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A Cry of Distress and a Plea for Justice.

Too late for notice in our last issue there came to us from the German Evangelical Mission Aid Society of Berlin-Steglitz the English edition of an address which Dr. Theol. Karl Axenfeld, Director of Missions, delivered before the annual convention of the Mission Aid Society in 1919. Though three valuable months have elapsed since the receipt of this address, the readers, we doubt not, will agree with us that its intrinsic value, its defense of eternal and essential rights, is such that even at this somewhat belated date the message of the speaker should be reiterated here. It is a simple plea for fundamental justice, and is well founded, particularly if one studies Article 438 of the Peace Treaty. We hold no brief for the Mission Aid Society, whose confessional basis is not fully known to us, nor do we subscribe to every sentiment expressed in the address. What the speaker, however, is battling for is an inalienable right of the Church of Jesus Christ, common and dear to every member of the Church.

The title of Dr. Axenfeld's address is, "Germany's Battle for the Freedom of the Christian Missions." The author says:—

The imminent conclusions of peace will not only bring about a great transformation in the political and economic life of the nations, but intellectual values, as well as the spiritual and the *religious*, are at hazard. There is a great danger that these most precious possessions of mankind will not be sufficiently regarded in the battle for wealth and power.

The chief point at issue, however, cannot be confined to the acquisition of additional territory by certain nations, nor to the reinforcement of

Vernacular Version of Parts of the Bible in England before Wyclif.

It is usually stated that there were no vernacular Bible-versions in Germany before Luther, and that assertion is, in a manner of speaking, correct. The statement has also been made that there were no Bible-versions in the vernacular in England before Wyclif, and that may also be defended. But just as Germany had had the Heliand, a translation of Tatian's Harmony of the Gospels, Otfried's Evangelienbuch, the Monsee-Vienna Fragments, some interlinear Psalters, and last, but not least, the fourteenth century version made from the Vulgate, which was published either in 1462 or 1466, and, before 1518, had fourteen High German and four Low German editions (W. Braune, *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*; W. Grimm, *Kurzgefaszte Geschichte der lutherischen Uebersetzung bis zur Gegenwart*), thus England had a great many versions of parts of the Bible in the various dialects, especially the Wessex, the Middlesex, the Kentish, and the Northumbrian, which have well repaid the study that has recently been made of them (A. S. Cook, *Biblical Quotations in Old English Prose Writers*).

Although the ecclesiastical history of England goes back to the third century, very little is known of the period before the Anglo-Saxon invasion. With the conversion of Ethelbert of Kent at the time of Gregory the Great, the real history of the Christian Church in England begins as depicted so vividly by the Venerable Bede. It is he that gives us the account of the poet Caedmon in the seventh century, of whom he writes that he sang "de creatione mundi et origine humani generis et tota Genesis historia, de egressu Israel ex Aegypto et ingressu in terram repromissionis, de aliis plurimis Sacrae Scripturae historiis, de incarnatione Dominica, passione, resurrectione et ascensione in coelum, de Spiritus Sancti adventu, et apostolorum doctrina," or, as Alfred has it: "Song he acrest be middengeardes gesceape, ond bi fruman moncynnnes, ond eal thaet staer Genesis, thaet is seo aerste Moyses booc; ond eft bi utgonge

Israhela folces of Aegypta londe, ond bi ingonge thaes gehatlandes; ond bi odrum monegum spellum thaes halgan gewrites canones boca; ond bi Cristes mennisnesse, ond bi his throwunge, ond bi his upastignisse in heofonas; ond bi thaes Halgan Gastes cyme, ond thara apostola lare" (Beda's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV: 24). In the next century, Cynewulf made similar poetical transcriptions of Bible-stories: Crist, Doomsday, The Harrowing of Hell, and others. To the same school, although of a later date, belong the paraphrases which are most widely known: Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, Temptation of Christ, and others (Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsaechsischen Poesie*, II and III).

