

Ælfric on the creation and fall of the angels

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Ælfric, in the *Preface to Genesis*, comments about what we do not find in the first book of the Old Testament: “Seo boc ys gehaten Genesis, þæt ys “Gecyndboc”, for þam þe heo ys firmest boca and spricþ be ælcum gecinde (ac heo ne spricð na be þæra engla gesceapenisse).¹ Although he proceeds to explain what is contained in the opening verse, noting that creation ‘on annginne’ refers at once to the literal act of creation and, ‘æfter gastlicum andgite’, to Christ through whom all creation was formed, he makes no further comment here upon the angels. In other works, however, where the topic could be more appropriately introduced, Ælfric enthusiastically engages with the problem of angelic history. The sermon *De initio creaturæ*, the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*, the *Exameron*, the *Letter to Sigeward* and the *Letter to Wulfgeat*² all contain accounts of the angelic creation and fall. Because Ælfric is a writer

¹ “That book is called Genesis, that is “the book of origins”, because it is the first book and discusses every created thing (although it does not discuss the creation of the angels)’ (*Ælfric’s Prefaces*, ed. J. Wilcox (Durham, 1994), *Preface to Genesis*, 44–7). On the function of the *Preface to Genesis*, see also M. Menzer, ‘The Preface as Admonition: Ælfric’s *Preface to Genesis*’, *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches*, ed. R. Barnhouse and B. Withers (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000), pp. 15–39.

² *De creatore et creatura* is another work which considers the angelic fall, but, because it consists mainly of excerpts from the *Exameron*, I do not discuss it in detail. I cite the following editions [abbreviations have been silently expanded and punctuation and capitalization have been regularized]: *De initio creaturæ* [hereafter cited in references as *CHI.1*] in *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies. The First Series. Text*, ed. P. Clemons, EETS ss 17 (Oxford, 1997); Ælfric’s *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* [hereafter cited in references as *ÆInt.*] in W. Stoneman, ‘A Critical Edition of Ælfric’s Translation of Alcuin’s *Interrogationes Sigewulfi Presbiteri* and of the Related Texts *De creatore et creatura* and *De sex etatibus huius seculi*’ (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Toronto, 1983), pp. 78–239 (the more accessible version is G. MacLean, ‘Ælfric’s Version of *Alcuini Interrogationes Sigewulfi in Genesin*’, *Anglia* 6 (1883), 425–73 (commentary); and 7 (1884), 1–59 (text)); the *Exameron* [hereafter cited in references as *EX*] in *Exameron Anglice or The Old English Hexameron*, ed. S. Crawford, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 10 (Hamburg, 1921); the *Letter to Sigeward* [hereafter cited in references as *LSig.*] in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch: Ælfric’s Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. S. Crawford, EETS os 160 (London, 1922; repr. 1969), pp. 15–75 (where Crawford’s text is based on both Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 509 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343 (*LSig.* 51–834), I quote from the former); the *Letter to Wulfgeat* [hereafter cited in references as *LW*] in *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, ed. B. Assmann, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3 (Kassel, 1889; repr. Darmstadt, 1964), 1–12.

actively concerned with orthodoxy and sound doctrine,³ we would do well to ask why he has such an interest in the angels – about whom such an authority as Bede would say almost nothing⁴ – and to investigate precisely how, and from what sources, he presents their extra-scriptural history.

Peter Clemoes has observed that, in general, Ælfric's treatments of the creation and fall tend to conform to certain patterns, from the 'creation-fall-redemption-judgement' pattern of *De initio creaturae* to the typological relationship between creation and fall and redemption in the *Letter to Sigeward*.⁵ Virginia Day has drawn a comparison between the catechetical 'narratio' prescribed by Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus* – the 'narratio' should begin with 'an exposition of Christian cosmology and history' – and the 'outline of the whole Christian cycle' which Ælfric provides in *De initio creaturae*.⁶ To these observations we might add Paul Szarmach's insight about Ælfric's 'narrative impulse': 'In the broadest meaning, Ælfric's narrative impulse means his presentation of the Bible primarily as story, secondarily as text for analysis. As far as audience effect is concerned, the audience hears primarily narrative as narrative is heard, not, say, a sequence of embedded moral principles.'⁷ In treating angelic history, Ælfric seems to have had each of these goals in mind. Fusing the broad outline of the fall from the Christian tradition with details he finds in various sources, he places his distinctive narrative account of angelic history at the appropriate point in his discussions of creation and then proceeds to establish its relevance to the material which follows.

³ 'Ælfric desired, above all, that the doctrine transmitted in his lucid English prose should be absolutely orthodox and firmly based in the theological tradition' (M. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto, 1977), p. 14). Ælfric's concern with 'gedwyld' has also been well documented. See, for example, M. Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*, ed. P. Szarmach and B. Huppé (Albany, NY, 1978), pp. 99–117.

⁴ According to Bede, because the history of this world is intended to be a sermon for the instruction of the human race, Moses makes only brief mention of the 'superior mundus', the history of which pertains more to spiritual and invisible creation. Specifically, when, in the first line of Genesis, God is reported to have made heaven and earth, Moses uses the word 'caelum' to signify all the 'condition and provision of spiritual and invisible creation'. Bede continues: 'Vnde etiam consulte de casu praeuaricatoris angeli et sociorum eius penitus reticuit, quia hoc nimirum ad statum inuisibilis illius ac spiritalis creaturae pertinebat' (*Libri quatuor in principium Genesis* [hereafter cited in references as *In Gen.*], ed. C. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967) I.137–49).

⁵ P. Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of their History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P. Clemoes (London, 1959), pp. 212–47, at 225.

⁶ V. Day, 'The Influence of the Catechetical *narratio* on Old English and some other Medieval Literature', *ASE* 3 (1974), 51–61, at 51.

⁷ P. Szarmach, 'Ælfric as Exegete: Approaches and Examples in the Study of the *Sermones Catholici?*', *Humanities and Medieval Culture*, ed. P. Gallacher and H. Damico (Albany, NY, 1989), pp. 237–47 at 241.

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That is not to say, however, that Ælfric repeatedly relates the story of the creation and fall of the angels in the same words or contexts. *De initio creaturæ*, which provides Ælfric's first and most detailed comment upon the angels, is an attempt to present the most important moments in Christian history, from creation to the Last Judgement. Malcolm Godden calls it 'a preliminary to the more specific discussions in the subsequent sermons' and reiterates that Ælfric's essential concern is fall and redemption.⁸ Beginning with a short explanation of God and the Trinity, Ælfric's sermon discusses the creation and fall of the angels, the creation and fall of man, the growth of evil after the fall (which occasions a lengthy discussion of idolatry) and the beginning of the line of Eber, including a brief note about the crossing of the Red Sea. New Testament events are treated briefly: from the establishment of the covenant, Ælfric moves immediately to the Annunciation, the life and betrayal of Christ, and the triumphant return from hell with all the offspring of Adam and Eve. There is reference to the Last Judgement, and the sermon ends with an exhortation to forgo unrighteousness.

Ælfric's *Letter to Wulfgeat* and *Letter to Sigeward* contain less elaborate versions of the angelic fall. The *Letter to Wulfgeat* begins with what is best described as a condensed, personalized version of *De initio creaturæ*: Ælfric includes a discussion of the angels, Adam and Eve, the birth of Christ, the Redemption and the Last Judgment as a preface to a more complicated discussion of Matt. V.25.⁹ The *Letter to Sigeward*, an introduction to the books of the Old and New Testaments, is mainly an account of the structure of scripture and how we should read it.¹⁰ Ælfric explains that he offers this work to Sigeward 'þæt þu ealles ne beo minra boca bedæled':¹¹ with this introduction and scripture, Sigeward has the fundamental tools of the faith. The work begins much as *De initio creaturæ*, with an explanation of God and the Trinity, a discussion of the angels and a very cursory account of the creation and fall of man, after which Ælfric launches into his systematic treatment of the books of scripture.

Finally, the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* and the *Exameron* are works specifically intended to explicate the book of Genesis. The *Exameron* is a late work, and it

⁸ M. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS ss 18 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 7–8.

⁹ 'Nu wast ðu eall þis, and we wyllað þe secgan sum þæra lara, þe se leofa hælend, her on ðysum life lybbende mid mannum, tahte his folgerum, þe him filigdon on life, swa swa he sylf sæde on his halgum godspelle: "Esto consentiens aduersario tuo cito, dum es in uia cum illo, et reliqua" [Matt. V.25]' (*LW* 85–91).

¹⁰ For Ælfric, this seems to come down to the basic observation that all signs point to Christ: 'And swa forð oð ende, ælc halig fæder mid wordum oþþe mid weorcum cyddon urne hælend and his fær witodlice' (*LSig*, 203–7).

¹¹ '[I want you to have this little book] . . . that you might not be deprived altogether of my books' (*LSig*, 17–18).

has been suggested, on the basis of manuscript evidence, that it was intended to replace *De initio creaturae* in Ælfric's homily-collections.¹² The account of the fall of the angels introduces some new material, but the bulk of the commentary is an elaborate explanation of the creation and fall of man. The *Exameron*, explicating Genesis I–III, is, as its name suggests, a true hexameral commentary. The *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*,¹³ on the other hand, is an eclectic translation and adaptation of Alcuin's *Quaestiones in Genesim*.¹⁴ As Clemoes remarks, there is no 'controlling idea' in the *Interrogationes* to match the patterns and typology of Ælfric's other hexameral works.¹⁵ Naturally, the subject matter of Ælfric's *Interrogationes* is dictated to a large degree by Alcuin's choice of subject matter, but Ælfric's translation is by no means a mechanical rendering into Old English of the Latin original.¹⁶ Where Alcuin wrote 281 questions on topics ranging from creation to the blessings of the patriarchs, Ælfric includes only sixty-nine questions, the last of which is a discussion of the temptation of Abraham in Gen. XXII.¹⁷

¹² See F.E.C. Dietrich, 'Abt Ælfric, Zur Literatur-Geschichte der angelsächsischen Kirche', *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie* 25 (1855), 487–594; and 26 (1856), 163–256. References in the *Exameron* (1–3; 106) seem to refer to *De initio creaturae* and, in turn, much of the *Exameron* is repeated in *De creatore et creatura* (ed. Stoneman, 'A Critical Edition', pp. 292–329).

¹³ The *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* survives in five manuscripts, described in detail by Stoneman ('A Critical Edition', pp. 1–41), and usually circulated with various homilies and saints' lives. Indeed, the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* was part of a three-item addition (including *De falsis diis* and *De XII abusibus*) to the end of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* [hereafter cited in references as *LS*] in London, British Library, Cotton Julius E.vii.

¹⁴ PL 100, cols. 515–66 [hereafter cited in references as *Int.*]. On Alcuin's *Quaestiones*, see M. Fox, 'Alcuin the Exegete: the Evidence of the *Quaestiones in Genesim*', in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. C. Chazelle and B. Edwards (Turnhout, 2003), forthcoming.

