



«Гимн Кэдмона» в контексте древнеанглийской христианской поэзии

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«Cædmon's Hymn» in the Context of the Old English Christian Poetry (with special reference to the Song of the Three Youths)¹

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**Аннотация**

В статье сравнивается один из самых известных древнеанглийских текстов – «Гимна Кэдмона» с Песнью трех отроков в древнеанглийских вариантах (гlossированных и поэтических переводах).

Abstract

The article provides a comparison of the best-known Old English poetic text – «Cædmon's Hymn» with the Song of the Three Youths in Old English translations (both gloss and poetic ones).

Ключевые слова: «Гимн Кэдмона», Песнь трех отроков, древнеанглийская поэма «Даниил», древнеанглийские глоссы к книге Песней.

Keywords: «Cædmon's Hymn», the Song of the Three Youths, Old English poem «Daniel», Old English glosses for Canticles

«Cædmon's Hymn»: the Scope of Interpretation

The popularity of «Cædmon's Hymn» owes much to its early date and a huge number of manuscripts it is preserved in. The middle of the twentieth century saw the beginning of its interpretation as a text of oral tradition. In recent years it has enjoyed some criticism against its Christian background. Since Old English poetic texts were written in the Christian monastic milieu by the people who could sing poetic texts or enjoyed the singing by their contemporaries, the problem of coexistence of the two traditions (oral and Christian) is the key one in the studies of Old English poetry.

Christian Aspects of Cædmon's Story

Summing up the information about Cædmon we should say that both the legend (from Bede's «Historia Ecclesiastica» IV, 26) and the text of the Hymn can be viewed from the Christian perspective². Since the date of Cædmon's miracle is nothing more than a mere assumption³, all we know about Cædmon is that he follows the monastic liturgical order (he died no sooner than the monks had started singing *Domino laudes nocturnas*; he sang his songs *on morgenne* – in the hours of morning prayer or liturgy). The praise for God that he sings in his miraculous dream could be seen in the context of the Church time as it takes place late at night – the time for *Domino laudes nocturnas*.

Structure of the Hymn

The Hymn has two main parts: the call for prayer and a series of the names of God. The first part is short (only one half-line) but tells a lot about the origin and the genre of the text. Taking the critical view of the parallels from the epic texts containing the "Nu + personal pronoun + modal verb + infinitive" structure (Magoun 1955:62) we should say that neither of them has the sense close to the one of the first line of the Hymn: 1) none has the 1st person plural pronoun; 2) they all have the modal *magan* that can not refer to some duty or a must as *sculan* does; 3) the verb *hergan/ herian* – never appears in epic formulas. But gnomic verses show an extensive use of *sculan*.

² For detailed description of the problem see (Holsinger 2007).

³ Since C. Plummer's classical edition till the recent research (Niles 2006) very few people consider any date of the Cædmon's legend to be historically true.



The Old English prose translation of the Benedectine Rule also abounds in the *sculan+herian* phrases that express the necessity of the praise for God.

The second part of the Hymn contains a number of God's names. Parallels to it can be found not only in the poetic formulas but in the use of a list of names for God. Such example can be found in «Exodus»: before the Red Sea crossing, telling his people *lar Godes* Moses actually does not pronounce any law or rules, he only names God in several different ways. In this case the list of names can be considered a sacred knowledge helpful in the critical situation. The ability to give several names reminds of the magic actions of Óðinn in some Edda songs.

Christian “Sources” of the Hymn

Having included the texts of Psalms and the Song of the Three Youths in his list of the Hymn's sources, D. P. O'Donnell does not seem to be satisfied with the way these texts correspond to the Hymn. The problem here is clear: using some text as a “source” does not always mean copying it.

The Song of the Three Youths and the Hymn

The Song of the Three Youths comes from Old English in the form of poetic paraphrases of «Daniel» and «Azarias», and a number of glosses. The main difference between the Song and the Hymn is the size of the first part.

The first part – the call for praise

Old English versions of the Song are specific mainly in the translation of the repeated verb forms. The poetic text gives us the form with the ending *-ie/ -ige* of

different verbs denoting praise: *bletsige/ bletsie* (362, 380, 389⁴), *herige* (370, 376), *domige* (371, 398), *lofige* (372) along with the *-að* forms: *wurðiað* (366, 385, 403), *hergað/ herigað* (374, 379, 386, 404), *lofiað* (395), *bletsiað* (399). While the latter more or less corresponds to the Latin form (*benedicite*) as denoting present indicative 3rd person plural or imperative plural, the former one can express the first person singular present indicative to subjunctive singular. The action of the first person singular is definitely not implied in the Latin version that contains the form of *benedicite* (imperative plural) occasionally changed by *benedicat* (the third person singular present indicative). The Old English gloss translates it as *bletsige/ bletsie* mostly in the Eadwine's Psalter (XII cent.), all the other Canticles glosses having *blestiað* and *heriaþ* forms. In general this can mean the *-ige* forms in the paraphrase and gloss are used to express some action of the first person. Together with the forms of the second person singular pronoun (*þec*) they imply some intimacy in the address to God (from “me” to “Thee”).

The second part – the names of God

In «Daniel»'s paraphrase we find much more than just the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (that are a constituent part of the liturgical versions of the Song): lines 400–408 yield some 11 names for God. Besides the names of the Holy Trinity (400b, 401a, 402b) these are the names of God as Helper and Protector (401b, 402a). This part of the Song corresponds to the one of the Hymn, both having 1) *drihten* used twice with the epithets (*witig* (403b) and *halig* (404b) in «Daniel» and double use of *ece* in the Hymn); 2) the name of God as

⁴ The text of «Daniel» is cited from (Farell 1974) with the number of the line.



Lord of the heaven's kingdom (Dan 407a, CH 1b); 3) the name for the might of God (Dan 407b, CH 2a). The idea of God as the First Creator is implied in the context of the legend of Cædmon and expressed in «Daniel» as *lifes leohtfruma* (408a).

Conclusion

Evaluating oral and Christian frameworks of the study of «Cædmon's Hymn» we should say that their common point is the desire to find the "source" of the text. The problem is that there can not be any "ideal source". We should regard not only the formulas but the general structure of such texts that served as a matrix influential not only for the original Old English text of the «Cædmon's Hymn», but for the translation of the Song of the Three Youths both in its poetic («Daniel») and gloss versions (from Eadwine's Canterbury Psalter).

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