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Tundale's Vision: Socialization in 12th Century Ireland

Honors Thesis

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Introduction

At the turn of the 6th century, Pope Gregory I officially stated that icons were scripture for the illiterate, and in a population plagued by illiteracy and a lack of educational opportunity, artwork became a primary method of spreading Church ideas[1]. Artists in Medieval Europe created literature and images vividly depicting the cosmology of the Christian faith, and the population of Medieval Europe lauded these impressive works that effectively ratified their beliefs. Religious artwork depicting scenes of Hell, especially, aided the transmission of morals and Church ideology to Medieval European Christians. The image of Hell threatened eternal damnation immoral action. The fear of this eternal punishment became a driving force for the transmission of morals in Medieval Church society, and this can be seen through the image's proliferation into Medieval artwork.

This particular work will focus upon the evolution and influence of artistic demonology on the English and Irish populations in the middle portion of the Medieval period. Demonology and folklore permeated many aspects of Medieval English and Irish culture at this time, and one example of such folklore took the form of vision literature. Vision literature was a form of poetry that reported the journey of an individual through the cosmological realms of the Christian faith. The epitome of this genre may be found in Dante Alighieri's early 14th century work *The Divine Comedy*, a work that emerged from an era of reformed education. These pieces of artwork entailed numerous moral lessons that reinforced Christian social norms, and these lessons were presented through the portrayal of punishment for deviance from the expected norm. Dating these visions becomes complicated due to their folk nature. Christian officials often compiled these visions out of rumor and hearsay, and because of this, the true origin of

many visionary accounts often remains unknown. Additionally, visions were often orally transmitted in vernacular sermons. This resulted in slight changes over time. These visions gained rapid popularity throughout all of Medieval Europe during the Middle Ages. They were translated into a multitude of languages, and artists labored to produce artistic renditions of the events described in the visions. In this way, the Christian church buttressed its presence in Medieval Europe, and it monopolized the process of socialization.

In this historical survey, the power of art depicting the image of Hell as a driving force for socialization should become apparent. While it was not the only agent of socialization at this particular point in time, its extreme impact should not be discarded. Artwork exhibits the inexplicable ability to change or represent the perception of an individual, and the grotesque images that will appear in this survey will probably even leave an impression upon a modern reader. The power of these grotesque images as an agent of socialization should become evident through the analysis of the piece of vision literature, *Tundale's Vision.* While my inferences cannot fully encapsulate the Medieval view of artistic demonology, I hope to make its function as an agent of socialization clear by providing a historical context and exploring possible interpretations.

Chapter 1: Medieval Educational State

Monastic Learning: Education of the Clergy

In order to properly understand how religious artwork became a driving agent of socialization, one must first understand the educational context that surrounded its production. After all, it is through the process of socialization that human beings learn how to interact within a society. Today, much of our process of socialization takes place within public educational

systems set up by national government entities. Throughout the majority of the Medieval period, however, such a centralized system did not exist. Education largely fell into the hands of small independent institutions who tailored their curriculum to fit their regional needs, and all of these independent institutions share in common exclusivity and a relationship with the Christian faith. Due to the lack of a centralized system of education, much of the process of socialization took place within Church service and the personal experiences of an individual.

One educational institution that existed throughout Medieval Ireland at the time of the composition of *Tundale's Vision* was the monastic school. While the incursion of Germanic tribes in continental Europe during the early Medieval period ravaged the preservation of Roman culture, England and Ireland enjoyed an isolated island security[2]. This delayed the Germanic incursion into England and Ireland, and because of this, the monastic educational format spread differently than in the rest of Europe. During the early fourth century, monastic missionaries entered Ireland, and through their efforts, the Christian way of life proliferated into Irish culture. Like the rest of Europe, however, the Germanic tribes of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes entered Britain from Denmark. These tribes overran eastern and southern Britain between 443 and 485 C.E.[3] By the sixth century, Christian churches and monasteries covered the majority of Ireland. It was in Ireland that bardic schools flourished, and the area became the training ground for much of the early Christian clergy[4]. Although Ireland remained the center for Greek instruction throughout the beginning of the Medieval period, the adopted Christian culture rose to dominance[5].

Monastic schools developed a relatively standardized method of life and learning from the Christian monk St. Benedict. St. Benedict established a Benedictine rule that became the

general format of monastic study throughout Europe[6]. St. Benedict first wrote this rule at the monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy around 529 C.E.[7] His rule pragmatically served to foment a monastic lifestyle centered around spiritual contemplation and salvation. This rule for monastic function permitted a certain amount of flexibility and freedom in a monastery's general operations. Such flexibility came at a great cost, however, as it offered no firmly centralized form of monastic discipline. Widespread autonomy also left monasteries vulnerable to attacks from Germanic tribes because the Benedictine rule offered no unified military defense[8]. This severe disadvantage opened many monastic communities to the idea of reform under the reign of Charlemagne due to his assurance of a unified security.

The Benedictine rule pragmatically supported a life of quiet religious contemplation, and only basic education was needed to interpret sacred scriptures and ideology. The purpose of this monastic system, after all, was spiritual salvation. The issue of the Germanic invasions could be effectively ignored within the walls of a monastery, and the lower class could find relief and salvation from the strife of the Medieval world. These monasteries preserved a great deal of ancient literature that still survives today, and they influenced Medieval society for over half a millennium. Within the walls of the monastery, many Medieval Europeans were socialized to fill the role of a pious monk intent of preserving Church ideals. Even these isolated sanctuaries were not without their problems, however. As these institutions gained wealth, credibility, and influence, they grew apathetic, and they became subject to the vice and corruption from which they originally intended to escape[9]. Such Church corruption was a major issue that the famous king Charlemagne intended to reform.

Educational Reform under Charlemagne

The late eighth century of the Middle Ages marked a time of educational reform throughout Europe. In 768 C.E., Charlemagne rose to the Frankish throne, and his administrative talents made him a dominant unifying force for Europe in the Middle Ages[10]. This Medieval figure sought to end much of the lawlessness that rose from the dominance of Germanic tribes in the early Medieval period, and by the time of his death in 814 C.E., he succeeded in extending the boundaries of the Frankish kingdom to cover majority of the old Roman empire[11]. With the expansion of his kingdom, Charlemagne realized the dire need for educational reforms. Charlemagne aspired to establish adequate educational facilities for the nobles and clergy of the Frankish kingdom, and in order to accomplish this task, Charlemagne enlisted the aid of a prominent English scholar named Alcuin[12].

Alcuin entered the scene of Medieval education at a time when education had reached a state of near total annihilation. Over the centuries, monastic schools had lost their initial Christian fervor, and they were now plagued with political corruption. Monasteries became places for men of royal ties to sit back and gain a pension, and what little education that remained in the monastery was lackluster at best[13]. As Charlemagne's minister of education, Alcuin began solving this educational crisis by reorganizing a preexisting educational institution known as the palace school[14]. This school focused on the education of the royal family, and Alcuin introduced into it the system of English education that he had been exposed to[15]. He provided elementary instruction pertaining to writing, sciences, and theology of the time. In this system, Charlemagne himself learned to read Latin, but he was never able to perfectly master the art of writing it[16].

Once the palace school successfully educated royals at an elementary level, Charlemagne

extended his educational reforms to the clergy and monastic communities of his kingdom. He

initiated his reform by drafting a series of sermons to be delivered by churches throughout his

realm. These sermons called for a return to the intellectual zeal that Charlemagne claimed was

lost due to the negligence of their ancestors[17]. He also commissioned the aid of numerous Italian

monks to act as instructors for the monasteries in his kingdom[18]. Charlemagne delivered his first

official proclamation concerning the education crisis of the Middle Ages in 787 C. E. This

proclamation reprimanded the general illiteracy of the Christian clergy, and it exhorted them to

study letters. In 789 C.E., Charlemagne further exhorted the Christian clergy to return to a just

life possibly in response to the corruption that seemed evident amongst the clergy[19]. Over the

next couple of years, Charlemagne added the noble laity to his educational reforms, and he

suggested that every free member of his court should send their sons to study. It is important to

note that although Charlemagne extended educational opportunities to much of his kingdom, the

lower working class remained excluded from his programs[20].

