

THE PILGRIM'S JOURNEY HOME: GRACE, FREE WILL, AND
PREDESTINATION IN THE *COMMEDIA*

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Italian

written under the direction of

Dr. Alessandro Vettori

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

[May, 2009]

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Pilgrim's Journey Home: Grace, Free Will, and Predestination in the *Commedia*

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In my dissertation, I explore the relationship between grace and free will in the *Commedia*, analyzing the redemptive process in the *Purgatorio*, and the contrapasso in the *Inferno*. My close examination of the theological, philosophical and literary contexts of free will explores the moral theories that helped to shape Dante's views on sin, divine justice and personal responsibility. I discuss how justifying grace, without infringing upon the free will, repairs the purgatorial pilgrims' wounded natures and liberates the will from the desire to sin. I devote particular attention to the purpose of infernal punishment which unites the sinner to his vice, allowing him to wallow in his wicked moral choices, and to the purpose of purgatorial punishment which redirects the will towards virtue. Ultimately, I claim that free will without the guidance of grace leads souls in the *Commedia* to damnation.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to my parents Michelangelo and Enrica Biunno for encouraging me to pursue my studies. I would like to express my sincere thanks to my thesis advisor Dr. Alessandro Vettori for his academic help and support during the completion of my dissertation. I am also indebted to the rest of my committee, Dr. David Marsh, Dr. Andrea Baldi, and Dr. Gaetano Pastore for their helpful feedback and advice. I would also like to thank all of the faculty members of the Italian Department including Dr. Laura White for their help throughout my graduate studies.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter I: Free Will, Love, and Self-Sacrifice in the <i>Commedia</i>	
1.1 Introduction: Free Will and Fatalism	8
2.1 <i>Purgatorio XVI</i> : Free will and Astral Determinism	12
3.1 <i>Inferno XXVII</i> : Pope Boniface and Guido of Montefeltro	17
4.1 <i>Inferno V</i> : Francesca da Rimini's Defense	22
5.1 Free Will and Charity	30
6.1 <i>The Old Man of Sin</i> : Francesca da Rimini	33
6.2 <i>The Old Man of Sin</i> : Cato	34
7.1 Cato and His Quest for Moral Freedom	37
7.2 <i>The Commedia's</i> New Moses	39
8.1 Piccarda and Costanza: Absolute and Relative Will	41
9.1 Conclusion	45
Chapter II: Grace, Free Will, and Predestination in the <i>Commedia</i>	
1.1 Introduction	48
2.1 Limitation of Free Will: Early Church Doctrine on Original Sin	52
2.2 Limitations of Free Will in the <i>Commedia</i>	55
2.3 Moral Slumber in <i>Inferno I</i>	60
3.1 Fear and Self-Reliance	63
4.1 Divine Grace and Merit	66
5.1 Predestination and Dante's Vision of Divine Justice	70
5.2 Faith, Grace, and Good Works	75
6.1 Conclusion: Justification in the <i>Commedia</i>	80
Chapter III: Free Will and Punishment in the <i>Commedia</i>: A Study of the Contrapasso in the <i>Inferno</i> and the <i>Purgatorio</i>	
1.1 Introduction	84
2.1 Contrapasso and <i>Lex Talionis</i>	87
2.2 Contrapasso in the <i>Inferno</i> : Unification to the Soul's Deepest Desires	93
3.1 Sin and Corruption of the Soul	97
4.1 Free Will and the Contrapasso	99
5.1 Purgatorial Punishment	100
6.1 Suffering and the <i>Purgatorio</i>	102
7.1 Suffering and Redemption in the <i>Purgatorio</i>	107
7.2 Purgatorial Torment	109
7.3 Meditation and Prayer in the <i>Purgatorio</i>	113

8.1 Final Observations and Conclusions _____	117
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Chapter IV The Conception and Creation of Purgatory

1.1 Introduction _____	122
2.1 Location _____	127
2.2 The Creation of Mount Purgatory _____	129
3.1 Duration of Punishment in Purgatory _____	131
3.2 Prayers for the Dead _____	133
4.1 Topography of Mount Purgatory _____	135
4.2 <i>Limbus Patrum</i> and <i>Limbus Infantiles</i> in the <i>Commedia</i> _____	137
4.3 Terrestrial Paradise in the <i>Purgatorio</i> _____	142
4.4 Hugh of St. Victor and the Topography of Dante's <i>Purgatorio</i> _____	145
5.1 Classification of Sinners _____	149
5.2 Early Church Doctrine on Mortal and Venial Sin _____	151
5.3 Venial, Mortal, and Capital Sin in the <i>Commedia</i> _____	153
6.1 Pain in the <i>Purgatorio</i> : Embryology and Aerial Bodies _____	156
6.2 The Nature of Punishment in the <i>Purgatorio</i> _____	161
6.3 Purgatorial Fire _____	162
7.1 Conclusion _____	167
Conclusion _____	169
Bibliography _____	172
Curriculum Vita _____	196

Introduction

The relationship between predestination, grace, and free will is at the core of the Dantean conception of redemption and divine justice. God rewards or punishes people based on their adherence to or defiance of the Law, and in the *Commedia*, divine justice would prove unfair if humans were fated by the Creator to make bad moral choices. In *Purgatorio XVI*, Marco Lombardo defends the supremacy of free will and explains that the motion of the Heavens affects human behavior, but does not cause people to sin. In my analysis of *Purgatorio XVI*, I discuss Orr's and Kay's research on astral influence in the *Commedia*. They observe that the idea that God expresses His will through the stars is present in most of Dante's major works including the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia*.¹ God, through the movement of the Heavens, awards His creation with specific personalities, talents, and abilities, but it is up to the individual to decide how they will use their divinely bestowed gifts. Those that harness their God-given talents and use them for a greater purpose, find salvation, while those that use their gifts for self-profit and self-promotion become wicked and lose eternal life.

In the *Paradiso*, Dante examines the effects of fear upon free will and concludes that divine judgment holds people accountable for moral decisions made under duress. In the Heaven of the Moon Dante meets Piccarda and Costanza who were forced by their families to leave the convent and to marry. Piccarda explains to the pilgrim that the blessed of the Moon dwell in the farthest heavenly sphere from God because they had

¹ Kay, Richard. *Dante's Christian Astrology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994; Orr, MA.. *Dante and the Early Astronomers*. Kennikat Press. NY. 1969

broken their religious vows.² According to Piccarda, it was never in Costanza's will to leave the convent, but because she feared for her safety, she consented to the marriage.³ The two women are held accountable for abandoning their religious orders even though they made the decision under extreme external pressure.⁴ Beatrice explains to the pilgrim that all are responsible for the choices they make in life, and compares free will to a flame that tends upwards despite any external pressure to change its direction:

Se violenza é quando quel che pate
 niente conferisce a quel che sforza
 non fuor quest'alme per essa scusate
 chè volontà, se non vuol, non s'ammorza
 ma fa come natura face in foco,
 se mille volte violenza il torza.⁵

She insists that Piccarda and Costanza should have become martyrs rather than give into fear and violate sacred vows.

Many of the damned in the *Inferno* do not take responsibility for their moral decisions. Paolo and Francesca claim that external forces destined them to damnation. Francesca bases her defense on courtly love and in my analysis of *Inferno V*, I examine the rules of the tradition presented in *The Art of Courtly Love* by Andreas Capellanus and C.S Lewis's *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. The poet of the *Commedia* rejects the courtly tradition because it claims that love is always virtuous. In *Purgatorio XVII* and *XVIII*, Virgil explains that love leads to sin if it is improperly directed towards temporal pleasures. In Virgil's speech, the poet expresses his

² *Paradiso III*. 55-56.

³ *Paradiso III*. 115-117.

⁴ *Paradiso IV*. 19-21 "Se 'l buon voler, dura/ la violenza altrui per qual ragione/ di meritar mi scema la misura?"

⁵ *Paradiso IV*. 73-78

condemnation of the courtly tradition because it teaches its followers that they can become virtuous by indulging in earthly pleasures.

My treatment of Francesca in *Inferno V*, also takes into consideration the debate over the extent of Dante's sympathy for the lovers. De Sanctis idealizes Francesca and emphasizes the tragic tone of the episode. Cassell, Busnelli, Montano, and Musa believe that the poet strongly condemns her for her sins, while Poggioli notes that the pilgrim's pity for Francesca comes from his own unresolved internal moral struggle against lust.⁶ I propose that the pilgrim's sympathy is a symptom of his weak moral disposition. He feels sorry for the lovers because he questions divine judgment and has not yet fully rejected sin.

Dante saves Cato because of his dedication to political and moral liberty, and assigns him the role of gatekeeper in Purgatory. The pagan-suicide renounced his life rather than submit to the rule of a vicious tyrant, and in my analysis of Cato, I also examine Singleton's idea that *Purgatorio I* and *II* are a re-enactment of Exodus. Hollander and Mazzotta agree with Singleton and add that Cato is the *Commedia's* Moses figure because he guides all those who seek freedom from sin to a mountain top.⁷

In the *Pharsalia* Lucan portrays Cato as a great redeemer who sacrificed himself for the good of his people, but the Poet of the *Commedia* transforms Lucan's pagan Cato

⁶De Sanctis, Francesco *De Sanctis on Dante: essays; edited and translated by Joseph Rossi and Alfred Galpin*; Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1957; Busnelli, Giovanni, "La ruina del secondo cerchio e Francesca da Rimini," in *Miscellanea Dantesca pubblicata a cura del Comitato cattolico padovano per il VI centenario della morte del Poeta* (Padua, 1922), pp. 49; Cassell, Anthony K., *Dante's Fearful Art of Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Hatcher, Anna Granville, and Mark Musa. "The Kiss *Inferno V* and the Old French Prose Lancelot." *Comparative Literature* 20 (1968): 97-109; Montano, Rocco, *Storia della poesia di Dante* (Naples: Quaderni di Delta, 1962), vol. 1; Renato Poggioli. "Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's *Inferno*". *PMLA* 72.3 Jun 1957. 356.

⁷Hollander, Robert. *Allegory in the Commedia*: p.124-130; Mazzotta, Giuseppe. *Dante Poet of the Desert*. Princeton University Press. 1979. p. 60-70; Singleton, Charles "In Exitu Israel de Aegypto". *Annual Report of the Dante Society*, vol. 78, pp. 1-24, 1960.

into an example of righteousness for all Christians. Christianity teaches that sinners must die to sin or face eternal damnation, and Cato follows this model by committing suicide and metaphorically dying to the *old man of sin*. In my dissertation, I discuss how the penitent are guided by Cato's example, crucify the sinful part of the self, and are reborn into righteousness.

Although the poet of the *Commedia* believed that individuals are responsible for their moral decisions, he did not think that people could make themselves worthy of salvation or rise from sin of their own moral strength. The wayfarer in *Inferno I* and *II*, for example, finds himself lost in the *selva oscura* or the symbolic place of sin and cannot reach the *colle luminoso*. He wants to lead a virtuous life, but falls into temptation.⁸ I propose that wayfarer cannot overcome his sinful tendencies because he suffers from moral slavery. Augustine's and Aquinas's writings on original sin and the Fall, formed the basis of Modern Church Doctrine, and heavily influenced the poet's conception of redemption and divine justice. They argue that all of Adam's descendants have free will, but not moral liberty. God granted prelapsarian Adam and Eve original justice which allowed them to chose between virtue and vice without the influence of the passions, but they lost this gift after the Fall.⁹ Postlapsarian people always experience an internal struggle when making moral decisions, and need divine grace to heal them of their wounded natures. The wayfarer in the prologue scene is unsuccessful because he tries to become righteous by relying entirely on free will and his own moral strength which has been compromised due to the fall. According to Freccero the wayfarer's limp represents

⁸*Inferno I. 51-53*

⁹*City of God. X; ST I.II. 82.3*

postlapsarian people's spiritual struggle.¹⁰ Prelapsarian Adam's powers of *intellectus* and *affectus* were perfect, but after he committed the first sin these two *feet* of the soul became wounded: the *intellectus* by ignorance and the *affectus* by concupiscence. The wounding of the feet can be seen in the wayfarer's walk. His left foot, or the *affectus*, remains "fermo" while the right foot or the *intellectus* struggles to reach the summit.

In the *Commedia*, grace, free will, and predestination are intricately connected. Dante believed that God predestines people to salvation, but he did not think that God saves the predestined regardless of the lives they lead. Dante was influenced by Augustine who proposed that predestination is simply the divine foreknowledge of future events: "Predestination is the foreordaining of those gracious gifts which make certain the salvation of all who are saved".¹¹ In Dante's conception of divine justice, God never condemns people to sin, and His mercy moves Him to extend the graces necessary for salvation to all people of all eras. In my analysis of the paradoxical nature of predestination, I discuss the episode of Trajan and Ripheus in *Paradiso XIX* and *XX* and suggest that their salvation confirms God's universal salvific will in the *Commedia*. I also examine the Eagle's speech in the Sphere of Jupiter where he tells the pilgrim that hope and faith conquer divine will because it desires to be conquered, and yet divine will is never altered: "*Regnum celorum* violenza pate / da caldo amore e da viva speranza / che vince la divina volontate."¹²

Aristotle, Aquinas, the Victorines, Augustine, and the Bible influenced the poet's conception of punishment. Guido da Pisa believed that the contrapasso in the *Commedia* was synonymous with the *lex talionis* or the biblical concept of "taking an eye for an eye"

¹⁰ Freccero, John. "Dante's Prologue Scene". *Dante Studies*. LXXIV (1966). 1-25.

¹¹ *On the Gift of Perseverance* 35

¹² *Paradiso XX*. 94-96

in which the sinner suffers an exact and reciprocal punishment in retaliation for his crimes.¹³ I propose that Dante's contrapasso involves more than simple reciprocity. In the *Inferno* the damned pay double for their sins and are tormented for their misdeeds, and for their corrupted natures. Punishment in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* serves two distinct purposes. Infernal punishment satisfies divine justice, and rewards the damned with the pleasures they choose in life. In the *Inferno* the damned are tormented by the realization that they will never find true fulfillment in sin. Contrarily, purgatorial punishment is an instrument of divine grace because it reforms the pilgrims, and prepares them for the beatific vision.¹⁴ In the *Purgatorio*, virtue is attained only through great struggle and through the use of contemplation and meditation, which is an idea undoubtedly influenced by Aquinas and Augustine. The penitent of the *Purgatorio* are cleansed of vice and liberated from the bondage to sin by repeating acts of virtue, meditating, and suffering. The purgatorial pilgrims never rebel against their punishment because they understand that it will rid them of their sinful dispositions, and will make them worthy of eternal life.

The last chapter of my dissertation is dedicated to the conception and creation of the *Purgatorio*. Although most early church theologians believed that souls were cleansed of their sins in Purgatory, they were vague about the exact nature of this second Kingdom. They debated endlessly over which souls might be worthy of purification. In the *Commedia*, Dante creates a detailed poetic vision of the afterlife and envisions

¹³Guido da Pisa. Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno. Edited with Notes and an Introduction by Vincenzo Cioffari. Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1974. For the biblical reference to *lex talionis* see: Exod. 21:24; Deut. 29:21; Lev. 24:20; Matt. 5:38, 7:2

¹⁴For more about the redemptive aspect of suffering in the *Purgatorio* see: Gilbert, Allan. Dante's Conception of justice. NY: AMS Press, 1971 p. 112; Gragnolati, Manuele. Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005

Purgatory as a place where the penitent might die to the sinful part of the self and be reborn into righteousness. The poet develops a highly complex system of purification and incorporates within his poetic vision Early Church Doctrines regarding the Fall of Man, and redemption. Dante does not limit himself to one doctrinal view of Purgatory, and he re-interprets early beliefs on the nature of purgatorial punishment. Some early church theologians such as Mechtild of Magdeburg believed that Purgatory was a "tiny Hell" filled with gruesome torment, but the poet of the *Commedia* transforms Purgatory into a realm of hope and peace. According to Mechtild, devils torment the penitent, but in the *Purgatorio* demons have no place. Angels serve as gatekeeper and guides in the penitent's spiritual journey.

The topography of Mount Purgatory has a number of theological sources. Dante's idea for the creation of Mount Purgatory has its origins in the biblical story of Satan's Fall. In the *Purgatorio*, divine mercy turns an act of disobedience into a vehicle of salvation for humankind. Lucifer is cast out of Heaven for his rebellion, and he crashes to earth, displacing a large mound of earth which later becomes Purgatory. I propose that the idea for the seven terraces was most likely influenced by Hugh of St. Victor and his mystical teachings on penitence and purification. In *Sermones xxxviii* and *xxxix*, Hugh of St. Victor describes the process through which souls are purified by ascending the steps of Jerusalem. As in the *Purgatorio*, Jerusalem has a series of seven steps which one must ascend in order to purify oneself from the seven capital sins and acquire the seven virtues.

“Free Will, Love and Self-Sacrifice in the *Commedia*”

1.1 Introduction: Free will and Fatalism

Through the centuries moral philosophers have debated whether free will or fate determines world events and how much liberty individuals have when making moral decisions. Sophocles and Æschylus believed that people could not change future events or alter destiny. Humans were at the mercy of the gods of Olympus who unrelentingly punished them by imposing misfortune. Founded in Athens by Zeno, Stoicism taught that the universe and god are one. Fate infallibly controlled all human events, and the wise and virtuous had to conform to all of destiny’s misfortunes. The stoics believed that vice is a product of ignorance, and that true happiness came from a dominance of the passions attainable only through the use of reason and of extreme self-sacrifice.¹⁵

Upon the advent of Christianity the debate over free will versus fate changed as theologians challenged ideas about destiny.¹⁶ Christianity teaches that God commands people to follow a specific moral code and that He rewards or punishes people based on their adherence to or defiance of the Law. The divine system of justice whereby the soul

¹⁵ For a history of Greek philosophy regarding free will and fatalism see: Ed. Terrance Irwin. Classical philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; Ed. Armstrong, A.H. The Cambridge history of later Greek and early Medieval Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970; Bigongliari, Dino. Backgrounds of the Divine Comedy. Delaware: Griffon House Publications, 2005; Burnet, John. Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato. London: Macmillan and Co. 1950; Frede, Michael. Essays in Ancient Philosophy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987; Furley, David. Two Studies in the Greek Atomists: study 1, Indivisible Magnitudes; study 2, Aristotle and Epicurus on Voluntary Action. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1967; Shibles, Warren. Models of Ancient Greek Philosophy. London: Vision, 1971.

¹⁶ Evans, G Red. The First Christian Theologians: an introduction to Theology in the Early Church. Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004; Kelly, J.N.D. Early Christian Doctrines. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

is assigned a place in the afterlife based upon previous moral conduct would prove unfair if humans were fated by the Creator to make bad moral choices. Christianity also professes that God is the source of all good, and cannot by nature predetermine people to commit wicked deeds. While affirming the supremacy of free will, early Christian theologians struggled to determine the amount of moral liberty postlapsarian people possessed, and examined the external factors which entice people to sin. Augustine's and Aquinas's study on free will and predestination profoundly influenced Church doctrine regarding man's fallen state and his redemption through grace.¹⁷ According to Aquinas and Augustine, postlapsarian people have free will, but have lost their moral liberty as a result of the fall. Augustine explains that Adam and Eve, in their perfect state, possessed the gift of original justice whereby human will was subject to the divine and passion was subject to reason.¹⁸ After the Fall, humankind lost the gift of original justice and with it the ability to make moral decisions without the influence of the passions. Augustine argues that postlapsarian people have free will, but that is not to say that they can make moral decisions without being swayed in one direction or another. People are tempted by passion to commit sin because of moral slavery. Aquinas makes a similar argument saying that people make moral decisions based upon what they perceive to be the Good, but adding that postlapsarian people do not always see the Universal Good because of

¹⁷ For more information on Augustine's and Aquinas's influence on early church doctrine regarding original sin, free will, and the role of grace in redemption see: Ferguson, Everett ed. Doctrines of human nature, sin and Salvation in the Early Church. New York: Garland, 1993; Evans, G.R The Medieval Theologians. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001; Pelikan, Jaroslav. The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 1 Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971; Ogliari, Donato. Gratia et Certamen: The Relationship Between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called SemiPelagians. Leuven University Press, 2003.

¹⁸ For Augustine's and Aquinas's doctrines on the state of mankind before the fall see: Augustine The City of God XIV. 1-12; Augustine. On Rebuke and Grace 32; *ST*. I.95.2: "...in the state of innocence the inferior appetite was wholly subject to reason: so that in that state the passions of the soul existed only as consequent upon the judgment of reason"; *ST* I.94-101.

their limited moral insight. The will is never fully enticed by one thing or another because every good perceived in a postlapsarian world is imperfect.¹⁹ Augustine and Aquinas believe in free will while at the same time acknowledging God's infinite and omnipotent nature: They argue that although He controls the universe and has foreknowledge of people's future actions, He does not impose upon people's free will.²⁰

Augustine's and Aquinas's doctrines on free will influenced Dante's conception of divine justice, and in the *Commedia* people's use or misuse of free will serves as the basis for the soul's placement in the afterlife.²¹ Like Augustine and Aquinas, Dante argues that people who are strengthened by the healing power of grace can overcome moral slavery by properly using their free will.²² In his speech on *libero arbitrio*, Marco Lombardo affirms that people can never be forced to sin against their will because that would corrupt the entire system of divine judgment:

Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto
libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia
per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto.²³

¹⁹ For Augustine's and Aquinas's doctrines on the fall of man and the role of grace in redemption see: Augustine *The City of God* XIV chapter 15; *ST I/II.82.3*; *ST I/II.109.8*.

²⁰ For Augustine's and Aquinas's theories on free will see: *ST I/II.83.1-4*; For Augustine's and Aquinas's theories on God's omnipotent nature see: *ST I.6.1*; *I.22.1-4*; *I. 23.1-8*; Augustine. *The City of God* 13.14.

²¹ For more information regarding the influence of Augustine, Aquinas and early church theologians on the *Commedia*, see: Bigongiari, Dino, Anne Paolucci, and Henry (supplementary essays) Paolucci.

Backgrounds of The Divine Comedy Dover, DE: Griffon, for Bagehot Council, 2005; Bigongiari, Dino, Henry Paolucci, and Anne Paolucci. *Essays on Dante and Medieval Culture: Critical Studies of the Thought and Texts of Dante, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Marsilius of Padua, and Other Medieval Subjects* Florence, Italy: Olschki, 2000; De Smet, Richard. "The Medieval Inheritance of Dante." *Journal of the Department of English* 22.1-2 (1986-1987): 37-49; Hawkins, Peter S. "Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the Divine Comedy." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 106.3 (May 1991): 471-482; Panvini, Bruno. "La concezione tomistica della grazia nella Divina Commedia." *Lecture Classensi* 17 (1988): 69-85; Stump, Eleonore. "Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and the Love of God." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16.2 (June 1986): 181-198; Tateo, Francesco. "Percorsi agostiniani in Dante." *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 76 (2001): 43-56; Took, John. "Dante, Augustine, and the Drama of Salvation." *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia*. 73-92. Dublin: Irish Acad., 1993; Wickstead, Philip H. *Dante and Aquinas*. New York: Haskell House, 1971.

²² *Paradiso IV*. 72-78.

²³ *Purgatorio XVI*. 70-72.

In the *Commedia* external and internal pressures can never move people to act against their free will, but in the *Inferno* many claim that destiny and insurmountable forces left them no choice but to sin. In *Inferno V* Paolo and Francesca insist that they are not to blame for their damnation and claim that love seizes the heart, making it impossible for anyone to deny another love. They believe that they have been unfairly condemned because they think all love is ennobling. According to the poet of the *Commedia*, love and free will are intricately tied together. Virgil explains to the pilgrim in *Purgatorio XVII* and *XVIII* that not all love is righteous. Although the will seeks the objects it loves, the individual must use reason to discern virtuous love from sinful love. According to Dante's conception of justice, love's influence can never be used as an excuse for sinful behavior because reason allows the will to distinguish virtuous love from unrighteous love.²⁴ Paolo and Francesca are in Hell because they confused noble love or *caritas* with mere lust.

In the *Purgatorio*, the pilgrim asks Marco Lombardo if astral influence is an obstacle to free will. Lombardo argues that God, through the motion of the heavens, awards His creation with specific personalities, talents, and abilities, but it is up to the individual to decide how they will use their divinely bestowed gifts. Those that harness the talents awarded to them and use them in the pursuit of virtue find salvation, while those that use their gifts for self profit and self promotion become wicked and lose eternal life.

In the *Commedia* fear and extreme external pressure to sin do not constrict free will. Piccarda and Costanza choose to break their vows to God and leave the convent because they feared for their lives. In the *Paradiso* they occupy the lowest of the

²⁴ *Purgatorio XVII*. 91-139.

heavenly spheres and are still held accountable for their sin because they willingly violated their vows. Contrarily, as I will discuss later, Cato renounced his earthly life rather than submit to Caesar's tyrannical rule and gained eternal life. Dante assigns to Cato the role of gatekeeper of the Mountain of Purgatory and makes Cato a model for all those passing through the seven terraces of *Purgatorio* on their way to salvation. Free will allows all to choose between virtue and vice, but self sacrifice and suffering frees the will from the grip of vice and moral slavery.

2.1 *Purgatorio XVI*: Marco Lombardo: Free will and astral determinism in the *Commedia*

Dante's placement of the most pivotal discussion on free will at the very center of the *Commedia* in *Purgatorio XVI* stresses the notion that free will is at the heart of divine justice.²⁵ The concept of free will is so central to understanding divine justice that the poet chooses to emphasize the message and not the messenger. It is well worth noting that Marco Lombardo delivers one of the most important discourses in the *Commedia*, but because of the blinding smoke on the terrace of the wrathful, he does not even have a physical presence. In *Purgatorio XVI* Lombardo is strictly a voice guiding Virgil and Dante through the terrace and correcting the pilgrim's misguided notions about the source of corruption in the world. Dante considered Marco Lombardo an exemplary man of virtue, but does not reveal in the *Purgatorio* much about his identity or personal story

²⁵ For an in-depth discussion on the theology and historical background of *Purgatorio XVI* see: Boitani, Piero *From Darkness to Light: Governance and Government in Purgatorio XVI*. Dante and Governance. Oxford. 1997 12-27; Bufano, Antonietta. "La lezione di Marco Lombardo: Il Canto XVI del Purgatorio." Critica Letteraria 23.1-2 [86-87] (1995): 153-168; Mazzamuto, Pietro. Il Canto XVI del Purgatorio. *Lettura Dantis Scaligera*. Firenze. 1968; Freccero, John. "Dante's Impure Beast: Purg. XVI, 99." Modern Language Notes 75.5 (May 1960): 411-414; Vivaldi, Fulberto. "Su alcuni versi del Purgatorio (XVI. 1-3; XI. 109-110; X. 7-12; III. 124-126). L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca 3 (1962): 43-50.

because he does not want to distract the reader with a story about the speaker. In *Purgatorio XVI*, Marco Lombardo does not reveal much information about his family or history and identifies himself only as a native of Lombardy.²⁶ Not much is known of Marco through the *Commedia*, but Villani and the *Novellino* attest to his exemplary reputation and virtue. Lombardo lived in the second half of the thirteenth century and generously gave away most of his wealth to the poor.²⁷ Villani writes that Lombardo was a wise man who despised worldly corruption and vice. In *The Chronicles* Villani recounts the story of Lombardo and Count Ugolino. Count Ugolino invites Lombardo to a lavish feast at his home and proudly displays to Lombardo all his acquired wealth and prestige. At the party, Lombardo foresees the Count's tragic death and warns him that God's wrath will soon descend upon him in retaliation for his crimes.²⁸ A short time later, Count Ugolino and his sons are imprisoned in a tower on account of their treachery against the State. After eight months in prison, the leadership of Pisa decides to nail the tower door shut and to throw the key into the Arno, leaving Ugolino and his sons without food or water. They starve to death in a matter of days.²⁹

While listening to Lombardo's speech, the pilgrim must make his way through the smoke-filled terrace of the wrathful. The smoke forces the pilgrim to close his eyes, to grab hold of Virgil's shoulder, and to follow his guide like a blind man through the terrace. The smoke in *Purgatorio XVI* represents the blindness of wrath and stresses the

²⁶ *Purgatorio XVI*. 46-48: "Lombardo fui, e fu' chiamato Marco;/ del mondo seppi, e quel valore amai/al quale ha or ciascun disteso l'arco."

²⁷ *Novellino XLIV* and *LV*.

²⁸ Villani *Cronica*.vii, 121. For more information on the biography of Marco Lombardo see Singleton, Charles *The Divine Comedy, Translated with a Commentary*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1970-75. *Purgatorio XVI*, 46.

²⁹ *Inferno XXXII*. 66-75.

pilgrim's moral ignorance.³⁰ The pilgrim wonders if the motion of the Heavens causes the world and its people to become corrupt because he does not yet comprehend free will's power to overcome external influences and pressures. Lombardo explains to the pilgrim that the stars do not cause people to turn towards vice because all possess a free will. Without free will, God would unjustly condemn or reward mankind for actions over which they had no control.³¹ Lombardo admits that stars do have some influence on human behavior, but individuals can overcome these influences by exercising their free will.³² According to Lombardo, people must wage war against the impulses which the heavens stir up in them: "...se fatica / ne le prime battaglie col ciel dura, / poi vince tutto, se ben si notrica".³³ Although Dante believed that the stars influence human behavior, he did not think that the stars were the cause of vice.³⁴ In the *Convivio* Dante explains that through the motion of the stars God writes his divine plan and transfers to earth His heavenly virtue:

...e così lo ditto cielo ordina col suo movimento la cotidiana revoluzione di tutti li altri, per la quale ogni die tutti quelli ricevono e mandano qua giù la vertude di tutte le loro parti. Chè se la revoluzione di questo non ordinasse ciò, poco di loro vertude qua giù verrebbe o di loro vista.³⁵

³⁰ Boitani, Piero *From Darkness to Light: Governance and Government in Purgatorio XVI, Dante and Governance*. Oxford. 1997 12-27 see page 13; Singleton, Charles *The Divine Comedy, Translated with a Commentary*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1970-75. *Purgatorio XVI* 1-12.

³¹ *Purgatorio XVI*. 58-63; 70-72.

³² *Purgatorio XVI*. 73.

³³ *Purgatorio XVI*. 76-78.

³⁴ *Convivio* II.12: "Li cieli narrano la Gloria di Dio, e l'opere de le sue mani annunzia lo fermamento." Orr discusses Dante's ideas on astral influence and the development of those ideas in the *Commedia, Monarchia* and the *Convivio*: "For him it was a tremendous fact, and one which pervades his writings, that stars and spheres are the instruments of God's providence, and are ordained by the First Mover to mould the destinies of Earth. It is their movements which manifest His Will, they are the hammers, earth the metal, they are the seals, and earth the wax"; Orr, MA. *Dante and the Early Astronomers*. Kennikat Press. NY. 1969 p. 323; Richard Kay discusses the role of the free will in determining the use of divinely bestowed talents and observes: "To sum up Dante's views on astrology, then we can say that he believed that the stars were God's instruments for expressing His will through nature". *Dante's Christian Astrology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994. 150-151.

³⁵ *Convivio* II xiv. 34.

In the *Paradiso* Dante proposes that the stars distribute various talents to humankind and even claims that his own poetic abilities are a result of their influence.³⁶ In a similar vein, Charles Martel in *Paradiso VIII* explains that corruption arises in society when people act in a manner contrary to their nature or use their God-given gifts to promote their own self interest.³⁷ The motion of the stars provides the clergy with certain virtues and talents so that they might guide their flock to salvation. The movement of the stars also awards kings the talents and virtues necessary to govern. Martel's speech suggests that corruption arises in society when those who are best apt to deal with temporal affairs are motivated out of their own self-will to enter into spiritual affairs and vice versa.

In *Purgatorio XVI*, Lombardo's righteous anger against corruption in the Church and the State contrasts sharply with the terrace's images of sinful wrath and demonstrates that anger properly directed towards injustice and sin is virtuous. He accuses the Pope and Emperor of abusing their power, neglecting their duty to society, and leading people astray through their corrupt example:

Ben puoi veder che la mala condotta
è la cagion che 'l mondo ha fatto reo,
e non natura che in voi sia corrotta.³⁸

³⁶ *Paradiso XXV I*.128-129 and *Paradiso*, XXII,112-114.

³⁷ *Paradiso VIII*. 139-148.

³⁸ *Purgatorio XVI*. 103-105.

According to Bufano the Poet attributes most of the evil in society to the power struggle between the Church and the Emperor: "In effetti, fuor di metafora, è proprio questa la tesi che Dante vuol sostenere: per lui è verità inconfutabile che i mali del mondo, e dell'Italia in particolare, derivano in gran parte dalla commistione dei due poteri, più esattamente dall'indebita ingerenza della Chiesa nelle cose terrene, a sua volta conseguenza della donazione di Costantino" Bufano, Antonietta *La lezione di Marco Lombardo: Il Canto XVI del Purgatorio* Critica Letteraria. 23; 1995. 153-168. p. 157.

For a discussion on Dante's view on how the stars cause both political upheaval and equip the Emperor with the talents necessary to rule his people, see: Kay, Richard. *Dante's Christian Astrology*. . 7-10; Took observes that Dante explain in the *Monarchia* that papal and princely power ought to remain separate: "...Dante sets about putting his own case, about defining the relationship as *he* sees it between papal and princely power. Papal and princely authority, he believes, exist in parallel. They are not dependant one on the other. They are each directly dependant on God."; Took, J.F. *Dante Lyric Poet and Philosopher: An Introduction to the Minor Works*. Clarendon Press. Oxford. 1990. p. 157; For more information on Dante and his Political views see: Albertini, Stefano. "Questione linguistica e questione politica nelle opere

Lombardo tells the pilgrim that Rome once held two “Suns” or two separate powers, King Philip V and Pope Boniface, but the “two Suns” desired to usurp the other’s power. In his speech, Lombardo refers to the struggle over money and influence between Boniface and King Philip which prompted Boniface in 1302 in his Papal Bull *Unam Sanctam* to declare that all temporal power lay under the Church. In the *Unam Sanctam* Boniface argued that the Church wielded the power of *two swords*: the secular and the Spiritual. He contended that because the secular sword is subordinate to the spiritual, the emperor must submit himself to Papal authority.³⁹ In the *Monarchia* Dante argues that the Pontiff and the Emperor have a moral obligation to foster virtue amongst their people. The Church must guide its followers along the path to salvation while the Emperor must enact laws that enable his subjects to attain temporal happiness:

...yet human greed would cast these ends and means aside if men, like horses, prompted to wander by their animal natures, were not held in check "with bit and bridle" on their journey. It is for this reason that man had need of two guides corresponding to his twofold goal: that is to say the supreme Pontiff, to lead mankind to eternal life in conformity with revealed truth, and the Emperor, to guide mankind to temporal happiness in conformity with the teachings of philosophy.⁴⁰

In *Purgatorio XVI* Lombardo argues that the Church, in its attempt to unite temporal and spiritual authority became a bad moral example for its followers. The Church abandoned

minori di Dante." *Canadian Journal of Italian Studies* 18.51 (1995): 111-135; Cassell, Anthony K. *The Monarchia Controversy* Washington, DC: Catholic U of America P, 2004; Ferrante, Joan *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy*. Princeton University Press. 1984; Honess, Claire E. "Salus, venus, virtus: Poetry, Politics, and Ethics from the *De vulgari eloquentia* to the *Commedia*." *Italianist: Journal of the Department of Italian Studies, University of Reading* 27.2 (2007): 185-205; Howard, Lloyd, and Elena Rossi. "Textual Mapping of Dante's Journey Back to Political Original Sin in Florence." *MLN* 106.1 (Jan. 1991): 184-188; Imbach, Ruedi. "Quattro idee sul pensiero politico di Dante Alighieri." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 47.28 (July 2006): 41-54; Moevs, Christian. "The Metaphysical Basis of Dante's Politics." *Le culture di Dante: Studi in onore di Robert Hollander*. 215-241. Florence, Italy: Cesati, 2004; Najemy, John M. "Dante and Florence." *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*. 80-99. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993; Schildgen, Brenda Deen. "Dante's Utopian Political Vision, the Roman Empire, and the Salvation of Pagans." *Annali d'Italianistica* 19 (2001): 51-69; Scott, John. *Dante's Political Purgatory*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1996.

³⁹ *Unam Sanctam* : "Now, therefore, we declare, say, determine and pronounce that for every human creature it is necessary for salvation to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff."

⁴⁰ *Monarchia* III. xvi. 9-10.

its divine purpose and became corrupted in the moment it sought to attain a greater authority than it had been granted by God.⁴¹

The battle that all people must wage in verses 76 to 78 of Lombardo's speech is not against the negative influences of the Heavens, since the stars do not transmit vice to mankind; instead it is an inward battle of the individual to overcome selfish desire and to seek only to fulfill God's will. Stars give people their talents, but free will determines what use they will make of their talents. Those who are moved by a love of this world use their God-given talents for personal gain, but those who are moved by charity or a deep rooted desire to please God, use their talents to fulfill His will. In Lombardo's discussion on astral influence and corruption in the Church, the Papacy abuses its divinely bestowed powers and talents in its selfish worldly pursuits. The Church strays from its divine purpose and leads its followers into sin and vice by attempting to achieve more than it is allowed by God's plan.

3.1 *Inferno* XXVII: Pope Boniface and Guido of Montefeltro

In *Inferno* XXVII⁴² Pope Boniface's hunger to satisfy his own self-will and to attain temporal power leads a member of his flock astray. Boniface wanted to gain temporal power at any cost and when the Colonna family challenged the Pope's

⁴¹ *Purgatorio* XVI. 100-102: "per che la gente, che sua guida vede/pur a quel ben fedire on'ella è ghiotta,/ di quel si pasce, e più oltre non chiede".

Purgatorio XV., 127-129: "Di oggimai che la Chiesa di Roma,/per confondere in sè due reggimenti,/cadde nel fango, e sè brutta e la soma"

⁴² For more analysis on *Inferno* XXVII see:

Hatcher, Anna Granville, "Dante's Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro." *Dante Studies* 88 (1970): 109-17; Markulin, Joseph, "Dante's Guido da Montefeltro: A Reconsideration," *Dante Studies* 100 (1992): 135-78; Pertile, Lino, "*Inferno* XXVII. Il peccato di Guido da Montefeltro," *Atti dell'Istituto veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti* 141 (1982): 147-78.

authority, the family was forced to seek refuge in the city of Palestrina. In 1298 Boniface sought Guido of Montefeltro's advice and Guido devised a plan in which he would promise the Colonna family amnesty and negate that promise as soon as they left the fortress. At first Guido was hesitant to commit this crime, but Boniface told him that because he possesses the *keys to Heaven*, he could grant absolution from all sins.⁴³

Boniface's actions bring to mind Marco Lombardo's accusation against corrupt church leaders in his speech on free will in *Purgatorio XVI*: God gave Boniface the power to rule His children, but Boniface, tempted by worldly gain, abuses this power and becomes a wicked example to his people. Guido had repented of his past sins and had become a monk, but Boniface convinces him to return to his old ways.⁴⁴ In *Inferno XXVII*, Guido receives damnation not only because he gave fraudulent counsel, but also because he took it. He fell victim to the Pope's vengeful desires and wicked abuse of power, and might have been saved if he had not believed Boniface's claim that the Pope holds the *keys to Heaven* and has absolute power to forgive sins:

Io fui uom d'arme, e poi fui cordigliero,
credendomi, sì cinto, fare ammenda;
e certo il creder mio venìa intero,
se non fosse il gran prete, a cui mal prenda!,
che mi rimise ne le prime colpe.⁴⁵

It is important to note that Dante believed that individuals are still responsible for their sins, although they may be influenced by corruption in the Church, because all possess

⁴³ *Inferno XXVII*. 103-105: "Lo ciel poss'io serrare e diserrare/ come tu sai; però son due le chiavi/ che 'l mio antecessor non ebbe care."

⁴⁴ *Inferno XXVII*. 70-83

⁴⁵ *Inferno XXVII*. 67-71

free will enabling them to reject sin.⁴⁶ Guido cannot justify his behavior with ignorance because he was fully aware that by granting Boniface's favor, he was committing a grave offense against God. Guido could not be repentant because he asked forgiveness for a sin he had not yet committed. His sin is serious because it is a sin of volition, not committed out of weakness, but out of a willful and calculated disobedience to God. God condemns Guido to Hell not only for deceiving the Colonna family, but more importantly, for foolishly trying to trick God into granting him absolution for a sin for which he was not truly sorry.

Guido takes enormous pride in his talents, but does not realize that his God-given talents could have led him to salvation if only he had used them in accordance with divine will.⁴⁷ In his description of Guido's punishment, the poet alludes to the Bull of Perillus, suggesting that Guido becomes the victim of his own ingenuity:

Come 'l bue ciclian che mughhiò prima
 Col pianto di colui, e ciò fu dritto,
 che l'avea temperato on sua lima,
 mughhiava con la voce de l'afflitto,
 sì che, con tutto che fosse di rame,
 pur el pareva dal dolor trafitto.⁴⁸

Perillus invented a torture device in which the victim is roasted alive in a bronze bull, and in a cruel twist of fate, Perillus was the first to be killed in the Bull.⁴⁹ Similarly, Guido

⁴⁶ Bufano observes that in the *Commedia* ignorance does not excuse sinful behavior: "Ma se gli errori dei popoli dipendono dalla mala condotta, cioè dalle cattive guide, che dovrebbero invece indirizzarli sulla via del bene, come si può sostenere il principio della responsabilità personale? La risposta implicita al quesito è quella che il poeta affida a Beatrice quando, nell'invettiva contro i falsi predicatori, (siamo nel Primo Mobile), identifica i fedeli, che nella loro ignoranza si lasciano frastornare e trarre in inganno da quei mistificatori, con "le pecorelle, che non sanno" e che perciò "tornan del pasco pasciute di vento". Ma la conclusione- "e non le scusa non veder lo danno"- è categorica e non lascia dubbi sul severo giudizio del poeta: L'ignoranza non può essere addotta come giustificazione, essendo di per sè una colpa." Bufano, Antonietta "La lezione di Marco Lombardo: Il Canto XVI del Purgatorio" 158

⁴⁷ *Inferno XXVII*. 76-78: "Li accorgimenti e le coperte vie/io seppi tutte, e sì menai lor arte,/ ch'al fine de la terra il suono uscie."