¹⁵ Clemoes, 'Chronology', p. 225.

¹⁶ Ælfric's approach to translation has received a great deal of attention, especially with regard to his *Preface to Genesis*, which has been related to Jerome's statement on translation: 'Non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu.' See R. Marsden, 'Ælfric as Translator: the Old English Prose Genesis', *Anglia* 109 (1991), 319–58 at 322–8; Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, pp. 63–5; and H. Minkoff, 'Some Stylistic Consequences of Ælfric's Theory of Translation', *SP* 73 (1976), 29–41 and 'An Example of Latin Influence on Ælfric's Translation Style', *Neophilologus* 61 (1977), 127–42. For an interesting introductory discussion of his translation of Alcuin and Ælfric's other hexameral works and their place in the 'English' tradition, see K. O'Keeffe, 'Three English Writers on Genesis: Some Observations on Ælfric's Theological Legacy', *Ball State Univ. Forum* 19.3 (1978), 69–78.

¹⁷ Ælfric's translations, on the whole, are faithful to the spirit of his original. The various additions which he makes prove that he had Bede's *De natura rerum* and *In Genesim* to hand when translating; it would appear that Ælfric also incorporates Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manicheos* and Isidore's *Etymologiae* (though evidence for the use of these four works is quite limited). Throughout, Ælfric translates freely, adding or removing clauses at will and excising many questions, even before Alcuin's *Int.* 201. One thing Ælfric does not do, however, is add questions: although he might augment or redirect a response, Ælfric selects his subject matter from Alcuin (excluding the passage on the Trinity with which Ælfric concludes).

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In his conclusion to the *Interrogationes*, Ælfric implies that his primary principle of selection in translating Alcuin has been the utility of the material. After the question on the temptation of Abraham, Ælfric states suddenly: ‘Nelle we na swiðor embe þis spræcan, forþan þe we habbað þa nydbehefestan axunga nu awritene’;¹⁸ and then he appends a short passage on the Trinity. The question of why these particular queries on material from Gen. I–XXII should have been ‘most necessary’ has several plausible answers. Clemoes draws attention to the fact that Ælfric stops translating Alcuin very close to the point at which his translation of Genesis breaks off, and thus postulates that Ælfric’s vernacular version of the *Interrogationes* was an attempt to clothe the ‘bare narrative’ of Genesis.¹⁹ It may also be significant that the point at which Ælfric stops selecting material from Alcuin’s commentary (at *Int.* 201) coincides with Alcuin’s increased dependence on Augustine and Jerome: the character of Alcuin’s text changes markedly. Furthermore, Ælfric was certainly familiar with Bede’s *In Genesim*, a commentary which traces the Genesis narrative only to the birth of Isaac and the banishment of Ishmael, and he may well have had knowledge of the Old English poem *Genesis A*, which again treats Gen. I–XXII. Because the structure of the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* follows Alcuin’s logic and sense of the issues and because Ælfric’s translation decisions require a different kind of analysis, I consider the creation and fall of the angels in the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* separately from Ælfric’s other works.

INTERROGATIONES SIGEWULFI

In his *Quaestiones in Genesim*, Alcuin devotes three questions to the initial creation of heaven and earth. The first equates ‘in principio’ with Christ; the second, based upon a variant reading of Gen. II.8,²⁰ notes that the creation of paradise can also be located ‘in principio’; and the third addresses the meaning of ‘caelum et terram’, postulating either that the phrase refers to that unformed matter, created from nothing, which will become heaven and earth, or that

¹⁸ ‘We do not wish to speak about this further, because we have now written the most necessary questions’ (*ÆInt.* 69). It is unlikely to be coincidence that Ælfric’s words evoke the preface to King Alfred’s version of Gregory’s *Regula pastoralis*. See *King Alfred’s West Saxon Version of Gregory’s Pastoral Care*, ed. H. Sweet, 2 vols., EETS os 45 and 50 (London, 1871–2), 6–8.

¹⁹ Clemoes, ‘Chronology’, p. 225.

²⁰ See *Int.* 27, quoted below, n. 21. Alcuin’s source is Jerome’s *Hebraicae quaestiones in Genesim* II.8 (ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL 72 (Turnhout, 1959), 1–56), but Bede makes a similar suggestion (*In Gen.* I.1432–5). Although Ælfric omits *Int.* 27, the variant reading of Gen. II.8 – ‘Plantauerat autem Dominus Deus paradysum uoluptatis a principio’ – which occasions the quotations from Jerome in both Bede and Alcuin, does find its way into Ælfric’s translation of Genesis. However, instead of using the word ‘angin’, Ælfric there translates ‘a principio’ as ‘fram frymðe’, as if to establish a semantic difference between the uses of the word ‘principium’ in Gen. I.1 and Gen. II.8.

‘caelum’ refers to spiritual creatures and ‘terram’ to earthly.²¹ Ælfric reduces these three questions to one:

ÆInt. 22. Hu is to understandenne on anginne gesceop God heofonan and eorþan?

þæt angin is Crist, Godes sunu, swa [swa] he sylf cwæð on his godspelle to þam Iudeiscum, þa þa hi axodon hwæt he wære. He cwæð: ‘Ic eom angin þe to eow sprece.’ Þurh þæt angin, þæt is þurh þone sunu, gesceop se fæder ærest þæt antimber of nahte, of þam þe he syþþan heofonan and eorðan geworhte.²²

Ælfric’s comment on creation ‘on anginne’ combines material from two of Alcuin’s three questions. Specifically, the first phrase of Ælfric’s answer – ‘þæt angin is Crist, Godes sunu’ – translates the response in Alcuin’s *Int.* 26. The reference to John VIII.25 is Ælfric’s addition (almost certainly taken from Augustine’s *De Genesi contra Manicheos*),²³ and the last sentence, in which Ælfric mentions [unformed] matter, translates and simplifies the first possibility which Alcuin considers for ‘caelum et terram’ in *Int.* 28. Ælfric’s explanation, then, of the meaning of ‘caelum et terram’, omits the one statement in the *Quaestiones* which fixes the moment of angelic creation in the scriptural narrative.²⁴ Indeed, various other questions which touch upon the first moments of creation again fail explicitly to address the timing of angelic creation. Ælfric

²¹ *Int.* 26: ‘Quid est: “In principio creauit Deus caelum et terram”? In filio perfecit [*Ms.*, fecit] Deus caelum et terram’; *Int.* 27: ‘Cur dictum est “plantaerat Deus paradysum a principio”? Hieronymus uult [quod] ante conditionem caeli et terrae paradysum plantatum esset [*Edit.*, esse]’; *Int.* 28: ‘Quid in caeli terraeque nomine significatur, quando dicitur: “In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram”? Informis illa materia, quam de nihilo fecit Deus, appellata est primo caelum et terra, non quia iam hoc erat, sed quia iam hoc esse poterat. Nam secundo die caelum istud sidereum factum esse legitur, et tertio die terram apparuisse et uestiri floribus coepisse. Siue, in caeli et terrae nomine spirituales et terrenae creaturae intelligi possunt.’

²² *ÆInt.* 22: ‘How is “In the beginning, God created heaven and earth” [Gen. I.1] to be understood? The beginning is Christ, son of God, just as he himself said in his gospel to the Jews who asked him what he was. He said: “I, who speak to you, am the beginning” [John VIII.25]. Through that beginning, that is, through the son, the father first created matter from nothing, from which [matter] he later wrought heaven and earth.’ Ælfric gives a similar explanation in *Preface to Genesis* 47–54 and *EX* 47–53.

²³ *De Genesi contra Manicheos* I.ii.3 (PL 34, cols. 173–220): ‘His respondemus, Deum in principio fecisse caelum et terram, non in principio temporis, sed in Christo . . . Dominus enim noster Iesus Christus, cum eum Iudaei interrogassent quis esset, respondit: “Principium, quia et loquor uobis” [John VIII.25].’ The passage is similar in Bede, but Bede has ‘interrogantibus se Iudeis quid eum credere deberent’ (*In Gen.* I.25–8) before the quotation from John.

²⁴ Ælfric appears to consider Alcuin’s explanation (from Augustine’s *De Genesi contra Manicheos* I.vii.1 and I.v.9) for the representation of unformed matter by the words ‘caelum et terram’ a superfluous and unnecessarily complex detail in a work designed for an unlearned audience. The suggestion that spiritual and earthly creatures may have been indicated, a statement which is predicated upon Alcuin’s explanation of how ‘caelum et terram’ can stand for unformed matter – ‘non quia iam hoc erat, sed quia iam hoc esse poterat’ (*Int.* 28) – must then also be excised.

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notes that the following creations were made from nothing: ‘Heofan and eorð[e], englas and leoht, lyft and wæter and þæs mannes sawl’,²⁵ and repeats Alcuin’s comment about the four modes of divine operation, the second of which consists of the creation of that unformed matter from which all things would be created.²⁶ Though Ælfric never makes a definitive statement, if the angels, like heaven and earth, are made from nothing, their creation is best located in Gen. I.1.²⁷

The logically linked series of questions which Alcuin dedicates to the angelic fall and its relationship to the fall of man (*Int.* 2–4) are translated without major change. Ælfric notes that God created two rational creatures, angels and men, but fails to include Alcuin’s remark on their respective dwelling places in heaven and on earth.²⁸ The issue of human and angelic sin is addressed in the following two questions:

ÆInt. 3. Hwi wæs þære engla syn forsuwod on þære bec Genesis, and þæs mannes wæs gesæd?

Forþan þe God gemynte þæt he wolde þæs mannes synne gehælan, na þæs deofles.²⁹

ÆInt. 4. Hwi wæs þæs heahenglas syn unmiltsigendlic and þæs mannes miltsigendlic?

Forþan þe se heahengel, þe nu is hetol deofol, him sylf his synne afunde, and se man wæs beswicen. And eac swa micclum swa þæs engles gecynd mærrre wæs on wuldre, swa

²⁵ *ÆInt.* 17: ‘Heaven and earth, angels and light, air and water and the soul of man’; *Int.* 20: ‘Caelum, terra, angeli, lux, aer, aqua [et] anima hominis.’

²⁶ *ÆInt.* 16: ‘On hu manegum wisum is Godes weorc? On feower wisum. Ærest on Godes wordes gefadunge on þam ecan geþeahte. Eft on þam ungehiwodum antimbre þe he þa gesceafta of gesceop swa swa hit [a]writen is: “Qui uiuit in aeternum creauit omnia simul” [Sir. XVIII.1]. Se þe leofað on ecnysse gesceop ealle þingc togædere. þæt ðridde wæs þa þa God todælde mislice gesceafta on þære syx daga gesceapennysse. þæt feorðe is þæt God gescypð symle edniwan of þam ærran, þæt hi ne ateorian.’