The first prose version of any part of the Bible originated in all probability in the eighth century, when the Venerable Bede, the eminent scholar, historian, and churchman, translated the Gospel according to St. John into the vernacular. It represented the culmination of his life work. But no part of his rendering is extant. We have parts of an Anglo-Saxon version of this Gospel, however, which may go back to the end of this century. The rendering is remarkably exact and clear, as the following verses show: "On fruman waes Word, and thaet Word waes mid Gode, and God waes thaet Word. Thaet waes on eardode on us, and we gesawon hys wuldor, swylce an-cennedes wuldor of Faeder, thaet waes ful mid gyfe and sodfaestnysse," John 1, 1. 2. 14. (Carson, *Handbook of Anglo-Saxon*.)

In the ninth century, the interlinear Psalters appear, that is, interlinear glosses of the Book of Psalms. Of these renderings eleven manuscripts are known to exist, and they appear under various names: Aldhelm's Paris Psalter, Altmere's Psalter, the Mercian Psalter, and others. "Not less than three Latin versions of the Psalter were current in the Middle Ages, viz., *Psalterium Romanum*, *Psalterium Gallicanum*, and *Psalterium juxta Hebraeos*. They were all due to the efforts of Jerome. In 383 he made a cursory revision of the Old Latin Psalter from the Septuagint. Pope Damasus at once ordered

this revision to be introduced into the Roman liturgy; it was henceforth known as the Roman Psalter, and is still in use at St. Peter's in Rome. Soon after retiring to Palestine in 387, Jerome found at Caesarea a copy of the Hexapla of Origen, which had belonged to the learned bishop Pamphilus, and from which he made a careful revision of the Psalter. This new text soon found its way into the churches of Gaul, whence it derived its name 'Gallican'; it is still retained in the Roman Breviary and in the Vulgate, and forms the basis of the English Prayer-book version of the Psalms. At the age of forty-five Jerome began to learn Hebrew, and before 393 he had translated the Psalter from the original. This excellent version did not lend itself to the already established traditions of the liturgy. We only find it in the most ancient manuscripts of the Vulgate and in the triple Psalters." (Paues, *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*, X.) In Altmerc's Psalter, which is conceded to be one of the earliest versions, the seventh Psalm begins thus: "Dryhten god min, in the ic gehyhte, gefrea me from allum oehtendum me ond genere mec." (Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 18.) In the Cambridge Psalter (ed. by Wildhagen, Hamburg, 1910), the language is much more difficult, as the introductory verses of Psalm 23 show: "Drihtyn recyd me ond nowiht me bid wona, on stowe laeswe thaer he me yestadulode, ofyr waetyr yereordnisse yelaedde me."

A Kentish Gloss on the Book of Proverbs is very laborious reading. The glosses do not represent a connected translation, and it is of fragmentary character (Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 57). A much more satisfactory version is the Northumbrian Gloss on the Gospels, of the tenth century, known also as a fine example of an illuminated manuscript. It is variously known as the "Durham Book," the "Lindisfarne Gospels," or the "Book of St. Cuthbert." The Latin manuscript from which this rendering was made dates from before 700, having been made by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne. The glosses were written by Alfred, whom scholars have suggested to have been the Bishop of Durham of that name (957—68). Another

celebrated manuscript is the Rushworth Version of the Gospels, from the latter half of the tenth century. It contains an independent translation of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and glosses of those of St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, founded upon the Lindisfarne Gospels. The translation was prepared by Farman, a priest at Harewood, and Owun, the latter, however, supplying only a few transcriptions. The dialect of the Matthew Gospel is the Mercian: "Middy escod gecenned were haelend in thaer byrig in dagum herodes cyninges heonu tha tunguleraeftga of eastdael cwomun to hierusalem," 2, 1. The Lord's Prayer is rendered as follows: "Faeder ure, ther the in heofunum eard. Beo gehalgad thin noma. Cume tho thin rice. Werthe thin willa, swa-swa on heofune, swilce on eorthe. Hlaf userne daeghwaemlicu sel us to-daege. And forlet us ure scylde, swa-swa we ec forleten thaem the seyldigath wid us. And ne gelaet us in costungae, ah gelse us of yfle." (Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 47.)

