

THE HISTORICAL REFERENCES IN DANTE'S L'INFERNO

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I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Frank McGuire Hodgson entitled "The Historical References in Dante's L'Inferno." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

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THE HISTORICAL REFERENCES IN
DANTE'S L'INFERNO

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Frank McGuire Hodgson

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the major historical references in the first part of Dante's Divine Comedy, the "Inferno."

The paper proposes to show that Dante's "Inferno" can be viewed not only as a literary and theological work, but also as an historical work. An attempt was made to identify and research references of historical importance, showing the reason for their inclusion in the "Inferno."

The paper also draws conclusions as to why historical personages and occurrences are mentioned and their true relation to the history of the ancient and medieval world. It explains Dante's political thought and his views involving a revival of the old Roman Empire. It shows Dante's wide range of historical knowledge and his own personal involvement with the politics of the time.

The work develops the concept that Dante was extremely concerned with the affairs of Church and State in the Middle Ages. In addition, it illustrates the conflicts that occurred over interpretations of temporal powers. It shows his concern with classical history and ancient civilizations. He was not only a political partisan and propagandist, but also had an appreciation of the lessons of the past in a true historical sense.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. INFERNO: CANTOS I-X	7
III. INFERNO: CANTOS X-XVII	35
IV. INFERNO: CANTOS XVIII-XXXIV	64
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	98

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The greatest of the Italian poets, Dante Alighieri, was born in Florence in May, 1265, and died in Ravenna in 1321.

Dante was born in the latter part of the medieval period and yet he is part of the Renaissance period also. His works tie the two periods firmly together; not only combining them, but at the same time giving Italy a national language and a national history. He is important because he is the first Italian writer to popularize the Tuscan dialect of the vernacular so that it became the natural language of Italy. He is important also because of his historical and social criticism of the period in which he lived.

Little is known of Dante's family background. It is known, however, that he came from the burgher class of Florence and not from the knightly class.

Dante was very educated for his day and time. He studied the works of Vergil, Horace, Ovid, and Statius. He was a student of science, mathematics, philosophy and theology.¹ His work, the Divine Comedy, is literally

¹Arthur J. Butler, "Dante," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), pp. 810-811.

refined politician. He reorganized the government of Egypt, replaced the Fatimids' officials with his own trusted men, and, through his officers, he knew what the population was doing. Despite such knowledge he remained aloof from the throng of people in his country. Saladin felt that the only way that his forces of Egypt and the forces of the Near East would be united was through the Jihad--or Holy War. Saladin felt that this would sufficiently unite the Moslems in order that they might defeat the Christians of Jerusalem. Saladin was determined to subdue the Moslem forces that opposed him and, in this determination, he aroused the anger of the Islamites, or the freethinkers, and the Assassins against him. The Assassins even made a vain attempt upon his life.³³

Saladin was never able fully to realize his dreams for a united Moslem world, nor was he ever fully able to regain the lost territories that the Christians had captured. Saladin was able to capture Jerusalem which was to remain in the hands of the Arabs until 1917.³⁴ Saladin had done his best to contain the Crusaders in the Near East. He had fared well against the strongest of the European Kings--both Richard

³³ Ibid., pp. 31-45.

³⁴ James Westfall Thompson, An Introduction to Medieval Europe: 300-1500 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1965), p. 540.

based on these subjects, as well as on ancient history as understood in his time. It was also appealing to contemporaries, being full of references to Italian politicians and despots of his day.

Dante was a great poet and the popularizer of the Tuscan dialect of the Italian language. But today, it is often forgotten that he was a political man and a strong partisan. During the youth of Dante, the two major political factions of Florence constantly struggled for the political control of Florence. The parties were the Guelfs (the Whites) and the Ghibellines (the Blacks).

