





THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Founded by John D. Rockefeller.

DANTE'S CONCEPTION OF PUNISHMENT.

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Divinity School in candidacy  
for the degree

of

BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

( Department of Church History )

by

Richard Miner Vaughan



## DANTE ' S C O N C E P T I O N O F P U N I S H M E N T .

If any literary work deserves the Miltonic phrase " the life-blood of a master spirit," it is the Divine Comedy of Dante degli Alighieri. A scholar, philosopher, statesman, artist, poet, this fourteenth century Florentine is one of the world's half-dozen greatest men. No one can look at the face painted by Giotto, so it is believed, on the walls of the Bargello without recognizing in the lofty brow, the clear sad eyes, the firm set lips, an elect soul born to suffer and inspire. Like Carlyle, we will not quarrel with the fates, the Providence rather, that made the best lover Florence ever had, an exile for years. It was the crushing of the grapes that made the spirit strain true. Loneliness, poverty, sorrow turned the poet's thoughts to the eternal world and gave us what President Strong well terms, " the first Christian poem " and " the greatest."

It is now over five centuries since Dante realized the wish of his heart- a life prolonged sufficiently to enable him to complete a song worthy of Beatrice and, then, release. He was no sooner buried at Ravenna than Italy recognized him as her great man and with tardy repentance began to whiten his sepulchre. Since then the interest in Dante has been continuously increasing. Exception must, perhaps, be made for the sceptical eighteenth century which had small use for so earnest and intense a believer. " Stupidly extravagant and barbarous," so Voltaire characterized

the poem. In our own time, however, Dante is accorded the highest honors. Translations are multiplying in many languages. And Lowell has expressed the enthusiasm for Dante in these remarkable words, "His readers turn students, his students zealots, and what was a taste becomes a religion."

Explanation of this profound interest? Certainly one item is the poetic merit of the Comedy. Doubtless this is more apparent to those who read the triple rhymes of the vigorous and musical Italian than to those of us who must resort to the translations of Cary and Longfellow, excellent as they are. But even English readers easily discern the peculiar glory of Dante's style. It was no presumptuous egotism that led him to speak of

" That style which for its beauty into fame  
Exalts me."

In simple pathos, in " the single and sufficient thrust of phrase," in luminous description and sweet poesy, he stands alone. He wastes no words. The adjectives ( the enemies of the nouns ) are as rare and meaningful with Dante as in the perfect style of Jesus. In three or four lines he will give you pictures of doves returning to their cote," wafted by their will along," or of Gorgons with temples bound with adders and cerastes, pictures one can never forget. And as for sublimity, nothing from Milton's pen excels Dante's magnificent description of the vision of God.

An additional reason for the interest in the Comedy is

the fact that it is a microcosm of the Dark Ages. So we term these strange, germinal centuries pervaded by more light, however, than we commonly think. As the connecting ~~link~~ between the ancient and the modern civilizations they possess for us the deepest significance and attraction. Dante is their spokesman, " the voice of ten silent centuries." This man with Plato's heart and Aristotle's brain has uttered the feeling and thought of his time. He is the drop of dew reflecting the whole scholastic firmament. In his physics, metaphysics and theology, " all bad of their kind," says Macaulay, we have nevertheless the soul of the Dark Ages.

Yet we cannot but feel that the interest in Dante's great work centers in his theme. What is the theme? Apparently, it is the state of man beyond the grave. The poem has three books, each of thirty-three cantos, one hundred cantos in all counting the introduction. The first book, the Hell, describes the sinners lost for aye peopling the narrowing and concentric circles of the cone shaped prison which extends from the earth's surface to its center; the second, the Purgatory, shows us repentent sinners winding their way up the terraces of the purifying mount in the southern seas, antipodal to Jerusalem; the third, the Paradise, carries us upward through the spheres of the Ptolemaic heavens to the Empyrean and the beatific presence of God. " Mediaeval eschatology!" you say. But is that all?

To them the Divine Comedy is a chamber of inquisitorial curiosities. Blind literalists, witness alike to the vividness of Dante's imagination and their own lack of spiritual perception. Mrs. Browning well censured those

" Who understood

Our natural world too insularly, as if

No spiritual counterpart completed it."

