireburnensis ecclesiae episcopus, Eanwulf quoque Summurtunensis pagae comes coniurasse referuntur, ne unquam Æthelwulf rex, a Roma revertens, iterum in regno reciperetur. (XII.4–9)[50]

48 Simon Keynes, "The Control of Kent in the Ninth Century," *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993): 111–31.

49 Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750–870* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 224. See further: Nelson, "Frankish Kingdoms," 125.

50 Cited by chapter and line number from *Asser's Life of King Alfred together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously ascribed to Asser*, ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904).

> [Then King Æthelbald, King Æthelwulf's son, with Ealhstan, Bishop of Sherbourne and Eanwulf the ealdorman of Sommerset are declared to have conspired that, on his return from Rome, King Æthelwulf should never again be received into his kingdom].

Asser's decision to list the chief supporters of Æthelbald's revolt testifies to the participation of aristocratic (and ecclesiastical) support networks in dynastic politics. In such a context, Lucifer's calculations regarding the strength of his following would surely have resonated with contemporary political realities, as much as with heroic ideals.

It seems quite likely, moreover, that it was during this period that the Old Saxon poem first travelled to England. Barbara Raw convincingly argues that the illustrations accompanying the composite Old English *Genesis* text in Junius 11 derive from a sequence designed originally to accompany the text of the Old Saxon *Genesis*; based on the similarities between these illustrations and surviving examples of ninth-century West Frankish Bible manuscripts, Raw suggests that the Old Saxon poem travelled to England in a high-status manuscript, probably illuminated in Tours during the reign of Charles the Bald (r. 843–77).[51] Both Raw and Doane posit Æthelwulf's marriage to Judith as a likely occasion for the bestowing of just such a high status manuscript.[52] This is an attractive speculation, but it should be noted that strong ties between Wessex and Francia dated back at least as far as the reign of Ecgberht. Ecgberht, who, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, achieved the imperial-style distinction of *Bretwalda* in the year 827, may have spent as long as thirteen years in exile in Francia before he succeeded to the West Saxon kingdom in 802.[53] His son Æthelwulf is known to have maintained good contacts with the West Frankish court even before his marriage to Judith, and was served by a Frankish secretary named Felix.[54] Æthelwulf's son and ultimate successor Alfred famously recruited continental scholars to assist him in his political and cultural endeavors.[55] There were ready conduits, therefore, by which both the Old

51 Raw, "Probable Derivation," 146–48. Cf. Doane, "Transmission," 64–65.

52 Raw, "Probable derivation," 148; Doane, "Transmission," 66–67.

53 Story, *Carolingian Connections*, 214–24.

54 Story, *Carolingian Connections*, 225–40.

55 *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 26–8. On the possible role of these scholars in the transmission of *Genesis B*, see: Doane, "Transmission," 67–70. The prominence of continental scholars at the West Saxon court is apparent also in the reigns of Alfred's successors. Cf. Michael Wood, "A Carolingian Scholar in the Court of King Æthelstan," in *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honor of Wilhelm*

Saxon poem, and the Carolingian imperial ideologies that underpin it, might have been transmitted to the West Saxon court.

The process of linguistic adaptation of the Old Saxon poem that resulted in the text preserved in Junius 11 appears to have begun around the year 900.[56] This was, again, a period of probable dynastic tension in Wessex. In 898, King Alfred followed the practice of his father and grandfather by appointing his own son Edward the Elder as sub-king of Kent.[57] Janet Nelson suggests that the designation of Edward as sub-king late in Alfred's reign was the result of tensions regarding arrangements for Alfred's succession and that Edward's appointment may have coincided with a general diminution of Alfred's authority.[58] Equally, it may have been an attempt to consolidate Edward's position, as Alfred's designated successor, in the face of a potential challenge from his cousin Æthelwold, son of Alfred's older brother Æthelræd I. From his accession to the throne in 871, Alfred attempted to circumscribe the potential claims of his nephew by withholding from him lands that he may otherwise have expected to inherit, limiting his ability to construct a network of support for any future claim on the kingship, such as that on which Lucifer founds his rebellion in the poetic account.[59]

