

2. A wave of Barbarism...Saxons, Angles, etc.
3. The Gaelic Missions
4. Roman reestablishment
5. Development of the English Church

C. Pre-Reformation English Scriptures

1. The language barrier:

What must be understood is that in the earlier part of our history, English was not one language but many. There were dialects in a very great number in the British Isles and many of them were almost unintelligible to one another. Consequently the earliest forms of Bible translations, however small they may have been, were largely limited to one linguistic group. It would be awhile before a central dialect of speech would but well understood throughout England, as we know it today. In addition the Vulgate, the Latin Bible used throughout the western church, was also in a rather sad textual state...one that would grow worse in the next few centuries. And of course the literacy rate of early Britain was not really high. All these things stood in the way of the quick translation of the Scriptures and while many felt an urgency to have the Bible, the actuality of getting it was impeded on these lines.

2. Saxon works: Pre-Norman period

In this period it is not easy to distinguish between tradition, rumor and fact. Following are such facts as I can adduce:

a. The work of Caedmon (d. 680)...

Called from his work as a cowherd to sing God's Word, Caedmon rendered parts of the Scripture into ballads and sang them in the English dialects. We have some of this work today and it does not sound like "Bible Translation" as we know it but does represent an honest effort to put into the language of the people the concepts of parts of the Word of God. The singing of the Scripture in a folk form always requires a lot of adjustment to the texts and Caedmon's songs seem to have been no exception but the Scriptural ideal is seen in what we have of his work and those who heard him must have had an idea of the message and some accounts of the Bible.

b. Aldhem (d. 709?)...

Produced a Psalter translation of which some fragments remain but there is a lot of uncertainty about detail and translation base.

c. Eadfrith (d. 720) and Guthlac (d. 706, )

Apparently were disciples of Bede (below) and continued some of his translation work. How extensive we cannot say.

d. Bede (the Venerable) (d. 735)

The foremost Saxon clergyman of his day, Bede was devout, mystical, but committed to teaching. You would have liked him. He translated many parts of the Scripture into English but is most famous for the translation of John's Gospel..a work which, tradition tells us, he finished virtually with his dying breath. His influence and teaching were