The *Heliand* and Christological Orthodoxy

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The ninth-century *Heliand*, a nearly 6,000-line versification of the life of Christ, is the major surviving monument of Old Saxon literature. The theological viewpoints expressed in the work are of great importance to the study of the ninth-century Saxon mission and of the beliefs of the newly-converted Saxons themselves. In the past century, several scholars who have studied the theology of the *Heliand* have attributed to the poet various heretical or heterodox beliefs concerning Christ's nature and will, including Docetism, Monothelitism, and Monophysitism.[1] While some of this scholarship is by now outdated, the tendency to resort to suggestions of Christological heresies in order to explain the poet's more curious turns of phrase is still apparent in the most important English-language study of the *Heliand* and in its major English translation.[2] No scholar has stepped forward in recent years to critically examine claims of heresy made against the *Heliand*, but their implications for the study of the poet and his audience make it important that they be addressed.[3]

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1 For examples of such attributions see Pickering, "Christlicher Erzählstoff," 271; and Boehmer, "Das germanische Christentum," 213. Rathofer takes issue with Pickering's and Boehmer's arguments; see Rathofer, *Der Heliand: Theologischer Sinn*, 71 and 411.

2 Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 44-45; Murphy, trans., *The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel*, 13 n. 20. However, Murphy does not believe that the *Heliand* poet was a heretic, despite some perceived infelicities in the poet's word choice; see Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, ix and 41.

3 The terms "orthodoxy" and "heresy/heterodoxy" as used in this paper are to be understood from a ninth-century, Carolingian standpoint. Orthodoxy in Aachen did not, of course, differ radically from orthodoxy in Rome, but different historical circumstances and pastoral concerns in the Carolingian Empire resulted in different doctrinal emphases.

A brief introduction to the circumstances of the *Heliand*'s composition is necessary in order to provide context for a discussion of the poet and his work. Charlemagne's long and bloody campaign to subdue the Saxons was largely complete by the close of the eighth century. However, while the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae* of 782/85 forced the religion of the Franks on the Saxon populace by making pagan practices and resistance to Christianity capital offences, the Christianization of Saxony was still far from complete.[4] Continuing rebellions against Charlemagne and the new faith soon convinced Carolingian churchmen that forced baptism and mandatory church attendance were not enough to ensure the obedience and compliance of the Saxon converts. The Saxons had to be able to understand and internalize the basics of the new religion. The result was a renewed emphasis on catechesis, characterized in part by vernacular teaching and a greater sensitivity to the Saxon cultural context.[5] One example of this heightened desire for the Saxons to understand the implications of their new faith may be seen in the famous Saxon baptismal vow which explicitly instructs the respondent, in the vernacular, to renounce the Saxon gods Thunaer, Uuoden, and Saxnote.[6] The *Heliand*, which couches the basics of the Gospels in terms familiar to a Saxon audience, is usually seen as a part of this missionary project.[7]

The *Heliand* survives in two mostly complete manuscripts, conventionally referred to as C (London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. vii, s. x[2]) and M (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cgm. 25, s. ix[med]), and in four fragments dating from the mid-ninth to the late tenth century.[8] Its place of composition has been a frequent subject of scholarly debate, a useful summary of which is provided by James E. Cathey.[9] Since 1950, at least five scriptoria — Mainz, Corvey, Fulda, Werden, and Essen — have been suggested as places of origin.[10] The dating of the *Heliand* is similarly uncertain, since, besides the dating of the manuscripts themselves, the only external clue to the date of the text appears in the so-called *Praefatio*. This document, which describes a plan to translate the entire Bible "in Germanicam linguam" (into the German language), was printed by M. Flacius Illyricus in 1562 from a now lost

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4 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 243. Cathey, ed., *Hêliand: Text and Commentary*, 11-12, and Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 16-17.

5 Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 19-27.

6 Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 21; Mettke, ed., *Älteste deutsche Dichtung und Prosa*, 142-44.

7 Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, passim; Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 27-53; Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 12-15.

8 Behaghel and Taeger, eds., *Heliand und Genesis*, xviii-xxiv; Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 22-24; Schmid, ed., "Ein neues 'Heliand'-Fragment" (re-issued as "A New *Heliand* Fragment").

9 Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 16-18.

10 Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 16-18; Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 27.

exemplar and was only later interpreted as a preface to the *Heliand*.[11] The *Praefatio*, much of which is probably a later interpolation based on Bede's story of Cædmon, attributes the idea of composing vernacular versions of the Old and New Testaments to "Ludouicus piissimus Augustus"[12] (the most pious emperor Louis), who can be identified as either Louis the Pious (r. 813-840) or Louis the German (r. 843-876); the latter's death in 876 is often considered a *terminus ante quem* for the *Heliand*'s composition.[13] The *Heliand* poet's use of Hrabanus Maurus's *Commentary on Matthew*, which was completed in 822, helps to establish a *terminus post quem*.[14]

The *Praefatio*, if genuine, also gives clues to the identity of the author of the *Heliand*. It states that the man chosen for the task of versifying and translating the scriptures was a Saxon "qui apud suos non ignobilis vates habebatur" (who was considered a poet of renown among his own people) and who composed his work for the benefit of the literate and illiterate alike.[15] Unfortunately, the non-interpolated sections of the *Praefatio* do not indicate where the poet was writing, whether he was a layman or a religious, or how much formal, Latin education he had.

Nevertheless, the nature of the *Heliand* itself and its probable use as a catechetical tool make it unlikely that its author's orthodoxy was in doubt. Most likely a Saxon working sometime between 822 and 876,[16] the poet could scarcely have had first-hand experience with the heresies with which he has been associated, most of which antedated his birth by centuries and were never prominent in Western Europe. If the poet indeed held views on Christ's nature which were contrary to ninth-century Carolingian orthodoxy, he would have arrived at them on his own by mistranslation or misinterpretation of his sources,[17] most likely as a result of an insufficient knowledge of Latin or of Christian doctrine. Attempts to find heresy or heterodoxy in the *Heliand* thus seem to depend on the assumption either that the *Heliand* poet was relatively new to the faith and uncomfortable with some of its tenets, or perhaps that he was simply uneducated.[18] This is not an impossibility; after all, the Carolingian project of converting and educating

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11 Behaghel and Taeger, eds., *Heliand*, xxxiii-xxxviii and 1-2.
12 Behaghel and Taeger, eds., *Heliand*, xxxiii-xxxviii and 1.
13 Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 21.
14 Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 22.
15 Behaghel and Taeger, eds., *Heliand*, 1.
16 Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 21-22; Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 134.
17 This explanation is apparently favoured by Murphy; see Murphy, trans., *The Heliand*, 13 n. 20.
18 See, for example, Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 44-45. For a recent argument that the *Heliand* poet was, in fact, illiterate, see Haferland, "War der Dichter des 'Heliand' illiterat?" (re-issued as "Was the *Heliand* Poet Illiterate?").

the Saxons was still very much underway during the poet's lifetime. However, the poet's apparent efforts to use his talent to aid in Christianizing the Saxons[19] suggest that he was considered theologically qualified for the task. If the *Heliand* was used as a catechetical tool, it probably enjoyed at least the tacit sanction — or, if the *Praefatio* is genuine, the explicit sanction — of Frankish religious authorities.[20] In addition, if the *Praefatio*'s claims are to be trusted, the work even had the direct approval of the emperor. It seems unlikely that such approval would be given to the work of a poorly trained convert who held opinions that ran counter to Carolingian conceptions of Christological orthodoxy.

