

THE ENGLISH VERSIONS.

CHAPTER I.

ANGLO-SAXON VERSIONS.

THE statement, very frequently repeated, that the Anglo-Saxons were provided with a complete vernacular translation of the Bible, if not purely fictitious, is certainly unhistorical, for thus far no such volume, although eagerly sought for, has been discovered, and it is very doubtful whether any will be discovered, because the existence of an entire Anglo-Saxon version is highly improbable. This applies only to an *entire* version—*i. e.*, a translation of the whole Bible into Anglo-Saxon; it does not apply to portions of the Word of God which have been translated at different times and by different men. The Bible among the Anglo-Saxons was for all practical purposes a Latin book; it was quoted in Latin, and then, by way of explanation, turned into the native idiom. This is unquestionably the *origin* of those portions of the Scriptures in Anglo-Saxon which have come down to us. While there is abundant testimony that the Anglo-Saxon clergy were really anxious to spread a knowledge of the Bible, we have testimony equally clear showing that they were averse to its indiscriminate publication—*e. g.*, in this extract from Ælfric to Æthelwold, alderman (*Præfatio Genesis Anglice*, Ed. Thwaites, p. 1): “Now it thinketh me, love, that that work (the translation of Genesis) is very dangerous for me or any men to undertake; because I dread lest

some foolish man read this book, or hear it read, who should ween that he may live now under the new law, even as the old fathers lived then in that time, ere that the old law was established, or even as men lived under Moyses' law." He then goes on to narrate how an illiterate instructor of his own dwelt upon Jacob's matrimonial connections with two sisters and their two maids.

The absence of an Anglo-Saxon version of the whole Bible being thus partly accounted for, an explanatory word as to the term "Anglo-Saxon" appears to be in place prior to examining the venerable monuments in our possession. Raske, in the preface to his grammar, commenting upon the statement of the Venerable Bede, that from "*Germany* came the old Saxons, the Angles, and the Jutes," reaches the conclusion that the Anglo-Saxon language was gradually formed by the intermingling of their dialects running parallel with the union of the tribes into one nation. The stages of its development are: Anglo-Saxon proper, from the arrival of the Saxons to the irruption of the Danes; Dano-Saxon, from the Danish to the Norman invasion; and Norman-Saxon (encroaching upon the English), down to the time of Henry II. The printed documents do not exhibit a marked variation of dialect, although they show the development of the language.

One of the oldest and most interesting monuments of Anglo-Saxon Christianity is a *runic* inscription on a cross at Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire, which was for the first time deciphered in 1838 by Mr. John Kemble as part of a poem on the Crucifixion. The discovery, at Vercelli, of a MS. volume of Anglo-Saxon homilies containing a more complete copy of the same poem, has triumphantly confirmed Mr. Kemble's interpretation.

The Ruthwell Cross (about A. D. 680), with the inscription, "CADMON MOE FAUÆTHO," contains some thirty lines of runes, which read as follows:—

*Anglo-Saxon Original.**

Verbatim Version.

Geredæ hinæ	Girded him
God almeyottig	God Almighty
tha he walde	when he would
on galgu gi-stiga	on gallows mount
modig fore	proud for
(ale) men	all men
(ahof) ic riicnæ cuningc	I heard the rich King
heafunæs hlaford	heaven's lord
hælda ic(n)i darstæ	heel (over) I not durst
bismærædu ungcet men ta ætgad(r)e	mocked us men both together
ic (wæs) mith blodæbistemid	I was with blood besmeared
Krist wæs on rodi	Christ was on rood
hwethræ ther fusæ	whither there confusedly
fearran kwomu	afar they came
æththilæ ti lanum	the Prince to aid
ic thæt al bi(h)eal(d)	I that all beheld
s(eoc) ic wæs	sick I was
mi(th) sorgu(m) gi(d)rac(fe)d	with sorrow grieved
mith strelum giwundæd	with arrows wounded
alegdun hiæ hinæ limwæ rignæ	laid down they him limb weary
gistoddun him (æt) h(is l)i cæs(h) eaf	they stood (near) him (at) his
(du)m.	corpse's head.