Dante has but expressed in concrete terms universal moral truths. Think you, this is simply a photograph of Thais the harlot-" that dirty and disheveled creature, who is scratching herself there with her nasty nails, and now is crouching down and now standing on foot?" ( Norton Inferno p. 96 ). No, that is the moral appearance, here and now, of the girl of the streets.

The fact is that Dante's theatre of action is not the cosmography of the middle ages, but the soul of man. And this is the supreme significance of Dante, to quote Lowell's words, " His is the first keel that ever ventured into the silent sea of human consciousness to find a new world of poetry." That we are not cramping Dante into the mould of a pleasing theory is plain from his celebrated letter to Can Grande della Scala. " The sense of the work is not simple but on the contrary one may say manifold. The subject then of the whole work taken literally is the condition of souls after death, simply considered. But if the work be taken allegorically, the subject is man, how by actions of merit or demerit, through freedom of the will he justly deserves reward or



punishment."

The subject of this paper, therefore, Dante's Conception of Punishment, penetrates the core of the Divine Comedy. Man, conduct, reward or punishment, this is Dante's theme. We have chosen to deal with punishment only, the subject matter of the first two books, Hell and Purgatory. For it is here that popular interest centers. Dante and Virgil descending the dolorous circles of Hell or climbing the sides of the Mount of Purgatory are familiar figures, but not so Dante and Beatrice sweeping upward through the spheres of Paradise.

Will it profit? It is a pathetic figure we see in the opening lines of the poem. Dante

" in a gloomy wood, astray

Gone from the path direct." ( Hell IX. 1-3 ) .

The moral wanderer is in immanent peril of the fell beasts of pleasure, pride and avarice. What can save him? This is the question asked by Beatrice whom Dante once loved as a child but now exalts as the personification of divine wisdom. Her answer—

" Such depth he fell, that all device was short

Of his preserving, save that he should view

The children of perdition." ( Purg. XXX: 139-141 )

The contemplation of punishment has, therefore, a moral value. Nor are the admonitory lessons limited to the discernment of the few. They are patent through human wisdom, personified in Vergil, our guide in Hell and Purgatory. But divine wisdom alone, Beatrice,

may <sup>can</sup> carry us past the stars to God, and, indeed, send us Vergil to conduct us through the lower realms.

There are four things which we would learn of Dante- the ground of punishment, the object, the nature, and the measure. In the sad shadows of the under world, in the more hopeful light of the southern mount let us learn, if we may, Dante's thought on this deep and dark theme,- punishment.

What is its ground? Why punishment at all? Certainly, it is not the spite of capricious and revengeful deities. Humanity is no Prometheus afflicted because an arbitrary decree has been disregarded. Nor is punishment traceable to a blind and resistless fate under whose iron sceptre God and man must bend alike. These are heathen conceptions. Dante was a Christian poet. Let us spell out the dimly written inscription over the lofty ~~and~~portal of Hell- " Justice moved my high creator " (Norton Hell, p. 11) But what is justice? Is it not the return of our own deeds, reward for good, punishment for evil? Here then is the ground of punishment, it is ever and only sin. This fact is without significance to us however until we discern the origin, nature and expression of sin.

Troubled with the problem of the world's evil, the poet turns to Marco of Lombardy and beseeches an explanation. The philosopher, after referring to the primal bent of our movements from heaven, replies-

" Light have ye still to follow evil or good  
 And of the will free power, which, if it stand  
 Firm and unwearied in Heav'n's first assay,  
 'Conquers at last, so it be cherished well,  
 Triumphant over all. To mightier force, to  
 To better nature subject, ye abide  
 Free, not constrain'd by that, which forms in you  
 The reasoning mind uninfluenced of the stars.  
 If then the present race of mankind err,  
 Seek in yourselves the cause, and find it there."  
 ( Purg. XVI. 75-84)

Sin, then, has its origin in will. Dante does not say that sin is a necessary correlate of will. Yet the inscription at the entrance of Hell seems to imply that the gift of free will and apostacy or, at least, anticipation of apostacy, are co-evil, " Before me things create were none." ( Hell I. 7). That is, creation in general and Hell are coetaneous.