The *Heliand* poet's handling of his sources also suggests that he was not uneducated or new to the faith. From the earliest days of *Heliand* scholarship, it has been recognized that in addition to his main source text — a Latin translation of Tatian's *Diatessaron*, an early Gospel harmony — the poet drew directly on the Scriptures and on Hrabanus Maurus's *Commentary on Matthew*.[21] Forty years ago, Wolfgang Huber showed convincingly that the poet supplemented the material drawn from Hrabanus with Irish biblical exegesis.[22] Any author who was able to compile material from so many Latin sources and adeptly translate it into Old Saxon verse can hardly have been uneducated, unless one accepts Harald Haferland's controversial hypothesis that the *Heliand* was composed by an illiterate Saxon poet in collaboration with an educated monk.[23] Positing such dual authorship seems unnecessary to me, but even if this hypothesis were true, the involvement of a well-educated religious would probably have prevented any unorthodox theology which had crept in because of the Saxon poet's ignorance from being retained in the final version of the text. If, on the other hand, the poet *knowingly* held views which his peers considered heretical, it would be difficult to explain his heavy reliance on the work of Hrabanus Maurus, who championed Carolingian orthodoxy against Gottschalk of Orbais (*c.*804-866) in

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19 Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 11, 16, 28; Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*, 7-15; Murphy's arguments for the poet's sympathy for the Saxons are fascinating but do not necessarily contradict the idea of the *Heliand* as a Carolingian-sponsored catechetical text; Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 11-28.

20 Possible associations of the *Heliand* poet with major Carolingian religious figures, including Paschasius Radbertus and Hrabanus Maurus, have also been proposed; see Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 27.

21 See Windisch, *Der Heliand und seine Quellen*, passim.

22 See Huber, *Heliand und Matthäusexegese*, 22-25 and 90-102.

23 Haferland, "War der Dichter des 'Heliand' illiterat," 43, or "Was the *Heliand* Poet Illiterate," 203-204.

a dispute on predestination,[24] and whose teacher Alcuin had done the same vis-à-vis the Adoptionism of Felix of Urgel (d. 818).[25] In sum, there is little convincing evidence that the *Heliand* poet was uneducated or new to the faith, although his audience may have been. Rather, the apparent approval of the poem by the Frankish ecclesiastical establishment and its author's skill in his translation of several Latin sources suggest that the poet should be assumed to have been an educated Christian who held to the orthodoxy characteristic of his time and place, unless the theological opinions in his work provide clear evidence to the contrary.

The following examination of the *Heliand*'s theological underpinnings will focus mainly on the text's Christology as evidenced in the poet's rendition of the Incarnation, of the Temptation of Christ in the Desert, and of the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane — that is, of those parts of the Gospels where the tension between the humanity and the divinity of Christ is most apparent: if the *Heliand* poet did hold unorthodox Christological views, they would most likely appear in these passages. For comparison, I include the corresponding passages from the Latin *Diatessaron* and from its Old High German translation, since the latter provides an example of a roughly contemporary Carolingian Gospel vernacularization project which produced a text very different from the *Heliand*.[26] As this examination will show, the *Heliand* poet did not hold Christological views which were heretical from a ninth-century Carolingian standpoint. On the contrary, he went to great lengths to show both the divinity and humanity of Christ. This emphasis on the presence and operation of both a human and divine nature and will in the person of Christ reflects an orthodox Christology. In order to throw the tension between the divinity and humanity of Christ into sharper relief, the poet not only drew on the commentary traditions on the Gospels but also embellished or even altered the Gospel accounts themselves. (Because it presents some especially difficult problems, the account of the Incarnation will here be considered last.) The following case studies are meant both to show why earlier heresies should not be anachronistically applied to the *Heliand* poet and to illustrate how an agent of the Frankish Church attempted to versify the concerns and complexities of the Christological orthodoxy of his day.

24 Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 181-95. For a discussion of this dispute and its possible bearing on the Old Saxon *Genesis*, see Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 101-107.

25 Cavadini, *The Last Christology*, 71-102.

26 This strategy is borrowed from Murphy, who uses it with fruitful results; Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 41, 59, & *passim*.

The Temptation of Christ in the Desert

One of the simultaneously most difficult and most important concepts to inculcate in a people that was still learning the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine was that Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, was both fully human and fully divine in nature. The episode of Christ's temptation by the devil during his fasting in the desert lays bare the human nature of Christ, portraying him as a man who is able to hunger, suffer, and be tempted.[27] Here, then, is one of the places in the Gospels in which a new convert to Christianity could conceivably have difficulty reconciling Christ's divinity and his humanity, and thus one might expect to see traces here of a heretical Christological viewpoint. If the poet were uncomfortable with the notion of a God who voluntarily suffers, he could have easily glossed over the reality of Christ's pain in this scene. However, not only does the poet not shy away from the Gospel account, but he even expands upon the existing tension between the divine and human natures of Christ. This increased emphasis turns the passage into an instructive moment for the poet's audience, many of whom may have been struggling to understand the concept of Christ's dual nature:

> Uuas im the landes uuard
> an fastunnea   fiortig nahto,
> manno drohtin,   sô he thar mates ni antbêt;
> than langa ni gidorstun im   dernea uuihti,
> nîðhugdig fîund,   nâhor gangan,
> grôtean ina geginuuardan: uuânde that he god ênfald,
> forûtar mancunnies uuiht   mahtig uuâri,
> hêleg himiles uuard.   Sô he ina thô gehungrean lêt,
> that ina bigan bi thero menniski   môses lustean
> aftar them fiuuartig dagun,   the fîund nâhor geng,
> mirki mênscaðo: uuânda that he man ênfald
> uuâri uuissungo,   sprac im thô mid is uuordun tô,
> grôtta ina the gêrfîund: 'ef thu sîs godes sunu', quað he,
> 'behuuî ni hêtis thu than uuerðan,   ef thu giuuald haƀes,
> allaro barno bezt,   brôd af thesun stênun?
> Gehêli thînna hungar.'   Thô sprac eft the hêlago Crist:

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27   Mark 1:12-13; Matt. 4:1-10; Luke 4:1-13.