²⁷ I am associating the creation of light in Gen. I.3, also a creation ‘of nahte’, specifically with earth. The angels, in the company of God, would have been illuminated by his eternal light, as Bede makes clear (*In. Gen.* I.162–6). Temporal light, on the other hand, illuminates the earthly creations of God. See *ÆInt.* 24 (*Int.* 33).

²⁸ *ÆInt.* 2: ‘Hu fela gesceadwisa gesceafta gesceop God? Twa. Englas and men’; *Int.* 2: ‘Quot creaturas rationales [*Ms.*, rationabiles] condidit Deus? Duas. Angelos et homines: et caelum angelis, et terram hominibus habitationem.’ In the *Exameron*, Ælfric makes a similar comparison: ‘Ac he geswutelode his mihta ðurh ða gesceafta, and wolde ðæt ða gesceafta gesawon his mærdða. And hine wurðodon a on wuldre mid him ða ðe andgyt habbað, ðæt syndon englas and menn’ (42–6).

²⁹ *ÆInt.* 3: ‘Why was the sin of the angels passed over in silence in the book of Genesis and [the sin] of man revealed? Because God intended that he would heal the sin of the man, but not [the sin] of the devil’; *Int.* 3: ‘Quare angelicum peccatum silentio in Genesi absconditum est et hominis patefactum? Quia angelicum uulnus Deus non praedestinavit curare, hominis uero sanare praedestinavit.’

hit wæs mare on forwyrde, and swa micclum swa þæs mannes gecynd unmihtigre wæs, swa hit wæs leohte to miltsunge.³⁰

In *ÆInt.* 3–4, Ælfric makes only minor changes. Instead of retaining Alcuin’s two Latin infinitives (‘curare’ for the angelic wound and ‘sanare’ for human sin) and repeating the term ‘praedestinauit’ in *ÆInt.* 3, Ælfric allows the phrase ‘wolde . . . gehælan’ to stand for both objects, the order of which, perhaps to give prominent placement to the healing of human sin, he reverses. The most interesting change is Ælfric’s decision to translate both ‘peccatum’ and ‘uulnus’ as ‘syn’, and thus ignore Alcuin’s distinction between the act of sinning and its effect. In *ÆInt.* 4, Ælfric translates Alcuin’s ‘angelus’ as ‘heahengel’ and adds the relative clause ‘þe nu is hetol deofol’ in order to avoid potential misunderstanding.

The final question which Ælfric preserves concerning the angels is a combination of *Int.* 93–4 in the *Quaestiones*:³¹

ÆInt. 47. Hwæt is yfel?

Yfel nis nan þing þurh hit sylf, and nane wununga næfð buton on sumum gesceafta. Se deofol wæs ærest to godum engle gesceapen, ac he weaðð yfel þurh modignysse. Nu nis yfel nan þing buton godnysse forgægednysse, swa swa þeostru ne synd nan þing buton leohtes forlatennysse.³²

³⁰ *ÆInt.* 4: ‘Why was the sin of the high angel unpardonable and [the sin] of man pardonable? Because the high angel, who is now the hostile devil, invented his sin himself, and the man was deceived. And also, as much as the nature of the angel was greater in glory, so was it greater in ruin; as much as the nature of man was weaker, so was it easier to pardon.’ *Int.* 4: ‘Cur summi angeli peccatum insanabile fuit et hominis sanabile? [Quia] angelus sui sceleris inuentor fuit; homo uero alterius fraude seductus [fuit]. *Item*, quanto sublimior angelus in gloria, tanto maior in ruina; homo uero quanto fragilior in natura, tanto facilius ad ueniam.’ In *CHI*.13, Ælfric uses different language to make a similar observation: ‘Ða þeahhwæðere ofþuhte þam ælmihtigum Gode calles manncynnes yrmða and smeade hu he mihte his handgeweorc of deofles anwealde alysan; for ði him ofhreow þæs mannes, for ðan þe he wæs beþæht mid þæs deofles searocræftum; ac him ne ofhreow na þæs deofles hryre, for ðan þe he næs þurh nane tihtinge forlæred, ac he sylf asmeade þa upahefednysse þe he ðurh ahreas and he for þi a on ecnysse wunað on forwyrde wælraw deofol’ (10–17).

³¹ *Int.* 93: ‘Vnde euenit diabolo prima [*Ms.*, primo] mala uoluntas? Cum [uero] causa miseriae malorum angelorum quaeritur, ea merito occurrit, quia noluerunt ad illum custodire fortitudinem suam, qui est summum bonum, sed auersi sunt ab illo et ad seipsos conuersi sunt [et] sua propria delectati potestate. Et iste primus defectus est et prima inopia rationalis creaturae. Et hoc uitium quid aliud, nisi superbia, nuncupatur?’; *Int.* 94: ‘Quid est malum? Malum [uero] nihil est per se, nisi priuatio boni: sicut tenebrae nihil sunt, nisi absentia lucis.’

³² *ÆInt.* 47: ‘What is evil? Evil is nothing in itself, and has no habitation except in certain creatures. The devil was first created as a good angel, but he became evil through pride. Now evil is nothing except the deviation from good, just as shadows are nothing except the absence of light.’ *ÆInt.* 47 is very close to another passage in Ælfric: ‘Næfð yfel nane wununge þæt hit wesan mæge ahwær buton on gesceaftum þe gode wæron gesceapene’ (*Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. J. Pope, 2 vols., EETS os 259–60 (London, 1967–8) I.190–1).

Ælfric on the creation and fall of the angels

The introductory and concluding parts of Ælfric's answer correspond closely to Alcuin's definition of evil in *Int.* 94. Having deleted Alcuin's *Int.* 93, Ælfric supplements his translation of *Int.* 94 by explaining that evil has no existence outside of certain creatures and inserting a brief comment on the devil.³³ While Ælfric clearly intends his sentence on the devil to replace Alcuin's extended comment on the first evil will, his comment resembles Alcuin's adaptation of Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei*³⁴ only in its emphasis on pride as the cause of the angelic defection. The process, in which the devil and his followers avert themselves from God, turn to themselves and seek delight in their own power, is deemed dispensable.

In translating the material which deals with the creation of the angels and their subsequent fall, Ælfric is largely faithful to Alcuin's text. However, he avoids any reference to the temporal difficulties which inhere in angelic history and the hexameral portion of Genesis.³⁵ Ælfric's omission of *Int.* 93 is the most significant change: in Ælfric's translation of Alcuin, there is no indication – apart from an attribution to pride – of events leading up to the angelic fall. The omission of Alcuin's cursory explanation of the first evil will by no means indicates that Ælfric wishes, like Bede, to steer away from discussions of the angelic creation and fall. Rather, as his other accounts of creation demonstrate, Ælfric seems to have felt that his audience required a more accessible explanation.

DE INITIO CREATVRAE, THE LETTER TO SIGEWEARD, THE LETTER TO WULFGEAT, AND THE EXAMERON

Ælfric's narrative accounts of the angelic creation and fall go much farther than the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* to reconstruct the history of the angelic fall. Generally, these narrative works agree in the major details. The temporal location of the creation of the angels is either not specified, or is placed simply under the works of the first day. In his *Letter to Sigeward*, angelic creation is first mentioned to have taken place 'on þam forman dæge', and later 'on ðam frumscafte', the latter of which may indicate that the creation of the angels was prior to all other creation.³⁶ The number of angels originally created is 'fela þusenda' or 'manega þusenda' and they are divided into ten legions, or orders. Only in his sermons

³³ The devil, created good by God, is not evil in nature, but rather made evil by sinning. Hence the use of the word 'wununga' is very appropriate: evil, having been invited in through sin, dwells in a creation for as long as that creation remains unredeemed.

³⁴ Alcuin's *Int.* 93 is an adaptation of *De ciuitate Dei* XII.6 (ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47–8 (Turnhout, 1955)), which is constructed around Sir. X.15: 'Initium peccati omnis superbia.'

³⁵ That is, not only does Ælfric avoid locating the creation of the angels in scriptural time, he also omits Alcuin's *Int.* 31, 45 and 46, which treat various issues on the timing and speed of creation.

³⁶ 'Se ælmihtiga scippend, ða ða he englas gesceop, þa geworhte he þurh his wisdom tyn engla werod on þam forman dæge on micelre fægernisse, fela þusenda on ðam frumscafte' (*LSig.* 51–5).

does Ælfric enumerate the various orders: ‘He gesceop tyn engla werod; þæt synt englas and heahenglas, throni, dominationes, principatus, potestates, uirtutes, cherubim, seraphim.’³⁷

In every account of the creation of the angels, Ælfric describes their original condition before he mentions the fallen tenth host, Lucifer, or any rebellion in heaven. The characteristics of the angels vary slightly, but the elements which appear consistently are as follows: the angels are created ‘on micelre [or ‘wundorlicre’ or ‘ænlicre’] fægernysse’; they are ‘ealle lichamlease’, and, therefore, live in, or as, spirits (‘on gaste’ or ‘hi sindon ealle gastas’); and they are very strong (‘on miclere strengðe’ or ‘swiðe strange’) or just strong (‘strange’). Of Ælfric’s main works on Genesis, only the *Letter to Sigeward* mentions light in connection with the original angels (‘[they were] ealle . . . leohte’),³⁸ but both the *Letter to Sigeward* (‘swa wlitiges gecindes, swa we secgan ne magon’) and *De initio creaturae* (they are simply ‘wlitige’) contain references to their great beauty. Ælfric stresses that the angels were created good³⁹ in order that ‘hi mihton geseon Godes mærdða mid him and mid him wunian on his ecum wuldre’.⁴⁰ In the *Exameron*, Ælfric adds that the function of angels mirrors the function of men: as a result of their creation with understanding (‘andgit’), both angels and men are intended to see the greatness of God and adore him.⁴¹ At the moment of their creation, because no evil could be created by God, there was no evil among the angels.⁴²

The differentiating characteristics of Lucifer, when mentioned, always follow the general description of the angelic host. In the *Exameron*, Ælfric states only that Lucifer was ‘wundorlicne and fægerne’. In the *Letter to Sigeward* and *De initio creaturae*, however, he explains the origin of the name ‘Leohtberend’:

³⁷ *CHI*.1.22–3: ‘He created ten hosts of angels, those are angels and archangels, throni, dominationes, principatus, potestates, virtutes, cherubim [and] seraphim.’ The tenth host, which fell from heaven, is unnamed. In *CHI*.24, Ælfric not only names the nine hosts, but also describes the relative functions of each. There, the fallen tenth host is related to the parable of the lost drachma in Luke XV.8–9. The material in *CHI*.24 comes ultimately from Gregory’s *Homilia in Euangelia* [hereafter cited in references as *HEV*] XXXIV (PL 76, cols. 1246–59), although Smetana notes that Gregory’s homily also appears in the homiliary of Paul the Deacon (C. Smetana, ‘Ælfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary’, *Traditio* 15 (1959), 163–204, at 190).

