

The Vision of Adamnan

An Irish precursor of Dante : a study on the Vision of heaven and hell ascribed to the eighth-century Irish Saint Adamnán

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The Vision which has come down to us under the name of Adamnán is not to be included among his own works. The language and style, which belong to a much later period, are conclusive as to this ; while several allusions in it, as that to the donation of Constantine, also point to a later date. Dr. Whitley Stokes, indeed, considers that ‘ it is not older than the eleventh century,’ but Professor Windisch, in the preface to his edition, demurs to this conclusion, and holds that it was written in the tenth century, possibly even in the ninth (*Irische Texte*, i. 167 *sqq.*). Nevertheless, it is not to be classed among the literary forgeries with which the Middle Ages teem, composed sometimes *animo fraudandi*, sometimes, in the loose views then prevailing as to literary property and literary fame, in order to secure the prestige of a great name. The present work, however, never professes to be Adamnán’s own composition. It invariably speaks of him in the third person, terming him the ‘ High Scholar of the Western World,’ and refers to his legislation at the Mórdáil, where he is said to have first received his Vision, and to his subsequent preaching as matters of past history. It remains, then, to be considered how this Vision came to be associated with his name. We have seen that he had become the hero of a saga-cycle, into which fiction had made an entrance : whether we must class the doubtful episodes as historical romance merely, or as facts set off by the aid of fiction. This, however, brings us little further, for it is certain that this popular reputation was earned by his actual achievements : again, therefore, we are faced with the question how to distinguish fact from fiction. It may be that the true author sought for his own teaching the authority of so famous a saint ; or he may have had before him an anonymous work, and inserted the name of Adamnán from a like motive, or from a belief in the fact ; or, again, the work may be what it professes to be, and may have for its basis a more or less accurate tradition of Adamnán’s own teaching. A tradition, I venture to think, should be allowed a certain weight where it is in conflict neither with ascertained fact nor with probability ; and here the probabilities appear to be rather favourable than otherwise, which, perhaps, in the absence of further evidence, is the nearest approach to a conclusion we can hope to make. It is not a forgery ; it is not a polemical work, where the author might wish to shoot forth his darts from under the shield of some Ajax of controversy. Neither is it a mere floating legend, ready to be tacked on to any name indifferently ; on the contrary, it is written with great care, and with a literary and constructive skill rare at that day. It makes no profession, and betrays no purpose, save to give the substance of the Vision which Adamnán related to the Mórdáil, and of his subsequent preaching. The fashion of the day renders it highly probable that Adamnán’s teaching or preaching may have assumed this form. Then his fame and authority, at the most active period of Irish letters, might avail to preserve a work, thus widely published, for a longer time than the 150 or 250 years which intervened between his death and the composition of the Vision, even in its present form, while if the reasons adduced in a later place (Part n. Sec. 5, *post*) for supposing it to be of a composite character be correct, it follows that the latest author must have had before him—as in any case he probably had—materials of an earlier date.

Thus the *Fis* and the *Cáin* appear to institute an exact parallel. We have as the basis of the extant work, in the one case, a law enacted, in the other, a Vision recited, by the saint, which a later writer has worked up into literary form, while other details relating to the same subject-matter, but entirely irrelevant, have been added later.

Two versions of the *Fis Adamnáin* exist, in two mediaeval MSS., now in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy. Of these, the *Lebor na h-Udri*, or 'Book of the Dun' (*sc.* 'Cow'), is the oldest extant Irish MS. which contains a collection of secular literature, being copied about 1103 from another MS., probably about fifty years older, which was itself compiled from various earlier writings. The other MS., the *Lebor Brec*, 'Speckled Book,' was written towards the end of the fourteenth century. Both versions have been edited and printed by Professor Windisch in *Irische Texte*, vol. i. I believe that no complete translation of either version has been published in a form generally accessible, though O'Donovan made and translated extracts from it, and Dr. Whitley Stokes has edited and translated it, with notes, but printed fifty copies only for private distribution (Simla, 1870). I have had the advantage of referring to this edition, thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Alfred Nutt, to whom I am indebted for several valuable suggestions and corrections.

The following translation has been made from the L.U. version. There is little difference in substance between the two versions, but the L.U. is more attractive from a literary point of view, the L.B. being somewhat overloaded in places with Latin quotations, while it wants the concluding chapter, which the L.U. possesses.