Among the few remaining specimens of Anglo-Saxon of the earliest period is that subjoined "On the Origin of Things," given in two versions, by Cædmon, a monk of Whitby, who died in A. D. 680. The narrative of Bede (*Hist.* iv. 24) specifies that his origin was very humble, that he did not even know poetry by heart, and that when, at the customary hall-gatherings, the harp came to his turn, he had to leave the table to hide his shame. On one occasion, after such a humiliating scene, it was his duty to keep watch in the stable,

* In the examples given the Anglo-Saxon letters are represented by their English equivalents, on the principle that *th* has the power of *th* in *thin* and *thing*, *dh* that of *th* in *thine* and *smooth*. *G*, *gh*, *gg* are used to give the power of *g* in *give*, *great*, and *big*; where the power of that letter comes nearest to *y* in *year* or *day* it is expressed *y* or *yy*; sometimes they are used interchangeably.

but he fell asleep. In his slumber he heard a stranger call him by his name, saying, "Cædmon, sing me something." He pleaded inability, but the stranger continued, "Nay, but thou hast something to sing." "What must I sing?" asked Cædmon. "Sing the Creation," ran the reply, and then he began to sing verses "he had never heard before," and they are said to have been those which follow. When he awoke he not only was able to repeat them, but to continue in a similar strain. He was taken to the Abbess Hilda, who, as well as the learned men with her, listened to his story, and held that he had received the gift by inspiration. They expounded to him a portion of Holy Scripture, bidding him repeat it in verse; the next day he came with a poetic version of great beauty. This induced Hilda to invite him to enter her house as a monk; and it is said that, at her instance, he composed many Bible histories in verse. They were, of course, not properly translations, but poetical paraphrases. Poems of this description under the name of Cædmon were published by Junius at Amsterdam in 1655. Bede says that "He sang of the creation of the world, of the origin of man, of the whole history of Genesis, from the exodus of Israel to the possession of the promised land, and of most of the histories of the Holy Scriptures."

CÆDMON.

"On the Origin of Things," preserved in Alfred's Translation of Bede's Eccl. History, written about A. D., 670.

*MS. by King Alfred, A. D. 885, at
Oxford.**

Literal English.

"Nu we sceolan herian,
heofon-rices weard.

metodes mihte.

"Now ought we to praise
heaven-kingdom's Warden (guard
ian)

the Creator's might,

* King Alfred probably composed these verses himself.

and his mod-gethonc.
wera wuldor-faeder.
swa he wundra gehwaes.
ece dryhten.
oord onstealde.
he aereſt geſceop.
eordhan bearnum.
heofon to hrofe.
halig ſcyppend.
tha middangeard.
mon-cymes weard.
ece dryhten.
aefter teode.
frum foldan.
frea ælmihtig.”

and his mind's thought,
glory-Father of men!
how he of every wonder,
eternal Lord,
the beginning formed.
He first framed
for earth's bairns (children)
heaven as a roof;
holy Creator!
Then mid-earth,
mankind's guardian,
Eternal Lord,
afterward did (-produced)
for men the earth
Lord almighty!”

To the beginning of the eighth century belongs the Psalter of Aldhelm and Guthlac, which contains the Latin with an exceedingly minute interlinear Anglo-Saxon version. The *text* is the Roman psalter in use at Canterbury, whereas the *Gallican* text was used in other parts of England. It is said to be the identical copy sent by Pope Gregory to Augustine, A. D. 596. The translation is of much later date. It is among the Cotton MSS., marked *Vespasian, A 1.*

Next in order of time (A. D. 735) comes the Venerable Bede, who undertook the translation of the Gospel of St. John “for the advantage of the Church” (see page 4).

King Alfred's name is also mentioned in lists of scholars who at an early period translated the Bible into the vernacular. His labors seem to have been confined to the translation of isolated portions of Scripture. In his laws he translated many passages from Exodus xx., xxi., xxii., and he is said to have been employed upon a regular translation of the Book of Psalms when he died (A. D. 901). His version of the Decalogue is here presented:

EXTRACT FROM KING ALFRED'S ANGLO-SAXON CODE IN WILKINS'S
Leges Anglo-Saxonicae.

