Ælfric, Preface to *Genesis*
(Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 509)
Ed. S. Crawford, 1922, 76-80.

ÆLFRIC MUNUC GRET ÆÐELWÆRD EALDORMANN EADMOdlice.

Ðu bæde me, leof,
þæt ic sceolde ðe awendan of Lydene on Englisc þa boc Genesis:
ða þuhte me hefigtime þe to tiþienne þæs,
and þu cwæde þa
þæt ic ne þorfte na mare awendan þære bec buton to Isaace, Abrahames suna,
for þam þe sum oðer man þe hæfde awend fram Isaace þa boc oþ ende.

Nu þincð me, leof,
þæt þæt weorc is swiðe pleolic me oððe ænigum men to underbeginnenne,
for þan þe ic ondræde,
gif sum dysig man þas boc ræt oððe rædan gehyrþ,
þæt he wille wenan, þæt he mote lybban nu on þære niwan æ,
swa swa þa ealdan fæderas leofodon þa on þære tide,
ær þan þe seo ealde æ gesett wære,
oþþe swa swa men leofodon under Moyses æ.

Hwilon ic wiste þæt sum mæssepreost,
se þe min magister wæs on þam timan,
hæfde þa boc Genesis,
and he cuðe be dæle Lyden understandan:
þa cwæþ he be þam heahfædere Iacobe,
þæt he hæfde feower wif,
twa geswustra and heora twa þinena.

Ful soð he sæde,
ac he nyste,
ne ic þa git,
hu micel todal ys betweohx þære ealdan æ and þære niwan.

On anginne þisere worulde nam se broþer hys swuster to wife
and hwilon eac se fæder tymde be his agenre dehter,
and manega hæfdon ma wifa to folces eacan
and man ne mihte þa æt fruman wifian buton on his siblingum.

Gyf hwa wyle nu swa lybban æfter Cristes tocyme,
swa swa men leofodon ær Moises æ
oþþe under Moises æ,
ne byð se man na cristen
ne he furþon wyrðe ne byð þæt him ænig cristen man mid ete.

Ða ungelæredan preostas,
gif hi hwæt litles understandað of þam Lydenbocum,
þonne þingð him sona þæt hi magon mære lareowas beon,
ac hi ne cunnon swa þeah þæt gastlice andgit þærto,
and hu seo ealde æ wæs getacnung toweardra þinga
oþþe hu seo niwe gecyþnis æfter Cristes menniscnisse wæs gefillednys ealra þæra þinga,
þe seo ealde gecyðnis getacnode towearde be Criste and be hys gecorenum.

Hi cweþaþ eac oft be Paul,
hwi hi ne moton habban wif,
swa swa Petrus se apostol hæfde,
and hi nellað gehiran ne witan,
þæt se eadiga Petrus leofede æfter Moises æ, oþ þæt Crist,
þe on þam timan to mannum com
and began to bodienne his halige godspel
and geceas Petrum ærest him to geferan:
þa forlet Petrus þærrihte his wif,
and ealle þa twelf apostolas,
þa þe wif hæfdon,
forleton ægþer ge wif ge æhta,
and folgodon Cristes lare to þære niwan æ and clænnisse,
þe he silf þa arærde.

Preostas sindon gesette to lareowum þam læwedum folce:
nu gedafnode him þæt hig cuþon þa ealdan æ gastlice understandan,
and hwæt Crist silf tæhte and his apostolas on þære niwan gecyðnisse,
þæt hig mihton þam folce wel wissian to Godes geleafan,
and wel bisnian to godum weorcum.

We secgað eac foran to
þæt seo boc is swiþe deop gastlice to understandenne,
and we ne writaþ na mare buton þa nacedan gerecednisse.

Ðonne þincþ þam ungelæredum
þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealdan gerecednisse,
ac hit ys swiþe feor þam.

Seo boc ys gehaten *Genesis*,
þæt ys gecyndbod,
for þam þe heo ys firmest boca and spricþ be ælcum gecinde,
ac heo ne sprić na be þæra engla gesceapenisse.

Heo onginð þus: *In principio creauit Deus celum and terram*;
þæt ys on Englisc, On annginne gesceop God heofenan and eorþan.

Hit wæs soðlice swa gedon,
þæt God ælmihtig geworhte on anginne,
þa þa he wolde,
gesceafta.

Ac swa þeah æfter gastlicum andgite þæt anginn ys Crist,
swa swa he sylf cwæþ to þam Iudeiscum:
Ic eom angin,
þe to eow sprece.

Đurh þis angin worhte God Fæder heofenan and eorþan,
for þan þe he gesceop ealle gesceafta þurh þone Sunu,
se þe was æfre of him accenned,
wisdom of þam wisan Fæder.

Eft stynt on þære bec on þam forman ferse: *Et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas*;
þæt is on Englisc, and Godes gast wæs geferod ofer wæteru.

Godes gast ys se Halga Gast,
þurh þone geliffæste se Fæder ealle þa gesceafta,
þe he gesceop þurh þone Sunu,
and se Halga Gast færþ geond manna heortan
and sylð us synna forgyfnysse
ærest ðurh wæter on ðam fulluhte and syððan ðurh dædbote;
and gyf hwa forsyhð ða forgyfnysse,
ðe se Halga gast sylð,
ðonne bið his syn æfre unmiltsigendlic on ecnysse.

