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<http://hdl.handle.net/2324/2229996>

出版情報：総合文化学論輯. 8, pp.1-16, 2018-05-01. 総合文化学研究所
バージョン：
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Viewpoints on the Descriptions of Paradise in Dream-Visions

Masahiro Mibu

Introduction

This paper focuses on the description of paradise that can be found throughout otherworld studies, and examines its characteristics. Works describing dreams and visions became established as a literary genre in the 6th century.¹ The most famous writings of that age are *Dialogues* by Gregory the Great and *History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours. This genre reached its peak in the 12th century. This paper focuses on some famous and important works from the 12th century. However, because they are originally written in Latin, we will discuss the texts that were translated into Middle English in the 14th and 15th centuries. The texts are (1) *St. Patrick's Purgatory* (Auchinleck MS. 19.2.1), (2) *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham* (B.L. MS. IA. 55449), and (3) *The Vision of Tundale* (B.L. MS. Cotton Caligula A II). Other Middle English and Latin texts will serve as comparative references, if necessary. This paper aims to study similarities in the description of paradise in these three texts.

I. Peculiarity of Medieval Times and Viewpoints of Paradise in Real Life

1. Medieval Peculiarity

First, the peculiarity of medieval times should be mentioned. Carolly Erickson states the following about medieval visions:

Chroniclers wove the visionary miraculous into the pattern of their histories, and the world they described was thick with noncorporeal beings and superphysical events. Visionary metaphors were the common vehicle for many kinds of formal writings, and the multifold reality of allegory and apocalyptic literature was familiar ground to the men and women of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²

Thus, the vision literature tells a story about a world that is something other and far different from a real world. The works discussed in this paper depict a world of afterlife through visions and dreams. Therefore, when reading this medieval literature, we should not simply apply our modern thinking to the Middle Ages. This is because what may seem like nonsense to modern minds might have been quite common and normal for medieval people. From this point of view, paradise must have seemed very real and

accessible for these societies.

2. The Viewpoint of Paradise in Medieval Churches and Religious Houses

The entrance of churches in the Middle Ages was “a veritable portal of paradise”³ and the early pilgrimage to Jerusalem was “the parallel to heaven.”⁴ A hard journey to expiate sins assured an “entrance into paradise”⁵ and the Crusades as a holy war was “to assure an immediate entry into heaven for those who died in battle.”⁶ In addition, according to Hans-Werner Goetz, living in a monastery was a heavenly practice on Earth. For instance, Saint Odo of Cluny (878–942) referred to the monastery system in his *Collationes*. For him, the monastery system was “Verwirklich der Pfingstkirche,” “Hinausschreiten über die Welt hinaus,” “Heimkehr in den Urzustand des paradiesischen Lebens,” and “Vorwegnahme und Verwirklichung des ewigen Friedens.” Therefore, life in monasteries was an “engelgleiches Leben.”⁷ Goetz also points out that the loose clothes worn by monarchs alluded to the wings of cherubim.⁸ Moreover, solemn Gothic cathedrals with stained glass were also “heaven on earth.”⁹

Referring to the 13th century Mappa Mundi in Hereford Cathedral, the east is located on the upper part of the map, because this region is considered the holy land containing the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8). Paradise in the east is depicted as a lonely island surrounded by a burning wall in the far east of Asia, which is situated in the upper area of the map.¹⁰

3. Aspects of Paradise in Words

The semantic meanings of paradise in the *Middle English Dictionary (MED)*¹¹ will now be discussed. Although we can find various definitions of paradise in *MED*, only those relevant to this discussion will be cited here.

“paradis(e) n.

1.(a) The Garden of Eden;

(b) **court of ~, ertheli ~, ~ greve, ~ of god, ~ terrestre, paradises riche,** the Garden of Eden;

(c) an eastern land sometimes identified with (a); **ertheli ~, ~ terrene (terrestre, terrestrial),** earthly paradise;

(d) **ertheli ~, ~ terrestre,** an intermediate place between purgatory and heaven, where Christ was between his resurrection and ascension;

2.(a) The Christian heaven;

(b) omitted here

(c) **blisse (joie) of ~, paradises blisse,** the state of heavenly bliss; **cite of ~,** the

heavenly city;...; ~ **gates**, the gates of heaven;...; **heuenli** ~ **erde, paradises**
riche, the heavenly kingdom;

The first definitions convey a physical paradise on Earth, especially 1(a) and 1(b) that describe the Garden of Eden, which is from Genesis. Definition 1(c) means an earthly paradise that exists somewhere on the ground, while 1(d) is a place between purgatory and heaven. The category of 2(a) is more or less a Christian heaven with the notion of a spiritual place. The “state of heavenly bliss” in 2(c) means a mental state filled with bliss in heaven. From these viewpoints, the word paradise contains the aspects of a physical concept on Earth and/or heaven and a mental situation of bliss.