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Translation of The Fis Adamnáin

1. Noble and wonderful is the Lord of the Elements, and great and marvellous are His might and His power. For He calleth to Himself in Heaven the charitable and merciful, the meek and considerate ; but He consigns and casts down to Hell the impious and unprofitable host of the children of the curse. For upon the blessed He bestows the hidden treasures and the manifold wages of Heaven, while He inflicts a diversity of torments, in many kinds, upon the sons of death.

2, Now there are multitudes of the saints and righteous ones of the Lord of Creation, and of the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ, unto whom have been revealed the secrets and the mysteries of the Heavenly Kingdom, and the golden wages of the righteous ; likewise the divers pains of Hell, with them that are set in the midst thereof. For unto the Apostle Peter was shown the four-cornered vessel, let down from Heaven, [1] with four cords to it, and they with sound as sweet as any music. Also, the Apostle Paul was caught up to Heaven, [2] and heard the ineffable words of the angels, and the speech of them that dwell in Heaven. More-over, on the day of Mary's death, all the apostles were brought to look upon the pains and miserable punishments of the unblest ; for the Lord commanded the angels of the West [3] to open up the earth before the face of the apostles, that they might see and consider Hell with all its torments, even as Himself had told them, long time before His Passion.

3. Finally, to Adamnán ua Thinne, the High Scholar of the Western World, were revealed the things which are here recorded ; for his soul departed from out his body on the feast of John Baptist, and was conveyed to the celestial realm, where the heavenly angels are, and to Hell, with its rabble rout. For no sooner had the soul issued from out the body, than there appeared to it the angel that had been its guardian while in the flesh, and bore it away with him to view, firstly, the Kingdom of Heaven.

4. Now the first land to which they come is the Land of Saints. A bright land of fair weather is that country. In it are diverse and wondrous companies, clad in cassocks of white linen, with hoods of radiant white upon their heads. The saints of the Eastern world form a company apart in the East of the Land of Saints ; the saints of the Western world are to the West of the same land ; the saints of the Northern world and of the South, in their great con-course, are to the South and North. For every one that is in the Land of Saints may freely listen to the music, and may contemplate the vault, [4] wherein are the nine classes of Heaven, after their rank and order.

5. For one spell, then, the saints keep singing marvellous music in praise of God ; for another, they are listening to the music of the heavenly host ; for the saints have no other need than to listen to the music that they hear, and to contemplate the radiance that they see, and to sate themselves with the fragrance that there is in that land. The wonderful Lord is face to face with them, in the Southeast, [5] and a crystal veil between ; to the South is a golden portico, and through it they discern the form and adumbration of the people of Heaven. No veil, however, nor cloud is between the Host of Heaven and the Host of the Saints, but those are ever manifest and present unto these, in a place that is over against them. A circle of fire surrounds this place, yet do they all pass in and out, and it does scathe to none.

6. Now, the Twelve Apostles and Mary the pure Virgin form a band apart, about the mighty Lord. Next to the Apostles are the Patriarchs and Prophets, and the disciples of Jesus. On the other side are holy Virgins, at Mary's right hand, and with no great space between. Babes and striplings are about them on every side, and the bird-choirs of the heavenly folk, making their minstrelsy. And amid these companies, bands of angels, guardians of the souls, do perpetual suit and service in the Royal presence. No man is there in this present life who may describe those assemblies, or who may tell of the very manner of them. And the bands and companies which are in the land of saints abide continually in even such great glory as aforesaid, until the great Parliament [6] of Doom, when the righteous Judge, on the Day of Judgment, shall dispose them in their stations and abiding places, where they shall con-temple God's countenance, with no veil nor shadow between, through ages everlasting.

7. But great and vast as are the splendour and the radiance in the Land of Saints, even as hath been said, more vast, a thousand times, the splendour which is in the region of the Heavenly Host, about the Lord's own throne. This throne is fashioned like unto a canopied chair, [7] and beneath it are four columns of precious stone. Though one should have no minstrelsy at all, save the harmonious music of those four columns, yet would he have his fill of melody and delight. Three stately birds are perched upon that chair, in front of the King, their minds intent upon the Creator throughout all ages, for that is their vocation. They celebrate the eight [canonical] hours, praising and adoring the Lord, and the Archangels accompany them. For the birds and the Archangels lead the music, and then the Heavenly Host, with the Saints and Virgins, make response.