The cities of Tuscany and northern Italy have been described as rather similar to the ancient Greek city-states in that there was a deep attachment to the city or village where a person was born. Dante felt this way about Florence and, being from the burgher class, it was logical that he would later join the Guelf party.²

In Dante's time the northern cities were the Ghibelline strongholds, while Florence was controlled by the Guelfs; but all the cities and indeed many families were divided into Guelfs and Ghibellines.³

The political division between Guelf and Ghibelline had started about the middle of the tenth century. The

²Francis Fergusson, Dante (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1966), p. 5.

³Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Ghibellines had originally been the early Germanic invaders. They became the powerful feudal lords of northern Italy and ruled their territories with an iron hand. Being descendants of early Germanic tribes, they tended to look to the German emperors as protectors and allies. The Guelfs, on the other hand, had risen from the bourgeoisie and looked to the Pope for spiritual, political and military support. This early form of feudal order was already much on the decline at the time Dante was born. The new class of burghers was much on the rise, and with their wealth they began to obtain the previous positions of the nobility.⁴ The rough country burghers were slowly eating into the power of the nobles and acquiring the nobles' land and titles.

The uncouth country lords tended to move into the city, acquire the glamorous Florentine urbanity, and become city families. The rich bourgeois liked to acquire aristocratic titles, along with aristocratic pride and cruel insolence. The struggle between the rich and the poor, and in this time of rapid change it was common for powerful leaders to shift their party labels with bewildering frequency. . .⁵

In the year 1266 the Guelfs finally gained control of the city of Florence. The Ghibellines were ousted and the town remained in the hands of the Guelf party for almost thirty years. This period of total Guelf rule was to prove

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

both active and fruitful for the city of Florence. The thirty year rule of the Guelfs was full of prosperity, as well as artistic achievement and great intellectual growth for the city of Florence.⁶

At the age of twenty-four Dante was active in the Guelf and Ghibelline struggle for power. In 1289, at twenty-four, he was in the service of the Florentine cavalry at the Battle of Campaldino fighting on the side of the Guelf league which defeated the Ghibellines. The city of Florence stayed under this power until 1302 when the struggle broke out again under different families. Dante, at this time, held one of the major positions in the Florentine government --that of the Office of Priors. However, Dante's party, the Whites (the Guelfs), was kicked out of power and the fifteen men in the position of prior were condemned to be burned to death if they ever again were found within the territory and power of Florence.⁷

At thirty-five, Dante was exiled from the city of Florence. At the time of the new uprising he had been out of the city. He never again saw his wife and children.

In this state of exile, he worked out a personal compromise with the defeated Ghibellines which allowed him as a

⁶Ibid.

⁷H. F. Cary (trans.), The Vision of Dante Alighieri (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1925), p. 9.

Guelf to be taken into their company and started to write the Divine Comedy. He died in the city of Ravenna in 1321. The last of the line of Alighieris was Dante's daughter, Beatrice, who was a nun in Ravenna and died there between 1350 and 1370.

It has often been said that Italian literature was born at the court of Frederick II. This medieval Holy Roman Emperor was known for his many talents and one of those was writing poetry. Even the Prime Minister to Frederick II, Piero delle Vigne, was a known composer of sonnets. The much traveled court of Frederick II traveled about Italy with poets, artists, and learned scholars. This entourage was made up of Moorish poets and French troubadours. These, for safety, had fled to the court of Frederick II. Out of this mixture of poets, scholars, and teachers came the "Apulian Renaissance" which was the forerunner of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. Without this awakening at the court of Frederick II, it is doubtful that there would have been a Divine Comedy.⁸

Dante's work, the Divine Comedy, first appeared under the title The Vision of Dante Alighieri. The work is divided

⁸Will Durant, The Age of Faith: The Story of Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 1056.

into thirty-three cantos. The entire work concerns the morality of the times as Dante saw it.

The Inferno: Hell to Dante was his life in exile and the wickedness and corruption he found in life around him.

Purgatory: To Dante, Purgatory was his life of studies and his writings. Also involved was his belief that man could wait in Purgatory for heaven if he had cleansed himself from sin.