Dante, of course, reflects the contemporaneous Augustinianism with reference to the relation of the Adamic sin to the race. He chided " with warrantable zeal," so he affirmed, the hardihood of our racial progenitor ~~for~~<sup>in</sup> depriving his remote Tuscan descendant of the earlier enjoyment of the terrestrial Paradise ( Purg. XXIX: 22). Certainly, Dante has a very definite doctrine of nature limiting will. It is the " first assay " leaving its residuum of character, good or bad, to condition the will that marks the crucial hour. Redemption itself is a process

of making nature completely accordant with a renewed and divine will. No finer expression of this truth can be found than the parting words of Virgil to the poet standing now with a purified nature which he need no longer distrust.-

" I invest thee then

With crown and mitre, sovereign o'er thyself."

We have spoken of the origin of sin in will, but we have not considered its nature. What is sin? Let us first ask what is the condition of man's life? As a moral, and, therefore, social creature, it is undoubtedly fellowship. Only in the give and take of a community of personalities can man realize his life. But what makes fellowship possible? Love. Here, then, is the fundamental condition of man's life,- love. Heaven itself is only love regnant. Hell is love dethroned and exiled. Contrast the redeemed assisting each other and shouting for joy until the mountain trembled when one of their number passed higher (Purg.XX) and the condemned mangling each other piecemeal with their teeth. (Hell VII ). What makes the difference? Love honored, love perverted. We repeat, the condition of welfare, of life, is ultimately love.

What then is sin? There is but one possible answer- sin is offence against love. For the sinfulness of sin can reside in no arbitrary statute; sin is sin because somehow it strikes at life, it injures. Dante divines the true meaning of sin when he affirms," Of every malicious act abhorred in heaven the end is

injury" ( Hell XI: 22). Sin is injury. And injury is affected by the violation of love. Hence Dante asserts:-

" Love is germin of each virtue in ye,

And of each act no less that merits pain"(Purg.XVII.100-1

Nor may it be said that man is blameless because love ~~as~~ the constitutional outgoing of the soul to what appears desirable, is inevitable. For although love is of necessity, its direction and degree is determined by the man himself ( Purg. XVIII:69-71). Thus we see the nature of sin is violated love.

And what is the expression of sin? The answer carries us back to the distinctions and refinements of scholastic theology, in particular to the Summa Theologica of Aquinas, " the angelic teacher." Sin arises from love

" If on ill object bent, or through excess

Of vigor, or defect." ( Purg. XVII: 92-93).

That is, first, when love has bad objects; second, when love has too little vigor; ~~there is sin~~; third, when love has too much vigor, there is sin. From this three-fold perversion of love, the schoolmen derived the seven mortal sins. Love centered upon bad objects resulted in pride, envy and anger; love deficient, in sloth; love exaggerated, in avarice, gluttony and lust. These are the seven mortal sins, four spiritual: pride, envy, anger, sloth; three physical: avarice, gluttony, lust. The physical sins are so termed because the names indicate their outward expression. While the spiritual sins manifest themselves to men

not as spiritual sins but as manifold concrete sins, whose enumeration we shall make later as we study the various circles of Hell.

Such is Dante's theory of sin. We trust that its elucidation has not led us afield. For we cannot rightly get at Dante's conception of punishment except as we understand the ground of punishment, namely sin. Anthropology conditions penology. Of course the poet's scheme is logical and somewhat abstract. Only thus can he adequately treat his theme. In practical life, however, we know that the various ~~sins~~<sup>sins</sup> do not appear separately as figures in an allegory, but with hair interbraided like Spartan warriors. One sin involves others.