⁴⁸ *Inferno XXVII*. 7-12.

uses the talents awarded to him by God through the motion of the stars to devise a scheme eventually leading to his own downfall. Guido tries to use his abilities to forge his own path to Heaven, but inevitably is sent to Hell because he does not, as Marco Lombardo suggests, harness the powers given to him by the motion of the stars.

In *Inferno XXVII*, Saint Francis and a demon battle for possession of Guido of Montefeltro's soul. Francis tries to take Guido to Heaven, but a dark cherub carries Guido to Hell. Although Francis is among the blessed of the Paradiso, he does not know the will of God and mistakenly believes that Guido is saved. Scholars have tried to explain Francis's ignorance, and Markulin, for example, argues that Guido lied about the episode between Francis and the dark cherub. How could Francis not have known that Guido was damned?⁵⁰ I believe that Guido did not invent the story of the battle over his soul, and propose that the episode in *Inferno XXVII* illustrates the mystery of divine will. Francis's ignorance regarding Guido's eternal fate demonstrates that in the *Commedia* only God knows who is counted among the elect. Divine will is discussed in detail in *Paradiso XIX* and *XX*, and in the Sphere of Jupiter, for example, the Eagle tells the pilgrim that God's will is inscrutable.⁵¹ According to the Eagle, there is a fixed number of elect, and that even the blessed do not know who will be saved or who will be damned:

E voi, mortali, tenetevi stretti

⁴⁹ Richard Kay observes the cruel irony that links Guido da Montefeltro to Perillus and argues that both were victims of "misguided ingenuity". "Two Pairs of Tricks: Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro in Dante's *Inferno XXVI-XXVII*": *Quaderni d'italianistica*: 1980: 1: 107-24. See in particular pages 111 and 112.

⁵⁰ Markulin, Joseph, "Dante's Guido da Montefeltro: A Reconsideration," *Dante Studies* 100 (1982): 25-40.

⁵¹ For more on divine will in *Paradiso XIX* and *XX* see: Foster, Kenelm, "Paradiso XIX," *Dante Studies* 94 (1976): 71-90; Camerino, Giuseppe Antonio. "Paradiso XX." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 36.6 (1995): 47-60. Foster, Kenelm, O.P. "Paradiso XIX." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 94 (1976): 71-90; Reissner, Claus. "Paradiso XX, 118-120: 'Quell'Avvocato De' Tempi Cristiani: Orosius Oder Lactantius?'" *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 47 (1972): 58-76; Russo, Vittorio. "Paradiso XIX: Similis Fictio Numquam Facta Fuit Per Aliquem Poetam." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 101 (1983): 87-110; Scrivano, Riccardo. "Paradiso XIX." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 36.6 (1995): 29-46.

a giudicar: ché noi, che Dio vedemo,
non conosciamo ancor tutti li eletti.⁵²

In the *Commedia*, Frances is among the blessed of the *Paradiso*, but this privilege does not grant him the power to read the mind of God.

In *Inferno XXVII*, the demon argues that Guido is not truly repentant because he committed the sin with the intention of later receiving the sacrament of confession:

Francesco venne poi, com' io fu' morto,
per me; ma un d'i neri cherubini
li disse: 'Non portar; non mi far torto.
Venir se ne dee giù tra ' miei meschini
perché diede 'l consiglio frodolente,
dal quale in qua stato li sono a' crini;
ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente,
né pentere e volere insieme puossi
per la contradizion che nol consente.'
Oh me dolente! come mi riscossi
quando mi prese dicendomi: 'Forse
tu non pensavi ch'io löico fossi!'⁵³

Guido suffers eternal torment amongst the fraudulent of the *Inferno*, but his son, Buonconte awaits eternal glory in the *Ante-Purgatorio*.⁵⁴ Buonconte had spent his entire life in sin, but a last minute act of repentance saves him from eternal damnation. In the moments before his death at the battle of Campaldino, he experiences a change of heart and murmurs the name *Mary*.⁵⁵ In an episode similar to *Inferno XXVII*, an angel and a demon fight over Buonconte's eternal fate, but in Buonconte's case the angel wins:

⁵² *Paradiso XX*. 133-135

⁵³ *Inferno XXVII*. 112-123

⁵⁴ For more analysis on Buonconte in the *Purgatorio* see: Armour, Peter. "Words and the Drama of Death in *Purgatorio V*." *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia*. 93-122. Dublin: Irish Acad., 1993; Costantini, Aldo M. "Elementi cronachistici e sacre rappresentazioni nei due Da Montefeltro." *Lecture Classensi* 28 (1999): 29-42; Pietropaolo, Domenico. "The Figural Context of Buonconte's Salvation." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 102 (1984): 123-134; Toja, Gianluigi. "Buonconte di Montefeltro e l'epos dell'eroe morente." *Studi in onore di Alberto Chiari*. 1269-1274. Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1973.

⁵⁵ *Purgatorio V*. 100-102: "Quivi perdei la vista, e la parola/nel nome di Maria fini', e quivi/caddi, e rimase la mia carne sola."

“l'angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d'inferno/gridava: 'O tu del ciel, perché mi privi?’”.⁵⁶ The contrast Dante draws between Guido's fate and that of his son Buonconte demonstrates that the poet believed that the Church does not have the absolute power to grant salvation. Buonconte never confesses his sins to a priest, but God forgives him because he has a contrite heart. Guido receives the sacrament of reconciliation directly from Pope Boniface, but suffers eternal damnation because his confession was insincere.⁵⁷

4.1 *Inferno V*: Francesca da Rimini's Defense and Denial of Free Will

In the circle of the lustful, Francesca recounts her tragic love story to the pilgrim, and at the conclusion of the Canto, the pilgrim faints: “io venni men così com' io morisse / E caddi come corpo morto cade”.⁵⁸ Danteists have debated over the extent of Dante's sympathy for the lovers. De Sanctis idealizes Francesca and emphasizes the tragic tone of the episode.⁵⁹ Contrarily, Cassell, Busnelli, Montano, and Musa view Francesca in a more unfavorable light.⁶⁰ They take on a moralistic approach in their analysis of the *Inferno V*, and believe that the poet strongly condemns Francesca for her transgressions.

⁵⁶ *Purgatorio V*. 104-105

⁵⁷ For more analysis on Buonconte in the *Purgatorio* see: Armour, Peter. "Words and the Drama of Death in *Purgatorio V*." *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia*. 93-122. Dublin: Irish Acad., 1993; Costantini, Aldo M. "Elementi cronachistici e sacre rappresentazioni nei due Da Montefeltro." *Lecture Classensi* 28 (1999): 29-42; Pietropaolo, Domenico. "The Figural Context of Buonconte's Salvation." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 102 (1984): 123-134; Toja, Gianluigi. "Buonconte di Montefeltro e l'epos dell'eroe morente." *Studi in onore di Alberto Chiari*. 1269-1274. Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1973.

⁵⁸ *Inferno V*. 141-142

⁵⁹ De Sanctis, Francesco *De Sanctis on Dante: essays; edited and translated by Joseph Rossi and Alfred Galpin*; Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1957.

⁶⁰ Busnelli, Giovanni, "La ruina del secondo cerchio e Francesca da Rimini," in *Miscellanea Dantesca pubblicata a cura del Comitato cattolico padovano per il VI centenario della morte del Poeta* (Padua, 1922), pp. 49; Cassell, Anthony K., *Dante's Fearful Art of Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Hatcher, Anna Granville, and Mark Musa. "The Kiss *Inferno V* and the Old French Prose Lancelot." *Comparative Literature* 20 (1968): 97-109; Montano, Rocco, *Storia della poesia di Dante* (Naples: Quaderni di Delta, 1962), vol. 1;

Hatcher and Musa argue that the pilgrim's pity is merely a poetic device used to expose Francesca's wickedness: "It is as if Dante the poet, Dante the pitiless judge, has exploited the foolish pity of his pilgrim to bring to light the character of Francesca."⁶¹ According to Poggioli and Mazzini, the poet feels compassion for the two lovers while at the same time faults them for their sins. Poggioli notes that the pilgrim's pity for Francesca comes from the poet's unresolved internal moral struggle against lust.⁶² Poggioli adds that although the pilgrim feels sorry for the lovers, the poet does not excuse Francesca for her wickedness: "The scene is one of tender pity, but not of forgiveness or indulgence. Dante does not absolve those who God has condemned for eternity."⁶³ I believe that the pilgrim's pity in *Inferno V* is a poetic device that indicates the pilgrim's weak moral disposition. The pilgrim is so moved by Francesca's story and questions divine judgment because he has not yet learned to truly hate sin. In *Inferno IV*, for example, the pilgrim expresses great sorrow upon realizing that the classical philosophers and poets that inspired him have been damned:

Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo 'ntesi
però che gente di molto valore
conobbi che 'n quel limbo eran sospesi.⁶⁴

In another example, the pilgrim in *Inferno XIII* pities Pier della Vigna because injustice led him to commit suicide, the sin for which he was damned. Pier ends his life because of false accusations of betrayal against the emperor. The pilgrim is so overcome with

⁶¹Hatcher, Anna Granville, and Mark Musa. "The Kiss *Inferno V* and the Old French Prose Lancelot." *Comparative Literature* 20 (1968): 109

⁶² Renato Poggioli. "Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's *Inferno*". *PMLA* 72.3 Jun 1957. 356

⁶³ Renato Poggioli. "Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's *Inferno*". 313; For a concise history of the debate on *Inferno V* see: Villa, Claudia, "Tra affetto e pietà: per *Inferno V*," *Lettere Italiane* 51 (1999): 513-41.

⁶⁴*Inferno IV*. 43-45

compassion for Pier that he cannot find the strength to talk to him, and asks Virgil to speak for him instead.⁶⁵ The Blessed of the *Paradiso*, who have been purified of sin, never feel pity for the lost souls in Hell, and in *Inferno II*, Beatrice tells Virgil that the damned's pain does not cause her any sorrow: "I son fatta da Dio, sua mercé, tale, / che la vostra miseria non mi tange".⁶⁶ In the *Commedia*, piety lives only when pity is dead: "Qui vive la pietà quand' è ben morta."⁶⁷ I believe the pilgrim's conversion takes place only after he learns of the true nature of sin which deforms the soul, making it unworthy of the beatific vision. His pity for Francesca in *Inferno V* is evidence that he still believes that Francesca is a victim of her internal moral struggles and does not yet understand that grace heals moral weakness and gives the sinner the strength to reject vice: The poet, however, places Francesca in Hell because she freely rejected divine grace and chose to remain a slave to passion.

In the *Inferno*, many of the damned deny the existence of free will by blaming others for their sins. Guido of Montefeltro refuses to accept responsibility for his sins and blames his damnation on Pope Boniface in the same manner that the damned of *Inferno III* blame their forbearers. In their wretchedness, they blaspheme God while Charon ferries them across the river Styx.⁶⁸ In the second circle of the *Inferno*, the damned, although confessing their sins to Minos, blame God, refuse to take responsibility for their wickedness, and try to justify their sins by denying their culpability.⁶⁹ Francesca

⁶⁵*Inferno XIII*. 82-84

⁶⁶*Inferno II*. 91-92

⁶⁷*Inferno XX*. 28

⁶⁸*Inferno V*. 103: "Bestemmiavan Dio e lor parenti".

⁶⁹*Inferno V*. 7-12: "Dico che quando l'anima mal nata/li vien dinanzi, tutta si confessa;/e quel conoscitor de le peccata/ vede qual loco d'inferno è da essa;/ cignesi con la coda tante volte/ quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa."; Poggioli cites the lustful's blasphemy as proof that their wickedness continues even in the depths of Hell: "Those souls are not guileless martyrs, but victims of their own guilt: and they show their everlasting wickedness by still rebelling in thoughts and words against the 'divine virtue', by cursing the

tries to justify her adulterous affair by alluding to Guido Guinizelli's poem "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore" in which Guinizelli defends the ennobling nature of love. The courtly tradition regards love as the highest of all virtues because it enslaves only the noblest of hearts.⁷⁰ In her tragic love story, Francesca⁷¹ says that love has seized her such that she can not escape its grasp even in the depths of Hell:

Amor, ch' al cuore gentil ratto s'apprende
prese costui de la bella persona
che mi fu tolta; e 'l modo ancor m'offende.⁷²

Francesca's marriage to Gianciotto Malatesta was arranged by her father, Guido da Polenta, in order to solidify the peace between the Malatesta and Polenta families.

hand that chastises them for their sins". Poggioli, Renato. "Paolo and Francesca: Tragedy or Romance?" 315

⁷⁰ Lewis, C.S. p. 32 The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. Oxford University Press. London 1936. Lewis observes that love in the courtly tradition is always virtuous: "It is only the noblest hearts which Love deigns to enslave, and a man should prize himself the more if he is selected for such service."

⁷¹ For more information on Courtly Love's Influence on Dante, see: Barolini, Teodolinda. "Dante and Calvalcanti: Inferno V in Its Lyric content". Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society. vol. 116 1998 31-63; Scott, John. "Dante's Francesca and the Poet's Attitude Towards Courtly Literature". Reading Medieval Studies vol 5. 1979. 4-20; For more on Inferno V and the episode of Paolo and Francesca see: Boselli, Filiberto. Dante e Beatrice. Paolo e Francesca da Rimini Trieste, Italy: Tip. Triestina, 1958; Calistri, Antonio. Canto v dell'Inferno: Paolo e Francesca Perugia, Italy: Grafica di Salvi e C., 1959; Hatcher, Anna Granville, and Mark Musa. "The Kiss *Inferno V* and the Old French Prose Lancelot." Comparative Literature 20 (1968): 97-109; Hoffmann, Béla. "Inferno V: Questioni analitiche e interpretative." Testo: Studi di Teoria e Storia della Letteratura e della Critica 28.53 (Jan. 2007): 7-27; Maddox, Donald. "The Arthurian Intertexts of Inferno V." Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society 114 (1996): 113-127; Marconi, Paola; "Per quello amor che i mena; Inferno V, 78 e il Roman de Tristan de Beroul". L'Alighieri. 20. 2002. 77-93; Masciandaro, Franco. "The Paradise of Paolo and Francesca and the Negation of the Tragic: A Dramatistic Reading of Inferno V (97-138)." Italiana. 87-96. River Forest, IL: Rosary Coll., 1988; Mazzoni, Francesco "Il Canto V dell'inferno". Inferno: lettura degli anni 1973-76 Rome, 1977. 97-143; Noakes, Susan. "The Double Misreading of Paolo and Francesca." Philological Quarterly 62.2 (Spring 1983): 221-239; Renato Poggioli. "Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's Inferno". PMLA 72.3 Jun 1957. pp.313-358; Santagata, Marco. "Cognati e amanti: Francesca e Paolo nel V dell'Inferno." Romanistisches Jahrbuch 48 (1997): 120-156; Sarteschi, Selene. "Francesca e il suo poeta: Osservazioni su Inferno V." Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca 42.18 (July 2001): 21-45; Valerio, Sebastiano. "Trittico per Francesca, I: Perché 'il modo ancor m'offende': Riflessioni sul peccato di Paolo e Francesca." Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca 47.28 (July 2006): 5-13. MLA International Bibliography; Valesio, Paolo. "Inferno V: The fierce Dove". Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation, vol. 14-15, Spring 1994. 3-25; Vecchio, Giorgio del. "Paolo and Francesca: Justice, Love and Sin in Dante." Western Review 235 (1961): 158-167; Villa, Claudia. "Tra affetto e pietà: Per Inferno V." Lettere Italiane 51.4 (Oct. 1999): 513-541.

⁷² *Inferno V*. 100-102.

Francesca never agreed to become Gianciotto's wife; rather she married him by proxy through Paolo and did not even realize she was married to him until the day after the wedding. C.S Lewis observed that in the courtly tradition love thrives only outside of marriage because a lady must freely bestow her affections on her lover. Marriage is a bargain between the future husband and his father-in-law, and so the husband can never truly win his wife's favor:

The love which is to be the source of all that is beautiful in life and manners must be the reward freely given by the lady and only our superiors can reward. But a wife is not a superior. As the wife of another, above all as the wife of a great lord, she may be queen of beauty and of love, the distributor of favors, the inspiration of all knightly virtues, and the bridle of 'villainy', but as your own wife, for whom you have bargained with her father, she sinks at once from lady into mere woman.⁷³

Francesca might have believed that only by means of an adulterous affair she could experience the noblest of all virtues. Gianciotto has tricked Francesca into marriage and never earns her love, but Paolo wins her affections through his good merits.

Andreas Capellanus in The Art of Courtly Love writes that although pure love is ideal, love's aim is always towards the consuming desire for carnal pleasure. Capellanus stresses the importance of self-control because love can only grow stronger as the desire for the beloved increases. Mere carnal desire holds no place in love's court,⁷⁴ but at its core, the courtly tradition defines love as an ever-consuming lust for the beloved. Francesca tells the pilgrim that her love for Paolo is so strong that it lasts even in Hell.⁷⁵

In the *Commedia*, her love's endurance confirms the sinfulness of courtly love and the

⁷³ Lewis, C.S The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. 36-37.

⁷⁴ Capellanus, Andreas. 149: "This readiness to grant requests is, we say, the same thing in women as over voluptuousness in men- a thing which all agree should be a total stranger in the court of Love. For he who is so tormented by carnal passion that he cannot embrace anyone in heart-felt love, but basely lusts after every woman he sees, is not called a lover but a counterfeiter of love and a pretender, and he is lower than a shameless dog"

⁷⁵ *Inferno* V. 103-105: "Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,/mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,/ che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona".

conviction of Francesca's lustful will. In the *Inferno*, her love is fueled by lust and a yearning that will never be realized, and so Francesca's agony grows as her longing for Paolo increases.

Falling in love might not have been Paolo and Francesca's choice, but, according to the principles in the *Commedia*, it was certainly within their free will to restrain their carnal desires and to not allow passion to overcome reason. In her speech, Francesca denies free will's power over love by claiming that it is impossible to reject love.⁷⁶ Paolo's love for Francesca *forces* her to return his love. Francesca tells the pilgrim that she never intended to fall in love with Paolo, but that Lancelot's tale acted as love's intermediary: "Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse".⁷⁷ Lancelot's tale, not only ensnared the unsuspecting lovers, but compelled them to commit their adulterous affair:

Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.⁷⁸

In Francesca's speech *amore* violently assails the pair, leaving them no choice but to love.⁷⁹ By blaming her lust on *amore* and not acknowledging that she could have avoided sin, Francesca insinuates that it was her destiny to commit the sin for which she was damned. Francesca believes that she deserves pity because she had no control over her fate, and she even thanks the pilgrim for his sympathy: "poi c'hai pietà del nostro mal perverso".⁸⁰ Francesca's blasphemous denial of free will suggests that the system of divine judgment is unfair. Augustine's doctrine on redemption and grace influenced the

⁷⁶ Cappellanus defends the supremacy of love in rule XXVI: "Love can deny nothing to love".

⁷⁷ *Inferno* V. 137.

⁷⁸ *Inferno* V. 127-129.

⁷⁹ Poggoli observes *amore*'s violent nature in Francesca's speech verses 100-106: "The action of love, as well as the consequences of that action, are always suggested by such violent verbs as 'to catch', 'to seize' and the like". 313-58.

⁸⁰ *Inferno* V. 93.

Dantean conception of free will. In *On Grace and Free Will* Augustine maintains that God would never have promised to reward those who keep his commandments if it were impossible to fulfill His will: “There is, to begin with, the fact that God's precepts themselves would be of no use to a man unless he had free choice of will, so that by performing them he might obtain the promised rewards”.⁸¹ In the *Commedia*, Francesca possesses free will and so she could have kept God's commandments and received the *promised rewards*, but she made herself unworthy of salvation by violating His precepts.

Virgil's speech on love and free will in *Purgatorio XVII and XVIII* refutes Francesca's argument that it is impossible to resist love.⁸² Virgil argues that although love is a natural impulse, reason allows one to distinguish virtuous love from sinful love.⁸³ Free will, guided by reason, chooses then to accept love or to reject it.⁸⁴ Virgil's speech on love and free will echoes a passage in the *Convivio* in which Dante explains that people confuse temporal and universal good because of their moral-short sightedness:

E sì come peregrino che va per una via per la quale mai non fue, che ogni casa che da lungi vede crede che sia l'albergo, e non trovando ciò essere, dirizza la credenza a l'altra, e così di casa in casa, tanto che a l'albergo viene; così l'anima nostra, incontanente che nel nuovo e mai non fatto cammino di questa vita entra, dirizza li occhi al termine del suo sommo bene, e però, qualunque cosa vede che paia in sé avere alcuno bene, crede che sia esso. E perché la sua conoscenza prima è imperfetta, per non essere esperta né dottrinata, piccioli beni le paiono grandi, e però da quelli comincia prima a desiderare. Onde vedemo li parvuli desiderare massimamente un pomo; e poi, più procedendo, desiderare uno augellino; e poi, più oltre, desiderare bel vestimento; e poi lo cavallo; e poi una donna; e poi ricchezza non grande, e poi

⁸¹ Augustine *On Grace and Free Will* 2

⁸² For a discussion on the relationship between free will and love, see: Boyde, Patrick. *Perception and Passion in Dante's Comedy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Boyde, Patrick. *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Fordyce, Cristiana. "Il problema di amore e libero arbitrio nella *Commedia* di Dante." *Romance Review* 4.1 (Spring 1994): 35-51; Morgan, Gerald. "Natural and Spiritual Movements of Love in the Soul: An Explanation of *Purgatorio*, XVIII. 16-39." *The Modern Language Review* 80.2 (Apr. 1985): 320-329.

⁸³ *Purgatorio* XVIII. 66.

⁸⁴ *Purgatorio* XVIII 70-74.

grande, e poi più. E questo incontra perché in nulla di queste cose truova quella che va cercando, e credela trovare più oltre.⁸⁵

The lustful of *Inferno V* sought fulfillment in temporal pleasures, but found eternal torment. They cannot attain true joy from pursuing the pleasures of the flesh since the only source of spiritual happiness comes from serving God.

Aquinas's ideas on reason and vice might have influenced Dante's conception of the second circle of Hell. In the *Summa Theologica* Aquinas proposes that overindulgence in pleasures of the flesh leads sinners to abandon reason. According to Aquinas, those who excessively delight in temporal good become distracted, no longer pursuing noble ends. They are consumed by a desire fundamentally contrary to reason by illogically believing that turning away from God, the source of all goodness, brings happiness.⁸⁶ In the *Inferno* the poet immerses the lustful in a darkness representative of their abandonment of reason.⁸⁷ He transforms Minos from the mythical King of Crete into a monstrous beast that growls, snarls, and assigns all the damned of the *Inferno* to their appropriate place in Hell by coiling his tail around himself.⁸⁸ Dante emphasizes the brutish nature of the lustful by placing an animalistic monster in the second circle of Hell. Minos's presence calls attention to the lustful, who have freely rejected reason, a distinctly human quality, and who have become slaves to passion.

⁸⁵ *Convivio* IV. xii 15-16.

⁸⁶ *ST I/II*. 33.3; Barolini comments on the connection between reason and love in the *Commedia*: "Rather, as in the *Commedia*, Dante offers us a choice: appetite divorced from reason, mistakenly called love, versus appetite in accord with reason, correctly called love." "Dante and Calvalcanti: *Inferno V* in Its Lyric content". *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*. vol. 116 1998 31-63; p. 52.

⁸⁷ *Inferno V*. 28: "Io venni in loco d'ogne luce muto".

Inferno V. 37-39: "Intesi ch'a cos'ì fatto tormento/enno dannati i peccator carnali,/ che la ragion sommettono al talento"

⁸⁸ *Inferno V*. 4-11; Ignazio Baldelli observes Minos' dehumanization in Baldelli, Ignazio *Dante e Francesca*. Saggi di "Lettere Italiane" LIII Firenze 1999. p. 6.

5.1 Free will and Charity

In her speech to the *pilgrim* Francesca argues that her adulterous affair was inevitable. She suggests that insurmountable external forces such as the nature of love and human weakness led her to her downfall. In the *Commedia*, sin can be overcome by the power of the free will. The poet rejects the idea that any external circumstance can pressure the free will to choose that which it does not truly desire. In the *Paradiso* free will is likened to a flame which naturally extends itself upwards:

ché volontà, se non vuol, non s'ammorza,
ma fa come natura face in foco,
se mille volte violenza il torza.⁸⁹

Just as the flame rises upwards despite any effort to bend it downwards, free will can never be forced to choose against its own will by any external pressure. Love, temptation and Lancelot's tale therefore could never have directed Francesca's will towards vice; rather Francesca turns her will away from God by giving into her passions and abandoning reason.⁹⁰

In *Inferno* V, Francesca bases her discourse on love upon the principles of the courtly tradition which regard *romantic* love as the highest of all virtues. In the *Commedia*, love does not necessarily lead to virtue: Love entices the will, causing it to move towards the desired object.⁹¹ If directed towards improper ends, it leads people

⁸⁹ *Paradiso* IV, 76-78.

⁹⁰ Mazzoni, Francesco "Il Canto V dell'inferno". *Inferno; letture degli anni 1973-76* 1977 97-143. Mazzoni proposes that in the *Commedia*, reason and free will can overcome concupiscence: p. 116: "...la presenza dell'elemento razionale, che consente all'uomo di comprendere a fondo le ragioni del reale, e di decidere i propri atti liberi futuri con il libero arbitrio, magari intervenendo, come già Enea, a cavalcare e dominare gli appetiti con il possente freno della ragione."

⁹¹ Singleton, Charles. "The Three Conversions". *Journey to Beatrice*. Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore. 1977. 43. Singleton observes that in the *Commedia* charity properly directs the will towards God: "...charity is chief, for it is through charity that the will receives its due orientation to God as our last

astray, but if directed towards God, it brings eternal life. Virgil's speech in *Purgatorio XVII* and *XVIII*⁹² dismisses the courtly tradition, affirms the supremacy of spiritual love, and develops the stilnovistic concept of love. Virgil proposes that there are two kinds of love, natural and mental. Natural love is instinctive, virtuous and always pleasing to God because it finds its end in the *Summum Bonum*. Natural love is never at the root of sin, but, as Virgil explains, mental love can cause people to fall into vice if they choose to love the wrong objects, or to love the Good either deficiently or excessively:

Lo naturale è sempre senza errore,
ma l'altro puote errar per malo obietto,
o per troppo o per poco di vigore⁹³

At its core the courtly tradition leads to moral degradation and damnation because it does not foster charity, the greatest of all the divine virtues according to St. Paul. In the courtly tradition love finds its end squarely in the *donna amata*, but in Christianity believers are taught that they must not love temporal good more than God.⁹⁴ In the *Purgatorio* the spiritual journey of the penitent leads them to salvation because it

end. Charity is one kind of love, and love is the proper name for all movements of the will. Indeed, as the poem affirms, the soul 'moves by no other foot than that of love.'

⁹² For more information on *Purgatorio XVII-XVIII* and Virgil's speech on love, see: Bologna, Corrado. "'Purgatorio' XVII (Al centro del viaggio, il Vuoto)." *Studi Danteschi* 69 (2004): 1-22; Howard, Lloyd. "Virgil's Discourse on Love in *Purgatorio XVIII* and Guido Cavalcanti." *Quaderni d'Italianistica: Official Journal of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies* 6.2 (Autumn 1985): 167-177; Morgan, Gerald. "Natural and Spiritual Movements of Love in the Soul: An Explanation of *Purgatorio, XVIII*. 16-39." *The Modern Language Review* 80.2 (Apr. 1985): 320-329; Ryan, Christopher J. "Free Will in Theory and Practice: *Purgatorio XVIII* and Two Characters in the *Inferno*." *Dante Soundings: Eight Literary and Historical Essays*. 100-112. Dublin; Totowa: Irish Academic P; Rowman & Littlefield, 1981; Singleton, Charles. "The Poet's Number at the Center" *MLN*, Vol. 80, No. 1, Jan 1965, pp 1-10.

⁹³ *Purgatorio XVII*. 94-96.

⁹⁴ Singleton observes that in the courtly love tradition there is no greater love than the *donna amata*: "...within troubadour ideology there is no place for an object of love higher than the lady; whereas in the Christian, not only can there be no object of love higher than God but all other loves must show subordination to love of Him. The trouble was precisely that the troubadour could always forget to acknowledge that subordination. For his love of *donna amata* was without reference to God." Singleton, Charles. "From Love to Caritas". *An essay on the Vita Nuova* 1949. Oxford University Press, London. 75.

redirects misguided love towards charity, transforms improper love into righteous love, and strengthens love of virtue.

In *Inferno V* the poet evokes the image of the sea to describe the eternal punishment of the Lustful, whirled about by an infernal storm like a wave tossed by conflicting winds:

Io venni in loco d'ogne luce muto,
che mugghia come fa mar per tempesta
se da contrari venti è combattuto.⁹⁵

The tempestuous sea of *Inferno V* recalls the scene in which the wayfarer of *Inferno I* emerges from the deep.⁹⁶ In the *Commedia*, Beatrice is transformed from the courtly tradition's *donna amata* into the very representation of Christian charity.⁹⁷ The wayfarer's spiritual love for his Lady enables him to reject sin, to love God above all temporal good and to escape the perilous waters of *Inferno I*. Conversely, Francesca's physical love for Paolo elevates temporal good to a place higher than God, leads her to abandon the gift of charity, and ends in her spiritual death. In the *Commedia*, God gives sinners the gift of charity so that they might be saved. Aquinas, one of Dante's main sources on the doctrine of charity, believes that God freely bestows this gift to all who want to be healed by it.⁹⁸ Like the wayfarer, Francesca could have overcome her moral

⁹⁵ *Inferno V*. 28-30.

⁹⁶ *Inferno I*. 22-24: "E come quei che con lena affannata, /uscito fuor del pelago a la riva, / si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata".

⁹⁷ According to Singleton, Dante's love for Beatrice is transformed into charity: Singleton, Charles. "From Love to Caritas". 76-77: "Between God and her lover she is the medium by which a love which begins in Heavencan reach down to him on earth. And, through her death and her return to Heaven, she is also the means by which the love of her lover is led back to God. The course of love is therefore like a circle, descending from God and ascending up to God-through Beatrice. The name for such a love as this, coming from God and returning to God, is truly charity".

⁹⁸ *ST II/II.24.2*.

shortcomings, by accepting this free gift of charity, but through an exercise of free will she rejects it.⁹⁹

6.1 The *Old Man of Sin*: Francesca da Rimini

In *Inferno V* Francesca claims that because of her lack of moral strength she had no choice but to commit the sin for which she is damned. Christian principles teach that moral weakness can be overcome for those willing to crucify the flesh and rid themselves of unrighteous desires.¹⁰⁰ In the *Commedia*, weakness can be overcome through redeeming grace, self-sacrifice, penitence, prayer, and perseverance. On the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio* the penitent demonstrate that the struggle against concupiscence is won by figuratively *taking up the cross* and crucifying the *old man of sin*. Francesca insists that she had no choice but to succumb to the desires of the flesh, but does not admit that she obstinately refused to *crucify the flesh* and die to concupiscence.

Upon reaching the purgatorial shore, the pilgrim reflects on the innocence lost through original sin and notices the light radiating from the four stars representing the four Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Strength and Temperance, that illuminate the Purgatorial sky but never reach earth.¹⁰¹ The four Cardinal Virtues were natural to the

⁹⁹ Morrison, Molly. *A journey to Caritas: Dante's Idea of Love and Will as Seen Through Two Women of the Divina Commedia*. The Journal Association for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts. Fall 1995. Pp 49-57. In this article Morrison contrasts Piccarda righteous love for God or Caritas with Francesca's lesser love.

¹⁰⁰ Galatians 5:24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscence" *Matthew 16:24*: Jesus reminds his disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me".

¹⁰¹ *Purgatorio I*. 26-27: "oh settentrional vedovo sito,/ poi che private se' di mirar quelle"

original parents¹⁰² and allowed Adam and Eve to maintain their righteousness, but were lost through original sin.¹⁰³ Christ's sacrifice merited for mankind both grace and salvation, but restored neither original justice nor the Cardinal Virtues. Divine mercy rewards the Cardinal and Theological Virtues only to those who seek moral freedom through the practice of self sacrifice.

6.2 The *Old Man of Sin*: Cato

On the purgatorial mountain pilgrims die to the *old man of sin* and gain moral liberty. Cato serves as their gatekeeper because he committed suicide in order to gain political and moral freedom.¹⁰⁴ Augustine admits that Cato possessed great virtue, but condemns Cato for his suicide.¹⁰⁵ The theologian believed that Cato ended his life to avoid suffering, but for the poet of the *Commedia* Cato's suicide represents a supreme act of moral strength. In the *Monarchia*, Cato's death was a selfless act done in the pursuit of freedom:

¹⁰²ST I.95.3: "...in the state of innocence man in a certain sense possessed all the virtues."

¹⁰³ *Purgatorio* I. 22-24: "I' mi volsi a man destra, e puosi mente/ a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle/ non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente"

¹⁰⁴ For analysis on *Purgatorio* I-II see: Casella, Mario. "Interpretazioni: La figura simbolica di Catone." *Studi Danteschi* 28 (1949): 183-95; Hollander, Robert. "Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's scoglio." *Italica* 52.3 (Autumn 1975): 348-363; Hollander, Robert. "Purgatorio II: The New Song and the Old." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6 (Spring 1990): 28-45; Pasquazi, Silvio. "Catone." *Cultura e Scuola* 4.13-14 (1965): 528-539; Proto, Enrico, "Nuove ricerche sul Catone dantesco," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 59 (1912): 193-248; Sanguineti, Edoardo. "Dante, Purgatorio I." *Da Dante al Novecento: Studi critici offerti dagli scolari a Gianciotto Getto nel suo ventesimo anno di insegnante universitario*. 11-28. Milano: Mursia, 1970; Sicari, Stephen. "Bloom in Purgatory: 'Sirens' and Purgatorio II." *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 36.4 (Winter 1990): 477-488; Sills, Kenneth C. M. "Another Word on Dante's Cato." *Modern Language Notes* 20.6 (June 1905): 162-164.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine. *City of God* V. 12 : "But, of the two great Romans of that time, Cato was he whose virtue was by far the nearest to the true idea of virtue"; However fond of Cato's virtue, Augustine condemns Cato for his suicide in *City of God* I. 24; For a more in depth discussion on the church fathers' condemnation of Cato vs. Dante's praise of Cato, please see Vaccauzzo, N. *Le fonti del Catone dantesco*, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 40 (1902) 140-150. And Proto, E, *Nuove ricerche sul Catone dantesco*, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 59 (1912) 193-248.

Now add to their number those most holy victims, the Decii, who laid down their lives dedicated to the salvation of the community, as Livy relates to their glory, not in terms worthy of them but as best he can; and that sacrifice (words cannot express it) of the most stern guardian of liberty, Marcus Cato. The former for the deliverance of their fatherland did not recoil from the shadows of death; the latter, in order to set the world a fire with love of freedom, showed the value of freedom when he preferred to die a free man rather than remain alive without freedom.¹⁰⁶

Dante seems to have been influenced by the image of Cato found in Cicero. In *De officiis*, Cato ends his life out of strength of character and dedication to virtue, not out of weakness or of pride.¹⁰⁷ Cato's presence in the *Purgatorio* affirms that human beings possess a free will making them morally responsible for their place in the afterlife. Cato understood that it was within his power to choose righteousness over sin and this recognition distinguishes him from the damned of the *Inferno*.

The poet of the *Commedia* praises Cato for committing suicide and his refusal to submit himself to Caesar's unjust government. According to Dante's political views, virtue cannot thrive in a tyrannical and corrupt society. Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio XVI* reveals that governments must provide their citizens with laws that curb morally destructive impulses.¹⁰⁸ The ruler serves as a model of virtue for his people, but if he is corrupt, the entire society follows his bad example.¹⁰⁹ Caesar's corrupt government serves as a wicked example to all his people and so Cato kills himself rather than submit to sinfulness.

¹⁰⁶ *Monarchia* 2.5.15.

¹⁰⁷ Cicero *De officiis*. I. 112.

¹⁰⁸ *Purgatorio XVI*. 91-94: "Di picciol bene in pria sente sapore;/ quivi s'inganna, e dietro ad esso corre,/ se guida o fren non torce suo amore./Onde convenne legge per fren porre"

¹⁰⁹ *Purgatorio XVI*. 100-105: "per che la gente, che sua guida vede/pur a quel ben fedire ond'ella è ghiotta,/di quel si pasce, e più oltre non chiede./Ben puoi veder che la mala condotta/è la cagion che 'l mondo ha fatto reo,/ e non natura che 'n voi sia corrotta".

Cato's suicide in the name of political liberty is transformed in the *Commedia* into the ultimate model of Christian self-sacrifice for the sake of moral righteousness.¹¹⁰ Christianity teaches that those who renounce this life will gain eternal life, while those that cling to the world will die a spiritual death:

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.¹¹¹

In the *Commedia* Cato, a pagan, is the representation of the Christian ideal because he gains salvation by renouncing his life and dying to the *old self*. Cato's ultimate self-sacrifice demonstrates that moral liberty and virtue can only be won after an immense and difficult struggle against concupiscence. In praising Cato's suicide, Virgil explains to the pilgrim that if he wishes to be freed from the bondage of sin, he must perform the same sacrifice as Cato and die to the wicked part of the self:

Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta:
libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,
come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Auerbach, Mazzotta, and Proto observe that Cato serves as a model to all Christians in their quest for moral liberty: "The political and earthly freedom for which he died was only an *umbra futurorum*: a prefiguration of the Christian freedom whose guardian he is here appointed, and for the sake of which he here again opposes all earthly temptation; the Christian freedom from all evil impulses, which leads to true domination of self, the freedom for the acquisition of which Dante is girded with the rushes of humility, until, on the summit of the mountain, he actually achieves it and is crowned by Virgil as lord over himself." Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. New York, 1959. p. 66; Mazzotta, Giuseppe. *Dante Poet of the Desert*. Princeton University Press. 1979. cit. p. 60: "Dante asks us to view Cato's suicide as the enactment of a veritable voluntary death of the self by which he is reborn as a new man"; Proto *Nuove ricerche sul Catone dantesco* 240: "Ed ecco quest'uomo, che muore leggendo Platone (il filosofo che più si avvicinò alla dottrina cristiana, che forse apprese in Egitto, secondo S. Agostino), significare la liberazione dal corpo del peccato, la morte al peccato del vecchio uomo, per non servire al peccato, e quindi il risorgere e vivere in Cristo"; According to Hollander Cato represents in the *Commedia* a Christ-like figure who through his death redeems a nation and serves as a model to his people: "The historical Cato's motives are understood by Dante as implying the kind of devotion to liberty that is the mark of Christ, Who sought and found true liberty for all men. And so, for Dante, Cato becomes *figura Christi*". *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* 128.

¹¹¹ John 12: 24-25.

¹¹² *Purgatorio I*. 70-72.

The pilgrim is set free of moral slavery only after passing through the flames of *Purgatorio XXVII*. At first, terror fills the pilgrim's heart as he obstinately holds on to the *old man* by refusing to cross through the purifying flames.¹¹³ Virgil's words encourage him, and the pilgrim is reminded that although the fire will cause him great torment, he will not die: "e Virgilio mi disse: 'Figliuol mio, qui può esser tormento, ma non morte'".¹¹⁴ In Christian teaching those that are *double-souled* or *double-minded* are conflicted between the love of the flesh and the spirit and will never attain salvation.¹¹⁵ After passing through the purgatorial fire, the pilgrim dies to that *second soul*, and stands before Beatrice, no longer conflicted between the desires of the flesh but obedient to God.¹¹⁶ Through a supreme act of faith, the pilgrim burns away the unrighteous part of the self and emerges healed of his wounded nature.

7.1 Cato and His Quest for Moral Freedom

In the *Summa Theologica* Aquinas proposes that suicide is a mortal sin because it is contrary to the law of charity, but in the *Pharsalia* Lucan portrays Cato as a great redeemer who sacrifices his life not only to preserve his own moral and political liberty, but more importantly to save his people.¹¹⁷ As is evident in his great speech in the *Pharsalia*, Cato proclaims his willingness to die as a sin-offering for his people:

Ah, if only the supernal and infernal powers would jointly sentence me to be a national sin-offering! Decius sacrificed his life for the army, rushing into the thickest of the fray until overborne by weight of numbers. How I wish that I might die in the

¹¹³ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 23.

¹¹⁴ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 20-21.

¹¹⁵ James 1:8: "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways".

¹¹⁶ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 35-36.

¹¹⁷ *ST II/II*.64.5.

same manner, but pierced through and through by the javelins of both armies: that Caesar's barbarous allies from Rheims might make me their target; that I might intercept each and every blow struck in this war. Thus my blood would redeem all the nations in our empire of the guilt incurred by this civil war...Let them strike at none but myself, one who fights vainly in defense of the just laws which they despise; so be it only that my sacrificial blood may redeem all Italians. Once I am gone, the intruding tyrant will find it no longer necessary to make war.¹¹⁸

As in the *Pharsalia*, Cato's suicide in the *Commedia* is not the manifestation of a self-centered will devoid of charity. Cato's sacrifice in the *Commedia* is likened to that of Christ who renounced his life out of a selfless love for his people and obedience to divine will. In the *Purgatorio* Cato's suicide represents the ultimate act of Christian charity. Cato, who loved God above all worldly things, committed an act of supreme self-sacrifice, liberated himself from wickedness and was rewarded with eternal happiness.

In the *Commedia* those who seek fulfillment by pursuing the pleasures of the flesh suffer eternal torment, while those who are moved exclusively by divine will experience a moral freedom absent in a postlapsarian world. Cato possesses this gift of charity because he has given up self-will. For example, in *Purgatorio I* Virgil tries to convince Cato to let them pass by reminding Cato of his past love for Marcia.¹¹⁹ Virgil tells Cato that if he lets them enter the purgatorial mountain, he will tell Marcia so that Cato might win favor with her.¹²⁰ Cato tells Virgil that he no longer loves or serves Marcia because she is God's enemy:

Or che di là del mal fiume dimora,
più muover non mi può, per quella legge
che fatta fu quando me n'usci' fora.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ *Pharsalia* 55-56. II.

¹¹⁹ *Purgatorio I*. 78-81.

¹²⁰ *Purgatorio I*. 82-83.

¹²¹ *Purgatorio I*. 88-90.

Cato agrees to let them pass only because it is the will of the Virgin Mary.¹²² In the *Commedia* love stirs the will into action, and in *Purgatorio I* Cato is moved only by love for God or charity. Virgil's failed attempt to sway Cato with love outside the realm of charity, reveals Virgil's moral limitations. Virgil foolishly tries to move Cato by tempting him with a love contrary to divine will because Virgil himself does not possess the virtue of charity.