8. Over the head of the Glorious One that sitteth upon the royal throne is a great arch, like unto a wrought helmet, or a regal diadem : [8] and the eye which should behold it would forthwith melt away. Three circles are round about it, separating it from the host, and by no explanation may the nature of them be known. Six thousand thousands, in guise of horses and of birds, surround the fiery chair, which still burns on, without end or term.

9. Now to describe the mighty Lord that is upon that throne is not for any, unless Himself should do so, or should so direct the heavenly dignitaries. For none could tell of his vehemence and might, His glow [9] and splendour, His brightness and loveliness, His liberality and steadfastness, nor of the multitude of His Angels and Archangels, which chant their songs to Him. His messengers keep going to and from Him, ever and anon, with brief messages to each assemblage, telling to the one host of His mildness and mercy, and to the other of His sternness and harshness.

10. Whoso should stand facing about him, East and West, South and North, would behold on each side of him a majestic countenance, seven times as radiant as the sun. No human form thereto, with head or foot, may be discerned, but a fiery mass, burning on for ever, while one and all are filled with awe and trembling before Him. Heaven and earth are filled full with the light of Him, and a radiance as of a royal star encircles Him. [10] Three thousand different songs are chanted by each several choir about Him, and sweeter than all the varied music of the world is each individual song of them.

11. Furthermore, in this wise is the fashion of that city, wherein that throne is set. Seven crystal walls of various hue surround it, each wall higher than the wall that is before it. [11] The floor, moreover, and the lowest base of that city, is of fair crystal, with the sun's countenance upon it(?), shot with blue, and purple, and green, and every hue beside.

12. A gentle folk, most mild, most kindly, lacking in no goodly quality, are they that dwell within that city ; for none come there, and none abide there ever, save holy youths, and pilgrims zealous for God. But as for their array and ordinance, hard is it to understand how it is contrived, for none turns back nor side to other, but the unspeakable power of God has set, and keeps, them face to face, in ranks and lofty coronels, all round the throne, circling it in brightness and bliss, their faces all towards God.

13. There is a chancel rail [12] of silver between each two choirs, cunningly wrought upon with red gold and silver, and choice rows of precious stones, variegated with diverse gems, and against that lattice are seats and canopies [13] of carbuncle. Between every two chief companies are three precious stones, softly vocal with sweet melody, and the upper halves of them are lighted lamps. Seven thousand angels, as it were great candles, shine and illumine that city round about ; seven thousand others in the midst thereof are aflame for ever, through-out the royal city. The men of all the world, if gathered into one place, many as they are, would derive sustenance enough from the sweet savour of any one of those candles.

14. Now, such of the world's inhabitants as attain not to that city after their life is spent, and to whom a dwelling-place therein is allotted after the Words of Doom shall have been spoken, find a restless and unstable habitation, until the coming of Judgment, on heights and hilltops, and in marshy places. Even so fare those hordes and companies, with the guardian angel of every soul in their midst, serving and tending them. In the main doorway of the city they are confronted by a veil of fire and a veil of ice, smiting perpetually one against the other. The noise and din of these veils, as they clash together, are heard throughout the world, and the seed of Adam, should they hear that din, would be seized thereat with trembling and intolerable dismay. Faint and dazed are the wicked at that din ; howbeit, on the side of the Heavenly Host, nought is heard of that rude discord, save a very little only, and that sweeter than any music.

15. Awful is that city, and wonderful to describe ; for a little out of much is that which we have told concerning its various orders, and the wonders of it. Seldom indeed may a spirit, after its converse and co-habitation with the body, in slumber and repose, in freedom and luxury, win its way to the throne of the Creator, unguided of the angels ; for hard of essay are the seven Heavens, nor is any one of them easier than the rest. Six guarded doors confront all those of mortal race who reach the Kingdom. There sits a porter and warder of the Heavenly Host, keeping guard over each door. At the door of that Heaven which is nearest on the hither side sits the Archangel Michael, and with him two youths, [14] with iron rods in their laps to scourge and smite the sinners as they pass through this the first grief and torment of the path they have to tread.

16. At the door of the next Heaven, the Archangel Ariel is warder, and with him two youths, [15] with fiery scourges in their hands, wherewith they scourge the wicked across the face and eyes. A river of fire, its surface an ever-burning flame, lies before that door. Abersetus is the angel's name who keeps watch over that river, and purges the souls of the righteous, and washes them in the stream, according to the amount of guilt that cleaves to them, until they become pure and shining as is the radiance of the stars. Hard by is a pleasant spring, flowery and fragrant, to cleanse and solace the souls of the righteous, though it annoys and scalds the souls of the guilty, and does away nought from them, but it is increase of pain and torment that comes upon them there. Sinners arise from out of it in grief and immeasurable sadness, but the righteous proceed with joy and great delight to the door of the third Heaven.