We now ask, What is the object of punishment? What has God in view? Is punishment an end in itself or only a means to an end? The state punishes criminals but it has always an object in view. It would satisfy justice, deter the criminally disposed, protect the innocent, reform the criminal. A Christian penology, substituting the reformatory for the dungeon, is affirming that the real reform of a criminal attains all the ends of punishment. Granted, but how shall we compass his reformation? And if he refuses to be reformed, if he baffles the resources of love, what then? To these problems as related to the divine government Dante sought a solution. And his answer is that the object of punishment is two-fold- retribution and purification. Hell stands for retribution, Purgatory for purification.

We call the punishment in Hell retributive because it eventuates in nothing good to those incarcerated. There are those who deny retributive punishment on the ground that such punishment is intended as a deterrent to those who now are innocent or salvable. It is for the sake of Dante and others who descend into the shadows and see the wages of sin and are thereby led to virtue and to God. But if we could conceive so impossible a condition, the denizens of Hell the only creatures in the universe, would there then be no penal woe? Would holiness cease to react against sin, stench no longer produce nausea, the sunlight wound no more the diseased eye? Stearn and awful as is the thought, if we postulate incorrigible impenitence and sinfulness, we must assert retribution.

Nothing in Dante's Hell is so terrible as its utter hopelessness. Over the fatal entrance are the well known words- " Abandon hope all ye that enter here." True, there was a day, while men above mourned the body lying in the garden grove, when a puissant one descended into Hell and drew from the upper circle many ancient Hebrew worthies, but none remaining may look for deliverance. For them there is only reunion to their fleshly vesture when the last angel trumpet blows and then- the final doom.(Hell VI: 96-102). There is no hope in Hell.

And yet, strange to say, the spirit's evil desire to enter the accursed place. As they gather on the banks of Acheron and the grim boatman Charon draws near to ferry them across the

black and reeking tide Virgil explains " They are eager to pass over the stream, for the divine justice spurrs them, so that fear is turned to desire " (Norton.Hell:III p. 15)

Explanation? No doubt it is found in the assertion made in the inscription at the gate," to rear me was the task of.. supremest wisdom." Hell is the best place for sinners. Place and character correspond. Moral forces centripetal, centrifugal, act until every atom of matter finds its orbit. What would happen if the gates of Hell were thrown wide open? It may be that the prisoners would rush out. It is more probable, however, that they would remain as stationary as Paul's fellow prisoners at Philippi, or if they ventured out would speedily return like dogs to their kennels.

But what does love think of all this? We speak of fearful and heart-breaking things; how did Dante feel about it? It is unjust to think of Dante as vindictive, embittered by the stings of outrageous fortune, rejoicing like a salamander in fire and brimstone. Dante weeps as he enters Hell( Hell III; 23 ). Again and again he mourns the fate of many whom he recognizes. The sight of Francisca da Rimini, fallen through love, whom as a child, the daughter of an intimate friend, he had doubtless often held upon his knees, gave Dante such grief that he fainted. It is observable, however, that the poet's pity diminishes as he descends and sins more and more heinous greet him. And there are sinners so hateful to Dante that he would add, if possible, to



their suffering. Yet on the whole he exhibits a loving sorrow.

Does God show a like pity? Or does the poet overtake Him " in the one way of love?" It must be said that Dante's God is not supremely compassionate. He is a Sovereign dwelling in light ineffable, not a Father sorrowing for a lost child. We do not hear the cry " How shall I give thee up, Ephriam?" The tenderness of God in Christ, Dante in true Catholic fashion has transferred to Beatrice and Mary. For the heart will have its compensations, beside the God who is merely king and judge will stand the Virgin or the saint, "the flesh that we seek in the Godhead."

And yet divine love shines even into the under world of Dante. To refer yet again to the portal inscription, there it is stated, " Primeval love " no less than "power" and "wisdom" reared Hell. We have unduly narrowed the scope of love. Hell, as truly as Purgatory and Paradise, is the expression of the love of God; not undiscerning love, but love coupled with wisdom. And is there not significance in the beautiful words of Virgil as he describes the trembling of the abyss as Christ came down to make reprisals-

" I thought the universe was thrilled with love"(Hell XII40

We turn now to a more hopeful aspect of punishment. The object of punishment is not merely retribution, it is likewise purification. There is a Purgatory as well as a Hell. And Purgatory is

" this mountain-steep,

Which rectifies in you whate'er the world

Made crooked or deprav'd"( Purg. XXIII: 120-122 ).