7.2 Cato: the *Commedia's* "New" Moses

The pilgrims' passage across the dark waters of sin in *Purgatorio II* evokes the Exodus story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. As the penitent of the *Purgatorio* are ferried across the river by an Angel, they sing *In Exitu Israel de Aegypto* in praising God for delivering both them and the Israelite's from sin. At the purgatorial shores the pilgrims find Cato standing at the base of the Mountain of Moral Liberty. Cato becomes the pilgrims' Moses, pointing the way to the top of Purgatorial mountain and guiding all those who seek righteousness and freedom from sin.

Cato's story mirrors that of Moses. Cato liberates his army of followers from a corrupt and tyrannical government by leading them across a vast desert in search of freedom as Moses who guided the Israelites across the desert in search of liberty. Cato and Moses are prevented from entering the Promised Land, but on the Day of Judgment they will be saved.¹²³

¹²² *Purgatorio I*. 91-93.

¹²³ According to Hollander, Mazzotta and Singleton *Purgatorio I-II* represent a secular re-enactment of exodus. They agree that Cato is the *Commedia's* Moses figure. Hollander, Robert. *Allegory in the Commedia*: p.124-130; Mazzotta, Giuseppe. *Dante Poet of the Desert*. Princeton University Press. 1979.

Cato acts with the same authority over his people as Moses. Cato enforces the laws of the Purgatory mountain, and his chastisement of Casella and Dante in *Purgatorio II* for finding comfort and rest in song recalls Moses's fury in the book of Exodus at finding the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf. Cato's physical description in *Purgatorio I* mirrors that of Moses in the old Testament:

Lunga la barba e di pel bianco mista
portava, a' suoi capelli simigliante,
de' quai cadeva al petto doppia lista.¹²⁴

Cato's hair falls in "double strands" down his chest recalling the image of Moses' "forked beard".¹²⁵

The most significant parallel to Moses is found at the very beginning of *Purgatorio I*: The four stars representing the four cardinal virtues illuminate Cato's face and bring to mind the episode of Moses' *horned face* in the Old Testament.¹²⁶ Moses' face shone with Divine Virtue and Glory, but he hid his favor from the Israelites by wearing a veil.¹²⁷ In the New Testament Paul tells his followers that Moses hid his face from his people as to not show them his *fading* glory: "For if what was going to fade was glorious, how much more will what endures be glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we act very boldly and not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could not look intently at the *cessation of what was fading*".¹²⁸ According to

p. 60-70; Singleton, Charles "In Exitu Israel de Aegypto". Annual Report of the Dante Society, vol. 78, pp. 1-24, 1960.

¹²⁴ *Purgatorio I*. 34-36.

¹²⁵ According to Hollander, the description of Cato's double stranded hair is a clear reference to Moses' forked beard: "What of a second detail, the beard and/or hair that falls in double strand upon his breast?...In Christian art the tradition of the horned Moses, from Jerome's mistranslation in the Vulgate, apparently gave rise to the iconographical forked beard" *Allegory in the Commedia* 124

¹²⁶ *Purgatorio I*. 37-39.

¹²⁷ Exodus 34: 32-35.

¹²⁸ 2 Cor 3.11-13 (Italics are mine).

Paul, all were bound to the Law before the advent of Christ. Christianity teaches that after the resurrection people were freed from bondage to the law through the Grace won by Christ's sacrifice. Unlike Moses, Cato of the *Purgatorio* unveils his shining face and allows God's glory to emanate from him. Dante's Cato is not the Moses of the Old Testament; rather he is the *New Moses* of the New Testament. Cato's unveiled face shows the pilgrims his glory and favor and reminds them that they have been liberated from bondage to the old law through grace. Cato's shining face is a sign to the purgatorial pilgrims that salvation does not lie in their natural ability to follow to perfection God's commandments. The penitent of the *Purgatorio* could never reach Heaven without the healing gifts of grace and charity. The central role of grace in the healing of sins is so pivotal in the *Commedia* that it is mentioned even in Hell. In *Inferno III* Charon recognizes that the pilgrim will be saved because he has been marked by the grace of God: "...Per altra via, per altri porti/verrai a piaggia, non qui, per passare:/ più lieve legno convien che ti porti".¹²⁹ Moral slavery resulting from the Fall plagues all postlapsarian people on their quest towards righteousness. Many of the damned of the *Inferno* use moral slavery as an excuse for their wickedness, but Cato's redemption proves that in the *Commedia* all can triumph over sin through the power of grace working upon free will. In the *Commedia* grace enables the will to reject sin and to turn towards righteousness. If the purgatorial pilgrims persistently seek virtue, as did Cato, God will strengthen and liberate them from the bonds of moral slavery.

8.1 Piccarda and Costanza: Absolute and Relative Will

¹²⁹ *Inferno III*. 91-93.

Beatrice explains to Dante that all souls in the *Paradiso* dwell in the Empyrean and are eternally blessed. For the sake of the pilgrim's human limitations, they will appear to him on the seven heavenly spheres in a kind of hierarchy of blessedness. Those closest to God enjoy a higher degree of blessedness than those farthest from God. Beatrice makes clear to Dante that although they experience the beatific vision differently, they all are contented.¹³⁰

In the Heaven of the Moon Dante meets Piccarda and Costanza who were forced by their families to leave the Convent and to marry.¹³¹ Piccarda explains to the pilgrim that the blessed of the Moon dwell in the farthest heavenly sphere from God because they had broken their religious vows.¹³² According to Piccarda, it was never in Costanza's will to leave the convent, but because she feared for her safety, she consented to the marriage.¹³³ The pilgrim questions why these blessed souls are still held accountable for abandoning their religious orders since they did so against extraordinary external pressure.¹³⁴ Beatrice explains that all are responsible for the choices they make in life, and likens the free will to a flame that tends upwards despite any external pressure to change its

¹³⁰ *Paradiso* IV. 28-33.

¹³¹ For more information on Piccarda and *Paradiso* III see: Battaglia Ricci, Lucia, "Piccarda o della carità: lettura del terzo canto del *Paradiso*," *Critica e filologia* 14 (1989): 27-70; Lansing, Richard, "Piccarda and the Poetics of Paradox: A Reading of *Paradiso* III," in *Dante Studies* 105 (1987), 63-77; Malato, Enrico, "Il difetto della volontà che 'non s'ammorza': Piccarda e Costanza: Lettura del canto III del *Paradiso*," *Filologia e critica* 20 (1995): 278-317; Muresu, Gabriele, "Piccarda e la luna (*Par* III)," *L'Alighieri* 26 (2005): 5-33; Stefanini, Ruggero, "Piccarda e la luna," *Lectura Dantis (virginiana)* 11 (Fall 1992): 25-4.1.

¹³² *Paradiso* III. 55-56.

¹³³ *Paradiso* III. 115-117.

¹³⁴ *Paradiso* IV. 19-21 "Se 'l buon voler, dura/ la violenza altrui per qual ragione/ di meritar mi scema la misura?"

direction.¹³⁵ She insists that Piccarda and Costanza should have become martyrs rather than give into their fears and violate their sacred vows.

The pilgrim is puzzled by Piccarda's claim that it was never her will to give up the veil because it seems to contradict Beatrice's speech on the free will. Beatrice explains that there are two kinds of wills: the absolute and the relative. The absolute will when acting independently from the circumstances tends toward the good, but the relative will consents to the bad when faced with great suffering:

Voglia assoluta non consente al danno;
 ma consentevi in tanto in quanto teme,
 se si ritrae, cadere in più affanno.
 Però, quando Piccarda quello spreme,
 de la voglia assoluta intende, e io
 de l'altra; sì che ver diciamo insieme.¹³⁶

Beatrice recounts the myth of Alcmaeon and his father Amphiaraus to clarify the difference between absolute and relative will: A prophecy reveals to Amphiaraus that he will die in battle at Thebes. Amphiaraus tries to save himself by going into hiding, but Eriphyle, Alcmaeon's treacherous mother, betrays him. Before going into battle, Amphiaraus convinces Alcmaeon to take vengeance on Eriphyle upon his death, and Alcmaeon kills his mother. Beatrice argues it was not Alcmaeon's absolute will to kill his mother. His relative will was moved to kill Eriphyle because he feared his father's wrath and wanted to satisfy the laws of justice.¹³⁷ In the same manner, it was Piccarda and Costanza's absolute will to remain faithful to their vows, but their relative will to give into external pressure and marry. Beatrice's discussion on the two wills was most likely

¹³⁵ *Paradiso IV.* 73-78: "Se violenza é quando quel che pate/ niente conferisce a quel che sforza/ non fuor quest'alme per essa scusate/ chè volontà, se non vuol, non s'ammorza/ ma fa come natura face in foco,/ se mille volte violenza il torza"

¹³⁶ *Paradiso IV.* 109-114.

¹³⁷ *Paradiso IV.* 103-105.

influenced by Aristotle theories on voluntary and involuntary actions found in the third book of Nichomachean Ethics.¹³⁸ Aristotle gives an example of a man who was ordered by a tyrant to commit an evil deed or else see his family murdered, and argues that if a man chooses to do the wrong thing in order to save his loved ones, his actions are both involuntary and voluntary. Aristotle explains that the man's choice was relative to the circumstances because if those conditions had not existed, the man would not have committed the base act. According to Aristotle the man should not be blamed for not withstanding the extraordinary circumstances, but argues that in certain cases people should face death rather than submit to vice.¹³⁹

Piccarda and Costanza choose to violate their vows because they lacked the extraordinary strength to become Martyrs, and Beatrice acknowledges that Piccarda and Costanza should have bravely faced death like St. Lawrence who in 258 was martyred under the Emperor Valerian because he refused to give up to the State the Church's treasures entrusted to him by Pope Sixtus II. Under extreme torture, St. Lawrence refused to reveal the location of the treasure and was roasted alive over a gridiron.¹⁴⁰ Although Beatrice insists that Piccarda and Costanza should have gotten over their fears, she admits that a will as strong as St. Lawrence's is rare.¹⁴¹ In the *Commedia*, divine judgment holds every soul accountable for their sins, but still acknowledges the limits of human endurance. Although those souls that now dwell in the Heaven of the Moon

¹³⁸ Singleton observes that Dante's understanding of absolute and relative will was influenced by both Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics and Aquinas. Singleton, Charles The Divine Comedy, Translated with a Commentary. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1970-75. *Paradiso* 4.73-74.

¹³⁹ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* III. 1

¹⁴⁰ *Paradiso IV*. 82-83.

¹⁴¹ *Paradiso IV*. 87"ma così salda voglia è troppo rada".

violated divine law, divine judgment shows them mercy for sinning under extreme duress and welcomes them to participate in the beatific vision even in a diminished capacity.

The blessed whom Dante encounters along his journey through the *Paradiso* did not lead perfect lives, but were saved because they loved God and desired righteousness. God rewards Piccarda and Costanza with eternal life because they have never turned their will away from Him or rejected the gifts of charity and grace. Piccarda, Costanza and Francesca all sinned out of human weakness, but dwell in different places in the afterlife because of the differences in the orientation of their wills. Francesca tries to excuse her sinful behavior by claiming that it is impossible to resist love. She destroys the gifts of charity and grace by making vice an end in itself and by loving the pleasures of the flesh more than God. Contrarily, Piccarda and Costanza love God and wanted to remain faithful to their vows although fear had led them to leave the convent. Through healing grace, penitence, and infinite mercy, God forgave their sins and strengthened their weak wills so that in the *Paradiso* Piccarda and Costanza's wills are identical to God's. When the pilgrim questions Piccarda about her place in Heaven, Piccarda tells him that she is perfectly content and does not wish to have a higher place in the Empyrean simply because it is not God's will.¹⁴²

9.1 Conclusion

Free will is fundamental to Dante's conception of justice because without it divine judgment unjustly condemns sinners that could not help but sin and rewards the righteous that did not freely choose virtue. In the episode of Paolo and Francesca, the couple

¹⁴² *Paradiso III*. 82-94.

argues that love seized their hearts and compelled them to commit the sin for which they were damned, but in the *Commedia* temptation, the lure of temporal good and external pressures, never constrict, the will. According to Virgil's speech on love and free will, people may not be able to control their initial impulse to love, but through the power of the free will and self-control they may overcome their sinful desires. Dante places Paolo and Francesca in Hell because they pervert the true nature of love by elevating temporal good over God. They lose eternal life because they embrace vice, give into their unrighteous desires and reject the divine gifts of grace and charity.

Although Dante believed that the motion of the stars influenced human characteristics, talents, and traits, he rejected the notion that people are destined to sin. In his speech in the *Purgatorio* Marco Lombardo insists that the misuse of talents awarded by God causes people to stray from the virtuous path. Individuals that harness the power of their gifts and use them to fulfill the divine will attain salvation, while those that use them for personal profit lose eternal life.

In the *Commedia* Dante examines the affects of fear upon the will and concludes that divine judgment holds people accountable for moral decisions made under duress. At the shores of Mount Purgatory, the pilgrim meets Cato, a pagan-suicide that renounced his life rather than submit to the rule of a vicious tyrant. In the *Pharsalia* Lucan portrays Cato as a great redeemer who sacrificed himself for the good of his people, but the Poet of the *Commedia* transforms Lucan's pagan Cato into a model of righteousness for all Christians. Christianity teaches that sinners must die to sin or face eternal damnation. In a similar vein, Cato died to vice or the *old man of sin* by committing suicide. His suicide represents the sacrifice that all sinners must make in

their quest for salvation. They must reject all their selfish desires and turn their hearts towards fulfilling divine will. They must transform their love from the mundane to the spiritual and crucify the desires of the flesh.

Augustine and Aquinas acknowledge that although people have free will, they suffer from moral slavery. Free will is the ability to choose between sin and virtue, but moral liberty allows people to make moral decisions without the influence of the passions. Augustine's and Aquinas's writings on the Fall and the effects of original sin on humankind helped establish Catholic doctrine on redemption and influenced the notion of grace and free will in the *Commedia*. Augustine and Aquinas propose that Adam and Eve possessed the gift of original justice which allowed them to make moral decisions without the influence of the passions. They had true moral freedom, but after the Fall original justice was overturned and people became slaves to sin because they could no longer make moral decisions without the influence of concupiscence. Sanctifying grace strengthens the will, giving the individual the possibility to overcome moral slavery and to attain salvation.¹⁴³ In the next chapter I will discuss how Aquinas and Augustine's doctrines on grace and free will shaped the Dantean conception of the redemptive process. In the *Commedia*, free will unaided by grace tends towards vice and leads the individual astray. In *Inferno I* and *II* the pilgrim's efforts to reject vice and reach the *colle luminoso* are futile because he relies entirely upon his own moral strength. As all postlapsarian people, the pilgrim is endowed with reason, free will and a desire for virtue, but gives into temptation and sins. His salvation is possible only after he accepts the gratuitous gift of divine grace and takes the journey into the otherworld.

¹⁴³ For Aquinas's views on the role of grace in the redemptive process, see *ST I/II.109-114*. For Augustine's ideas on grace and free will see *City of God*, *On Grace and Free will*, and *On Nature and Grace*.

"Grace, Free Will, and Predestination in the *Commedia*"

1.1 Introduction

In *Purgatorio XVI*, Marco Lombardo argues that all are responsible for their moral choices. God would be rendered unjust if people did not possess free will, and so external forces, such as temptation, astral influence, and fear, do not restrict the will:

Voi che vivete ogne cagion recate
pur suso al cielo, pur come se tutto
movesse seco di necessitate.
Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto
libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia
per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto.¹⁴⁴

If the wayfarer in *Inferno I* and *II* has free will and wants to follow the righteous path leading to the *colle luminoso*, why is he unable to escape the dark wood of sin? He possesses both reason to distinguish virtue from vice and free will to make moral decisions, yet the three beasts representing sin prevent the wayfarer from continuing along the path of righteousness.¹⁴⁵ In this chapter, I will discuss the role of grace in the redemptive process, and will argue that grace strengthens free will so that people can make virtuous moral choices. The wayfarer's attempts to escape the *selva oscura* are initially futile because he relies entirely upon his natural abilities to lead him to virtue.

Aquinas's and Augustine's doctrines on grace, free will, and predestination helped shape the conception of redemption in the *Commedia*.¹⁴⁶ They are careful to distinguish

¹⁴⁴ *Purgatorio XVI*. 67-72

¹⁴⁵ *Inferno I*. 32-60

¹⁴⁶ For more information regarding the influence of Augustine, Aquinas and early church theologians on the *Commedia*, see: Bigongiari, Dino, Anne Paolucci, and Henry (supplementary essays) Paolucci. Backgrounds of The Divine Comedy Dover, DE: Griffon, for Bagehot Council, 2005; Bigongiari, Dino,

between moral liberty and free will. Free will is the ability to choose between sin and virtue, but moral liberty allows people to make moral decisions without the influence of the passions. All postlapsarian people possess free will, but all suffer from moral slavery¹⁴⁷ resulting from the Fall.¹⁴⁸ Aquinas proposes that God granted Adam and Eve the gift of original justice which allowed them to make moral decisions without having to struggle against temptation. The original parents had true moral freedom, but after the Fall, original justice was overturned and people became slaves to sin since they could no longer make moral decisions without struggling against the passions.¹⁴⁹ Early Church Doctrine teaches that postlapsarian people lost their moral liberty in the moment original justice was reversed. Passion was no longer subject to reason; human reason was no longer subject to God's will, and the flesh was no longer obedient to the spirit. Aquinas

Henry Paolucci, and Anne Paolucci. Essays on Dante and Medieval Culture: Critical Studies of the Thought and Texts of Dante, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Marsilius of Padua, and Other Medieval Subjects. Florence, Italy: Olschki, 2000; De Smet, Richard. "The Medieval Inheritance of Dante." Journal of the Department of English 22.1-2 (1986-1987 1986): 37-49; Hawkins, Peter S. "Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the Divine Comedy." PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 106.3 (May 1991): 471-482; Panvini, Bruno. "La concezione tomistica della grazia nella Divina Commedia." Lecture Classensi 17 (1988): 69-85; Stump, Eleonore. "Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and the Love of God." Canadian Journal of Philosophy 16.2 (June 1986): 181-198; Tateo, Francesco. "Percorsi agostiniani in Dante." Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch 76 (2001): 43-56; Took, John. "Dante, Augustine, and the Drama of Salvation." Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia. 73-92. Dublin: Irish Acad., 1993; Wickstead, Philip H. Dante and Aquinas. New York: Haskell House, 1971.¹⁴⁷ For more on Aquinas's and Augustine's doctrine on moral slavery and original sin see: Babcock, William S.. The Ethics of St. Augustine. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991; Dauphinais, Michael. Aquinas the Augustinian. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007; Grossi, Vittorino. La Liturgia Battesimale In S. Agostino: Studio Sulla Catechesi Del Peccato Originale Negli Anni 393-412. Roma: Institutum patristicum Augustinianum, 1970; Paffenroth, Kim. The Heart Set Free: Sin And Redemption In the Gospels, Augustine, Dante, And Flannery O'Connor. New York: Continuum, 2005; Pieper, Josef. Guide to Thomas Aquinas. Scranton, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1962; Rigby, Paul, and Augustine. Original Sin In Augustine's Confessions. [Ottawa]: University of Ottawa Press, 1987; Van Nieuwenhove, Rik. The Theology of Thomas Aquinas. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005; Wetzell, James. Augustine And the Limits of Virtue. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

¹⁴⁸ *ST I.II. 85.5*: "Through sin, the reason is obscured, especially in practical matters, the will hardened to evil, good actions become more difficult and concupiscence more impetuous". For Augustine's ideas on moral slavery and corruption see *City of God*. 13. 3-4

¹⁴⁹ *ST I.95.1*: "For this rectitude consisted in his reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul: and the first subjection was the cause of both the second and the third; since while reason was subject to God, the lower powers remained subject to reason".

writes:

As a result of Original Justice, reason had perfect hold over the lower part of the soul, while reason itself was perfected by God, and was subject to Him. Now this same Original Justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parents as already stated (81,2); so that all the powers of the soul are left as it were destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue, which destitution is called a wounding of nature.¹⁵⁰

According to Anselm, the corruption and guilt of original sin was passed down to all Adam's children.¹⁵¹ Since original sin incurred a debt so large that man could never hope to repay it, salvation become unattainable until the incarnation of Jesus Christ.¹⁵² Early Church Theologians proposed that Christ's sacrifice redeemed humankind by meriting for them the gift of saving grace. Augustine argues that the grace won by Christ liberates postlapsarian people from moral slavery and heals the will so that people might choose virtue over vice:¹⁵³

He, then, who lawfully uses the law learns therein evil and good, and, not trusting in his own strength, flees to grace, by the help of which he may shun evil and do good. It is to be confessed, therefore, that we have free choice to do both evil and good; but in doing evil every one is free from righteousness and a servant of sin, while in doing good no one can be free, unless he have been made free by Him who said, *If the Son shall make you free, then you shall be free indeed.* John 8.36.¹⁵⁴

Early Church doctrine teaches that grace never overtakes free will or forces people to make virtuous moral decisions. All are free to reject the guidance offered by grace and to

¹⁵⁰ ST I/II 85 III

¹⁵¹ Anselm of Canterbury: *On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin*: "So if Adam and Eve had kept their Original Justice, then those who were born of them would likewise have been originally just...And because human nature as a whole was in Adam and Eve and because there was no human nature outside them, the whole human nature was weakened and corrupted".

¹⁵² For more information on the doctrine of Original Sin see Ferguson, Everett, Scholer, David and Finney Paul. *Studies in Early Christianity: Doctrines of Human Nature, Sin, and Salvation in the Early Church*. New York: Garland, 1993.

¹⁵³ *On Grace and Free Will*. 7: "Grace is necessary along with free will to lead a good life"; *On Grace and Free Will*; *City of God* 13-14; ST I/II 109-114.

¹⁵⁴ *On Rebuke and Grace*. 2; See also *On the Spirit and the Letter* 3-5.

remain in a state of wickedness.¹⁵⁵ I believe that grace is at the core of the redemption process in the *Commedia* because it heals the will and gives people the strength to make good moral choices. In *Inferno I*, for example, the wayfarer fails to triumph over sin because he attempts to reach the *colle luminoso* without the healing power of grace, but in the very moment he accepts divine grace in the form of a journey to the underworld, he is set on a path that eventually leads him to eternal glory.

The blessed of the *Paradiso* are saved by grace, faith, and good works. In the *Commedia*, grace is the root cause of people's good works and without grace, even faith in God is impossible. In this chapter, I will analyze the discussion on the origin of faith in *Paradiso XXIV*, in which the pilgrim tells Peter that he has been made worthy of the beatific vision by grace and not by natural ability. The pilgrim acknowledges that even the ability to believe in Christ did not come from within, but from grace which opened his eyes to the Faith.¹⁵⁶

In the *Commedia* grace, free will, and predestination are intricately connected. In the *Commedia*, God predestines people to salvation, and in *Inferno I* Virgil expresses grief about not being counted amongst the elect: "oh felice colui cu' ivi elegge!"¹⁵⁷ I propose that the idea of predestination in the *Commedia* is quite different from the later sixteenth century Calvinistic belief in predestination. The Calvinist tradition teaches that God selects specific people for salvation, and no matter what sort of lives the elect lead, they will be saved. In a similar vein, God condemns certain people to sin and so they will

¹⁵⁵ *ST I/II.112.2; ST I/II.113.5*

¹⁵⁶ *Paradiso XXIV. 92-93*

¹⁵⁷ *Inferno I. 129*

suffer eternal damnation.¹⁵⁸ Conversely, in the *Commedia*, God's universal salvific will would never allow him to condemn a group of people to sin or to Hell. God's mercy moves Him to extend the graces necessary for salvation to all people of all eras. In the episode of Trajan and Ripheus in *Paradiso XX*, for example, the pilgrim learns that those born before the advent of Christ are not excluded from eternal glory if they accept saving grace and become believers. The Eagle tells the pilgrim that love and hope conquer the will of God and move Him to extend grace to all people.¹⁵⁹ According to the Dantean conception of justice, individuals that reject divine grace are condemned to Hell, but those that accept grace and allow it to transform the sinful part of the self are redeemed and counted amongst the elect.

2.1 Limitations of Free will: Early Church Doctrine on Original Sin and Postlapsarian People's Moral State

Augustine's and Aquinas's theories regarding original sin and the Fall of Man were instrumental in developing modern Catholic Doctrine and had a profound influence on Dante. According to Augustine and Aquinas, God does not possess an evil will since He is the source and the perfection of the Good, and so when God created man, He endowed him with a good will.¹⁶⁰ Aquinas proposes that people must always look to God for moral guidance, and Augustine argues that although prelapsarian Adam was created in a state of moral righteousness, he remained in that desired state as long as divine grace

¹⁵⁸ For information on Calvin and Calvinism see: Cottret, Bernard *Calvin a Biography*; WB Eerdmans Publishing. Michigan; 2000; McKim, Donald. *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*; Cambridge University Press, 2004; Wendel, Francois. *Calvin origins and Development of his Religious Thought*. Labyrinth Press, Durham, 1987; McKim, Donald. *Calvin and the Bible*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

¹⁵⁹ *Paradiso XX*. 94-95.

¹⁶⁰ *City of God* 13.14. "For God, the author of natures, not of vices, created man upright.; *ST I.6.1*: "To be good belongs pre-eminently to God."

was available to him: "For he did not need grace to receive good, because he had not yet lost it; but he needed the aid of grace to continue in it, and without this aid he could not do this at all".¹⁶¹ Early Church doctrine teaches that God did not force Adam to remain in a state of righteousness. God gave Adam both a free will and an abundant source of justifying grace so that Adam could remain, if he wished, in a state of moral purity.¹⁶² As long as Adam remained obedient to God's laws, he maintained his righteousness. Theologians have debated the length of time Adam spent in the Garden of Eden, and in *Paradiso XXVI*, the poet claims that Adam's innocence lasted only six or seven hours.¹⁶³ According to Thomas Hill, Dante's notion that Adam spent so little time in the Garden of Eden was most likely influenced by Petrus Comestor, a French medieval theologian.¹⁶⁴ Sabbatino suggests that Dante believed that this detail about Adam was so important that he places it in the last lines of the Canto.¹⁶⁵ In his article, he also explains that the six hours Adam spent in innocence is numerically significant: Adam lost his innocence at the sixth hour of the sixth day of Creation, and in *Paradiso XXVI*, Dante enters Terrestrial Paradise at the sixth hour of the sixth day of his journey.

In *Paradiso XXVI*¹⁶⁶ the pilgrim meets Adam and asks him four questions which

¹⁶¹ *On Rebuke and Grace* 32

¹⁶² *On Rebuke and Grace* 32: "He had given help without which he could not continue therein if he would; but that he should will, He left in his free will".

¹⁶³ *Paradiso XXVI*. 139-142

¹⁶⁴ Hill, Thomas D., "Adam's Noon: *Paradiso XXVI*, 139-142," *Dante Studies* 100 (1982): 93-97.

¹⁶⁵ Sabbatino, Pasquale. *L'Eden della nuova poesia: Saggi sulla "Divina Commedia"* Florence: Olschki, 1991.

¹⁶⁶ For more analysis on *Paradiso XXVI* see: Barlozzini, Guido. *Il canto XXVI del Paradiso* Torino, Italy: S.E.I., 1961; Borsellino, Nino. "Notizie dell'Eden (*Paradiso XXVI*)." *Lettere Italiane* 41.3 (July 1989): 321-333; Brownlee, Kevin. "Language and Desire in *Paradiso XXVI*." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6 (Spring 1990): 46-59; Cremona, Joseph. "Paradiso XXVI." *Cambridge Readings in Dante's Comedy*. 174-190. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981; Gaffney, James. "Dante's Blindness in *Paradiso XXV-XXVI*: An Allegorical Interpretation." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 91 (1973): 101-112; Getto, Giovanni. *Il canto XXVI del Paradiso* Florence: Monnier, 1966; Giffin, Mary. "Paradiso XXVI. 97." *Modern Language Notes* 71.1 (Jan. 1956): 30-33; Griswold, Jerry. "Aquinas, Dante, and Ficino on Love: An Explication of the *Paradiso*, XXVI, 25-39." *Studies in*

he answers out of order: How many years passed from the Creation to the present moment, and what language did Adam speak in the Garden of Eden? How long did Adam remain in the Garden of Eden and what was the nature of original sin?¹⁶⁷ Adam first discusses the causes of the Fall, and I believe that his willingness to talk about his most serious sin helps the reader understand the redemptive process in the *Commedia*. The blessed of the *Paradiso* did not lead morally perfect lives, but divine mercy forgives and heals them of their wickedness. Throughout the *Paradiso*, the blessed admit their earthly transgressions without expressing any bitterness because they know that grace has cleansed them of sin and has made them worthy of the beatific vision. For example, in *Paradiso XI*, Folco of Marseille tells the pilgrim that in life he burned with an intense amorous desire, but now experiences a blessed joy in Heaven free of the guilt of any past misdeeds.¹⁶⁸ In another example, the Eagle tells the pilgrim that Charles II of Anjou committed more misdeeds than good works, but divine mercy healed him, and he now enjoys eternal life in the Heaven of Jupiter.¹⁶⁹

In *Paradiso XXVI* Adam explains that he disobeyed God because pride led him to believe that he could be greater than the Creator:

Or, figliuol mio, non il gustar del legno
fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio,
ma solamente il trapassar del segno.¹⁷⁰

Medieval Culture 8-9 (1976): 151-161; Lograsso, Angeline H. "Paradiso, XXVI, 97." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 23.1 (Jan. 1948): 104-109; Nardi, Bruno. "Il canto XXVI del Paradiso." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 26.1 (Jan. 1985): 24-32; Rati, Giancarlo. "Il canto XXVI del 'Paradiso'." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 32.1 (Jan. 1991): 19-38; Valerio, Sebastiano. "Lingua, retorica e poetica nel canto XXVI del Paradiso." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 44.22 (July 2003): 83-104. Walter, Edward L. "Dante's Paradiso: Cantos XXIV-XXVI." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 4.1 (1889): 24-40.

¹⁶⁷ *Paradiso IX*. 109-112

¹⁶⁸ *Paradiso IX*. 67-142

¹⁶⁹ *Paradiso XIX*. 127-129

¹⁷⁰ *Paradiso XXVI*. 115-117

Danteists¹⁷¹ have observed that the poet alludes to Ulysses's sin in verse 117 of Adam's speech because both the original parents and Ulysses trespassed a divine boundary:

Io e ' compagni eravam vecchi e tardi
 quando venimmo a quella foce stretta
 dov' Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi
 acciò che l'uom più oltre non si metta;¹⁷²

Dante's notion that pride caused original sin comes from early church doctrine. Augustine proposes that the original parents' rejected divine moral guidance, and wanted to become like God Himself, possessing the knowledge of all that is Good.¹⁷³ By tasting of the forbidden fruit, Adam desired to fulfill his own will rather than God's and brought about his own moral destruction and spiritual death. The original parents turned away from God's saving grace and in return, God's saving grace was withdrawn from all humankind until the advent of Christ.¹⁷⁴ Aquinas argues that postlapsarian Adam lost his moral righteousness because he could no longer look to God, who is the source of all goodness and perfection, to guide and sanctify him. His rejection of God's grace meant that humankind was left to wallow in sin and wickedness until Christ's Resurrection.¹⁷⁵

2.2 Limitations of Free Will in the *Commedia*

¹⁷¹ Chiavacci Leonardi, Anna Maria, *Paradiso, con il commento di A. M. C. L.* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997); Hawkins, Peter S., "Trespassing on the Word: God's Book and Ours," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47 (1979): 47-53; Iannucci, Amilcare, "Ulysses' *folle volo*: the Burden of History," *Medioevo romanzo* 3 (1976): 410-45; Nardi, Bruno, "La tragedia di Ulisse," in *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari: Laterza, 1942).

¹⁷² *Inferno XXVI*. 106-109

¹⁷³ *City of God*. 13.13-15: *City of God* 14.12: "But by the precept He gave, God commanded obedience, which is, in a sort, the mother and guardian of all the virtues in the reasonable creature, which was so created that submission is advantageous to it, while the fulfillment of its own will in preference to the Creator's is destruction".

¹⁷⁴ *City of God* 13:15: "It may perhaps be supposed that because God said, "You shall die the death," Genesis 2:17 and not "deaths," we should understand only that death which occurs when the soul is deserted by God, who is its life; for it was not deserted by God, and so deserted Him, but deserted Him, and so was deserted by Him"

¹⁷⁵ *ST. I/II* 109 XVII: "Man by himself can no wise rise from sin without the help of grace".

The pilgrim's inability in *Inferno I* to follow the virtuous path he desires illustrates that the poet believed that free will without the guidance of grace leads to damnation.¹⁷⁶ In the *Commedia*, all people suffer from moral slavery and need divine healing. A small group of theologians in the fifth century denied the role of grace in the redemptive process and claimed that virtue and salvation are attained solely through the efforts of free will. Pelagians refuted Augustine's doctrine of original sin and in 418 at the Council of Carthage, their teachings were declared heretical by the Church and his theology deemed unorthodox. Pelagians denied Adam's original state of immortality in the Garden of Eden and taught that Adam would have died even if he had never committed original sin. Concupiscence is natural to man because man never possessed the gift of Original Justice, whereby the passions were subject to the will. The stain of original sin remained only in Adam, and so children are born in the same state as Adam before his fall and do not require baptism for salvation.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ For more on the Prologue scene see: Baranski Zygmunt, G. "La Lezione Esetica Di Inferno I: Allegoria, Storia e Letteratura Nella *Commedia*." *Dante e Le Forme Dell'Allegoresi*. Ed. Michelangelo Picone. Ravenna: Longo, 1987. 79-97; Barth, R. L. "Inferno I, II and XXVI: Dante as Poet and Wayfarer, Ulysses, and the Reader." *The Kentucky Review* 2.2 (1981): 35-48; Casagrande, Gino, "Parole di Dante: il 'lungo silenzio' di Inferno I, 63," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 174 (1997): 243-54; Cassell, Anthony K., "Il silenzio di Virgilio: Inferno I, 62-63," *Lecture classensi* 18 (1989): 165-76; Cassell, Anthony K., Robert (fwd & tr). Hollander, and Patrick (tr). Creagh. *Inferno I*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989; Cassell, Anthony K. "Failure, Pride and Conversion in Inferno I: A Reinterpretation." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 94 (1976): 1-24; Frare, Pierantonio. "Il Potere Della Parola: Su Inferno I e II." *Lettere Italiane* 56.4 (2004): 543-69; Finotti, Fabio. "Il Poema Ermeneutico (Inferno I-II)." *Lettere Italiane* 53.4 (2001): 489-508; Gorni, Guglielmo, *Dante nella selva: il primo canto della "Commedia"* (Parma: Pratiche, 1995); Grimes, Margaret W. "The Sunlit Hill of Inferno I." *Romance Notes* 28.1 (1987): 27-9; Hallock, Ann H., *Dante's selva oscura and Other Obscure selvas*, *Forum Italicum* 6 (1972): 57-78; Heilbronn-Gaines, Denise, "*Inferno I: Breaking the Silence*," in *Dante's "Inferno"*: The Indiana Critical Edition , ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 286-98; Hollander, Robert. "Dante's use of Aeneid I in Inferno I and II." *Comparative Literature* 20.2 (1968): 142-56; Manescalchi, Romano, *Il prologo della "Divina Commedia"* (Turin: Tirrenia, 1998); Pagliaro, Antonino. ". . . Lo Passo Che Non Lasciò Già Mai Persona Viva. (Inferno I, 27)." 1956; Quinones, Ricardo J. "Inferno I." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6, no. supp (1990): 5-16; Stefanini, Ruggero. "Attributo e Predicato Di Piè(De) in Inferno I.30." *Italica* 70.2 (1993): 212-6.

¹⁷⁷ For more on Pelagius' views on baptism see St. Augustine. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*. Chapters 35 and 36. For more on Pelagius view of Original Sin and Adam's moral state before the Fall,

Pelagians did not deny that Adam's original sin had a negative effect on his descendants. When man commits sins and embraces vice, he does so because he follows Adam's bad moral example. According to the Pelagians, God never would have expected man to follow the commandments and lead a virtuous life, if he did not already equip man with the tools needed to accomplish such a task.¹⁷⁸ People of their natural moral strength, can avoid sin entirely and lead a life of perfect virtue by following Jesus' good example and by rejecting Adam's bad example.¹⁷⁹ Pelagians deny the doctrine of grace because they believe that man can achieve moral perfection strictly through the power of free will.¹⁸⁰ Grace plays no role in the redemption of the sinner, and so people are justified by faith alone and by this justification are cleansed of all personal sins.¹⁸¹

The pilgrim in *Inferno I* fails to reach the *colle luminoso* precisely because he follows the Pelagian notion that people can reform their sinful ways by relying entirely upon individual moral strength and free will.¹⁸² In *Inferno I* the pilgrim has yet to receive the gift of saving grace which will heal his weaknesses and liberate him from moral slavery. The wayfarer, for example, gazes upwards at the *colle luminoso* and

see: Pelikan, Jaroslav. The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine v. 1 Chicago. The University of Chicago Press 1971. Pp. 314-316.

¹⁷⁸ See Pelagius *On the Possibility of not Sinning* 164-170

¹⁷⁹ For more information on Pelagianism teaching on the example of Adam vs the example of Christ see Augustine *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* 42-43.

¹⁸⁰ *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*. 5.

¹⁸¹ For more on Pelagius' doctrines and Pelagian theology, see: Bonner, Gerald. Augustine And Modern Research On Pelagianism. [Villanova, Pa.: Augustinian Institute, Villanova University, 1972; Evans, Robert F. Pelagius: Inquiries And Reappraisals. New York: Seabury Press, 1968; Ogliari, Donato. Gratia et Certamen: The Relationship Between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called SemiPelagians. Leuven University Press, 2003; Pelagius, and Theodore De Bruyn. Pelagius's Commentary On St Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Translated With Introduction And Notes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; Rees, B. R. Pelagius: Life And Letters. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 1998.

¹⁸² Most Danteists argue that the *colle luminoso* represents the virtuous life attainable through natural abilities, see: Mazzoni, Francesco, *Saggio di un nuovo commento alla "Divina Commedia": "Inferno" Canti I-III* (Florence: Sansoni, 1967); Cassell argues that the wayfarer's climb represents an attempt to earn salvation without the help of grace. see: Cassell, Anthony K., Lectura Dantis Americana: Inferno I (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

marvels at the sun rising behind it:

Ma poi ch'i' fui al piè d'un colle giunto,
 là dove terminava quella valle
 che m'avea di paura il cor compunto,
 guardai in alto e vidi le sue spalle
 vestite già de' raggi del pianeta
 che mena dritto altrui per ogne calle.¹⁸³

In the *Commedia* the active presence of divine grace in an individual is often indicated by the illumination of the face by Divine Presence. In *Purgatorio I*, for example, four stars representing the four cardinal virtues brighten Caton's face such that it resembles the sun:

Li raggi de le quattro luci sante
 fregiavan sí la sua faccia di lume,
 ch'i' l vedea come 'l sol fosse davante.¹⁸⁴

In a similar vein, in *Purgatorio XXXI* Beatrice's face becomes like a mirror that reflects Divine Light so brightly that the pilgrim can hardly look upon her.¹⁸⁵ Contrarily, in *Inferno I*, the light radiates off the face of the hill, but not the face of the wayfarer, indicating that the wayfarer has not yet received saving grace which will help him reform his sinful nature.¹⁸⁶

The light stirs the pilgrim's desire for righteousness and he foolishly attempts to climb the hill in hopes of attaining grace. According to Augustine, one of Dante's sources on Divine Justice, people cannot merit grace: "This grace, however, of Christ, without

¹⁸³ *Inferno I*. 13-18

¹⁸⁴ *Purgatorio I*. 37-39

¹⁸⁵ *Purgatorio XXXI*. 135-143; For more on *Purgatorio XXXI*, see: Delcorno, Carlo. "Lettura Di 'Purgatorio' XXXI." *Studi Danteschi* 71 (2006): 87-120; Fasolini, Diego. "'Illuminating' and 'Illuminated' Light: A Biblical-Theological Interpretation of God-as-Light in Canto XXXIII of Dante's Paradiso." *Literature & Theology: An International Journal of Religion, Theory, and Culture* 19.4 (2005): 297-310; Jacomuzzi, Angelo. "La 'Pargoletta' in *Purgatorio* (XXXI.58-60)." Ravenna: , 1979; Storey, H. Wayne. "Revision and Vision in *Purgatorio XXXI*." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 14-15 (1994): 26-41.

¹⁸⁶ For more on Light as symbolic of virtue see: Gilson, Simon A., *Medieval Optics and Theories of Light in the Works of Dante*. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

which neither infants nor adults can be saved, is not rendered for any merits, but is given *gratis*, on account of which it is also called grace"¹⁸⁷ In the *Commedia*, people cannot merit divine grace; the wayfarer must not climb towards the light, rather he must as Singleton suggests, humble himself and wait for the light of grace to come down to him.¹⁸⁸

In *Inferno I* and *II* the pilgrim's struggle to reach the *colle luminoso* is hindered by original sin and the subsequent wounding of nature. As he climbs up the hill, for example, one foot remains lower than the other: "sì che 'l piè fermo sempre era 'l più basso".¹⁸⁹ The image of Dante limping up towards the *colle luminoso* is a subject which many Danteists have examined and in particular John Freccero in his article *Dante's Firm Foot and the Journey without a Guide*. Freccero proposes that the pilgrim's manner of walking represents postlapsarian man's spiritual struggle brought about through the Fall:

The figure of a man in the act of walking was quite literally the incarnation of the act of choice, for walking was simply choosing brought down to the material plain. The vital spirit residing in the heart has for its entire function the transmission of the soul's commands, and the concatenation of thoughts and desires produced by the intellect and the will is reproduced, in the act of walking, by the succession of right and left. What better way to represent a struggle which goes on in the soul, than to observe the

¹⁸⁷ *On Nature and Grace*. 4; *ST I/II.112.1*: "Nothing can act beyond its species, since the cause must always be more powerful than its effect. Now the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature, which exceeds every other nature. And thus it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle."