17. Above this, a fiery furnace keeps ever burning, its flames reaching a height of twelve thousand cubits ; through it the righteous pass in the twinkling of an eye, but the souls of sinners are baked and scorched therein for twelve years, and then their guardian angel con-veys them to the fourth door. About the entrance door of the fourth Heaven is a fiery stream, like the foregoing. It is surrounded by a wall of fire, in breadth twelve thousand measured cubits, through which the souls of the righteous pass as though it were not there, while the souls of the sinful tarry therein, amid pain and tribulation, for another twelve years, until their guardian angel bears them to the door of the fifth Heaven.

18. In that place is a fiery river, which is unlike all other rivers, for in the midst of it is a strange kind of whirlpool, wherein the souls of the wicked keep turning round and round, and there they abide for the space of sixteen years ; the righteous, however, win through it straightway, without any hindrance. So soon as the due time cometh for the sinners to be released thereout, the angel strikes the water with a rod, hard as though it were of stone, and uplifts the spirits with the end of that rod. Then Michael bears them up to the door of the sixth Heaven ; but no pain nor torment is meted out to the spirits at that door, but there they are illumined with the lustre and the brilliancy of precious stones. Then Michael cometh to the Angel of the Trinity, and one on either side they usher the soul into the presence of God.

19. Infinite and beyond all telling is the welcome where-with the Lord and the Heavenly Host then receive the soul, if he be a pure and righteous soul ; if, however, he be an unrighteous and unprofitable soul, harsh and ungentle is the reception of him by the Mighty Lord. For He saith to the Heavenly Angels, ' Take, O Heavenly Angels, this unprofitable soul, and deliver him into the hand of Lucifer, that he may plunge him and utterly extinguish him in Hell's profound, through ages everlasting. '

20. Thereupon that wretched soul is parted, fearfully, sternly, awfully, from sight of the Heavenly Kingdom, and of God's countenance. Then utters he a groan, heavier

than any groan, as he comes into the Devil's presence, after beholding the bliss of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is then deprived of the guidance of the Archangels, in whose company he had come unto Heaven. Twelve fiery dragons swallow up every spirit, one after the other, until the lowest dragon lands him in the Devil's maw. There doth he experience the consummation of all evil, in the Devil's own presence, throughout all ages.

21. After that his guardian angel had revealed to Adamnán's spirit these visions of the Heavenly Kingdom, and of the first progress of every soul after parting from its body, he brought him to visit the nethermost Hell, with all its pains, and its crosses, and its torments. Now, the first region whereunto he came was a land burnt black, waste and scorched, but with no punishment at all therein. A glen, filled with fire, was on the further side of it ; huge the flame of it, extending beyond the margin on either hand. Black its base, red the middle, and the upper part thereof. Eight serpents were in it, with eyes like coals of fire.

22. An enormous bridge spans the glen, reaching from one bank to the other ; high the middle of it, but lower its two extremities. Three companies seek to pass over it, but not all succeed. One company find the bridge to be of ample width, from beginning to end, until they win across the fiery glen, safe and sound, fearless and undismayed. The second company, when entering upon it, find it narrow at first, but broad afterwards, until they, in like manner, fare across that same glen, after great peril. But for the last company the bridge is broad at first, but strait and narrow thereafter, until they fall from the midst of it into that same perilous glen, into the throats of those eight red-hot serpents, that have their dwelling-place in the glen.

23. Now the folk to whom that path was easy were the chaste, the penitent, the diligent, they who had zealously borne a bloody testimony to God. The band who found the path narrow at first, but afterwards broad, were they who had hardly been constrained to do God's will, but had afterwards converted their constraint into the willing service of God. They, how-ever, to whom this way was broad at first, but strait thereafter, were sinners who had listened to the precepts in God's word, and after having heard, fulfilled them not.

24. Furthermore, vast multitudes abide beyond, feeble and powerless, upon the shore of perpetual pain, in the land of utter darkness. Every other hour the pain ebbs away from them, and the next hour it returns upon them again. Now these are they in whom good and evil were equally balanced, and on the Day of Doom, judgment shall be passed between them, and their good shall quench their evil on that day ; and then shall they be brought to the Haven of Life, in God's own presence, through ages everlasting.