One of the most pretentious efforts in the translation of Psalms is Eadwine's Psalterium Tripartitum, of the eleventh century, also known as the Canterbury Psalter. As the name indicates, it contains Jerome's three versions of the Psalter. The version "Juxta Hebraeos" is provided with a Norman-French, and the Romanum with an Old English interlinear gloss. The first verses of Psalm 23 are rendered as follows: "Drihten me gerecht and namuht me wane bid, on thaere stowe fosternodes ther he me gestaethelede, Ofer weteraes gereordunge he gefedde me," and the beginning of the Te Deum Laudamus: "The God we heriar, the drihten we andetted. The ecne faeder eal eorthe wurthad." (Harsley, *Early English Text Society*, 92.)

About the year 1000 a version of the Gospels was made, of which transcripts with a Kentish tinge appeared in the late twelfth century. From their original dialect they are known as the West Saxon Gospels. Matt. 2, 1 is rendered as follows: "Eornunstliche tha se haelend acenned waes on Iudeiscere Bethleem on thaes cyninges dagum Herodes, tha comon tha

tungolwitegan fram east daele to Hierusalem." (Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 55.) To the same age belongs the Regius Psalter (edited by F. Roeder, 1904), one of eleven manuscripts investigated by Lindeloef (*Bonner Beitræge zur Anglistik*, Heft 13, 1904). It is more of a glossary than an interlinear translation, many of the Latin words not being rendered at all. Mention should also be made of the Ormulum, a paraphrase of the Gospel-stories in rhymed lines. A part of Matt. 4 is produced thus: "Forrthriht se Jesuss fulltnedd wass, He wennde himm intill wesste, The Goddspell seggth thatt he was ledd Thurh Gast intill the wesste." (Corson, *Handbook of Anglo-Saxon*, 179.) The great epic poem Cursor Mundi, which is placed by modern scholars into the early fourteenth century and which paraphrases the entire story of salvation from Creation till Doomsday, also deserves special mention as a work of some merit.

One name stands out above all others in the eleventh century as the most striking representative of learning of his age, namely, Bishop Aelfric of Winchester, later Abbot of Cerne in Dorsetshire. According to his own statement in his *De Vetere Testamento*, he had translated the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Kings, Job, Esther, Judith, and the Maccabees (*Anglia*, 9: 35. Wuelker, *Geschichte der angelsaechsischen Literatur*, 453; Grein *Bibliothek der angelsaechsischen Prosa*, 1: 25). "His rendering is clear and idiomatic, and though he frequently abridges, the omissions never obscure the meaning or hinder the easy flow of the narrative." (Paues, *Loc. cit.*, XV.) The first verses of Genesis 1 read, in his translation: "On anginne gesceop god heofenan and eordan. . . . God evad tha: Geveorde leoht! and leoht veard gevorht."

In the mean time, many renderings of the Lord's Prayer appeared, both in prose translations and in poetical transcriptions, of which some appear in various Anglo-Saxon collections. A thirteenth century version reads as follows: "Hure fader, that art in hevene, blessed be thi name, Thin holi heveriche mote us cumen to frame, Thi will be don in hevene and in

erthe ii same, To day us yif ure lifi bred that ilke dai we craven, And foryif us oure dettes, so strong so we hes haven, Also we don alle men that in oure dettes aren, And lede us noht in foding, bot silde us fro harm and fro schame, And fro alle kennes iveles, thuruh thin holi name"; and a Kentish Pater Noster of 1340: "Vader oure thet art ine hevenes, y-halged by thi name, cominde thi riche, Y-worthe thi wil ase ine hevne and ine erthe, bread oure eche dayes yef ous to day, and vorlet ous oure yeldinges, ase and we vorleteth oure yelderes, and ne ous let nagt in to vondinge, ac vri ous uram queade. Zuo by hit." (Wright-Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*.)