While Charlemagne promoted education with a great deal of alacrity, the actual effect it

had on Medieval Europe appeared to be miniscule. Much of the monastic clergy remained

content in their ignorance and illiteracy, and the noble class equally saw little benefit to a

scholarly education[21]. His reforms succeeded merely in rekindling the dim flame of intellectual

pursuit in the Middle Ages. He proposed a system that replaced the prominence of rule through

physical strength with the rule through ideas, and he promoted a society based on individual

merit as opposed to royal favoritism[22]. Charlemagne essentially attempted to elevate education

as the primary agent of socialization for the members of the nobility and clergy, and he promoted

a social norm of an educated priestly and upper class. During his reign, he appointed numerous

well educated men to the positions of bishop and abbots, and in some select areas, his

educational message took hold[23]. On the whole, however, his progressive reforms failed to fully

transform Medieval society, and the process of socialization still fell upon the Church.

Feudal Education: Teaching the Laity

With the death of Charlemagne and the arrival of the tenth century, Medieval Europe

plunged into a tumultuous state. Charlemagne was the dominant unifying personality of the

eight century, and his death left a drastic power vacuum in Europe.   It became apparent that the

Frankish kingdom had overextended itself, and a rapidly declining economy made it possible for

only small states to survive[24]. To alleviate this problem, the political system of feudalism

reached its height. Feudalism created a simple and pragmatic administrative force under strict

class distinctions for the purpose of physical protection. Slight regional variations occurred in

the practice of Feudalism because it divided Medieval Europe into a series of militarily

independent states based on a system of fiefdom[25]. The fief entailed a lord and vassal

relationship that dominated Medieval society until the mid-thirteenth century. In the most

generalized view of the political system of feudalism, vassals served a land owning lord in

exchange for shelter and arable land. These vassals presided over a fief, a land and title grant

given to them by a lord[26]. The lord expected vassals to render military service and hospitality in

return[27]. This obligatory military service placed the economic burden of the military on the

shoulders of the vassal[28]. Such a system grew out of a contentious period wrought with fighting.

Elements of the military relationship between lords and vassals may be traced back to the 8th

century in the Frankish kingdom[29]. Because the noble vassalage owned weapons and armor,

they accounted the military force at this time. These nobles fought for their own interests as well

as the interests of their lords[30]. Feudalism proved to be a highly unstable system similar to that of the warring Germanic tribes that overtook Europe centuries before, and the Christian Church sought a return to stability. In the pursuit of this goal, the Church dipped its hands into the educational system of chivalry. This was the first official secular educational system since the unified Roman Empire, and although it did not foment true stability, it proved efficacious in spreading Church ideology into the process of socialization for the Medieval nobility[31].

The educational system of chivalry first appeared in the ninth century, and it reached its apogee during the Crusades. Chivalry originated as a secular system with purpose of raising children of nobility to the status of knighthood, and it was meant to teach strength, honor, obedience, and gallantry. By the 11th century, however, Church ideology wholly permeated the structure of this system[32]. From roughly the age of seven, children of the nobility learned the ways of Christian life and feudal etiquette[33]. At the age of twenty-one a child in the system of chivalry reached the status of knighthood. The Church oversaw this transition with a ceremony in which the new knight took an oath "to defend the Church, to attack the wicked, to respect the priesthood, to protect women and the poor, to preserve the country in tranquility, and to shed his blood, even to its last drop, in behalf of his brethren" in the presence of his lord and priests[34]. With this ceremony, the knight's socialization was completed, and he was now bound to the defense of the Church and its ideals.

Along with this system came a school format differentiated from the monastic school that still dominated Church education. The castle school became the primary educational institution for those of the noble class. In contrast to monastic schools, the castle school offered no course of Latin. Instead, nobles learned their native language in order to better interact with the local

populations. They also practiced riding, swimming, archery, fencing, hunting, chess, and rhyming in order to better prepare them for military careers[35]. This system offered little for the prospect of a future, but rather it focused on promoting the skills necessary for survival in the present. Through this new secular form of education, the Church managed to regain a sense of stability in Medieval Europe. This system stressed the social norm of obedience to and defense of the Church and its doctrine, and due to this focus, Christianity became a ubiquitous presence in the minds of Medieval Europeans. Religion became the primary agent of socialization amongst all social classes.

The Average Citizen: Those Left in the Dark

The analysis of these forms of education leads to numerous inferences pertaining to the educational status of the common lower class peasant. An important aspect that these educational systems share is that of exclusivity. In order to participate in a monastic education, one was required to submit their life to the service of the Church. Charlemagne's educational reforms were extended only to the clergy and upper class. In order to participate in an education through chivalry, one had to be lucky enough to be born into a noble class. Peasants held no freedom of social mobility, and they were generally denied any form of institutionalized education. The only real form of education such citizens received took the form of Church service and folk tradition[36]. In this manner, we see that the Church, in the place of institutionalized education, facilitated the majority of the process of socialization for the lower class[37].

The Medieval Church took a rather repressive stance toward lower class peasants. The Church claimed access, through divine revelation, to a final truth outside the realm of reason[38]. Scripture and its interpretations by Church officials became the authoritative guide to life for the

vast proportion of the Medieval European population, and the Church demonized deviance from its doctrine and social norms. It was a criminal sin to question the dogma of the church[39]. Such a repressive attitude toward the education of commoners engendered an environment where fantastical folk tales thrived. Average church goers sought to explain their world within the framework that they understood, and due to this, explanations were placed in an entirely spiritual framework. The repression of inquiry also lent itself to a mindset of unquestioning belief in the lower class[40]. This mindset extended to folk traditions, and many people who reported angels, demons, and other religious experience attained authoritative credibility.

It should now be apparent that education existed only in a religious context at this time. Conditions in the Medieval world were deplorable regardless of social class. Economic depression, pestilence, and famine plagued the lives of the Medieval Europeans[41]. Christianity offered a unique form of escapism from these daily contentions. Within the walls of the Church, one could find salvation and deliverance from a life of intense suffering. Religion offered a guarantee that struggles in this life held meaning, and the afterlife would reward those who stayed virtuous in the eyes of the Church. Christianity provided an effective safety net for a population seemingly powerless against the forces of nature and human conflict[42]. Humanity was a small and ephemeral part of history, and Christianity offered a sense of comfort through eternity[43].

An environment such as this enabled religious artwork to thrive as a tool for the process of socialization, and a uniquely vivid form of demonology emerged as an integral part of Medieval culture. The rising credibility and popularity of these demonic folk traditions that were used to explain the world motivated artists to create artistic renditions based on this folklore.

These visual renditions confirmed the belief in otherworldly phenomena that dominated the Medieval European mind, and their popularity elevated their status as an agent of socialization. The work of vision literature embodying folk tradition in Ireland that will be discussed in the latter portion of this work may be viewed as a result of this outlook of obedience. These pieces of artwork aided in shaping the minds of the Medieval European population. Few of these impoverished people knew how to read, and imagery and oral transmission governed the process of socialization for the lower class of Medieval Europe.

Chapter 2: The Evolution of the Artistic Vision of Hell

Doctrine of Hell

In the early years of the Medieval period, the belief in Hell was axiomatic to the Christian community of Europe. Augustine of Hippo offered a significant contribution to the theological doctrine of Hell. Augustine is argued by historians to be one of the primary contributors to the mentality of the Middle Ages. Paul Johnson stated in his book, *A History of* Christianity, "Next to Paul, who supplied the basic theology, he did more to shape Christianity than any other human being[44]." Augustine's writings were incredibly popular in the Christian church during his life in the 4th and 5th centuries[45]. It is from his writings that we observe the origination of the mindset of obedience that was reinforced by the exclusive Medieval educational systems. During his career as a bishop, he labeled adversaries as heretics, and he influenced their violent removals[46]. He established that deviance from the social norm would not be tolerated, and he contributed much to the discourse on the hell that awaited social deviants.

His theological discourses often focused on the dualist struggle of sin within the human heart, and he firmly believed in the existence of a hell that punished the souls of sinners. This

view was especially apparent in one of his writings from the early 5th century entitled *The City of God.* This multi-volume work explained the relationship between Christianity and its neighboring religions at the time, and it also attempted to place the overall collapse of the Roman nation within a Christian context. In *The City of God,* Augustine claimed that pagans and philosophers were victims of deception from the Devil and his demons[47]. This deception, according to Augustine, condemned the city of Rome to failure from the beginning of its history. Throughout the work, Satan was spoken of as physically manifesting in the world in order to sow seeds of discord. Those who were strong in the ways of the Christian faith, however, were immune to such deception because the goodness of God exposed the trickery of the Devil[48].