¹⁸⁸ Singleton proposes that the pilgrim must first humble himself before he can be made worthy of salvation: "...for we all bear the burden of Adam's sin; the proof of which is that when we turn towards God and strive to ascend to Him, we have not the strength to do so. Indeed we discover that, if we struggle to ascend by our own powers, we simply fall back into the darkness the more we strive. The burden of Adam's sin is too much with us. But it was Christ who showed us the way: we have first to descend in order to ascend". Singleton, Charles *In Exitu Israel de Aegypto*, in 78th annual Report of the Dante Society (1960), 1-24.

¹⁸⁹ *Inferno I*. 31

effects of that very struggle upon the body?¹⁹⁰

Freccero observes that thirteenth century theologians proposed that the *intellectus* and the *affectus* move the soul in the same manner that limbs move the body.¹⁹¹ In his prelapsarian state Adam was perfect and the powers of *intellectus* and the *affectus* were balanced, but after he committed the first sin these two *feet* of the soul became wounded: the *intellectus* by ignorance and the *affectus* by concupiscence.¹⁹² According to Freccero, the wounding of the feet can be seen in the wayfarer's limping; his wounded left foot, or the *affectus* remains "fermo" while the right foot or the *intellectus* struggles to reach the summit. The pilgrim has no hope of reaching the colle luminoso while his left foot bears the wound of concupiscence; his salvation depends on the God-given free gift of grace which works to heal the wounds of fallen man.¹⁹³

2.3 Limitations of Free Will in the *Commedia*: Moral slumber in *Inferno I*

In the *Commedia*, postlapsarian people either actively reject vice and seek virtue or sink into sinfulness. In *Inferno I*, for example, the exhaustion that leads the sinner into the *selva oscura* is a kind of moral slumber in which the wayfarer no longer labors against impulses of the flesh, and gives in to temptation.¹⁹⁴ The wayfarer in fact mentions that he was overcome with sleep when he lost his way:

Io non so ben ridir com'i' vi'intraì

¹⁹⁰ Freccero "Dante's Firm Foot and the Journey without a Guide" *Harvard Theological Review* LII (245-281) 1959, 264.

¹⁹¹ Freccero 262

¹⁹² Freccero 267

¹⁹³ For more on the image of the fallen man limping in his effort to reach God see Freccero, John "Dante's Prologue Scene". *Dante Studies*, LXXXIV (1966) 1-25.

¹⁹⁴ For more on sleep as a metaphor for sin and moral backsliding in *Inferno I* and *II*. see Cassell, Anthony. *Lectura Dantis Americana: Inferno I*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press. 1989.

tant'era pien di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abandonai.¹⁹⁵

The wayfarer, continues to suffer from moral backsliding throughout *Inferno I* and *II*. The arduous climb towards the *colle luminoso*, for example, wares him down, and he rests repeatedly in order to renew his strength: "Poi ch'ei posato un poco il corpo lasso, / ripresi via per la piaggia diserta".¹⁹⁶ According to Early Church Doctrine, the reversal of Original Justice meant that postlapsarian people must wage constant war against vice if they wish to avoid eternal damnation. Hugh of St. Victor in *Sermones xxxviii* and *xxxix* compares the human soul to the city of Jerusalem under constant attack by the Gentiles, and argues that people must put up a wall of virtue so that sin does not enter their *city* or corrupt their soul. People easily fall into sin when they no longer fight the impulses of the flesh, and rest in their wickedness.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, in the *selva oscura*, the wayfarer loses his way because he allowed himself to be ruled by vice and stopped practicing virtue. In the terms of Hugh of St. Victor, the wayfarer left Jerusalem's gates unguarded by the virtues and so he easily fell into vice.

The image of the wayfarer in *Inferno I* sleeping at the foot of the hill contrasts sharply with the images of the penitent in the *Purgatorio* who work tirelessly to reach the summit of Mount Purgatory. I propose that the difference in attitude and moral vigor between the wayfarer and the purgatorial pilgrims can be explained by the absence or presence of grace. Grace, for example, strengthens the penitents' moral weaknesses so that they can dedicate themselves to moral purification. In the prologue scene, the

¹⁹⁵ *Inferno I*.11-12

¹⁹⁶ *Inferno I* 28-29

¹⁹⁷ Threnos, 175.258; For a more in depth analysis on Jerusalem and Babylonia in the writings of Hugh of St. Victor see: Battles, Lewis "Hugh of St. Victor as a Moral Allegorist" Church History Vol. 18, No. 4, Dec., 1949; 220-240.

wayfarer rests instead of continuing his journey because he lacks the grace necessary for spiritual transformation. The purgatorial pilgrims do not depend on their own moral strength to carry them through the seven terraces; rather they depend upon grace. They rest only after sunset, when they can no longer draw upon divine grace to guide them:

Ma vedi già come dichina il giorno
e andar sù di notte non si puote;
però è buon pensar di bel soggiorno.¹⁹⁸

The penitent pray to God for guidance and study scriptures and examples of virtue as they climb up the seven terraces. Images from the Scriptures and biblical verses help reform them and are an important part of their journey towards purification. On the terrace of the proud, for example, pilgrims meditate on the image of the Annunciation and are reminded of Mary's humility which led her to yield to and accept divine will. The pilgrims also reflect on Mary's words to the Angel Gabriel: *ecce ancilla dei: Behold the handmaid of the Lord*¹⁹⁹ and learn to follow the Virgin's example: They humble themselves, reject self-will, and conform to divine will. Contrarily, meditation is absent in *Inferno I* and *II* because the wayfarer has not yet learned that prayer will strengthen and guide him on his spiritual journey. He believes that he can become virtuous of his own natural abilities and consequently does not look to God for direction. In the prologue scene, I believe that the wayfarer does not pray because he has not yet been granted grace. According to Augustine, one of Dante's theological sources, prayer indicates that the individual is in a state of grace because only grace can stir up the desire to commune with God.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ *Purgatorio VII.* 43-45.

¹⁹⁹ *Luke* 1.38

²⁰⁰ *On Grace and Free will.* 9

3.1 Fear and Self-Reliance

On the seven terraces of Purgatory, the pilgrims joyfully endure suffering and never fear their torment because they have been granted the gift of salvation. In the *Purgatorio*, music accompanies the pilgrims as they make their way up the mountain, and reminds them of divine mercy and of the healing power of grace.²⁰¹ A beautiful angelic chorus sings *Te Deum Laudamus* and welcomes the pilgrim to Purgatory Proper.²⁰² The music quiets the pilgrim's fears and he eagerly passes through the gates. Angels sing one of the beatitudes, on each of the terraces, in order to inspire the pilgrims to continue on their journey. The pilgrim observes that the lamentations in Hell have now been replaced in Purgatory with music and song which calm him and give him the courage to ascend to the next terrace.²⁰³

Contrarily, joy is absent from the prologue to the *Commedia* because the pilgrim is unsure of his eternal fate. Unlike the *Purgatorio*, the prologue is characterized by an enormous sense of dread, misery, and solitude: In *Inferno I*, for example, there are five references to fear.²⁰⁴ Fear has a physical presence: The lion's furious roar, for example, makes the air quake, and the she-wolf inspires such terror that the wayfarer's veins tremble:

²⁰¹ Music and song are an integral part of the purification process in the *Purgatorio*. See: Cappuccio, Chiara. "Gli effetti psicologici della musica sui personaggi del *Purgatorio*." *Tenzone: Revista de la Asociación Complutense de Dantología* 6 (2005): 35-80; Jones, Nancy A. "Music and the Maternal Voice in *Purgatorio* XIX." *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. 35-49. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1994; La Favia, Louis M. "'... chè quivi per canti ...' (*Purg.*, XII, 113), Dante's Programmatic Use of Psalms and Hymns in the *Purgatorio*." *Studies in Iconography* 10 (1984-1986 1984): 53-65.

²⁰² *Purgatorio IX*. 140

²⁰³ *Purgatorio XII*. 112-114: "Ahi quanto son diverse quelle foci/ da l'infernali! chè quivi per canti/ s'entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci 112-114 -12.

²⁰⁴ *Inferno I*. 6, 15, 19, 44, 53.

Questi pareva che contra me venisse
 con la test' alta e con rabbiosa fame
 sì che pareva che l'aere ne tremesse²⁰⁵

(...)

Vedi la bestia per cu' io mi volsi;
 aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,
 ch'ella mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi.²⁰⁶

According to Anthony Cassell, the threat of damnation in the prologue scene motivates the wayfarer to reject sin and seek truth. He argues that fear plays an important role in the wayfarer's redemption:

In the Judeo-Christian tradition fear is the beginning of wisdom (Ecclus. 1:16) and it comes first as a cowardly dread of evil and Hell but leads, according to St. Augustine, to charity; though the sinner does not first actively desire the good, his dread and avoidance of evil set him on a path towards righteousness.²⁰⁷

I propose that fear in *Inferno I* and *II* has a dual nature: it is a great motivator for spiritual progress, but also indicates that the pilgrim suffers from spiritual bondage to the law and has not yet received grace. The wayfarer bases his salvation entirely on strict obedience to Divine Precepts and worries that he will be damned when he realizes that he cannot adhere to the law, due to his moral weaknesses.

The wayfarer's internal spiritual struggle in the prologue scene is influenced by the *Epistle to the Romans*. Paul commits sin although he wants to become virtuous, and no matter how much he tries he can not follow all Divine Precepts: "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my

²⁰⁵ *Inferno I*. 46-48

²⁰⁶ *Inferno I*. 88-90

²⁰⁷ Cassell, Anthony "Failure, Pride and Conversion in *Inferno I*". *Dante Studies* 94 (1976) 1-24.

members."²⁰⁸ Although St. Paul would never fully overcome the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, he did not doubt his salvation because he did not believe that eternal life is rewarded only to those who attain moral perfection during their lifetimes. He argued that the healing power of Divine Grace would justify him.²⁰⁹ According to Paul, the faithful should not fear because grace will give them the strength to overcome their moral shortcomings.²¹⁰

In *Inferno I* the wayfarer's internal moral struggle is similar to Paul's. He fears damnation because he tries to earn salvation. For example, he worries less about his eternal fate when he begins to presume that it is in his power to reach the *colle luminoso*, but his misery quickly returns as soon as he repeats poor moral choices. This fluctuation in fear is best observed in the episode of the three beasts.²¹¹ The wayfarer's heart fills with terror when he first encounters the leopard. As he regains confidence in the self, his fear subsides and he continues past the leopard:

sí ch'a bene sperar m'era cagione
di quella fiera a la gaetta pelle
l'ora del tempo e la dolce stagione.²¹²

Although the wayfarer gets past the leopard without the guidance of grace, he cannot overcome his sinful nature without its healing power. The idea that the wayfarer can avoid some sins without the help of grace may have been influenced by Early Church Doctrine. According to Aquinas people can avoid some sins without the guidance of grace, but will never free themselves from moral slavery without it: "Man can avoid each

²⁰⁸ Epistle to the Romans 7:22-23.

²⁰⁹ Epistle to the Romans 7: 24-25: "Unhappy man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

²¹⁰ Epistle to the Romans 8:15: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear: but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)".

²¹¹ *Inferno I*. 32-60

²¹² *Inferno I*. 41-43.

but not every act of sin, except by grace".²¹³ The wayfarer's victory over the leopard is only momentary, and his heart is once again filled with an overwhelming sense of dread because a more ferocious beast blocks his path.²¹⁴ Fear in *Inferno I* leads to a spiritual awakening: The she-wolf makes his *veins tremble*, and he gives up his foolish attempt to achieve moral perfection without divine guidance:

questa mi porse tanto di gravezza
con la paura ch'uscita di sua vista,
ch'io perdei la speranza de l'altezza.²¹⁵

In the very moment that the wayfarer admits his helplessness, grace comes to him in the form of a pilgrimage to the otherworld and his journey towards salvation begins.

4.1 Divine Grace and Merit

The wayfarer eagerly agrees to undertake the pilgrimage, but his enthusiasm quickly fades. He questions his abilities and wonders if he merits such an extraordinary gift: "Poeta che mi guidi, guarda la mia virtù s'ell' é possente, / prima ch'a l'alto passo tu mi fidi".²¹⁶ The pilgrim believes that his sins have made him unworthy of God's forgiveness, and tells Virgil that he no longer wishes to take the pilgrimage:

E qual é quei che disvuol ciò che volle
e per novi pensier cangia proposta
sí che dal cominciar tutto si tolle.²¹⁷

According to Catholic Doctrine, God does not grant grace to people because they are

²¹³ *ST. I/II*. 109. 9

²¹⁴ *Inferno I*. 44-48

²¹⁵ *Inferno I*. 52-54

²¹⁶ *Inferno II*. 10-11

²¹⁷ *Inferno II*. 37-39.

worthy of salvation; rather God extends grace to people so that they might become worthy of salvation.²¹⁸ In the *Commedia*, the wayfarer receives grace regardless of personal merit. In *Inferno II*, for example, he questions his election to eternal glory and claims that he is unlike Paul, a worthy recipient of divine favor: "ma io, perché venirvi? o chi 'l concede? / Io non sono Enea, io non Paulo sono".²¹⁹ It is important to note, that the wayfarer may say he is unlike Paul, but for the poet of the *Commedia*, the wayfarer represents a *New Paul*. Before his conversion to Christianity, Paul persecuted Christians, and dedicated his life to spreading the Gospels only after a divine light struck him temporarily blind.²²⁰ As in the case of Paul before his conversion, the wayfarer is unworthy of God's mercy, but is given the gift of saving grace so that he might fulfill his divine mission.²²¹ The pilgrim's hesitation in *Inferno II* reflects the same self doubt expressed by Moses in the Old Testament. Moses who is chosen by God to lead His

²¹⁸ *On the Predestination of Saints* 37: "Therefore God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinating us to the adoption of children, not because we were going to be of ourselves holy and immaculate, but He chose and predestinated us that we might be so."

²¹⁹ *Inferno II*. 31-32; Jacoff and Stephany argue that what the pilgrim argues in these verses do not reflect the views of the Poet: In the *Commedia*, Dante becomes the New Paul: Jacoff, Rachel, and William Stephany, *Lectura Dantis Americana*, "Inferno" II (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989)55-73; For more on Paul in the *Commedia* see: Di Scipio, Giuseppe, "Dante and St. Paul: The Blinding Light and Water," *Dante Studies* 98 (1980): 151-57; Di Scipio, Giuseppe, *The Presence of Pauline Thought in the Works of Dante* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995); Silverstein, Theodore, "Dante and the Visio Pauli," *Modern Language Notes* 47 (1932): 392-98; Silverstein, Theodore, "Did Dante Know the Vision of St. Paul?," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 19 (1937): 231-47; For more on *Inferno II* see: Cassell, Anthony K. "Santa Lucia as Patroness of Sight: Hagiography, Iconography, and Dante." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 109 (1991): 71-88; Demaray, John G. "The Pilgrim Texts and Dante's Three Beasts: Inferno, I." *Italica* 46.3 (1969): 233-41; Jacoff, Rachel. "The Tears of Beatrice: Inferno II." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 100 (1982): 1-12; Jacoff, Rachel, et al. *Inferno II*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989. xxiii, 1989; Locke, F. W. "Dante's Perilous Crossing (Inferno II, 108)." Symposium: *A Quarterly Journal in Modern Foreign Literatures* 19 (1965): 293-305; Mandelbaum, Allen. "'La Mente Che Non Erra' (Inferno II, 6)." *Lecture Classensi* 18 (1988): 41-48; Mastrobuono, Antonio C. "Inferno II." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6, no. supp (1990): 17-27; Pellegrini, Silvio. "Inferno, II. 59-60." Milan: , 1963; Singleton, Charles S. "Sulla Fiumana Ove'l Mar Non Ha Vanto (Inferno, II, 108)." *Romanic Review* 39 (1948): 269-77.

²²⁰ Acts of the Apostles 8.1-3; 9.1-30; 22.3-21; 26.9-23

²²¹ *On Rebuke and Grace* 36 "It is He Himself, therefore, that makes those men good, to do good works. For He did not promise them to Abraham because He foreknew that of themselves they would be good. For if this were the case, what He promised was not His, but theirs."

people out of slavery, also questions his worthiness.²²² He acknowledges his shortcomings and realizes that, if he relies on his own natural strength, he will be incapable of performing such a task. Moses undertakes the task given to him only when God tells him that He will be his guide.²²³

Like Moses, the wayfarer accepts Virgil's proposal when he learns that God will lead him. In *Inferno II*, Virgil tells the wayfarer that three Heavenly ladies, Mary, Lucy, and Beatrice desire his salvation and will provide him with the necessary guidance²²⁴:

perché ardire e franchezza non hai
poscia che tai tre donne benedette
curan di te ne la corte del cielo,
e 'l mio parlar tanto ben ti promette?²²⁵

Dante's acceptance of the pilgrimage at the end of *Inferno II* marks a turning point in the *Commedia* because it is here that the pilgrim begins to understand that grace will strengthen his moral weakness and give him the tools to overcome moral slavery.

The gratuitous nature of grace in the *Commedia* has its foundation in Early Christian Doctrine. Augustine argues that people can never merit grace:

This grace however, of Christ, without which neither infants nor adults can be saved, is not rendered for any merits, but is given *gratis*, on account of which it is also called grace. *Being justified*, says the apostle, *freely through His blood. Romans 3-24*

²²² Exodus 3:11: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

²²³ Exodus 3:12: "And God said to him: I will be with thee..."

²²⁴ For more on the Three Heavenly Ladies see: Beal, Rebecca, "Beatrice in the Sun: A Vision from Apocalypse," *Dante Studies* 103 (1985): 57-78; Bologna, Corrado, *Il ritorno di Beatrice: Simmetrie dantesche fra "Vita nova," "petrose" e "Commedia"* (Rome: Salerno, 1998); Cassell, Anthony K., "Santa Lucia as Patroness of Sight: Hagiography, Iconography, and Dante," *Dante Studies* 109 (1991): 71-88.

²²⁵ *Inferno II* vv. 123-126; De Robertis, Domenico, "Dante e Beatrice in Paradiso," *Critica letteraria* 18 (1990): 137-54; Gorni, Guglielmo, "Beatrice agli Inferi," in *Omaggio a Beatrice*, ed. R. Abaro (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997), pp. 143-58; Hollander, Robert, "Vita Nuova: Dante's Perceptions of Beatrice," *Dante Studies* 92 (1974): 1-18; Iannucci, Amilcare, "Beatrice in Limbo: a Metaphoric Harrowing of Hell," *Dante Studies* 97 (1979): 23-45; Jacoff, Rachel, "The Tears of Beatrice," *Dante Studies* 100 (1982): 1-12; Pacchioni, Paola, "Lia e Rachele, Matelda e Beatrice," *L'Alighieri* 18 (2001): 47-74; Singleton, Charles S., "Virgil Recognizes Beatrice," *Annual Report of the Dante Society* 74 (1956): 29-38; Singleton, Charles S., *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

Whence they, who are not liberated through grace, either because they are not yet able to hear, or because they are unwilling to obey or again because they did not receive, at the time when they were unable on account of youth to hear, that bath of regeneration, which they might have received and through which they might have been saved, are indeed justly condemned; because they are not without sin, either that which they have derived from their birth, or that which they have added from their own misconduct. *For all have sinned— whether in Adam or in themselves— and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23.*²²⁶

In the *Commedia*, the gratuitous nature of grace is best observed in Virgil's speech in *Inferno II* where he reprimands the wayfarer for his cowardice and recounts the story of Beatrice's descent into Hell.²²⁷ Beatrice tells Virgil that the gracious lady of Heavens moved by Dante's tears and summons Lucy for help who then calls Beatrice and implores her to save him. Charity moves Beatrice into action and she hastily descends into Limbo to obtain the help of the classical poet:

I' son Beatrice che ti faccio andare;
vegno del loco ove tornar disio;
amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare.²²⁸

In Virgil's speech it is important to note that the gracious ladies do not help the wayfarer out of any moral obligation, but out of mercy and charity. In the same manner, God in the *Commedia* extends his mercy and grace to sinners because without it, they would face eternal damnation. It is also worth noting that the three Heavenly Ladies *violate*

Heaven's rules by allowing Beatrice to go to Limbo:

Donna è gentil nel ciel che si compiange
di questo 'mpedimento ov' io ti mando,
sì che duro giudicio là sù frange.²²⁹

In the *Commedia*, God's abundant grace has no boundaries and His mercy moves Him to

²²⁶ *On Nature and Grace. 4*

²²⁷ *Inferno II.45*

²²⁸ *Inferno II. 70-72*

²²⁹ *Inferno II. 94-96*

break the laws of nature and perform miracles.

5.1 Predestination and Dante's vision of Divine Justice

In *Paradiso XX*,²³⁰ the pilgrim learns that God predestines people to salvation. According to the Eagle in the Sphere of Jupiter, there is a fixed number of elect known solely to God; even the blessed do not know who is predestined:

O predestinazion, quanto remota
 è la radice tua da quelli aspetti
 che la prima cagion non veggion *tota*!
 E voi, mortali, tenetevi stretti
 a giudicar: ché noi, che Dio vedemo,
 non conosciamo ancor tutti li eletti;
 ed ènne dolce così fatto scemo,
 perché il ben nostro in questo ben s'affina,
 che quel che vole Iddio, e noi volemo.²³¹

Aquinas's doctrine of predestination helped shape modern Church Beliefs and influenced the conception of Divine Justice in the *Commedia*.²³² Aquinas argues that the names of the elect are metaphorically written into the Book of Life and are known only by God.

²³⁰ For more on predestination in *Paradiso XIX and XX* see: Allan, Mowbray. "Much Virtue in Ma: *Paradiso XIX*, 106, and St. Thomas's *Sed Contra*." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 111 (1993): 195-211; Foster, Kenelm, "Paradiso XIX," *Dante Studies* 94 (1976): 71-90; Camerino, Giuseppe Antonio. "Paradiso XX." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 36.6 (1995): 47-60. Foster, Kenelm, O.P. "Paradiso XIX." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 94 (1976): 71-90; Reissner, Claus. "Paradiso XX, 118-120: 'Quell'Avvocato De' Tempi Cristiani: Orosius Oder Lactantius?'" *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 47 (1972): 58-76; Russo, Vittorio. "Paradiso XIX: Similis Fictio Numquam Facta Fuit Per Aliquem Poetam." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 101 (1983): 87-110; Scrivano, Riccardo. "Paradiso XIX." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 36.6 (1995): 29-46.

²³¹ *Paradiso XX*. 130-138

²³² For more on the Doctrine of Predestination in the Early Church see: Bonner, Gerald. *Freedom And Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching On Divine Power And Human Freedom*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007; Creswell, Dennis R.. *St. Augustine's Dilemma: Grace And Eternal Law In the Major Works of Augustine of Hippo*. New York: Peter Lang, 1997; Farrelly, John. *Predestination, Grace, And Free Will*. London: Burns & Oates, 1964; Garrigou-Lagrance, Réginald, and Bede Rose. *Predestination*. St. Louis, Mo.: and London, B. Herder book co., 1939; Ogliari, Donato. *Gratia Et Certamen: the Relationship Between Grace And Free Will In the Discussion of Augustine With the So-called Semipelagians*. Leuven: University Press, 2003;

Their names cannot be erased, otherwise God's foreknowledge would be deemed imperfect: "Those who are ordained to possess eternal life through divine predestination are written down in the book of life simply, because they are written therein to have eternal life in reality; such are never blotted out from the book of life."²³³ As I have previously mentioned, predestination in the *Commedia* differs greatly from the sixteenth century Calvinistic understanding of predestination. Calvinists believe that God condemns most people to Hell and permits only a select few to enter Heaven. According to Calvin, God never offers those not counted among the elect, grace, moral guidance, or a way out of sin because it is within Divine Will that they remain in sin. In other words, the wicked people's evil actions originate from God's refusal to offer them grace. Contrarily, in the *Commedia*, God has a universal salvific will, and His mercy is beyond all human comprehension:

Ora conosce assai di quel che 'l mondo
 veder non può de la divina grazia,
 ben che sua vista non discerna il fondo.²³⁴

In the *Commedia* God does not cause people to sin because He is the source of charity and goodness.²³⁵ The poet's notion that God never destines people to damnation is influenced by Early Church Doctrine. Augustine argues that predestination does not mean that God positively reprobates people to Hell. Predestination is simply the divine foreknowledge of future events: "Predestination is the foreordaining of those gracious gifts which make certain the salvation of all who are saved".²³⁶ In other words, God

²³³ *STI.24.3*. See also *STI/23.7*: Augustine also argues that only God knows our eternal fate. *De Corr. et Grat.* 13: "The number of the predestined is certain, and can neither be increased nor diminished."

²³⁴ *Paradiso XX*. 70-72

²³⁵ *Paradiso XIX*. 88-90: "Cotanto è giusto quanto a lei consuona:/ nullo creato bene a sé la tira,/ ma essa, radiando, lui cagiona."

²³⁶ *On the Gift of Perseverance* 35

does not force those not counted among the elect to reject grace or to fall into sin.

In a similar vein, predestination in the *Commedia* is a manifestation of God's omnipotence. Divine knowledge of future events does not infringe upon free will or influence the future. In *Paradiso XX*, for example, the Eagle explains the paradoxical nature of predestination. Hope and faith conquer Divine Will because it desires to be conquered, and yet Divine Will is never altered:

Regnum celorum violenza pate
da caldo amore e da viva speranza,
che vince la divina volontate.²³⁷

In *Paradiso XX*, there are numerous examples of the mysterious aspect of predestination described by the Eagle. Hezekiah, for example, was a King of Judah in the seventh century before Christ, and when he became ill and was told by the prophet Isaiah that he would die, Hezekiah asked God to postpone his death on account of his faithfulness to Him:

In those days Hezekiah was sick even to death, and Isaiah the son of Amos the prophet came unto him, and said to him: Thus saith the Lord: Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live. And Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, And said: I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.²³⁸

Hezekiah's faith moves Divine Will and postpones his death for nearly fifteen years, but, as the Eagle explains, Hezekiah's prayer does not change Divine Will because the miracle was always part of Divine plan:

ora conosce che 'l giudicio eterno
non si trasmuta, quando degno preco
fa crastino là giù de l'odierno.²³⁹

²³⁷ *Paradiso XX*. 94-96

²³⁸ Isaiah 38 1-3; According to Carroll: "In short, what Hezekiah now knows in Heaven is the mystery of how prayer harmonizes with and fulfils 'the eternal judgment,' instead of being, as it seems, an alteration of it." Carroll, John. *In Patria (Par.)*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1911. *Paradiso. XX* 49-54:

²³⁹ *Paradiso XX*. 52-54.

According to the Eagle, Hezekiah's prayer and faith was merely the manifestation and the fulfillment of Divine Promise.

The mystery of predestination is further examined in the story of Trajan, a pagan Roman emperor who reigned between 97 and 117 AD.²⁴⁰ A widow seeking justice for her murdered son stops Trajan on his way into battle. Trajan tells the widow he will take care of the matter upon his return, and his successor will hear the case if he should die in battle. The old woman begs him to bring her son's murderers to justice before he leaves for battle because it is his responsibility as Emperor: " "...L'altrui bene/ a te che fia, se 'l tuo metti in oblio?"²⁴¹. Trajan agrees to help the widow. In the *Commedia*, Trajan was once amongst the virtuous pagans in Limbo, but later ascended to the Sphere of Jupiter because of Pope Gregory the Great's prayers. Trajan's sense of justice, mercy, and virtue inspires Gregory to pray for the pagan's salvation and his hope stirs Divine Will and obtains grace on Trajan's behalf. According to the Eagle, God resurrects Trajan, offers him grace, and opens his eyes to the Faith. Trajan converts to Christianity of his own free will, accepts healing grace, dies a second death, and is rewarded with eternal life.²⁴² As I have previously mentioned, no one can be removed or added to the number of God's elect, and so Trajan must have always been predestined for salvation. Gregory's prayers did not change Divine Plan, but were part of Divine Destiny.

According to Aquinas, predestination does not infringe upon free will because the graces that are offered to the elected individual still require the co-operation of free

²⁴⁰ For more on Trajan in the *Commedia* see: Battistini, Andrea. "'Rifeo Troiano' e La Riscrittura Dantesca Della Storia (Paradiso, XX)." *Lettere Italiane* 42.1 (1990): 26-50; Picone, Michelangelo. "La 'Viva Speranza' di Dante e Il problema della salvezza dei pagani virtuosi: una lettura di *Paradiso* 20." *Quaderni d'Italianistica: Official Journal of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies* 10, no. 1-2 (1989): 251-68.

Vickers, Nancy, "Seeing is Believing: Gregory, Trajan, and Dante's Art," *Dante Studies* 101 (1983): 67-85.

²⁴¹ *Purgatorio* X. 88-89.

²⁴² *Paradiso* XX. 100-117

will.²⁴³ In the *Commedia*, predestination does not mean that God *forces* grace upon the elect; the elect are those who God already knows will accept saving grace and will allow that grace to reform them.²⁴⁴ The relationship between grace, free will, and predestination in the *Commedia* is best observed in the episode of Ripheus in *Paradiso XX*.²⁴⁵ In his speech on predestination, the Eagle tells the pilgrim that God's grace extends to those born before the Incarnation:

L'altra, per grazia che da sì profonda
fontana stilla, che mai creatura
non pinse l'occhio infino a la prima onda,
tutto suo amor là giù pose a drittura
per che, di grazia in grazia, Dio li aperse
l'occhio a la nostra redenzion futura;
ond' ei credette in quella, e non sofferse
da indi il puzzo più del paganesmo;
e riprendiene le genti perverse.²⁴⁶

Ripheus was predestined to be amongst God's elect, but his salvation was not automatic. Ripheus's predestination means that God knew that he would accept the grace offered to him. Although God prepared and made possible Ripheus's acceptance of the Faith, in the end it was Ripheus who chose to believe. After Ripheus converted to Christianity, God awarded him the graces necessary for justification, and because of his good works, the three cardinal virtues baptized him long before the sacrament even existed:

Quelle tre donne li fur per battesimo
che tu vedesti da la destra rota,
dinanzi al battezzar più d'un millesmo.²⁴⁷

In another example, the pilgrim of *Inferno I* was offered grace in the form of a journey to

²⁴³ *ST. I. 23.1-7; On Grace and Free Will* 15-18

²⁴⁴ For more on the subject of predestination see: Cogan, Marc. *The Design in the Wax: the Structure of the Divine Comedy*. Notre Dame; University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.

²⁴⁵ For more on Ripheus in the *Commedia* see: Battistini, Andrea. "'Rifeo Troiano' e La Riscrittura Dantesca Della Storia (Paradiso, XX)." *Lettere Italiane* 42.1 (1990): 26-50.

²⁴⁶ *Paradiso XX*. 118-126.

²⁴⁷ *Paradiso XX*. 127-129

the otherworld, but he nearly rejects this grace out of fear. He could have chosen to remain in the *selva oscura*, but Divine love stirred within him the desire to become righteous, and in the moment he accepted saving grace, he was saved. In *Inferno III*, for example, Charon shouts at the pilgrim, commanding him to leave the ferryboat. He tells the pilgrim he does not belong on the boat and upon his death, he will be carried by a *lighter ship*. Charon knows that the pilgrim is among the elect because he has been marked by grace.

E tu che se' costì, anima viva,
 pàrtiti da cotesti che son morti.
 Ma poi che vide ch'io non mi partiva
 disse: "Per altra via, per altri porti
 verrai a piaggia, non qui, per passare:
 più lieve legno convien che ti porti."²⁴⁸

Grace does not instantaneously make the wayfarer virtuous or worthy of the beatific vision because if it had done so, grace would have compromised his free will. In the *Commedia*, the wayfarer accepts gratuitous grace and it slowly heals his wounded nature so that he might attain moral liberty and no longer be tempted by sin.

5.2 Faith, Grace, and Good Works

In the sphere of the fixed stars, Dante must pass an examination on the three Cardinal Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity before he may obtain the Beatific Vision. Peter acts as Dante's examiner on faith and is an appropriate choice for such a role. In the Gospel of Matthew, Peter tried to walk on water, but his doubts cause him to nearly

²⁴⁸ *Inferno III*. 88-93

drown.²⁴⁹ In *Paradiso XXIV* Beatrice reminds Dante of this event to emphasize that with faith one can do the impossible, but without it one will fail.²⁵⁰

It is also important to note that Peter was the first Apostle to recognize that Christ was the Messiah. His faith in Christ set him apart from the other apostles, and Jesus gives him the responsibility of leading his people and establishing the Church.²⁵¹ I believe that Peter's confession of Faith in the Gospel of *Matthew* heavily influenced the poet's notion that grace initiates faith, and is the primary reason why Peter serves as the pilgrim's examiner. In this biblical passage, Jesus tells Peter that his belief does not derive from his natural abilities; rather it was revealed to him by God:

And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.²⁵²

Aquinas, one of Dante's sources on faith and grace, proposes that justification begins with faith, and most importantly, that grace initiates faith. Aquinas believed that God gratuitously grants the grace of vocation regardless of merit and that postlapsarian people cannot of natural ability become believers: "To believe does indeed depend on the will of the believer: but man's will needs to be prepared by God with grace in order that he may be raised to things which are above his nature".²⁵³ In another example, Augustine argues that faith does not initiate grace; rather faith is evidence that a person has been granted grace: "Even faith itself cannot be had without God's mercy, and that it is the gift of

²⁴⁹ *Matthew 14*

²⁵⁰ *Paradiso XXIV. 37-39:* "tenta costui di punti lievi e gravi,/ come ti piace, intorno de la fede,/ per la qual tu su per lo mare andavi."

²⁵¹ *Matthew 13-14:* "And Jesus came into the quarters of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, saying: Whom do men say that the Son of man is? But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art, Christ, the Son of the living God."

²⁵² *Matthew 16: 14-18*

²⁵³ *ST. II/II.6.1*

God."²⁵⁴ Contrarily, the Semi-Pelagians argued that people become believers without the guidance of grace. According to the Semi-Pelagians,²⁵⁵ God withholds saving grace until the individual through natural merits, begins to have faith in the Almighty. Semi-Pelagian doctrine was declared heretical by the Catholic Church in 418 by Pope Sixtus III in his epistle which defended the gratuitous nature of grace and claimed that grace prepared the will to accept Christian Faith²⁵⁶.

The poet rejects Semi-Pelagian theory. He is influenced instead by Thomistic and Augustinian doctrines regarding grace and faith. Throughout the *Commedia* there is evidence that Dante believed that Faith is divinely initiated. Ripheus and Trajan, were pagans and unworthy of salvation, until God's grace opened their eyes to the Faith. In the *Commedia*, the most important discussion on the origins of faith occurs in *Paradiso XXIV*.²⁵⁷ According to the pilgrim, faith guarantees believers that what they hope for will come to pass, and assures them that what they can't see with their eyes or feel with their senses really does exist.²⁵⁸ In *Paradiso XXIV*, the pilgrim argues that grace strengthens people so that they might believe without any physical evidence,²⁵⁹ and proposes that the

²⁵⁴ *On Grace and Free Will*. 19.

²⁵⁵ For more information on Semi-Pelagian theory see: Weaver, Rebecca Harden. *Divine Grace And Human Agency: a Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*. [Macon, Ga.]: Mercer University Press, 1996.

²⁵⁶ Ep. cxciv in PL XXXIII, 874

²⁵⁷ For more information on *Paradiso XXIV*, see: Hollander, Robert, "Paradiso 24.13-21: St. Peter's Companions," Electronic Bulletin of the Dante Society of America (May 2006); Marazzan, Mario. *Il canto XXIV [i.e. ventiquattresimo] del Paradiso / Lectura Dantis Scaligera*. Firenze : F. Le Monnier, 1966; Moevs, Christian, "Miraculous Syllogisms: Clocks, Faith and Reason in Paradiso 10 and 24," *Dante Studies* 117 (1999): 59-84

²⁵⁸ *Paradiso XXIV*. 64-66: "fede è sustanza di cose sperate/ e argomento de le non parventi;/ e questa pare a me sua quiditate." Hebrews 11.1: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for and the evidence of things that appear not".

²⁵⁹ *On Rebuke and Grace*. 60: "God acts upon us by the incentives of our perceptions, to will and to believe, either externally by evangelical exhortations, where even the commands of the law also do something, if they so far admonish a man of his infirmity that he betakes himself to the grace that justifies by believing; or internally, where no man has in his own control what shall enter into his thoughts, although it appertains to his own will to consent or to dissent. Since God, therefore, in such ways acts upon the reasonable soul in order that it may believe in Him (and certainly there is no ability whatever in free will to

Scriptures which were inspired by the Holy Spirit, offered him an argument so convincing that he could not help but believe:

Appresso uscì de la luce profonda
sopra la quale ogne virtù si fonda,
onde ti venne?" E io: "La larga ploia
de lo Spirito Santo, ch'è diffusa
in su le vecchie e 'n su le nuove cuoia,
è silogismo che la m'ha conchiusa
acutamente sì, che 'nverso d'ella
ogne dimostrazion mi pare ottusa."²⁶⁰

Peter asks the pilgrim why he believes that Christ rose from the dead. Dante explains that the very fact the Apostles spread the Gospel throughout the world without performing miracles or offering physical proof of the Resurrection shows that the Scriptures and the faith must be divinely inspired. The pilgrim argues that the Apostles' evangelization and subsequent foundation of the Church was the greatest miracle in history:

"Se 'l mondo si rivolse al cristianesimo,"
diss' io, "sanza miracoli, quest' uno
è tal, che li altri non sono il centesimo."²⁶¹

According to the pilgrim, Christian religion must be divinely inspired because it requires people to believe in supernatural miracles which they have not witnessed with their own eyes.

In the *Commedia*, simple belief in Christ's Resurrection does not automatically guarantee salvation.²⁶² The Eagle in *Paradiso XIX*, for example, says that there are many Christians who will be denied entrance into Heaven:

believe, unless there be persuasion or summons towards some one in whom to believe), it surely follows that it is God who both works in man the willing to believe, and in all things prevents us with His mercy.

²⁶⁰ *Paradiso XXIV*. 88-96

²⁶¹ *Paradiso XXIV*. 106-108

²⁶² *Paradiso XXIV*. 43-45

Ma vedi: molti gridan 'Cristo, Cristo!'
che saranno in giudicio assai men *prope*
a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo.²⁶³

In the *Commedia*, faith without good works does not yield salvation. The pilgrim in *Paradiso XXV* tells James that Hope, one of the Cardinal Virtues necessary for salvation, inspires righteous people to expect future glory based on the merits they have won and on the grace they have received:

"Spene," diss' io, "è uno attender certo
de la gloria futura, il qual produce
grazia divina e precedente merto."²⁶⁴

It is important to note, that the pilgrim is not saying that salvation can be won by natural merit. Postlapsarian people's natures are so wounded from the Fall that they could never earn their justification; rather the pilgrim argues that the righteous would not be able to merit salvation through good works if it were not for the divine gratuitous nature of grace which strengthens the will, freeing it from moral slavery. In the *Commedia*, divine grace initializes faith within believers, rewards the faithful with the graces necessary for the completion of good works, and gives them the grace of perseverance so that they can resist sin and become worthy of eternal glory.

The poet's notion that faith, grace, and good works lead to salvation was influenced by Augustine, whose ideas on merit serve as the foundation of Modern Catholic Doctrine. Augustine argued that faith without good works results in damnation and those good deeds are not natural to postlapsarian people, but are made possible through grace.²⁶⁵ Augustine's notion that salvation is both a reward for leading a good life and a free gift of

²⁶³ *Paradiso XIX*. 106-108

²⁶⁴ *Paradiso XXV*. 66-69

²⁶⁵ *On Grace and Free Will* 18-19

grace is best observed in the *Purgatorio*. The pilgrims, for example, possess both grace and faith, but still must merit their salvation by ridding themselves of their sinful dispositions. They toil through the seven terraces, cleansing themselves of vice until they undergo a spiritual transformation and become morally righteous.

6.1 Conclusion: Justification in the *Commedia*

In the *Commedia* salvation without grace is impossible. Postlapsarian people have free will, but have lost their moral liberty. In *Inferno I* and *II* the wayfarer is unable to reach the *colle luminoso* precisely because he is relying entirely on his moral strength. His journey towards salvation begins at the moment he admits his weaknesses and accepts divine guidance. Grace marks him for salvation and in *Inferno III*, Charon tells the pilgrim he does not belong on the ferryboat to Hell, and that he will one day be carried by a *lighter ship*.²⁶⁶ Grace is so central to Dante's conception of the redemption process, that even faith is impossible without it. Grace is an instrument of divine mercy, and it opens people's eyes to the Truth, even those born before the advent of Christ.

In the *Commedia*, God initiates salvation through His grace and mercy. However important grace is to the redemptive process, it does not instantaneously justify sinners. Justification is a spiritual journey which requires both the full cooperation of free will and the granting of five different states of grace: the grace of vocation, actual grace, sanctifying or habitual grace, the grace of perseverance, and finally the grace of eternal life.