Eft is seo halige ðrynnys geswutelod on ðisre bec,
swa swa is on ðam worde,
ðe God cwæð:
Uton wyrcean mannan to ure anlicnisse.

Mid ðam ðe he cwæð:
Uton wyrcean,
is seo ðrynnys gebicnod;
mid ðam ðe he cwæð:
to ure anlicnysse,
is seo soðe annys geswutelod.

He ne cwæð na menigfealdlice:
to urum anlicnyssum,
ac anfealdlice:
to ure anlicnysse.

Eft comon ðry englas to Abrahame,
and he spræc to him eallum ðrym swa swa to anum.

Hu clypode Abeles blod to Gode
buton swa swa ælces mannes misdæda wregað hine to Gode butan wordum?

Be ðisum lytlan man mæg understandan,
hu deop seo boc is on gastlicum andgyte,
ðeah ðe heo mid leohtum wordum awriten sy.

Eft Iosep,
ðe wæs geseald to Egypta lande
and he ahredde ðæt folc wið ðone miclan hunger,
hæfde Cristes getacnunge,
ðe wæs geseald for us to cwale
and us ahredde fram ðam ecan hungre helle susle.

Ðæt micele geteld,
ðe Moyses worhte mid wundorlicum cræfte on ðam westene,
swa swa him God sylf gedihte,
hæfde getacnunge Godes gelaðunge,
ðe he sylf astealde ðurh his apostolas
mid menifealdum frætewum and fægerum ðeawum.

To ðam weorce brohte ðæt folc gold and seolfor
and deorwurðe gimstanas and mænifealde mærða;
sume eac brohton gatehær,
swa swa seo æ bebead.

Ðæt gold getacnode urne geleafan and ure gode ingehyd,
ðe we Gode offrian sceolon;
ðæt seolfor getacnode Godes spræca and ða halgan lare,
ðe we habban sceolon to Godes weorcum;
ða gimstanas getacnodon mislice fægernyssa on Godes mannum;
ðæt gatehær getacnode ða stiðan dædbote ðæra manna,
ðe heora synna behreowsiað.

Man offrode eac fela cynna orf Gode to lace binnan ðam getelde;
be ðam is swyðe mænifeald getacnung,
and wæs beboden ðæt se tægl sceolde beon gehal æfre on ðam nytene æt ðære offrungae,
for ðære getacnunge ðæt God wile ðæt we symble well don oð ende ures lifes;
ðonne bið se tægl geoffrod on urum weorcum.

Nu is seo foresæde boc on manegum stowum swyðe nearolice gesett,
and ðeah swyðe deoplice on ðam gastlican andgyte;
and heo is swa geendebyrd,

swa swa God sylf hi gedihte ðam writere Moyse,
and we ne durron na mare awritan on Englisc þonne ðæt Leden hæfð,
ne ða endebyrdnysse awendan,
buton ðam anum,
ðæt ðæt Leden and ðæt Englisc nabbað na ane wisan on ðære spræce fandunge:
æfre se ðe awent oððe se ðe tæcð of Ledene on Englisc,
æfre he sceal gefadian hit swa ðæt ðæt Englisc hæbbe his agene wisan,
elles hit bið swyðe gedwolsum to rædenne
ðam ðe ðæs Ledenes wise ne can.

Is eac to witene ðæt sume gedwolmen wæron
ðe woldon awurpan ða ealdan æ,
and sume woldon habban ða ealdan and awurpan ða niwan,
swa ða Iudeiscean doð;
ac Crist sylf and his apostolas us tæhton ægðer to healdenne,
ða ealdan gastlice and ða niwan soðlice mid weorcum.

God gesceop us twa eagan and twa earan,
twa nosðyrlu, twegen weleras, twa handa and twegen fet,
and he wolde eac habban twa gecyðnyssa on ðisre worulde gesett,
ða ealdan and ða niwan;
for ðan ðe he deð swa swa hine sylfne gewyrð,
and he nænne rædboran næfð,
ne nan man ne ðearf him cweðan to,
Hwi dest ðu swa?

We sceolon awendan urne willan to his gesetnyssum,
and we ne magon gebigean his gesetnyssa on urum lustum.

Ic cweðe nu
ðæt ic ne dearr ne ic nelle nane boc æfter ðisre of Ledene on Englisc awendan;
and ic bidde ðe, leof ealdormann,
ðæt ðu me ðæs na leng ne bidde,
ði læs ðe ic beo ðe ungehyrsum,
oððe leas gyf ic do.

God ðe sy milde a on ecnysse.

Ic bidde nu on Godes naman,
gyf hwa ðas boc awritan wille,
ðæt he hi gerihte wel be ðære bysne,
for ðan ðe ic nah geweald,
ðeah ðe hi hwa to woge gebringe ðurh lease writeras,
and hit bið ðonne his pleoh na min:
micel yfel deð se unwritere,
gyf he nele his gewrit gerihtan.