In book twenty-one of Augustine's *The City of God*, he depicted the city of the Devil in vivid detail. Augustine believed that proving the eternal damnation of sinners would make it easier to believe that saints received an eternal reward[49]. Augustine painted a frightening picture of Hell that resembles its modern conception in a numerous ways, and it became the standard view of Hell accepted during the Medieval period. His Hell was a Hell of fire and eternal unending pain[50]. In this realm, souls became separated from the body so that pain may be inflicted without the relief of death[51]. God banishes the souls of the sinful to this realm, and none guilty of sin are granted impunity. Only through faith in the eternal goodness of God as well as abstaining from sin could protect man from this cruel unending punishment[52]. Such a frightening image bolstered belief in Church doctrine. No person wanted to risk the eternal punishment of their soul or the social stigma of heresy by going against Church policies, and this fearful image became the universally accepted image of Hell in the Middle Ages.

By the middle of the Medieval period, the idea of Heaven and Hell in Europe was an

uncontested doctrine. Many debates still persisted in relation to its purpose and nature, but its existence was firmly agreed upon. Prominent Church thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard insisted upon the Augustinian view of a literal hell wrought with torments for the mind and body in the 12th and 13th centuries[53]. Records survive indicating only one instance of someone questioning the truth behind the existence of Hell. In the middle of the 9th century, Johannes Scotus Erigena publicly questioned the existence of a Hell, and due to this deviance, the church labeled him a heretic. This unfortunate man met his end when a group of students stabbed him to death with pens because of his heretical views[54]. Prominent thinkers of this era were overtaken by an intense obsession with the possibilities of an afterlife. Arguments littered the years concerning the state of the body at resurrection, and Church theologians attempted to calculate the size of hell and its legions. These theologians even purported that the entrance to Hell could be located on the Earth[55]. One theory even placed the entrance to Hell in a volcanic crater at Lake Avernus in Italy[56].

An example of such a dogmatic theologian survives in the work of Isidore of Seville. This Church scholar wrote various works during the 7th century, and the reality of Hell revealed itself in his writing[57]. His most extensive work entitled *Etymologies* compiled the basic essentials of Graeco-Roman and early Christian learning, and some consider this book to be the basic handbook of Medieval Church thought[58]. This book interpreted scripture and history in the Medieval mindset that Heaven and Hell were real physical forces in conflict with each other. It described pagan civilizations such as Egypt and Persia as having been under the influence of the devil and his demons[59]. In this work, Isidore of Seville presented an interpretation of Satan as he appears in the book of Job. This particular interpretation evinced his arguments through biblical

citation. He acknowledged the Hebrew meaning of the word "Satan" as the accuser, but he spun

the meaning to attach a theme of opposition to its use in the book of Job[60]. Isidore of Seville

called Satan the tempter, the transgressor, and the adversary, and he buttressed these titles with

the sufferings inflicted upon Job[61]. This interpretation was the authoritative doctrine that

established the Devil as the corporeal opposition to good.

In addition to rationalizing the existence of a Devil, Isidore of Seville casually mentioned

the existence of various demons throughout human history. He purported the existence of Incubi

who wander the world seducing and violating unsuspecting women[62]. He demonized the Greek

conception of Cupid, a God associated with love. Isidore of Seville effectively twisted this

conception into a demon of sinful fornication[63]. He also blatantly attacked the Greek worldview

of the Pantheon of Gods calling them, "...entirely made up by poets, with the intention of

enhancing their gods with certain figures of speech, while histories reveal these gods to have

been lost and full of the infamy of shame[64]." Such belittling of past Greek tradition elevated the

Christian view supported by Isidore of Seville, and the encyclopedic work *Etymologies*

successfully adapted past historical views into the 7th century Medieval Christian worldview.

Etymologies presented a great example of the intense theological effort to legitimate the

existence of demons in reality as well as the credibility attached to the doctrine of Hell.

Such a vivid dogma supporting the existence of an afterlife became the focal point of

vernacular Church services in the mid to late Medieval era. Church sermons drew large crowds

by preaching fire and brimstone, and this served to spread the message of the Christian Church.

It was in these sermons that the Church's role in the process of socialization solidified. These

sermons provided well received entertainment to small communities whose only respite lay in

Church functions[65]. Vernacular sermons often came coupled with artistic visual aids, and the

depiction of sin was a popular theme in these artistic devices. Preachers often utilized manuals,

sculptures, reliefs, mosaics, and anecdotal stories in order to bring life to their words[66]. These

pieces of artwork conveyed social norms to the parishioners participating in the Church sermon.

In this manner, Hell and its vices gained authoritative credibility amongst local communities

throughout Europe. Unfortunately, the reaction of the average Medieval European to these

ebullient sermons can only be inferred through their popularity and preservation because no

records exist to fully recreate the experience of the vernacular Church sermon.

During this era, we can also observe an increasing anthropomorphization of the Devil, his

demons, and Hell. The structure of demonology closely resembled the educational and political

institutions at the time. Humans have a startling tendency to produce images within the

contextual framework of the time in which they live. Even the physical appearance of Hell as

portrayed by artists mirrored the appearance of Medieval Europe. Structures in Hell often took

the architectural form of Medieval citadels and battlements[67]. Due to this, it should come as no

surprise that the hierarchy of Hell parallels the hierarchy of feudalism. As discussed earlier,

feudalism entailed a lord-vassal relationship with strict class distinctions governing the social

functions of Medieval society. The artistic vision of Heaven as depicted by Medieval European

artists showed a similar format. The hierarchy of Heaven presented God as the feudal lord with

vassal knights in the form of angelic troops. The story of Lucifer's fall entailed the ultimate sin

of feudal society, betrayal[68]. This betrayal may also be interpreted as deviance from social norms

when juxtaposed with Church ideology, and it is an issue explored in almost all works of vision

literature. Lucifer effectively breached the faith and fealty to the feudal lord of Heaven, God,

and because of this perfidy, God condemned Lucifer to the eternal suffering of Hell. This

ideological image saturated artwork of the late Medieval period. Most memorably, Dante

Alighieri depicted this theme of feudal fealty in *The Divine Comedy* by placing the sin of

betrayal at the final level of Hell. This level contained Satan chewing the heads of Judas Iscariot,

Brutus, and Cassius, the ultimate traitors by Medieval standards, in a lake frozen by Satan's own

wings[69]. Such an image fully conveyed the social stigma ascribed to the treacherous in the

Middle Ages, and it evinced the filtration of Christian ideology and doctrine into artwork as well

as social expectations.

The Rise of Hell in Theater

Throughout the Middle Ages, the vision of Hell gained unprecedented popularity in

English theater. A genre of English theater in which images of Hell occurred may be found in

Christian Mystery plays. These religious plays began as an attempt to educate parishioners about

the Bible and church theology[70]. Since many parishioners were illiterate, theater played an

invaluable role in the Church's ability to spread a message. While early theatrical performances

depicting the Christian afterlife served a strict didactic purpose, sensational representations of

Hell began to gain popularity as time passed. Theaters began investing in large amounts of

money into special effects to enhance the thematic impact of Hell on the stage. They brought in

large cauldrons, fireworks, and numerous reptiles in order to bolster the performance's realism[71].

Although these pieces of art were not literary in the strictest sense, they clearly influenced the

genre of vision literature that will be discussed in the latter portion of this work.

Mystery plays served an instructive purpose in Medieval Church service. The label

"mystery" itself came from the Latin term "ministerium" meaning service[72]. Unfortunately, the

earliest surviving Mystery plays from the 12th century had already reached their sensational state, but secondary sources indicate that earlier Mystery plays served a strict spiritual and educational function[73]. In these earlier theatrical performances, biblical scenes would be reenacted by members of the clergy during festivals and holidays. While the vast majority of these plays reenacted important moments in Christian History, one of the most popular scenes, the crucifixion of Christ, featured the image of Hell. The crucifixion of Christ, referred to as a Passion cycle, entailed a short "Harrowing of Hell" in which Christ descended the depths of Hell in order to free his disciples[74].