'ni mugun eldibarn', quað he,　'ênfaldes brôdes,
liudi libbien.'[28]

[The guardian of the land, the Lord of men, was fasting for forty days. During this time in which he never tasted food, the hidden beings, the ill-intentioned foe did not dare to approach him, greet him face-to-face. He [the devil] believed that he [Jesus] was solely the mighty God, the holy protector of heaven, without any trace of humanity. When he allowed himself to hunger, so that according to his human nature he began to desire food after those forty days, the foe, the dark malefactor, approached. He believed that he was certainly solely man. The enemy then greeted him, spoke to him with his words. "If you are the Son of God," said he, "why do you not command that bread be made out of these stones, if you have the power, best of all sons? Alleviate your hunger." Then the holy Christ spoke in response: "People, the children of men, cannot live on bread alone," said he.]

A comparison with the Gospel passages (as mediated by the *Diatessaron*) shows how significantly the *Heliand* poet has expanded his source:

Tunc Ihesus ductus est in deserto a spiritu, ut temptaretur a diabulo.

Et cum ieiunasset quadraginta diebus et XL noctibus, postea esuriit.

Et accedens temptator dixit ei: si filius dei es, dic ut lapides isti panes fiant. Qui respondens dixit: scriptum est: non in solo pane vivit homo.

Thô ther heilant uuas gileitet in vvuostinna fon themo geiste, thaz her vvurdi gicostot fon themo diuuale.

Inti mit thiu her thô fasteta fiorzug tago inti fiorzug nahto, after thiu hungirita inan.

Gieng thô zuo thie costari inti quad imo: oba thu gotes sun sis, quid thaz these steina zi bróte uuerden. Her antlingota thô inti quad: iz ist giscriban, thaz in themo einen bróte ni lebet thie man.

Tatian, *Diatessaron*, XV

[Then Jesus [OHG: the Saviour] was led into the desert by the spirit to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted for forty days and nights, he then hungered. And the tempter approached him and said to him, "If you

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28 *Heliand* 1052b–1069a. Quotations from the *Heliand* are taken from Behaghel and Taeger, eds., *Heliand und Genesis*; hereafter, line references are provided parenthetically in the text above. The accompanying Latin and Old High German sections of the *Diatessaron* are taken from Sievers, ed., *Tatian*. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." He said in response, "It is written: man does not live on bread alone."]

This expansion is largely inspired by Hrabanus Maurus's *Commentary on Matthew*, which has long been recognized as a significant influence on the *Heliand*:[29]

Cum tamen hunc [i.e. Christum] passibilem cerneret [i.e. diabolus], cum posse mortalia perpeti humanitus videret, omne quod de ejus divinitate suspicatus est ei fastu suae superbiae in dubium venit. Nihil quippe se nisi superbum sciens, cum hunc esse humilem conspicit, Dominum esse dubitavit, unde et ad tentationum se argumenta convertit. Sed non sicut nos, qui puri homines sumus, irruente saepe tentatione concutimur, ita Redemptoris nostri anima tentationis est necessitate turbata.[30]

[However, when the devil saw that Christ was able to suffer, when he saw that he was able to endure the mortal effects of humanity, he began to doubt all that he had suspected of his [i.e., Christ's] divinity because of the arrogance of his [i.e., the devil's] pride. For, knowing himself to be nothing if not proud, when he [the devil] saw him [Christ] to be humble, he doubted that he was the Lord, on account of which he turned himself to planning temptations. But the soul of our Redeemer was not troubled by the necessity of this temptation in the same way as are we, who, being solely human, are often attacked by temptation's assault.]

Lastly, a work of Irish biblical exegesis conventionally called the "Bibelwerk" (in German scholarship) or the "Irish Reference Bible" (in English scholarship) — extant in several early manuscripts, including two from early ninth-century Regensburg (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 14276, 14277)[31] — may also, as Huber suggests, have played a role in shaping this passage.[32] Its language closely parallels that of the *Heliand*:

Item si plus ieiunasset non hominem putasset diabolus sed purum filium dei et non temptasset eum. Item si minus ieiunasset quam moyses uel elias

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29 For early scholarship on this relationship, see Windisch, *Der Heliand und seine Quellen*. For a more detailed survey, see Huber, *Heliand und Matthäusexegese*.

30 Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Matthaeum Libri Octo*, PL 107:781A-B.

31 Bischoff assigns these manuscripts to the scriptorium of the monastery of St. Emmeram; see Bischoff, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen*, 1:194-95.

32 Huber, *Heliand und Matthäusexegese*, 91. See also Bischoff, "Wendepunkte," 223, or "Turning-Points," 97.

ieiunauit, diabolus non temptasset eum, quem purum hominem credidisset, sicut non temptauit moysen et heliam.[33]

[If he had fasted more, the devil would not have thought him to be a man but the pure Son of God and would not have tempted him. Likewise, if he had fasted less than Moses or Elijah fasted, the devil would not have tempted him, whom he would have believed to be purely human, just as he did not tempt Moses and Elijah.]

The dependence of the *Heliand* author on the commentary tradition is obvious. However, it should be noted that he gives more insight into the thoughts of Satan and his "dernea uuihti" (hidden beings) than does Hrabanus or the "Reference Bible," and in the process he provides a vivid explanation of the Christology he was trying to instill in his audience. Here, Satan at first hesitates to approach Christ because he believes him to be solely God ("god ênfald"), a serious error in the assessment of the nature of Christ. However, upon seeing Christ hunger according to his human nature ("bi thero menniski"), Satan makes the opposite Christological error and deems Christ solely human ("man ênfald"). In contrast to the "Reference Bible," which uses a past contrary-to-fact construction, in the *Heliand* these errors in judgement on the part of Satan are real, not hypothetical. In giving the reader or listener a window into Satan's thought process, the author of the *Heliand* places heretical opinions on Christ's nature into the mind of the evil one himself, which acts to reinforce the dangerous consequences of holding such beliefs. Finally, in a clever rhetorical flourish, the *Heliand* poet connects Satan's erroneous assumptions that Christ is either "god ênfald" or "man ênfald" with Christ's rebuttal of Satan's first temptation, that man does not live "ênfaldes brôdes" (by bread alone). This connection is, as far as I am aware, not to be found in the commentaries and must be attributed to the poet himself. The *Heliand* poet, then, not only adopts various elements of the commentary traditions on the temptation of Christ but expands upon them in order to make the idea of Christ's dual nature even clearer.