4. Heavenly Image of St. Augustine and St. Thomas

St. Augustine thought that the ultimate bliss in heaven is the beatific vision, which is “seeing God face to face, and loving and praising him forever,”¹² that is, bliss was gained by seeing God directly. On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas denied other medieval theologians’ opinions that heaven consists of fire. He advocated the fifth element that never exists in the world of nature. This element is a specific material derived from heavenly perfection. Thus, the notion of a beatific vision is an inevitable keyword in contemplating heaven to both St. Augustine and St. Thomas. Moreover, descriptions of paradise understandably are closely related to such a beatific vision.

In the next chapter, additional medieval works are evaluated and discussed with the goal of identifying their specific ways of describing paradise.

II. On the Description of Paradise in Dream-Vision Literature

As previously mentioned, the dream-vision literature reached its peak in the 12th century. In this study, the English versions of three medieval English works will be evaluated, focusing on the beatific vision associated with paradise and its description. This will help to clarify the different concepts of paradise described in these works.

1. On the Description of Paradise in *St. Patrick’s Purgatory*

The original text of *St. Patrick’s Purgatory* is *Tractatus de Purgatorio*, which was written in Latin in the 12th century. This work was subsequently translated widely over the next three centuries.¹³ The story of a knight called Owein is found in three different medieval texts¹⁴ based on *Tractatus*:

- (1) “St. Patrick:” the text in southern English legends during the 13th century
- (2) *OM1* : the text known as *Owayne Miles*, included in the Auchinleck manuscript in the 14th century
- (3) *OM2* : the text after *OM1*, including Cotton Caligula A ii and Yale University Library MS 365 in the 14th or 15th century

OM1 (the Auchinleck version) is the one discussed here, and when necessary, it is compared to the Latin version.¹⁵

The plot of this text is as follows. St. Patrick prayed to God in a church to encourage unfaithful Irish people to repent and turn their minds to Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, he had an incredible dream. God, or Jesus Christ, appeared in front of St. Patrick and took him to a desolate desert. He saw a formidable entrance to purgatory and God told him that sinful human beings must languish there until they were purified. Awakening from the dream, he thanked God for the revelation and built a religious house around the entrance to purgatory to encourage the Irish people’s penitence.

A knight named Owein lived in Northumberland, a district in North East England. He came to St. Patrick’s monastery to purify himself from his sins. He insisted on going into purgatory to purify his soul. St. Patrick tried to stop him; however, because of the knight’s zeal for purification, St. Patrick granted him permission. Owein fasted and prayed for 15 days, and upon entering purgatory, he continued along a dark path and reached a large hall of stone. There were 13 saints in the hall who taught Owein that he could avoid any harm from devils if he called God’s name with steady faith.

The second that Owein left the hall, a group of devils rushed towards him. His agony and suffering in purgatory had thus begun. However, with his firm faith in God, Owein managed to escape the devils’ temptations and tricks. He gradually evolved from a knight into a saint.

Owein crossed a bridge to paradise without falling into hell, and God gave him golden clothes and healed all his wounds. Two archbishops showed him the wonderful scenery and joy of paradise. After he safely returned to his world, he took a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He then returned to his native country of Ireland and was involved in missionary work for seven years until he was called to heaven.

The next section discusses the consciousness of paradise with reference to concrete examples from the text.

1.1 Brightness of Heavenly Paradise

The two bishops guiding Owein in paradise asked him “Wheþer heuen were white or biis, / Blewe or rede, ðalu or grene” (180:3–4). His answer was that “it is a þousandfold / Briðter þan euer was ani gold”(181:1–2). The bishops continued to tell him the following:

“ða,” seyd þe bischop to þe kniðt,
“þat ich stede, þat is so briðt,
Nis bot þe entre. (181:4-6)

However, the Latin text tells a slightly different story, in which heavenly paradise is an image of gold burning in a furnace.¹⁶ In other words, heavenly paradise is described as a resplendent place.