25. Another great company is there, near to the last-named group, and monstrous their torment. And this is their plight : they are fettered to fiery columns, a sea of fire about them up to their chins, and about their middle fiery chains, in the shape of vipers. Their faces are aflame with agony. They who are tormented thus are sinners, fratricides, [16] ravagers of God's Church, and merciless Erenachs, [17] who, in presence of the relics of the Saints, had been set over the Church's tithes and oblations, [18] and had alienated these riches to their private store, away from the Lord's guests and needy ones.

26. Great multitudes there are, standing in blackest mire up to their girdles. Short cowls of ice are on them. Without rest or intermission, through all time, their girdles are perpetually scorching them with alternate cold and heat. Demon hosts surround

them, with fiery clubs [19] in their hands, striking them over the head, though they struggle against them continually. These wretches all have their foreheads to the North, and a rough, sharp wind blowing full upon their foreheads, in addition to every other woe. Red showers of fire are raining on them, every night and every day, and they cannot ward them off, but must needs endure them throughout all ages, wailing and making moan.

27. Some of them have streams of fire in the hollows of their visages ; some, fiery nails through their tongues ; others, through their heads, from side to side. They who are so punished are thieves and liars, and they who have practised treachery, reviling robbery and rapine ; judges of false judgment and contentious persons ; women who have dealt in poison and spells, reivers, [20] and learned men who have practised heresy. Another great throng is set upon islands, in the midst of the fiery sea. About them is a silver wall [built] of the raiment and the alms [which they had bestowed]. These are they who have practised mercy without zeal, [21] and have remained in loose living, and in the bonds of their sin, until the hour of their death ; but their alms are a bulwark unto them, amid the fiery sea, until the Judgment, and after Judgment they shall be brought into the Haven of Life.

28. Another great multitude is there, clad in red and fiery mantles down to their middle. [22] Their trembling and their outcries make themselves heard, even unto the firmament. An unspeakable throng of demons is throttling them, holding in leash the while raw-hided, stink-ing hounds, which they incite to devour and consume them. Red glowing chains [23] are con-stantly ablaze about their necks. Every alternate hour they are borne up to the firmament, and the next hour they are dashed down into Hell's profound. Now they that are punished in this wise are the regulars who have transgressed their rule, [24] and become leathers of piety ; also, impostors who have deceived and seduced the multitude, and have undertaken miracles and wonders which they are not able to perform. Moreover, the children that are tearing the men in orders, are they who were committed to them for amendment, but they amended them not, neither reprov'd them for their sins.

29. Thereafter, is another vast company ; East and West they go, unresting, across the fiery flagstones, at war with demon hosts. Innumerable showers of red-hot arrows are rained upon them by the demons. Running, they go on without stop or stay, making for a black lake and a black river, that they may quench those arrows therein. A weeping and wailing, truly miser-able and piteous, do the sinners make in those waters, for in them they only meet with augmentation of their pain. Now they that are punished thus are cheating artificers, weavers, and merchants; judges that judged falsely, both Jews, and others likewise ; impious kings, Erenachs of lewd and crooked ways, adulterous women, and the panders that destroyed them by their evil practices.

Beyond the land of torment is a fiery wall ; seven times more horrible and cruel is it than the land of pain itself. Howbeit, no soul dwells therein till Judgment, but it is the province of the demons only, until the Day of Judgment.

30. At that time, woe unto him that shall dwell amid those pains, in company with the Devil's own tribe ! Woe unto him that is not ware of that tribe ! Woe unto him over whom a vile and savage demon is set in dominion ! Woe unto him that shall be hearkening unto the spirits, making moan and complaining unto the Lord, for the speedy coming of the Day of Judgment, that they may know whether they shall find any remission of their doom ; for they get no respite ever, save only for three hours on every Sunday. Woe unto him unto whom that land shall be for a lasting inheritance, even for ever and ever ! For this is the nature of it : Mountains, caverns, and thorny

brakes ; plains, bare and parched, with stagnant, serpent-haunted lochs. The soil is rough and sandy, very rugged, icebound. Broad fiery flagstones bestrew the plain. Great seas are there, with horrible abysses, wherein is the Devil's constant habitation and abiding-place. Four mighty rivers cross the middle of it : a river of fire, a river of snow, a river of poison, a river of black, murky water. In these wallow eager hosts of demons, after making their holiday and their delight in tormenting the souls.