Arianism, a heresy which denied Christ's full divinity, was a potent force during much of the early history of Western Christianity, and thus one must wonder if the *Heliand* poet's decision to adapt the temptation scene as a lesson on the dual nature of Christ was a reaction to this position. Although it is doubtful that Arianism was

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33 "Irish Reference Bible," München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 14277, f. 233v; qtd. in Huber, *Heliand und Matthäusexegese*, 139.

ever wide-spread among the Saxons,[34] it played a significant role in the Christianization of other Germanic tribes, many of whom — including the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Gepids, Burgundians, and Lombards — had converted to Arianism rather than Catholicism. The Lombard conversion to Arianism seems to have occurred especially late, and may have begun as late as the second half of the sixth century.[35] While Steven C. Fanning has cast doubt on the significance of Arianism as a movement among the Lombard populace, at least two seventh-century Lombard kings — Arioald (r. 624-636) and the great legislator Rothari (r. 636-652) — are known to have been Arian,[36] and Paulus Diaconus states that during Arioald's reign "pene per omnes civitates regni eius duo episcopi erant, unus catholicus et alter Arrianus"[37] (in nearly all the cities of his realm there were two bishops, one Catholic and the other Arian), though this was perhaps an exaggeration.

The past heresies of the Lombards may have held propaganda value for their Frankish enemies, who unlike the Lombards had a long history of Catholicism. It should also be noted that there had been some cultural contact between the Saxons and the Lombards, who seem to have contracted an alliance in the late sixth century.[38] If, as the *Praefatio* states, the patron of the *Heliand* was a Frankish king interested in evangelizing the Saxons, one could see a polemical aspect in the poet's expansion: a refutation of the past heresy of the Saxons' former allies and the Franks' recent political enemies.

The Agony in the Garden

The *Heliand*'s treatment of the Agony in the Garden brings up another issue related to the question of the nature of Christ, namely, that of Christ's will.[39] There was significant controversy over this question in the East in the seventh century, and the orthodox position finally resulting from the Third Council of Constantinople in 680 was that Christ, in accord with his two natures, also possessed two wills — one human,

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34 Siegmund and Ausenda, "Current Issues," 349-50.
35 Fanning, "Lombard Arianism," 251-58.
36 Fanning, "Lombard Arianism," 254-56.
37 Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Waitz, IV.42. Translation from Paul the Deacon, *The History of the Lombards,* trans. Foulke, 194 n. 3.
38 Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Waitz, II.6; III.5-7.
39 Matt. 26:36-45; Luke 22:39-46.

the other divine.[40] This negated the Monothelite position, which held that although Christ had both natures, he possessed only a divine will. While primarily an Eastern phenomenon, this heresy worried some prelates in the West (though it never seems to have gained a following there), and it was explicitly condemned by the Synod of Hatfield in 680.[41] Bede relates this event and its circumstances in Book IV of his *Ecclesiastical History*,[42] and it is possible that memories of this controversy — or of Bede's description of it — were at the back of the *Heliand* poet's mind when he was describing the Agony in the Garden, an episode at the centre of the debate over Christ's will.[43]

In the whole of the Gospels, the scene which presents the seemingly greatest conflict between the human and divine wills of Christ occurs in the Garden of Gethsemane during the night before the Crucifixion, and one would expect to see a departure from Christological orthodoxy on the part of the *Heliand* poet here if his understanding of the nature of Christ were indeed unconventional. However, the poet does not shy away from a graphic depiction of Christ's internal struggle, clearly illustrating that Christ's human will, while ultimately subordinate to the divine will, still exerts an influence. In the course of this portrayal, the poet takes liberties in adapting the commentary tradition and even the Gospels themselves:

> Thuo hiet sia thie godes suno
> an berge uppan te bedu hnîgan,
> hiet sia god gruotian, gerno biddian,

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40 Chapman, "Monothelitism and Monothelites."

41 Vollrath, *Die Synoden Englands bis 1066*, 94-95.

42 Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, iv.18 (p. 388).

43 Le Guillou summarizes: "Ce qui est au centre de la controverse monothélite, ce n'est pas d'abord une discussion sur les natures et leurs propriétés respectives, mais bien plutôt l'interprétation d'un événement majeur de la vie du Christ: l'Agonie. C'est là, dans la prière de Jésus à Gethsémani, que sa volonté humaine est considérée concrètement, dans un acte libre d'une portée décisive pour notre salut. Ainsi, le grand débat christologique du VIIᵉ siècle a fondamentalement pour objet la liberté humaine de Jésus, manifestée dans son histoire" (That which lay at the centre of the Monothelite controversy was not primarily a discussion on the natures [of Christ] and their respective properties, but rather the interpretation of a major event in Christ's life: the Agony. It is here, in the prayer of Jesus at Gethsemane, that his human will is considered in concrete terms, in a free act with decisive consequences for our salvation. Thus, the great Christological debate of the seventh century is fundamentally concerned with the human freedom of Jesus, made manifest in the story of his life); Le Guillou, Preface, 5.

that he im thero costondero   craft farstôdi,
uurêðaro uuilleon,   that im the uuiðersaco,
ni mahti the mênscaðo   môd gituîflean.
[*Christ withdraws to pray:*]
          [. . .]   uuas imu is hugi drôbi,
bi theru menniski   môd gihrôrid,
is flêsk uuas an forhtun: fellun imo trahni,
drôp is diurlîc suêt,   al sô drôr kumid
uuallan fan uundun.   Uuas an geuuine thô
an themu godes barne   the gêst endi the lîchamo:
ôðar uuas fûsid   an forðuuegos,
the gêst an godes rîki,   ôðar giâmar stôd,
lîchamo Cristes: ni uuelde thit lioht ageƀen,
ac drôƀde for themu dôðe.   Simla he hreop te drohtine forð
thiu mêr aftar thiu   mahtigna grôtte,
hôhan himilfader,   hêlagna god,
uualdand mid is uuordun: 'ef nu uuerðen ni mag', quað he,
'mankunni generid,   ne sî that ik mînan geƀe
lioƀan lîchamon   [. . .]
[*Christ returns to find the disciples asleep:*]
'huî uuilliad gi sô slâpen?' quað he;   'ni mugun samad mid mi
uuacon êne tîd?   Thiu uurd is at handun,
that it sô gigangen scal,   sô it god fader
gimarcode mahtig.   Mi nis an mînumu môde tueho:
mîn gêst is garu   an godes uuillean,
fûs te faranne: mîn flêsk is an sorgun,
letid mik mîn lîchamo: lêð is imu suîðo
uuîti te tholonne.   Ik thoh uuillean scal
mînes fader gefrummien.'
          (*Heliand* 4738b-4743; 4748b-4762a; 4777a-4785a)

[Then the Son of God ordered them to bend down to pray on the mountain, ordered that they address and earnestly entreat God that he might protect them from the power of tempters, the will of evil ones, and that the adversary might not cause their minds to doubt. [*Christ withdraws to pray:*] His mind was troubled, his disposition stirred according to his human nature. His flesh was afraid. His tears fell. His precious sweat dripped just as blood comes welling from wounds. The spirit and the body were in conflict

then within the Son of God. One was eager to go forth, the spirit into God's kingdom; the other stood saddened, the body of Christ. It did not wish to give up this life, and was disturbed on account of [his] death. The ruler continually called forth to the Lord all the more with his words, addressed the mighty one, the high heavenly Father, holy God. "If it cannot now occur," said he, "that mankind should be saved unless I give up my dear body [...]." [*Christ returns to find the disciples asleep:*] "Why must you sleep like this?" said he. "Can you not stay awake one hour together with me? The fate is now at hand, such that it shall now come to pass as mighty God, the Father, appointed it. There is no doubt in my heart. My soul is eager to go forth according to the will of God; my flesh is in sorrow, my body holds me back. It is very reluctant to suffer pains. I nevertheless shall do my Father's will."]