Heaven: To Dante, Heaven was achieved only by love and strengthened moral character. It was a state of absolute happiness.⁹

This paper will deal only with the first section of the Divine Comedy, that of the Inferno. Here the purpose will not be to give a literary interpretation of the work, but a historical one. Here the job will be to examine the strictly historical references in the Inferno and interpret their value and the reason for their inclusion in the work.

⁹Ibid., pp. 1066-1081.

CHAPTER II

INFERNO: CANTOS I-X

The opening cantos of Dante's works are mainly concerned with the founding of Rome and the history of Aeneas. These first two cantos deal with the references to St. Paul's descent into Hell, the journey of Aeneas, including the description of avarice, greed and corruption. The work itself starts with sunrise on Good Friday in the year 1300. At this time, Dante was thirty-five years old.¹⁰

The third canto is the first contemporary historical reference. Dante discusses a group of shades or souls who are in hell because their lives have been lived with indifference and apathy to both good and evil.

When some of these I recognised
I saw and knew the shade of him
who to base fear yielding, abjured
to high estate.¹¹ [sic]

This statement refers to Peter of Morrone, the hermit who became Pope Celestine V. He became the only Pope who voluntarily resigned the papacy, and thus earned, in Dante's mind, a place in hell. Either cowardice, intimidation, indifference, inability, incompetence, or a lack of worldly

¹⁰Cary, pp. 2-9.

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

ambition--or a combination of these--led him to resign. He may have been physically frightened by his ambitious subordinate, Benedetto Guatani, who succeeded him as Pope.

Peter of Morrone became Pope on July 5, 1294. He succeeded Pope Nicholas IV who died in 1291. The papacy had remained vacant because the Sacred College of Cardinals could not agree upon a selection.

Peter of Morrone had been born of obscure parentage at Isernia about 1215. He had joined the Benedictine Order and began living as an ascetic hermit of Mont Morrone. Soon he gathered other ascetic monks about him and later formed them into a congregation of the Benedictine Order which was eventually divided into the Celestine religious order with Peter of Morrone as its head. Later a vicar was appointed to help him and in this manner he was allowed to be rid of the duties of administration of the order. His life was then totally dedicated to complete development and devotion to certain ascetics, notable the Spiritual Franciscans. His desire to escape administrative duties caused many problems when he assumed the papacy in 1294.

In 1294 the College of Cardinals with the insistence of Charles II of Naples convened in July to elect a new Pope. Charles II needed a new man to replace Nicholas IV who had died in 1291. The papacy had thus remained vacant for these years until Charles called a conclave in 1294. Charles was

interested in getting a pope who would help secure his position in Sicily.¹² Charles had lost Sicily after the naval Battle of Naples in 1284. The battle had been won by Peter III, King of Aragon (1236-1286), who had come forward as the representative of the claims of the Hohenstaufen (descendants of Frederick II) in Naples and Sicily.¹³ Peter of Aragon died before settlement was made over Sicily. The settlement of Sicily occurred in 1288 and was mediated by King Edward of England. Charles II was allowed to keep Naples and the territory of Sicily eventually passed to Peter III's son, James, and later to his third son, Frederick. Frederick seized the country in 1296 in order to keep James from giving it to Charles II of Naples.

Charles II's interest was in getting a new Pope who would effectively help in the recapture of his lost territory of Sicily. Thus Peter of Morrone, the hermit monk, was elected Pope on July 5, 1294. The Cardinals who elected him had hoped to keep the power of the papacy to themselves and use him as a figurehead. The real power behind Peter was that of Charles II of Naples and he intended to use all his powers in his struggle against Hohenstaufen control of Sicily.¹⁴

¹²William W. Rockwell, "Celestine V," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), V, p. 600.

¹³David Hannay, "Peter III," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), XXI, p. 292.

¹⁴Rockwell, p. 600.