These plays initially occurred during festivals related to early Christian holidays. Originally, the plays were rather simple often consisting of priests or nuns performing simple pious religious actions in front of an audience, but as their popularity grew amongst parishioners, the mystery plays transformed into an ostentatious form of drama meant to depict religious scenes from the time of creation to the last judgment[75]. Toward the end of the Medieval period, members of the clergy ceased acting in these plays, and much larger scale theatrical productions developed. Tradesmen guilds began investing in these productions, and this new surge of funding increased the quantity and quality of these plays. New venues were constructed to house the plays, more items were procured to serve as special effects, and actors were commissioned to deliver the stories to their receptive audiences[76]. It was at this point that the Harrowing of Hell of the Passion cycle embodied the popularity of Hell as an iconographic image and theme of the Mystery play.

From these plays, the image of Hell in the minds of Medieval Europeans became quite clear. Late Medieval Mystery plays often included scenes of Heaven, but the artistic depiction of

Hell superseded that of Heaven. Something as simple as a ladder sufficed to signify Heaven, but

surviving stage directions indicate lavish constructions of Hell scenes[77]. Investing guilds

enlisted cooks to adapt innovative special effects to the productions. These cooks additionally

provided large cauldrons for the set as well as pots and pans to produce sound effects. Such

special effects increased the impact of torture scenes set in Hell[78]. Mystery plays also often

included numerous stage props such as kettledrums, chains, and smoke in order to invigorate the

image of Hell. Productions toward the end of the Medieval period even utilized numerous

reptilian animals when constructing the image of Hell[79].

The most elaborate stage prop from the Mystery play's portrayal of Hell was the

Hellmouth. The Hellmouth was an image associated with the demonic realm in Christian

iconography throughout the Middle Ages. The theological justification for such an image was

derived from a passage in the book of Job implying that the jaws of Leviathan somehow acted as

a portal leading to the prison of mankind[80]. This conception of the Hellmouth delineated the

entrance of Hell as a large bestial jaw, and it was commonly believed to be an actual location on

Earth[81]. The image of the Hellmouth as a bestial jaw developed out of Anglo-Saxon England in

the late 10th century. The icon took preexisting imagery provided by Pope Gregory I, and

constructed an image meant to appeal to both Pagans and Christians alike[82]. This became an

omnipresent image throughout much Medieval artwork, and its presence may be found in the

genre of vision literature. It should come as no surprise that Mystery plays elaborated upon such

an axiomatic image.

To create an accurate Hellmouth, late Medieval carpenters carved beast heads from wood,

and they combined them with intricate systems of winches and pulleys to engender a realistic

actualization of the Hellmouth[83]. Smoke and flames radiated from the professionally constructed

Hellmouth in order to captivate the audience, and stagehands would create cacophonous sounds

to accompany the lively image. The prop itself was often too large to move off stage during

scene transitions, and because of this, the majority of Mystery plays centered around the image

of the Hellmouth[84]. The Hellmouth provided a form of transition in the actual performance of a

Mystery play. After the crucifixion of Christ occurred in a Passion cycle, Christ would enter the

Hellmouth, and the solemn tone of the play would shift to one of comedic action[85].

The depiction of Hell in Mystery plays tended to be one of comedic effect to

counterbalance solemn religious themes, and the humor took a rather low form in order to appeal

to the lower class audience. The Devil and his demons wore costumes of grotesque masks with

suits of hair or feathers, and they played roles of comic failure[86]. In a surviving Medieval

English York Cycle Mystery play, a somewhat lengthy dialogue between Christ and Satan

occurs. Satan, when encountering Jesus in Hell, stated, "God's son? Then should thou be full

glad, After no chattles need thou crave![87]" This line implied a critical lack of knowledge on the

part of Satan as he was completely oblivious to the existence of the son of God, and it would

likely have been a point of humor to its audience. Christ and the forces of good always inevitably

defeated the Devil and his temptation, and the Devil always became bound in a prison of his own

making[88]. After Satan's attempt to retain the souls of Christ's disciples in Hell, Satan sank into

the pits of Hell literally stating, "Alas for dole and care, I sink into hell's pit[89]."

Christ exemplified the role of a strong, proud, and triumphant divine warrior[90]. He

confidently breaks into hell with the intention of tearing down its gates[91].   Satan, on the other

hand, emerged in his elaborate costume exhibiting a lack of knowledge with dialogue often

referencing the breaking of wind[92]. Actors playing the role of the Devil took many great risks throughout the plays. These actors were often expected to hold fireworks and play tricks with fire, and injuries quite often occurred[93]. To make matters worse, their costumes were very unwieldy and fragile, requiring a great deal of consistent maintenance. The weight of the costume only added to the dangers associated with performing fire tricks[94]. Such a portrayal of the Devil in these Mystery plays evinced the lavishness associated with the image of Hell in the late Middle Ages.

Overall, the propensity of the iconographic image of Hell throughout many avenues of Medieval European artwork reveals the popularity of the image. This massive popularity provided an opportunity for the Christian Church to spread its message and morality to a largely illiterate population. Since education was exclusive to the nobility and members of the clergy, artistic images, orally transmitted stories, and personal experience became the driving agents of socialization for Medieval Europe. This can be inferred from the apparent popularity of the Harrowing of Hell scene as presented by the Medieval English Mystery play. Such a vivid scene no doubt left an impression on its audience, and this impression was grounded in religious ideology. The Harrowing of Hell presented a polemic against deviance from Christian doctrine. Depicting Christ, the idealized representation of Church morality, as a strong divinity that triumphs over the forces of evil supported a culture of obedience. The conquered evil, as represented by the comic portrayal of the devil, effectively belittled the social deviance that the devil, as a concept, embodied. Such an impression subtly aided the Church to spread its morals and ideology. This fact that will become even more evident when discussing the contents of a popular form of oracular folk tradition referred to as vision literature.

Chapter 3: Vision Literature

Popularity and General Introduction to Visions

A genre of literature featuring vivid depictions of demonology and other religious iconography that fully embodied the didactic function present in Medieval religious artwork may be found in the genre of vision literature. Records of visions in Medieval Europe began to grow in number during the 6th century, and they reached a peak in popularity from the 12th century to the 15th century. These religious folk tales recounted spiritual experiences, and the works of this genre took on the characteristics of popular folk traditions in late Medieval period in England and Ireland. Authors of visions purported their work to be recapitulations of true stories. Gwenfair Adams defines a vision as, "events that were believed to involve direct encounters with or communications from the supernatural world[95]." Such events often entailed glimpses of Heaven and Hell, and each of these pieces of literature built a unique cosmology with the intention of spreading moral and social messages. Vision literature gained great popularity in the late Medieval period, and the magnum opus of this genre may be found in Dante Alighieri's influential 14th century work *The Divine Comedy*.   The popularity of visions may be inferred from the quantity of surviving visions from the Medieval period. Many visions survive from the Late Medieval era, and the efforts at preserving them evince the popularity of the genre[96]. Vision literature provided insight into the social norms as dictated by the Medieval Christian Church, and as a result, it exemplified the educational function that religious artwork served for Medieval communities.

The visions that this genre of literature recounted could be experienced by people of varying social classes. They happened to saints and sinners of the upper and lower classes, and

they generally occurred in unique states of consciousness. Trances, dreams, and near death experiences engendered the conditions necessary to experience visions of this quality[97]. Visions also occurred at a variety of locations. One could fall into a vision during a Mass, at an acquaintance's home, in the forest, or even in the safety of one's own bed[98]. Creating relatable scenarios enhanced the credibility of these visions, and this enabled the authors of visions to label them as true stories. The Church was also careful to ensure that visions did not fall under the disreputable label of superstition by allowing priests and friars to frequently present visions in their sermons and religious manuals. The frequent use of these visions by church officials enabled the genre to survive as a form of inherited folklore without the stigma attached to the term superstition[99].

A vision's content varied slightly from work to work, but they all followed similar structures and themes. They were written in both prose and poetry by visionaries themselves or priests and monks who allegedly knew the visionary[100]. As hagiographical accounts that were often orally presented, visions also tended to change with the passage of time[101]. Some visions consisted of their protagonist being tormented by horrific fiends from Hell. Others granted their protagonist a glimpse into the grand kingdom of Heaven or the planes of purgatory. A few construct a full cosmology of Heaven and Hell through which the main character must undergo a pilgrimage[102]. The popular *Tundale's Vision* falls into this pilgrimage format. In these pilgrimage stories, the visionary was generally accompanied by an angelic guide[103]. All visions, however, remain religious in context, and they generally contained some word of caution against certain devious actions. This warning would often come with the offer of spiritual reward for adhering to the rules of the Church.