Again, a comparison of the Latin and Old High German texts of the *Diatessaron* shows the alterations made by the *Heliand* poet to his source:

Et cum pervenisset ad locum, dixit discipulis suis: sedete hic et orate, ne intretis in temptationem, donec vadam illuc et orem. [...]

Tunc ait illis: tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem: sustinete hic et vigilate mecum. [*Christ withdraws to pray:*]

Pater, si possibile est, [...] transfer calicem hunc a me! [...]
[*Christ returns to find the disciples asleep:*]

Et ait eis: quid dormitis? sic non potuistis una hora vigilare mecum?

Vigilate et orate, ut non intretis in temptationem.

Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma.

Tatian, *Diatessaron*, CLX

Mit diu her quam zi theru steti, tho quad her zi sinen iungiron: sizzet hier inti betot, thaz ir ni get in costunga, unz ih thara faru inti beton. [...]

Tho quad her in: gitruobit ist min sela io unzin tod: beitot hier inti uuahhet mit mir. [*Christ withdraws to pray:*]

Fater, ob iz odi ist, [...] erfuori thesan kelih fon mir! [...]
[*Christ returns to find the disciples asleep:*]

Inti quad in: ziu slafet ir? so ni mohtut ir eina zit uuahhen mit mir?

Uuahhet inti betot, thaz ir in ni get in costunga.

Ther geist giuuesso funs ist, thaz fleisc ist abur ummahtic.

[And when he came to the place, he said to his disciples, "Sit here and pray that you may not enter into temptation, while I go further and pray." [...] Then he said to them, "My soul is saddened unto death. Stay here and watch with me." [*Christ withdraws to pray:*] "Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me!" [*Christ returns to find the disciples asleep:*] And he said to them,

"Why do you sleep? Could you not watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."]

Some of the expansion provided by the *Heliand* poet again seems to derive from Hrabanus Maurus's commentary, especially the interpretation of Christ's phrase "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" as a reference to Christ's own inner conflict rather than as a critique of the sleeping disciples:

> *Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma*: [. . .] Facit hic locus et adversum Eutychianos, qui dicunt unam in mediatore Dei et hominum, Domino et Salvatore nostro operationem, unam fuisse voluntatem. Cum enim dicit, *Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma*, duas voluntates ostendit, humanam videlicet, quae est carnis, et divinam, quae est deitatis [. . .] Aliter, ad eos hic sermo conversus est, qui se spoponderant numquam negaturos: illorum enim spiritus promptus sed caro infirma erat, quia nondum induti erant virtute ex alto.[44]

> ["The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak:" [. . .] This saying opposes the Eutychians, who say that there was one operation and one will in our Lord and Saviour, the Mediator of God and men. For when he says, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," he shows two wills, *viz.* a human will, which is of the flesh, and a divine will, which is of the Godhead. [. . .] Alternatively, this speech is directed to those who promised that they would never deny him, for their spirit was willing but their flesh was weak, since they were not yet endowed with strength from on high.]

Expanding upon this, the *Heliand* poet has Christ explicitly state that his spirit ("gêst") and his flesh ("flêsk") are pulling him in opposite directions. The poet's exaggeration of the commentary tradition, along with the phrase "Mi nis an mînumu môde tueho" (There is no doubt in my heart), at first seems to call the orthodoxy of the *Heliand* poet into question. If there is no doubt in Christ's mind despite the frailty of his human nature, he would not seem to possess a human will but only a divine one which is unmoved by fear. This would be a manifestation of a Monothelite Christology. This charge, however, has been convincingly countered by Johannes Rathofer, who, in discussing the scene of the Agony in the Garden, argues that the human will of Christ is in fact here represented by the word "flêsk," an exegetical tradition that reaches as

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44 Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Matthaeum Libri Octo*, PL 107:1114B-1114D.

far back as Augustine.[45] The "flêsk" of Christ in the *Heliand*, then, includes his human will, while words such as "gêst" and "môd" (heart, mind) represent his divine will. Alternatively, one might understand Christ's assertion that there was no doubt in his "môde" to indicate the ultimate submission of his human will to his divine will despite his obvious anxiety concerning his imminent death.

The *Heliand* poet, in fact, goes further than Hrabanus in his view of Christ's human will, most notably in his interpretation of Christ's plea to the Father, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." The implications of this passage are neatly shrugged off by Hrabanus, who says that Christ uttered these words in order to show the humility of his mind by the comportment of his flesh ("ut humilitatem mentis habitu carnis ostendat"), and that he was not moved by fear of suffering but by compassion ("non timore patiendi, sed misericordia") for those who were about to kill him.[46] Such downplaying of Christ's humanity may owe something to the Carolingian tendency to see the Crucifixion and the events leading up to it as Christ's triumphant conquest of sin and death rather than as the ultimate sacrifice. In such circumstances, Celia Chazelle observes, "the remembrance of his [Christ's] mortal humanity is typically so imbued with allusions to the divinity that it is impossible to forget this is God."[47]

The *Heliand* poet, on the other hand, specifically says that the human nature of Christ was afraid ("flêsk uuas an forhtun"), that his flesh did not want to give up this life ("ni uuelde thit lioht ageƀen"). This attribution of a volition to the "flêsk" of Christ further supports Rathofer's argument that "flêsk" must be taken to mean Christ's human will, not just his human nature. Christ himself even refers to his body as "lioƀan lîchamon" (dear body). This is hardly the kind of detachment that Hrabanus understands in this scene. Nevertheless, the *Heliand* poet's position fully conforms with ninth-century Carolingian Christological concerns.