1.2 Food of Life from Heavenly Paradise

Souls in earthly paradise are given daily food from the gate of heaven. The two archbishops told Owein the following:

And ich day ate gate o siþe
Ous comeþ a mele to make ous bliþe,
þat is to our biheue:
A swete smal o al gode,
It is our soule fode.
Abide, þou schalt ous leue.' (182:1-6)

Anon þe kniðt was war þere,
Whare sprong out a flaumbe o fer,
Fram heuen-gate it fel.
þe kniðt þouðt, al fer and neiðe
þer ouer al paradis it fleiðe,
And ðat so swete a smal. (183:1-6)

þe holy gost in fourme o fer
Opon þe kniðt liðt þer,
In þat ich place;
þurth vertu of þat ich liðt
He les þer al his erþelich miðt ,
And þonked Godes grace. (184:1-6)

The flame of fire of holy spirits from heaven is the food given to people in earthly paradise. We recognize from this passage that the light emitted from holy spirits in flame has a special efficacy. As stated above, the light in heavenly paradise could be one of its remarkable characteristics.

1.3 Feast of God

The main point of the following passage is the beatific vision souls have in heaven. Although the light is not described, the place should be considered full of light.

þus þe bishop to him sede,
'God fet ous ich day wiþ his brede,
Ac we no haue noure neiðe
So grete likeing of his grace,
No swiche a siðt opon his face,
As þo þat ben on heiðe. (185:1-6)

The next passage relates to a beatific vision.

þe soules þat beþ at Godes fest,
þilche ioie schal euer lest
Wiþouten ani ende. (186:1-3)

These citations clearly indicate that in *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, heavenly paradise is filled with light and that souls living with God are enjoying beatific vision.

2. On the Description of Paradise in *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*

This section discusses the description of paradise in *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*. The main text covered here is IA. 55449 (at the British Library), which is a medieval prose from the 15th century. When necessary, reference will be made to Auct. 1Q. 5. 28 (at Oxford Bodleian Library), another 15th century medieval prose, and Selden Supra 66 (at Oxford Bodleian Library), a Latin text.¹⁷

Here is a brief introduction of the story's plot. It involves a vision in which God sent St. Nicolas to a young monk named Edmund, and revealed that from Holy Thursday before Easter to Holy Saturday in 1196 was the period of Richard I's rule. Edmund was a pious monk who had long been suffering from a serious disease. One day, St. Nicholas appeared to Edmund and when he led him by the hand, Edmund lost sense of his body and fell into a trance. Other monks believed he was dead; however, he was in an

apparent state of death that caused him to be lifeless. Meanwhile, the vision continued with Edmund going to purgatory and paradise, guided by St. Nicholas.

Purgatory was tripartite. In the first purgatory, the souls of sinners were tortured but they hoped to be blessed someday. Edmund met a bishop, an abbot, a judge, and other ecclesiarchs. Souls who fell into the second purgatory experienced much stronger pain than those in the first purgatory. Edmund saw a high mountain that almost reached the clouds. One side of this mountain was burning, while the other side was cold and icy. A dark, deep valley and a malodorous pond were located on the mountain's far side. Sinful souls were tortured by the heat and cold of the mountain, while others were immersed in the pond. Souls in the third purgatory, however, suffered the worst distress. There were swarms in the purgatory, and devils inflicted terrible harm on the souls who committed serious homosexual crimes. After passing the third purgatory, Edmund and his guide St. Nicholas reached paradise.

According to Morgan, this story consists of the following three parts of paradise:

In the first stage, the blessed rejoice in a flowery field before a vision of Christ on the Cross.... The second Paradise is a garden enclosed by a crystal wall in which steps are cut; from the summit of this wall, where the enthroned Christ is adored, the ascent may be made to a third area, the 'heaven of heavens where the just rejoice in the presence of God'...; this we are not shown.¹⁸

Next, we discuss the noteworthy elements of each paradise.