In Medieval Church society, vision literature played the role of visually depicting the spiritual world behind Church ideology. This created a window through which a Medieval citizen could physically experience a world beyond the reality in which they lived, and this experience was meant to strengthen the faith of individuals by providing evidence that religious claims were true[104]. By enabling Medieval Europeans to experience the supernatural world of the Christian faith, Medieval Europeans verified that their faith was not misplaced. This was an incredibly important component of Church artwork as majority of its practitioners never personally experienced the Christian cosmology. The chronicling of tales in which an individual physically experienced the Christian cosmology essentially proved that, although often unseen, the Church cosmology was true[105]. In this manner, the Church solidified its hold on the Medieval European mind by gripping the imaginations of its practitioners[106]. This grasp fully evinced the ubiquitous nature of religious thought in the late Medieval period.

The history of Medieval visions may be traced back to Pope Gregory the Great of the years 540-604 C.E[107]. Pope Gregory I greatly appreciated the arts and folk traditions burgeoning in the early Middle Ages, and he recorded numerous visions in 590 C.E. in a work entitled *Dialogues*[108]. Gregory, alongside contemporary authors of vision literature such as Gregory of Tours (539-594 C.E.) and the Venerable Bede (673-735 C.E.), provided official church sanction of the use of visions to spread messages, and this added an element of authority to the folk tales[109]. The first vision presented in Pope Gregory's *Dialogues* formed through hearsay. The story traveled to Pope Gregory from, "a fellow monk of a third monk, Peter of Spain[110]." The monk claimed that Peter died of an illness, and his death resulted in a transitional state where he experienced a number of places in Hell that were cloaked in flames. After living the torments of

Hell, an angelic guardian resurrected him with a warning to reform his lecherous ways[111].

Gregory recorded this vision along with many others, and he believed that visions occurred for

the benefit of the visionary to stand as a witness to the possibilities of the afterlife. He thought

that preserving these visionary accounts could urge sinners to rethink the choices in their lives[112].

It was for this purpose that he placed such interest in the preservation of a folk tradition seeped in

rumor and second hand accounts. The transmission of visions through rumor and hearsay also

remained prevalent in the late Medieval vision that will be analyzed in the next section.

Until recently, few scholars have found merit in the interpretation of vision literature.

Tundale's Vision in particular has often been considered a work of gratuitous imagery. Pieces of

art falling into this category allegedly presented little merit for historical interpretation, and they

were seen as mere stories capitalizing on the shock value of grotesque imagery to evoke a

reaction. As it should become evident in the coming chapter, however, vision literature appears

to have served a didactic purpose in Medieval Church society as an agent of socialization. Such

didactic themes in vision literature have been expounded upon in great detail by the work of

Gwenfair Adams who argues that sets of implicit and explicit didactic messages may be taken

away from visions. Visions offered few new ideas in the realm of education, but they reinforced

preexisting Church ideas and social norms in an imaginative way. These pieces of art supported

the Church's stance on morals and general piety as dictated by scripture and its accepted

interpretations[113]. In this manner, visions became effective agents of socialization to the people

of Europe in the late Medieval period, and through their analysis, we can reconstruct an array of

social norms and expectations in Medieval European society.

Tundale's Vision, which will be the focus of this discussion, gives us insight into the

norms and expectations of Medieval Ireland in the late Medieval period. The work also solidified new sets of social norms developing out of a reform movement occurring in the Irish Church at the time of its authorship. One of the ways that these visions served as agents of socialization may be observed through accounts of pilgrimages through Hell. These pilgrimages established unique demonologies consisting of numerous horrific scenes meant to instill fear in the recipient of the vision. This fear generally reformed the individual to live a life that was socially acceptable by Church standards, and the life they lived prior to their religious experience revealed the actions that carried a social stigma in Medieval Church society.

Visions a Teaching Aid

Numerous reasons exist to explain why vision literature proved to be an effective teaching tool. The fact that all of these pieces of literature share a theme of direct contact with the spiritual world attached a sense of authority to these imaginative stories, and considering the environment from which these works emerged, it should come as no surprise that they taught so efficaciously. Spirituality was at the forefront of Europe throughout the Medieval period, and the spiritual nature of vision literature appealed to the people immersed in this culture[114]. Visionary accounts provided a means through which ordinary people could physically experience the supernatural world. Sources survive to evince the use of visions as didactic devices in Medieval England in the form of sermons, saints' legends, and religious manuals[115].

Gwenfair Adams separates the educational purposes of vision literature into explicit purposes and implicit teachings[116]. Explicit purposes are subdivided into five categories. Visions explicitly validated saints by chronicling their physical contact with the supernatural realm. They encouraged lay persons to participate in ritual acts of Christian piety that were

considered socially acceptable at the time. Additionally, each vision attempted to convey moral lessons in some form, and this is a fact that will become especially apparent in the upcoming analysis. Visions also exhorted their audience to repent for any devious acts committed in their lives. Finally, they attempted to explicitly teach something about official church doctrine such as the trinity or state of the soul at death[117].

Alongside explicitly stated information, visionary tales conveyed a great deal of less obvious implicit information. Visions subtly delivered information concerning the interaction between our world and the supernatural world, constructing a vivid cosmology that shed light upon our actions and their effects on the world as a whole[118]. The manner in which visionaries interacted with the spiritual realm provided models of behavior for lay persons because their actions were generally within the capabilities of an ordinary individual[119]. This conflicted somewhat with the monastic form of education that required its students to submit to a monastic lifestyle. Priests who utilized vision literature in their sermons repeated the same stories frequently, and this repetition drilled the examples socially acceptable behavior into Medieval English church goers. These explicit and implicit messages presented in vision literature amalgamate to support their status as a vehicle for moral transmission in Medieval England, and because of these, they provide excellent examples of the use of religious artwork as didactic devices and agents of socialization.

Chatper 4: Tundale's Hell

Arguably the most popular visionary account prior to Dante's *The Divine Comedy* containing a fully developed image of Hell was entitled *Tundale's Vision.* An Irish monk from the city of Cashel in Ireland named Marcus wrote this extremely popular work of Medieval

literature around 1149 C.E[120]. The vision was written during a time of reform for the Irish

Church in which power was frequently changing hands. An important historical event, the

council of Cashel of 1101, occurred near the time of the composition of *Tundale's Vision.* The

decrees of this council changed much of the ecclesiastical structure and canon of the Church of

Ireland[121]. Alongside the ecclesiastic reform came numerous doctrinal changes, and one of these

changes pertained to the image of Hell. In Ireland, the 9th century view of Hell was one of a

purgatorial state. Souls resided in its torments to repent, and through pious repentance, they

would eventually escape its punishments[122]. By the 10th century, the reformation movement

brought the idea of Hell as a place of eternal damnation for the sins of its residents, and

Tundale's Vision fully embodied this reformed view of Hell in the Irish Church.

It is known that *Tundale's Vision* was translated into at least 13 languages during the late

Medieval period[123]. The vision told the tale of an Irish knight named Tundale. Tundale lived an

exceptionally lecherous life in comparison to many visionaries who recounted their experiences

prior to this vision, and his life of intense sin secured him a seat in the torments of Hell. Due to

his sinful status, his tale took the form of a pilgrimage through his warranted sufferings. The

story began with Tundale visiting an acquaintance to collect a debt of three horses that was owed

to him[124]. The acquaintance did not have the debt payment ready, and he attempted to placate

Tundale by offering him a meal. Tundale accepted the invitation, but during the meal, he

suddenly collapsed from a stroke in the man's home. Upon his death, a warmth was found in his

side, and because of this, the community delayed his burial. The people who tended to the

corpse of Tundale viewed the warmth as a sign that the soul still resided in his body[125]. After

waiting three days, the community decided that it was time to put Tundale's body to rest, but just

before they could put their plan into action, Tundale revived. He then proceeded to reconstruct the events that happened during his deathlike state. An angelic guide led him through numerous torments of Hell, and Tundale experienced an array of torments for the sins committed in his life. As a show of God's mercy, however, the angel accompanying Tundale allowed him to view the glory of Heaven in hopes that Tundale would return to the mortal realm, reform, and spread his story to help other people.