31. What time the holy companies of the Heavenly Host are singing the eight hours with harmonious melody, praising the Lord with cheerfulness and great gladness, then do the souls of the wicked utter piteous and weary wailings, as they are buffeted unceasingly by the demon hordes.

Such then are the pains and torments which his guardian angel revealed to the spirit of Adamnán, after his journey towards the Heavenly Kingdom. After which he was borne in the twinkling of an eye through the golden forecourt, [35] and through the crystal veil, to the Land of Saints, whereunto he had been brought at first, after his departure from the body. But when he bethought him to rest and tarry in that land, he heard, through the veil, the angel's voice enjoining him to return again into that body whence he had departed, and to rehearse in courts and assemblies, and in the great congregations of laymen and of clerics, the rewards of Heaven and the pains of Hell, even as his guardian angel had revealed them unto him.

32. This, then, was the doctrine that Adamnán continually taught to the congregations, from that time forth, so long as he remained in life. This, too, is what he preached in the great assemblies of the men of Éire, [36] wherein the Constitution of Adamnán was imposed upon the Gaels, and the women were emancipated by Adamnán and by Finnachta Fledach, [37] King of Éire, and the princes of Éire, of one accord. Such, too, were the tidings which Patrick, son of Calpurnius, at the Gospel-dawn, was ever wont to proclaim—to wit, the rewards of Heaven and the pains of Hell—to all them that would believe in the Lord, through his teaching, and would accept his guidance of their souls. [38] That, too, is the doctrine most constantly taught by Peter and Paul, and the [other] apostles likewise, to wit, the enumeration of the rewards and pains which had been revealed to them in like manner. And so did Silvester, Abbot of Rome, teach Constantine, son of Helen, High King of the World, in the General Synod when he offered Rome to Paul and to Peter. [39] Even so did Fabian, successor to Peter, teach Philip, son of Gordian, the King of Rome, whereby he believed in the Lord, and many thousands beside believed in that hour. [40] For he was the first King of Rome that believed in the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

33. And these are the tidings which Elias declares continually unto the souls of the righteous, under the Tree of Life, which is in Paradise. So soon as Elias opens his book in order to instruct the spirits, the souls of the righteous, in form of bright white birds, repair to him from every side. Then he tells them, first, of the wages of the righteous, the joys and delights of the Heavenly Realm, and right glad thereat are all the throng. After that he tells them of the pains and torments of Hell, and the woes of Doomsday ; and easy it is to mark the look of sorrow that is upon his face, and upon the face of Enoch; and these are the two sorrows of the Heavenly Kingdom. Then Elias shuts his book, and thereupon the birds make exceeding great lamentation, straining their wings against their bodies till streams of blood issue from them, in dismay of the woes of Hell and of the Day of Doom.

34. Now, seeing that they who make this moan are the Saints to whom have been allotted everlasting mansions in the Heavenly Realm, how much more fitting were it for the men that are yet on earth to ponder, even with tears of blood, upon the

Judgment Day, and upon the pains of Hell. For at that time will the Lord render due recompense to every one on earth ; that is to say, rewards to the righteous, and punishments to the guilty. And at that very time shall the guilty be set in the abyss of everlasting pain, and the book of the Word of God shall then be closed, under the curse of the Judge of Doom, for ever. But the saints and the right-eous, the charitable and the merciful, shall be borne to the right hand of God, to a lasting habitation in the Kingdom of Heaven, there to abide without age or death, end or term, for ever and ever.

35. This, then, is the manner of that City : A Kingdom without pride, or vanity, or false-hood, or outrage, or deceit, or pretence, [41] or blushing, or shame, or reproach, or insult, or envy, or arrogance, or pestilence, or disease, or poverty, or nakedness, or death, or extinction, or hail, or snow, or wind, or rain, or din, or thunder, or darkness, or cold, a noble, admirable, ethereal realm, endowed with the wisdom, [42] and radiance, and fragrance of a plenteous land, wherein is the enjoyment of every excellence.

FINIT AMEN FINIT.

[1] Acts x. ii.

[2] 2 Cor. xii. 2-4. Cp. also Galat. i. 12, 16 ; Ephes. i. 3 ; and the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, Ante-Nicene Library, vol. xvi.