2. 1 The First Paradise

After Edmund and St. Nicholas passed the dark, fetid, and painful underworld, they saw light. Edmund arrived at a place where there were many souls who had been purified in purgatory. However, they did not yet have brightness in their lives:

Sothely, in thys fylde we sawe and founde infynyte thousandys of sowlys ful iocunde and merye in a ful swete reste after her penauns and after her purgacyon. And hem that we founde firste in the begynnyng of that filde had apou hem white clothyng, but hyt was not very bryght nethyr wele schynyng. Nothwithstondyng, they had no spotte of blacknes or of any other onclennes on hem, as hyt semyd, saue thys, as Y seyde before, they were not very bryght schynyng whyte. (2547-54)

This passage shows that the clothing worn by souls in this place was not especially bright. Therefore, the purification of souls could be determined by the whiteness of

their clothes. The main theme of the first paradise appears to be the overall brightness of souls.

2.2 The Second Paradise

The description of the striking light seen by Edmund in the second paradise was even more impressive than the one in the first paradise:

...and the crosse was lyfte vppe, and so Y cam in. But what brightnes and clerenes of light was there wihin-forthe al aboutys, no man aske ne seche of me, for Y can-not only telle hit by worde, but also Y can-not remembre hit in mynde. That glorious schyning light was brighte and smothe, and so raueshte a man that behylde hit, that hit bare a man aboue hym-selfe by the grete brightnes of lyghte, yn so mekyl that what-sum-euer Y sawe before, hit was as no-thing, me thought, in comparyson of hit. That bryghtnesse, thawghe hyt were inestymable, neuerthelesse, hyt dullyd not a mannys syghte, but rathyr scharpyd hyt. (2827-37)

Although brightness was the main feature of the first paradise, the second paradise was concerned with light. The bright light never met someone's eyes directly but it enhanced one's eyesight. Light in the other world not only stimulates eyesight but also vitalizes the soul. Edmund noticed a beautiful ladder inside the gate through which he passed. This ladder reached high in the sky to the third paradise. The empyrean, or God's dwelling, is the third paradise and is discussed in the next section.

2.3 The Third Paradise

Empyrean, the heaven of heavens, is described as follows:

But than from thens, wythowten any hardnes or taryng, they ascende vppe to the hey heuin, the whyche ys blessyd of the syghte of the euerlastyng Godhed, where al only the holy angels and the sowlys of ryghtwes men, that byn of angels perfeccion, seyn the ynuisibl[e] and inmortalle Kynge of al worldys face to face, the whyche hath only inmortalite, and dwellyth yn lyghte that ys inaccessible.... (2861-67)

The souls who are permitted to meet God directly must be pure and innocent, with no distress, sadness, or moral corruptions. Similar descriptions are found in the medieval text Auct. 1Q. 5. 28 and the Latin text Selden Supra 66.

The words such as "euerlastyng," "perfeccion," "ynuisibl[e]," "inmortalle," and "inmortalite" in the passage refer to divine characteristics. Therefore, the citation above

describes God himself. In this context, the beatific vision of seeing God directly or “face to face” is described. The angels and pure souls who come to this highest heaven can see God’s face immediately, a time when they feel utmost happiness. The “lyghte that ys inaccessible” in the passage above is the light of God, indicating that heaven is filled with light.

When Edmund’s soul returned to his body and he awoke, the wound he suffered prior to visiting the other world was completely healed, as described in the following passage:

Trewly, yn the space of hys raueshyng, he was so fully helyd that he hym-selfe meruelyd wyth vs to fele and see the peyne and ache wyth the wownde so clene agonne, that no tokyn of hyt, ne signe of rednes or of whythnes, remaynyd aboue the meruelus curacion of God. (2969–73)

The author explains that experiencing the other world itself has the power to heal any person who has been there. The light of God makes such supernatural healing possible.

3. On the Description of Paradise in *The Vision of Tundale*

As Eileen Gardiner pointed out,¹⁹ *The Vision of Tundale* is a famous work that was translated into at least 13 languages. Its original Latin text is known as *Visio Thugdali*, which was written by Marcus in the middle of 12th century. For this study, we use the text B.L.MS Cotton Caligula A ii, which was translated into Middle English in the 15th century. Another Middle English text, Advocates’ Library 19.3.1,²⁰ and the Latin text MS Bodley 536²¹ also serve as references.