In the fourteenth century, Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole, the English Bonaventura, made a translation with a commentary on "The Psalms and Certain Canticles" (*Early English Text Society*, Vol. 20; Horstmann, *Library of Early English Writers*). His rendering is preceded by a prolog. In his translation of the Psalms he took a verse or short section, the Latin being given first, followed by a more or less extensive commentary in English. The text of Rolle was later used by some Lollard scribe to attach his own commentary, and therefore the two versions are kept apart with great care. The form of his rendering may be seen from the text of Ps. 8, whose first verses read: "Lord our Lord, qwat thi name es wonderfull in al the erde. For lyfted es thi worchyp aboven hevens. Of the mouth of nought spekand and sowkand thou has made louying, for thin enmys, that thou destroye the enmy and the venger." The same man also made a translation of the Canticles, as they were appointed for the service of the canonical hours: The Thanksgiving of Israel, Precatio Ezechiae, The Song of Hannah, The Song of Moses and the Children of Israel, The Prayer of Habakkuk, The Song of Moses, Magnificat, Te Deum Laudamus, Benedictus, Nunc Dimittis, The Song of the Three Children, The Athanasian Creed. At the same time a translation of the Psalter was made in the West Midland dialect. It is casier and more idiomatic than Hampole's work, who exhibits too much slavishness in his adherence to the Latin

original, making his rendering more of a gloss than a translation. There was finally a translation into English of Jerome's *Psalterium Abbreuiatum*, whose earlier manuscript belongs to the middle of the fourteenth century. The form of rendering is shown by the following specimen: "Lord, parceyue my wordis with eres; undurstonde my cry. Take hede to the voys of my preir, my kyng & my God." (Paues, *l. c.*, LXIV.)

There are two more versions which deserve a place among the translations before Wyclif. The first is known as the *Gospel Story of the Life of Jesus* and contains an account of the principal events in the life of the Savior in 112 sections, corresponding to the lessons to be read in churches at the celebration of Holy Communion. The author, whose language seems to belong to the fourteenth century, evidently took the Comes of the *Lectionarium* or the *Evangelistarium* used in his territory, and arranged the accounts in chronological order, so as to form a continuous narrative of the life of Jesus. "The style is homely and vigorous; the Biblical phraseology is mostly retained, but the writer generally paraphrases the text, sometimes adding short explanations of his own. But little apocryphal matter is introduced." (Paues, *l. c.*, LXVIII.) A poetical version, similar to this account, is found in a manuscript based upon the *Temporale*, containing: 1) The Old Testament Story (the Creation and Fall, Cain, Seth, the Death of Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc.); 2) The Life of the Savior (Birth, Ministry, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, Descent into Hell after the Gospel of Nicodemus, and an account of the Destruction of Jerusalem). It does not seem to have been very widely known (Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, 41).

The other version referred to above is a translation of the Acts, the greater part of the Epistles, and a portion of the Gospel of St. Matthew, also from the latter part of the fourteenth century. Two of the extant manuscripts are preceded by a Prolog with an introduction to the Gospel account from the Old Testament story and an indirect appeal that the people

be taught all that is needful for the welfare of their souls: "God made mankynde aftur his owne ymage & lyknesse & put hym in paradys that was a lond of blysse." The following extract from the Epistle to the Ephesians will show the nature of the rendering: "And therefore be ye foloweres of God, as his dereste children; & walke ye in lofe, as Crist hath y-lofed ous, & yef hym-selfen for ous, an offerynge & a sacryfyce to God in a swet smellynge of softnesse." (Paues, 73.)

Thus these early translators, with a manifest love for the sacred Word, did their share toward making the Gospel of Christ known to their fellow-countrymen. Theirs were but feeble cries in the night, but they heralded the new and better day, when the flowers appeared on the earth. The time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land, Song of Solomon 2, 12.

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