Peter of Morrone thus became Pope in 1294. He took the title of Pope Celestine V. He was at the age of seventy-nine when he assumed the Papacy, and he was a very ineffective Pope. Celestine V had no desire for the office of Pope nor did he have any of the administrative training that would be required for the office. He was probably selected for these exact reasons plus the fact that he was seventy-nine years old. This might have helped the Cardinals to vote for him, hoping that his reign would be short and thus they would be in a better position to elect the next most powerful figure in the College of Cardinals--Benedetto Guatani (Gaetani), later to be Pope Boniface VIII.

Celestine V did not want the Papacy nor did he know how to run it. He wanted to spend all his time in ascetic devotion and religious service. He preferred to delegate his powers to three Cardinals but this was not approved. The only other plan was to get Celestine V to give up the papacy. This would insure a new election of a Pope and it was certain that Cardinal Benedetto Guatani would be elected.¹⁵

Cardinal Guatani tried everything possible to get the aged Pope Celestine to give up the office. The Pope was kept in the Vatican, watched at all times, and constantly harassed

¹⁵Ibid.

by Cardinal Guatani. Finally, Cardinal Guatani decided to seek help from Charles II of Naples, but first he had to get the aged Pope to resign the papacy. Celestine had made the offer to resign if it would not hurt the papacy and if he could be shown that it had been done before and was morally right. Cardinal Guatani cited as a precedent Clement I (circa 30 A.D. to circa 100 A.D.) who was Pope circa 96 A.D. Clement I was generally known as Clement of Rome and was one of the "Apostolic Fathers." He was supposedly martyred in Crimea circa 102 A.D.¹⁶

It is doubtful that Clement I resigned the papacy. However the fourth century Greek writing "Acts of the Martyrs" lists Clement I as being exiled by Emperor Trajan to the Crimea where he worked with the prisoners who were condemned to the mines. Here it is believed that he was thrown into the sea with an anchor weighted about his neck.¹⁷ The "Clementine Literature" is named after him because at one time it was thought that he was the sole author of these documents.¹⁸

¹⁶Alexander J. Grieve, "Clement I," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), VI, pp. 482-483.

¹⁷Joseph S. Brusher, Popes Through the Ages (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1959) p. 8.

¹⁸The idea that the "Clementine Literature" was written by Clement I is now proven to be untrue. Some of these documents were included in the forged decretals (same as pseudo-Isidorian Documents) first found in Spain in the 8th century, including the 8th century forgery of the Constantine Donation. James B. Bartlet, "Clementine Literature," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), VI, pp. 490-494.

When Celestine gave up the papacy, Cardinal Guatani proceeded with his plan to get a new conclave of the Cardinals convened.

. . . having his wit and sagacity so wrought that Pope Celestine had renounced the papacy, . . . followed up in his enterprise . . . And while he was pursuing this quest, one evening by night he went secretly with but few companions to King Charles (of Naples), and said to him: "King, thy Pope Celestine had the will and the means to serve thee . . . but he had not the knowledge. Now, if thou wilt work with thy friends the cardinals that I may be elected Pope, I shall know, and I shall will, and I shall be able . . . 19 [sic]

On the 24th of December in 1294 Cardinal Benedetto Guatani became Pope Boniface VIII. His first official act was to have ex-Pope Celestine placed in detention. Celestine escaped and was captured and escaped again. The last time Celestine escaped "he wandered for weeks through Apulia, reached the Adriatic, attempted a crossing to Dalmatia, was shipwrecked, was cast ashore in Italy, and was brought again before Boniface."²⁰ Later he was condemned to imprisonment in the castle of Ferentino near Anagni.²¹ He was placed in

¹⁹Charles T. Wood (ed.), Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII: State vs. Papacy (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 9.

²⁰Durant, p. 812.

²¹Ibid.

a monastic cell with running water and died in May of 1296 --probably from pneumonia. Celestine was made a Saint by Clement V in 1313.

There were political overtones to this act of canonization. Clement V, a French Pope and a supporter of Philip the Fair of France in his fight with Boniface VIII, probably found it politically expedient to canonize a saintly if incompetent Pope in order to dramatize the ambitions, aggressiveness, and wickedness of Boniface VIII.

In the same canto that refers to the papacy and rule of Celestine V, is the reference to the medieval system of education.