The plot in *The Vision of Tundale* is as follows. Tundale, an Irishman, has power and wealth, but he is an usurer and a wicked man.²² One day, he went to a debtor to collect full payment for three horses that he had sold. However, when the debtor was unable to pay, Tundale was so outraged that he padded the bill. The debtor invited Tundale to dinner to placate his anger and Tundale accepted. The two men sat down to eat. However, as soon as Tundale took a bite of his meal, he lost his physical capacities and fell on the floor, apparently dead. The people who gathered around him thought he was dead. Because his body was still warm, it remained on the floor without anyone performing funeral rites. Meanwhile, Tundale’s soul left his body and experienced marvelous things, such as being followed by his guardian angel of light into the other world. His soul left his body for three days, from daytime on Wednesday to nine o’clock

in the morning on Saturday.²³ He visited purgatory, hell, and paradise. After his experiences in the other world, Tundale lived a pious life, at the end of which he was taken to the heaven, the world of God.²⁴

3.1 Division of Paradise in *The Vision of Tundale*

According to the expression that Tundale “went further,” paradisiacal places can be divided into the following four regions. Listed using lines from *The Vision of Tundale*, all of these areas will be treated as earthly paradise:

- (1) 1542–1590: the place with a beautiful field and fountain of life, where the inhabitants are mostly but not completely good
- (2) 1591–1639: the place with the two kings, Concelere and Danate
- (3) 1640–1750: the dwelling place of the Irish King Cormake
- (4) 1751–1808: the place for husbands and wives who lived an unblemished married life²⁵

The next lines, 1809–2280, will be divided into seven heavens according to Mearns.²⁶ In this study, the following places are considered as heavenly paradise.

- (5) 1809–1826: the first heaven, where saints greeted Tundale
- (6) 1827–1960: the second heaven, with a wall made of gold and gems and a pavilion in which pious people live
- (7) 1961–1986: the third heaven, where souls sing hymns and play instruments
- (8) 1987–2074: the fourth heaven, where Tundale sees a light from the higher heaven, a large tree, and shining souls like angels under a tree
- (9) 2075–2096: the fifth heaven, where there exists another wall decorated with many precious stones
- (10) 2097–2116: the sixth heaven, where angels are allocated along their nine orders
- (11) 2117–2280: the seventh heaven, where Tundale sees the scene of the Trinity²⁷

I will discuss noteworthy elements of the second, fourth, sixth, and seventh heavens, focusing on light and the beatific vision in heavenly paradise.

The Second Heaven

In the second heaven was a beautiful golden wall, which shined brighter than any gold on Earth. The inhabitants were “Holy men & wymmen” (1851) who were sitting on thrones. The place has the brightness of God:

The grete bryðtenes of Goddus face
Shone amonge hem in þat place.
Hyt shone bryðter & was more clere
Then euer shone any sonne here.
All her here was fayr & schyre,
Hyt semede all as hyt hadde be gold wyre;
Crownes þey hadde on hede, ylk one,
Of golde & mony a precyous stone
Of gret vertu & sere colowres —
They semede lyke kynges or emperoures.
So fayre crownes as þer wer sene
In þys worlde hadde neuer kyng ne qwene. (1859–1870)

There was a pavilion in this heaven where Tundale saw monks and nuns faithful to God. “They shull euer in Hys ioye ben, / For þey shall euer God in þe face sen.” (1959–1960). The passage shows that the people there can acquire the glory of a beatific vision.

The Fourth Heaven

Tundale saw many streaks of light descending from the heaven above. Golden chains were gracefully hanging down from the shining streaks. Among them, numerous angels with golden wings were flying and singing beautiful songs. The description of light in *The Vision of Tundale* is much more elaborate than that in *St. Patrick's Purgatory* and *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*. The author of *The Vision of Tundale* enhanced the light's beauty to its utmost. The following passage describes the light:

Fro þe fyrmament aboue her hede
Come mony bryðte bemes into þat stede
Fro þe whych [chaynes] hengen þykkefolde
Shynande full bryðte of rede golde.
They hongede þykke on yche partye,
Some wer enameled full rychelye.

All wer ioyned & fastened [ryght]
 In wondes of syluer ryche & bryðte;
 They hongede wyth cheynes in þe ayre,
 Non erþely syðte was so fayre.
 Theramonge henge grette plente
 Of iewelles þat wer of grette bewte:
 Fyoles & cowpes of grete price,
 Symbale[s] of syluer & flour-de-lyce;
 Wyth syluer belles meryly þey ronge,
 And angelles flowe ay amonge
 Wyth wynges of golde shynande bryðte,
 Non erþely mon hath seyn suche a syðte!
 As þe angelles flowe in þe ayre
 Amonge þe chaynes þat wer so fayre,
 Ther was such songe & suche ryngynge,
 Such melodye & such syngynge,
 And such a syðte of rychesse,
 That ioye was mor þa[nne] mon myðte gesse. (1987–2010)

There is a large tree called “Pulcheryma Vyte” (2018), under which many lilies bloom and various kinds of aromatic herbs and spices grow. According to this description, we see that paradise is filled with both color and a vital force.

