

Caedmon's Hymn

Nū scylun hergan	hefaenrīcaes Uard,
metudæs maecti	end his mōdgidanc,
uerc Uuldurfadur,	suē hē uundra gihwaes,
ēci dryctin	ōr āstelidæ
hē ærist scōp	aelda barnum
heben til hrōfe,	hāleg scepen.
Thā middungeard	moncynnæs Uard,
eci Dryctin,	æfter tīadæ
firum foldu,	Frēa allmectig.

Now [we] must honour the guardian of heaven,
the might of the architect, and his purpose,
the work of the father of glory
as he, the eternal lord, established the beginning of wonders;
he first created for the children of men
heaven as a roof, the holy creator
then the guardian of mankind,
the eternal lord, afterwards appointed the middle earth,
the lands for men, the Lord almighty.

"Caedmon's Hymn" is one of the oldest poems known written in Anglo-Saxon, the language which centuries later became English. It's a poem about the creation of the world, written by an illiterate farmhand named Caedmon who worked for the monastery of Whitby in northern England. The story told is that Caedmon was given the gift of song by a mysterious figure who visited him in a dream, however it's very likely that Caedmon was in fact a trained bard who had been hiding his gifts from the Christian monks who would have disapproved of his "pagan" songs. The words of his song were written down, but no melody survives. This version is a setting of the Anglo-Saxon lyrics to a melody written by Jay Leeming.