

OLD ENGLISH STUDY QUESTIONS

“King Edwin’s Council”

1. Under what conditions does King Edwin agree to accept Christianity?
2. What role do his thanes have in his decision?

“Caedmon’s Hymn”

1. Why doesn’t Caedmon sing at the beginning of the narrative?
2. According to Bede, what is the purpose of Anglo-Saxon poetry? (See not only “Caedmon’s Hymn,” but also “Bede on Himself.”)
3. Describe how Caedmon composes and how his compositions presumably were circulated?

“Cuthbert’s Death and Disinterment”

1. Our editor writes that Bede’s audience “expected the miraculous” (Crossley-Holland 163). Outline the miraculous events in this narrative.

"Dream of the Rood"

Possibly inspired by a cross like the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire: an Anglo-Saxon Stone cross 18 feet high with words of Christ carved on sides. This poem probably written in Mercia in 9th century borrows this idea. Christ is presented in Germanic heroic terms as leader of warrior band or comitatus. The Cross is one of his followers, and the dreamer another. The second part of poem is a homily (sermon-like). The poem employs the popular medieval form of dream vision.

1. Find examples of heroic language in this poem.

2. Discuss the narrative perspective in this poem. Who is speaking in each part?