*Anglo-Saxon.**English.*

- “Drihten wæs sprecende thæs word to Moyses, and thus cwæth:
“Ic eam Drihten thin God. Ic the ut gelædde of Aegypta londe and of heora theowdome. Ne lufa thu othre fremde godas ofer me.
“Ne minne naman ne cig thu on idelnesse; forthon the thu ne bist unscyldig with me; gif thu on idelnesse cigst minne naman.
“Gemine that thu gehalgie thone feste (reste) dæg. Wyrceath eow syx dagas, and on tham seofothan restath eow, thu and thin sunu and thine dohter; and thine theore, and thin wylne, and thin weorcnyten; and se cuma the bith binnan thinan durum. Fortham on syx dagum Christ geworhte heofenas and eorthan, sæs, and ealle gesceafta the on him synd, and hine gereste on thone seofothan dæge; and forthon Drihten hine gehalgode.
“Ara thinum fæder and thinre mæder; tha the Drihten sealde the, that thu sy thy leng libbende on eorthan.
“Ne slea thu.
Ne stala thu.
“Ne lige thu dearnunga.
Ne sæge thu lease gewitnesse with thinum nehstan.
“Ne wilna thu thines nehstan yrfes mid unrihte.
“Ne wyrc thu the gyldene godas, oththe seolfrene.”
- Lord was speaking these words to Moses, and said thus:
I am the Lord thy God; I led thee out of the land of Egypt and its thralldom. Not love thou other strange gods over me.
Not my name utter thou in vain; because thou art not guiltless with me, if thou in vain utterest my name.
Mind that thou hallow the festal (sabbath) day. Work ye six days, and on the seventh rest ye, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and thy cattle, and those who come within thy doors; because in six days Christ created heaven and earth, seas, and all creatures that in them are, and rested on the seventh day, and therefore the Lord hallowed that *day*.
Honor thy father and thy mother, whom the Lord gave thee, that thou be long living on earth.
Not slay thou.
Not steal thou.
Not commit thou adultery.
Not say thou false witness against thy neighbor.
Not desire thou thy neighbor's inheritance with unright (wrongfully).
Not work thou thee golden gods, or silvern

Examination of the subjoined versions of the Lord's Prayer in Anglo-Saxon, will show the changes in the language. Respecting some *literal* differences, it is difficult without the manuscripts at hand to verify them. This applies especially to the letters R and S, which are very similar in Anglo-Saxon, and on that account frequently confounded by transcribers. The interlinear translation added to No. 3 will suffice to explain the rest.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

I. Anglo-Saxon version, by Eadfride, eighth bishop of Lindisfarne, about A. D. 700.

“Fader uren thu in Heofnas,
 Sie gehalgud Nama thin,
 To Cymeth ric thin;
 Sie fillo thin suæ is in Heofne and in Eortha.
 Hlaf userne oferwirtlic sel us to dæg;
 And forgef us scyltha urna suæ we forgefon scylgum urum.
 And ne inlead writh in Cosnunge.
 Al gefrigurich from evil.”

II. Anglo-Saxon version, from the Gospels of Mareschall and Junius, about A. D. 890.

“Fæder ure thu the eart on heofenum,
 Si thin nama gehalgod;
 To becume thin rice.
 Gewurthe thin willa on eorthan swa swa on heofenum.
 Urne dæghwamlican hlaf syle us to dæg;
 And forgyf us ure gyltas, swa swa we forgifadh urum gyltendum;
 And ne galæd thu us on costnunge.
 Ac alys us of yfele.
 Sothlice.”

III. Anglo-Saxon Lord's Prayer, by Alfred, bishop of Durham, A. D. 900.

“Uren fader dhic ardh in heofnas, sic gehalged dhin noma, to cymedh
Our father which art in heavens, be hallowed thine name, come