Purgatory refines, redeems, and prepares for Paradise and to this beneficent task it consecrates pain. Punishment becomes " that kindly grief which re-espouses us to God "( Purg. XXIII: 74-75). Yet the punishment is real, it is no imagined, no sentimental suffering, but tears and anguish.

Nothing concerning Purgatory is more striking than the desire of the penitent to suffer. They are " content in fire " ( Hell I: 115). It is no wail that greets the pilgrim as he stands within the gate of the sacred mount, but

" We praise thee, O God," methought I heard

In accents blended with sweet melody.

The strains come o'er mine ear, e'en as the sound

Of choral voices, that in solemn chant

With organ mingle, and, now high and clear,

Come swelling, now float indistinct away."(Purg.IX:132-7)

The true penitent, who Newman says " never forgives himself," welcomes suffering as his just due and a means under God to a more assured holiness. The forger comes back with a confession on his lips and the request, " Sentence me, let me suffer." And we see again the strong and pathetic figure of Samuel Johnson as he stands bare-headed in the rain, delighting in humiliation and the cold pitiless beating of the storm, he expiates the unkind words ~~once~~ spoken in that place to his father.

The willingness of the captive spirits to do their penance finds striking confirmation in the words of Statius=

" Purification by the will alone  
Is proved, that free to change society  
Seizes the soul rejoicing in her will  
Desire of bliss is present from the first;  
But strong propension hinders, to that wish  
By the just ordinance of heaven opposed;  
Propension now as eager to fulfil  
The allotted torment, as ~~are~~ white to sin,  
And I who in this punishment had lain  
Five hundred years and more, but now have felt  
Free wish for happier clime." ( Purg. XXI: 60=70 ).

The spirit ~~an~~ Purgatory has its liberty. It leaves a given terrace ~~on~~ the mount itself when it pleases. But so attuned it is to possible holiness that it abides rejoicing in suffering until purification is complete.

For Dante's remedial punishment fulfils its ~~###~~ perfect end. Purged from a mortal sin, the spirit conscious now of its release sings an appropriate beatitude and passes higher. From circle to circle, often greatly aided by the prayers of the faithful upon earth, the penitent ascends and one by one the seven Ps, Peccata, inscribed by the point of the angel's sword upon the forehead disappear. And at last, the <sup>mystic</sup> river, on the earth side called Lethe because it takes away remembrance of offences, on

the heaven side called Eunoë, because it gives back remembrance of every good deed done. Grace sanctifying suffering has drained sin of its remorse and left it dead; grace filling the mind with new thoughts has caused the dead to be forgotten. And the purified poet, standing beside Beatrice in the Terrestrial Paradise does not recall his spiritual estrangement from her, nor for his fault doth conscience chide him, ( Purg. XXIII: 90-92.)

Is some Protestant ready to denounce the whole Purgatorial scheme as unscriptural, inconsistent with the atonement, a prolific source of abuse? Even so, but has not Robertson shown us, as in the case of Mariolatry, that superstition, heresy, is the exaggeration of a truth? Purgatory is a fact. To deny it, is to assert that suffering is useless and devilish. It was a Hebrew prophet who said that the Lord sat as a refiner of silver, and silver is refined by fire. It was a New Testament writer who asserted that chastening yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Whatever obtains for eschatology for the moral present Purgatory is true.

Hell, Purgatory, retribution, purification; but what determines which a sinner shall undergo? Is punishment to be retributive or remedial, what decides? It is not sin, for great sinners toil up the steep of Purgatory. It is the attitude toward sin. The subjective element makes a difference, radical, determinative in all objective forces. The two malefactors expiated the same crimes; they gazed into the face of the same

dying Christ, and yet one passed to be with his Lord in Paradise, the other went out into the darkness. The difference? one saw his sin, as sin," We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing amiss;" the other was heedless of his own guilt and mocked at innocence.