We came to the foot of a noble castle, seven times circled by high walls, defended round about by a fair streamlet. This we passed as if hard ground; through seven gates.²² [sic]

The castle itself represents the house of philosophy, seven walls represents the four moral and three intellectual virtues, (knowledge, wisdom, temperance, and understanding, prudence, justice, and fortitude).²³ The "fair streamlet" as Dante calls it represents the

²²Charles E. Norton, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) p. 6.

²³Ibid.

pleasant stream of eloquence . . . and the seven gates are probably the seven liberal arts of the Trivium and Quadrivium, in the medieval system of education: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric; Music, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy.²⁴ [sic]

The well-educated man of the medieval period was well acquainted with the trivium and the quadrivium. If not educated at the university, then he was probably educated by a privately paid tutor.

Still further in the same canto while wandering through the "Castle of Fame," Dante names the famous people he encounters. Most of the representatives are of Roman and Trojan descent, starting with Electra who was supposedly the mother of Dardanus, the legendary ancestor of the King of Troy, and Julius Caesar, the descendant of Aeneas. But Dante notices that "sole apart retired the Soldan fierce."²⁵ [sic] This is the Saladin of the third Crusade, the fierce foe of the papal armies of Europe and King Richard the Lion-Hearted.

The Crusades have often been called the two-hundred years' war for man's soul and the profits of trade. One of the causes of the Crusades was the advance of the Seljuk Turks into the West. They took Jerusalem away from the Fatimids of Egypt who had let the Christians worship there

²⁴Cary, p. 16.

²⁵Ibid.

in peace. Also, there was the weakening of the power of the Byzantine empire. The Byzantine empire had held back the armies of Asia for over seven centuries. However, with internal discord and the Schism of 1054, it became too weak to withhold the forces of the Turks. The most important buffer state to Europe proper was almost defeated. The Byzantine army was almost totally defeated and destroyed in 1071 by the Seljuk Turks at the Battle of Manzikert. From here the Turks took Edessa, Antioch, Tarsus, and Nicaea. This resulted in Emperor Alexius I (1081-1118) signing a treaty because he had no army with which to attack. Later, Emperor Alexius I asked Pope Urban II for aid in ousting the Turks. The third cause of the Crusade was the financial interest of the mercantile city-states of Italy such as Pisa, Genoa and Venice. With the fall of Sicily in 1060 to the Christian armies, and the reduced Moslem rule in Spain in 1085, the whole of the Mediterranean was open for trade.²⁶

Trade opened with Constantinople, Caffa on the Crimean, the Russians of the Black Sea, and even the Moslem controlled cities in Egypt and later Acre. Trade allowed the Christians to penetrate deep into the realm of the Moslem world. Trade could be listed as one of the primary causes of the Crusade.

²⁶Durant, pp. 585-586.

In 1071 the Fatimids of Egypt lost Jerusalem to the Seljuk Turks. Reports coming from Jerusalem seemed to show that the Christians were not being treated well by the Turks. The situation remained the same even after the election of Pope Urban II to the papacy. Pope Urban II faced numerous problems during his reign, one of which was the trouble incurred because of the reign of the anti-Pope Guibert. The reports coming from Jerusalem disturbed Pope Urban II and in 1095 he called the Council of Clermont. At the council of Clermont, Pope Urban protested the control of the "Christian city of Jerusalem" by the Seljuk Turks. Pope Urban was the first Pope to call for forces to be gathered in Europe to oust the Turks from the land of the Christians in the East. Pope Urban also wanted to send aid to Emperor Alexius so that Greek territories heretofore retained could be held and those lost could be recovered. With the cry, "God wills it," Pope Urban II rallied the Christians of Europe against the Turks and the Moslems of the East in the defense of the Christian ideas. The first Crusade was started within the year of 1095 and lasted until 1099.²⁷

²⁷Steven Runciman, A History of the Crusades (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), I, pp. 101-112.