³⁸ In the homily *De falsis diis*, Ælfric explains: ‘ðeos þrynnys gesceop þa scinendan englas’ (Pope XXI.28).

³⁹ Though it is implied, the original beatitude of all the angels is not stated explicitly in the *Letter to Wulfgeat*.

⁴⁰ *LW* 28–9: ‘[The angels were created in order that] they might see the greatness of God among them and dwell with him in his eternal glory.’

⁴¹ *EX* 42–6 (quoted above, n. 28). Ælfric likely takes this point from Gregory, who repeatedly mentions the similar functions of angels and men (‘ad uidentium Deum’, ‘ad cognoscendum [Deum]’, etc.). See *HEV* XXXIV.3 and 6; and *Moralia in Iob* VIII.xviii.34 on Job VII.9–10 (*Moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, 3 vols., CCSL 143–143B (Turnhout, 1985)).

⁴² *LSig.* 61–6: ‘Nan yfel ðing næs on ðam englum þa git, ne nan yfel ne com ðurh Godes gesceapnisse, for ðan ðe he sylf ys eall god and ælc god cimð of him.’

Ælfric on the creation and fall of the angels

Gesceawode se an engel þe þær ænlicost wæs, hu fæger he silf wæs and hu scinende on wuldre, and cunnode his mihte, þæt he mihtig wæs gesceapen, and him wel gelicode his wurðfulniss þa: se hatte ‘Lucifer’, þæt ys, ‘Leohtberend’, for ðære miclan beorhtnisse his mæran hiwes.⁴³

Somewhere within the six days, Ælfric suggests in the *Letter to Sigeward*, Lucifer recognized this excellence within himself and then, on the sixth day, the same day on which God created man, Lucifer was turned into an accursed devil and fell from heaven. Ælfric describes the process of Lucifer’s apostasy in great detail. The accounts in the *Letter to Sigeward*, *De initio creaturæ* and the *Letter to Wulfgeat*, though they vary in length, share similar content. Only the *Hexameron* differs significantly: it is the instance in which Ælfric most explicitly grounds his explanation in the scriptural tradition.

In the fuller versions of the angelic fall, contained in the *Letter to Sigeward*, *Exameron* and *De initio creaturæ*, the fall of the angels, and specifically Lucifer, is preceded by a recognition of his motivation. In each of these accounts, Lucifer’s creation as a beautiful and powerful angel (he is, for example, ‘ænlicost’, ‘ænlic’, ‘fæger’ and ‘wlitig’), is the inspiration for a choice: having recognized this excellence within himself, Lucifer must either embrace his creator gratefully, or turn away and exalt himself against God. In *De initio creaturæ*, Ælfric stresses that this choice inheres in the angelic creation: ‘God hi gesceop ealle gode, and let hi habban agenne cyre, swa hi heora scyppend lufedon and filidon, swa hi hine forleton.’⁴⁴

The scriptural verse to which Ælfric often alludes in this context is John VIII.44, which he quotes, in both Latin and Old English, in the *Exameron*: ‘He ne wunode na on soðfæstnyssse forðam ðe seo soðfæstnyss nis nateshwon’⁴⁵ on

⁴³ *LSig.* 70–9: ‘One angel, who was the most excellent there, considered himself, how beautiful he himself was and how shining in glory; he recognized his strength, that he was created mighty, and his magnificence pleased him very much: he was called “Lucifer”, that is, “Light-bearing”, on account of the great brightness of his glorious appearance.’ This passage closely resembles Martin of Braga’s description of Lucifer’s recognition of his created excellence: ‘Ex quibus unus, qui primus omnium archangelus fuerat factus, uidens se in tanta gloria praeulgentem, non dedit honorem Deo creatori suo’ (*Martin von Bracara’s Schrift De correctione rusticorum* [hereafter cited in references as *De corr. rust.*], ed. C. Caspari (Oslo, 1883), c. 3). The account in *De initio creaturæ* is much condensed: ‘þa wæs þæs teoðan weredes ealdor swiðe fæger and wlitig gesceapen, swa þæt he wæs gehaten “Leohtberend”’ (*CHI* 1.29–30).

⁴⁴ *CHI* 1.27–9: ‘God created them all good, and let them have control of themselves, so they might love and follow their creator, or they might abandon him.’ Interestingly, this choice echoes the process of angelic sin as Alcuin describes it in *Int.* 93, which Ælfric chose not to translate. See above, pp. 182–3.

⁴⁵ The adverb ‘nateshwon’ (‘not at all’, ‘by no means’) is Ælfric’s addition to John VIII.44. In his *Grammar*, ‘nates hwon’ translates ‘haud’ (*Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. J. Zupitza (Berlin, 1880; repr. Berlin, 1966), p. 226, line 5).

him.⁴⁶ In Ælfric's descriptions of Lucifer's choice, the 'ueritas' which Lucifer abandons becomes almost synonymous with lordship ('hlaforðscipe'). In general, Lucifer decides that he does not wish to have God as his lord, and abandons God, or 'truth', accordingly. In the *Letter to Sigeward*, which goes furthest to examine the psychology of Lucifer's decision, Ælfric states:

Ða þuhte him to huxlic, þæt he hiran sceolde ænigum hlaforde, þa he swa ænlic wæs, and nolde wurðian þone, þe hine geworhte, and him þancian æfre ðæs þe he him forgeaf and beon him underðeodd þæs ðe swiþor geornlice for þære micclan mærdæ þe he hine gemæðegode. He nolde þa habban his scippend him to hlaforde, ne he nolde þurhwunan on ðære soþfæstnisse ðæs soðfæstan Godes sunu, þe hine gesceop fægerne . . .⁴⁷

Rather than motivate him to thank and follow his creator with all eagerness, Lucifer's created excellence causes him to grow proud. Pride (usually 'modigness') is associated in each of the three major versions with the elements of the words, attributed to the devil, found in Isaiah XIV.12–15. In the *Letter to Sigeward*, the attempt to be like God is the one act specifically determined by pride; in the *Exameron*, which preserves much of the scriptural language, the speech itself is made 'mid dyrstire modignysse'; and, in *De initio creaturae*, Lucifer speaks only when he has begun 'to modigeanne'.⁴⁸ Within the narrative explanation of the angelic fall, it would appear that the sin of pride is most often evinced by Lucifer's vaunt that he will be better than he was created, like, in fact, to God. However, in general, the angelic fall itself is attributed most often to 'modigness', though 'ofermetto' and 'upahefedness' appear as well.

Having associated Lucifer's pride with his vaunts in Isaiah XIV.13–14, Ælfric uses the scriptural verses differently in his treatments of the angelic fall.⁴⁹ Placing Ælfric's uses of the verses into chronological order yields interesting results. By dividing Isaiah XIV.13–14 into eight phrases,⁵⁰ we may devise the following table (fig. 6).

⁴⁶ *EX* 304–5: 'He did not stand in the truth because truth is not at all in him.' See also the speech of St Vincent in Ælfric's *LSXXXVII.84–5* (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints: Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days formerly observed by the English Church*, ed. W. Skeat, EETS 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900; repr. as 2 vols., 1966)).

⁴⁷ *LSig.* 79–91: 'Then it seemed to him, when he was so excellent, too shameful that he should obey any lord, and he did not want to honour the one who had created him and to thank him always for that which he had given him and to be subordinate to him, all the more eagerly, on account of the very great glory which he had bestowed upon him. He would not, then, have his creator as his Lord, nor would he remain in the truth of the true son of God, who created him beautiful . . .'

⁴⁸ In the *Letter to Sigeward*, Lucifer's pride becomes, for a time, his defining characteristic: as he searches desperately for a seat in heaven, he is described as 'se modiga'.

⁴⁹ The following versions of Isaiah XIV.13–14 are *CHI* 1.31–3; *EX* 310–12; *LSig.* 92–4; *LW* 38; and *De creatore et creatura* 86–8.

⁵⁰ My divisions are based solely upon Ælfric's usage of the scriptural verses.

Ælfric on the creation and fall of the angels

Isaiah XIV.13–14	<i>De initio creaturae</i> (c. 989)	<i>Exameron</i> (c. 992–1002)	<i>Letter to Sigeward</i> (c. 1005–6)	<i>Letter to Wulfgeat</i> (c. 1005–6)	<i>De creatore et creatura</i> (c. 1006)
1. Qui dicebas in corde tuo:	1. cwæð on his heortan	1. cwæð			1. cwæð
2. ‘In caelum consendam					
3. super astra Dei		3. bufan Godes tunglum			3. bufan Godes tunglum
4. exaltabo solium meum		2. wolde wyrcean his cynesetl			2. wolde wyrcean his cyneseld
5. sedebo in monte testamenti	3. and sittan				
6. in lateribus aquilonis	4. on ðam norðdæle heofonan rices	5. on ðam norðdæle			5. on ðam norðdæle
7. ascendam super altitudinem nubium		4. ofer ðæra wolcna heannysse			4. ofer ðæra wolcna heahnyssæ
8. ero similis altissimo.’	2. wolde and eaðe mihte beon his scyppende gelic	6. and [wolde] beon Gode gelic	1. [wolde] hine macian to Gode	1. wolde . . . him sylf beon God	6. and [wolde] beon Gode gelic

Fig. 6. Ælfric’s treatment of Isaiah XIV.13–14

Clearly, the most significant changes in Ælfric’s use of the verses from Isaiah lie between *De initio creaturae* and the *Exameron*. Ælfric edits four phrases (one in each section), adds three, and restructures his citation to approximate more closely the emphasis of scripture on Lucifer’s desire to be like God. Specifically, Ælfric removes ‘on his heortan’, ‘and sittan’, ‘heofonan rices’ and ‘and eaðe mihte’ while adding ‘bufan Godes tunglum’, ‘wolde wyrcean his cynesetl’ and ‘ofer ðæra wolcna heannysse’. The desire to be like God – ‘ero similis altissimo’ – is transferred from its unusual position as Lucifer’s first boast in *De initio creaturae* to the close of the boast in the *Exameron* (although the *Exameron* still does not adhere strictly to the order of Isaiah). Ælfric’s preference for the more

scripturally grounded version in the *Exameron* is supported by his use of the later version in *De creatore et creatura*.

Although Ælfric incorporates most of the elements of Isaiah XIV.13–14 in at least one of his versions of the angelic fall, he omits ‘in caelum conscendam’ and ‘sedebo in monte testamenti’.⁵¹ While it could be argued that these omissions are coincidental, it seems more likely that Ælfric deliberately excised these somewhat obscure remarks. For an unlearned audience, Lucifer’s original statement would have been puzzling: how would the brightest angel ascend into heaven? Even Jerome, whom Bede quotes in *In Genesim* with reference to these verses, found it an unresolvable question: Lucifer could have made this speech before, or after, his fall from heaven.⁵² Ælfric, who would have been familiar with Jerome’s conclusions through Bede, decides to pass over Lucifer’s first boast in silence.