²⁶⁶ *Inferno III*. 88-93

In the *Commedia*, justification always begins with faith. As I have previously mentioned, postlapsarian people's natures are so corrupted by the Fall that they need the grace of vocation in order to have Faith. In *Paradiso XIX* and *XX*, for example, Ripheus and Trajan would never have converted to Christianity if it were not for grace. In another example, the pilgrim tells Peter in *Paradiso XXIV* that his faith was divinely inspired. In the *Commedia*, Faith alone does not justify. In addition to the grace of vocation, postlapsarian people also need *actual grace* or, as Aquinas calls it, *operating grace*. Actual grace strengthens the will so that it might perform virtuous deeds:

Now in both these ways grace fittingly divided into operating and cooperating. For the operation of an effect is not attributed to the thing moved but to the mover. Hence in that effect in which our mind is moved and does not move, but in which God is the sole mover, the operation is attributed to God, and it is with reference to this that we speak of "operating grace."²⁶⁷

Aquinas proposes that *operating grace* may lead to *cooperating grace*. According to Aquinas, people in a state of *sanctifying* or *cooperating grace* undergo a spiritual transformation. They detest sin because it distances them from God, and they enjoy performing acts of virtue. Aquinas argues that the will in a state of *habitual grace* is not only moved by God to perform acts of virtue, but is itself drawn to doing good: "But in that effect in which our mind both moves and is moved, the operation is not only attributed to God, but also to the soul; and it is with reference to this that we speak of *cooperating grace*".²⁶⁸ In this state of sanctifying grace, people perform meritorious acts which lead to their salvation, but it is important to note that those good works would be impossible if it were not for the healing nature of grace.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ *ST I/II.111.2*

²⁶⁸ *ST I/II.111.2*

²⁶⁹ *ST I/II.111.2*

In the *Commedia*, the justifying effects of actual and sanctifying grace are best observed in the *Purgatorio*. The pilgrims who reach the shores of Mount Purgatory are not yet worthy to witness the beatific vision because they are not yet morally perfect: Actual and sanctifying grace guide the pilgrims through the seven terraces and help them redirect their wills towards righteousness. Actual grace moves them to undergo punishment and work towards the acquisition of virtue while sanctifying grace provokes a spiritual transformation. Sanctifying grace helps the pilgrims accord their will to the divine. The pilgrims eagerly do their penance not only because God wills it, but also because they will it: On the fourth terrace of the *Purgatorio*, for example, the slothful joyously undergo their punishment because they truly desire righteousness. They praise God and ask that their zeal for the good might move Him to grant them the grace necessary to complete their purification:

Ratto, ratto, che 'l tempo non si perda
per poco amor, gridavan li altri appresso,
che studio di ben far grazia rinverda.²⁷⁰

A great sense of urgency permeates the entire canto. The penitent tell the pilgrim that they do not want to waste even a second of their time, and although they wish to help Dante and Virgil in their journey, they cannot. The desire for righteousness moves them to such a degree that they refuse to pause even for a moment to speak with Virgil and the pilgrim.²⁷¹ In another example, the gluttonous of the sixth terrace, hardly acknowledge Virgil and the pilgrim's presence. Undistracted, they sing, walk and meditate.²⁷² The pilgrims undergo complete spiritual transformation on the seventh terrace of the

²⁷⁰*Purgatorio XVIII*. 103-105

²⁷¹*Purgatorio XVIII*. 115-117: "Noi siam di voglia a muoverci sì pieni,/ che restar non potem; però perdona,/ se villania nostra giustizia tieni."

²⁷² *Purgatorio XXIII*. 16-18: "Sì come i peregrin pensosi fanno/ giugnendo per cammin gente non nota/ che si volgono ad essa e non restanno"

Purgatorio when they pass through the purifying flames of Purgatory. Faith, Hope, and Love move the penitent to enter the fire and they emerge from the flames with a *perfect will*.²⁷³ After climbing the seven terraces, the pilgrim becomes morally righteous and is consequently granted the grace of the beatific vision.

In the next chapter I will examine the role of punishment in the *Commedia*, and in particular, I will analyze in detail the episode in *Inferno XXVII* in which Bertran de Born argues that his punishment is just because he has reaped exactly what he has sown. I propose that the contrapasso is more complex than what Bertran expresses in his speech and that the contrapasso is not a synonymous with the *lex talionis*. The damned do not receive a punishment in direct proportion to their sins, rather they *pay double* for their wickedness. I will argue that through the poet device of the contrapasso, Dante illustrates the perfection of Divine Justice. Infernal punishment *rewards* the damned with the vice they so much loved during their lifetimes. In the *Inferno* the damned eternally re-enact the sins which damned them: During their lifetimes, the sullen of the fifth circle, for example, hid their anger, allowing it to fester and corrupt them, and so in death they re-enact their hidden wrath by lying below the surface of the marsh.²⁷⁴ I will also discuss the relationship between punishment, grace, and redemption in the *Purgatorio*. In the *Inferno*, punishment re-enforces sinful behavior, but in the *Purgatorio* punishment instructs and directs the pilgrims, leading them to the truth. In the end, I will conclude that the presence of grace in the *Purgatorio* makes the penitents' punishment redemptive while the absence of grace in the *Inferno* makes the torment of the damned merely punitive.

²⁷³ *Purgatorio XXVI*. 140: "libero e dritto e sano è tuo arbitro".

²⁷⁴ *Inferno VII-IX*

"Free Will and Punishment in the *Commedia*: A study of the Contrapasso in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*"

1.1 Introduction

In *Inferno XXVIII*, Bertran de Born, holding his severed head like a lantern, utters the famous phrase in which he exclaims that his punishment of decapitation is just because it follows the laws of the contrapasso:

Perch'io partì così giunte persone
partito porto il mio cerebro, lasso!
dal suo principio ch'è in questo troncone
Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso.²⁷⁵

Just as he sowed discord amongst families, he now must suffer discord within his own body. The term *contrapasso* comes from the word *contrapassum*, Aquinas' Latin translation of Aristotle's Greek term meaning "in retribution".²⁷⁶ Scholars have proposed that the law of contrapasso, mentioned in *Inferno XXVII*, rules the system of divine retribution in the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.²⁷⁷ Guido da Pisa believed that the

²⁷⁵*Inferno XXVIII*. 139-142

²⁷⁶*Nicomachean Ethics* V, 5, 1132b and ST. II/II.61.4.

²⁷⁷For a discussion on the contrapasso and divine justice in the *Commedia* see Abrams, Richard. "Against the Contrapasso: Dante's Heretics, Schismatics and Others." *Italian Quarterly* 27.105 (Summer 1986): 5-19; Armour, Peter, "Dante's contrapasso: Contexts and Texts," *Italian Studies* 55 (2000): 1-20; Casagrande, Gino. "Per la dannosa colpa de la gola': Note sul contrapasso di 'Inferno' VI." *Studi Danteschi* 62 (1990): 39-53; Cassell, Anthony K. *Dante's Fearful Art of Justice*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1984; Gilbert, A. H. "Dante's Conception of Justice." *Duke Divinity School Review* (1925): 231-231; Gilbert, Allan H. *Dante's Conception of Justice*. New York: AMS Press, 1971; Gross, Kenneth. "Infernal Metamorphoses: An interpretation of Dante's Counterpass." *MLN* 100 (1985): 42-69; Hollander, Robert and Jean. *Inferno* translated by Robert and Jean Hollander. Doubleday Publishers, New York, 2000. *Inferno* 28.142; Leuker, Tobias, "L'acerbità di Vanni Fucci. Sul contrapasso del Caco dantesco," *Letteratura italiana antica* 4(2003): 401-5; Lucchesi, Valerio, "Giustizia divina e linguaggio umano. Metafore e polisemie del contrapasso dantesco," *Studi Danteschi* 63 (1991): 53-126; Mason, H. A. "A Journey through Hell, Dante's *Inferno*: The Magnificent contrapasso-Canto XIX." *The Cambridge Quarterly* 22.1 (1993): 1-24; Marchesi, Simone, "The Knot of Language: 'Sermocinatio' and 'Contrapasso' for the Rhetoricians in Dante's *Inferno*,"

contrapasso in the *Commedia* was synonymous with the *lex talionis* or the biblical concept of “taking an eye for an eye” in which the sinner suffers an exact and reciprocal punishment in retaliation for his crimes.²⁷⁸ In this chapter I will argue that Dante’s contrapasso involves more than simple reciprocity. In the *Inferno* the damned *pay double* for their sins: They are tormented not only for their misdeeds, but also for the guilt of sin and their wicked natures.

Suffering serves different purposes in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*.²⁷⁹ Infernal punishment satisfies divine justice by tormenting the damned and is in no way restorative because it immerses the sinner deeper into vice. As a consequence of their torment, the damned feel pain, rebel against their punishment, and blaspheme God. The poet illustrates the perversity of the damned by making use of the device of the contrapasso and gives them what they chose in life through their disobedience to divine law. The damned feel a wicked and perverse pleasure from infernal punishment because it allows them to sink further into vice. Their delight quickly turns to anguish as they realize that they can never find true fulfillment in sin. Their perverse natures prevent them from turning away from sin or from asking God for forgiveness. Although they will never

Romance Languages Annual 11 (1997): 254-59; Norton, Glyn P. "'Contrapasso' and Archetypal Metamorphoses in the Seventh Bolgia of Dante's *Inferno*." Symposium 25 (1971): 162-170; Sapegno, Natalino. La Divina Commedia a cura di Natalino Sapegno. Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1968. *Inferno* 28.142; Singleton, Charles. The Divine Comedy, Translated with a Commentary. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1970-75 *Inferno* 28.142; Trovato, Mario. "Il contrapasso nell'ottava bolgia." Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society 94 (1976): 47-60; Vazzana, Steno. Contrapasso nella Divina Commedia. Rome, Italy: Ciranna, 1959; Vazzana, Steno. "Il Commentarium di Pietro di Dante e il contrapasso." L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca 9.1 (1968): 82-92.

²⁷⁸ Guido da Pisa. Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's *Inferno*. Edited with Notes and an Introduction by Vincenzo Cioffari. Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1974. For the biblical reference on *lex talionis* see: Exod. 21:24; Deut. 29:21; Lev. 24:20; Matt. 5:38, 7:2

²⁷⁹ Aquinas' doctrine on punishment in the afterlife undoubtedly influenced Dante. Aquinas proposes that Infernal punishment is eternal and serves only to inflict pain upon the damned and to satisfy divine justice while purgatorial punishment serves to satisfy divine justice and to heal the soul of its wickedness. See *ST II/II.108.4*

attain true happiness from wallowing in wickedness, they obstinately prefer vice to virtue.

Punishment on each of the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio* reforms the pilgrims, making them worthy of the beatific vision.²⁸⁰ In the *Purgatorio*, virtue is attained only through great struggle and through the use of contemplation and meditation, which is an idea undoubtedly influenced by Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* and Augustine's *City of God*. In the *Purgatorio*, the penitent are cleansed of vice and liberated from the bondage to sin by repeating acts of virtue, meditating on scripture and examples of virtue, and suffering. The purgatorial pilgrims welcome their torment not for punishment's sake, but to rid themselves from their sinful dispositions, to free themselves from vice, and, most importantly, to please God. Postlapsarian people desire righteousness, but because of moral slavery resulting from the Fall, they will always be tempted to choose vice. Punishment in the *Purgatorio* restores the gift of original justice, and reforms the will so that it might choose according to reason and not to passion.

Aristotle's ideas on the acquisition of virtue influenced the Dantean conception of divine justification in the *Commedia*. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that virtuous people delight in performing noble deeds and do not engage in wicked behavior because they find acts of vice truly abhorrent.²⁸¹ In a similar vein, purgatorial punishment aids the pilgrims in becoming righteous before the eyes of God by teaching the pilgrims to love vice and to hate sin because it is offensive to God.

²⁸⁰For more about the redemptive aspect of suffering in the *Purgatorio* see: Gilbert, Allan. Dante's Conception of justice. NY: AMS Press, 1971 p. 112; Gragnolati, Manuele. Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005

²⁸¹*Nicomachean Ethics* I. 8 17-21

2.1 Contrapasso and *Lex Talionis*

The term contrapasso is mentioned only once in the *Commedia* and by Bertran De Born,²⁸² a poet and schismatic in the ninth bolgia of the *Inferno*. It is important to note that Bertran De Born is the only poet present in Malebolge, and that his damnation is key to understanding one of the major themes of the *Commedia* which is that the purpose of poetry is to foster within its readers the desire for virtue. All poetry must rise above temporal concerns and pleasures, and inspire individuals to seek spiritual fulfillment. Dante, for example, saves three other Provençal poets, Arnaut Daniel, Giraut de Borneil, and Folco of Marseille precisely because their poetry supported these ideals. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* Dante praises Giraut de Borneil and Folco of Marseille as singers of virtue and recognizes Daniel for his poetic treatment of love.²⁸³ Folco of Marseille was a twelfth century poet who became a Cistercian monk and later the Bishop of Toulouse. In

²⁸²For more information on Bertran de Born see: *Convivio* 4.11; Asperti, Stefano. "L'eredità lirica di Bertran de Born." *Cultura Neolatina* 64.3-4 (2004): 475-525; Barolini, Teodolinda. "Bertran de Born and Sordello: The Poetry of Politics in Dante's Comedy." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 94.3 (May 1979): 395-405; Beltrami, Pietro G. "Bertran de Born il giovane e suo padre (appunti sulla maniera di Bertran de Born)." *Studi Testuali* 5 (1998): 25-35; Beltrami, Pietro G. "Bertran de Born poeta galante: La canzone della dompna soiseubuda." *Ensi firent li ancessor*. 101-117. Alessandria, Italy: Orso, 1996; Chiarini, Giorgio. "Bertran de Born nel De Vulgari Eloquentia." *Cultura Neolatina* 47 (1987): 411-420; Diggelmann, Lindsay. "Exile and the Poetic Standpoint of the Troubadour Bertran de Born." *Parergon: Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 22.1 (Jan. 2005): 1-16; Paden, William D., Jr. "Bertran de Born in Italy." *Italian Literature, Roots and Branches: Essays in Honor of Thomas Goddard Bergin*. 39-66. New Haven: Yale UP, 1976; Parker, Mark. "Inferno XXVIII." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6.supp. (Spring 1990): 363-372; Peterson, Thomas. "Canto XXVIII: Scandal and Schism." *Inferno*. 368-377. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1998; Picone, Michelangelo. "I trovatori di Dante: Bertran de Born." *Studi e Problemi di Critica Testuale* 19 (1979): 71-94; Picone, Michelangelo. "La poesia romanza della Salus: Bertran de Born nella Vita Nuova." *Forum Italicum* 15.1 (Spring 1981): 3-10; Shanzer, Danuta R. "The Punishment of Bertrand de Born." *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 8 (1989): 95-97; Shapiro, Marianne. "The Fictionalization of Bertran de Born (Inf. XXVIII)." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 92 (1974): 107-116.

²⁸³*De vulgari eloquentia* II, ii, 9: "Circa que sola, si bene recolimus, illustres viros invenimus vulgariter poetasse; scilicet Bertramum de Bornio, arma; Arnaldum Danielem, amorem; Gerardum de Bornello, rectitudinem; Cinum Pistoriensem, amorem; amicum eius, rectitudinem.". See also *De vulgari eloquentia* II, ii, 6

the Heaven of Venus, Folco tells the pilgrim that he used to burn with an intense amorous desire, but now experiences a blessed joy in Heaven free of the guilt of any past transgressions.²⁸⁴ Arnault Daniel lived between 1180-1210, was the author of eighteen lyrical poems, mostly amatory, and is among the lustful of the seventh terrace. In *Purgatorio XXVI*, Guido Guinizelli, an important Italian poet, tells the pilgrim that Arnault Daniel's works are the most beautiful of the *langue d'oc* or the *langue d'oïl*. He claims that Daniel was an even greater writer than Giraut de Borneil, one of the most famous Provençal poets of his time:

"O frate," disse, "questi ch'io ti cerno
col dito," e additò un spirto innanzi,
"fu miglior fabbro del parlar materno.
Versi d'amore e prose di romanzi
soverchiò tutti; e lascia dir li stolti
che quel di Lemosì credon ch'avanzi."²⁸⁵

In the *Convivio*,²⁸⁶ Dante recognized Bertran De Born for his generosity and for his poetry of arms, but his favorable opinion of Bertran changed when he began writing the *Commedia*. In *Inferno XXVIII* Dante condemns Bertran to Hell because he used his poetry to stir up strife between King Henry II of England and his son, Young King Henry. Young King Henry, crowned King during his father's reign, demanded that his father give him more power and territory. King Henry refused and war endured for ten years. Whenever he wanted to end the power struggle against his father, Bertran, a troubadour poet and staunch supporter of the rebellion, encouraged Young King Henry by singing him one of his songs. According to Michelangelo Picone and Marianne

²⁸⁴ *Paradiso IX*. 67-142

²⁸⁵ *Purgatorio XXVI*. 115-120

²⁸⁶ *Convivio IX.XI*. 14

Shapiro,²⁸⁷ Dante altered his opinion of Bertran when he began writing the *Commedia* because Bertran's poetry glorified temporal achievements and insisted that the only place people could prove their worth was on the battlefield. Shapiro believes that Dante condemns Bertran in the *Commedia* because Bertran used his poetry to foster strife, war, and division, and idealized political unrest:

Bertran may thus be understood as a force bearing a casual relationship to the fragmentation of an ideal body politic. Whether or not the historical Bertran actually succeeded in stimulating the kings to strife matters less than the fact that he transformed strife into a convincing imaginative vision.²⁸⁸

In the *Inferno*, Bertran holds his severed head in his hands like a lantern and explains to Virgil and Dante that, because he caused an unnatural division between father and son, he should suffer the same unnatural division within his own body. Contrary to what Bertran suggests, in the *Commedia* God does not punish the damned according to the *lex Talionis*,²⁸⁹ the Old Testament's system of justice which demands an exact and reciprocal retribution for sin; instead the damned of the *Inferno* pay a penalty in proportion to their sins. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* influenced Dante's conception of the contrapasso and his beliefs on justice and punishment.²⁹⁰ In the fifth book of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle proposes that justice does not necessarily demand reciprocity, and in many cases a direct correspondence between sin and punishment is both unjust and insufficient.

²⁸⁷ Picone, Michelangelo, "I trovatori di Dante: Bertran de Born," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 19 (1979): 79-94; Picone, Michelangelo, "Giraut de Bornelh nella prospettiva di Dante," *Vox romanica* 39 (1980): 22-43; Picone, Michelangelo, "La poesia romanza della Salus: Bertran de Born nella Vita Nuova," *Forum Italicum* 15 (1981): 3-10; Shapiro, Marianne, "The Fictionalization of Bertran de Born (Inf. XXVIII)," *Dante Studies* 92 (1974): 107-16.

²⁸⁸ "The Fictionalization of Bertran de Born (Inf. XXVIII)," 112

²⁸⁹ Deu 19:21

²⁹⁰ For more information on Aristotelian influence on Dante see: Bigongiari, Dino, Anne Paolucci, and Henry (supplementary essays) Paolucci. *Backgrounds of The Divine Comedy*. Dover, DE: Griffon, for Bagehot Council, 2005; Corti, Maria. "La filosofia aristotelica e Dante." *Lecture Classensi* 13 (1984): 111-123. Hatcher, Anna, and Mark Musa. "Aristotle's matta bestialitade in Dante's Inferno." *Italica* 47.4 (Winter 1970): 366-372; Minio-Paluello, Lorenzo. "Dante's Reading of Aristotle." *The World of Dante: Essays on Dante and His Times*. 61-80. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.

The philosopher proposes that if an official and a citizen both commit the same crime, the citizen must be punished more severely than the official. If an official wounds a citizen it is unjust for the official to be wounded in return. Conversely, if a citizen wounds an official, the citizen must be wounded in return, and suffer an additional punishment.²⁹¹ Aristotle accounts for this difference in punishment by proposing that a citizen who strikes an official commits not only a crime against an individual, but also against the moral and ethical codes of society.

Aquinas' ideas on justice also influenced Dante's conception of the *contrapasso*.²⁹² Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* proposes that justice does not always include reciprocity. Justice requires the sinner suffer an additional punishment so the guilt of the sin can be repaid. For example, justice demands that a thief return the stolen goods to the owner and pay an additional penalty.²⁹³ The thief, according to Aquinas, must *pay double* for his crime: once to the owner and once to the society he wronged.

In the book of Exodus, justice goes beyond the *lex talionis* and is satisfied only when the sinner *pays double* for his wickedness:

For all manner of trespass, [whether it be] for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, [or] for any manner of lost thing, which [another] challengeth to be his, the cause

²⁹¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.5.25-30

²⁹² For more information regarding the influence of Augustine, Aquinas and early church theologians on the *Commedia*, see: Bigongiari, Dino, Anne Paolucci, and Henry (supplementary essays) Paolucci. *Backgrounds of The Divine Comedy* Dover, DE: Griffon, for Bagehot Council, 2005; Bigongiari, Dino, Henry Paolucci, and Anne Paolucci. *Essays on Dante and Medieval Culture: Critical Studies of the Thought and Texts of Dante, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Marsilius of Padua, and Other Medieval Subjects*. Florence, Italy: Olschki, 2000; De Smet, Richard. "The Medieval Inheritance of Dante." *Journal of the Department of English* 22.1-2 (1986-1987 1986): 37-49; Hawkins, Peter S. "Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the Divine Comedy." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*. 106.3 (May 1991): 471-482; Panvini, Bruno. "La concezione tomistica della grazia nella Divina Commedia." *Lecture Classensi* 17 (1988): 69-85; Stump, Eleonore. "Dante's Hell, Aquinas' Moral Theory, and the Love of God." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16.2 (June 1986): 181-198; Tateo, Francesco. "Percorsi agostiniani in Dante." *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 76 (2001): 43-56; Took, John. "Dante, Augustine, and the Drama of Salvation." *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia*. 73-92. Dublin: Irish Acad., 1993; Wickstead, Philip H. *Dante and Aquinas*. New York: Haskell House, 1971. 293st II/II. 61.4

of both parties shall come before the judges; [and] whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor.²⁹⁴

In the *Inferno*, the damned also *pay double* for their sins: Continuing on in their journey through Hell, the pilgrim and Virgil meet Friar Alberigo, a member of the family of the Manfredi, amongst the traitors of the ninth circle.²⁹⁵ Alberigo hired assassins to murder his brother and nephew during a family dinner, and gave the signal for the assassins to burst into the room and commit the murder during the fruit course. He tells Dante and Virgil that he has been given his own "fruit course", and he now reaps in dates what he had sown in figs:

Rispuose adunque: 'I son frate Alberigo;
i' son quel de la frutta del mal orto,
che qui riprendo dattero per figo.²⁹⁶

In other words, Alberigo believes that God is punishing him for more than his sin of treachery. In the *Inferno* the damned suffer not only for their wicked misdeeds, but also for the sin's effect on society, politics, family, and human nature.²⁹⁷ Sinners must, as the laws of Exodus suggest, *pay double* for their sins, and so Alberigo must be punished not

²⁹⁴Exodus 22:9

²⁹⁵For more information on Friar Alberigo see: Chiavacci, Anna M. "Il canto disumano (Inferno XXXII)." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca*. 25.1 (Jan. 1984): 23-46; Lonergan, C. Salvadori. "The Context of Inferno XXXIII: Bocca, Ugolino, Fra Alberigo." *Dante Commentaries: Eight Studies of the Divine Comedy*. 63-84. Dublin; Totowa, NJ: Irish Academic; Rowman & Littlefield, 1977; Pasquini, Emilio. "Lettura di Inferno XXXII." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca*. 40.13 (Jan. 1999): 29-37; Scaglione, Aldo. "Inferno XIII." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6.supp. (Spring 1990): 163-172; Triolo, Alfredo A. "Inferno XXXII: Fra Alberigo in Context." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca*. 11.2 (1970): 39-71; Vazzana, Steno. "Il 'disdegnoso gusto' di Pier de le Vigne." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 39.11 (Jan. 1998): 91-94; Wilson, William M. "Inferno XXXII." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6.supp. (Spring 1990): 412-418.

²⁹⁶*Inferno XXXII.I* 118-120

²⁹⁷For a further discussion on contrapasso in Aquinas and Aristotle, see: Gilbert, Allan. *Dante's Conception of Justice*. Ams Press, Inc: New York, 1965. Pp 1-32.

only for his sin of treachery, but also for his violation of societal norms and, more importantly, for his corrupted nature.

If the entire system of the *contrapasso* in the *Commedia* were based on a simple application of the *lex talionis*, as Bertran suggests, it would be difficult to explain why the poet places those who have committed seemingly identical sins in different circles of Hell. Dante is the unquestionable judge of the *Commedia*, and his conception of divine judgment is more complex than the *lex talionis*. Cato, for example, is not alongside the other suicides in the seventh circle of the *Inferno* because he did not end his life out of a perverse need to escape the tribulations of life like the suicides of the *Inferno*. Pier della Vigna, the chancellor to Federico II, arrested under false accusations of betrayal, took his own life because he felt victimized by injustice.²⁹⁸ Vanity and pride led Pier della Vigna to his demise while a noble desire to escape tyranny and to save his people led Cato to his self-sacrifice. Similarly, Cleopatra and Dido both committed suicide, but they are among the lustful of the second circle because carnal desire led them to their demise.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ For more information on Pier della Vigna see: Biow, Douglas. "Pier della Vigna, Dido, and the Discourse of Virgilian Tragedy in the *Commedia*." *Stanford Italian Review* 11.1-2 (1992): 155-170; Cassell, Anthony K. "Pier della Vigna's Metamorphosis: Iconography and History." *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in Honor of Charles S. Singleton*. 31-76. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983; Glenn, Diana. "The Envious Eye: Echoes of *Inferno* XIII in *Purgatorio* XIII (the Figures of Pier della Vigna and Sapia)." *Flinders Dante Conferences 2002 & 2004*. 65-76. Adelaide, Australia: Lythrum, 2005; Paratore, Ettore. "Analisi retorica del canto di Pier della Vigna." *Miscellanea di studi danteschi*. 59-92. Genoa: Lib. ed. Mario Bozzi, 1966; Paratore, Ettore. "Pier della Vigna nel canto XIII dell'*Inferno*." *Atti del Convegno di studi su Dante e la Magna Curia (Palermo, Catania, Messina, 7-11 novembre 1965)*. 250-263. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, 1967; Stephany, William A. "Pier della Vigna's Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: The 'Eulogy' of Frederick II and *Inferno* 13." *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought, and Religion* 38 (1982): 193-212.

²⁹⁹ For more on Dante's placement of sinners in the *Inferno* see: Busnelli, Giovanni. *L'Etica Nicomachea e l'ordinamento morale dell'*Inferno* di Dante* 1907 Bologna: Zanichelli, 1907. See in particular Pp 149-150. For more information on Dido and Cleopatra in the *Commedia* see: Brownlee, Kevin. "Dante, Beatrice, and the Two Departures from Dido." *MLN* 108.1 (Jan. 1993): 1-14; Hawkins, Peter S. "Dido, Beatrice, and the Signs of Ancient Love." *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Commedia*. 113-130. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991.

2.2 Contrapasso in the *Inferno*: Unification to the Soul's Deepest Desires

On Hell's door is written that God did not create Hell for the sake of cruelty, but to satisfy justice and as a manifestation of His love:

Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;
fecemi la divina podestate,
la somma sapienza e 'l primo amore.³⁰⁰

God's love and justice moves him to reward or punish souls by uniting them to that which they most desire. Those that love God above all lesser good are joined to Him in the *Paradiso* through the beatific vision, while those that love temporal good more than God are united in the *Inferno* to the vice they seek.³⁰¹ Although punishment in the *Inferno* causes the damned so much pain that they scream, cry and beg for mercy, the wicked long for their punishment³⁰²:

e pronti sono a trapassar lo rio,
chè la divina giustizia li sprona,
sì che la tema si volve in disio.³⁰³

Their corrupt nature, in which desire is subject neither to reason nor to God, leads them to seek pleasure in vice, and in Hell they both yearn for and are repulsed by the punishment that unites them to their vice. In *Inferno III* demons do not force the lost souls onto the

³⁰⁰ *Inferno III*. 4-6

³⁰¹ Cogan observes that divine justice unites the soul to that which it desired most in life: "There is not one judgment for the wicked and one for the blessed. Rather, there is one single principle operating in both eternal realms. People choose the aims of their actions, and the delights these propose, freely. If the final judgment is precisely that one possess those delights eternally, what judgment could be more freely sought, or more just?" "Delight, Punishment and the Justice of God in the Divina Commedia". 44.

³⁰² Eleonore Stump argues that God punishes the damned because He loves them: Stump, Eleonore. "Dante's Hell, Aquinas' Moral Theory and the Love of God". *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 (1986): 181-198; Marc Cogan argues that the damned delight in their punishment: "The sinful take pleasure-find delight- in sinful objects and activities. That is what it means to be sinful, and that is what has damned those we encounter in Hell." Cogan, Marc. "Delight, Punishment, and Justice of God in the Divine Comedy." 40.

³⁰³ *Inferno III*. 124-126

ferry that carries them to the place of despair; *the wicked seed of Adam*³⁰⁴ willingly fling themselves from the infernal river's shore at Charon's signal. The poet of the *Commedia* compares the damned at the shores of the Acheron to falcons returning when summoned by their master. In Medieval art a tamed falcon symbolized the good Christian who overcomes sin and vice, but in this canto Dante reverses the symbol of the tamed falcon and uses the image to evoke moral slavery.³⁰⁵ They hastily return to their master when summoned, and in their eagerness the poet brings to light the perversity of sin and the necessity of grace to heal postlapsarian people's wounded natures. All suffer from moral slavery resulting from original sin, but divine grace heals corrupted postlapsarian nature so that it may be made worthy of salvation.³⁰⁶ The wicked rejected this grace during their lifetimes, dooming them to eternal moral slavery because, as Augustine argues, free will unguided by grace is merely the freedom to sin.³⁰⁷ Without justifying grace the lost will forever continue their search for fulfillment in temporal good, but they will find only torment. At the end of days, the soul and the body will re-unite and receive their final judgment. In *Inferno VI* Virgil tells the pilgrim that after the final judgment the damned will reach a wicked perfection.³⁰⁸ Their pleasure will increase as they are more perfectly united to their vices, but they will feel immense torment because the pleasure they attain

³⁰⁴ *Inferno III*. 115-116

³⁰⁵ See Flores, Nona. *Animals in the Middle Ages: a book of essays*. New York: Garland Publishers, 1996; Hicks, Carola. *Animals in Early Medieval Art*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993.

³⁰⁶ *ST I/II*. 109. viii: "But in the State of corrupt nature man needs grace to heal his nature in order that he may entirely abstain from sin".

³⁰⁷ Augustine "On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin" and "On Grace and Free Will".

³⁰⁸ *Inferno VI*. 106-111: "Ed essi a me me: 'Ritorna a tua scienza,/ che vuol, quanto, la cosa è più perfetta,/ più senta il bene, e così la doglienza./ Tutto che questa gente maladetta/ in vera perfezione già mai non vada,/ di là più che di qua essere aspetta' ". For a more in depth study on the resurrection of body and the Last Judgment in early Christian Theology see: *ST Q.86 Supplement*; Bynum, Caroline Walker. *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 200-1336. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. For a study on the influence of the Christian idea of the Last Judgment and the Resurrection on the *Commedia* see: Jacoff, Rachel. "Our Bodies, Our Selves: The Body in the *Commedia*." *Sparks and Seeds: Medieval Literature and its Afterlife: Essays in Honor of John Freccero*. 2000: 119-137.

from this unification is merely a perversion of the true happiness of the blessed of the *Paradiso*.

All infernal punishment in the *Commedia* allows the lost to re-enact the sins for which they were damned. The sullen of the fifth circle suffer a punishment analogous to their vice; in life they hid their anger, allowing it to fester and corrupt them, and so in death they re-enact their hidden wrath by lying below the surface of the marsh.³⁰⁹ The fortunetellers of the eighth circle, with their heads turned backwards, suffer a punishment in antithesis to their misdeeds; in life they looked into the future and in death they can only look towards the past.³¹⁰ Fortunetellers, having pursued forbidden foreknowledge, continue to view time unnaturally.³¹¹

The empty pleasure that the damned obtained from sin fades to misery because they realize in Hell that what they thought would bring them true happiness is the cause of their eternal sorrow. They want to end their torment, and yet they cling to the sins that condemned them. The wrathful and the sullen, for example, scratch, claw and tear at each other in a physical manifestation of the folly of unrighteous anger. Devils do not force the wrathful to torment each other. The wrathful participate in their own punishment because they have given themselves up to vice and cannot help but wallow in sin.

The misers and spendthrifts of the fourth circle repeat with perverse pleasure the infernal battle that is their punishment. Divided into two groups, they roll giant weights

³⁰⁹ *Inferno. VII-IX*

³¹⁰ *Inferno. XX*

³¹¹ For more on the contrapasso in the circle of fortune tellers and the wrathful see: Costa, Gustavo. "Inferno, VII." *Esperienze Letterarie: Rivista Trimestrale di Critica e Cultura* 29.2 (Apr. 2004): 3-29; Looney, Dennis. "Inferno VII." *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 6.supp. (Spring 1990): 82-92; Vickrey, John F. "Inferno VII: Deathstyles of the Rich and Famous." *Neophilologus* 79.4 (Oct. 1995): 599-610; Vazzana, Steno. *Il contrapasso nella Divina Commedia*. 52-58 and 61-65.

in opposite directions around the Circle until they meet in the center where they hurl the massive boulders at one another. They taunt each other, shouting “Why do you hoard?” or “Why do you squander?”,³¹² and then hastily reassemble, pick up their weights, and repeat the punishment. The spendthrifts and misers' infernal punishment is a physical manifestation of the internal corruption of the soul which rejected charity and grace and embraced sin. Their frenzy in Hell mirrors their former earthly unrest resulting from an insatiable hunger for the acquisition of material goods. Even in Hell, they obsessively seek fulfillment in temporal goods, and the excessive desire for material possessions transforms them physically, rendering them unrecognizable to the pilgrim:

E io : “Maestro, tra questi cotali
dovre' io ben riconoscere alcuni
che ruo immondi di cotesti mali.”
Ed elli a me: “Vano pensiero aduni:
la sconoscente vita che i fè sozzi,
ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruni.”³¹³

The misers' and spendthrifts' loss of individuality is a physical depiction of a spiritual loss they willingly underwent in life. They became a perversion of what God intended for his creation by loving material possessions more than God. Infernal punishment allows them to continue in their folly, and the perverted delight the misers and spendthrifts obtain from their punishment contrasts sharply with their obvious pain and physical distortion.³¹⁴

³¹² *Inferno VII.* 30 “Perchè tieni? e Perchè burli?”

³¹³ *Inferno VII.* 49-54

³¹⁴ For more information on the contrapasso in the circle of spendthrifts and misers see: Cioffi, Caron Ann. “Canto VIII: Fifth Circle: Wrathful and Sullen.” *Inferno*. 111-122. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1998; Bardazzi, Giovanni. “Avari e prodighi, iracondi e accidiosi.” *Studi Danteschi* 65 (2000): 1-39; D'Andria, Michele. *Dinamica e pena di prodighi ed avari (Inf. VII, 27)* Rome: S.T.I., 1967; Vazzana, Steno. *Il contrapasso nella Divina Commedia*. 48-51;

3.1 Sin and Corruption of the Soul

According to Dante, sin corrupts the soul's very nature. It makes the soul heavy and forces it to sink further from God.³¹⁵ In *Purgatorio II*, for example, Casella tells the pilgrim that the purgatorial souls gather at the shores of the Tiber while the wicked sink into the Acheron under the weight of their sins.³¹⁶ In the *Inferno*, the distorted physical shape of the aerial body reflects the internal corruption of the soul. According to Christian theology, mankind was meant to love God above all lesser goods and to follow the mandates of reason. The damned of the *Inferno* made misguided moral choices and became a perversion of their original purpose. Their souls became corrupted in the moment they rejected charity, worshipped a lesser good in place of God, and abandoned reason. The damned of the *Inferno* are tormented for all eternity and forced to remain in a perverted state and in a corrupted aerial body.

As the pilgrim travels through Hell, he less easily recognizes the aerial bodies. Many of the damned lose their original human forms and are transformed into animalistic representations of their corrupted states. Amongst the gluttons of the third circle, the pilgrim meets Ciaccio, battered by a filthy rain and lying beneath the mud. Ciaccio is unidentifiable to the pilgrim because pain distorts his facial features:

E io a lui:
L'angoscia che tu hai
forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,
sì che non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ For more information on the relationship of sin and deformation of aerial bodies see: Durling, Robert M. "Deceit and Digestion in the Belly of Hell." *Allegory and Representation*. 61-93; Barkan, Leonard. *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis & the Pursuit of Paganism*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986. see pages 142-145 and 158-160; Gragnolati, Manuele. *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval culture*. See pages 53-87 for more on the relationship between the weight of the aerial bodies and sin.

³¹⁶ *Purgatorio II*. 103-105

³¹⁷ *Inferno VI*. 43-45

The suicides of the seventh circle of Hell are denied a human shape because they rejected their bodies. In the *Inferno XIII* they are transformed into thorny bushes and trees and tormented by the Harpies. The thieves of *Inferno XXIV* and *XXV* are denied their bodies as part of their eternal torment. Infernal punishment robs the thieves of their bodies just as in life the thieves stole money, wealth and goods from others. Reptiles and lizards bite at and twist themselves about the damned of the eighth circle.³¹⁸ Before the pilgrim's eyes, a snake bites Vanni Fucci in the neck and Fucci bursts into flames, rising from the ashes like an infernal phoenix.³¹⁹ Another snake raps himself so tightly around Agnello that they form one unnatural shape that is part man and part reptile.³²⁰ Buoso the thief and Francesco the serpent exchange forms; Francesco transforms himself into a "man" and Buoso into a serpent.³²¹

As part of infernal punishment, some bodies are gruesomely mutilated and distorted in retaliation for sin. The fortune tellers of the fourth bolgia in the seventh circle sought an unnatural knowledge of time and in the afterlife they must spend eternity with their heads turned backwards.³²² The schismatics in the ninth bolgia of the eighth circle are hacked to pieces by their tormentors. Just as they once sowed discord among

³¹⁸ *Inferno XXIV*. 82-96

³¹⁹ *Inferno XXIV*. 100-111

³²⁰ *Inferno XXV*. 49-78

³²¹ For more information on punishment in the circle of the thieves see: Chiampi, James T. "The Fate of Writing: The Punishment of Thieves in the Inferno." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*. 102 (1984): 51-60; Ferrante, Joan M. "Good Thieves and Bad Thieves: A Reading of *Inferno XXIV*." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*. 104 (1986): 83-98; Ferrante, Joan M. "Canto XXIV: Thieves and Metamorphoses." *Inferno*. 316-327. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1998; Oldcorn, Anthony. "Canto XXV: The Perverse Image." *Inferno*. 328-347. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1998; Pinsky, Robert. "Dante's Canto XXV: Among the Thieves: A Note and a Translation." *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 14.1 (Summer 1994): 18-25; Terdiman, Richard. "Problematical Virtuosity: Dante's Depiction of the Thieves (Inf. XXIX-XXV)." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*. 91 (1973): 27-46.

³²² *Inferno XX*. 10-18

families, societies, and governments, they now must suffer discord within their own bodies.

4.1 Free will and the Contrapasso

In Hell repentance is beyond the damned's capability because they have rejected the restorative gifts of grace and charity. Aquinas proposes that the obstinacy of the wicked has its root in divine justice which denies them saving grace. Divine Justice does not force unwilling souls to accept grace because such an action would infringe upon free will:

The cause of obduracy in evil is therefore to be found partly in God and partly in free choice. It is to be found in God, not as causing or preserving evil, but as not bestowing grace. And indeed His justice demands this, for it is just that those who have not been willing to will rightly when they could, should be brought to such a pass of misery that they are altogether unable to will rightly.³²³

In their wickedness the damned have chosen to turn from virtue and reject grace, and accordingly, divine justice denies them the grace that would heal them of their sinfulness. Souls are not condemned to eternal torment if they are repentant, desire moral perfection, or detest vice. The damned are incapable of penitence because they are by nature wicked.³²⁴ They are in Hell because, having turned their wills towards vice, they have

³²³ Aquinas *De verit.*, Q. xxiv, a.10

³²⁴ Marc Cogan observes that the damned remain fixed in their wickedness: "...justice demands that the damned be beyond change. Were they still capable of change, they could be capable of repentance, and then it would be unjust to continue their punishment eternally. Unlike the souls of Purgatory, then, the damned must remain fixed in the damnable choices they made while alive. And indeed, while undergoing their punishments, they undergo without cease the experience of their same damnable activities. In doing so, they thereby become ever more fixed in the characteristic actions that damned them, since it is the repetition of a certain manner of acting that, for an Aristotelian, renders a specific state of character more stable and durable." *Design in the Wax*, 40.

become eternally corrupted, obstinate in their wickedness, and fully deserving of their punishment.³²⁵

Infernal punishment reinforces sinful tendencies and allows the damned to become more perfectly wicked. According to Aristotle people acquire virtue through the repetition of virtuous acts: "...we must become just by doing just acts, and temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing brave ones".³²⁶ Aquinas proposes that sinful habits make people more predisposed to sin because the more the sinful act is repeated, the more engrained the behavior becomes for the individual.³²⁷ In the *Inferno* punishment allows the damned to reenact the sins for which they were damned and consequently, their wills become more enslaved to the vice with each repetition.³²⁸

5.1 Purgatorial Punishment

Most infernal punishment is analogous because its purpose is to immerse the damned further into vice, but purgatorial punishment is largely antithetical so that the

³²⁵ De Civ. Dei xii, 12: "He is become worthy of eternal evil, who destroyed in himself a good which could be eternal."

³²⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* II.3. 4. 16-20

³²⁷ *ST I/II*. 49. i-iv; De verit., Q. xxiv, a. 23 : " Later on, however, a man is made to be of a certain sort by a habit—either an acquired habit, of which we are the cause, or an infused habit, which is not given without our consent even though we are not the cause of it. From this habit it results that the man efficaciously tends to an end consonant with that habit. And yet that habit does not introduce any necessity or take away the freedom of choice"

³²⁸ Cogan suggests that repetition of sinful acts firmly fixes the damned in their wickedness: "But since all successful actions end in delight, even those pursuing the wrong object, and since the delight experienced reinforces the desirability of the actions that led to it, repeated choice of delights of one quality rather than another eventually establishes fixed habits and characters, whether for good or ill. In this way, choice of wrong delights impedes choice, and experience, of proper delights. Even in this world, habit and character are changed only with difficulty. In Heaven and Hell, these characters are beyond change. The blessed are firmly fixed in their blessedness; the damned are as firmly fixed in their sin". "Delight, Punishment, and the Justice of God in the *Divina Commedia*" p. 39.

penitent might be cleansed of sin.³²⁹ While infernal torment is merely punitive and satisfies divine justice, purgatorial punishment is restorative. It atones for guilt, cleanses the soul of sin and, most important, redirects the will towards virtue.³³⁰ In the *Purgatorio* grace has secured the pilgrims' salvation, but it never overpowers the pilgrims' free will; rather it strengthens the will so that it may fully embrace virtue. Under the guidance of grace, the pilgrims suffer, pray, and meditate on the consequences of sin and the righteousness of virtue so that their wills might be redirected towards virtue. On each of the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio*, the pilgrims are purged of one of the seven capital vices: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust, and in turn acquire the opposing virtue: humility, generosity, meekness, zeal, charity, temperance and chastity. Dante uses the seven capital sins as the basis for the *Purgatorio* because according to early church doctrine, those seven vices lead man to commit a multitude of sins.³³¹ On the purgatorial mountain the pilgrims are not punished for specific past sins, like in the *Inferno*; rather they are purged of their wicked inclinations so that they may reform their sinful tendencies and redirect the will away from vice. On the purgatorial mountain the pilgrims learn to hate vice simply because it offends God and to love virtue because it pleases God. In order for the penitent to become truly virtuous and to overcome moral slavery they must hate sin so much that they are no longer tempted by it. In

³²⁹For more on the Contrapasso in the *Purgatorio* see: Caroll, John. *Prisoners of Hope*. Kennikat Press: New York, 1971 and Le Goff, Jacques. Cogan, Marc. *The Design in the Wax*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999 (see in particular pages 38-39, 115-117, 338-339).