The third Crusade pitted Saladin against the Christian armies of Europe. Dante's reference to Saladin places him "apart as the supreme representative of Mahometan nobility and magnificence."²⁸ [sic] Saladin was to hold this place of high authority even after his death.

In the twelfth century the Turkish empire was racked by disunity. Zengi, Atabeg of Mosul, had started his holy war in 1137-1146, with his campaigns in Syria. His son, Nur-ed-din, (the contemporary spelling is "Nur ad Din") worked in Damascus with the help of Saladin's father, Ayyub, (meaning Job) and his uncle, Shirkuh. Saladin's father's assistance was so valuable in helping Nur-ed-din capture Damascus that Ayyub was made governor. Having his father as governor of Damascus allowed Saladin to obtain perhaps the finest education possible in the Arab world at that time.²⁹

Saladin was born in 1138 at Tekrit. Saladin's name in Arabic means "Honouring the Faith." Saladin was also the name by which he was known to the Europeans.³⁰ When Saladin

²⁸Cary, p. 16.

²⁹Winifred F. Knox, "Saladin," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), XXIV, p. 55.

³⁰Ibid.

came to power in Egypt in 1168, he was given the title of El Malik en Nasr, which meant the "Conquering King." This was the title under which the people of the Moslem world knew Saladin.³¹

In the twelfth century after the death of Zengi, Nur-ed-din began to establish order in the Near East. With the help of Shirkuh, the Mountain Lion, and Ayyub, his brother (Saladin's father), Nur-ed-din ruled from Edessa in the North to the Arabian desert in the South. Nur-ed-din kept his capital at Damascus and sent Shirkuh and Ayyub, who were younger, out to do his fighting against the Christians, and other Moslem chieftains. In the year of 1169, Nur-ed-din made a truce with the Crusaders and the Near East was relatively quiet.

The territory of Egypt was ostensibly ruled by the Fatimid, Caliph, and was actually ruled by his Vizier, or minister, who was the real dictator with the Caliph as a figurehead. The Vizier of Egypt was playing the Crusaders against the armies of Nur-ed-din and his General Shirkuh. The Crusaders were paid by the Vizier to hold back the army of Shirkuh. Then in the next instance, Shirkuh himself was called by the Vizier to defend Egypt from the Crusaders.

³¹Harold Lamb, The Crusades (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1931), p. 30.

The leader of the Crusaders, Amalric, King of Jerusalem, realized the value of capturing and controlling the territory of Egypt. Egypt was the dividing point which kept the Moslems of West Africa apart from the Moslems of the Near East. Soon this division of the Moslems was also noticed by Shirkuh and Nur-ed-din. They felt that Egypt was too weak really to defend herself. The armies of both Shirkuh and Amalric started a push for the capture of Cairo in 1168. Shirkuh reached the city first and proclaimed that he had saved the city. When the time was right he had the Vizier killed. His army then ruled all of Egypt. Before Shirkuh could establish himself as the new Vizier, he died. The leaders of the army of Nur-ed-din, along with the Kalif, felt that a new Vizier should be elected. The man named to lead the army and Egypt was Shirkuh's nephew, Saladin.³²

Saladin became the leader of Egypt at the time when he faced both a split in his army and the oncoming forces of Amalric of Jerusalem. Saladin was a rather quiet man, a man inclined to be more of a scholar than a warrior. He commanded his forces with cruel strength and refined leadership. He handled situations with whatever it took to deal with them--whether it was brute force or the finesse of a

³²Ibid., pp. 26-27.

refined politician. He reorganized the government of Egypt, replaced the Fatimids' officials with his own trusted men, and, through his officers, he knew what the population was doing. Despite such knowledge he remained aloof from the throng of people in his country. Saladin felt that the only way that his forces of Egypt and the forces of the Near East would be united was through the Jihad--or Holy War. Saladin felt that this would sufficiently unite the Moslems in order that they might defeat the Christians of Jerusalem. Saladin was determined to subdue the Moslem forces that opposed him and, in this determination, he aroused the anger of the Islamites, or the freethinkers, and the Assassins against him. The Assassins even made a vain attempt upon his life.³³

Saladin was never able fully to realize his dreams for a united Moslem world, nor was he ever fully able to regain the lost territories that the Christians had captured. Saladin was able to capture Jerusalem which was to remain in the hands of the Arabs until 1917.³⁴ Saladin had done his best to contain the Crusaders in the Near East. He had fared well against the strongest of the European Kings--both Richard

³³Ibid., pp. 31-45.