Ælfric likely omitted ‘sedebo in monte testamenti’ for similar reasons. In *De initio creaturae*, it would seem that Ælfric began to translate this portion of the verse, as this is the one occasion on which he uses the verb ‘sittan’, but then decided to omit the obscure phrase ‘in monte testamenti’ – a phrase which Jerome explains with reference to Ps. XLVII.3.⁵³ ‘In corde tuo’, as well, which Ælfric initially included, may have been dropped from later versions to avoid confusion concerning the interiority of Lucifer’s speech. In *De initio creaturae*, where the events of Genesis are related with the least reliance on scripture, Ælfric may have used the phrase to suggest the inner swelling of pride which is later associated with Eve’s decision to heed the serpent.⁵⁴ Overall, then, the apparent motivation behind Ælfric’s modifications is to make his account conform more closely to his source in scripture. While composing *De initio crea-*

⁵¹ Ælfric mentions a throne, Lucifer’s ‘solium’, or ‘cynesetl’, only in the *Exameron* and *De creatore et creatura*. However, as I demonstrate below, the culmination of Lucifer’s proud silent boasts in actual conflict brings a curiously literal element into Ælfric’s conception of the throne as a place to sit.

⁵² See Bede, *In Gen.* I.61–71; Jerome, *In Esaïam* VI.xiv.13–14 (ed. M. Adriaen, 2 vols., CCSL 73–73A (Turnhout, 1963)). Ælfric was familiar with the ‘heaven of heaven’ from Ps. CXLVIII.4–5, which he quotes in the *Exameron* (157–61) in both Latin and Old English with reference to the firmament and the separation of the waters in Gen. I.6.

⁵³ Jerome, *In Esaïam* V.xiv.12–14: “Sedebo in monte testamenti”, id est, in templo ubi Dei iura sunt condita; “et in lateribus aquilonis”, id est, in Hierusalem. Scriptum est enim: “Montes Sion latera aquilonis” [Ps. XLVIII.3]. Alternatively, the mountain may be identified as Mount Zaphon, north of Ugarit, where, according to popular belief, the gods assembled (R. Bratcher, *Marginal Notes for the Old Testament* (New York, 1980), p. 136).

⁵⁴ See Alcuin, *Int.* 66 (not translated by Ælfric): ‘Quomodo potuit mulier credere serpentis sermonibus, quod diuinitas a re bona fuisset prohibita? Quia forte ante inerat menti illius amor quidam propriae potestatis, et quaedam de [se] superba praesumptio, quae per illam tentationem fuerat uincenda et humilianda.’ Alcuin’s source is Bede, *In Gen.* I.1946–50, taken in turn from Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* XI.xxx.39 (ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 28.3 (Vienna, 1894)).

turæ, Ælfric seems to have been less concerned with such details and was perhaps, as I will discuss in more detail below, crafting his words more after an account such as that in *Genesis A*.⁵⁵

The one element which occurs in all Ælfric's versions of the angelic fall is 'ero similis altissimo'. In the *Letter to Wulfgeat* and the *Letter to Sigeward*, in fact, it is the only element of the speech which Ælfric includes. Clearly, he considers Lucifer's claim to be like God, or to usurp God's role, most significant. Lucifer's pride causes him to desire to exchange the lordship of God for his own. In addition to the close translations cited above, Ælfric also transforms the words of Isaiah in other contexts according to his interpretation of the verses. The proud desire to be like God is manifested and summarized by the desire to have power and a kingdom against the will of God, which Ælfric expresses variously: Lucifer 'wolde mid riccetera him rice gewinnan'; '[wolde] habban anweald and rice ongean Gode ælmihtigum'; and 'wolde beon him sylf on his sylfes anwealde'.⁵⁶

After Lucifer articulates his intentions, he acts. Though Ælfric's descriptions of the conflict in heaven all emphasize the ease with which the scheming angels are despatched, their fall and their transformation into devils, each account also contains unique detail. In the *Letter to Sigeward*, Ælfric explains that Lucifer's next move, after his proud boasts, is to gather companions – '[Lucifer] nam him gegadan ongean Godes willan to his unræde on eornost gefæstnod' – and events then unfold quickly. Through the use of the adverbial conjunction 'þa' (or 'ða') and the conjunction 'for ðan ðe', Ælfric concatenates each new development in a manner which suggests both causality and speed:

Ða næfde he nan setl, hwær he sittan mihte, for ðan ðe nan heofon nolde hine aberan, ne nan rice næs, þe his mihte beon ongean Godes willan, þe geworhte ealle ðinc. Ða afunde se modiga, hwilce his mihta wæron, þa þa his fet ne mihton furðon ahwar standan, ac he feoll ða adun to deofle awend, and ealle his gegadan of ðam Godes hirede in to helle wite be heora gewirhtum.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Thus Ælfric's 'heofonan rices' and 'and eaðe mihte' of *De initio creaturæ*, also in *Genesis A* but absent from scripture, are removed for the *Exameron*. The complete paraphrases in *Genesis A* read: 'þa he worde cwæð,/ niþes ofpyrsted, þæt he on norðdæle/ ham and heahsetl heofena rices/ agan wolde' (31b–34a); and 'Cwædon þæt heo rice, reðemode,/ agan woldan and swa eaðe meahtan' (48–9). All citations of *Genesis A* are from *Genesis A: a New Edition*, ed. A. Doane (Madison, WI, 1978) [hereafter cited in references as *Gen. A*].

⁵⁶ *LSig.* 92–3; *CHI*.1.33–4; *EX* 316. This interpretative substitution may, in fact, be traced to the very words in *Int.* 93 (from Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei*) which Ælfric omits in his translation of Alcuin. See above, p. 182.

⁵⁷ *LSig.* 96–107: 'Then he had no seat upon which he might sit, because no heaven would bear him, nor was there any kingdom which might be his against the will of God, who created all things. Then the proud one discovered what his powers might be, when his feet could not even stand any longer anywhere, but he fell down, turned into a devil, and all his companions [with him], from the company of God in to the pains of hell on account of their deeds.'

In his emphasis on action ‘on gean Godes willan’, Ælfric stresses the efficacy of the will of God: Lucifer has neither seat (‘setl’) nor kingdom (‘rice’, which could perhaps also be translated as ‘power’) and, therefore, he cannot remain in heaven. Only God’s will has the power to keep Lucifer aloft: none of the power which he has perceived in himself will avail. The fact that Lucifer’s feet can find no purchase is extremely literal, almost comical, and a detail for which I have been able to find no parallel.⁵⁸ I would suggest that it is intended to emphasize God’s omnipotence: the rebel band had no chance from the beginning.

Lucifer’s first action in the *Letter to Sigeward*, to bind (‘gefæstnian’) the rebel angels to his ‘ræd’ (or ‘unræd’), finds parallels in both the *Exameron* and *De initio creaturae*.⁵⁹ Because *De initio creaturae* uniquely mentions Lucifer’s lordship over a tenth host of angels, Ælfric confirms several times that their ‘ræd’ is binding and unanimous before God acts:

þa gefæstnode he [Lucifer] þisne ræd wið ðam werode þe he bewiste, and hi ealle to ðam ræde gebugon; þa ða hi ealle hæfdon þisne ræd betwux him gefæstnod, þa becom Godes grama⁶⁰ ofer him eallum, and hi ealle wurdon awende of ðam fægeran hiwe þe hi on gescapene wæron to laðlicum deoflum.⁶¹

The *Exameron* mentions his accomplices and their agreement only at the moment at which they fall, but begins by observing that Lucifer ‘næfde . . . nane fæstnung’.⁶² The placement of this remark and its structural similarities to the *Letter to Sigeward* (quoted above) equates the words ‘setl’ and ‘fæstnung’, and the language of all three accounts suggests that Ælfric is employing an interesting

⁵⁸ The translation included in Crawford’s edition (by William L’isle) pretends that the line does not exist: ‘Then perceived this proud one what his power was: sith hee had no place to rest on; but fell downe, into devill turned with all his complices, from the court of God to the paines of hell, as they deserved [sic]’ (20).

⁵⁹ Day suggests that Ælfric’s source may be Martin of Braga’s *De correctione rusticorum*, a work which Ælfric certainly knew, as he quotes it in his homily *De falsis diis* (Pope XXI). Martin twice mentions the angels who were plotting with Satan – ‘qui illi consenserunt’ and ‘illi alii angeli, qui consentientes illi fuerunt’ (*De corr. rust.* c. 3). Day also notes that Pirmin’s *Scarapsus* (*Die Hiemat des hl. Pirmin des Apostels der Alamannen*, ed. G. Jecker, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens 13 (Münster, 1927)) preserves much of Martin’s account of the angelic creation and fall (V. Day, ‘The Fall of the Angels in Old English Literature’ (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Cambridge Univ., 1974), p. 98). Ambrosius Autpertus’s *In Apocalypsin* (ed. R. Weber, 2 vols., CCCM 27–27A (Turnhout, 1975)) contains a similar detail – ‘angelorum legiones sibi consentientes’ (*In Apocalypsin* II.ii.24a, lines 14–30).

⁶⁰ This anthropomorphic description of God’s reaction in this context is unusual: I have been able to find no source or parallel outside Old English biblical verse. Compare, for example, *Gen.* A 60b–63a. However, Ælfric often uses the phrase ‘Godes grama’.

⁶¹ *CHL* 1.34–8: ‘Then he fixed that counsel with the host which he governed, and they all bent to that counsel. Then when they had all fixed that counsel between them, then God’s wrath came over them all, and they all were changed from that fair appearance, in which they were created, to loathsome devils.’ ⁶² *EX* 317.

metaphor throughout: instead of binding himself to God, Lucifer chooses to seek a 'seat' or 'security' in his own power. The angels of the tenth host make the same mistake, bending to Lucifer's plan (the 'ræd' which would seem to represent Lucifer's vaunts in Isaiah XIV.13–14) and then neither Lucifer nor his host have any power by which they might retain a kingdom in heaven. As Ælfric puts it in his *Letter to Wulfgeat*: 'Ða ne mihte he wunian on þære micclan mærdæ, ne eac his gegadan, butan Godes mihte, ac wurdon þa asyndrode fram þam soðum Gode, forþam ðe hi forleton his hlafordscipe.'⁶³ That is, without the tie to God, and without any overt action by God, except perhaps a withdrawal of his power, the apostate angels simply plummet from heaven into the punishments of hell.⁶⁴

Ælfric's conception of the chronology of these events is inconsistent. The change of form, from angel to devil, can either precede or follow the fall from heaven.⁶⁵ In *De initio creaturæ*, Ælfric interposes a short interval between the transformation to devils and the consignment to hell: while Lucifer thinks desperately how he might wrestle a kingdom from his creator, God calmly prepares hell.⁶⁶ The speed and ineluctability of the fall, however, which are demonstrated by Ælfric's unique use of language (as detailed above), are confirmed by the scriptural verse with which Ælfric closes his account in the *Exameron*: 'Be ðam cwæð se hælend her on ðysum life: "Ic geseah ðone sceoccan swa swa scinende liget feallende adun dreorig of heofonum"; forðamðe ahreas ungerýdelice.' As if falling like lightning were not sufficient, Ælfric adds the word 'dreorig' (or 'bloody') to the biblical version and explains the verse: Lucifer fell violently.⁶⁷

⁶³ *LW* 39–42: 'Then he [Lucifer] might not dwell in that great glory, nor also his companions, without God's power, but they were then cut off from the true God because they all abandoned his lordship.'

