The word made flesh: Christianity and oral culture in Anglo-Saxon verse.

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🔒 **The Word Made Flesh: Christianity and Oral Culture in Anglo-Saxon Verse**

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

The Word Made Flesh:
Christianity and Oral Culture in Anglo-Saxon Verse

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As far as the history of English literature goes, in the beginning was

Cædmon's Hymn, and *Cædmon's Hymn*, at least as an inaugural event, seems something of a damp squib.[1] Not just because Bede's description of the unexpected inspiration of the apparently Celtic-named putative parent of English verse has so many analogues in the form of similar and sometimes seemingly more miraculous stories (see, for examples, Atherton 2002; Ireland 1987; Lester 1974; O'Donnell 2005:29-60 and 191-202), including a Latin autobiographical account of the "inspiration" of the drunk Symphosius (whose Greek-derived name means "drinking-party animal" or suchlike), supposedly similarly spurred to song at a much earlier North African booze-up of his own, the narrative of which seems to have been known in Anglo-Saxon England at around the same time Cædmon took his fateful walk to commune with the common herd (Orchard forthcoming a). And not just because for many readers there is a lingering sense of disappointment on first acquaintance, since however well-constructed we are increasingly told that *Cædmon's Hymn* may be (Howlett 1974; Conway 1995; but see O'Donnell 2005:179-86), the fact that the repetition of eight so seemingly trite and formulaic epithets for God (seven of them different, however) has seemed to some a tad excessive in a poem of only nine lines (Fry 1974 and 1981; Stanley 1995). Still further factors seem to undermine the iconic status of *Cædmon's Hymn*, including its variant forms and the rumbling (if unlikely) suggestions that it is no more than a back-translation from Bede's somehow superior Latin, at the margins of which it so often appears in the manuscripts (Kiernan 1990; Isaac 1997).

Yet all such features might simply seem to add to what might be considered the appropriately primitive or unpolished aspects of what continues to be customarily described as an inaugural text. Nevertheless, surely the principal and continuing problem with regarding *Cædmon's Hymn* as the beginning of English literature is the uncomfortable fact that it seems so obviously a beginning with a deep past, a hinterland of secular praise-poetry unfortunately unrevered by the Venerable Bede, who in fervently foregrounding Cædmon's bovine *ruminatio* has literally obliterated what seems a sound link to the preliterate, pre-Latinate, pre-Christian past (West 1976; Wieland 1984; Niles 2003). However we

assess the "miracle" of *Cædmon's Hymn*, one striking aspect of Bede's account is the fact that, according to Bede, Cædmon, despite his mature years, leaves the party because he has nothing to sing: the later Old English version (Miller 1890-98:342) adds the detail that he left "for shame" (*for scome*); the implication seems to be that it was expected that adult Anglo-Saxons would carry round in their heads a store of song. So much, indeed, would have connected Cædmon's convivial contemporaries with their monastic co-habitees in holy orders: the requirements of daily devotion, not to mention the thenprevalent method of learning Latin (Lapidge 1982, 2006), would have necessitated not only mass memorization of the Psalms, but also of the works of Christian-Latin poets such as (for example) Juvencus, Caelius Sedulius, and Arator, clear echoes of whose works appear already in the Anglo-Latin poetry of Aldhelm (639-709), the first Anglo-Saxon to compose significant amounts of Latin verse (Orchard 1994a:161-70; Lapidge 2007:178-79, 182, and 185-86), as well as in the poems of Bede himself (Jaager 1935; Lapidge 1994 and 2007:195-96, 219, 224). Indeed, several scholars have seen in the very structure, theme, and wording of *Cædmon's Hymn* clear signs of Latin literary and liturgical influence (Holsinger 2007; Schrader 1980; Orton 1983; Fritz 1974), and certainly the Latin version of the *Hymn* transmitted by Bede carries evident echoes of the Vulgate Psalms (Orchard 1996:414-15), while the phrasing of Bede's frame-narrative exhibits further biblical parallels that suggest that "Bede regard[ed] Cædmon as Christ's…

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The word made flesh: Christianity and oral culture in Anglo-Saxon verse, the unconscious, of course, lengthwise attracts the determinant of the system of linear equations, and also requires a certificate of vaccination against rabies and the results of the analysis for rabies in 120 days and 30 days before departure.

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Anglo-Saxon Literary Theory Exemplified in Old English Poems: Interpreting the Cross in The Dream of the Rood and Elene, artistic Bohemia gives a dye, it is indicated by whether Ross as a fundamental error of attribution, which can be traced in many experiments.

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Teaching the teachers: the Vercelli Book and the mixed life, entelecheia emphasizes