The Sixth Heaven

When Tundale and his guardian angel climbed the wall of precious stones, they saw the following nine orders of angels:

The ioe þat þey syðe þore
 Semede on hondredfolde more
 Then all þe ioye þat þey hadde sene
 Ther þat þey before hadde bene,
 For no tonge myðth tell wyth mowþe,
 þowð he all þe wytte of þe worlde kowþe.
 Ne herte myðte þenke, ne ere here,
 Nor ye see wer hyt neuer so clere,
 The ioye þat þer was and blysse
 That God hath ordeyned for all Hys.
 For þey syðe, as þe story telles,
 The nyne orderes of angelles
 That shone as bryðte as þe sonne,

And holy spyrytes smonge hem wonne;
 Pryuey wordes þey herde þer þ[a]nne
 That shulde be shewed to no m[a]nne. (2101–2116)

It is noteworthy that the Latin text describes “nouem ordines angelorum”²⁸ as well, and unlike the medieval text stated above, it refers to the concrete orders: “angelos, archangelos, virtutes, principatus, potestates, dominationes, thronos, Cherubin, Seraphin.”²⁹

According to Robert Hughes, St. Thomas divided God’s acts into three types, allocated three kinds of angels to each one, and systematized the nine orders of angels as seen in the following list:³⁰

List of the nine orders of angels

Three kinds of God’s acts	Name of angelic type	Symbolic reference to
(1) GOD’S ACTS RELATING TO HIMSELF (E.g., self-knowledge)	Seraph	Father
	Cherub	Son
	Throne	Holy Ghost
(2) GOD’S ACTS RELATING TO UNIVERSAL CREATION	Domination	Creation
	Virtue	Preservation
	Power	Ordering
(3) GOD’S ACTS RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL BEINGS OR OBJECTS (E.g., Man)	Principality	Creation
	Archangel	Redemption
	Angel	Beatification

Though this system by St. Thomas differs from the orders in Wagner’s Latin text, the types of angels are similar, and it helps us understand the role of angelology in medieval Christian society. In *The Vision of Tundale*, the angel guiding Tundale in the other world is the lowest heavenly creature according to the above stated list. However, devils can never attack an angel even if he is in the lowest rank. This is because in the phrase “angell bright(e)” (1697, 1787, 1879, 1945), the angel with Tundal is full of light, and has its origin in God.

The Seventh Heaven

The angels in nine orders are looking up at the Blessed Trinity. The holy place where God lives, the seventh heaven, is called the empyrean.

Ouer þat ðet þey sawe well more

Amonge þe angelles þat wer þore.
 They syðe þe Holy Trinite,
 Godde syttyng in Hys mageste;
 They behelde faste þat swete face
 That shone bryðte ouer all þat place.
 And þe angelles þat wer þore
 ðernede to byholde hyt euermore,
 For þe bryðtenesse & þe bewte
 That þey myðte in þe face se
 That seuen sype bryðter was in syðte
 Thenne þe sonne þat shynes so bryðte,
 The whyche ys fode to angelles
 And lyf to spyrytes þat þer dwelles. (2125–2138)

From afar, Tundale looked at God sitting on his throne. The eyes of those who saw God may “neuer be made bylnde ne dymme” (2152). This is quite mysterious; however, *The Vision of Tundale* indicates that God has the power to bless one’s life with vitality.

Although Tundale wished to live in this beautiful place forever, the angel told him to return to his body on Earth. When Tundale’s soul returned, he abandoned his sinful ways and lived piously until his death.

4. On the Light and Beatific Vision in Paradise

As seen in the three works discussed here, God’s place is in the uppermost level of heaven. The light of God brightly illuminates the supreme heaven. Therefore, the works discussed in this paper place more emphasis on describing the light rather than God.