³⁴James Westfall Thompson, An Introduction to Medieval Europe: 300-1500 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1965), p. 540.

the Lion-Hearted of England, and Philip Augustus of France. He had lost Acre, Tripoli, and Antioch; yet he had recaptured Jerusalem from the hands of the Christian infidels. Saladin died in 1193 still uncertain that his holy war had been a success.³⁵

In the same locality that Dante saw Saladin he also saw many other notables who were connected with the classical age. Dante remarked when he raised his head from sighting Saladin he

. . . spied the master of the sapient throng,
seated amid the philosophic train. Him all admire,
all pay him reverence due. There Socrates and Plato
both I mark'd Nearest to him in rank, Democritus,
with Heraclitus, and Empedocles, and Anaxagoras,
and Thales sage, Zeno, and Dioscorides well read
in nature's secret lore. Orpheus I mark'd and
Linus, Tully and moral Seneca, Euclid and Ptolemy,
Hippocrates, Galenus, Avicen, and him who made that
commentary vast, Averroes.³⁶ [sic]

Dante's statement "I raised my brow, I spied the master of the sapient throng,"³⁷ is a reference to the great scientist and philosopher, Aristotle.

Aristotle became the most famous pupil of Plato. He was born in 384 B.C. at Stagira in Chalcidice. He was

³⁵Ibid., pp. 538-541.

³⁶Cary, p. 17.

³⁷Ibid.

the son of a physician at the court of the King of Macedon. When Aristotle was seventeen he was sent to Athens where he studied under Plato in the Academy. In 347 Aristotle left the city of Athens and settled in Assus. In Assus Aristotle married the daughter of the King of Assus. Between the years of 343 and 340 Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander the Great. When Alexander the Great came to the throne of Macedon, Aristotle left and returned to the city of Athens where he opened a school called the Lyceum. Here students from all over Greece and the Greek world came to study under him. Here, in 322, he died. Most of the works of Aristotle are lost, though some thirty-two have been attributed to him. The works that are attributed to Aristotle are: six works of Logic, known as the *Organon*; over twenty works that deal with the sciences of astronomy, physics, and even biology, and also the works titled "Metaphysics" and "Politics" are attributed to him.³⁸

Plato was also of the fourth century and the teacher of Aristotle. Plato was born in 427 B.C. to a family that was high in the Athenian social order. He was supposed to have been from a line of kings starting with Codrus of Athens.

³⁸ Joseph Ward Swain, The Ancient World (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), I, p. 506.

Socrates, who was a profound influence on his life. After the trial of Socrates, Plato left Athens and studied with Euclid. Later he traveled in Egypt and to Syracuse. Plato returned to Athens in 387 where he opened his famous Academy and he taught there until he died in 347 at the age of eighty. The works that Plato left behind are well-known. In the year of 367 Plato wrote "The Dialogues" (twenty-five in number). In 370 he wrote "The Republic," a work that describes Plato's experiences in Sparta. He was apparently very much intrigued with the way in which Sparta was run.³⁹

Socrates was the teacher of Plato, and Plato was present at the trial of Socrates. Socrates was born in 470 and died in 399 B.C. He was poor, with only enough wealth to sufficiently allow him to serve in the heavy cavalry in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.). Socrates could often be seen on the market place in Athens arguing and asking questions instead of answering them. Those students who came to him were taught to question the world around them. He has often been accused of being a Sophist, yet he was not. He felt that all things were not alike to all people.⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid., pp. 497-505.