⁶⁴ In *De initio creaturæ*, Ælfric states the God 'let befeallan' the rebel angels (*CHI*.1.44, quoted in full n. 66, below).

⁶⁵ The devil, however, is not one of God's creations: 'Nu þencð mænig man and smeað hwanon deoful come; þonne wite he þæt God gesceop to mæran engle þone þe nu is deoful, ac god ne sceop hine na to deofle, ac þa ða he was mid ealle fordon and forscyldgod þurh ða micclan upahæfednysse and wiðerweardnysse, þa wearð he to deofle awend, se ðe ær wæs mære engel geworht' (*CHI*.1.56–61). This rhetorical question on the origin of the devil echoes passages in Augustine: see *De Genesi contra Manicheos* II.xxviii.42 and *Tractatus in Iohannis euangelium* CXXIV.XLII.x.33–6 (ed. A. Mayer, CCSL 36 (Turnhout, 1954)). Godden (*Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, p. 9) points out that the latter appears also in Haymo's *Homilia* XXXII (PL 118, col. 216).

⁶⁶ *CHI*.1.42–5: 'And þa hwile þe he smeade hu he mihte dælan rice wið god, þa hwile gearcode se ælmihtiga scyppend him and his geferan hellewite, and hi ealle adræfde of heofonan rices myrihðe, and let befeallan on ðæt ece fyr, þe him gegearcod wæs for heora ofermettum [cf. Matt. XXV.41].'

⁶⁷ *EX* 320–3: 'About that the Lord said here in this life: "I saw that devil just like shining lightning, falling down bloody from heaven" [Luke X.18]; because he fell violently.' The Vulgate version of Luke X.18 reads: 'Videbam Satanam sicut fulgur de caelo cadentem'; the Old English reads: 'Ic geseah Satanam swa swa ligræsc [variant in Cambridge, University Library Ii.2.11: 'liget ræstc'] of heofone feallende' (*The Old English Version of the Gospels*, ed. R. Liuzza, EETS os 304

The eternal state of the fallen angels is given only minimal consideration.⁶⁸ Satan and his cohorts are in ‘hell-punishment’, suffering the torment of eternal fire.⁶⁹ Interestingly, Ælfric also points out that the rebel angels become worse than any other creation: ‘þa wearð he and ealle his geferan forcuþran and wýrsan þonne ænig oðer gesceaft.’⁷⁰ In addition, the *Letter to Wulfgeat*, in a passage which Ælfric adapts from Alcuin’s *Quaestiones*, briefly examines the internal disposition of the fallen angels: ‘[Cut off from God, the fallen angels are] mid andan afyllede and mid orwennysse ælcere miltsunge, manfulle gastas.’⁷¹ Though every evil perpetrated in the world can be attributed to the apostate angels,⁷² Ælfric stresses that they have very little power unless a man is willing to bend to their teaching:

Nu cwædon gedwolmen þæt deofol gesceope sume gesceafta, ac hi leogað; Ne mæg he nane gesceafta gescyppan, for ðan ðe he nis na scyppend, ac is atelic sceocca, ac mid leasunge he wile beswican and fordon þone unwaran; ac he ne mæg nænne man to nanum leahre geneadian, buton se mon his agenes willes to his lare gebuge.⁷³

(Oxford, 1994)). I choose to translate ‘dreorig’ as ‘bloody’ rather than ‘sorrowful’, based on the devil’s recent defeat in heaven and Ælfric’s qualification of Luke X.18, he ‘ahreas ungerýdelice’. For a parallel use, see the passage preceding the finding of Æschere’s head in *Beowulf*: ‘Wæter under stod/ dreorig ond gedrefed’ (*Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. F. Klaeber, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1950), 1416b–1417a). For another attribution of corporeal characteristics to the devil, recall the devil’s feet in the *Letter to Sigeward*.

⁶⁸ The remaining nine orders of angels are confirmed in heaven and can no longer sin: ‘þa sona þa nigon werod þe ðær to lafe wæron bugon to heora scyppende mid ealre eaðmodnysse and betæhton heora ræd to his willan; Ða getrymde se ælmihtiga God þa nigon engla werod and gestaðolfæste swa þæt hi næfre ne milton ne noldon syððan fram his willan gebugan ne hi ne magon nu ne hi nellað nane synne gewyrcean; Ac hi æfre beoð ymbe þæt an hu hi magon Gode gehyrsumian and him gecweman’ (*CH* I.1.45–51). See also *De creatore et creatura* 107–12.

⁶⁹ The scriptural source for the nature of the suffering of the angels (though the change of form from angel to devil is not mentioned) is Matt. XXV.41: ‘Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem æternum, qui paratus est diabolo et angelis eius.’

⁷⁰ *CH* I.1.41–2: ‘Then he [Lucifer] and all his companions became more wicked and worse than any other creation.’

⁷¹ *LW* 44–5: ‘[Cut off from God, the fallen angels are] filled with envy and despair of any pardon, evil spirits.’ See *Int.* 13; *ÆInt.* 10.

⁷² *LW* 46–9: ‘And ælc þæra yfela, ðe oð ðis becom, eall hit gewyrð æfre þurh þa awyrgedan gastas and þurh þa yfelan menn, þe hi magon forlæran to ðam yfelan willan, þe hi on wuniað.’ Ælfric also associates the gods of heathen men with the fallen angels. See *De falsis diis* (Pope XXI.658–63), a passage which appears to be taken from Martin’s *De corr. rust.* c. 7.

⁷³ *CH* I.1.117–22: ‘Now heretics say that the devil created some creatures, but they lie; he may not create any creatures, because he is no creator, but is a loathsome fiend, and with lying he will deceive and destroy the unwary; but he may not compel any man to any crime, unless the man, through his own will, bends to his teaching.’

BACKGROUND AND SOURCES

Ælfric's treatments of the angelic creation and fall are remarkable for both their form and content. When authorities such as Augustine, Gregory, Bede and Alcuin probe the question of the angels, they avoid formulating a narrative. In other words, they are primarily concerned with exegesis and analysis. Ælfric, on the other hand, beginning with *De initio creaturae*, constructs an elaborate narrative which, though grounded in various verses of scripture, is based only loosely upon hexameral exegesis. Both the *Letter to Sigeward* and the *Letter to Wulfgeat* are also narrative accounts, but both seem to assume some knowledge of the scriptural background. Of the four main accounts which I have considered, the *Exameron* is the least inventive, as it presents the scriptural evidence with little embellishment.

Although I have indicated possible sources throughout, Ælfric's treatments seem to me to be without direct source. After an exhaustive study of the history of the fall of the angels, Virginia Day has concluded: 'No exact sources have been discovered for Ælfric's four main accounts of the fall of the angels, and it seems to me possible that none existed.'⁷⁴ Still, Ælfric's main source is clearly scripture. Ælfric constructs his comments around several different scriptural verses which he quotes – John VIII.44, Luke X.18 and, most importantly, Isaiah XIV.12–15. Other passages from scripture, though he does not quote them, appear also to have influenced Ælfric. Luke XV.8–9 and the parable of the lost drachma provide a backdrop against which to set an explanation of the function of each of the nine different angelic hosts;⁷⁵ Apoc. XII.9 confirms the violent expulsion of Satan and his followers from heaven;⁷⁶ and Ezekiel XXVIII.12–17 appears to be the ultimate source for the notion that Lucifer was pre-eminent among the angels in heaven.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Day, 'The Fall', pp. 131–2. Day's thesis provides an excellent summary of the history of the fall of the angels. See also J. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford, 1968), and, for a summary particularly relevant to Old English, D. Johnson, 'The Fall of Lucifer in *Genesis A* and Two Anglo-Latin Royal Charters', *JEGP* 97 (1998), 500–21, esp. 500–12.

⁷⁵ See also Col. I.16 and Eph. I.21.

⁷⁶ 'Et proiectus est draco ille magnus serpens antiquus qui uocatur diabolus et Satanas, qui seducit uniuersum orbem: proiectus est in terram et angeli eius cum illo missi sunt' (Apoc. XII.9). The term 'diabolus' translates the Greek form meaning 'slanderer' or 'accuser'; the name 'Satan' translates the Hebrew form, meaning 'adversary' or 'opponent' (R. Bratcher, *A Translator's Guide to the Revelation of John* (New York, 1984), p. 100).

⁷⁷ The verses in Ezekiel are too lengthy to quote in full, but they include references to the devil's boast that he is a god, his perfect beauty ('perfectus decore') and subsequent pride ('eleuatum est cor tuum in decore tuo') and his supremacy over the nine orders of angels (symbolized by the precious stones in Eden).

The application of these verses to angelic history has a long tradition in exegesis.⁷⁸ At least as early as the time of Origen's *De principiis* (written *ante* 231), the verses in Isaiah and Ezekiel were being taken to apply figuratively to the devil.⁷⁹ Augustine, too, cites many of these verses in his explication of Genesis. John VIII.44 is pivotal in Augustine's determination of Lucifer's original status in heaven and, by extension, in Augustine's arguments about the origin of evil.⁸⁰ In addition, in consecutive chapters of *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine cites the passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel with reference to the devil. Augustine, however, rather than applying them to the sequence of events in heaven, explains both as references to the body of the devil, those recruits from the human race who have thrown in their lot with evil.⁸¹ Neither passage is cited or alluded to within his explanation of the angelic fall.

