

Translating the Old Testament

Gatekeepers

Ɔu bæde me, leof, þæt ic sceolde ðe awendan of Lydene on Englisc þa boc Genesis: ða þuhte me hefigtime þe to tiþienne þæs, ⁊ þu cwæde þa þæt ic ne þorfte na mare awendan þære bec buton to Isaace, Abrahames suna, for þam þe sum oðer man þe hæfde awend fram Isaace þa boc oþ ende. Nu þincð me, leof, þæt þæt weorc is swiðe pleolic me oððe ænigum men to underbeginne, for þan þe ic ondræde, gif sum dysig man þas boc ræt oððe rædan gehyrþ, þæt he wille wenan, þæt he mote lybban nu on þære niwan æ, swa swa þa ealdan fæderas leofodon þa on þære tide, ær þan þe seo ealde æ gesett wære, oþþe swa swa men leofodon under Moyses æ. (Ælfric, Preface to *Genesis*, c. 1000)

King Alfred's Translation Programme (s. IX^{ex})

Ða gemunde ic hu sio æ wæs ærest on Ebreisc geðiode funden, 7 eft, ða hie Creacas geliornodon, ða wendon hie hie on hiora agen geðiode ealle, 7 eac ealle oðre bec. 7 eft Lædenware swæ same, siððan hie hie geliornodon, hie hie wendon ealla ðurh wise wealhstodas on hiora agen geðiode. Ond eac ealla oðræ Cristnæ ðioda sumne dæl hiora on hiora agen geðiode wendon. Forðy me ðyncð betre, gif iow swæ ðyncð, ðæt we eac sumæ bec, ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne, ðæt we ða on ðæt geðiode wenden ðe we ealle gecnawan mægen, 7 gedon swæ we swiðe eaðe magon mid Godes fultume, gif we ða stilnesse habbað, ðæt eall sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to liornunga oðfæste, ða hwile ðe hie to nanre oðerre note ne mægen, oð ðone first ðe hie wel cunnen Englisc gewrit arædan: lære mon siððan furður on Lædengeðiode ða ðe mon furðor læran wille 7 to hieran hade don wille.

King Alfred's Translation Programme (s. IX^{ex})

- ▶ Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*
- ▶ Augustine's *Soliloquies*
- ▶ Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*
- ▶ Orosius's *History Against the Pagans*
- ▶ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*
- ▶ Psalms 1–50

This committee may also have produced

- ▶ the Old English *Martyrology*
- ▶ *Bald's Leechbook*

The Psalms

Hermann Gunkel's typology: five major genres

1. Hymns
2. Communal laments
3. Royal Psalms
4. Individual laments
5. Individual Psalms of thanksgiving

The Old Testament in Early Germanic

- ▶ Wulfila's Gothic Bible (s. IV; a fragment of Nehemiah survives)
- ▶ The Old English verse *Exodus* (s. VIII)
- ▶ The Old English verse *Azarias* (s. VIII)
- ▶ The Old English verse *Daniel* (s. VIII)
- ▶ The Old English verse *Genesis A* (s. VIII)
- ▶ The Old Saxon verse *Genesis* (s. IX; fragments survive)
- ▶ The Old English verse *Genesis B* (s. IX; trans. of the above)
- ▶ (Alfred's?) (prose) Paris Psalter: Psalms 1–50 (s. IX^{ex})
- ▶ The (verse) Paris Psalter: Psalms 51–150
- ▶ Alfred's Laws: the ten commandments et al. (s. IX^{ex})
- ▶ Various psalter glosses and fragments
- ▶ The Old English prose Hexateuch (Ælfric et al., c. 1000)
- ▶ Ælfric's prose adaptations of Judges, Kings, Judith, Esther, Job, and Maccabees (c. 1000)

Alfred, Ælfric, Genesis, and the Junius 11 Material

- ▶ Not most needful for everyone to know?
- ▶ Dangers of individual interpretation?
- ▶ Aware of the existing verse paraphrase/s? Why never mentioned?

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