

## WORKSHEET 1

### Caedmon discovers his song

There was in Abbess Hilda's monastery a certain monk who was gifted in music - whenever he heard a passage from the Bible, he could turn it into verses of amazing poetry using English, his native language. His songs could make any listener hungry for heaven. It was a rare quality because, unlike others, Caedmon learned his art directly from God. As a result, he never wasted his talents writing about other subjects - he only wanted to sing about his creator.

For many years, Caedmon had lived a normal life working for the monastery. He hated poetry and singing: if he was at a party and people were taking turns to sing a song while strumming an instrument, he would leave and go home. But one night, something special happened. Caedmon had gone back to the stable where he took care of the horses and settled down to sleep. But then he had a dream.

In the dream, someone appeared to him, and said, 'Caedmon, sing me a song.'

He answered, 'I can't sing! That's why I left and came to bed! I can't sing!'

The other replied, 'Yes you will sing!'

'Sing what?'

'Sing about how everything was created in the beginning,' said the other.

With that, Caedmon began to sing a song in praise of God, a new song which he had never heard before. It went something like this:

*Let us praise the maker of the heavenly kingdom,  
The power of the creator and his wisdom,  
The deeds of the Father of glory.*

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*Let's sing of the eternal God, author of all miracles,  
Who first, as almighty preserver of the human race,  
Created heaven as a roof of the house for the sons of men  
And after that, the earth!*

*(Bede adds: This is what the song was about, but not the words he actually sang in his sleep.  
Even the most beautiful poetry loses something in the translation.)*

Awaking from his sleep, Caedmon remembered the song and then added more words to it. Next morning, he told his manager about what had happened and was taken to see the Abbess, Hilda. After telling Hilda about his dream, he sang her the song. Hilda was amazed, so she called in some other older monks to listen to the song as well, to see if they could make sense of what was happening here. After some discussion, they decided the song could only have come from God.

But could Caedmon do it again? To see if he could, someone read him a passage from the Bible (as he couldn't read by himself) and he was sent away. Next morning, he was back with another excellent song based on the Bible passage. With that, Hilda (who was becoming rather excited at what God was doing) told Caedmon that he must join the monastery straight away as a monk. He agreed. Soon, he was being taught all the things of the Bible that he had never heard before, and he didn't forget a thing. It was like seeing a cow chew the cud as he took the words, thought them through, then repeated them in song after song. His teachers became his audience!

Caedmon sang about the creation of the world, the creation of man and all the history of Genesis. He also wrote many verses about the escape of God's people from Egypt and their entering into the land of promise. He sang about many other Bible stories, especially the birth, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his ascension into heaven. He sang many more songs about serving God, hoping to turn humankind away from all the things that spoil life, and to excite them instead with the love of doing good.

Caedmon did all this because he was full of faith. He was prepared to do whatever it took to serve God even when it hurt, and encouraged others to do the same - and he lived happily for the rest of his life. He served God with a simple and pure mind, and when it was time for him to die, he left the world quietly. His tongue, which had composed so many holy words in praise of the creator, spoke its last words as he signed himself with the cross and offered himself back to God. Perhaps he knew that now he would finally meet the creator he had been singing about, face to face.