[3] With the ancient Irish, the abode of the departed was beyond the Atlantic, towards the setting sun ; so, in the Hindu mythology, Yama, King of the Dead, crossed the stream towards the sunset, first showing the way by which all men were to follow him. This natural idea has been shared by many barbarous races.

[4] Vault ; inna luinge, genitive of long, =ship. Qy. here= ‘ nave’ ?

[5] South-east, possibly because that is the direction of Jerusalem, the Holy City.

[6] The word used is Mórdáil, the name of the Irish National Assembly, or States-General. See *ante*, Sec. 2.

[7] Or, ‘ a chair highly wrought,’ inna chathair chumthachta.

[8] The comparison of the arch above the head of the Heavenly King to a wrought helmet or a regal diadem, may have been suggested by the picturesque and chivalrous custom of the Irish kings recorded in the ancient Irish poem upon the Fair of Carman, whence it appears that their head-dress on ordinary state occasions was a wrought helmet, the royal crown being reserved for the day of battle.

[9] ‘ Glow,’ derge, lit. ‘ redness,’ which, Mr. Whitley Stokes suggests, ‘ symbolises divine love, creative power, royalty.’ If so, cp. Dante’s description of a ‘ goodly crimson’ as ‘ questo nobilissimo colore.’

[10] Or, *qy.* ‘ comet’ ?

[11] Compare the description of the seven walls of Ecbatana, of different hue, in Herodotus, Book I.

[12] So Windisch trans. Crand caingil, =*cancelli*.

[13] ‘ Seats,’ or *qy.* stalls ; the author appears to have in mind the construction of a Christian church. Cp. note to ch. 31 *post.* ‘ Canopies,’ lit. ‘ crowns.’

[14] Or ‘ virgins,’ W. S.

[15] See last note.

[16] Or ‘ parricides,’ fíngalach, which O’Donovan translates both as ‘ a fratricide, one who has killed a tribesman,’ and ‘ parricidal’ (Supplement to O’Reilly’s Dictionary).

[17] The Erenach, or aircindech, was the official guardian of Church temporalities.

[18] Dánaib, which signifies ‘ gifts,’ ‘ arts,’ etc.

[19] pluic, which W. S. trans, ‘ maces,’ or ‘ clubs.’

[20] ‘ Reivers,’ aithdibergaig, which W. S. trans, ‘ men who mark themselves to the

- Devil,' but expresses doubt on the subject, and cites authorities which seem to imply the sense of rapine or plunder.
- [21] Or ' without remission, but they,' etc.
- [22] Co lár, which W. S. trans, ' down to the ground.'
- [23] Rotha, so Windisch from ruth ; W. S. trans. ' wheels' from roth.
- [24] Or, ' the ordained who have broken their vows.'
- [35] Erdam, which, Mr. Whitley Stokes says, was the name used by the Irish ecclesiastical writers as equivalent to the Greek *pronaos* or *narthex*. See notes I and 2 to Ch. 13, *ante*.
- [36] Cp. *ante*. Sec. 2.
- [37] The Mórdáil at which these laws were passed was apparently held in the year 697, while Finnachta Fledach had been assassinated in 695. This anachronism affords yet further evidence of the comparatively late composition of our version of the Vision.
- [38] Anmchairdine, ' soul-friendship ; ; Anmchara, ' soul-friend,' is the Irish name for a father-confessor.
- [39] Professor Bryce considers that the first extant mention of the Donation of Constantine is contained in the letter of Pope Hadrian i. to Charlemagne, dated A.D. 777 (*Holy Roman Empire*, ch. vii. p. 112 note, 4th ed.). If so, the allusion is couched in very general and obscure terms. Dollinger, who dates the letter in question 775, holds that it refers not to what is commonly understood by the Donation of Constantine, but to gifts of land in various parts of Italy, afterwards seized by the Lombards. The forgery of the Donation would appear to be later than 750, but prior to 774, as it refers to the state of things existing before the first Frankish settlement in Italy, which took place in 774. In any case, it is later than the time of Adamnán.
- [40] Philip succeeded to Gordian III. in 224, but was not his son, being an Arab. He favoured the Christians, and corresponded with Origen, whence arose a report, countenanced by Eusebius, that he had embraced Christianity, but for this there is no authority.
- [41] Taithlech, so W.S..
- [42] Suthi. So Windisch, though W. S. trans. ' fruitfulness (?).'

An Irish precursor of Dante : a study on the Vision of heaven and hell ascribed to the eighth-century Irish Saint Adamnán (1908)

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