Despite these maneuvers, however, Æthelwold contested Edward's succession upon the death of Alfred in 899, presenting himself as a legitimate alternative candidate for royal power in a revolt that was only finally defeated with Æthelwold's death at the Battle of Holme in 902. Ryan Lavelle argues that the threat posed by Æthelwold's claim was sufficiently serious to have driven developing ideas of royal authority during Edward's rule.[60] These developments encompassed increasingly ambitious gestures towards imperial-style rule dur-

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Levison (*1876–1947*), ed. David Rollason, Conrad Leyser, and Hannah Williams, 135–62 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

56 See above: n. 6.

57 Barbara Yorke, "Edward as Ætheling," in *Edward the Elder, 899–924*, ed. N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill, 25–39 (London: Routledge, 2001), 32.

58 Janet L. Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family: Reflections on Alfred, From Asser, Chapter 2," in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500–1600: Essays in Honor of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. Ian Wood and Niels Lund, 47–66 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), 62–64.

59 Ryan Lavelle, "The Politics of Rebellion: The *Ætheling* Æthelwold and West Saxon Royal Succession, 899–902," in *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter*, ed. Patricia Skinner, 51–80 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 55–61. See also: Ann Williams, "Some Notes and Considerations on Problems Connected with the English Royal Succession, 860–1066," in *Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1978*, ed. R. Allen Brown, 144–67 (Ipswich: Boydell, 1979), 148–49.

60 Lavelle, "Politics of Rebellion," 79–80.

ing the reigns of Edward and his son Æthelstan (r. 924–939).[61] The period of dynastic challenge, consolidation, and ideological development in the early years of the tenth century thus provides a rich potential context for, and perhaps an explanation of, interest in the Old Saxon poem and its account of Lucifer's revolt in precisely these years.

The poem's depiction of Lucifer as a subordinate aristocrat or sub-king pressing a claim to royal authority—founded upon a network of aristocratic support—in treasonous revolt against his rightful lord would surely have resonated with a politically engaged audience of early tenth-century Anglo-Saxons. This is not to say that all aspects of the political ideology encoded in the Old Saxon poem would have been intelligible to an Anglo-Saxon audience.[62] It seems doubtful, for example, that Lucifer's punishment could have been interpreted in the same way in Anglo-Saxon England. Evidence from the tenth and early eleventh centuries does suggest that punitive blinding was increasingly accepted as an alternative to execution, both as a judicial punishment and as a non-judicial or quasi-legal means of asserting political power and eliminating potential threats to that power.[63] The punishment seems not, however, to have carried a precise ideological significance in the way that it did in ninth-century Francia, and was apparently not considered a particularly appropriate punishment for treason in England before the Norman Conquest.[64] But the overall picture would have been clear enough, and the parallels that the poem draws between treason within the world and the crime for which Lucifer is damned would undoubtedly have recommended it to the West Saxon royal dynasty.

The interest in the Old Saxon poem at the turn of the tenth century also coincides, moreover, with an extension of the Anglo-Saxon understanding of

61 For a succinct summary of the evidence for West Saxon imperial ambitions, and for the suggestion that successive West Saxon rulers may have conceived of themselves (or wanted to present themselves) as the heirs to Christian *imperium* in Western Europe, see: Francis Leneghan, "*Translatio Imperii*: The Old English *Orosius* and the Rise of Wessex," *Anglia* 133 (2015): 656–705, esp. 663–73.

62 Cf. Doane, "Transmission," 80–81.

63 Matthew Firth, "Allegories of Sight: Blinding and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Ceræ* 3 (2016): <http://openjournals.arts.uwa.edu.au/index.php/cerae/article/view/66> (accessed May 14, 2017).