In attributing volition to the "flesh" of Christ, the *Heliand* poet may have been influenced by the writings of earlier Carolingian authors. Around the year 800, Alcuin of York and Paulinus of Aquileia, among others, were concerned with stamping out Adoptionism, which had already existed in Spain for some time but had only recently sprung up in Carolingian territory through the agency of Felix, the bishop of the newly annexed city of Urgel.[48] The Carolingian Church interpreted Spanish Adoptionism as

45   Rathofer, *Der Heliand: Theologischer Sinn*, 71-75.
46   Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Matthaeum Libri Octo*, PL 107:1112D-1113A.
47   Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 23.
48   Heil, "Adoptianismus."

teaching that Christ was the adoptive rather than the true Son of God (though this was probably a misinterpretation of this doctrine, which is based on a heightened emphasis on the self-emptying of the second person of the Trinity).[49] To Alcuin and his peers, such a teaching was an obvious affront to Christ's divinity, as it seemed either to resurrect Arianism, by making the Son inferior to the Father, or to represent a form of Nestorianism, which was interpreted as splitting Christ into two persons.[50] At the same time, Adoptionism was considered an attempt to diminish the sufferings Christ endured in his human form. As Chazelle succinctly notes,

> unless Christ possesses human nature in its entirety, body and soul, he cannot have known the entire scope of human pain and frailty. Without the soul, the flesh cannot hunger, thirst, and feel the pains of the passion, while without the flesh the soul cannot be hungry, thirsty, or crucified, fastened to the cross at the hands and feet.[51]

Furthermore, for Alcuin and Paulinus, if Christ, in his human nature, was not the true Son of God, his suffering and death would not have been entirely voluntary, nor could they have been redemptive.[52]

In providing graphic descriptions of Christ's suffering in the Agony in the Garden scene, and in clearly depicting the presence and final alignment of both his human and his divine will in his resolve to suffer and die, the *Heliand* poet may well have been influenced by the anti-Adoptionist concerns of his surroundings. By the time of the poem's composition, this Christological controversy had probably ceased to be a significant threat. However, the poet would almost certainly have known of Adoptionism, or at least Alcuin's and Paulinus's interpretation of it, and the concerns of older Carolingian theologians (some of whom may have been his teachers) may have influenced his decision to emphasize Christ's suffering as a free act, assented to by both his divine will and, with some reluctance, his human one.

This emphasis on the voluntary nature of Christ's suffering was emphasized by Rathofer, who saw in the *Heliand* "die Nachwirkungen einer antiadoptianistischen Christologie" (the after-effects of an anti-Adoptionist Christology).[53] According to Rathofer, the *Heliand* poet sets forth a "voluntaristisches Christusbild" (a depiction

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49 Cavadini, *The Last Christology*, 1, 71-102, 107-27; Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 55-74.

50 Cavadini, *The Last Christology*, 74 & *passim*; Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 55-56.

51 Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 61.

52 Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 63.

53 Gantert, *Akkommodation und eingeschriebener Kommentar*, 195.

of Christ as voluntary agent), in which Christ's human will is obedient to and in accord with the divine and in which it is evident that Christ is the true — not the adoptive — Son of God in both his humanity and his divinity.[54]

Another embellishment introduced by the *Heliand* poet in this scene may effect a significant change to the biblical narrative. In the Gospels, Christ clearly says to the disciples, "pray in order that *you* may not enter into temptation" ("ne intretis in temptationem" / "thaz ir ni get in costunga").[55] However, the *Heliand* is more ambiguous and could be read as Christ asking the disciples to pray that *he* might be able to withstand the devil:

> hiet sia god gruotian,   gerno biddian,
> that he im thero costondero   craft farstôdi,
> uurêðaro uuilleon,   that im the uuiðersaco,
> ni mahti the mênscaðo   môd gituîflean.
> (*Heliand* 4780a-4783b)

> [that they address and earnestly entreat God that he [God the Father] might protect them from the power of tempters (that he [Christ] might withstand the power of tempters), the will of evil ones, and that the adversary might not cause their minds (his mind) to doubt.]

It is unlikely that this change is a misunderstanding of the Gospel, since the poet shows by his comprehension of the *Diatessaron* and the commentaries that he possessed a firm grasp of Latin. It is similarly unlikely to result from a scribal error, since both in the subject and the verb of the subordinate clause ("he . . . farstôdi") are clearly third-person singular, in both C and M. However, it must be admitted that this is only a conjectural interpretation, since the subject of the clause ("he") remains ambiguous, and "im" can be either singular or plural.[56] A safer approach would be to interpret "he" as a reference to God the Father, in which case the disciples are simply asked to pray for God's protection from temptation.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the *Heliand* poet has re-worked the Gospel passage in order to place heavy emphasis on the human will and frailty of Christ despite his ultimate resolve to suffer and die, and although the poet's method of retelling

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54   Rathofer, *Der Heliand: Theologischer Sinn*, 152 n. 94, 160-61, 399-400, 405-410. The phrase "voluntaristisches Christusbild" is borrowed from Gantert's summary of Rathofer's argument; Gantert, *Akkommodation und eingeschriebener Kommentar*, 195, paraphrasing Rathofer, *Der Heliand*, 129-69, esp. 157.

55   Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40, 46.

56   I am indebted to Robert Getz for reminding me of the latter ambiguity.

the Gospel may be considered unorthodox, the message he intends to convey is surely not.

The Incarnation

Perhaps the Christologically most significant moment in the Gospels is the Incarnation of Christ, when, in orthodox terms, the second person of the Trinity became incarnate in the womb of Mary.[57] The means by which this is accomplished is described in the Gospels by God's angel during the episode of the Annunciation:

Et respondens angelus dixit ei: spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus altissimi obumbrabit tibi.

Tatian, *Diatessaron*, III

Antlingota tho ther engil, quad iru: thie heilago geist quimit ubar thih, inti thes ho[h]isten megin biscatuit thih.

[And the angel said to her [Mary] in response, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."]

The orthodox understanding of this event as formulated in the Nicene Creed is that Jesus Christ, the Son (that is, the second person of the Trinity), "incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto, ex Maria virgine, et homo factus est" (became incarnate by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary, and became man). It is thus clear that, although the power of the Holy Spirit is involved in his conception, it is the Son alone who becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ.

The *Heliand* passage which is most difficult to reconcile with orthodox Christology occurs precisely in the description of the Incarnation, where it is said that "Uuarđ the hêlago gêst / that barn an ira bôsma" (291b-292a). This seems like a straightforward claim that the "Holy Spirit became the child in her [Mary's] womb" — a conflation of the second and third persons of the Trinity and a view completely at odds with medieval orthodoxy. Taken in conjunction with Gabriel's announcement that "an thi scal hêlag gêst fon heƀanuuange / cuman thurh craft godes" (275a-276a; the Holy Spirit shall come upon you from the fields of heaven through God's power), in

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57 Luke 26:35. This is an event perhaps more associated with Trinitarian doctrine than Christology, since it involves the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. However, Christ's nature is also at stake in the Incarnation, and this passage in the *Heliand* has been used as evidence for claiming a Docetist bias in the poem; see Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 44; Murphy, trans., *The Heliand*, 13 n. 20.

which "hêlag gêst" must refer to the third person of the Trinity, the poet's statement seems inexplicable except as a heretical account of Christ's conception. Ronald Murphy makes much of this passage, calling it "a shocking turn of phrase"; he believes that such a "blunder" might have originated in an "anti-Arian, docetist bias," and attempts to explain the possible rationale for such an alteration: "If Christ [. . .] is entirely the product of the Holy Spirit and not at all beholden to the workings of time and fate, then He is shown to be above the highest Germanic divinities. This is a very docetist position."[58] Alternatively, Murphy hypothesizes, the cause of the mistake may have been a "defective copy of the Nicean creed" or the author's own misunderstanding of the Creed or of the Annunciation in Luke.[59] However, I believe that none of these explanations holds true, and that the confusing nature of this passage may be attributed to the ambiguity of the Old Saxon language rather than to an error on the *Heliand* poet's part.