This particular vision is unique when compared to many visions presented by men of a holier status, such as those compiled by Pope Gregory. Many of the visions predating *Tundale's Vision* featured visionaries amongst the clergy. Tundale, however, was a knight outside of the clerical class. This made it easier for citizens outside of Church professions to relate to Tundale as a character. Many of the visionary tales predating *Tundale's Vision* focused on the importance of ritual piety associated with the ecclesiastic class such as attending mass and providing alms for the dead[126]. Tundale instead focused upon the infinite mercy and wisdom of God. Salvation of the individual becomes the overall theme driving the action in *Tundale's Vision*. This salvation leads Tundale to fully understand how he should behave in order to avoid the harsh punishments of Hell[127].

In addition to this theme of salvation, *Tundale's Vision* evinced the vindictive nature of Hell constructed by late Medieval artwork and Church doctrine. The punishments of Hell presented in this tale are grotesquely harsh, vivid, and outright sadistic. These painful torments afflict the souls of the damned eternally. No opportunity to reform is tendered to souls, aside from Tundale himself, and the eternal aspect of Hell revealed the vindictive attitude of Church doctrine toward sin. God delivered judgment to social deviants with a sense of hatred for their

sinful actions. Condemnation in Hell was not meant to reform an individual, and this solidified

the didactic purpose behind the image of Hell. Since one could not reform in the afterlife, they

had to adhere to the social norms and expectations of the Christian Church in their lifetime[128].

This theme can also be seen in an analysis of this vision by John Seymour. This scholar claimed

that *Tundale's Vision* represented a solidification of a contemporary reform movement within the

Irish Church. This movement modified the doctrine of Hell from one of a purgatorial reform

setting to one of eternal punishment until the day of judgment, and this nascent vindictively

decisive theme strengthened the image of Hell as a vehicle for moral lessons[129].

From the themes of salvation and vindictiveness, numerous didactic messages appear in

Tundale's Vision. Works such as this clearly exemplified the role of religious artwork as an agent

of socialization in Medieval Europe, and the vivid depiction of Hell presented in this vision

revealed the importance of demonic imagery as a tool for the Church to spread its message. As it

will soon become evident, images of Hell in *Tundale's Vision* were especially violent and

grotesque. The translations of the text used in this discussion include an old Irish poetic form

provided in the work of Thomas Stevenson as well as a modern English prose translation by

Eileen Gardiner. Alongside analysis of the textual story, images attributed to the Medieval artist

Simon Marmion from the end of the Medieval period will be provided as visual stimulus, and

although the survival of this illuminated manuscript evinces the popularity of visions amongst

the laity, the analysis focuses on the literary text itself. These stories and images must have been

developed in order to evoke the emotion of fear in the readers and listeners of this visionary

account, and this fear proved to be a useful tool for the process of socialization in Medieval

Ireland. Through the analysis of the horrific images delineated by the Irish knight Tundale, we

catch a glimmer of how Medieval Christian practitioners were expected to behave.

Tundale's Hell: Education through Fear

As a tale of pilgrimage through the cosmology of the Christian faith, the unfortunate Tundale endured a number of torments that Hell offered. In the progression of Tundale as a character, these torments juxtaposed with their explanations delivered by an accompanying angel reveal the flaws in Tundale's moral character, but as an implicit didactic device they shed light upon what actions were considered proper and improper in late Medieval Irish Christian society. A Medieval Christian exposed to this visionary tale might have been persuaded to think twice about how they behave in the community because they wished to avoid torments such as those depicted in *Tundale's Vision.* Tundale's damnation emerged from very specific socially unacceptable actions that, according to the story, could be avoided in favor of moral piety. The pursuit of a life in service of God's infinite mercy tendered an eternal reward in Heaven. Folk tales such as *Tundale's Vision* played off of the preexisting notion of an afterlife to reiterate Church morals, and this becomes increasingly evident upon analysis of Tundale's punishments.

Simon Marmion*, Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Entering Hell, 1475,* Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

Image of Tundale being accosted by demons at the gates of Hell

After Tundale's apparent death, he awakened as a soul on the shores of Hell. A group of demons greeted him by mocking his fate. They gnashed their teeth at Tundale, and they tore the flesh from their own cheeks in rage[130]. At this point, Tundale receded into a state of misery, and God, in his infinite mercy, sent an angel to

guide Tundale through his torments. The angel explained that Tundale's suffering was well earned because he ignored the Church and its doctrines during his life[131]. The angel stated, "I followed you ever since your birth, wherever you went, and you never wished to obey my counsels[132]." This statement along with a few others in the dialogue between Tundale and the angel subtly reinforced the social expectation of Medieval citizens to participate in the Christian faith. Tundale's lack of participation was, after all, what led to his placement in Hell. The angel then proceeded to explain that he would take Tundale through Hell where he would suffer just a few of the torments that he so rightly deserved. After experiencing these tortures, he would be returned to his body so that he may have a chance to return to the right path[133]. At this point, moral messages become very explicit as Tundale is guided through levels of Hell tied to particular sins.

The first punishment witnessed by Tundale was the punishment for murderers. This level of Hell contained the souls of murderers burning in a valley of hot coals covered with an iron lid[134]. The souls of murderers burned into a liquid state, and they slipped through a grate where they continued to burn on the coals. Additionally, an unbearable scent of death enveloped the air itself. The stench of Hell was not uncommon in its representation in Medieval artwork. Harsh odors embodied the epitome of all that was considered uncivilized, undesirable, and evil in the eyes of a Medieval European[135]. Such negative depiction emphasized the stigma attached to the denizens of this particular layer of Hell. Tundale evaded this punishment because he abstained from fratricide, patricide, and matricide, but the angel ensured him that he will suffer it eventually for his homicides as a knight[136]. Numerous moral messages can be taken away from this particular scene. While it is obvious that blatant murder was a socially unacceptable act

worthy of punishment in the Medieval period, this particular passage placed an emphasis on the acts of fratricide, matricide, and patricide. Such emphasis implicitly teaches respect for one's family members. The angel himself dictated to Tundale that general homicide was a sin less worthy of punishment when compared to the murder of one's family members. Although it is difficult to fully determine whether or not a Medieval Irish citizen would hear this part of the story and develop a greater respect for their family, it emerges as a potential moral message in the process of socialization.

The second punishment witnessed by Tundale was the punishment for traitors and spies. This plane of Hell contained a large mountain with a narrow bridge-like path by which to cross. One side of the path held a sulphur fire, and the other side was ravaged with ice, snow, wind, and hail[137]. Images of bridges were common in the Medieval visualization of Hell. The image originated from an ancient Persian myth about the Bridge of Judgment entitled the Kinvad Bridge[138]. Souls of the dead crossed this bridge that connected Heaven and Earth, and if the soul was deemed unworthy, the bridge narrowed causing them to fall into the depths of Hell[139]. Bridges that mirror this description pervade the visionary recollections of Hell in particular[140].

In *Tundale's Vision*, demons with pitchfork prodded the souls that were forced to cross the narrow mountain pathway, and the souls would fall into the torment of ice or fire. After enduring the fire or ice for a while, souls would be thrown back and forth between the flames and icy torments. At this point, a parallel may be drawn between *Tundale's Vision* and *The Divine Comedy*. Although Dante placed this sin at the deepest depth of Hell alongside the Devil himself, both *Tundale's Vision* and *the Divine Comedy* chose to punish this sin with an element of ice[141]. As explained in a previous chapter, the cardinal sin of feudal society appeared to be

disloyalty to one's lord. Perfidious actions resulted in the complete breakdown of the feudal

lord-vassal relationship, and religious tales such as these intended to reinforce a social

expectation of loyalty. Members of Medieval Ireland were expected to loyally serve whatever

institution to which they were bound, be it the church or a lord, and this punishment in *Tundale's*

Vision sought to covey this message to its audience.