³³⁰*ST*.Suppliment.97.1:“The punishment of Purgatory is not intended chiefly to torment but to cleanse”.

³³¹ Aquinas explains that the seven deadly sins are at the root of all sin: “In this way a capital vice is one from which other vices arise, chiefly by being their final cause, which origin is formal, as stated above (question 72, article 6). Wherefore a capital vice is not only the principle of other, but is also their director and, in a way, their leader: because the art or habit, to which the end belongs, is always the principle and the commander in matters concerning the means. Hence Gregory (Moral. xxxi, 17) compares these capital vices to the leaders of an army” *ST* I/II.84.3.; For a discussion on the moral order of the *Purgatorio* and the seven deadly sins see: Wenzel, Siegfried. “Dante's Rationale for the Seven Deadly Sins (*Purgatorio* *XVII*)”. *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4, (Oct. 1965), 529-533.

Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle proposes that if a man performs a virtuous act, but does not find pleasure in performing virtuous deeds, he is not virtuous. The virtuous by definition delight in acts of virtue and find displeasure in acts of vice:

For, besides what we have said, the man who does not rejoice in noble actions is not even good; since no one would call a man just who did not enjoy acting justly, nor any man liberal who did not enjoy liberal actions; and similarly in all other cases. If this is so, virtuous actions must be in themselves pleasant.³³²

Punishment in the *Purgatorio* redirects the will so that it may find pleasure in performing virtuous deeds and displeasure in performing sinful ones. The penitent regain their moral liberty lost after the Fall, and are able to make moral choices without the influence of the passions.

6.1 Suffering and the *Purgatorio*

In the *Inferno*, punishment and wickedness are the main sources of torment, while in the *Purgatorio* suffering mostly comes the knowledge of having offended God and of temporary separation from Him. The *Summa Theologica* helped shape Dante's views on the nature of purgatorial punishment. According to Aquinas, the penitent souls of Purgatory suffer the pain of loss, or the temporary delay of the divine vision, as well as the *poena sensus*, or physical torment.³³³ Aquinas also suggests that purgatorial souls suffer mostly because they want above all else to be near to God, but they understand that their sins have prevented them from ascending directly to Heaven.³³⁴ The avaricious of

³³²*Nicomachean Ethics* I 8 17-21

³³³*ST* III Supplement I.ii: "In Purgatory there will be a twofold pain; one will be the pain of loss, namely the delay of the divine vision, and the pain of sense, namely punishment by corporeal fire."

³³⁴*ST* III appendix 1. 2. 1: "For the more a thing is desired the more painful is its absence. And since after this life the holy souls desire the Sovereign Good with the most intense longing--both because their longing

the fifth terrace, for example, are remorseful and grieve tremendously because their sins have distanced them from God. A deep sense of sorrow fills the fifth terrace as the avaricious lie on the ground repeating the psalm *Adhaesit Pavimento Anima Mea*. Their punishment is the most bitter of the entire purgatorial mountain because it forces them to reflect with shame upon their wickedness.³³⁵ The agony and suffering in the fourth circle of the *Inferno* contrasts greatly with that of the avaricious in the *Purgatorio*. In the fourth circle of the Hell, the misers and the spendthrifts carry large boulders on their shoulders as they defiantly shout “Why do you hoard? Why do you waste?”.³³⁶ Their torment results from the continuation of sin and their reveling in wickedness. Contrarily, the avaricious feel torment because they acknowledge their wretchedness. Their pain has its root in the realization of having offended God. The spendthrifts and the misers in Hell are tormented by their obstinacy and their punishment allows them to further rebel against God by permitting them to continue their sinful behavior.

Temporary *poena damni* is one of the main sources of purgatorial torment. In Ante-purgatory Virgil and Dante meet the souls of the excommunicate who must wait thirty times the period of their expulsion from the church before being allowed to climb the seven terraces. The delay in the purification process provokes such longing that they express regret at having spent time in idle pursuits during their lifetime: “chè perder

is not held back by the weight of the body, and because, had there been no obstacle, they would already have gained the goal of enjoying the Sovereign Good—it follows that they grieve exceedingly for their delay”.

³³⁵The pilgrim reflects with pity upon the sorrowful nature of the avaricious’ punishment in *Purgatorio* XIX. 115-117: “Quel ch’avarizia fa, qui si dichiara/in purgazion de l’anime converse;/ e nulla pena il monte ha più amara.”; For more information on the circle of the avaricious see: Paparelli, Gioacchino. Il canto xix del Purgatorio. F. Le Monnier, 1964. *Lectura Dantis Scaligeri*; Ulivi, Ferruccio. Il canto xx del Purgatorio. F. Le Monnier, 1964. *Lectura Dantis Scaligeri*.

³³⁶*Inferno VII*. 30

tempo a chi più sa più spiace".³³⁷ Manfred, eager to climb the mountain and to suffer the pains of Purgatory so that he might attain salvation, begs Dante to tell his daughter Constance that her prayers will shorten his time in the Ante-Purgatory.

In the *Purgatorio*, pain caused by the delay of beatific vision is so great that the penitent wish to climb the purgatorial mountain and willingly submit to punishment. The intense spiritual hunger caused by the temporary separation from God is first observed in *Purgatorio II*. After Cato chastises the pilgrims for listening to Casella's song instead of journeying up the mountain, the pilgrims, stirred by their deep spiritual desire to be unified to God, stop resting and begin their ascent.³³⁸ Upon entering the sixth terrace, the pilgrim notes that the souls purifying themselves of the vice of gluttony hardly acknowledge their presence. They remain undistracted and continue to sing, walk, and meditate.³³⁹ Continuing on in their journey towards the summit of Mount Purgatory, Dante and the penitent souls, walk through the purgatorial fire of the seventh terrace. They are not forced to enter the purgatorial fire, but cross through it of their own volition; their desire to become worthy of the beatific vision urges them to enter the flames despite their fear.³⁴⁰

In the *Purgatorio* there is tremendous suffering, but, unlike in the *Inferno*, there is also an overwhelming sense of hope because the penitent know they will be healed through pain. Throughout the *Purgatorio*, the divine promise of salvation often manifests

³³⁷ *Purgatorio III*. 78

³³⁸ *Purgatorio XXX*. 128-129: "subitamente lasciano star l'esca,/ perch'assaliti son da maggior cura"; For an interesting article on *Purgatorio II* and Cato's scolding of Dante, see: Hollander, Robert. "Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's scoglio." *Italica* 52.3 (Autumn 1975): 348-363.

³³⁹ *Purgatorio XXIII*. 16-18: "Sì come i peregrin pensosi fanno/ giugnendo per cammin gente non nota/ che si volgono ad essa e non restanno"

³⁴⁰ *Purgatorio XXVII*

itself in song.³⁴¹ Music accompanies the pilgrims as they make their way up the purgatorial mountain, and reminds them of divine mercy and of the healing power of grace. Psalms and hymns comfort and teach the pilgrims that they will one day reach heaven, not by their own merits, but by divine salvific will which has granted them the grace necessary for salvation. Dante enters Purgatory Proper in *Purgatorio IX* and a beautiful angelic chorus singing *Te Deum Laudamus* welcomes the pilgrim.³⁴² The chorus quiets the pilgrim's fears and inspires him to pass eagerly through the gates of Purgatory Proper. As the purgatorial souls purge themselves of each of the seven vices, angels sing one of the beatitudes, encouraging them to continue on their journey. When the pilgrim hears angels singing the first beatitude, *Beati Pauperes Spiritu*, his fears are quieted. He observes that the cries and lamentations in Hell that caused him to dread descending to the next circle have now been replaced in Purgatory with music and song which calm and inspire him to ascend to the next terrace.³⁴³

In the *Purgatorio*, song not only encourages the penitent to continue their pilgrimage, but it also serves as an act of penance. Punishment on the sixth terrace, for example, helps the gluttons to turn their improper hunger for temporal good into a righteous spiritual hunger:

Tutta esta gente che piangendo canta
per seguitar la gola oltra misura,

³⁴¹ Music and song are an integral part of the purification process in the Purgatorio. See: Cappuccio, Chiara. "Gli effetti psicologici della musica sui personaggi del Purgatorio." *Tenzzone: Revista de la Asociación Complutense de Dantología* 6 (2005): 35-80; Jones, Nancy A. "Music and the Maternal Voice in Purgatorio XIX." *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. 35-49. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1994; La Favia, Louis M. "'... chè quivi per canti ...' (Purg., XII, 113), Dante's Programmatic Use of Psalms and Hymns in the Purgatorio." *Studies in Iconography* 10 (1984-1986 1984): 53-65.

³⁴² *Purgatorio IX*. 140

³⁴³ *Purgatorio XII*. 112-114: "Ahi quanto son diverse quelle foci/ da l'infernali! chè quivi per canti/ s'entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci 112-114 -12.

in fame e 'n sete qui si rifà santa.³⁴⁴

The gluttons are transformed into emaciated skeletons on whose pale and wasted faces one can read the word *OMO*. Despite their agony, they sing the single verse of Psalm L, 17 *Labia mea, Domine*: “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise”. In this biblical psalm, David prays that God might open his lips, which have been sealed by sin, so that he might sing a song of praise to Him. In Psalm L David asks God for forgiveness after he had sinned with Bathsheba. He not only confesses his guilt, but he puts his faith in divine grace and praises divine goodness. David acknowledges that only through penitence, faith, charity, and suffering the guilt of sin is pardoned: “a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”.³⁴⁵ Psalm L appropriately expresses the faith of the gluttons and all the souls on the purgatorial mountain. They know that God will heal them of their sins if they repent, suffer just punishment, and praise God for his mercy. During their lifetimes, the gluttons opened their mouths to eat and drink, but now they open their mouths to pray. Their faith in the divine promise of redemption strengthens their wills so that they are able to transform their excessive hunger for temporal good into a righteous desire for the *Summum Bonum*.³⁴⁶

Through song the pilgrims also show their gratitude to God. At the shores of mount Purgatory, for example, the pilgrims thank God for His mercy in delivering them from sin and sing *In Exitu Israel de Aegypto*. In *Purgatorio XX* an earthquake signals to

³⁴⁴*Purgatorio XXIII*. 64-66

³⁴⁵Psalm L, 19

³⁴⁶For more information on the gluttons see: Muresu, Gabriele. "Forese e la gola (Purg. XXIII)." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 48.29 (Jan. 2007): 5-29; Trone, George Andrew. "The Cry of Dereliction in *Purgatorio XXIII*." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 113 (1995): 111-129.

all the pilgrims that a soul has just completed the purification process, and all the souls sing *Gloria in Excelsis* in celebration. In the *Ante-Purgatorio*, the pilgrims sing the *Miserere* a hymn appropriate for the excommunicate because it was often sung during a rite of absolution from excommunication.³⁴⁷ As they make their way through the blinding smoke, the wrathful sing in perfect chorus *Agnus Dei*, a psalm which petitions God for forgiveness.³⁴⁸

7.1 Suffering and Redemption in the *Purgatorio*

What separates the damned from the penitent of the *Purgatorio* is not merely the quantity or quality of the sins they have committed. Both the purgatorial pilgrims and the damned are guilty of sin and undeserving of eternal life, but the penitent's desire to overcome wickedness and to become virtuous saves them from damnation. In the *Purgatorio*, pain is at the core of spiritual healing. The penitent complete their journey towards salvation in the southern hemisphere on a mountain diametrically opposite to Jerusalem, the site of Christ's crucifixion. The Purgatorial pilgrims regain their righteousness in a place connected to Jerusalem because redemption became possible in that city.³⁴⁹ According to Christian theology, Christ's sacrifice paid the ransom for original sin and allowed mankind to receive the grace necessary for salvation. The penitent are reminded throughout their journey through the seven terraces that they must follow Christ's model of suffering and self sacrifice if they wish to reform their wills and to overcome moral slavery. On the fifth terrace, for example, the covetous profess that

³⁴⁷ *Purgatorio* V. 24

³⁴⁸ *Purgatorio* XVI. 19

³⁴⁹ *Purgatorio* II. 3 and *Purgatorio* IV. 68

their healing comes about only through *tears*: “Spirito in cui pianger matura / quel sanza l'quale a Dio tornar non pòssi”.³⁵⁰ Forese, one of the gluttons, tells Dante, as they walk around the terrace, that the fragrance coming from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and the water flowing from the stream kindles his craving to eat and drink. He first says that this craving is painful, but then abruptly corrects himself and says that it brings him comfort:

girando, si rinfresca nostra pena
io dico pena, e dovia dir sollazzo,
chè quella voglia a li alberi ci mena
che menò a Cristo lieto a dire '*Eli*'
quando ne liberò con la sua vena³⁵¹

In his speech, Forese alludes to Adam who ate of the forbidden fruit which deprived all postlapsarian people of eternal life and to Christ's sacrifice which redeemed mankind of original sin and made salvation attainable. He suggests that purgatorial souls must follow Christ's example and suffer so that they might atone for their sins. According to the laws of the *Purgatorio*, spiritual transformation occurs only through physical suffering. Forese explains that the pilgrims must rejoice and find comfort in their pain because it is only through this temporary agony that they will attain eternal glory.³⁵²

Unlike in the *Inferno*, the penitent of the *Purgatorio* ease each other's pain, and never participate in each other's torment. In a wretched fury, the wrathful tear and bite at one another,³⁵³ and the spendthrifts and the misers hurl large boulders at each other as

³⁵⁰ *Purgatorio* XIX. 91-92

³⁵¹ *Purgatorio* XXIII. 71-75

³⁵² For an interesting article on the connection between Christ's suffering and punishment in the *Purgatorio* see: Trone, George Andrew. "The Cry of Dereliction in *Purgatorio* XXIII." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 113 (1995): 111-129.

³⁵³ *Inferno* VIII

they shout insults.³⁵⁴ Conversely, the envious of the *Purgatorio* help one another to progress towards spiritual perfection as they rejoice in each other's successes. Their eyes are sown shut so that they must help one another up the perilous rocks. Punishment on the second terrace fosters charity and teaches the pilgrims generosity by forcing them to shift their focus away from securing their own salvation, towards helping another penitent soul make its way to the summit of Mount Purgatory. They reject the sinful inclination to excel at another's expense or to wish others harm by practicing generosity and by growing in charity.³⁵⁵

7.2 Purgatorial Torment

In the *Inferno*, most of the damned suffer a punishment analogous to their vice so that they may be fully united to their sins, while most of the *Purgatorio* are punished in antithesis to the vice so that they might acquire virtue through repetition and habit.³⁵⁶ On the first terrace, for example, the proud are bent over, struggling to carry a huge weight upon their shoulders. Their punishment corrects the sin of pride because it re-enforces a new and more virtuous behavior. The proud once stood tall looking down upon others, but are now looked down upon by others. This humbling aspect of the punishment is evident in *Purgatorio XI* when Dante must bend down to speak with Oderisi.³⁵⁷ In this scene both Oderisi and Dante humble themselves through their posture: Oderisi is bent over by the weight of his burden, cannot lift his head to look at the pilgrim speaking to

³⁵⁴ *Inferno VII.* 27-30

³⁵⁵ *Purgatorio XIII.* 43-72

³⁵⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* x, 9: "the purpose of punishment is the good of virtue".

³⁵⁷ *Purgatorio XI.* 73-142

him, and assumes a humble pose. The pilgrim does not carry any weights on his back, but learns humility by physically lowering himself so that he is able to speak with Oderisi.

In another example, the penitent of the fourth terrace purge themselves of the vice of sloth and become zealous lovers of virtue.³⁵⁸ Dante considers sloth in the *Purgatorio* a *middle sin* because those that suffer from it love neither excessively nor incorrectly, but insufficiently. Dante, influenced by Aquinas, believes that sloth is one of the capital vices because it is of its very nature contrary to charity in that those that suffer from it do not rejoice properly in the Good.³⁵⁹ As punishment for their vice, the penitent of the third terrace shout “Haste! Haste!” as they furiously run about the terrace. At first glance, the punishment for sloth in the *Purgatorio* resembles that of the punishment in *Inferno* III. On the contrary, infernal punishment in Limbo immerses the damned further into vice while purgatorial punishment cleanses the soul of sloth and redirects the will towards zeal. In Limbo wasps sting the fallen angels who refused to take sides during Lucifer's rebellion, and force them to run about the circle. In pain the fallen angels cry out and rebel against their punishment. The fallen angels' haste is futile and achieves no purpose since their movement is not directed towards attainment of the Good. Conversely, on the fourth terrace the slothful's haste is productive and leads towards the attainment of moral perfection. They joyously undergo their punishment because they are eager to please the

³⁵⁸For more information on the terrace of sloth see: Padoan, Giorgio. *Il canto xviii del Purgatorio*. Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1964. *Lectura Dantis Scaligera*.

³⁵⁹*ST* II/II. 35.2: “Wherefore we must say that a certain order exists among spiritual goods, since all the spiritual goods that are in the acts of each virtue are directed to one spiritual good, which is the Divine good, about which there is a special virtue, viz. charity. Hence it is proper to each virtue to rejoice in its own spiritual good, which consists in its own act, while it belongs specially to charity to have that spiritual joy whereby one rejoices in the Divine good. On like manner the sorrow whereby one is displeased at the spiritual good which is in each act of virtue belongs, not to any special vice, but to every vice, but sorrow in the Divine good about which charity rejoices, belongs to a special vice, which is called sloth.”

Creator and to become righteous. In Limbo, the slothful curse their punishment, as stinging wasps force them to run about the circle for all eternity. The slothful of the *Purgatorio* do not cry out in pain: they praise God and ask that their zeal for the good might move Him to grant them the grace necessary to complete their purification:

Ratto, ratto, che 'l tempo non si perda
per poco amor, gridavan li altri appresso,
che studio di ben far grazia rinverda.³⁶⁰

A great sense of urgency permeates through the entire canto. The penitent tell the pilgrim that they do not want to waste even a second of the time, and although they wish to help Dante and Virgil in their journey, they cannot because the desire for righteousness moves them such that they refuse to pause even for a moment.³⁶¹

The lustful suffer a punishment analogous to their vice and must pass through the Purgatorial Fire of the seventh terrace. Medieval literature and art represent lust as a flame that consumes lovers, and at first glance, the fire on the seventh terrace of the *Purgatorio* seems to resemble the raging flames of lust, but upon further examination, the Fire on the seventh terrace reflects Early Church doctrines regarding the nature of purgatorial punishment. Aquinas, Augustine, Origen, Ambrose, and Peter Lombard believed that all souls must pass through the fire of judgment before being assigned to their appropriate place in the afterlife.³⁶² Early church theologians formed their doctrine on Purgatorial Fire based upon a verse in Corinthians, and proposed that the same fire that punishes the damned cleanses the penitent of Purgatory of all their sins:

³⁶⁰*Purgatorio XVIII*. 103-105

³⁶¹*Purgatorio XVIII*. 115-117: “Noi siam di voglia a muoverci sì pieni,/ che restar non potem; però perdona,/ se villania nostra giustizia tieni.”

³⁶² See Le Goff, Jacques. *The Birth of Purgatory*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1984. see in particular 133-154 and 52-96.

For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it; because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.³⁶³

Believers enter the fire, and are cleansed of their sins so all that remains are their good works and faith. Contrarily, when the wicked pass through the fire, the flames consume them entirely, and they are condemned.

Dante, influenced by early church doctrine regarding Purgatorial fire, transforms the consuming fire of lust into a purifying flame without which the pilgrims would never be made worthy of salvation. The scene in which the pilgrims pass through the flames in *Purgatorio XXVII* is a microcosm for the entire redemptive process in the *Commedia*: sinners must desire the attainment of moral virtue to such an extent that they are willing to crucify their *old self*. The pilgrims prove, by entering the flames, they are finally ready to die to sin and to become righteous. At the moment the pilgrims' wills become resolute, divine grace strengthens their resolve, guides them through the fire, cleanses their wickedness, and makes them worthy of salvation. Before entering the flames, Dante is overcome with terror at being burned alive. He is moved by both the angel's song and the realization that if he crosses through the fire he will see his beloved Beatrice. As he walks through the flames, Virgil comforts and reminds him that Beatrice is waiting on the other side of the fire.³⁶⁴ Upon crossing through the fire, a dazzling light and a booming voice proclaim Christ's message to the elect in *Matthew 25: 34 Venite, benedicti Patris*

³⁶³ Corinthians 3: 8-15

³⁶⁴ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 52-53

*mei*³⁶⁵ both welcoming and enticing the purified souls forward. Their faith in divine promise has been rewarded.³⁶⁶

7.3 Meditation and Prayer in the *Purgatorio*

Physical punishment is not enough to rid the penitent of vice. In the *Purgatorio*, the pilgrims must also meditate on examples of virtue.³⁶⁷ The Proud, for example, misplaced their faith in their own merits and moral strength, but on the first terrace the pilgrims learn to humble themselves and to acknowledge their moral limitations by reflecting on the image of the Annunciation.³⁶⁸ Mary's example reminds the proud of the Virgin's humility which led her to yield to and accept divine will. The pilgrims reflect on Mary's words to the Angel Gabriel: *ecce ancilla domini: Behold the handmaid of the*

³⁶⁵*Purgatorio* XXVII. 58

³⁶⁶For more information on the terrace of lust see: Cali, Piero. "Purgatorio XXVII." Dante Commentaries: Eight Studies of the Divine Comedy. 93-113; Dublin; Totowa, NJ: Irish Academic; Rowman & Littlefield, 1977; Frattini, Alberto. Il canto xxvii del Purgatorio. Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1964. Lectura Dantis Scaligera; Monteverdi, Angelo. Il canto xxvi del Purgatorio. Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1968. Lectura Dantis Scaligera; Sacchetto, Aleardo. Il canto xxvi del Purgatorio. Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1931. Lectura Dantis Scaligera.

³⁶⁷Meditating on art and scripture is an integral part of the purification process. See: Barolini, Teodolinda. "Re-Presenting What God Presented: The Arachnean Art of Dante's Terrace of Pride." Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society 105 (1987): 43-62; Hatzfeld, Helmut. "The Art of Dante's Purgatorio." Studies in Philology 49 (1952): 25-47; Kleinhenz, Christopher. "A Nose for Art (Purgatorio VII): Notes on Dante's Iconographical Sense." Italica 52.3 (Autumn 1975): 372-379; Migiel, Marilyn. "Between Art and Theology: Dante's Representation of Humility." Stanford Italian Review 5.2 (Fall 1985): 141-159; Paolucci, Anne. "Art and Nature in the Purgatorio." Italica 42.1 (Mar. 1965): 42-60; Vettori, Alessandro. "La breccia silenziosa in Purgatorio X." Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation 20-21 (1997 Spring-Fall 1997): 78-100.

³⁶⁸For more information on the terrace of Pride see: Baldassaro, Lawrence. "Structure and Movement in Purgatorio X." Lingua e Stile: Trimestrale di Linguistica e Critica Letteraria 10 (1975): 261-274; Battistini, Andrea. "La 'speranza de l'altezza': La retorica patetica in Purgatorio XII." L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca 44.21 (Jan. 2003): 95-108; Crovi, Raffaele. "La terapia dell'umiltà nel Purgatorio." Lecture Classensi 30-31 (2002): 117-126; Girardi, Enzo Noè. "Il canto XI del Purgatorio." Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, Sezione Romanza 28.1 (1986): 5-24; Henderson, Hanford. "Dante's Angel of Humility." Italica 28.4 (Dec. 1951): 249-250; Pietropaolo, Domenico. "Dante's Paradigms of Humility and the Structure of Reading." Quaderni d'Italica: Official Journal of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies 10.1-2 (1989): 199-211; Treherne, Matthew. "Ekphrasis and Eucharist: The Poetics of Seeing God's Art in Purgatorio X." Italianist: Journal of the Department of Italian Studies, University of Reading 26.2 (2006): 177-196.

*Lord.*³⁶⁹ By meditating on *ecce ancilla domini* the pilgrims remember to follow the Virgin's example, to humble themselves, to reject their own self-will, and to conform to divine will.

In the second image of humility, David dancing before the ark, the proud reflect upon both examples of pride and of humility. Uzzah feared that the Ark would fall, supported it with his hands, and was struck down suddenly by death. Since only priests were allowed to touch the Ark, Uzzah, out of pride and self-exaltation, assumed an office not given to him by God.³⁷⁰ The pilgrims also meditate on David's example. David is moved by his love for God and his enthusiasm to praise Him and dances before the Ark. In his jubilant display, David abandons all kingly dignity and lowers himself before both his subjects and God while Michal, David's first wife, watches in scorn. Uzzah's example of pride teaches the pilgrims that if they presume to be greater than what they are, God will strike them down, but if they behave humbly like David, divine justice will bless them with eternal life.

In the third example of humility, the pilgrims meditate upon the story of Trajan and the widow. The emperor Trajan, on his way to battle, stopped to help a grieving widow whose son was unlawfully killed. The image of Trajan differs slightly from the first two images of humility on the first terrace because Trajan lowers himself to an inferior. In the image of the Annunciation, Mary humbles herself before God and the Angel Gabriel, two superiors. In the second image, David lowers himself before God, his superior and the priests, his equals. Trajan's humility teaches the penitent they must not be so proud as to refuse to help those who are seemingly inferior to them. The pilgrims

³⁶⁹ Luke 1.38

³⁷⁰ 2 Samuel 6:1-7

learn from Trajan's example that God is merciful and will forgive all their sins, no matter how grave they are, but only if they have a humble heart.

In the *Purgatorio*, the penitent also learn to turn away from sin by studying images of sin. On the terrace of the proud, for example, the penitent show their disgust of the vice by trampling upon the twelve exemplars which are carved into the floor of the terrace. The images of pride include six classical and six religious references. Each classical example is juxtaposed with a biblical image of pride. They begin with Lucifer, who committed the greatest act of pride in his rebellion against God. The pilgrims meditate on Lucifer's Fall and learn that pride leads to damnation because it causes people to believe that they are greater than God. The twelve images of pride teach the pilgrims that, in order for them to enter Heaven, they must first lower themselves and admit their moral shortcomings. If they hold on to their pride as did the twelve exemplars, they will lose their God given potential and never attain the divine promise of salvation.

The purgatorial penitent become virtuous and learn about Divine Mercy also by reflecting on the scriptures. On the terrace of the envious, for example, a voice shouts: *vinum non habent*³⁷¹ which is a biblical allusion to the story of the wedding at Cana and to Christ's first miracle. Jesus, moved by his mother's request, instructs the waiters to fill six water pots up to the brim with water and later turns the water into wine.³⁷² In Exodus, Moses turning water into blood symbolizes divine judgment and wrath, but in the Gospel of *Matthew*, Jesus' turning water into wine implies divine grace and generosity. Just as Christ generously turns water into wine, God forgives the penitent of the *Purgatorio* for

³⁷¹*Purgatorio XIII. 29*

³⁷²John 2 1-11

their past transgressions. Christianity teaches that divine justice does not demand divine mercy. God heals the purgatorial pilgrims of their moral shortcomings and guides them in attaining eternal life because of His generosity. By meditating on the scriptural verse of the Wedding of Cana, the pilgrims experience God's mercy and love, and aspire towards following Christ's example.

While the pilgrims reflect on the scriptures and undergo their punishment, they recite hymns and pray that God might heal them of their moral shortcomings. The proud of the first terrace, recite the Lord's Prayer, composed by Christ, the supreme model of humility. By repeating the Lord's prayer, the pilgrims admit that they can never be saved without the assistance of grace:

Vegna ver' noi la pace del tuo regno
ché noi ad essa non potem da noi,
s'ella non vien, con tutto nostro ingegno.³⁷³

The admission that one needs God's help in order to be saved can only come from a humble heart, and the pilgrims remind themselves that without *manna* or grace they will never be saved:

Dà oggi a noi la cotidiana manna,
sanza la qual per questo aspro deserto
a retro va chi più di gir s'affanna.³⁷⁴

The reference to the *aspro deserto* recalls the experience of the pilgrim in the *selva oscura* who proudly tries to advance in virtue without the guidance of grace and slips further into the wilderness of sin. His salvation begins only when he puts aside his pride and admits that he cannot attain moral perfection by means of his own strength. Like the penitent of

³⁷³*Purgatorio XI. 7-9*

³⁷⁴*Purgatorio XI. 13-15*

the terrace of the proud, he is saved only after acknowledging his moral shortcomings and after humbly accepting God's guidance and grace.

8.1 Final Observations and Conclusions

Divine justice in the *Commedia* unites souls to that which they sought after in life. During their lifetimes, the damned of the *Inferno* loved vice more than virtue, and in the afterlife they wallow in the wickedness they chose for themselves. However just the concept of infernal punishment, the pilgrim, through most of the *Inferno*, expresses sorrow over the damned's anguish and questions divine judgment. Much to his dismay the pilgrim learns that the great philosophers and poets who inspired him are deprived of the beatific vision:

Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo 'ntesi
però che gente di molto valore
conobbi che 'n quel limbo eran sospesi.³⁷⁵

His pity implies that the virtuous pagans, whose only sin was lack of Christian faith, do not deserve to be denied the beatific vision. In *Paradiso XIX* the pilgrim expresses his doubts about the condemnation of the philosophers in Limbo. How can those born before the advent of Christianity be held accountable for their lack of faith?

sanza peccato in vita o in sermoni.
Muore non battezzato e sanza fede:
ov'è questa giustizia che 'l condanna?.³⁷⁶

The pilgrim learns in the following Canto that salvation is not exclusive to those born after the incarnation because God extends His saving grace to all of humanity, including

³⁷⁵*Inferno IV. 43-45*

³⁷⁶*Paradiso XIX. 75-77*

those born before Christianity. Ripheus was born before Christ, but through God's guidance, attained a foreknowledge of the faith, and now enjoys eternal bliss in the Heaven of Justice. Trajan died an unbeliever, but through Pope Gregory's prayers was resurrected and given the opportunity to accept the faith.³⁷⁷ He accepted the Faith and is amongst the blessed of the *Paradiso*. The damned of the *Inferno* ought not to be pitied because they chose for themselves a perpetual state of agony by rejecting God's saving grace which was available to all of them no matter when they were born.

The pilgrim's pity for the damned extends through much of Hell and in the in the circle of the lustful, he is so moved by compassion that he faints at the conclusion of Francesca's tragic love story.³⁷⁸ He sympathizes with Paolo and Francesca because he has not yet overcome temptation and understands how love can lead one to sin. In *Inferno XIII* the pilgrim pities Pier della Vigna because of the injustices committed against him. Pier killed himself because of false accusations of betrayal against the emperor. The pilgrim is so overcome with compassion for Pier that he cannot find the strength to question him about his demise, and asks Virgil to speak for him instead:

Ondi'o a lui: "Domandai tu ancora
di quel che credi ch'a me satisfaccia;
ch'i' non potrei, tanta pietà m'accora".³⁷⁹

The pilgrim is so moved by the anguish of the damned because he has not yet learned to truly hate sin. His conversion can take place only after he learns of the true nature of sin which deforms the soul, making it unworthy of the beatific vision. Virgil reminds Dante in *Inferno XX* that piety lives only when pity is dead:

³⁷⁷ *Paradiso XX*

³⁷⁸For an in depth article on the dignity of the damned see: Glickman, Enrica. "Human Dignity in Dante's *Inferno*." *Laurentian University Review* 2 (June 1968): 33-44.

³⁷⁹*Inferno XIII*. 82-84

Qui vive la pietà quand' è ben morta;
 chi è più scellerato che colui
 che al giudicio divin passion comporta?³⁸⁰

He must hate vice because it displeases God, and he must not feel compassion for those that rebel against the creator and indulge in sin.³⁸¹

In the circle of the wrathful and the sullen, the pilgrim curses Filippo Argenti and even participates in his punishment by gleefully pushing him further into the mud.³⁸² As he watches Filippo being torn to pieces by the other damned souls hidden beneath the mud, the pilgrim thanks God for Filippo's torment:

Dopo cio poco vid'io quello strazio
 far di costui a le fangose genti,
 che Dio ancor ne lodo e ne ringrazio.³⁸³

Some scholars have argued that the Dante's anger is unrighteous and that he is identifying with the sin of wrath.³⁸⁴ I agree with Hollander and believe that the pilgrim's anger towards Filippo Argenti marks his changing attitude towards sin and acknowledges that all those that disobey God are worthy of their punishment.³⁸⁵ In this Canto, the pilgrim begins to hate sin, but he will not fully reject it until he reaches the summit of Mount Purgatory and has been made worthy through the inner working of grace to witness the beatific vision. As I have already discussed in this chapter, the purpose of

³⁸⁰*Inferno XX. 28-30*

³⁸¹ Anselm proposes that it is just that the damned are deprived of the beatific vision and receive eternal torment: "it is not fit that God allow anything disordered in his kingdom; and if Divine Wisdom did not inflict these pains, the universe itself, the order of which God should preserve, would suffer a certain deformity from its violated beauty, and Divine Providence would seem to fail" *Cur Deus Homo*, i, 12.15.

³⁸²*Inferno VIII. 52-63*

³⁸³*Inferno VIII. 58-60*

³⁸⁴ Montano, Rocco. *Storia della poesia di Dante*, vol. I Naples: Quaderni di Delta, 1962 418-21

³⁸⁵ Hollander, Robert and Jean. *Inferno* translated by Robert and Jean Hollander, Doubleday/Anchor, New York. 2000. *Inferno VIII.40-45*; Singleton, Charles. *The Divine Comedy, Translated, with a Commentary*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970-75; *Inferno VIII.42*.

Purgatorial punishment is to reform the will, turning it away from wickedness, and freeing it from moral slavery. Accordingly, purgatorial punishment teaches the pilgrim to hate sin simply because it is an offence against God and to feel no pity for those that rebel against divine commandment.

I have analyzed how purgatorial suffering cleanses the penitent and makes them worthy of salvation, and in the next chapter I will discuss the conception and creation of the *Purgatorio*. I will argue that Origen's ideas on the redemptive power of punishment led to Aquinas and Augustine's conception of Purgatory, and eventually to the Second Council of Lyon approval of the doctrine of Purgatory in 1274. I will examine how the doctrine of almsgiving and prayers for the dead in Tertullian, Aquinas, Augustine, St. Cyril, and St. Hugh of Victor influenced the Dantean conception of the *Ante-Purgatorio* whereby souls are able to advance only by means of the prayers of the living.

The writing of Hugh of St. Victor influenced on the topography of the *Purgatorio*. I will analyze two of Hugh of St. Victor's sermons, Sermones xxxviii and xxxix, in which he contrasts Babylon with Jerusalem. In these two sermons Hugh of St. Victor describes the process through which souls are purified by ascending the steps of Jerusalem. This process is quite similar to that of the *Purgatorio*, in that Jerusalem has a series of seven steps which one must ascend in order to purify oneself from vice. Like the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio*, each of these steps in Hugh of St. Victor's Jerusalem represents one of the seven virtues with an opposing capital sin. I will also examine how the mysticism in the school of St. Victor influenced the process through which souls are purified in the *Purgatorio*.

“The Conception and Creation of Purgatory”

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how Early Church Theology regarding sin and purification helped shape the Dantean conception of Purgatory. In his poetic vision, Dante creates a highly complex system of purification and incorporates church teaching regarding the Fall of Man, and the roles of grace, free will, and suffering in the redemptive process. Dante does not strictly follow any one of the theological doctrines regarding Purgatory, but re-interprets early beliefs on the nature of Purgatory, and creates a unique vision of the purgatorial redemptive process.

The foundation for the doctrine of Purgatory lies in the Old Testament tradition of almsgiving for the dead.³⁸⁶ In *Maccabees*, Judas, the commander of the forces of Israel, tells his people to prepare a sacrifice so that God might pardon the sins of the dead soldiers:

And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for

³⁸⁶ For more on the evolution of the doctrine of Purgatory in the Catholic Church see: Barnard, Justin D. "Purgatory and the dilemma of sanctification." *Faith and Philosophy* 24.3 (July 2007): 311-330; Brattston, David. "Hades, Hell and Purgatory in Ante-Nicene Christianity." *Churchman* 108.1 (1994): 69-79; Catherine, of Genoa, Saint. *The Fire of Love: Understanding Purgatory* [S.I.]: Sophia Inst Pr. Church, Michael G L. "The poetics of purgatory: redeeming the middle place." *Pro Ecclesia* 13.4 (Fall 2004): 424-450; Deaton, Daniel E. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.3 (Sep. 1986): 356-356; Edwards, Graham Robert. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36.4 (Oct. 1985): 634-646; Hallett, Elaine. "The fire of love: understanding purgatory." *New Oxford Review* 64 (Dec. 1997): 39-40; Harries, Richard, Bp. "Life after death from a Christian perspective." *Abraham's children*. 298-306. London: Snow Lion Publications, 2005; Hayes, Zachary. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Theology Today* 42.3 (Oct. 1985): 376-376; Le Goff, Jacques. *The Birth of Purgatory*. University of Chicago Press, 1984; Olsen, Glenn W. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Theological Studies* 46.2 (June 1985): 362-363; McHardy, A K. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Expository Times* 97.6 (Mar. 1986): 186-187; Rowell, Geoffrey. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Theology* 89.727 (Jan. 1986): 62-63; Sachs, John R. "Resurrection or reincarnation? The Christian doctrine of purgatory." *Reincarnation or resurrection*. 81-87. London: Snow Lion Publications, 1993; Vander Laan, David. "The sanctification argument for purgatory." *Faith and Philosophy* 24.3 (July 2007): 331-339.

sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.³⁸⁷

Aquinas, Augustine, and Cyprian believed that Old Testament scriptures confirmed not only that the prayers of the living help the dead, but also that sins can be forgiven after death.³⁸⁸ Early theologians also pointed to New Testament Scripture in Matthew as the basis of their argument:

Therefore I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come.³⁸⁹

Early theologians disagreed over the exact nature of Purgatory and over the moral condition of the souls allowed into Purgatory. In *On Monogamy* Tertullian, an ecclesiastical writer in the second and third centuries describes the concept of *refrigerium*. Tertullian believed that both the Old Testament Patriarchs and all God's elect remain in *refrigerium* until Final Judgment. In *refrigerium* souls experience a blessed rest and do not undergo any sort of punishment to make up for past sins.³⁹⁰

The visions described in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* led theologians to view the middle kingdom in a new light and helped shape the modern church doctrine of Purgatory.³⁹¹ In *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Perpetua is thrown in prison for practicing her Christian beliefs and is about to become a martyr when she receives

³⁸⁷ 2 Maccabess 12: 43-46

³⁸⁸ *ST.II. I*; St. Cyprian Ep. lvii, P.L., III, 830 sq.; Augustine Serm. clxxii, 2, P.L., XXXVIII, 936

³⁸⁹ Matthew 12: 31-32; From these Scriptures St Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, 21. 13); St. Gregory (*Dialog.*, 4, c.39) conclude that some sins may be remitted in a middle kingdom or Purgatory.

³⁹⁰ *De Monogam.*, x, P.L., II, 942

³⁹¹ Theologians are unsure of the author of this text, but many attribute authorship to Tertullian.

visions of the afterlife. Shortly before her death, she has two dreams in which her dead brother Dinocratus speaks to her. In the first dream her brother suffers terrible torment: in a place of terrible darkness, Dinocratus is parched with thirst, has terrible sores, and begs his sister to pray for him:

I saw Dinocratus coming out of a place of darkness, where he found himself in the midst of many others, all burning and parched with thirst, filthy and clad in rags, bearing on his face the sore that he had when he died...In the place where Dinocratus was there was a basin full of water, whose lip was too high for a small child. And Dinocratus stood on the tips of his toes, as though he wanted to drink. It caused me pain to see that there was water in the basin but that he could not drink because the lip was so high.³⁹²

After praying for her brother for several days, Perpetua has a second vision in which the brother, healed of his soars, quenches his thirst from a never emptying cup. Perpetua remarks that her brother was saved through her prayers: "I awoke and I understood that his penalty had been lifted".³⁹³ Perpetua's vision is important to the development of the doctrine of Purgatory because it introduces a new middle state different from *refrigerium*. In *refrigerium*, souls do not suffer any torment, but in the place where Dinocratus's soul awaits eternal bliss, sins are remitted after death through almsgiving and punishment. Perpetua's vision is important to the development of the doctrine of Purgatory because it emphasizes the importance of prayers for the dead and teaches that only the prayers of Christian family members, who are in a state of grace, can hasten the purification of the penitent in the afterlife.³⁹⁴

³⁹² *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 2.3

³⁹³ *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 2.4

³⁹⁴ For more on Perpetua's vision and the development of Purgatory see: Le Goff, Jacques. *The Birth of Purgatory*. University of Chicago Press, 1984; Olsen, Glenn W. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Theological Studies* 46.2 (June 1985): 362-363; McHardy, A K. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Expository Times* 97.6 (Mar. 1986): 186-187; Rowell, Geoffrey. "The Birth of Purgatory." *Theology* 89.727 (Jan. 1986): 62-63.

