

**THE CHRIST OF CYNEWULF; A
POEM IN THREE PARTS: THE
ADVENT, THE ASCENSION, AND
THE LAST JUDGMENT. TRANSLATED
INTO ENGLISH PROSE, PP. 1-61**

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CYNEWULF & CHARLES HUNTINGTON WHITMAN

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THE
CHRIST OF CYNEWULF

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A Poem in Three Parts

*THE ADVENT, THE ASCENSION, AND
THE LAST JUDGMENT*

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE

BY

CHARLES HUNTINGTON WHITMAN

FELLOW IN ENGLISH OF YALE UNIVERSITY

BOSTON, U.S.A.

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TO
PROFESSOR ALBERT S. COOK

Prof. A. S. Cook

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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PREFACE.

MY purpose in the present translation is so to combine faithfulness with literary quality as to afford reasonable satisfaction to both the specialist and the general student of literature. In my diction I have endeavored to avoid unintelligible archaisms, and have sought after simple idioms, with a preference for words of Germanic origin.

All things considered, prose has been adopted as the most satisfactory medium of translation. Verse may be the ideal form, but it requires an ideal translator; and with the exception of Tennyson's version of *The Battle of Brunanburh*, and perhaps one or two others, I can think of none that are at all adequate. Nor is prose without its peculiar advantages; in at least one important respect it is superior to verse, since its flexibility offers a more facile medium for reproducing that metrical variety which is one of the principal charms of Old English poetry.

Up to the present time there have appeared three complete translations of this poem—Thorpe's in his edition of the *Codex Exoniensis*, Gollancz's in his two editions of the *Christ*, and Grein's in his *Dichtungen der Angelsachsen*. I have made free use of these translations, and am indebted to them for an occasional word or phrase.

The line-numbering follows the original, which necessarily causes irregular intervals between the marginal numbers. Square brackets indicate words inserted by the translator for the sake of clearness.

This translation was undertaken at the suggestion of Professor Albert S. Cook, and closely conforms in readings and punctuation to his recent edition of the *Christ*. Through his kindness I have been furnished with the proof-sheets as needed, and have thereby found my labor materially lessened. Specific acknowledgments to this edition are usually made in the foot-notes, but many of the Biblical parallels come from the same source. Throughout my work I have had the benefit of Professor Cook's ripe scholarship and sound judgment; for his unflinching kindness and helpfulness I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude. It also gives me pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Robert K. Root, who has carefully read the whole of my manuscript; and to Dr. Charles G. Osgood and Dr. Frank H. Chase for various helpful suggestions.

The introduction to Professor Cook's volume relieves me from attempting a literary appreciation. Suffice it to say that, as the beauties of the *Christ* have gradually unfolded before me, I have come to feel that it is the most spiritual expression of an age in which poetry, vital and genuine, if somewhat unformed, welled directly from the depths of man's nature.

If this translation should serve to win even a few readers to an ardent and appreciative love of Old English verse, the author would feel amply rewarded; yet the fitting and adequate recompense of such labor as it has cost lies in the disclosure to the soul of the worker of a beauty and truth hitherto unapprehended.

YALE UNIVERSITY,
April 12, 1900.

THE CHRIST.

PART I.—THE ADVENT.

— to the King.

Thou art the corner-stone which the builders once
rejected in their work ; fitting indeed is it for Thee,
O King of glory, to become the head of this noble
temple, and to join in bond secure the broad walls of 5
adamantine rock, so that throughout the cities of
earth all things endowed with sight may wonder¹
evermore. Reveal then, righteous and triumphant
One, through Thy wisdom, Thine own handiwork,
and leave wall firm against wall. The work hath 10
need that the Master Builder, the King Him-
self, should come and forthwith restore the house
that beneath its roof hath fallen into ruin. He
formed the body, the limbs of clay ; and now is it
time for Him, the Prince of life, to deliver this mis- 15
erable host from their enemies, the wretched from
their fears, as He full oft hath done.

¹ The construction in lines 7 and 8 is largely conjectural. Cf. Cook's *Christ*, p. 74.