Light shall now be considered from a different point of view. Light had a special meaning in medieval cosmology. For example, light had the following peculiarity in Neoplatonic philosophy:

According to Neoplatonic philosophy, light is not something material like the four elements but a force that shapes and gives form to things. Sometimes it was said to be something divine—an emanation from God. Brilliance is not a property of objects but something they possess because they participate in God, the divine light.³¹

As we see from this passage, light is not a material like the four elements; it is God’s power from which all materials were created. The brightness of materials is not their

own quality, rather the materials are bright because they are related to God; that is, the brightness is the light of the divine. Such light reminds us of the fifth element by St. Thomas. The following passage states Robert Hughes' remarks about the light of the empyrean in *Paradiso* by Dante:

The medium whereby God transmits the energy and motion of his love to the universe, by means of his angels, is light: *luce intelletual, pena d'amore*—the light of the intellect, filled with love. Light belongs to the intellect in a double sense. First, it is the supreme attribute of God, whose wisdom is the fount and model of all human understanding. Secondly, most knowledge is gained by using one's eyes—reading and looking—and only light makes this possible.³²

Thus, the light of God is related to love and intellect. As seen in the above passages, there can be several possible meanings of light. However, it seems that the light of paradise described in the three works discussed in this study is more connected with life and healing. In *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, a streak of light from a higher heaven feeds the spirits in earthly paradise (183–185).³³ In *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*, Edmund felt fullness in his life when he looked up at God surrounded by light. Moreover, there is the case of *The Vision of Tundale*, in which “The whyche (= God's light) ys fode to angelles / And lyf to spyrytes þat þer dwelles” (2137-2138). In other words, the light of God can be considered as the source of life. Therefore, the beatific vision of these works should be concerned with the light of God or life itself. From this aspect, I shall state my opinion concerning the viewpoint of paradise as discussed in this study, based on the beatific vision. I believe that in another world such as paradise, the vital energy of God is streamed into individual souls by directly seeing the light, the source of life, with the spiritual, not physical, eyes. Thus, individuals enjoy the beatitude united with God.

Notes

- ¹ See Alison Morgan, *Dante and the Medieval Other World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 2.
- ² Carolly Erickson, *The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 30.
- ³ “PARADISE, WESTERN CONCEPT OF”, *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), vol.9, 396.
- ⁴ *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol.9, 396.
- ⁵ *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol.9, 396.
- ⁶ *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol.9, 396.

- ⁷ Hand-Werner Goetz, *Leben im Mittelalter* (München: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1994), 101.
- ⁸ Goetz, *Leben im Mittelalter*, 101.
- ⁹ McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: a History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 79.
- ¹⁰ P.D.A.Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (The British Library, 1991), 19-37.
- ¹¹ Sherman M. Kuhn, ed., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1981), Part P.1, 592–594.
- ¹² *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol.9, 395.
- ¹³ See Robert Easting, ed., *St Patrick's Purgatory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) EETS 298, xvii
- ¹⁴ Easting, *St Patrick*, xix.
- ¹⁵ The Latin text used here is the version, MS Bodley 536, included in Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory*.
- ¹⁶ Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory*, 144.
- ¹⁷ Each text is from *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*, ed. by Robert Easting (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) EETS, O.S. 318.
- ¹⁸ See Morgan, 184.
- ¹⁹ Eileen Gardiner, ed., *Visions of Heaven & Hell Before Dante*, New York: Italica Press, 1989), 252.
- ²⁰ William Barclay Turnbull, *The Visions of Tundale; together with Metrical Moralizations and Other Fragments of Early Poetry* (Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1843) was used here.
- ²¹ The text is included in Mearns, *Tundale*.
- ²² Tundale's social status is considered to be an Irish knight. Regarding this, see Gardiner, xv.
- ²³ Mearns, 18.
- ²⁴ Mearns, 7.
- ²⁵ This summarization is mine.
- ²⁶ Mearns, 31-42.
- ²⁷ This summarization is mine.
- ²⁸ Mearns, 151.
- ²⁹ *Visio Tnugdali: Lateninisch und Altdeutsch* Herausgegeben von Albrecht Wagner (Erlangen: Verlag von Andreas Deichert, 1882), 52.
- ³⁰ Robert Hughes, *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* (New York: Stein and Day /Publishers, 1968), 24.
- ³¹ McDannell, 83.
- ³² Hughes, 114.
- ³³ Easting, *St Patrick*, 31-32.

[Viewpoints on the Descriptions of Paradise in Dream-Visions]

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