

Medieval Bibles

"Pearl"

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The dubberment dere of down and dales
Of wode and water and wlonk plaines
Bilde in me bliss, abated my bales
Forbidden my stress, destroyed my paines
Down after a strem that drightly hailes
I bowed in bliss, bredful my branes
The firre I folwed those floty vales
The more strength of joye myn herte straines
As fortune fares theras ho fraines
Whether solace ho sende other elles sore
The wye to wham hir wille ho waines
Hittes to have ay more and more
More of wele was in that wise
Than I couth telle thagh I tom hade
For erthly herte might not suffise
To the tenthe dole of tho gladness glade
For thy I thoght that paradise
Was there other gain tho bonkes brade
I hoped the water were a devise
Between mirthes by meres made
Beyond the brook, by slent other slade
I hoped that mote inkerked wore
Bot the water was depe, I dorst not wade
And ever me longed ay more and more
More and more and yet well mare
Me liste to see the brook beyond
For if hit was fair there I can fare
Well loveloker was the firre londe
About me con I stote and stare
To finde a forth faste con I fonde
Bot wothes mo ywis there ware
The firre I stalled by the stronde
And ever me thoght I shokle not wonde
For wo there weles so winne wore
Thenne newe note me com on honed
That meved my minde more and more

Translation:

The rich splendour of the downs and dales
The woods, the rivers and the fertile fields
Baised within me, joy and on to my sorrows
They dispelled my grief and destroyed my pain

I followed the fast flowing stream
My mind overflowing with exultation
And the deeper I went into those watery gorges
The more my heart pounded with
The strength of overwhelming joy
For as fortune tends, whatever she sends
To repay first circumstance in dividends
Yet moreover and more
Given all the time in the world
I could not explain all the delight I found there
A human heart has not room enough
To feel even a tenth of those joyous pleasures
Therefore I thought that paradise
Was only on the broad bank opposite
And I thought the water was only a diversion
Between two pleasure gardens made my waters
I suppose the celestial city lay
Across the brook on the other side of the sloping valley
But the water was deep and I dared not wade over
Although I longed to get across yet moreover and more
More and more and yet moreover
I yearned to see beyond the brook
For though it was beautiful where I walked
The other side was lovelier by far
I stopped and sought for a safe place to cross
But the further I looked the more dangers I found
I knew I should not hesitate
Because of any difficulty
Where joys were so intensely delightful
Then something new came to my judgement
And the wonder in my mind grew
Yet moreover and more

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