Although Augustine refers to the different angelic orders in many works, he does not compile a complete list of the nine orders, nor does he address the various functions of each order. In fact, the most important comment which Augustine makes on this issue reveals a fundamental unwillingness to speculate on this particular aspect of angelology: 'Quomodo autem se habeat beatissima illa et superna societas, quae ibi sint differentiae praepositarum . . . dicant qui possunt, si tamen possunt probare quod dicunt. Ego me ista ignorare confiteor.'⁸² Gregory the Great, however, with reference mainly to the passages in

⁷⁸ The precise influence of the earliest attempts to elucidate and supplement Gen. I–III in the Jewish and Jewish-Christian pseudepigrapha is difficult to establish. Works such as *I Enoch* (also known as the *Book of Enoch* or the *Ethiopic Enoch*) and *II Enoch* (also known as the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* or the *Slavonic Enoch*), the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Vita Adae et Euae* all attempt to redress the narrative shortcomings of the book of Genesis (see J. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I (Garden City, NY, 1983)). In these accounts, however, no firm consensus emerges about the timing and circumstances of angelic and human sin. In fact, the fall of the angels is often located in Gen. VI.1–4 (see *I Enoch* and the *Book of Jubilees*): angels, inspired by the beauty of earthly women, descend, take wives and breed horrible giants, all the while dispensing different types of arcane knowledge to men and women. Thus, the origin of evil in the world is traced not to the sin of Adam and Eve, but rather to the sins of the angels: the collocation of the acquisition of knowledge and the spread of lawlessness and evil probably influences later interpretations of the temptation. *II Enoch* (about which Charlesworth says: 'In every respect *II Enoch* remains an enigma' (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, p. 97)), in placing creation and fall of the angels on the second day, shows the clear influence of Isaiah XIV.12–15 (*II Enoch* XXIX.3–5).

⁷⁹ Origen points out that it is impossible that the passage in Ezekiel, especially, could refer to a man. See *On First Principles*, trans. G. Butterworth (London, 1936), V.4–5.

⁸⁰ See, for example, *De Genesi ad litteram* XI.xvi.21 and *De ciuitate Dei* XI.13.

⁸¹ Both passages, Augustine remarks, function 'in figura'. See *De Genesi ad litteram* XI.xxiv.31–XI.xxv.32.

⁸² *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate* XV.58 (ed. E. Evans, CCSL 46 (Turnhout, 1969), pp. 21–114): 'How that high and most blessed society might keep itself, and what the differences of the orders might be . . . let those say who are able, if, however, they are able to prove what they say. I confess myself to be ignorant of these things.'

Isaiah and Ezekiel, explores the history of the angels in great depth. In fact, Gregory's homily for the third Sunday after Pentecost (*HEVXXXIV*) becomes the 'locus classicus' for later exegetes and homilists interested in angelology. Gregory also contrasts and compares the respective histories of angels and men, noting that both are created subject to God, either 'ad uidendum Deum' or 'ad cognoscendum [Deum]', and this remark seems to have inspired Ælfric's comments on the function of the angels.⁸³

Gregory relates the nine orders of angels both to the parable of the lost drachma in Luke XV.8–9 and to the nine precious stones of Ezekiel XXVIII.13, establishing Lucifer's pre-eminence on the basis of the latter: 'Quibus nimirum ordinibus ille primus angelus ideo ornatus et opertus exstitit, quia dum cunctis agminibus angelorum praelatus est, ex eorum comparatione clarior fuit.'⁸⁴ After mentioning the strength of Michael in relation to Isaiah XIV.13–14 and Apoc. XII.7, Gregory enumerates the specific functions of each of the nine orders of angels, and it is this explanation which becomes the source of Ælfric's account in *CHI.24*. For Gregory, the creation of man is God's solution to the problem of the empty seats in heaven.⁸⁵

In the *Moralia*, Gregory makes frequent reference to angelic events, usually within the context of Isaiah and Ezekiel. Gregory again applies the nine stones to the nine subordinate orders of angels, stating that Lucifer was 'reliquis angelis eminentior', 'magnus sine comparatione', and that 'quorum dum claritatem transcenderet, ex eorum comparatione clarior fuit'.⁸⁶ The devil's boast in Isaiah then becomes the focus of Gregory's explanation of the angelic fall. After

⁸³ See *HEVXXXIV.3* and 6; and *Moralia* VIII.xviii.34 on Job VII.9–10. Another interesting possibility, and a work which certainly influenced Alcuin's *Int.* 3–4, is the Irish Augustine's *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* (PL 35, cols. 2149–200). The Irish Augustine seems to be the source of the idea that angelic sin is passed over in silence because it is not destined to be restored: 'Angelicum uero uulnus uerus medicus qualiter factum sit, indicare noluit, dum illud postea curare non destinavit. Et qualiter sit eiectus per sententiam uindictae, reticuit, quem per poenitentiam nullo modo reuocauit. Peccatum uero hominis, quomodo factum fuerit, profertur: ipsum namque quandoque promereri ueniam non desperatur. Et qualiter eiectus sit homo, indicare Deus maluit, quem ad statum pristinum in nouissimo iterum reuocauit' (*De mirabilibus* I.2). See also Gregory, *Moralia* IV.iii.8 and XXXI.i.1 and Augustine, *Tractatus in Iohannis euangelium* CX.7.

⁸⁴ *HEVXXXIV.7*: 'Certainly, the first angel stood adorned and covered with the nine orders, since, when he was placed before the entire host of angels, in comparison to them, he was more distinguished.'

⁸⁵ *HEVXXXIV.6*. The idea was made popular by Augustine (see *De ciuitate Dei* XXII.1 and *Enchiridion* IX.29). For the development of the 'doctrine of replacement', see Dorothy Haines, 'Vacancies in Heaven: the Doctrine of Replacement and *Genesis A*', *Notes and Queries* n.s. 44 (1997), 150–4.

⁸⁶ *Moralia* XXXII.xxiii.47–8 on Job XL.14: '[Lucifer was] more eminent than the remaining angels'; 'great beyond comparison'; and 'while he transcended the brightness of the others, he was, in comparison to them, more distinguished'.

quoting Isaiah XIV.13–14, Gregory states: ‘Solus quippe altissimus ita dominatur super omnia, ut alteri subesse non possit. Quem diabolus imitari peruerse uoluit, cum suum dominium quaerens, ei subesse recusauit.’⁸⁷ Furthermore, the fall of Lucifer, who wishes in his pride to be like God, is a model for the fall of man, who believes the serpent’s claim that eating the fruit will confer divinity upon him.⁸⁸ As Lucifer becomes a devil through his desire to be more than the other angels, so man becomes like an apostate angel when he disdains to be like his fellow men.⁸⁹

Although Gregory’s outline of angelic events, and especially his *HEV* XXXIV, were likely the strongest influences upon Ælfric, it is possible that Ælfric obtained some of his knowledge of Gregory through later sources. Isidore, for example, twice treats the issue at length. In the *Etymologiae*, he discusses the naming of the various orders as well as their functions; and, in the *Sententiae*, Isidore offers a fairly full account of both the creation and fall of the angels.⁹⁰ In addition, Gregory’s *HEV* XXXIV was used by Paul the Deacon (720–?99) in compiling his eighth-century homiliary, and Smetana has shown that Ælfric often consulted Paul’s work.⁹¹ Ultimately, however, some elements of Ælfric’s account must be adopted directly from Gregory.⁹²

Another early source with which Ælfric was familiar is the treatise *De correctione rusticorum* by Martin of Braga (515–80), a work which Day has connected with the catechetical ‘narratio’ and has suggested, very plausibly, as a possible inspiration for Ælfric’s *De initio creaturae*.⁹³ Martin’s work begins with the creation of heaven and earth and explains the original condition and fall of the angels in some detail. Martin’s account of angelic history, though it is not grounded in the vocabulary of scripture, is closer in style and content to Ælfric

⁸⁷ *Moralia* XXIX.vii.15 on Job XXXVIII.15: ‘The most high alone rules over all things in such a way that he is unable to be subject to another. The devil perversely wished to imitate him, when, seeking dominion of his own, he refused to be subject to him.’

⁸⁸ *Moralia* XXIX.viii.18 on Job XXXVIII.15. See also *Moralia* XXXIV.xxi.40 on Job XLI.24.

⁸⁹ *Moralia* XXVI.xxvi.44 on Job XXXVI.5.

⁹⁰ See *Etymologiae* VII.5 (ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi etymologiarum siue originum libri XX* (Oxford, 1911)); *Sententiae* I.10 (PL 83, cols. 537–738).

⁹¹ See Smetana, ‘Ælfric’, p. 190.

⁹² The manuscript evidence would seem to imply that Gregory’s *Homiliae in Euangelia* were fairly well known in Anglo-Saxon England. Gneuss includes seven manuscripts, three of which (though fragmentary) may date from the late eighth century, in his handlist. See H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe, AZ, 2001), nos. 42, 242, 255, 566, 733, 767 and 804.5. For detailed information on the early English manuscript tradition, see T. Hall, ‘The Early English Manuscripts of Gregory the Great’s *Homiliae in Euangelia* and *Homiliae in Hierzechibelenr*: a Preliminary Survey’, *Rome and the North: the Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. R. H. Bremmer Jr., K. Dekker and D. F. Johnson (Leuven, 2001), pp. 115–36 at 118–29. On the manuscript evidence for homiliaries in general in Anglo-Saxon England, see M. Clayton, ‘Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Peritia* 4 (1985), 207–42, at 218–20.

⁹³ Day, ‘Influence’, pp. 53 and 56–7.

than any other Latin account which I have been able to discover.⁹⁴ Like Ælfric in *De initio creaturae*, Martin gives little attention to the creation and fall of man – the remainder of the work is a selective rendition of history to the day of judgement and an exhortation to pray for the clemency of Christ.

Interestingly, neither Bede nor Alcuin discuss the angelic orders, and their treatment of angelic history is limited. Bede claims that angelic history is a topic best omitted in a ‘sermon for the instruction of the human race’.⁹⁵ Though he adopts much of Gregory’s *HEVXXXIV* in his commentary on Luke, his borrowing breaks off at precisely the point at which Gregory introduces the nine orders of angels.⁹⁶ Alcuin, on the other hand, gives the angelic creation and fall passing treatment in his *Quaestiones*.⁹⁷ In a letter to Gallicellulus on the numbers one to ten in scripture, Alcuin also makes a brief comment on the angelic orders: ‘Nouem lapidibus opertus est archangelus, qui cecidit de caelo. Nouem ordines angelorum remanserunt in caelo.’⁹⁸ There are interesting Gregorian passages in both Ambrosius Autpertus and Paschasius Radbertus, but there is no way of determining their possible influence on Ælfric.⁹⁹ Among the later Carolingians, Haymo’s *Homilia de tempore CXIV*¹⁰⁰ is closest to Gregory’s angelology, but does not preserve many of the details which we find in Ælfric.

After scripture, then, the primary influence on Ælfric’s conception of angelic events is probably Gregory: Ælfric would have seen the significant scriptural verses used by Gregory (except perhaps John VIII.44, which may have come via Augustine) and then, using those verses as his authority, he constructed a convincing narrative sequence of events. In the process, he may have been influenced by specific comments from other writers (most importantly, it would seem, by Gregory and Martin of Braga) and I believe we should not exclude the possibility that Ælfric’s conception of the angelic fall, especially in *De initio creaturae*, was modelled to some extent on that in the Old English poem *Genesis A*: it is surprising, indeed, and perhaps significant, that the work closest to Ælfric should be the poetic paraphrase of Genesis contained in Junius 11.