The claim that the *Heliand* tends towards Docetism — which denies the full corporeality of Christ and claims that he only *appeared* human[60] — carries a heavy burden of proof. The poet's emphasis on the humanity and corporeality of Christ in scenes like that of the Agony in the Garden would seem irreconcilable with the Docetist position. Rathofer also argues against this supposed Docetism, characteristically focusing on the scene of the Transfiguration of Christ,[61] where Christ foretells his suffering and death (3166b-3168a). While Rathofer's numerological interpretation of the *Heliand* and its Transfiguration scene is problematic, the following observation can be accepted: "da die Weissagungen nicht nur die Fähigkeit Jesu zu Leiden und Tod dokumentieren, sondern die tatsächliche Verwirklichung und Erfüllung der Passion an ihm verkünden, ist jeder Flucht in einen Doketismus und Monophysitismus von vornherein der Weg abgeschnitten" (since these prophecies [*viz.* of Christ's Passion as expressed in the Transfiguration scene] not only demonstrate the ability of Jesus to suffer and die but also herald the actual realization and fulfilment of the Passion in him, any escape into Docetism or Monophysitism is cut off from the outset).[62]

Murphy's supposition of a defective copy of the Nicene Creed as the *Heliand* poet's source is also difficult to accept. It is, of course, possible that somewhere in

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58 Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 44; Murphy, trans., *The Heliand*, 13 n. 20.
59 Murphy, *The Saxon Savior*, 44-45; Murphy, trans., *The Heliand*, 13 n. 20.
60 Arendzen, "Docetae."
61 Rathofer, *Der Heliand: Theologischer Sinn*, 411-15.
62 Rathofer, *Der Heliand: Theologischer Sinn*, 415.

ninth-century Francia or Germany there was a copy of the Nicene Creed that mistakenly read "et incarnatus est Spiritus Sanctus" (and the Holy Spirit became incarnate) instead of "et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto" (and he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit). However, the *Heliand* poet's apparent level of education would seem to make him immune from such a coincidence, as well as from misinterpreting a correct copy of the Creed. If the poet was intimately familiar with the Gospel narrative and the commentary traditions on the Gospels, and could expound upon them at length in Old Saxon verse, he surely knew the Creed by heart.

With the possibilities of a Docetist bias and of an imperfect knowledge of the Creed excluded, how should one take the assertion that "Uuarđ the hêlago gêst / that barn an ira bôsma"? The plurality of meanings of the word *gêst* in Old Saxon provides a clue. Martin Fuß, in a recent study of the religious language of Old Saxon and Old High German, has proposed that the word *gêst* can, in addition to its normal meaning of "spirit," be construed "als Person oder Handelnder" (as a person or agent), and he asserts that "Als Besonderheit zeigt der Heliand 'eine Verwendung in einem merkwürdig personalen Sinne' in Anlehnung an den Gebrauch in der ags. Dichtung, wobei *gést* für 'Person (Christi)' steht" (the *Heliand* is peculiar in its 'use [of this term] in a curious personal sense,' modelled on its use in Anglo-Saxon poetry, with 'gêst' referring to the 'person of Christ').[63]

The *Dictionary of Old English* entry for *gāst, gǣst* lends support to Fuß's argument. An especially relevant definition is 4: "the spirit of God / Christ / (eternal) life."[64] While Old English "halig gast" usually refers to the Holy Spirit, it can also carry the meaning of "a saintly soul" (11.a.) or a "heavenly spirit" (12.a.). All these senses are common in both Old English prose and poetry, as can be seen from the following examples cited in the *DOE*:

> **4:** Ælfric's Homily for Wednesday in Easter Week: "Witodlice se ðe cristes gast on him næfð, nis se his."[65] [Truly, he who does not have the spirit of Christ in him does not belong to him.]
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> **11.a.:** *Andreas* 999b-1000: "Duru sona onarn þurh handhrine haliges gastes."[66] [The door soon sprung open through the touch of that saintly soul [i.e., St. Andrew].]

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63 Fuß, *Die religiöse Lexik*, 111, citing Lutze, "Die germanischen Übersetzungen," 119.

64 *Dictionary of Old English: A to G Online.*

65 Ælfric of Eynsham, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, ed. Godden, 167 line 206.

66 Krapp, ed., *The Vercelli Book*, 30.

12.a.: *Daniel* 523-525: "Þa of slæpe onwoc, swefn wæs æt ende, eorðlic æðel-
ing, him þæs egesa stod, gryre fram ðam gaste ðe þyder god sende."[67]
[Then the earthly prince awoke from sleep; the dream was at an end.
He was afflicted by terror, by fear from the spirit that God had sent to
him there.]

12.a.: Anonymous Homily for Wednesday in Rogationtide: "Æfre þær is
hæl buton yfele and æfre þær is englene sang and haligra gasta dream."[68]
[There [in heaven] is always prosperity without evil, and there is the
singing of angels and the rejoicing of holy spirits.]

If the range of meanings of Old Saxon *gêst* was as broad as Old English *gāst/gæst*, it
is not surprising that the *Heliand* poet occasionally uses the word to refer to a per-
son of the Trinity other than the Holy Spirit.

The *Heliand* poet's use of the word "gêst" to describe the soul or life-giving force
is also relevant to this discussion. For example, when Christ commands Lazarus to
come forth from the tomb, the poet comments, "Thô uuarð the gêst kumen / an
thene lîchamon" (4098b-4099a; then the spirit returned into the body). The "gêst" here
is clearly the force which gives life to Lazarus's body. The same phrasing is later used
to describe Christ's own resurrection:

> Thuo ni uuas lang te thiu,
> that thar uuarð thie gêst cuman   be godes crafte,
> hâlag âðom   undar thena hardon stên
> an thena lîchamon.
>
> (*Heliand* 5769b-5772a)

[It was not long until the spirit, the holy breath came through God's power
under the hard stone into the body.]

In this case, the synonym "hâlag âðom" (holy breath) makes the meaning of "gêst"
obvious. The same synonymy is used when Christ dies on the cross, where he com-
mends to the Father his "gêst [. . .] hêlagon âðom" (5655a-5657b). The poet, thus, uses
the same word to describe the key animative principle in Jesus's conception, death,
and resurrection. In the latter two events, there is no suggestion that this "gêst" is the
Holy Spirit.

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67 Krapp, ed., *The Junius Manuscript*, 126.
68 Bazire and Cross, eds., *Eleven Old English Rogationtide Homilies*, p. 64 line 93.