In Hell, sin is not regarded in its true light. The cause and effect relation of sin and punishment is not realized. Instead of engaging in self-accusation, the spirits gathered on the fatal shore " blasphemed God, and their parents, the human race, the place, the time and the seed of their sowing and of their birth " ( Norton, Hell: III: 14 ). Fate, circumstances are at fault. They do not morally own and acknowledge their sins. If they did, they would not be in Hell, for Hell is a wrong attitude toward sins. To perceive punishment as a moral outcome of sin is to possess a mighty motive to forsake sin. To regard punishment, suffering, as unrelated vitally to sin is to engender an additional weight of hate and sense of injustice to sink the soul deeper in perdition. What sense of sinfulness obtains in Hell is not moral but legal. And what sorrow exists is not on account of sin but on account of the punishment which has followed sin.

On the other hand, in Purgatory there is a right attitude toward sin, hence punishment becomes curative. Sorrow there is because of sin, not because of detection and punishment. " My sins were horrible " says Manfredi ( Purg. III: 118 ) confessing alike his responsibility and his repentance. And such magic

power has repentance," the precious streaming tears of self-accusing" ( Purg. XXI: 36 ) even though attained in the last crucial moment when the spirit leaves the broken body, that the sword of punishment becomes the fabled blade that alike wounds and heals. And if there were penitence in Hell, genuine moral sorrow, the flames would clense and the tormenting demons become angels of ministration. Such a possibility, however, Dante would deny. Death, he teaches, seals destiny.

The next great element in Dante's conception of punishment which we are to consider is the Nature of punishment. What is punishment?

The answer is apparent when we propound the law of relation between sin and punishment. This law is nothing other than the law of cause and effect. Stated for the purposes of this discussion- every sin contains its own punishment. We may not think of sin and punishment as separable any more than we may think of a cause active and dissociated from its effect. Punishment is not an arbitrary something which may or may not follow sin; it is wrapped up with the very heart of the sin. Drag a sin into the life and one ~~grags~~ drags in a Trojan horse in whose belly are the avengers.

What is, then, the nature of punishment? It is in kind with the sin. In the light of this discussion we may say, sin is its own punishment. The wise man of ancient Israel expressed this fact when he said " They shall eat of the fruit of their way and

be filled with their own devices."( Prov. I: 31). And Macbeth exclaims," We but teach

Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
To plague the inventor; this even-handed justice  
Commends th' ingredients of our poisoned chalice  
To our own lips."( Macbeth, Act I. Scene VII ).

No more forceful illustrations of the law of punishment in kind can be found in all literature than the circles of Dante's Hell and the terraces of Dante's Purgatory. Let us observe these illustrations and, incidentally, note how Dante has peopled the realms of punishment.

It is patent to the reader that the punishment in Hell is in kind. Just within the realm of woe, in a kind of limbo, are the spirits of the pusillanimous, the neither good nor bad. Like Kipling's Tomlinson, their vice is neutrality, hence they are fit for neither Hell nor Heaven. Here are angels and men who were moral non-combatants, seekers for ease, governed by circumstances, trimmers. Accordingly they are whirled like sand through the darkened air and follow fatuously an ever shifting banner.

On the first of the nine circles, we find the virtuous heathen, men who lived nobly but who knew not the historic Christ, nor entered the kingdom through the portal of baptism ( Purg. IV: 30-38) Men, women, infants from every land are here; heroes, philosophers, poets, matrons; Hector and Saladin, Plato, Seneca and Averroes, Homer and Flaccus, Penthesilea and Cornelia. What

of these souls? of mighty worth " ? To Dante, they are negations. They attained not to the principles of character which Christ taught, nor to the world-view of his religion. Consequently, they live in a negative sort of realm " neither sorrowful nor glad," afflicted only in that they live desiring but without hope.

