

Three Versions of *Cædmon's Hymn*

Cædmon's Hymn occurs in a number of manuscripts, which vary in their spelling of the poem. The two earliest manuscripts, the 'Moore' and the 'Leningrad' versions date to the eighth century and give the poem in a Northumbrian dialect. The other versions occur in tenth-century manuscripts and give the poem in West Saxon. In the texts below, the macrons, capitalisation, and punctuation have all been added by modern editors. The translation is as literal as possible without violating the norms of Modern English syntax.

Northumbrian 'Moore' Version

(CUL MS Kk 5.16, c. 737)

Nū scylun hergan hefaenrīces Uard,
Metudæs maecti end his mōdgidanc,
uerc Uuldurfadur, suē hē uundra gihuaes,
ēci dryctin, or āstelidæ.
Hē āērist scōp aelda barnum
heben til hrōfe, hāleg Scepen.
Thā middungeard moncynnæs Uard,
ēci Dryctin, æfter tīadæ
firum foldu, Frēa allmectig.

Northumbrian 'Leningrad' Version

(St Petersburg Public Library MS Q.v.I.18, c. 746)

Nū scilun herga hefenrīcæs Uard,
Metudæs mehti end his mōdgithanc,
uerc Uuldurfadur, suē hē uundra gihuæs,
ēci Dryctin, or āstelidæ.
Hē ærist scōp aeldu barnum
heben tō hrōfæ, hālig Sceppend.
Thā middingard moncynnæs Uard,
ēci dryctin, æfter tīadæ
firum foldu, Frēa allmehtig.

West Saxon Version

(Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 10, 10th century)

Translation

Nū sculon herigean heofonrīces Weard,
Meotedes meahte ond his mōdgeþanc,
weorc Wuldorfæder, swā he wundra gihwæs,
ēce Drihten, or onstealde.
Hē ærest sceōp eorðan bearnum
heofon tō hrōfe, hālig Scyppend.
Þā middangeard moncynnes Weard,
ēce Drihten, æfter tēode
firum foldan, Frēa ælmihtig.

Now we must praise the Guardian of heaven,
the Measurer's might, and the thought of his mind
the Glory-father's work, as he for every wonder—
the eternal Lord—established the beginning.
He first made for the earth's children
heaven as a roof, the holy Creator.
Then middle-earth the Guardian of mankind—
the eternal Lord—afterwards adorned,
the earth for men, the Lord almighty.