⁹⁴ See Martin, *De corr. rust.* c. 3, portions of which I have quoted above.

⁹⁵ See above, p. 176, n. 4.

⁹⁶ Bede quotes *HEVXXXIV*.1–6 frequently before *In Lucam* IV.2263 (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 [1960], pp. 1–425), and Bede next quotes *HEVXXXIV*.15–16 (*In Lucam* IV.2264–76).

⁹⁷ See above, pp. 179–83.

⁹⁸ ‘The archangel, who fell from heaven, was adorned with nine stones. Nine orders of angels remained in heaven’ (*Epistolae Karolini Aevi* II, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epist. 4 (Berlin, 1895), no. 81). Perhaps significantly, this letter was one of four which circulated with an early ‘edition’ of Alcuin’s *Quaestiones*.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Ambrosius Autpertus, *In Apocalypsin* II.ii.24a and III.v.1b, the latter of which, an adaptation of a passage in Augustine’s *Contra Faustum* XXII.87 (ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25.1 (Vienna, 1891), 251–797), is repeated verbatim by Paschasius Radbertus in his *Expositio in Matheo* I.1598–610 (ed. B. Paulus, CCCM 56–56B (Turnhout, 1984)). ¹⁰⁰ PL 118, cols. 609–15.

Setting aside the fact that the very inclusion of material relating to the angelic creation and fall as a preface to a discussion (or metrical paraphrase) of Genesis is unusual enough to elicit comment, there are at least four correspondences in detail between Ælfric's *De initio creaturae* and *Genesis A* which should be mentioned: (1) the use of Isaiah XIV.12–15 (*CHI*.1.31–4; *Gen. A* 31b–34a); (2) the delay while God creates hell (*CHI*.1.42–4; *Gen. A* 34b–46b); (3) the use of the phrases 'eaðe mihte' and 'eaðe meahtan' in the context of the boast (*CHI*.1.32; *Gen. A* 47a–48b); and (4) the anthropomorphized, angry God (*CHI*.1.36–7; *Gen. A* 60b–63a).¹⁰¹ That both Ælfric and the *Genesis A* poet should turn to the words of Isaiah is interesting, but, for reasons outlined above, hardly striking.¹⁰² The three other details, however, are intriguing. The delay while God creates hell is a highly unusual detail, and one for which I have been able to find no other source. Equally significant is the use of the adverb 'eaðe' in the context of the boast, though, admittedly, in *Genesis A*, it does not occur within the main paraphrase of Isaiah. The presentation of God's anger contains no verbal parallels, but is again, in the context of the fall of the angels, a detail for which I have been able to find no other source.

David Johnson has recently suggested, on the basis of similar presentations of the fall of the angels, that there may be some connection between two Winchester charters and *Genesis A*, and, ultimately, between Winchester itself and the manuscript Junius 11.¹⁰³ Ælfric, born c. 955, around the beginning of the reformation of the English monastic houses, was influenced most by Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester (963–84), under whom he studied in the cathedral school.¹⁰⁴ Between 987 and 990, Ælfheah, Æthelwold's successor, sent Ælfric to the minster church at Cerne, where Ælfric became 'munuc and mæssepreost'.¹⁰⁵ Thus, it was probably

¹⁰¹ A detailed comparison of Ælfric's *De initio creaturae* (and other sermons containing material from Genesis) and *Genesis A* is beyond the scope of this article: these similarities are simply the most suggestive in passages relating to the fall of the angels. For parallels in the 'doctrine of replacement', see Haines, 'Vacancies', pp. 152–4.

¹⁰² The focus of *Genesis A* is not, as in Ælfric, upon the desire to be like God, but rather upon the martial struggle: Lucifer attempts to establish an alternative kingdom in heaven. Thus, the *Genesis A* poet omits 'ero similis altissimo' in his paraphrase of the verses. However, both *De initio creaturae* and *Genesis A* point out that Lucifer intends to sit in the northern regions of the kingdom of heaven, adding 'heofonan rices' and 'heofena rices', respectively, to their translation of 'in lateribus aquilonis'.¹⁰³ Johnson, 'The Fall of Lucifer', p. 503, n. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Ælfric calls himself an 'alumnus Adelwoldi' (*CHI*, preface, line 3); 'Wintoniensis alumnus' (*Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, c. 1, in *Wulfstan of Winchester: the Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), pp. 70–80); and notes that he learned 'in scola Æðelwoldi' (Zupitza, *Grammatik*, p. 1). Though we do not know when Ælfric entered the school at Winchester, he reports that he lived in Æthelwold's school 'multis annis' and Æthelwold died in 984 (*Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, ed. C. Jones, CSASE 24 (Cambridge, 1998), c. 1).

¹⁰⁵ Ælfric himself reports the move: 'Ic Ælfric munuc and mæssepreost, swa ðeah waccre þonne

not long after his departure from Winchester that Ælfric composed *De initio creaturae*. Although Johnson's conclusions are tentative,¹⁰⁶ the addition of these interesting parallels between Ælfric and *Genesis A* would suggest that the possibility of a Winchester connection for *Genesis A* and, by extension, Junius 11, should be taken seriously.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that scripture says very little about the angels, angelic history has an important place in medieval Christian cosmology. From the earliest interpretations of Genesis, which were often mainly attempts to supplement the terse account of creation in Gen. I–III, the history of the angels has been constantly written and rewritten. Why were these peripheral characters the subject of so much speculation? To put it briefly, angelic sin was the first sin and, therefore, the model for all sin and the source of worldly evil. In fact, the fall of the angels was often seen as the event which precipitated the creation of man and the physical world. When coupled with the creation and fall of man, we essentially have an explanation of the 'human condition'.¹⁰⁷

In the education and spiritual guidance of both clergy and laymen, therefore, the foundations of world history would obviously have been of paramount importance. 'In general', Day concludes, 'Ælfric's production of several versions of the "narratio" – as well as his use of similar material in the *Exameron* – has the aim of providing a framework for the unlettered, of placing each particular point of Christian doctrine in the relation to the pattern of the whole.'¹⁰⁸ Indeed, if this is the case, such an aim is consonant with Ælfric's

swilcum hadum gebyrige, wearð asend on Æþelredes dæge cyninges fram Ælfeage biscope, Aðelwoldes æfterengan, to sumum mynstre ðe is Cernel gehaten, þurh Æðelmæres bene ðæs þegenes, his gebyrd and goodnys sind gehwær cuþe' (*CHI*, preface, lines 44–8).

¹⁰⁶ Johnson cautions that the evidence he offers does not, on its own, 'suffice to determine when and where the manuscript was written', but affirms that his findings are 'suggestive and worthy of further consideration' ('The Fall of Lucifer', p. 503, n. 10).

¹⁰⁷ Johnson comments: 'An account of creation is not simply an exercise in theological learning; it is also implicitly an account of the human condition' ('The Fall of Lucifer', p. 516). Alcuin, for example, eloquently explains how the obscure events of creation define the struggle for life on earth, as signified by the seed of woman and the seed of the serpent in Gen. III.15: 'Semen mulieris est totum genus humanum; semen serpentis, originalis peccati primordium: quae duo semina ex praecepto diuino continuum inter se odium gerere debent, ut non faciamus quae diabolus uult, quia ille numquam uult nobis profutura' (*Int.* 76). See also Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manicheos* II.xviii.28.

¹⁰⁸ Day, 'Influence', p. 59. O'Keeffe suggests that Ælfric's various exegetical methods with regard to Genesis may be explained by the different audiences for whom he was writing: 'Ælfric's four works [*CHI.1*, *De temporibus anni*, *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* and the *Exameron*] of exposition treating Genesis vary in content according to genre (sermon or treatise) and intended audience (clerical or lay)' (O'Keeffe, 'Three English Writers', p. 72).

overall plan, to provide England with ‘a summary of Carolingian – and English – religious learning’.¹⁰⁹

As I have shown, however, Ælfric’s treatments of the fall of the angels differ significantly from those of the authorities with which he is known to have been familiar. These differences are perhaps best explained by Ælfric’s desire to emphasize the cyclical nature of Christian history,¹¹⁰ his tendency to present scripture primarily as narrative and the relatively unlearned audiences for whom he is writing. Seeing the fundamental importance of creation and finding no exactly appropriate account of angelic history elsewhere, Ælfric turned first to the authority of scripture. With such an unassailable foundation, he was able to compose accounts which could satisfy his various needs. As his career progressed, Ælfric seems to have felt the need for scriptural authority more strongly, and thus we see major differences between *De initio creaturae* and the *Exameron*. Whatever his sources, Ælfric’s accounts are unique, scripturally grounded and compelling explanations of the angelic creation and fall.

In his fullest work, *De initio creaturae*, he demonstrates how the issue of obedience and disobedience is central to Christianity,¹¹¹ while at the same time neatly connecting the first sin with the fall of man and the redemption: Lucifer falls and Adam and Eve fall; Christ defeats Lucifer and Adam and Eve are released from hell. All of Christian history is effectively condensed into one simple observation: ‘And he þonne þa manfullan deofle betæcð into ðam ecan fyre hellesusle; þa rihtwisan he læt mid him into heofonan rice, on ðam hi rixiað a on ecnysse.’¹¹² The basic tenet, then, which informs Ælfric’s treatments of the angels (and, by extension, much of his exegetical writing) may be summarized by his comment at the beginning of the *Letter to Sigeward*: ‘. . . hit ys swiðe wolic þæt ða geworhtan gesceafta þam ne beon gehirsume þe hi gesceop and geworhte’.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ P. Clemons, ‘Ælfric’, *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 176–209 at 183.

¹¹⁰ Ælfric’s view of the complementary nature of Christian history is further demonstrated in his juxtaposition of the replenishment of the angelic host with Paul’s opinion of Christ’s role: ‘þæs hælendes tocyme and his þrowung was halwendlic ægðer ge mannum ge englum; for ðan þe we geeacniað heora werod, þe se feallenda deoful gewanode; Be þam cwæð se apostol Paulus: “þæt sceoldon ealle heofenlice þing and eorðlice beon geetstaðolode on Criste” [Eph. I.10]’ (*CHI* 14.152–6).

¹¹¹ Ælfric is no doubt influenced here by the writings of Paul, who was the first to state plainly the relationship between Adam and Christ: ‘Sicut enim per inoboedientiam unius hominis peccatores constituti sunt multi, ita et per unius oboedientiam iusti constituentur multi’ (Romans V.19). See also I Cor. XV.22.

¹¹² *CHI* I.1.291–3: ‘And he will then deliver the wicked to the devil, into the eternal fire of hell torment; the righteous he will lead with him into the kingdom of heaven, in which they shall rule to all eternity.’

¹¹³ *LSig.* 27–9: ‘it is very wicked that created beings should not be obedient to the one who created and shaped them’.