Such was Dante's logical conclusion from his theological premises. To the irrepressible doubt that arose, he interposed the shortsightedness of human judgment and the authority of the Scriptures ( ~~Par.~~ XIX: 66-81 ). But like the hyper-Calvanist## whose logic lands babies in Hell, Dante's heart revolted and turned ~~ed~~ a way to hope. He places ~~in~~ Paradise ~~Paradise~~ Ripheus whom Virgil termed the " justest man in Troy" and Trajan the virtuous Roman Emperor. The first in answer to Gregory's prayer returned to human life, believed and at death entered into glory; the second, although he lived a pagan in the Christian era, through grace loved righteousness so well that God received him. Dante does not educe the principles of a ~~longer~~ hope really involved in the case of ~~Trajan~~ but commends us rather to that measureless love which if it err at all, errs on the side of mercy ( ~~Par.~~ XX:125-130. Purg. IX: 119)

And now we come into the region of the seven mortal sins. On the second circle, those who yielded themselves to the unbridled tempest of lust, are being tossed and driven and dashed amain by the stormy and restless blasts of Hell. Next, we behold the gluttonous exposed to ceaseless rain, slush and stench even as



their swinishness on earth had made them coarse, ghouly and putrescent. The fourth circle contains a throng," more than elsewhere numerous," among them a host of clerics, those guilty of avarice, and prodigality. They are engaged in the Sis~~typhaen~~ task of rolling huge stones in semi-circles, the fruitless labor of man~~y~~getters and spenders. A striking fact is the impossibility of recognizing them. Does the misuse of wealth mean the obliteration of personality?

Next, on the fifth and sixth circles, we come upon the slothful. Dante gives to this spiritual sin a two-fold expression: Wrath and sullenness, and heresy. By wrath and sullenness is meant the accidie of the old writers, slackness in good works and spiritual gloom and despondency. Those guilty of it are appropriately submerged in murky slime where they rend each other and their sighs bubble to the surface. Heresy our poet makes synonymous with the Epicurean doctrine of materialism, the spirit dies with the body. For a faith in immortality imposing endless endeavor is inhibited by <sup>Sloth. But heretics learn by</sup> enclosure in red hot tombs that spirit survives the grave.

Anger peoples the seventh circle. It expresses itself in a three-fold violence, that offered to others, that offered to self and goods, and that offered to God by offence against nature and art. The violent to others, murderers, cook in boiling blood; the violent to self, suicides, are embodied in sensitive bushes through which hounds thresh and upon whose leaves harpies

feed, and thus they learn the worth of the body; the violent to God because they despised him both in His person and His world by nameless sins against nature and offences against art such as usury, are punished by falling flakes of fire.

The eighth circle is devoted to envy. In ten minor circles ten species of brand occasioned by envy are punished in kind. Pandars and seducers are lashed by demons, the return of the woe they cause. Flatterers are immersed in offal. Simonists, who reverse the order of the spiritual and material, are buried head down, feet up. Diviners pretending to foretell events walk now with face permanently turned rearward. Barrators, "boodlers" are boiled in pitch. Hypocrites, the " painted people " swelter in enormous metal hoods, gold without, lead within. Thieves suffer metempsychoses into serpents. Fraudulent counsellors learn the trials they occasioned as they dwell in flame. Schismatics are mangled, rent, cleft in twain. And falsifiers of all kinds receive the return of their deeds, such as the dropsical counterfeiters whose blood is diluted with water.

In the ninth and last circle, Lucifer's realm, we find the sinners in pride. Who are they? Traitors. Here are Cain, Antenor, Ptolemy and lowest of all- Judas Iscariot. The essence of pride is isolation, self-advancement at the cost of others. Treason dissolves society by destroying mutual confidence. Hence the Traitors are frigidly alone, encased in ice at the earth's center.

The same law of punishment in kind obtains in Purgatory. At the base of the mount wander the procrastinators. By long delay they expiate their tardy repentance on earth. On the first terrace sinners in pride are purged. On the Aristotelian principle that a crooked stick must be bent to an opposite angle in order to attain straightness so the proud bow beneath burdens as weighty as those borne by the corbels that bend under walls of stone. And they fix their eyes on mosaics depicting Biblical and classic scenes of humility and pride brought low.