64 Klaus van Eickels, "Gendered Violence: Castration and Blinding as Punishment for Treason in Normandy and Anglo-Norman England," *Gender & History* 16 (2004): 588–602; Charlene M. Eska, "'Imbrued in their owne bloud': Castration in Early Welsh and Irish Sources," in *Castration and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Larissa Tracy, 149–73 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), esp. 156–62.

treason as a legal concept.[65] This is particularly evident in the law-code issued by Alfred in the final decade of the ninth century. The extensive Prologue to this code explains how systems of compensation were established by Christian law-makers as a merciful alternative to harsher punishments:

> hie ða gesetton, for ðære mildheortnesse þe Crist lærde, æt mæstra hwelcre misdæde þætte ða weoruldhlafordas moston mid hiora leafan buton synne æt þam forman gylte þære fiohbote onfon, þe hie ða gesettan; buton æt hlafordsearwe hie nane mildheortnesse ne dorston gecweðen, forþam ðe God ælmihtig þam nane ne gedemde þe hine oferhogdon, ne Crist Godes sunu þam nane ne gedemde þe hine to deaðe sealde, 7 he bebead þone hlaford lufian swa hine.[66]
>
> [Then, for the mercifulness that Christ taught, they established that for almost all wrong-doing, at the first offence, a secular lord could, by their leave and without sin, receive the monetary compensation which they established; except that they dared not declare any mercy for treason, because almighty God decreed none for those who scorned him, nor did Christ, God's son, decree any for him who gave him up to death, and he commended each person to love the lord as himself].

In exempting the crime of treason (*hlafordsearu*) from the operation of Christian mercy, the author of the Prologue draws an explicit analogy between the loyalty owed to the king by his followers and that owed by created beings to their God—to the extent that the divine Lord and the secular lord become linguistically confused in the reoccurrence of the lexeme *hlaford* in the final clause of this passage. The operation of absolute justice upon those who betray God establishes by analogy the right of kings to execute similar justice upon those guilty of worldly treason. The reference to Judas, betrayer of Christ, is clear enough, but the preceding reference to God refusing mercy to those who scorned him (*þe hine oferhogdon*) is more allusive. David Pratt interprets this as a reference to the prescription of the death penalty for sacrificing to idols in Exodus 22:20.[67] A more likely explanation, however, is that it refers to the disobedience of Lucifer and his followers, whose fall—unlike that of humankind—is irredeemable. If this is correct, then the Alfredian code draws an

65 David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 232–38.

66 *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. F. Liebermann, 3 vols. (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1898–1916), 1:44–46.

67 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 233.

ideological connection between worldly treason and Lucifer's revolt paralleling that found in a more developed form in the narrative verse of *Genesis B*. While there is no evidence for any direct connection between these two texts, the Alfredian law-code further suggests that the intellectual climate of the West Saxon court at the turn of the tenth century could very well have supported an interest in the account of Lucifer's revolt in the Old Saxon poem.

The account of Lucifer's revolt in *Genesis B* emerges as a text open to multiple layers of interpretation. Viewed in purely heroic terms, Lucifer's actions are condemnable as those of an ungrateful follower in a *comitatus* society. In that sense, the ethos and values of heroic poetry provide a simple moral framework within which to critique Lucifer's betrayal, aligning unproblematically with the judgement implicit in the underlying Christian narrative. A more complex picture appears, however, when the text is read in a precise historical context: that of the composition of the original Old Saxon poem in Frankia in the early ninth century. Lucifer emerges as a vividly realistic depiction of a Carolingian aristocrat embroiled in the murky realities of contemporary power politics. In such a context, evaluating Lucifer's actions is more complex. Although his behavior can still be condemned in moral and ethical terms as treasonous, the recognition that it aligns with pragmatic realities amongst the governing elite undercuts the simplicity of this judgement. Thus, the poem draws more heavily upon the underlying Christian framework to condemn Lucifer's behavior, reflecting back upon the political context from which it originated with a clear ideological statement about the moral and spiritual culpability of those who engage in treason.

To put this another way, where a reading of the text as heroically-infused verse sees the poet turning to familiar heroic values to contextualize and condemn Lucifer's originary sin, a historicist reading recognizes how the poet uses the inherently sinful nature of Lucifer's actions to contextualize and condemn familiar instances of treason within the real world. This concern with treason, and with the operation of royal power, would have carried a particular resonance at the time of poem's composition in Frankia in the second quarter of the ninth century. It would also have resonated with the concerns and interests of the West Saxon rulers at the beginning of the tenth century. It seems likely that the political and ideological subtext of the Old Saxon poem was a factor in the process of linguistic adaptation and appropriation that began in Wessex at this time.