

ends ; that he was a simple herdsman among his flocks, specially endowed in later life with the divine gift of poetry ; that he wrote many poems "to draw men from the love of sins," and died in peaceful triumph about 680 A. D. In fine, all we know is, that he was a devout monk, taught of God, full of song and Saxon spirit, and that, out of the fullness of his heart, and for the common good, he sang of creation and of Christ. Such is the traditional account. As to the *source* of the Paraphrase, as we gather it from Bede and Alfred, it may be stated, as follows : that its author was an untaught herdsman, ignorant of the poetic art ; that, asleep among the cattle, he heard in his dream a voice bidding him sing ; that refusing, he was again commanded to sing the origin of things, and so began his song. At the request of the abbess, Hilda, he sang before all the learned, and turned into sweetest verse all that they taught him. Forsaking the worldly life, he joined the monks and devoted himself to the work of the minstrel. The poem thus produced is a paraphrase of Holy Scripture to foster piety in the hearts of the people. It was the first attempt in our vernacular verse to popularize the Bible and thus places its author, whether mythical or historic, in line with the authors of the Old Saxon "Heliand," with Orm, Dante, Milton and Klopstock, and our own American Longfellow. The poem is spiritual throughout, and opens a question, "ill to solve," as to the presence in a converted pagan of such clear views of Christian truth and so high ethical ideals.

The student of theology might profitably note the specific manner in which this old monk, at so early a date, poetically paraphrases the Mosaic account of the creation and the fall of man.

On its literary side, the cast of the poem is lyrical as well as epic or narrative. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Pharaoh, Daniel, Beshazzar, and the Hebrew children enter as prominent figures, while the praises of Jehovah and His servants are sung in truly fervent strain. While in some portions of the Paraphrase the historical temper of the epic prevails, and, in others, the emotional temper of the lyric, there is, throughout, the presence of free descriptive vivacity, heroic boldness of word and phrase, and vigorous poetic personality. The poem, as a whole, is the outspoken testimony of a reclaimed pagan to the might and benevolence of Jehovah in the care and deliverance of His people. The Hymn and the Vision apart, the Paraphrase consists of two books, or sections. In the first, are Genesis, Exodus and Daniel. In the second, there is Christ and Satan, to which some editors add "The Song of Azariah" and "The Song to the Three Children."

In Genesis, we have a free version of the first half of the book as given us in the canonical text. Beginning with the fall of the angels, and the creation, the poet goes on to the history of our first parents ; to that of Cain and Abel ; to that of Noah and the deluge, and on to