After addressing the issue of

treachery, Tundale proceeded to the plane

of Hell reserved for the proud. This part of

Hell took the form of a valley shrouded in

darkness. The darkness was so thick that it

was described as such, "The soul was unable

to see anything in the darkness, but he could

hear the sound of sulfur flaming and of great

Simon Marmion*, Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Proud,*
1475, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu,
California.
Image of Tundale being guided across the punishment of
pride by his angel guide

howling in the depths of endurance[142]." Tormented souls crossed this ominous valley across a

long narrow bridge, and they eternally fell off into the dark burning sulfur below. Sulfur pits,

along with cacophonous wailing, pitchforks, flames, and gnashing teeth, embodied the spirit of

Hell as an image in Medieval artwork. Hell represented the privation of good, and every aspect

of it conveyed a perversion in some manner[143]. A world of eternal flames and demonic torments

produced an image that was easy to relate to. Everyone has experienced physical pain in life,

and people have the ability to easily imagine such pain on a much larger scale. Such imagery

encouraged audiences to avoid the actions that would lead to this outcome by creating horrors

that audiences could easily imagine. The angel explained to Tundale that this level punished

those with pride. This image taught the moral lesson of living a humble life. From this, it may

be inferred that a Medieval Irish Christian was not supposed to bask in the light of his own

accomplishments. It seems more likely that, from the information presented in earlier chapters,

the Medieval Irish Christian was supposed to see all of his accomplishments through a spiritual

lens. One should not be overly proud of their achievements because it was the hand of God that

allowed for the possibility of such achievements. This conveyed a social norm of humility, and

Tundale's Vision buttressed this mindset by shocking its audience with frightening imagery.

Simon Marmion, *Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Acheron, 1475*, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

Image of the demon Acheron feasting on the souls of the greedy.

Following the sin of pride came the sin of greed. This level of Hell housed the demon Acheron. Acheron was as large as a mountain with a wide gaping mouth. Flames filled his mouth along with two demonic entities that divided the mouth into three portions[144]. More demons

surrounded the mouth, forcing unwilling souls into its depths. This particular image was a

notable example of the popular icon of the Hellmouth that the Medieval mystery play strove to

recreate. Acheron's mouth, in this instance however, did not serve as an entrance to Hell.

Instead it eternally consumed the souls of the greedy. Tundale, according to the angel, fully

deserved the punishment offered by this level of Hell, and Tundale was left to suffer the torment

for a period of time. This abandonment of Tundale to his torments reveals a connection to an

older vision presented in Pope Gregory's *Dialogues.* The English vision of Drithelm from 696 C.E. presented a situation in which the character Drithelm was guided through Hell by an angel. During his journey, the guide abruptly left him at a dark pit. At this pit, demons assaulted Drithelm while laughing until the angel soon returned to scare the demons away[145]. While this situation resembles Tundale's, it contains numerous very important differences. One of these differences was the representation of Hell itself. Drithelm's Hell exemplified the old belief of Hell as a purgatorial setting where condemned souls were punished while performing pious recitation of psalms with the intention of eventually moving on to Heaven. Tundale's Hell offered no such chance for redemption. The fact that Tundale's angel subjected him to the full punishment of this level of Hell further established the lack of redemption in this Hell. This difference evinces *Tundale's Vision's* relation with the doctrinal reforms occurring in the Irish Church[146].

Inside the bowels of Acheron, numerous carnivorous animals tore Tundale apart, exposing him to the conflicting elements of fire and harsh cold[147]. The fact that Tundale physically suffered this torment as well as its notably more colorful description places a great deal of weight upon the social stigma attached to greed. Considering the poverty and lack of social mobility from which this work emerged, it should not come as any surprise that such emphasis was placed upon the social expectation of generosity. Without the hospitality of others, it was very likely that many Medieval communities would not have survived. This made the act of teaching generosity an extremely important function in Medieval religious art. Additionally, this scene may be viewed as a polemic against the pre-reform Irish Church. One of the issues addressed by the reform movement in the Irish Church during the 12th century was simony, the

buying and selling of Church offices, within the Church. The council of Cashel in 1101 C.E. made great strides to prohibit secular tribute to Church authorities, and it called for tighter regulation of Church appointments[148]. Attempts of reform such as this shed light on the issue of greed in late Medieval Irish Church society.

After witnessing the punishment for greediness, Tundale bore witness to the punishment for thievery. Thievery was another act that could greatly damage the success of a Medieval community. Because much of Medieval civilization lived in a perpetual state of change and invasion, food and other such commodities were often in short supply. The 12th century marked a time of reduction in alms giving by Christian monasteries due to a general rise in poverty and lack of resources[149]. This meant that many had no access to any sort of social relief system in the event that they had no food or shelter. Someone who stole food from another was considered to be indirectly murdering that person, and *Tundale's Vision* treats this offense with a tone of severity. This part of Hell contained a lake that dwarfed the sky itself[150]. Large numbers of monsters resided in the lake, consuming the souls unfortunate enough to fall in. In order to cross this lake, souls had to, once again, cross an incredibly narrow bridge. This particular bridge,

however, had unavoidable nails protruding from its surface[151]. In addition to dealing with the pain caused by nails constantly penetrating their feat, souls were required to carry

Simon Marmion, *Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Thieves, 1475*, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

Image of Tundale about to cross a bridge of nails as punishment for his thievery

objects of varying weight across the bridge based on the severity of their sin, such as a bag of grain or large animal. Tundale, once again, endured this punishment. According the angel, Tundale was guilty of numerous robberies, and because of this, Tundale crossed the bridge guiding an uncooperative cow that could barely fit on its narrow surface. This cow represented an event in Tundale's life in which he stole a neighbor's cow[152]. The creativity and length of the description of this torment implied a great deal of social contempt for thieves. It seems likely that the idea of being forced across a bridge of nails only to fall into a harsher torment would persuade an individual to abstain from the act of thievery.

After traversing the bridge of nails, Tundale came upon a house in the shape of an oven with flames billowing out of it. Inside this house, executioners eviscerated souls with an arsenal of common Medieval tools. The angel, once again, abandoned Tundale to this torture because Tundale fell to the sin of excess in his life. Once the angel left, demons surrounded Tundale, and they tore him to pieces. The demons also tortured his genitals by turning them inside out and subjecting them to parasites[153]. Such genital mutilation seems an effective symbol for the sin of excess considering its association with sexual passion. Immediately after suffering this punishment for his gluttony, Tundale experienced the punishment for fornication.

Simon Marmion, *Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Unchaste Priests, 1475,* Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

Image of a demon consuming fornicators.

Fornicators suffered a fate more vivid and horrific than any described up to this point. They were plagued by a frightening demon delineated as such, "It had two feet and two wings, also the longest neck and an iron beak. He even had two iron claws, and from his mouth rose inextinguishable flames. This beast sat in a swamp of frozen ice[154]." The beast forcibly impregnated the souls of both male and female fornicators who resided in this frozen swamp with what can only be described as serpents. The serpents bit their insides as the condemned souls gave birth to them. Because men's bodies were not made to give birth, the serpents would burst out of them through their arms causing intense pain[155]. Once born, the serpents feasted upon the souls that gave birth to them. This chapter of *Tundale's Vision* gruesomely unveils the social stigma attached to excessive consumption and sex.

This image also shares a relationship with the contemporary reform movement that occurred within the Medieval Irish Church. One of the decrees implemented at the council at Cashel of 1101 attempted to regulate Irish marital practices. The decree called for the prohibition of marriage within the clergy, and it also forbade marriage with those of close kindred[156]. Such prohibition rose from the marital practices in Ireland failing to coincide with the social expectations of the Christian Church. The construction of such an elaborate and vivid punishment in *Tundale's Vision* conveys the intent of the author to spread its moral message relating to moderation and proper sexual conduct, and it supports a social expectation developing out of the Irish Church reform movement in the 12th century. Prior to this reformation, many Irish Church officials were married and sexually active while preaching the sinful nature of sex. This reform movement sought to eliminate such hypocrisy surrounding Irish marital practices and Church views on sex, and horrifying examples of the iconography of Hell such as this would

more than likely cause a Medieval European audience to reevaluate their sexual appetites and accept these changes lest they be condemned to this torture. In this manner, *Tundale's Vision* effectively conveyed the burgeoning social norms of the reform movement of the Irish Church in the 12th century.