In the third century, Origen and Clement of Alexandria laid the foundation for the doctrine that would later become Purgatory. They argued that God inflicts punishment not for punishment's sake, but to teach people virtue and to secure their salvation. In other words, God punishes people so that they might rid themselves of vice: "God does not wreak vengeance, for vengeance is to return evil with evil, and God punishes only with an eye to the good".³⁹⁵ According to Origen and Clement, all souls must pass through the Fire of Judgment. Clement believed that there were two separate fires one for the wicked and one for the righteous. The fire of the righteous purifies, while the flames of the wicked torment. Origen held much more radical beliefs than Clement and argued that damnation was temporary. According to Origen, all souls must pass through the Fire of Judgment, and all sinners, no matter how wicked, are eventually purified by the flames and ascend into Heaven.³⁹⁶ Augustine and Aquinas staunchly disagree with Origen and argue that punishment is not always restorative. In the *Summa Theologica* Aquinas proposes that the Fire of Judgment condemns the wicked, and purifies souls guilty of minor sins.³⁹⁷ According to Augustine, the damned endure eternal torment in Hell for their wickedness, but the faithful who are guilty of only venial sin may be allowed to atone for minor sins in the afterlife. In the *City of God* Augustine proposes that all souls, except the saints, must endure trial by fire. The wicked are tormented forever in the flames, but the faithful who are guilty of minor sins are healed and eventually enter into eternal life.³⁹⁸ The modern doctrine of Purgatory begins to take on a

³⁹⁵ Clement: *Stromata* 7.26. See also Origen: *De Principiis* 2.10.6

³⁹⁶ See *De principiis* 2.10, *Contra Celsum* 4.13 and 6. 71, *Commednatry on Leviticus*, *Commentary on Luke*, *Commentary on Jeremiah*

³⁹⁷ *ST II.II*

³⁹⁸ *City of God* 21.13; 21:36

more definitive shape in Augustine's *Confessions*.³⁹⁹ In the ninth chapter of the *Confessions*, Augustine prays that God might forgive his newly deceased mother of her transgressions and allow her to enjoy eternal life. In this passage of the *Confessions* it is clear that Augustine believed that some sins might be atoned for in the afterlife and that the living may offer suffrages for the dead.⁴⁰⁰

When Dante begins writing the *Commedia*, early Church theologians are still heavily debating the location of and exact nature of punishment in Purgatory. In the sixteenth century, the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Council of Florence officially declare Purgatory Catholic doctrine, although early church leaders are still unclear about the exact nature of Purgatory. In this chapter I will explore the theological and philosophical doctrines that influenced the location, geography, and topography of the *Purgatorio*. I will also examine the Catholic division of sin, in particular venial, mortal, and capital sins and how these categories of sin helped determine the nature of punishment in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Lastly, I will discuss the Victorine's influence on Dante in the creation of *Purgatorio* and analyze two of Hugh of St. Victor's sermons in which he contrasts Babylon to Jerusalem. In these two sermons Hugh of St. Victor describes the process through which souls are purified by ascending the steps of Jerusalem. Similar to the seven terraces of *Purgatorio*, Jerusalem has a series of seven steps which one must ascend in order to purify oneself from the seven deadly sins.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ For more on the evolution of Purgatory in Augustine see: Atwell, Robert R. "From Augustine to Gregory the Great: an evaluation of the emergence of the doctrine of purgatory." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38.2 (Apr. 1987): 173-186; Ntedika, Joseph, *L'évolution de la doctrine du purgatoire chez saint Augustine*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966

⁴⁰⁰ *Confessions* 9.13

⁴⁰¹ For more on Hugh of St. Victor see: Chase, Steven. *Contemplation and compassion: the Victorine tradition* Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003. Evans, Gillian R. *The Medieval Theologians* Oxford; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001; Taylor, Jerome. *The Origin and Early Life of Hugh St. Victor; an evaluation of the Tradition*. University of Notre Dame, 1957.

2.1 Location

In his creation of the *Purgatorio*, Dante reinterprets early church doctrine regarding the location of Purgatory. Hugh of St. Victor and Pope Gregory agree that purgatorial souls suffer punishment in the place where they sinned, and accordingly they propose that Purgatory is located somewhere on earth.⁴⁰² Aquinas suggests that Purgatory cannot be situated between earth and Heaven because the penitent are weighed down by the guilt of their sins and can never be exalted to such a high place.⁴⁰³ Aquinas strongly disagrees with Hugh of St. Victor and Pope Gregory and points out that it would be impossible for souls to be punished on earth or in the places where they had sinned because that would imply that the penitent are punished at the same time for sins committed in different locations:

Some say, however, that according to common law the place of Purgatory is where man sins. This does not seem probable, since a man may be punished at the same time for sins committed in various places. And others say that according to the common law they are punished above us, because they are between us and God as regards their state. But this is of no account, for they are not punished for being above us, but for that which is lowest in them, namely sin.⁴⁰⁴

Aquinas admits that scripture does not reveal the exact location of Purgatory; nonetheless he claims that Purgatory is situated below the earth and in close proximity to Hell so that the same fire that tortures the damned in Hell cleanses the penitent.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰²Hugh of St. Victor (De Sacram. ii, 16): "It is probable that they are punished in the very places where they sinned"; Gregory (Dial. iv, 40)

⁴⁰³ For more on Aquinas and purgatory see: Ombres, Robert. "The Doctrine of Purgatory According to St Thomas Aquinas." *Downside Review* 99.337 (Oct. 1981): 279-287

⁴⁰⁴ *ST. appendix II.1.2*

⁴⁰⁵ *ST. appendix II.1.2*

Dante departs from Augustine and Aquinas' teaching that Purgatory is situated below the earth and near Hell. The poet, perhaps influenced in part by Hugh of St. Victor and Pope Gregory's belief in an earthly Purgatory, places the Purgatorial Mountain in the Southern Hemisphere. It is important to note that the base of Mount Purgatory is grounded firmly on earth, but its summit is Heavenly. As the weight of sin is lifted from the pilgrims, they climb the terraces with greater ease and eventually make their way towards Paradise.

In the *Commedia*, the Purgatorial Mountain is located diametrically opposite to Jerusalem, the site of Christ's crucifixion.⁴⁰⁶ According to Christian beliefs, Christ's sacrifice made redemption attainable for humankind. Christ's suffering paid the ransom for original sin and allowed postlapsarian people to receive the grace necessary for salvation. In the *Purgatorio*, the pilgrims undergo spiritual transformation in a place connected to Jerusalem, because it is precisely in this city that Christ began the journey towards salvation for them. In *Purgatorio I*, Dante reminds his readers of the essential role that grace plays in the purification process by alluding to Ulysses's failed voyage:

Venimmo poi in sul lito deserto
che mai non vide navicar sue acque
omo, che di tornar sia poscia esperto.⁴⁰⁷

In their search for adventure, Ulysses and his men set out to go beyond the forbidden Pillars of Hercules. After sailing for many months, they reach the Southern Hemisphere and see the great Mountain of Purgatory in the distance. The crew is cast into the sea and are all drowned because they attempted to enter Purgatory without divine permission or the assistance of sanctifying grace. The allusion to Ulysses' failed voyage at the

⁴⁰⁶ *Purgatorio* II.3; IV. 68

⁴⁰⁷ *Purgatorio* I. 130-131

beginning of the pilgrims' journey in *Purgatorio I* reminds the pilgrims that they will not earn salvation through their own merits, but by grace.⁴⁰⁸

2.2 The Creation of Mount Purgatory

The description of the creation of Mount Purgatory given by Virgil in *Inferno XXXIV* emphasizes God's mercy, one of the *Commedia's* central themes: God's love for His creation moves Him to turn Satan's act of disobedience into a vehicle of salvation for humankind. God casts Lucifer out of Heaven for his rebellion, and as he crashes to earth, Satan displaces a large mound of earth which will later become Mount Purgatory.⁴⁰⁹ In

⁴⁰⁸ For more on the figure of Ulysses in the *Commedia* see: Barolini, Teodolinda. "Dante's Ulysses: Narrative and Transgression." *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*. 113-132. Toronto, ON: U of Toronto P, 1997; Bates, Richard, and Thomas Rendall. "Dante's Ulysses and the Epistle of James." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 107 (1989): 33-44; Bommarito, Domenico. "Il mito di Ulisse e la sua allegorizzazione in Boezio e Dante: Ulisse, il tema dell'homo insipiens." *Forum Italicum* 17.1 (Spring 1983): 64-81; Cassell, Anthony K. "The Lesson of Ulysses." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 99 (1981): 113-132; Corti, Maria. "On the Metaphors of Sailing, Flight, and Tongues of Fire in the Episode of Ulysses (*Inferno* 26)." *Stanford Italian Review* 9.1-2 (1990): 33-47; D'Alessandro, Mario. "Dante, Ulisse e la scrittura della nuova epica: Una lettura del Canto XXVI dell'*Inferno*." *Quaderni d'Italianistica: Official Journal of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies* 17.2 (Autumn 1996): 93-106; DiPino, Guido. "Il canto di Ulisse." *Italianistica: Rivista di Letteratura Italiana* 10.1 (Jan. 1981): 5-20; Donno, Daniel J. "Dante's Ulysses and Virgil's Prohibition: *Inferno* XXVI, 70-75." *Italica* 50.1 (Spring 1973): 26-37; Frankel, Margherita. "The Context of Dante's Ulysses: The Similes in *Inferno* XXVI, 25-42." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 104 (1986): 99-119; Giglio, Raffaele. "Il folle volo di Ulisse, di Dante e di ... *Inferno* XXVI." *Critica Letteraria* 23.1-2 [86-87] (1995): 123-151; Hatcher, Anna. "Dante's Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 88 (1970): 109-118; Mandelbaum, and Anthony Oldcorn. "Canto XXVI: Ulysses: Persuasion versus Prophecy." *Inferno*. 348-356. Berkeley, CA: U of California Press; Jannucci, Amilcare A. "Ulysses' folle volo: The Burden of History." *Medioevo Romanzo* 3 (1976): 410-445; Picone, Michelangelo. "Dante, Ovidio e il mito di Ulisse." *Lettere Italiane* 43.4 (Oct. 1991): 500-516; Rossi, Mario M. "Dante's Conception of Ulysses." *Italica* 30.4 (Dec. 1953): 193-202. Reynolds, Barbara. "Dante's Tale of Ulysses." *Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, Sezione Romanza* 2 (1960): 49-66; Scott, John A. "*Inferno* XXVI: Dante's Ulysses." *Lettere Italiane* 23 (1971): 145-186; Stull, William, and Robert Hollander. "The Lucanian Source of Dante's Ulysses." *Studi Danteschi* 63 (1991): 1-52; Thompson, David. "Dante's Ulysses and the Allegorical Journey." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 85 (1967): 33-58; Warner, Lawrence. "Dante's Ulysses and the Erotics of Crusading." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 116 (1998): 65-93.

⁴⁰⁹ *Inferno XXXIV*. 121-126: For more on Satan's Fall and the creation of Mount Purgatory see: Forti, Carla, "Nascita dell'*Inferno* o nascita del Purgatorio: nota sulla caduta del Lucifero dantesco," *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 4 (1986): 241-60; Freccero, John, "Satan's Fall and the *Quaestio de aqua et terra*," *Italica* 38 (1961): 99-115; Martin, Dennis D., and Elesha Coffman "What about purgatory? The doctrinal

the *Commedia* the pilgrim alludes to the physical disturbance to the earth caused by Satan's physical fall, and also to the spiritual corruption done to the world by Satan by calling Lucifer the great worm that pierced the earth: "... vermo reo che 'l mondo fóra".⁴¹⁰ The devil pierced the world physically and spiritually through his disobedience and played a fundamental role in convincing Adam and Eve to rebel against Divine Authority and to turn away from God. It is important to note that in the *Commedia* Lucifer's Fall creates the very mountain upon which the penitent must ascend to regain righteousness. The idea that Satan's wickedness forges a path towards salvation for the faithful is reinforced even in the very depths of the *Inferno*: The pilgrim escapes Hell and reaches the shores of Mount Purgatory by climbing down first and then up Satan:

Quando noi fummo là dove la coscia
 si volge, a punto in sul grosso de l'anche,
 lo duca, con fatica e con angoscia,
 volse la testa ov' elli avea le zanche,
 e aggrappossi al pel com' om che sale,
 sì che 'n inferno i' credea tornar anche.⁴¹¹

The journey through the *Purgatorio* is an undoing of the Fall: The penitent of the *Purgatorio* begin their journey towards healing their corrupted natures on a mountain planted firmly on earth, the place where all people lost their righteousness through Adam's sin. The penitent suffer tremendous pain as they make their way through the seven terraces in hopes of reaching the Garden of Eden located at the summit of the purgatorial mountain. Adam's sin weighs heavily on the pilgrim's shoulders as he makes

grounding of Dante's mysterious mountain." *Christian History* (2001): 43-43 Nardi, Bruno, "La caduta di Lucifero e l'autenticità della *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra*," in *Lecturae et altri studi danteschi* (Turin: Lectura Dantis Romana, 1959); Pasquazi, Silvio, "Sulla cosmogonia di Dante (*Inferno* XXXIV e *Questio de aqua et terra*)," in *D'Egitto in Ierusalemme* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), pp. 121-56; Stabile, Giorgio, "Cosmologia e teologia nella *Commedia*: la caduta di Lucifero e il rovesciamento del mondo," *Lecture classensi* 12 (1983): 139-73.

⁴¹⁰ *Inferno* XXXIV. 108

⁴¹¹ *Inferno* XXXIV. 76-82; see also *Inferno* XXIV. 113-117.

his way through the *Purgatorio*: “quand' io, che meco avea di quel d'Adamo/vinto dal sonno, in su l'erba inchinai”.⁴¹² The pilgrim is burdened by moral slavery resulting from the Fall, but as he journeys through the seven terraces, his corrupted nature is healed and the weight lessens. As he expiates each sin and acquires a new virtue, one of seven “P”s is removed from his forehead, sin weighs less heavily upon him, and he climbs to the next terrace with greater ease: “Ed elli a me: ‘Questa montagna è tale, /che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave; /e quant' om più va sù, e men fa male’.”⁴¹³

3.1 Duration of Punishment in Purgatory

Augustine and Aquinas’ doctrines on the duration of punishment in Purgatory influenced Dante's conception of fate of souls in Purgatory. Although Aquinas believed that all souls in Purgatory would ascend into Heaven at the Final Judgment, he also argued that the penitent may enter Heaven before the end of days.⁴¹⁴ According to Aquinas, certain souls pass through purgatory faster than others depending on the obstinacy of the will:

Some venial sins cling more persistently than others, according as the affections are more inclined to them, and more firmly fixed in them. And since that which clings more persistently is more slowly cleansed, it follows that some are tormented in Purgatory longer than others, for as much as their affections were steeped in venial sins.⁴¹⁵

According to Aquinas, the more steeped the will is in vice, the longer the soul must remain in Purgatory. In a similar vein, some souls pass more quickly than others through

⁴¹²*Purgatorio XI.* 10-11

⁴¹³*Purgatorio IV.* 88-90

⁴¹⁴*ST III.* 69-99: For the Scripture dealing with final judgment, see: Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:5-16; 14:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Peter 4:13;

⁴¹⁵*ST III.* appendix II.6

the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio* depending on how resistant the will is to ridding itself of its sinful disposition. Statius, for example, spends over four hundred years on the terrace of the slothful and five hundred years on the terrace of the avaricious, but Forese passes through the first five terraces in only five years.⁴¹⁶

In the *Purgatorio*, the penitent learn to overcome self-will and to accord their wills to the Divine by practicing patience. In the *Purgatorio*, purification proceeds according to its divinely appointed time, and so God may delay some souls' entrance into Purgatory. In *Purgatorio II*, for example, the pilgrim meets his friend Casella who died three months prior to Dante's arrival at the shores of Mount Purgatory. Casella explains that all souls must wait for an appropriate time for them to gather on the angel's ferry and that nothing can rush the angel to ferry the soul across the sea before its proper time:

Ed elli a me: "Nessun m'è fatto oltraggio
se quei che leva quando e cui li piace
più volte m'ha negato esto passaggio;
ché di giusto voler lo suo si face."⁴¹⁷

The excommunicate of the *Ante-Purgatorio* must wait thirty times the period of excommunication before entering Purgatory Proper. Similarly, the lethargic remain in the *Ante-Purgatorio* the length of time they were unrepentant, and the unabsolved must wait and pray indefinitely until divine judgment permits them to begin the purification process on the seven terraces.

3.2 Prayers for the Dead

⁴¹⁶ *Purgatorio XXII; Purgatorio XXIII; Purgatorio XX*

⁴¹⁷ *Purgatorio II*. 94-97

In the *Purgatorio*, almsgiving for the dead may decrease the amount of time the penitent spend on Mount Purgatory. As I have previously mentioned, the excommunicate, the lethargic, and the unabsolved must wait a predetermined length of time before entering Purgatory Proper, but the prayers of the living, who are in a state of grace, may gain them early entrance into the *Purgatorio*. In *Purgatorio III*, Manfred begs Dante to tell his daughter to pray for him so that his time there might be expedited:

Vedi oggimai se tu mi puoi far lieto,
 rivelando a la mia buona Costanza
 come m'hai visto, e anco esto divieto
 ché qui per quei di là molto s'avanza.⁴¹⁸

Belacqua, a pilgrim amongst the lethargic, tells Dante that it is useless for him to try and reach the gates of Purgatory Proper before he finishes serving his appointed time. He hopes that the prayers of the living might ease him from his burden and persuade divine justice to allow him to pass through the gates.⁴¹⁹ Similarly, Forese, a penitent glutton, tells Dante that his wife's prayers allowed him to escape the pains of the *Ante-Purgatorio*, and granted him swift passage through the previous five terraces.⁴²⁰

The idea that prayers offered by the living help those in Purgatory has its roots in the earliest of Christian doctrine and is now part of modern day Church practice. According to the Old Testament tradition, the living pray for the dead in hopes that God might show His mercy to the departed and forgive them their sins. In the early third century, Tertullian, basing his theories on 2 Maccabees, writes that it is obligatory for all Christians to offer prayers for the dead, and in the *De Monogamia* he tells a widow that it

⁴¹⁸ *Purgatorio III*. 142-145.

⁴¹⁹ *Purgatorio IV*. 133-134.

⁴²⁰ *Purgatorio XXIII*. 88-90

is her duty to pray for her departed husband's soul.⁴²¹ According to St. Cyril, the fourth century Bishop of Jerusalem, Christians must pray for the Holy Father, Bishops, and all those who have died in the Faith.⁴²² St. Gregory of Nyssa also argues that all souls upon their deaths will have to pass through the Purgatorial Fire, but for some souls pain might be lessened by the prayers of the living.⁴²³ In the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas argues that church prayers, personal prayers, and almsgiving help the departed.⁴²⁴ Augustine also believed that suffrages are most effective for the deceased if the departed souls are part of the faithful and are not guilty of grave sins. In *On the Care of the Dead* Augustine declares it is the duty of faithful to pray for their deceased loved ones and almsgiving for the dead must be offered during the celebration of the mass.⁴²⁵ One of Augustine's most influential writings on this topic comes from a personal prayer he wrote in 397-398 after the death of his mother Monica. Augustine appeals to God's mercy and asks God to forgive his deceased mother's sins because she was a deserving Christian who upheld the faith:

I then, O my Praise and my Life, Thou God of my heart, putting aside for a little her good deeds, for which I joyfully give thanks to You, do now beseech You for the sins of my mother. Hearken unto me, through that Medicine of our wounds who hung upon the tree, and who, sitting at Your right hand, makes intercession for us. I know that she acted mercifully, and from the heart forgave her debtors their debts; do Thou also forgive her debts. Forgive her, O Lord, forgive her, I beseech You; enter not into judgment with her. Let Your mercy be exalted above Your justice.⁴²⁶

⁴²¹ cap x, P.L, II, col 912

⁴²² *Catechet. Mystog.*, V, 9, PG, XXXIII, col. 1116

⁴²³ P.G, XLVI, col. 524,525

⁴²⁴ *ST.* 71

⁴²⁵ *On the Care of the Dead. I.*: "Of no small weight is the authority of the Church whereby she clearly approves of the custom whereby a commendation of the dead has a place in the prayers which the priests pour forth to the Lord God at His altar"; John of Damascus, believed that almsgiving is part of apostolic tradition: *De his qui in fide dormierunt*, 3: "Realizing the nature of the Mysteries the disciples of the Saviour and His holy apostles sanctioned a commemoration of those who had died in the faith, being made in the awe-inspiring and life-giving Mysteries."

⁴²⁶ *Confessions* 9. 13: 34-37

Many early church rituals included prayers for the dead. Until the twelfth century, for example, the names of the deceased were inscribed in a holy book called a Diptych. Priests read the names inscribed in the Diptychs to the congregation or laid the books down on the altar during mass as an offering in favor of the dead.⁴²⁷ In the Early Church, inscriptions on the catacombs offered petitions of peace for the dead, and at the anniversary of the loved one's death, the family united at the gravesite and prayed for the repose of departed.

4.1 Topography of Mount Purgatory

Early Christian theologians divided the afterlife into five realms: Terrestrial Paradise (Abraham's Bosom), Limbus Patrum and Limbus Infantum, Purgatory, Heaven, and Hell. Terrestrial Paradise or the Garden of Eden is considered by theologians to be the Prelapsarian home of mankind.⁴²⁸ Early Christians believed that Terrestrial Paradise was also synonymous with Abraham's bosom or the place where the Old Testament Patriarchs dwelled until Christ's harrowing of Hell.⁴²⁹ The New Testament makes three references to the Garden of Eden, each time equating it with Paradise or the Heavenly abode of the blessed. The first reference to Terrestrial Paradise in the New Testament is contained in the story of Lazarus and the rich man in the Gospel of Luke. Lazarus, a poor but virtuous man, begs for crumbs at the rich man's table. The rich man spends his days in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and wealth, and pays no attention to Lazarus'

⁴²⁷ Chrysostom defended this practice and believed that it hastened the dead's time in Purgatory In I Ad Cor., Hom. xli, n. 4, G., LXI, col. 361, 362

⁴²⁸ Genesis 2

⁴²⁹ The Biblical reference to the Harrowing of Hell is found in Ephesians 4.8-10

suffering. After his death, Lazarus enjoys eternal bliss in Abraham's bosom while the rich man is tormented in the fires of Hell. The rich man begs Lazarus to dip his finger in water and "cool his tongue," but Lazarus tells him that no one from his side may cross to rich man's side and vice versa⁴³⁰: "And besides all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither".⁴³¹ The second reference to Terrestrial Paradise is also found in Luke. During his crucifixion, Jesus tells the penitent thief he has been forgiven and will ascend directly into Paradise.⁴³² Early theologians believed that the Paradise to which Christ was referring was the blessed dwelling place of the Old Testament Hebrews or Abraham's bosom located in the Garden of Eden. The last reference to the Garden of Eden in the New Testament also equates Terrestrial Paradise with the eternal repose of the blessed. In the Book of Revelations St. John hears the voice of the Angel of Ephesus proclaim that the virtuous will one day eat from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the paradise of my God".⁴³³

Augustine did not believe that the Old Testament Patriarchs awaited eternal glory in Abraham's bosom. According to Augustine, the Hebrew Saints dwelled, until the harrowing of Hell, in the *Limbus Patrum* located in the upper regions of Hell. Augustine and Aquinas also believed that unbaptized children and all those guilty of only original sin are assigned to the *Limbus Infantum*. Although souls in the *Limbus Infantum* feel no

⁴³⁰ Luke 16:19-31

⁴³¹ Luke 16:26

⁴³² Luke 23:43: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

⁴³³ Revelations 2:7

physical torment, they suffer the *poena damni* or the pain of loss because they are denied the beatific vision.⁴³⁴

4.2 *Limbus Patrum* and *Limbus Infantum* in the *Commedia*

By the twelfth century the concept of Abraham's Bosom fell out of favor with most Christians and was replaced by the *Limbus Patrum* and the *Limbus Infantum*.⁴³⁵ Because Limbo was reserved for the Patriarchs and the unbaptized, most Christians by Dante's era viewed the afterlife in terms of three realms: Purgatory, Hell, and Heaven. Although the poet divides his *Commedia* into the three realms, he also includes within the framework of his conception of the afterlife, Limbo, Terrestrial Paradise and Abraham's bosom. The *Inferno*, for example, contains both a *Limbus Patrum* and a *Limbus Infantum*. In the *Inferno*, the unbaptized children dwell in Limbo, and do not undergo any physical punishment.⁴³⁶ Aquinas believed that the unbaptized endured a mild spiritual punishment. He argues that the unbaptized children understand that they have been denied the beatific vision, yet this knowledge does not cause them any sorrow.⁴³⁷ According to Aquinas their damnation is *tolerable* because, due to the stain of original sin, the unbaptized never possessed the natural ability to obtain the beatific vision:

⁴³⁴ Enchir. xciii: "The punishment of children who die in none but original sin is most lenient."; For Augustine's view on the fate of unbaptized infants see: *De Libero arbitrio III*; *Of Sin and Merit 1.21*; *Contra Jul. V. 44* For Aquinas' doctrine on the Limbus Infantum, see *ST Supplement 69*.

⁴³⁵ Le Goff, Jacques *The Birth of Purgatory*, 221: "Though it is possible to find, in the theoretical writings of certain thirteenth-century scholastics up to the time of Dante, a system of the other world involving five regions, the system that began to establish itself at the end of the twelfth century was one involving three regions".

⁴³⁶ For more information on the differences between Dante and Aquinas' vision of Limbus Infantum see: Mazzoni, Francesco, "Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Divina Commedia*: il Canto IV dell'*Inferno*," *Studi Danteschi* 42 (1965): 29-206.

⁴³⁷ *ST appendix I.I.2*: "Consequently others say that they will know perfectly things subject to natural knowledge, and both the fact of their being deprived of eternal life and the reason for this privation, and that nevertheless this knowledge will not cause any sorrow in them"

Accordingly, it must be observed that if one is guided by right reason one does not grieve through being deprived of what is beyond one's power to obtain, but only through lack of that which, in some way, one is capable of obtaining. Thus no wise man grieves for being unable to fly like a bird, or for that he is not a king or an emperor, since these things are not due to him; whereas he would grieve if he lacked that to which he had some kind of claim. I say, then, that every man who has the use of free will is adapted to obtain eternal life, because he can prepare himself for grace whereby to merit eternal life [Cf. I-II, 109, 5 and 6]; so that if he fail in this, his grief will be very great, since he has lost what he was able to possess. But children were never adapted to possess eternal life, since neither was this due to them by virtue of their natural principles, for it surpasses the entire faculty of nature, nor could they perform acts of their own whereby to obtain so great a good.⁴³⁸

Augustine also conceded that unbaptized children receive the mildest of punishments and that their punishment is so tolerable that they would prefer existence in Limbo to non-existence.⁴³⁹ Dante does not share Aquinas and Augustine's doctrine of a tolerable damnation for the unbaptized, and although the infants are punished in the upper regions of the *Inferno* and are spared the pains of physical torment, they suffer tremendous torment provoked by the *poenus damni* or the loss of the beatific vision. In the *Commedia*, eternal joy comes from participation in the beatific vision, while eternal suffering comes from separation from God, the one true source of happiness. In *Inferno III* the *poena damni* brings considerable sorrow and pain and the darkness of the circle represents the unbaptized infants' despair at having lost salvation. Upon entering the first circle, the pilgrim notes the absence of cries of physical anguish, but is haunted by the sense of grief pervading the entire circle. The unbaptized children's sorrowful sighs provoked by the *poena damni* fill the circle causing the air to tremble:

Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
non avea pianto mai che di sospiri
che l'aura eterna facevan tremare.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ *ST Supplement.Appendix I.I..2*

⁴³⁹ *On Sin and Merit* 1. 21

⁴⁴⁰ *Inferno IV. 25-27*

The poet borrows from the biblical images of the resting place of the Hebrew Saints in his description of the Limbo of the virtuous pagans: In *Inferno IV* the light of reason illuminates the infernal darkness, and the trembling air of the first circle is replaced by a quiet stillness. In the Limbo of the virtuous pagans, there is lush green meadow, and a cool, refreshing stream encircles the *nobile castello*.⁴⁴¹ Dante also strays from some of Aquinas and Augustine's teachings on the *Limbus Patrum*. Aquinas and Augustine agree that all pagans, including those that possessed great virtue, do not dwell in the *Limbus Patrum*; they suffer eternal torment in Hell. According to Aquinas and Augustine, the pagans' lack of faith damns them, while the Hebrew Saints' belief in the coming of Christ saves them from the pains of Hell and allows them entrance into the *Limbus Patrum*.⁴⁴² In the *Inferno*, virtuous pagans and Old Testament Patriarchs dwell in the same Limbo.⁴⁴³ Virgil, for example, tells the pilgrim that he witnessed the harrowing of Hell, whereby Christ descended into Hell, liberated the prophets, but left Virgil and all other unbelievers behind:

rispuose: 'Io era nuovo in questo stato,
 quando ci vidi venire un possente,
 con segno di vittoria coronato.
 Trasseci l'ombra del primo parente,
 d'Abèl suo figlio e quella di Noè,
 di Moïse legista e ubidente;

⁴⁴¹ *Inferno IV*. 106-108: "Venimmo al piè d'un nobile castello,/ sette volte cerchiato d'alte mura,/ difeso intorno d'un bel fiumicello."

⁴⁴² *ST II/II.10.1-12; ST III.68.1-12; City of God. VIII*

⁴⁴³ According to Singleton, Dante strays from Church doctrine by elevating the classical poets and philosophers: "Honor, or fame in the world, is given in the *Commedia* as the dominant aspiration of the pagans (see, for example, *Inf. II*, 59-60). Needless to say, in conceiving that such fame would win merit in Heaven, Dante is venturing beyond established doctrine -- as he is generally in his conception of Limbo, for that matter. Augustine, to be sure, had thought there would be a certain attenuation of suffering in Hell for such good deeds as these pagans were able to perform even without sanctifying grace. Dante here appears to have made a positive appraisal of so negative a concession." Singleton, Charles. *The Divine Comedy*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1970-1975. *Inferno IV*. 74

Abraàm patriarca e Davìd re,
 Israèl con lo padre e co' suoi nati
 e con Rachele, per cui tanto fé,
 e altri molti, e feceli beati.
 E vo' che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi,
 spiriti umani non eran salvati.⁴⁴⁴

Dante honors the pagan poets and philosophers and distinguishes them from the rest of the damned in *Inferno* because of their dedication to art, poetry, science, and philosophy:

E quelli a me: "L'onrata nominanza
 che di lor suona sù ne la tua vita,
 grazia acquista in ciel che s' li avanza."⁴⁴⁵

The virtuous pagans seem to suffer less than the other souls in *Inferno* because they are not tormented by the *poena sensus* and are given a place of privilege, but they still suffer the pain of the *poena damni*. Virgil explains to the pilgrim that a terrible sense of longing to partake in the beatific vision, coupled with the knowledge that such a union to God is impossible, causes both the unbaptized and the virtuous pagans immense sorrow and pain:

Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,
 semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
 che senza speme vivemo in disio.⁴⁴⁶

The virtuous pagans possess neither joy nor peace because they can never hope to one day witness the beatific vision. The poet notes their expressionless faces: "sembianz' avevan né trista né lieta".⁴⁴⁷ The lack of joy and peace in the Limbo of the virtuous pagans is characterized by the great silence and stillness that fills the air. Because the

⁴⁴⁴ *Inferno IV.* 52-63

⁴⁴⁵ *Inferno IV.* 76-78

⁴⁴⁶ *Inferno IV.* 40-42

⁴⁴⁷ *Inferno IV.* 84

virtuous pagans understand that they must endure eternity deprived of the beatific vision, there is no laughter or singing and minimal speaking.

Inferno IV celebrates the virtuous pagans' moral accomplishments while still reminding the reader of the fundamental role of grace in the justification process. Christian doctrine teaches that moral perfection can never be won through personal merit or strength. Justifying grace heals postlapsarian people's wounded natures, making them worthy of eternal life. The virtuous pagans achieved the highest level of moral perfection attainable for those lacking the healing power of grace and are granted a privileged place in Hell, but will never witness the beatific vision because they have not been made worthy of eternal life through grace.

The pilgrim crosses the stream encircling the *nobile castello* as though it were not made of water: "Questo passammo come terra dura".⁴⁴⁸ The stream serves as a barrier, and only lovers of virtue may cross it. According to Giorgio Padoan, the seven walls of the *nobile castello* represent philosophy, with its seven disciplines, physics, metaphysics, ethics, politics, economics, mathematics, and dialectic.⁴⁴⁹ Mazzoni argues that the *nobile castello* represents the good life of the virtuous pagans and all that they accomplished without the help of grace.⁴⁵⁰ I believe that the *nobile castello* and its seven walls might be interpreted as an infernal inversion of the *Purgatorio* and its seven terraces. The

⁴⁴⁸ *Inferno IV*. 109; For more on *Inferno IV* and the virtuous pagans see: Iannucci, Amilcare A. "Inferno IV." Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation 6.suppl. (Spring 1990): 42-53; Iannucci, Amilcare A. "Dante's Limbo: At the Margins of Orthodoxy." Dante & the Unorthodox: The Aesthetics of Transgression. 63-82. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005; Mazzoni, Francesco, "Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Divina Commedia*: il Canto IV dell'*Inferno*," *Studi Danteschi* 42 (1965): 29-206; Padoan, Giorgio. "Il limbo dantesco." Lettere Italiane 21 (1969): 369-388; Pertile, Lino, "Il nobile castello, il paradiso terrestre e l'umanesimo dantesco," Filologia e critica 5 (1980): 1-29; Rizzo, Gino. "Dante and the Virtuous Pagans." A Dante Symposium. In Commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the Poet's Birth (1265-1965). 115-140. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1965;

⁴⁴⁹ La Divina Commedia, Inferno (canti I-VIII) a cura di Giorgio Padoan. Vol. IX of *Opere di Dante* a cura di V. Branca, F. Maggini e B. Nardi. Firenze, Felice Le Monnier, 1967.

⁴⁵⁰ Introduction: The doctrine of Purgatory Mazzoni, Francesco, "Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Divina Commedia*: il Canto IV dell'*Inferno*," *Studi Danteschi* 42 (1965): 29-206

purgatorial pilgrims are spiritually transformed after climbing the seven terraces of Purgatory, while the pagans in Limbo are unchanged by their experience within the seven walls of the *nobile castello*. In the *Purgatorio*, grace and suffering are at the core of the redemptive process, and so the pilgrims rest only after sunset when God's grace in form of sunlight is no longer available to them. Unlike in Limbo, the penitent are moved by their faith, acknowledge their moral weaknesses, and yearn for divine guidance. The pilgrims pray and meditate on divine scripture because they understand that they cannot rely solely on individual strength to guide them through the terraces. Conversely, the pagans in the *nobile castello* will not experience a spiritual transformation because they lack both faith and grace. They believe that the power to become righteous lies with in them, and they think that reason will to lead them to moral perfection.

4.3 Terrestrial Paradise in the *Purgatorio*

Aquinas and Isidore agree that the Garden of Eden is located on earth somewhere in the Orient.⁴⁵¹ Dante places the Garden of Eden on top of the Purgatorial Mountain, in an intermediary place between Heaven and Earth.⁴⁵² The journey through the *Purgatorio*

⁴⁵¹ *STI*.102.1; "Now the east is the right hand on the heavens, as the Philosopher explains (De Coel. ii, 2); and the right hand is nobler than the left: hence it was fitting that God should place the earthly paradise in the east."; Isidore Etym. xiv, 3: "The Garden of Eden is a place situated in the east, its name being the Greek for garden."

⁴⁵² For more on *Purgatorio* XXVIII and Matelda see:

Armour, Peter. "Purgatorio XXVIII." *Dante Commentaries: Eight Studies of the Divine Comedy*. 115-141. Dublin; Totowa, NJ: Irish Academic; Rowman & Littlefield, 1977; Barnes, John C. "Dante's Matelda: Fact or Fiction?." *Italian Studies* 28 (1973): 1-9; Brown, Emerson, Jr. "Proserpina, Matelda, and the Pilgrim." *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 89 (1971): 33-48; Chiti, Paolo, S.I. "La Matelda dantesca." *Civiltà Cattolica* 116.1 (1965): 240-253; Coassin, Flavia. "Matelda: Poetic Image or Archetype?." *Visions and Revisions: Women in Italian Culture*. 3-12. Providence, RI: Berg, 1993; Del Popolo, Concetto S. "Matelda." *Lettere classensi 8: Opera di Dante*. 121-134. Ravenna: Longo, 1979; Dronke, Peter. "Dante's Earthly Paradise: Towards an Interpretation of Purgatorio XXVIII." *Romanische Forschungen* 82 (1970): 467-487; Fajardo-Acosta, Fidel. "Purgatorio XXVIII: Catharsis and Paradisal

is the reclaiming of original justice lost through the Fall and so it is fitting that all souls, who have been cleansed of sin, pass through the Garden of Eden on their way to eternal Paradise. Upon entering the Garden, the pilgrim meets Matelda, whose principle role of dressing and keeping the Garden makes her a representation of a prelapsarian Eve.⁴⁵³ She tells the pilgrim that, before he may enter into Heaven, he must first drink from the River Lethe, also known as the river of oblivion in classical literature, so that he might forget all his sins.⁴⁵⁴ In the *Purgatorio*, the poet strays from biblical tradition regarding the number of rivers in Eden. According to the Bible, there are four rivers in Eden: Phison (Ganges), Gehon (Nile), Tigris, and Euphrates, but Matelda explains to Dante that the Garden of Eden has only two rivers, the Lethe and the Eunoe.⁴⁵⁵

The worthy souls that reach the summit of Mount Purgatory and ascend into *Paradiso* have attained moral perfection through grace. Their wills are accorded to the divine, and they, along with the blessed of the *Paradiso*, enjoy a greater moral perfection than even Adam possessed in the Garden of Eden. For example, after the pilgrim passes

Visions as States of Dynamic Equilibrium." *Neophilologus* 75.2 (Apr. 1991): 222-231; Glenn, Diana. "Matelda in the Terrestrial Paradise." *FULGOR: Flinders University Languages Group Online Review* 1.1 (Mar. 2002); Hawkins, Peter S. "Watching Matelda." *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Commedia*. 181-201. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991; Lochbrunner, Margarete. "Dantes Proserpina-Matelda." *Antaios* 7 (1965): 253-263; Mazzaro, Jerome. "The Vernal Paradox: Dante's Matelda." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 110 (1992): 107-120; Nardi, Tilde. "Matelda." *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 3.2 (1962): 29-34; Pacchioni, Paola. "Lia e Rachele, Matelda e Beatrice." *Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 42.18 (July 2001): 47-74; Petrocchi, Giorgio. "Il mito di Matelda." *Lecture classensi* 2 (1969): 173-217; Pizzorno, Patrizia Grimaldi. "Matelda's Dance and the Smile of the Poets." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 112 (1994): 115-132; Saly, John. "Matelda's Poetics." *Italian Culture* 9 (1991): 55-62; Toffanin, Giuseppe. "Matelda." *Delta: Rivista di Critica e di Cultura* 13 (1957): 50-54; Walsh, Gerald G. "Dante's Matelda." *Thought* 12 (1937): 78-101.

⁴⁵³ For more on the link between prelapsarian Eve and Matilda see: Giamatti, A. Bartlett, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Hollander, Robert, *Allegory in Dante's "Commedia"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Singleton, Charles S., *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958)

⁴⁵⁴ *Purgatorio XXVIII*. 127-129

⁴⁵⁵ Genesis 2.10-14; *Purgatorio XXVIII*. 130-132

through the flames of the seventh terrace, Virgil declares that Dante's will has been healed because it is in perfect harmony with divine will:

libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:
per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio.⁴⁵⁶

Souls that pass through the purgatorial fire will never disobey Divine Law because they are no longer tempted by vice and only desire to please God. In another example, Piccarda in *Paradiso III* tells the pilgrim that she does not wish to ascend higher in Empyrean so that she might enjoy a higher degree of blessedness. She is content to remain in the Sphere of the Moon, the farthest Heaven from God simply because it is divine will:

Frate, la nostra volontà quieta
virtù di carità, che fa volerne
sol quel ch'avemo, e d'altro non ci asseta.⁴⁵⁷

Dante's notion that the blessed can never fall from grace might have been influenced by Augustine's doctrine on original sin and redemption. Augustine believed that the blessed of Heaven enjoyed a greater moral perfection than even Prelapsarian Adam: "Therefore the first liberty of the will was to be able not to sin, the last will be much greater, not to be able to sin; the first immortality was to be able not to die, the last will be much greater, not to be able to die".⁴⁵⁸ Augustine argues that God grants his elect with the grace of perseverance, which is stronger than *gratia laeta*, the grace given to Adam. According to Augustine, prelapsarian Adam possessed the gift of original justice which meant that he could make moral decisions without the influence of the passions. He remained in a state

⁴⁵⁶ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 140-142

⁴⁵⁷ *Paradiso III*. 70-72

⁴⁵⁸ *On Rebuke and Grace* 33; see also *On Rebuke and Grace* 29

of grace for as long as he chose to do so.⁴⁵⁹ Contrarily, postlapsarian free will is corrupted, easily influenced by the passions, and requires a stronger grace than the *gratia laeta*. Augustine argues that the grace of perseverance strengthens the will such that it remains uninfluenced by passions, seeks only that which God wills, and will never fall into sin.

4.4 Hugh of St. Victor and the Topography of Dante's *Purgatorio*

Early church theologians disagreed about the exact nature of punishment in Purgatory, and in the *Purgatorio*, Dante creates an intricate system of purgatorial purification based upon various Christian doctrines. The idea for the seven terraces was most likely influenced by Hugh of St. Victor and his mystical teachings on penitence and purification.⁴⁶⁰ Hugh of St. Victor compares the human soul to a city: When a city is filled with inhabitants it is alive, but when empty it is dead. In the same manner, the human soul in possession of divine virtue thrives, but if it lacks virtue it is dead.⁴⁶¹

Hugh of St. Victor compares the human soul under siege by vice to Jerusalem under siege by the gentiles. He argues that people must defend themselves against attack by putting up a wall of virtue. Vice easily passes through the gates and doors of the

⁴⁵⁹ Augustine writes: "The first man had not that grace by which he should never will to be evil; but assuredly he had that in which if he willed to abide he would never be evil, and without which, moreover, he could not by free will be good, but which, nevertheless, by free will he could forsake". *On Rebuke and Grace* 31

⁴⁶⁰ For more analysis on the influence of Hugh of St. Victor on the *Commedia* see: Carugati, Giuliana. "Dante 'mistico'." *Quaderni d'Italianistica: Official Journal of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies* 10.1-2 (1989): 237-250; Gardner, Edmund G. *Dante and the Mystics: A Study of the Mystical Aspect of the Divina commedia and Its Relations with Some of Its Mediaeval Sources* New York: Haskell House, 1968; Sozzi, Lionello. "Dante e Hugo." *Letture Classensi* 14 (1985): 45-61.

⁴⁶¹ *Annotatiunculae Elucidatoriae in Theros Jeremiae*, PL. 175.258

human soul when people do not guard against worldly desires.⁴⁶² Similarly, in the *selva oscura*, the wayfarer loses way because he allowed himself to be ruled by vice and ceased to practice the virtues. In Hugh of St. Victor's terms, the wayfarer left Jerusalem's gates unguarded by the virtues and so vice easily entered the city or his soul.