The envious are clad in sackcloth vile; they lean against each other and all against the cliff. Humiliation, dependence is their cure. The angry, once so quickly passionate grope slowly now in the darkness, their utterance " Agnes Dei," "Lamb of God ". Sloth is atoned for by haste. Almost with fury the erstwhile loiterers rush on exclaiming

" Hearty zeal

To serve reanimates celestial grace " (Purg. XVIII:103-4)  
The ~~shaves~~ of avarice, muck-delvers, grovel now prostrate ~~now~~ on the earth they loved so well. The gluttonous starve in sight of plenty! And the victims of lust are purged of their sin in the banks of flame through which they pass.

The final inquiry which we have to make is the Measure of punishment. We have considered the Ground of punishment, sin; the Object of punishment, retribution and purification; the Nature of punishment, suffering in kind. Now we ask how much punishment?

Is there discrimination in amount of punishment? Or has Dante lumped sinners into Hell as "government" sometimes huddles all classes of prisoners, men, women, children, murderers, and petty thieves into the same jail? For answer we must revert to the law already set forth- every sin contains its own punishment; sin the cause, punishment the effect, and cause and effect correspondent.

One step further back and we meet our problem. Do sins vary in degrees of sinfulness? If so, then punishment, commensurate <sup>with</sup> to the sin, varies accordingly. Now Dante is not one of the indiscriminating insulters of our moral sense who affirm that all sins are equally vile. Indeed when the poet inquires why the slothful and the angry do not receive like pains, Virgil suggests that his mind is in its dotage and reminds him of the Aristotelian ethics, accepted by Dante, which describe three dispositions adverse to Heaven's will, incontinence, malice and bestiality. And of these, said he, incontinence the least offends God and least guilt ~~incurs~~, ( Purg. XI: 80-87 )

In fact, Dante's whole scheme

" distinguishing the hideous chasm

And its inhabitants with skill exact "

proceeds on a theory of the varying sinfulness of sin. He tells us explicitly that the traitor is placed in the deepest circle of Hell because treason is the chief of sins, (Purg. XI: 67-69 ).

Arguing from these facts we may call the roll of the mortal sins

beginning with the least, lust, gluttony, avarice, sloth, anger, envy, pride. This order is confirmed in the terraces of Purgatory. Sins differ in degree and so, likewise, must punishment.

Let us glance again at the various inflictions in Hell and although all appear severe, we may recognize a descending severity. Tossing by wind, exposure to rain, the rolling of stones, submersion in mud, incarceration in hot tombs, parboiling in blood, the rending of the body piecemeal, residence in ice. Within a circle there is likewise discrimination. Concerning the heretics, it is said " Like with like is buried here and the monuments are more and less hot"(Norton, Purg. IX: 45). In Purgatory the same law obtains although it is not so apparent.

At this point the query presents itself- Does time increase or decrease the pain of punishment? In Purgatory we know the suffering is a diminuendo, until at last it dies out and bliss reigns alone. But in Hell Dante shows a realm whose several bodies not only preserve the same relative position to each other but the realm itself like the sweep of an entire solar system has a common movement toward some great and flaming star. The imperishability and expansiveness of the human spirit are alike the pledge of the endless and ever-widening joy of Paradise and of the ceaseless and cumulative woe of Hell (Hell VI: 108-113 ).

But how does each sinner find his proper place and measure of punishment? At the entrance to the penal realm stands Minos, Judge. Before him comes the ill-fated soul and " all confesses ". Men in reality judge themselves. Then hurled out

over the abyss the sentenced one falls to his fit abiding. It is moral gravitation. There was no need to follow Judas from the Temple and to constrain him;" he went unto his own place." Character finds its level.

Such we believe was Dante's conception of punishment. Previous to him the world-poets had written of Nemesis and Fate. To Dante belongs the lofty honor of putting into matchless verse the fundamental Christian ideas of freedom, justice and redemptive love. And if his figures seem at times grotesque in their materialism, the unutterable moral horrors of the sins back of the figures vindicates the prophet-poet who witnessed in the under world of soul the loss and cure of sin. And despite the presence of elements accidental to his age, we are assured that every race of our common humanity in every age to come will find much of its highest, deepest thought embodied and surpassingly expressed in Dante's " mystic unfathomable song."