Finally, other instances of the word pair "hêlag gêst" in the *Heliand* show that this phrase has a wider semantic range in Old Saxon than might be expected based on its modern English or German cognates. The *Heliand*, according to Fuß, contains three examples of "hêlag gêst" being used "als Bezeichnung für Christus" (as a designation for Christ).[69] The first occurs in the description of the Incarnation (291b). Another is a mention of Christ's birth as a reference point in a brief discussion of the six ages of the world; this event is hailed as "Cristas giburd, / hêlandero bestan, hêlagas gêstes" (49b-50b; the birth of Christ, the best of saviours, the holy "gêst"). The third instance, a description of Christ's gestation in Mary's womb, points out that Mary "sô sûƀro drôg / al te huldi godes hêlagna gêst, / gôdlîcan gumon" (334b-336a; out of devotion to God virtuously bore the holy "gêst," the divine man). In the latter two instances, the *Heliand* poet employs "hêlag gêst" as an element in a poetic *variatio*, and in both cases the other terms in the series ("Cristas [. . .] hêlandero bestan," "gôdlîcan gumon") clearly indicate that it is the second person of the Trinity who is being described. Fuß's assertion that here "the hêlago gêst" should be understood as the person or soul of Christ therefore seems quite correct. The lines "Uuarđ the hêlago gêst / that barn an ira bôsma" (291b-292a) should be translated as "The holy soul [i.e., the Son, the second person of the Trinity] became the child in her womb."[70]

The main obstacle to understanding the *Heliand* poet's description of the Incarnation as conforming with Carolingian Christological orthodoxy is therefore the Old Saxon poetic idiom. The conservative vocabulary of this specialized language was not able to translate the finer points of Christian doctrine with the same precision as, for example, late Old English prose. The conventions of his medium, thus, constrained — or, to take a more positive attitude, allowed — the *Heliand* poet to use the phrase "hêlag gêst" in more than one sense. He must have been confident that his audience was sufficiently familiar with the various possible meanings of the phrase

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69 Fuß, *Die religiöse Lexik*, 11.

70 Alternatively, the poet's strange use of "hêlag gêst" to refer to Christ may depend on "gêst" being understood as an orthographical variant of *gast* (guest, visitor). This variant occurs at least once in the *Heliand* ("gestseli" = *gastseli* [guest-hall], 711; see also dat. pl. "gestiun" [for the guests] at 2021 and nom. pl. "gesti" [the guests] at 2060), and the reverse process can be seen in the Saxon baptismal vow (twice "hâlogan gâst" for "Holy Spirit"; see Mettke, *Älteste deutsche Dichtung und Prosa*, 144). The idea of Christ as a "holy visitor [i.e., from heaven]" fits well with the context, and wordplay on the Old English cognates of *gast* and *gêst* occurs frequently in Anglo-Saxon poetry (*Dictionary of Old English*, s.v. *gāst*, *gǣst*). However, in the absence of more convincing evidence, it is safer to take *gêst* at face value as meaning "spirit" or "soul."

that they would understand the intended sense guided by the context. A roughly analogous case might be seen in the early Old High German *Wessobrunner Gebet*, which refers to God at the creation of the world as "almahtico cot / manno miltisto" (7b-8a; almighty God, the most merciful of men).[71] The word "man" here cannot denote a physical being. The world has not yet been created, so there are no men; besides, the referent of "manno miltisto" is presumably God the Father, who always remained pure spirit and never became man. Instead, the phrase must be understood as a stock poetic description of a good and benign ruler. In Old English poetry, for example, both Beowulf and Moses are called "manna mildost."[72] The readers or listeners of the *Wessobrunner Gebet*, who were familiar with the term "manno miltisto," must have recognized that a slightly different interpretation of it was demanded by the context. The *Heliand* poet and his audience should be credited with the same awareness.

Conclusions

As these examples show, the scholarly tendency to see traces of heresy or heterodoxy in the *Heliand* results not from any doctrinal misunderstandings on the part of the poet, but rather from his unique approach to versifying the orthodoxy of his day. In fact, the poet made impressive attempts to reflect Carolingian Christological teachings despite a medium which was not ideally suited to the task of theological argument. The poet's expansion of his sources often serves to instruct his audience in the proper understanding of certain Christological points which remain ambiguous in the Gospels themselves. Furthermore, although there is no evidence that either the chronologically remote spectre of Germanic Arianism or the more recent problem of Spanish Adoptionism posed any significant threat in mid-ninth-century Saxony, both of these heresies loomed large in the minds of Carolingian churchmen, and any familiarity which the poet may have had with such disputes would have given him a good idea of the possible stumbling blocks on the path to an orthodox understanding of Christ's nature.

Nevertheless, despite Rathofer's arguments that the *Heliand* is concerned with refuting heresies like Spanish Adoptionism, such a high level of sensitivity to current theological concerns may seem unlikely in a work whose probable purpose was to

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71 Braune and Helm, eds., *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, 83.

72 *Beowulf*, "manna mildust," 3181, and *Exodus*, "manna mildost," 550. See Wright, "Moses, *Manna Mildost*," 440-43.

familiarize lay or uneducated Saxons with the basics of Christianity. However, that such theological nuance is possible in a work like the *Heliand* is demonstrated by the other Saxon biblical epic, *Genesis*. This work, which now survives in fragments as the Old English *Genesis B* and the Old Saxon Vatican *Genesis*, was probably composed by someone familiar with the *Heliand*.[73] Alger N. Doane has made a convincing argument that the *Genesis* poet's preoccupation with matters of will was a result of the current theological controversy centred on Gottschalk of Orbais. This monk taught a strict form of Augustinian predestination that completely denied the ability of human free will to accomplish good. Gottschalk's version of "praedestinatio gemina" (double predestination, that is, predestination of some to salvation through divine grace and of others to damnation through lack of that grace) was perceived as a threat by the Frankish Church and condemned by Hrabanus Maurus, among others.[74] According to Doane, the *Genesis* poet's conception of free will can be understood as a compromise position between Gottschalk's rigourist Augustinianism and its opposite, Pelagianism.[75] If the *Genesis* poet was thus influenced by the Carolingian theological concerns of his day, it is not unreasonable to assume that the *Heliand* poet was, too.

While further comparison of the *Heliand* with the writings of Frankish churchmen, especially Hrabanus Maurus, might help shed more light on the date, place, and circumstances of the poem's composition, it appears that the author of the *Heliand* was firmly committed to presenting Christological positions in line with Carolingian orthodoxy; indeed, his ability to make these doctrines more easily comprehensible by seamlessly integrating ideas from exegetical works and from his own imagination into the biblical narrative was one of his great strengths as a poet and a teacher.[76]

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73 Behaghel and Taeger, eds., *Heliand*, xxxiii; Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, 48 and 176.

74 Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 165-208; Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, 102-107.

75 Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, 106-107.

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