In the evil city of Babylon, the wretched man builds a downward passage into Hell. Babylon's seven steps represent the seven deadly sins of pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. According to Hugh of St. Victor, the wicked man descends into Babylon by following six steps representing temptation, delight in sin, consent to sinning, operation (the sinner no longer desires virtue), habit (the sinner becomes a slave to sin), and despair (the sinner loses all hope and is thrown into the prison of Babylon). The wayfarer in *Inferno I* followed the six steps into the Babylonian prison described by Hugh of St. Victor. Sin tempts the wayfarer into straying from the virtuous path. Because he delights in and consents to sin, the three beasts representing vice easily keep him from reaching the *colle luminoso*. The wayfarer cannot break from sin, because sin has become a habit for him and he falls into despair, abandoning all hope of righteousness:

E qual è quei che volontieri acquista,
e giugne 'l tempo che perder lo face,
che 'n tutti suoi pensier piange e s'attrista;
tal mi fece la bestia senza pace,
che, venendomi 'ncontro, a poco a poco
mi ripigneva là dove 'l sol tace.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² *Threnos*, 175.258; For a more in depth analysis on Jerusalem and Babylonia in the writings of Hugh of St. Victor see: Battles, Lewis "Hugh of St. Victor as a Moral Allegorist" *Church History* Vol. 18, No. 4, Dec., 1949; 220-240.

⁴⁶³ *Inferno I*. 55-60

In the prison of Babylon described by Hugh of St. Victor, the sinner may be redeemed by returning to Jerusalem by way of another six steps: The penitent recognizes sin, has a conversion of heart, confesses his sins, completes his penance, practices virtue, and delights in good works. Just as the penitent sinner escapes the Babylonian prison, the purgatorial penitent become righteous by following the six steps outlined by Hugh of St. Victor. In order to reach the shores of *Purgatorio*, the penitent must have a conversion of heart and a desire to please God. The journey through the seven terraces teaches the penitent to hate sin because it distances them from God and prevents them from participating in the beatific vision. The pilgrims verbally confess their sins and do penance by suffering purgatorial punishment on each of the seven terraces. The pilgrims not only pay for their sins on the Purgatorial Mountain, but they also practice virtue and do good work, two important steps in Hugh of St. Victor's redemption process.

Hugh of St. Victor also uses his city analogy to demonstrate how the soul purifies itself of vice. In *Sermones XXXVIII* and *XXXIX*, he contrasts Babylon with Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem represents the good man who builds a high tower of contemplation, rids himself of wickedness, and attains salvation. Similar to the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio* Jerusalem's high tower of contemplation has a series of seven steps or plateae which one must ascend in order to purify oneself from vice. Like the terraces in the *Purgatorio*, each of these steps in Hugh of St. Victor's Jerusalem represents one of the seven virtues with an opposing capital sin: humility contrary to pride, brotherly love contrary to envy, peace contrary to wrath, zeal contrary to sloth, generosity contrary to avarice, abstinence contrary to gluttony, and chastity contrary to lust. One enters the city of Jerusalem through the gate of Christian faith and climbs to the gate of contemplation

by ascending five steps representing hope, charity, the seven virtues, the six good works, and evangelization.⁴⁶⁴

In the *Mystical Ark*, Hugh of St. Victor explains that in Jerusalem God gives the good man the tools and instructions necessary to build a spiritual house that will last for all eternity. According to Hugh of St. Victor, God tells the good man to build his house upon a foundation of Christian Faith so it might withstand any attack on virtue. God also commands that the good man prepare the house for divine visitation: The virtuous man opens the spiritual senses of his soul by opening the windows of the house. He sweeps the floor with the broom of confession, and hangs sweet smelling herbs of penance and the seven curtains of virtue upon the walls: green for faith, the hyacinth for hope, yellow for charity, black for humility, red for patience, and white for purity.

The penitent of the *Purgatorio* prepare the same dwelling place for God described by Hugh of St. Victor. The pilgrims open up the spiritual windows of the soul by giving up self-will and allowing themselves to be guided by God's grace and direction. In *Purgatorio XIII*, for example, the penitent stop climbing the terraces after sun down. In the *Commedia*, the sun represents God's grace and so the pilgrims cannot make any spiritual progress when the sun or grace is not present.⁴⁶⁵ God forgives the purgatorial pilgrims for their sins after they do their penance, confess their transgressions and drink from the cleansing waters of the river Lethe. After climbing up the seven terraces and passing through the purgatorial fire, the penitent acquire the seven virtues and are made worthy to enter into eternal life. Upon reaching Terrestrial Paradise, the pilgrim in *Purgatorio XXIX* witnesses a religious procession in which he sees three women

⁴⁶⁴ See Matthew 25:35 for a list of the six good works and the seven virtues

⁴⁶⁵ *Purgatorio XIII*. 10-24

representing the three theological virtues. The women wear robes representing charity (red), hope (green) and faith (white). He also sees four women dressed in purple robes representing the four cardinal virtues of temperance, justice, fortitude, and prudence.

5.1 Classification of Sinners

The Early church sought to distinguish souls worthy of damnation from those deserving of purification. According to Jacques Le Goff, Augustine attempts to resolve this problem by dividing sinners into four classifications: The *entirely good*, the *entirely wicked*, the *not entirely good*, and the *not entirely wicked*. The *entirely good* immediately ascend into Heaven while the *entirely wicked* are sent directly to Hell. The *not entirely good* include the souls of those that confessed their venial sins, but never completed their penance. Augustine considers souls that never confessed their venial sins to be amongst the *not entirely wicked*. According to Augustine, the souls of the *not entirely wicked* went to Hell, but were tormented less than the *entirely wicked*.⁴⁶⁶ Conversely, the *not entirely good*, are worthy of entrance into Purgatory.

Although Dante includes more penitent souls in the *Purgatorio* than Augustine would have allowed, few souls reach the purgatorial shores. In the *Purgatorio* the gates are so rarely opened that they creak each time the angel permits a pilgrim to pass through them:

E quando fuor ne' cardini distorti
li spigoli di quella regge sacra,
che di metallo son sonanti e forti,
non ruggiò sì né si mostrò sì acra

⁴⁶⁶ See *Enchiridion* 67, 68, 109, 110; *City of God* 13, 21, and 26; For a more in depth analysis of the categorization of sinners in Augustine and the Early Church see: Le Goff [The Birth of Purgatory](#) 220-230.

Tarpèa, come tolto le fu il buono
Metello, per che poi rimase macra.⁴⁶⁷

Some souls enter the *Purgatorio* without having confessed all their sins in this life, and consequently the penitent include those whom Augustine would damn. Augustine believed that only those souls that confessed all their sins before death were permitted to enter Purgatory, but Dante believed that souls desiring to please God and to reach moral perfection were worthy of purgatorial purification. Pilgrims who had spent their lives in sin, but repented in the very last moments await purification in the *Antepurgatorio*. Among the penitent of the *Antepurgatorio*, Dante meets Buonconte of Montefeltro, the son of Guido of Montefeltro. Buonconte, the leader of the Aretines, is fatally wounded at the battle of Campaldino in 1289. Bleeding from the throat, Buonconte flees to the banks of the Arno River and murmurs the name *Mary*.⁴⁶⁸ Buonconte had spent his entire life in sin, but a last minute act of repentance saves him from eternal damnation. Upon his death, an angel and a demon fight over his eternal fate: “l’angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d’inferno / gridava: ‘O tu del ciel, perché mi privi?’”.⁴⁶⁹ In anger for having lost Buonconte’s soul to the angel, the demon raises a violent storm. The floodwaters carry Buonconte’s body down the Arno and bury it in the mud at the bottom of the river so that the corpse would never be found.⁴⁷⁰

In a similar episode in *Inferno XXVII*, an angel and a demon battle over possession of Guido of Montefeltro’s soul:

Francesco venne poi, com' io fu' morto,
per me; ma un d'i neri cherubini

⁴⁶⁷ *Purgatorio IX*. 133-138

⁴⁶⁸ *Purgatorio V*. 100-102: “Quivi perdei la vista, e la parola/nel nome di Maria fini', e quivi/caddi, e rimase la mia carne sola.”

⁴⁶⁹ *Purgatorio V*. 104-105

⁴⁷⁰ *Purgatorio V*. 115-129.

li disse: 'Non portar; non mi far torto.
Venir se ne dee giù tra ' miei meschini
perché diede 'l consiglio frodolente,
dal quale in qua stato li sono a' crini.⁴⁷¹

Guido, Buonconte's father, suffers eternal torment amongst the fraudulent of the *Inferno*, but his son awaits eternal glory in the *Ante-Purgatorio*. The contrast Dante draws between Guido's fate and that of his son Buonconte demonstrates that the poet believed that the Church is limited in its power to grant salvation. In the case of Guido and Buonconte, Dante proposes that the mere sacrament of confession does not guarantee divine forgiveness or entrance into Purgatory if the sinner is not remorseful. Although Buonconte never confesses his sins to a priest, God forgives him because he has a contrite heart. Guido receives the sacrament of reconciliation directly from Pope Boniface, but suffers eternal damnation because his confession was insincere.⁴⁷²

5.2 Early Church Doctrine on Mortal and Venial Sin

Early church theologians believed that minor sins do not necessarily bring damnation.⁴⁷³ The early church uses a passage from the gospel of John as scriptural basis for the differentiation between moral and venial sins. In the New Testament passage it is written that some sins bring eternal damnation while other sins can be forgiven:

He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask: and life

⁴⁷¹ *Inferno XXVII*. 112-117

⁴⁷² For more analysis on Buonconte in the *Purgatorio* see: Armour, Peter. "Words and the Drama of Death in Purgatorio V." *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia*. 93-122. Dublin: Irish Acad., 1993; Costantini, Aldo M. "Elementi cronachistici e sacre rappresentazioni nei due Da Montefeltro." *Lecture Classensi* 28 (1999): 29-42; Pietropaolo, Domenico. "The Figural Context of Buonconte's Salvation." *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 102 (1984): 123-134; Toja, Gianluigi. "Buonconte di Montefeltro e l'epos dell'eroe morente." *Studi in onore di Alberto Chiari*. 1269-1274. Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1973.

⁴⁷³ *Tract. xli in Joan*: Augustine divides sins into two categories criminal, which leads to damnation and venial which does not: "a crime is one that merits damnation, and a venial sin, one that does not."

shall be given to him who sinneth not to death. There is a sin unto death. For that I say not that any man ask. All iniquity is sin. And there is a sin unto death.⁴⁷⁴

According to Aquinas mortal sin damns the sinner by destroying the divine gifts of charity and sanctifying grace. Mortal sin turns the will away from God and towards fulfillment of temporal pleasures.⁴⁷⁵ Aquinas bases his doctrine on mortal and venial sins on a passage in Corinthians, in which Paul tells his followers that all sinners will pay for their sins either in this life or the next life, but those that built their lives upon a foundation of faith, will be spared eternal damnation:

For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it; because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.⁴⁷⁶

The faithful, who are guilty of venial sin, do not merit eternal damnation because venial sin does not destroy sanctifying grace or charity. They must undergo purification in Purgatory before passing into eternal life.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁴1 John 5: 16-17

⁴⁷⁵*ST I/II:89:2*

⁴⁷⁶Corinthians 3: 8-15

⁴⁷⁷ *ST I/II.88.2*: "Venial sin is so called from "venia" [pardon]. Consequently a sin may be called venial, first of all, because it has been pardoned: thus Ambrose says that "penance makes every sin venial": and this is called venial "from the result." Secondly, a sin is called venial because it does not contain anything either partially or totally, to prevent its being pardoned: partially, as when a sin contains something diminishing its guilt, e.g. a sin committed through weakness or ignorance: and this is called venial "from the cause": totally, through not destroying the order to the last end, wherefore it deserves temporal, but not everlasting punishment"; Augustine believed that the Fire of Judgment purifies the faithful. *City of God* 21.26: "If, therefore, the fire shall try both, in order that if any man's work abide— *i.e.*, if the superstructure be not consumed by the fire— he may receive a reward, and that if his work is burned he may suffer loss, certainly that fire is not eternal fire itself. For into this latter fire only those on the left hand shall be cast, and that with final and everlasting doom; but that former fire proves those on the right hand. But some of them it so proves that it does not burn and consume the structure which is found to have been built by them on Christ as the foundation; while others of them it proves in another fashion, so as to burn what they have built up, and thus causes them to suffer loss, while they themselves are saved because they have retained Christ, who was laid as their sure foundation, and have loved Him above all."

5.3 Venial, Mortal, and Capital sin in the *Commedia*

Early church doctrine on mortal and venial sins influenced Dante's conception of Purgatory. The idea that not all sins are equal in gravity is central to the *Purgatorio*. For example, lust, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, and gluttony are punished in both the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, but in the *Inferno* those sins are considered mortal while in the *Purgatorio* they are considered venial. Minor sins in the Dantean conception of divine justice make the sinner undeserving of the beatific vision and worthy of temporal punishment, but they are not necessarily damning. According to Aquinas venial sinners love God and desire to please Him, but they tend towards temporal good with a *certain inordinateness*.⁴⁷⁸ The penitent of the *Purgatorio* are guilty of venial sin because they remained, during their lifetimes, united to God through charity, but did not tend towards Him as they should. The Purgatorial pilgrims did not deliberately place their last end in a temporal good, but were led to sin out of weakness.⁴⁷⁹ Aquinas proposes that sinners commit mortal sin by re-directing the will away from the *Summum Bonum* and towards temporal good. Mortal sin corrupts people's natures by turning them away from God and by making their end in vice: "For, when the will is directed to a thing that is in itself contrary to charity, whereby man is directed to his last end, the sin is mortal by reason of its object."⁴⁸⁰ The mortal sins of the damned in the *Inferno* corrupted their natures and

⁴⁷⁸ *ST I/II.88.2*: "Sometimes, however, the sinner's will is directed to a thing containing a certain inordinateness, but which is not contrary to the love of God and one's neighbor..."; Ambrose (commentary on the text, and *Sermo xx* in *Ps. cxvii*), Jerome (*Comm. in Amos c. iv*), Augustine (*Comm. in Ps. xxxvii*), Gregory (*Dial.*, IV, xxxix) and Origen (*Hom. vi in Exod.*) propose that the punishment for venial sins is temporary. Venial sins do not destroy charity or the gift of sanctifying grace.

⁴⁷⁹ See Virgil's speech on love and the topography of the *Purgatorio* in *Purgatorio XVII, XVIII*

⁴⁸⁰ *ST I/II.88.2*

led to their rejection of the divine gifts of charity and grace. During their lifetimes, they attained a perverse pleasure in sin and did not try to please God through moral perfection. Corruption brought on by mortal sin causes the damned to rebel eternally against God in their pursuit of vice, and in *Inferno III*, they continue to blaspheme against God:

Bestemmiavano Dio e lor parenti
l'umana spezie e 'l loco e 'l tempo e 'l seme
di lor semenza e di lor nascimenti.⁴⁸¹

Aquinas warns the faithful that venial sins may lead one to commit mortal sin by reinforcing sinful habits and the sinful dispositions outlined in the seven capital vices. According to Aquinas it is not the seriousness of the vice that categorizes it as capital; rather certain vices are called capital because they are the root cause of many other sins and may lead the sinner to commit mortal sin.⁴⁸² Cyprian, Cassians, Columbanu, and Alcuin identified eight capital vices: gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, wrath, sloth, vainglory, and pride.⁴⁸³ St. Gregory the Great was the first theologian to suggest that there were seven deadly sins and proposed that pride was the most grievous of the deadly sins, followed by envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust.⁴⁸⁴ Aquinas, Bonaventure, and most of the prominent theologians of the Middle Ages agreed with Gregory the Great's doctrine of seven capital vices, and the seven deadly sins became a part of modern day church theology.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸¹ *Inferno III*. 103-105

⁴⁸² *ST II/II: 153.4*"a capital vice is that which has an exceedingly desirable end so that in his desire for it a man goes on to the commission of many sins all of which are said to originate in that vice as their chief source"

⁴⁸³ Cyprian *De mort.*, iv, Cassians *De instit. cænob.*, v, coll. 5, *de octo principalibus vitiis*, Columbanu *Instr. de octo vitiis princip.*, *Bibl. max. vet. patr.*, XII, 23; Alcuin *De virtut. et vitiis*, xxvii sqq

⁴⁸⁴ *Lib. mor. in Job*. XXXI, xvii

⁴⁸⁵ *ST. I/II.84.4; Brevil.*, III, ix

Aquinas, Bonaventure, Hugh of St. Victor, and Gregory the Great's doctrine on the seven deadly sins influenced Dante's conception of the moral structure of the *Purgatorio*. The pilgrimage through the purgatorial mountain heals the penitent of the sinful dispositions that make them unworthy of salvation, and so the pilgrims purge themselves of the seven deadly sins on each of the seven terraces. In the *Purgatorio* the capital vices are the root cause of all sin, and according to Hugh of Saint Victor, they may lead to mortal sin by turning the will away from charity and towards the love of temporal good.⁴⁸⁶ Virgil explains in his speech on love in *Purgatorio XVIII*⁴⁸⁷ that the penitent strayed from virtue because they loved improperly. Virgil tells the pilgrim that the penitent never rejected the divine gift of charity; rather they sought temporal good with too much rigor or loved spiritual good with too little rigor. According to Virgil, love entices the will, causing it to move towards the desired object⁴⁸⁸:

L'animo, ch'è creato ad amar presto,
ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace,
tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto⁴⁸⁹

If directed towards improper ends, it leads people astray, but if directed towards God, it brings eternal life. Virgil explains that *natural love* is instinctive, virtuous, and always pleasing to God because it finds its end in the *Summum Bonum*. Conversely, *mental love* can cause people to fall into vice if they choose to love the wrong objects, or to love the Good either deficiently or excessively:

Lo naturale è sempre senza errore,

⁴⁸⁶*De Quinque Septenis seu Septenariis*, cap. 2, PL. 175.405f.

⁴⁸⁷ *Purgatorio XVIII*. 13-76

⁴⁸⁸ Singleton, Charles. "The Three Conversions". *Journey to Beatrice*. Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore. 1977. p. 43. Singleton observes that in the *Commedia* charity properly directs the will towards God: "...charity is chief, for it is through charity that the will receives its due orientation to God as our last end. Charity is one kind of love, and love is the proper name for all movements of the will. Indeed, as the poem affirms, the soul 'moves by no other foot than that of love.'"

⁴⁸⁹ *Purgatorio XVIII*. 19-21

ma l'altro puote errar per malo obietto,
o per troppo o per poco di vigore.⁴⁹⁰

In the *Purgatorio* the spiritual journey of the penitent leads them to salvation because it redirects misguided love, transforms improper love into righteous love, and strengthens love of virtue. On the first three terraces the proud, envious, and wrathful redirect their misguided love of improper things towards the Good while on the fourth terrace, the slothful are healed of their insufficient love of spiritual good. On the last three terraces, the avaricious, gluttonous and lustful turn their excess love of temporal good into zeal for *Summum Bonum*.

6.1 Pain in the *Purgatorio*: Embryology and Aerial Bodies

Early church theologians agree that suffering in Purgatory must surpass the pains of this life if it is to cleanse the penitent.⁴⁹¹ Early church teachings on punishment in Purgatory influenced Dante's conception of pain in the *Purgatorio* and on the Purgatorial Mountain the penitent undergo tremendous suffering, far greater than any on earth, so that they might be made worthy of the beatific vision. The purgatorial pilgrims, for example, carry heavy boulders on their shoulders, climb steep inclines with their eyes sown shut, and pass through a cleansing fire. The gruesomeness of the punishments and the terrible suffering of the penitent lead the pilgrim to question how souls devoid of their bodies can still feel pain. On the sixth terrace, Dante marvels at the emaciated gluttons and wonders how a shade can be reduced to such a state:

⁴⁹⁰ *Purgatorio XVII*. 94-96.

⁴⁹¹ *ST*. 2.1: "It follows that the pain of Purgatory, both of loss and of sense, surpasses all the pains of this life."

Allor sicuramente apri' la bocca
 e cominciai: "Come si può far magro
 là dove l'uopo di nodrir non tocca?"⁴⁹²

Virgil explains to Dante that the body and soul, although seemingly different entities, are intricately connected in the afterlife. To clarify his point, Virgil recounts the story of Meleager and his hunt for the Calydonian boar.⁴⁹³ After killing the Calydonian boar, Meleager gives the skin to his love, Atalanta. When Meleager's mother, Althaea discovers her son has given the skin to Atalanta, she instructs her brothers to take it from Atalanta. In retaliation, Meleager kills his uncles, and Althaea vows to avenge her brothers' death. At the time of Meleager's birth, the three Fates told Althaea that her son would live only as long as a log end remained unconsumed in a fire into which it had been thrown, and by destroying it, Althaea kills her son. In his reference to the story of Meleager, Virgil suggests that there isn't an obvious relationship between body and soul in the same manner that there isn't an obvious relationship between the destruction of a log end and the death of a man in the story of Meleager. Virgil furthers his point by telling Dante that the body and soul are connected in the same manner that an object and its reflection in a mirror are connected. An object and its reflection may seem as though they are separate entities, nonetheless they are intricately related.⁴⁹⁴ Similarly, Virgil explains that the gaunt physical appearance of gluttons' shades is a reflection of their spiritual condition. They starved their souls by feeding the flesh, and so it is fitting that their shades appear starved.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² *Purgatorio XXV*. 19-21

⁴⁹³ *Purgatorio XXV*. 22-24; Ovid *Metamorphosis* VII.260-546

⁴⁹⁴ *Purgatorio XXV*. 25-27

⁴⁹⁵ For more analysis on *Purgatorio XXV* and aerial bodies see: Fraser, Jennifer. "Dante/Fante: Embryology in Purgatory and Paradise." *Dante & the Unorthodox: The Aesthetics of Transgression*. 290-309. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005; Gilson, Etienne. "Dante's Notions of a Shade: *Purgatorio XXV*." *Mediaeval Studies* 29 (1967): 124-142; Gragnolati, Manuele. *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and*

Stattius tries to resolve Dante's questions about the connection between body and soul and how bodiless souls feel pain by first discussing the theory of embryology.⁴⁹⁶ Stattius explains that *Perfect blood* is formed after three digestions: the stomach, liver and heart. After it is digested in the heart, it descends into the testicles, mixes with the “perfect blood” in the vagina, and creates a new being. The fetus receives the vegetative and sensitive soul through the parents, but after the formation of the brain, God gives the fetus a rational soul which combines with the vegetative and sensitive souls creating a single entity. When the human dies, the soul separates from the body, but the vegetative, sensitive, and rational faculties are not destroyed because those faculties exist within the soul.⁴⁹⁷ Stattius explains to the pilgrim that the organs and the lower faculties exist in the soul as a potentiality, and must wait for the resurrection of the body at the Final Judgment to become active once again. Conversely, the rational soul, divinely bestowed upon the fetus, operates more perfectly. Memory, intelligence, and will are sharpened at the moment in which the soul separates from the body because the soul is no longer distracted by the senses.

According to Aquinas the vegetative or sensitive faculties stay dormant until Final Judgment because the body and the soul do not reunite until the end of days: “...after

Body in Dante and Medieval Culture Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2005; Gragnolati, Manuele. "From Plurality to (Near) Unicity of Forms: Embryology in Purgatorio 25." Dante for the New Millennium. 192-210. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2003.

⁴⁹⁶ *Purgatorio XXV*. 34-108; Dante was most likely influenced by Aristotle's ideas on Embryology in *De generatione animalium*

⁴⁹⁷ Dante was undoubtedly influenced by Aquinas' belief that the souls in the afterlife possess a heightened rational faculty and a muted sensitive faculty. *ST I/77.8* “As we have said already (5,6,7), all the powers of the soul belong to the soul alone as their principle. But some powers belong to the soul alone as their subject; as the intelligence and the will. These powers must remain in the soul, after the destruction of the body. But other powers are subjected in the composite; as all the powers of the sensitive and nutritive parts. Now accidents cannot remain after the destruction of the subject. Wherefore, the composite being destroyed, such powers do not remain actually; but they remain virtually in the soul, as in their principle or root...So it is false that, as some say, these powers remain in the soul even after the corruption of the body. It is much more false that, as they say also, the acts of these powers remain in the separate soul; because these powers have no act apart from the corporeal organ.

death souls have no bodies assigned to them whereof they be the forms or determinate motors...”⁴⁹⁸ Aquinas believed that souls in the afterlife cannot weep, sigh, or laugh because they lack a body.⁴⁹⁹ In the *Commedia*, Dante deviates from Aquinas's theories on the nature of the soul and the body in the afterlife. Although souls in the *Commedia* are not united to the body until the Final Resurrection, they feel real physical anguish because, as Statius explains, the soul once appointed to its proper place in the afterlife, takes on an *aerial body* which resembles its former earthly body. In the *Inferno*, the aerial body can cry, weep, and shout, and is almost corporeal. In *Inferno XXXII*, for example, the pilgrim, wishing to punish Bocca degli Abati for his wickedness kicks his head, twists Bocca's hair around his hands, and pulls out two or three tufts of hair:

Io avea già i capelli in mano avvolti,
e tratti glien' avea più d'una ciocca,
latrando lui con li occhi in giù raccolti.⁵⁰⁰

In this episode Bocca, like all of the damned, is devoid of his human body, but feels pain and is punished through his aerial body.

In the *Purgatorio*, the physical pain experienced by the aerial body plays a fundamental role in the reformation of their pilgrims' sinful natures.⁵⁰¹ For example, on the first terrace of the *Purgatorio*, the proud are bent over, struggling to carry a huge weight upon their shoulders. The proud once stood tall looking down upon others, but now must take on a humbling posture which teaches them the virtue of humility. In *Purgatorio XI*, for example, Dante must bend down to speak with Oderisi, one of the

⁴⁹⁸ *ST*.69.1; See also *ST* 70.1-3

⁴⁹⁹ *ST*. 97.3

⁵⁰⁰ *Purgatorio* XXXIII. 103-105

⁵⁰¹ Le Goff, Jacques. *The Birth of Purgatory* 136-137: According Le Goff, Dante's poetic invention of the aerial body might have been influenced by Honorius Augustodunensis who argues that demons are given bodies of air so that they can feel pain.

proud.⁵⁰² In this scene both Oderisi and Dante humble themselves through their posture: Oderisi is bent over by the weight of his burden, cannot lift his head to look at the pilgrim speaking to him, and assumes a humble pose. The pilgrim does not carry any weights on his back, but learns humility by physically lowering himself so that he is able to speak with Oderisi.

Aquinas' doctrine on the resurrection of the body at the end of days might have influenced Dante's conception of the aerial bodies. According to Aquinas, the resurrected body at Final Judgment is a reflection of the moral condition of the soul. In his theory of informative virtue, Aquinas argues that the body will be corrupted if the soul is wicked.⁵⁰³ In the *Commedia*, the shades are a poetic invention which transforms the spiritual experience of the souls into a physical representation. The poet uses the aerial bodies as a sort of mirror of the soul: Wickedness and sin make their mark on the aerial body through physical distortion: In the *Inferno* the pilgrim does not recognize many of the damned because of their physically corrupted shades. The thieves of circle eight, for example, are metamorphosed into snakes⁵⁰⁴; the fortune-tellers endure eternity with their heads turned backwards⁵⁰⁵; and Bertran de Born, a sower of discord, holds his decapitated head in his hands.⁵⁰⁶ Contrarily, the physical distortions of the purgatorial shades are minimal because sin has not eternally corrupted the penitent of the *Purgatorio*, and Dante can easily recognize most of the purgatorial shades.

The physical heaviness of the aerial body in the *Purgatorio* measures the soul's spiritual progress. The aerial body gets lighter as it ascends the mountain and is purged

502 *Purgatorio* XI. 73-142

⁵⁰³ *ST.* 80. 1

⁵⁰⁴ *Inferno* XXIV-XXV

⁵⁰⁵ *Purgatorio* XX

⁵⁰⁶ *Inferno* XXVIII

of sin. It is also important to note that in the *Paradiso*, the blessed do not have aerial bodies. In very moment the soul completes its journey through the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio*, and ascends into the *Paradiso*, it radiates a body of spiritual light representing its moral perfection and blessedness.

6.2 The Nature of Punishment in the *Purgatorio*

Mechtild of Magdeburg, a medieval mystic, envisioned Purgatory as a “little Hell” and believed its torment was worse than Hell's.⁵⁰⁷ Augustine and Aquinas also believed that Purgatory was a dark sorrowful place where the penitent suffered pains worse than Hell, but the poet of the *Commedia* transforms Purgatory into a realm of hope and peace.⁵⁰⁸ Upon arriving at the shores of Mount Purgatory, the pilgrim, overwhelmed by his experience in the *Inferno*, is struck by the sense of tranquility and comfort that the Purgatory inspires:

Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,
che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
del mezzo, puro infino al primo giro,
a li occhi miei ricominciò diletto.⁵⁰⁹

As the penitent make their way through the *Purgatorio*, they endure tremendous agony, yet they sing, dance and praise God while suffering. Despair is absent in the second realm because the promise of the *Purgatorio* is to purify the penitent and to restore original justice so that they might attain the beatific vision. The penitent who reach the

⁵⁰⁷ *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*

⁵⁰⁸ *ST. Appendix I. II; Augustine De Sanctis XLI*

⁵⁰⁹ *Purgatorio I. 13-16*

shores of Mount Purgatory are joyful and understand that they have already been saved through God's grace.

According to Mechtild, devils torment the penitent in the lower regions of Purgatory.⁵¹⁰ Aquinas did not believe that devils tormented souls in Purgatory, but he proposed that devils often take the penitent to Purgatory and gleefully watch them as they suffer: “the demons, who rejoice in the punishment of man, accompany them and stand by while they are being cleansed”.⁵¹¹ In the *Purgatorio* neither angels nor demons torment the penitent. Angels serve as gatekeepers and guides in the penitents' spiritual journey: An angel opens the gate to Purgatory proper and symbolically hears the pilgrim's confessions. Choirs of angels singing *Te Deum Laudamus* greet and inspire the pilgrim as he passes through the gates. After the pilgrim cleanses himself of one of the seven vices, an angel on each of the terraces removes one “P”, representing sin, from his forehead, easing him of his burden and giving him the encouragement to continue to the next terrace. Angels stand guard on each of the terraces making sure that pilgrims complete their punishment, even though the penitent would never try to violate the laws of the *Purgatorio* because they desire to be made righteous and will endure even the harshest of punishments in order to be made righteous.

6.3 Purgatorial Fire

⁵¹⁰ *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*

⁵¹¹ *ST. Appendix II.3*

As I have previously mentioned, First Corinthians⁵¹² served as a scriptural basis for the creation of Purgatory and led early theologians to believe that although all sins needed to be paid for either in this life or the next, some sins do not merit eternal damnation. First Corinthians states that fire will "try every man's work," purifying those who have "laid a good foundation" in Christian Faith and charity from their venial sins while condemning the wicked for their mortal sins and lack of faith. The purifying flames of first Corinthians led theologians to envision Purgatory as a kind of fire and to believe that Purgatory was not a physical place. Early theologians debated over the nature and duration of the fire, and the moral condition of the souls worthy of passing through the flames into eternal life.

Origen was the first to suggest that souls can be redeemed in the afterlife through a trial by an immaterial and spiritual fire.⁵¹³ In the twenty-fourth homily of *Commentary on Luke* he proposes that all souls must pass through purifying flames before attaining salvation. Origen argues that souls who first receive baptism by water will be allowed this baptism by fire.⁵¹⁴ His view of the afterlife was highly controversial to other early theologians because he believed that all people, no matter how wickedly they behaved

⁵¹² 1 Corinthians 3:11-15: "For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid: which is Christ Jesus. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: Every man's work shall be manifest. For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire".

⁵¹³ Origen: "For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into Heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works." (P. G., XIII, col. 445, 448). For a more in depth analysis on Origen and Clements doctrine of Purification in the afterlife see Le Goff, Jacques The Birth of Purgatory 52-61.

⁵¹⁴ *De principis* 2.10, *Contra Celsum* 4.13 and 6.71

during their lifetimes, eventually go to Heaven. The wicked spent a longer time in the purifying flames than did the less wicked. The trial by fire occurs at the Final Judgment, but he is unclear about where souls went to in the meantime.⁵¹⁵

According to Clement of Alexandria, there are separate fires for the damned and the penitent. The first punishes and is eternal while the other cleanses.⁵¹⁶ Ambrose believed that there were three types of fires. The fire of the righteous refreshes the blessed soul and prepares it for its ascension into Paradise. The flames reserved for the wicked eternally punish and torture while the third fire purifies less hardened sinners and lasts as long as it takes to purify the soul of sin.⁵¹⁷

Augustine's theories on Purgatory helped to establish modern church doctrine on the nature of purgatorial fire. In the *Commentary on Genesis against the Manicheans*, Augustine distinguishes between two fires: according to Augustine, the fire of the wicked is punitive and eternal while the fire of the penitent is cleansing and temporary. He staunchly disagrees with Origen's doctrine on divine judgment, and strongly proclaims that the fire of judgment damns most souls while saving only a few.⁵¹⁸ Augustine argues that the pain of purgatorial fire surpasses all pains of this life, and occurs between the time of death and final judgment. Purgatorial fire is temporal and depends on the quantity and severity of sin committed by the penitent. Aquinas and Hugh of St. Victor believed that judgment occurred right after death, and, unlike Origen, that purgatorial fire was corporeal and material.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁵ *In Lucam, homily 24; Seventh Homily on Commentary on Leviticus; Sixth Commentary on Genesis*, PG 12.191

⁵¹⁶ *Stromata* 4.24.

⁵¹⁷ *Psalmum cxviii, Sermon 20*, PL, 15.1487-88.

⁵¹⁸ *Questions on the Gospels and Commentaries on Psalm 37*

⁵¹⁹ *ST* 70.3: "Accordingly we must unite all the aforesaid modes together, in order to understand perfectly how the soul suffers from a corporeal fire: so as to say that the fire of its nature is able to have an

Early church beliefs regarding fire and Purgatory influenced Dante's conception of the Purgatorial flames on the seventh terrace. According to Origen, Clement, Augustine, Lombard and Aquinas, purgatorial fire does not harm the soul, rather it burns away lesser sins or the “wood, hay and stubble”, so all that remains is Christian faith and good works or “gold, silver, and precious stones”. Similarly in the *Purgatorio*, the purifying flames allow the penitent to complete their journey through the seven terraces by burning away the last remaining vestiges of sin. Virgil, for example, tells the pilgrim that the flames will cause him terrible torment, but will not harm him:

e Virgilio mi disse: "Figliuol mio,
qui può esser tormento, ma non morte.
Ricorditi, ricorditi! E se io
sovresso Gerion ti guidai salvo,
che farò ora presso più a Dio?
Credi per certo che se dentro a l'alvo
di questa fiamma stessi ben mille anni,
non ti potrebbe far d'un capel calvo."⁵²⁰

The purgatorial fire on the seventh terrace is corporeal as Hugh of St. Victor, Aquinas and Augustine suggest, and not spiritual as Origen claims. In the *Purgatorio* the pilgrim describes the physical pain provoked by the intense heat. Upon entering the fire, the pilgrim exclaims that the flames are so hot that a pool of hot lava would seem refreshing by comparison:

Sì com' fui dentro, in un bogliente vetro
gittato mi sarei per rinfrescarmi,
tant' era ivi lo 'ncendio senza metro.⁵²¹

incorporeal spirit united to it as a thing placed is united to a place; that as the instrument of Divine justice it is enabled to detain it enchained as it were, and in this respect this fire is really hurtful to the spirit, and thus the soul seeing the fire as something hurtful to it is tormented by the fire. Hence Gregory (Dial. iv, 29) mentions all these in order, as may be seen from the above quotations.”; Hugh of St. Victor: *Sacraments of the Christian faith* 4.16.2

⁵²⁰ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 20-27

⁵²¹ *Purgatorio XXVII*. 49-51.

Throughout the *Commedia* the poet emphasizes that salvation can never be attained solely through one's own merits. One must work towards moral perfection, but only divine grace and mercy can heal the will and make one worthy of eternal life. The purgatorial flames of the seventh terrace are a physical manifestation of God's grace and mercy and a microcosm of the system of justification in the *Commedia*: The penitent make their way through the *Purgatorio* by suffering purgatorial punishment and working towards the attainment of virtue, but ultimately it is God's grace in the form of fire that heals them. It is also worth noting that the pilgrims must decide if they wish to accept God's grace and enter the fire. Fear, for example, seizes the pilgrim's heart as he prepares to enter the flames, but Virgil reminds him that he will not reach the summit without passing through the fire.⁵²² The journey through the seven terraces prepares the pilgrim for the fire, and charity moves him to accept divine grace and enter the flames.⁵²³ In the moment the pilgrim enters the flames, he dies to the sinful part of the self and is reborn into righteousness. Although the flames cause the purgatorial pilgrims tremendous torment, they sing and praise God for His mercy and grace. Upon reaching the other side of the wall of fire, Virgil declares that the pilgrim has accorded his will to the divine:

libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
 e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:
 per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio.⁵²⁴

In the *Commedia*, the purgatorial flames have burned away all unrighteousness and have made him worthy to witness the beatific vision.

⁵²² *Purgatorio XXVII. 11*

⁵²³ *Purgatorio XXVII. 49*

⁵²⁴ *Purgatorio XXVII. 140-142*

7.1 Conclusion

Although most early church theologians believed that souls were cleansed of their sins in Purgatory, they were vague about the exact nature of Purgatory. They debated endlessly over which souls might be worthy of purification and whether the location and punishments were corporeal or spiritual. Aquinas believed that these questions might never be answered because the scriptures do not reveal much about Purgatory. In the *Commedia*, Dante creates a detailed poetic vision of the second kingdom and envisions Purgatory as a place where the soul might die to the sinful part of the self and be reborn into eternal life. The journey through the *Purgatorio* is more than the undoing of the Fall: After laboring through the seven terraces and reaching the Garden of Eden at the summit of the Purgatorial Mount, the pilgrims reach a state of greater moral perfection than that of the original parents. Adam could sin if he wanted to, but the pilgrims are so morally perfect that it is impossible for them to fall from grace. The grace given to prelapsarian Adam allowed him to remain in righteousness and not fall into sin, if he chose to do so, but the grace bestowed upon the pilgrims is even stronger. The grace given to the penitent spiritually transforms them, so that their wills are perfectly accorded to that of the divine. They will never fall from grace because it is impossible that they desire anything contrary to God's will.

Early Church theologians envisioned Purgatory as a "tiny Hell" filled with gruesome torment. They believed that the sole purpose of Purgatory was to punish the penitent so that they might atone for past sin and reform their sinful natures. Contrarily, the journey through the *Purgatorio* is more instructive than punitive. The pilgrims of the

Purgatorio actively participate in a true spiritual pilgrimage towards moral perfection, and become righteous through prayer, suffering, meditation, and repetition.

In the *Purgatorio*, suffering is always accompanied with prayer and thanksgiving. Amongst great suffering, there is tremendous joy because the pilgrims understand that grace will guide them to the top of the purgatorial mountain. The pilgrims give thanks to God, sing psalms and celebrate their journey. Upon reaching the shores of Mount Purgatory, the pilgrims praise God and sing to Him the Psalm 113. In the *Purgatorio* prayer is not a spontaneous act, but a fundamental part of the purification process. On each of the seven terraces the souls of the penitent pray to God, asking Him to cleanse them of their sins, to grant them the strength to endure their suffering, and to make them worthy of salvation. Prayer deeply connects the pilgrims to God, guides them in giving up self-will, and reminds them that the summit of Mount Purgatory cannot be reached by relying on individual moral strength.

Conclusion

Dante's conception of divine justice involves more than a simple application of the *lex talionis*, or the biblical law in which the sinner suffers an exact and reciprocal punishment in retaliation for his crimes. In the *Commedia*, God unites souls to the things they loved most in life. During their lifetimes, the damned of the *Inferno* abandoned themselves to vice, and in the afterlife they wallow in the wickedness they chose for themselves. The penitent of the *Purgatorio* did not lead morally perfect lives, but faith in God's eternal promise and a desire to become virtuous saves them. Divine guidance leads them through the seven terraces, and helps them become lovers of virtue. Grace gives them the strength to undergo penance, to accept suffering with humility, and to experience a spiritual transformation.

Free will is central to Dante's conception of divine justice because without it God would unjustly condemn sinners who could not help but behave wickedly. Many of the damned claim that external forces compelled them to sin, but in the *Commedia* temptation, the lure of temporal good, and external pressures do not constrict the will. Virgil explains in his speech on love and free will that people may not be able to control their initial impulse to love, but through the power of the free will and self-control they may overcome their sinful desires. Dante damns those that perverted the true nature of love and elevated worldly pleasures over God. The damned of the *Inferno* lost eternal life because they embraced vice, gave into their unrighteous desires and rejected the divine gifts of grace and charity. Although Dante believed that the motion of the stars influenced human characteristics, talents, and traits, he rejected the notion that people are

destined to sin. In his speech in the *Purgatorio*, Marco Lombardo insists that the misuse of talents awarded by God causes people to stray from the virtuous path. Individuals that harness the power of their gifts and use them to fulfill the divine will attain salvation, while those that use them for personal profit lose eternal life.

Dante acknowledges that people have free will, but they are slaves to sin because they are unable to make moral decisions without the influence of passion. Sanctifying grace strengthens the will, giving people the tools with which to overcome moral slavery and to attain salvation. In *Inferno I* and *II*, for example, the pilgrim's free will leads him astray because he has not yet accepted the gift of grace and is depending entirely on his own moral strength to help him reach the *colle luminoso*. His salvation is possible only after he accepts the gratuitous gift of divine grace and takes the journey into the otherworld. In the *Commedia*, Grace does not instantaneously reform sinners. Justification is a spiritual journey which requires both the full cooperation of free will and the granting of five different states of grace: grace of vocation, actual grace, habitual grace, the grace of perseverance, and the grace of eternal life.

Dante envisions Purgatory as a place where the soul might die to the sinful part of the self and be reborn into righteousness. At the shores of Mount Purgatory, for example, the pilgrim meets Cato, a pagan-suicide that renounced his life rather than submit to the rule of a vicious tyrant. In the *Purgatorio*, Cato serves as a Christian model of righteousness. Christianity teaches that sinners must die to sin or face eternal damnation. In a similar vein, Cato died to vice or the *old man of sin*. His suicide represents the sacrifice that the purgatorial penitent must make in their quest for salvation. They must

reject all their selfish desires and turn their hearts towards fulfilling divine will. They must transform their love from the mundane to the spiritual and crucify the flesh.

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