Analysis of Caedmon's Hymn

Caedmon's Hymn is one of my favorites. It was one of the earliest recorded poems and is a beautiful form of worship. Although there are many great parts of the hymn, I'm only going to give the significance of a few of my favorites. I'll also tell of the interesting old-English ways in their writing.

His hymn, which is meant to be a form of praise to God, starts out,

“Praise now to the keeper of the kingdom of heaven,
the power of the Creator, the profound mind...”

This form of praise gives attention to God without actually saying He is God. Using this form shows some of the different names that He has. This part of the poem is also telling the audience that it's time to praise.

“...For the children of men he made first heaven as a roof, the holy Creator...”

This gives acknowledge to the fact that God created men, but before then, he created heaven. In the Bible it is said in Genesis that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...” (Genesis 1:1) and “Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,...' (Genesis 1:26)

Another important part of the poem is,

“...the Lord of mankind, the everlasting Shepherd,...”

and this is significant because in the Bible, Jesus is called The Shepherd and we are His flock of sheep. Caedmon was pointing this out when he mentions the everlasting Shepherd also calling God another name of praise.

“...Then the Lord of mankind, the everlasting Shepherd,
ordained in the midst as a dwelling place,...”

This section talks about how the Lord is the Shepherd, as mentioned before, but also that He is in a
higher appointed spot as a house. This could be reference as God, being The Shepherd or The King, sits in the higher spot which is in heaven.

The poem was written in old-English and they had their own rules they followed in writing. Unlike today, very few of their poems rhymed. They didn't think of poems when they read something that rhymed like we do. The old-English used mainly alliteration and although they had their own language, there is an alliteration that can be found in the modern English translation.

...and his purpose, the work of the father of glory as he, the eternal lord....

He, the eternal is an alliteration, each of the words have the same sound. Each line in the poem contains a pause. The pause in the poem is call a caesura. The caesura is found in the old-English version as well as the modern English version. The poem also has four-stress verse which is when you pronounce certain words longer. This literary device is only present in the old-English version. Most of the poems that were written in the old-English translation was written in a way that sounds like a song. The poets would write them in a song form so people would remember them easier.

I really like this poem and the praise that is mentioned throughout it. I also admire the history behind the old-English language. Legends says that there were more poems that Caedmon wrote, but this is the only one that has survived the many years since it was written. I wish more of his work could be found.