The last area of Hell that Tundale visited before encountering the Devil himself was set aside for heathens. These people chose to go against the doctrine of the Medieval Church, and because of this, they endured a punishment in a demonic forge called Vulcan[157]. Demonic executioners emerged from the forge, throwing Tundale's soul into its inner workings. Inside the forge, souls underwent the process of forging as if they were pieces of metalwork. Additionally, they were tossed into burning bellows with pitchforks[158]. Tundale suffered this torment due to his lack of

Simon Marmion, *Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Forge of Vulcan, 1475,* Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.
Image of Tundale being taken into the demonic forge of Vulcan

devotion to the Church and by proxy God. By purporting systematic punishments such as these for deviating from the Christian lifestyle, the Church ensured its monopoly on the process of socialization. The Church's word was essentially the only guarantee of a good afterlife, and the ephemeral nature of this life during the Medieval period made this a very influential claim.

Finally, after surviving the pains of the demonic forge Vulcan, Tundale came face to face

with the Prince of Shadows, Lucifer. Tundale's Devil stood with a somewhat human form, but he had black skin, a tail, a beak, and thousands of hands with twenty fingers each[159]. Legions of demons surrounded the Devil as he breathed the souls of the damned into the levels of Hell for which they were bound. He crushed souls of all variations of sin with both his hands and tail[160]. This depiction of the Devil also presented a point of differentiation from the majority of visionary accounts. In other earlier visions, the Devil wielded impunity from the sufferings of Hell, and he sadistically inflicted torments on the souls in his realm. Tundale's Devil, on the other hand, experienced the pain and torment alongside the ordinary denizens of Hell[161]. In this instance, the Devil experienced punishment proportional to the sin that he caused people to commit. The angel explained to Tundale in a brief aside that although Lucifer bears the title Prince of Darkness, he does not wield any power over

Simon Marmion, *Les Visiones du Chevalier Tundal: Gates of Hell, 1475,* Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California. Lucifer at the gates of Hell.

Hell. The title merely indicated the severity of his evil[162]. The beast himself represented the epitome of social deviance in the late Medieval period. Lucifer, as the angel explains, turned away from the mercy of God and his teachings. He chose to enjoy the fruits of paradise and throw the cosmos into chaos and disorder[163]. Entities such as the Devil essentially shut the Church's set of social norms out of their hearts, and because of this, they paid the ultimate eternal

price in Hell.

Upon meeting the Prince of Shadows, the tone of *Tundale's Vision* shifts into a lighter story. He traverses the fields of Heaven meeting people who adhered to the social expectations dictated by the Medieval Christian churches. These saints remained humble in the eyes of God, gave alms to the impoverished as well as the Church, did not fall to excess, and participated in proper marriage and sexual conduct. The moral message presented in this portion of the vision mirror those presented in Tundale's harsh pilgrimage through Hell, but it focuses on reward instead of fear as an incentive. This act of the vision was notably shorter than the journey through Hell. The descriptions of Heaven are also less thorough. From this, it can be inferred that the punishment of Hell dwarfed the reward in Heaven as a didactic device for the moral socialization of Medieval Christians. Time could be afforded to this act, but for the sake of this work's focus on the utilization of the image of Hell to evoke an emotion of fear for the purpose of morally educating Medieval Christians, the point seems to have been made clear.

Conclusion

Upon analysis of the educational history of Europe throughout the Medieval period, it becomes evident that education was largely exclusive, inconsistent, and devalued. In order to participate in a monastic education, one had to offer their life in service of the Christian Church. Education from both the palace school and the system of chivalry required a noble birth as well as loyalty to the Church, and all of these systems of education offered little in the realm of scholastic pursuit. The monastic school that formed in the earliest years of the Middle Ages centered around preservation and interpretation of Church scriptures and its related texts. Chivalry and the palace schools from the middle and later Medieval era taught with the intention

of producing knights and politicians. Even if a Medieval European met the qualifications to participate in these educational systems, they often voluntarily chose not to because an education seemed meaningless given the ephemeral nature of life in the Middle Ages. Why should one pursue an education when they would likely die from some sort of disease or nomadic raid? Such a mindset and system of exclusivity enabled the Church to gain a monopoly on the process of socialization that generally occurs in schools today.

The process of socialization largely occurred in the Middle Ages from personal experience and the influence of the Church. Attendance of Church mass was mandatory in most Medieval European communities, and these masses spread church doctrine, ideology, and morals throughout Medieval parishes. Often due to the poor educational state of the communities in which such masses occurred, artwork provided a much needed didactic device in spreading moral messages. The theater offered an outlet through which the Church could bring religious scenes in the history of Christianity to life before an audience. Miracle plays and Mystery plays enabled the Medieval Church to visually convey subtle moral messages to largely illiterate audiences with a vivid image of the potential torments of the afterlife. The image of Hell became a vehicle through which the Church dictated social expectations. Depicting horrific punishments for sinful actions that the Medieval Church deemed socially devious proved an efficacious fear tactic in the process of socialization and moral transmission.

Vernacular sermons also made use of a large pool of poetic and anecdotal materials featuring images of Hell. Preachers orally presented stories such as *Tundale's Vision* to parishioners in Ireland during the final centuries of the Medieval period. These folk traditions gained great popularity in the Middle Ages due to their beautifully depicted spiritual content.

They put a sensational spin on images that had been familiar to the majority of Medieval

Christians. These stories painted a horrifying image of the torments that awaited social deviants

in Hell, but they came coupled with a message of hope that individuals could still reform by

adhering to the doctrines of the Church. Folk traditions such as these provide a great deal of

insight into the social norms and expectations of the Medieval communities from which they

spawned. They contained a great deal of explicit moral lessons as well as implicit messages

revealing the Church's role in the process of socialization at the time, and as a product of a

reformative period for the Medieval Irish Church, *Tundale's Vision* conveyed a nascent set of

social norms. As a folk tradition, visions such as these played off of the preexisting mindset of

unquestioning belief that emerged from the lackluster educational state of Medieval Europe at

the time. Compilers of these visions often purported receiving these stories from second hand

sources similar to the manner in which modern urban legends travel, but with sanction from

popular church figures such as Pope Gregory, the stories gained an authoritative credibility. This

increased the power of such artwork to spread moral and social messages to communities

because they were accepted as true stories. Thus, they provided the actual manual to avoiding

eternal damnation in hell and gaining an eternal reward in heaven.

It is important to acknowledge that while both theatrical Church performances and the

folk tradition of vision literature provide excellent examples of the didactic purpose the image of

Hell served in Medieval Europe, countless other sources survive in Medieval Christian artwork

to evince this function. Stained glass windows, relics, and numerous genres of poetry subtly

socialized Medieval Europeans who were exposed to these images, and inquiry into the implicit

functions of Medieval artwork should not cease at the analysis of only a few genres of Christian

art. While volumes could and have been written on this subject in Medieval history, the

examples provided here evince the central idea that artwork does not merely serve the purpose of

entertainment. Any individual exposed to a piece of artwork takes away countless messages,

thoughts, and emotions. Some of these messages may be obvious at a quick glance, but many of

them require a great deal of analysis and in many cases, one may not even realize what an image

has taught them.

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3   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 113.
4   John Wise, *Education: An Analytical Survey,* 90-91.
5   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 138-139.
6   John Wise, *Education: An Analytical Survey,* 87.
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8   John Wise, *Education: An Analytical Survey,* 88.
9   Frank Graves, *Education During the Middle Ages,* 22-23.
10   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education*, 140.
11   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 140.
12   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 140.
13   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 141.
14   John Wise, *Education: An Analytical Survey,* 91.
15   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 141.
16   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 141-142.
17   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 142.
18   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 142.
19   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 142-143.
20   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 143.
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25   Carl Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism,* 16-17.
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27   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 164-165.
28   Carl Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism,* 30-31.
29   Carl Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism,* 12.
30   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 165-166.
31   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 166.
32   Carl Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism,* 53.
33   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 166-167.
34   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 168.
35   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 168.
36   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 172-173.
37   John Wise, *Education: An Analytical Survey,* 100-102.
38   Frank Graves, *Education During the Middle Ages,* 50-51.
39   Ellwood Cubberly, *The History of Education,* 173.
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46   Paul Johnson, *History of Christianity,* 116.
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49   Saint Augustine, *The City of God,* 339.
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51   Saint Augustine, *The City of God,* 343.
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57   Gerald Messadie, *A History of the Devil*, 275.
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89   Richard Beadle and Pamela King, *York Mystery Plays,* 248.
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115   Gwenfair Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England,* 7-8.
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