⁴⁰The Sophist school of Greek thought believed in subordinating principles to success. Charles Alexander Robinson, Ancient History (New York: Macmillian Company, 1951), pp. 287-289.

In 423 the Greek dramatist Aristophanes, believing him to be a Sophist, ridiculed him in his play "The Clouds.". The main point of the drama was that Socrates taught the younger generation to argue in an irresponsible and dishonest way.⁴¹ Socrates was condemned to death in 399 B.C. for supposedly corrupting the youth of Athens.⁴²

The remaining men that Dante saw were important to him because of their various contributions to history as he knew it at the time. Democritus (d. circa 361 B.C.) believed that the world was formed by the fortuitous coming together of atoms. Heraclitus (sixth century B.C.) originated the theory of perpetual flux. The mythological poets, Orpheus and Linus, were thought of very highly by Dante as were Cicero (d. 43 B.C.) and Seneca (d. 65 B.C.). Indeed, their writings greatly influenced his work. Dante lists Hippocrates (d. circa 377 B.C.) and Galen (d. 200 B.C.) because they were the most famous of the old world physicians and because their knowledge, along with the knowledge of Avicenna (d. 1037 A.D.), the Arabian physician, was taught in the medieval universities at the time of Dante. Dante lists

⁴¹ Richard Mansfield Haywood, Ancient Greece and the Near East (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1964), p. 443.

⁴² Robinson, p. 289.

Averroes (d. 1200 A.D.) because it was through his translation that the works of Aristotle first began to gain the recognition that they should have had in the early middle ages. The Aristotle that was taught in the medieval universities was the Aristotle of Averroes.⁴³

In Canto V Dante refers to Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta. This is a tragic love affair contemporary with Dante in which they were caught together and killed. "Willingly would I speak with those two that go together, and seem to be so light upon the wind."⁴⁴

Francesca da Rimini was the daughter of Guido Novello the grandson of Da Polentas, Lord of Ravenna. The family of Polentas and the family of the Malatestas of Rimini were at war with each other in the form of a feud. The two families were supposed to become reconciled with the marriage of Francesca to Gianciotto Malatesta. Gianciotto was supposedly a cripple and, therefore, someone else was needed to court Francesca. Paolo, the brother of Gianciotto, became the suitor to Francesca. The two must have been deeply in love and Francesca probably thought she was marrying Paolo,

⁴³Cary, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁴Norton, p. 7.

but at the wedding she found that the real man she was to marry was the crippled Gianciotto.

After the wedding, the demented, crippled Gianciotto found out about the relationship between Paolo and Francesca. It seemed that they were still much in love and had not been too careful about their relationship. A servant informed Gianciotto of their actions and he stabbed them both to death.⁴⁵

Perhaps Dante's reason for inserting the romance between Francesca and Paolo is that he stayed for a while at the house of Guido Novello (Francesca's father) in 1321. This visit was also Guido's only claim to fame and he died in 1323.

In Canto VI Dante states "After long striving they will come to blood; and the wild party from the woods will chase the other with much injury forth."⁴⁶ This is a reference in the Inferno made by a character of Dante named Ciaccio. Ciaccio is making a reference to his prophecy of war between the reformed Whites and Blacks of Florence.

The old struggle between the Guelfs, the Whites, and the Ghibellines, the Blacks, returned in 1300. The struggle

⁴⁵Karl Vossler, Mediaveal Culture: An Introduction to Dante and His Times (New York: Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., 1958), II, pp. 239-240.

⁴⁶Cary, p. 25.

was renewed under the parties of Neri, the Blacks led by Corso Donati, and the Bianchi, the Whites led by Veri, de Cerchi. The party of Corso Donati was of the old nobility and the party of de Cerchi was of the new nobility of bankers and merchants. The party of Donati hoped for aid from the Pope (Boniface VIII). With the help of Pope Boniface VIII, Donati hoped to capture the city of Florence and overthrow the government in power which was the Whites of the Bianchi. The government in power was the one in which Dante himself served as prior.⁴⁷

Three agents of Donati were accused of treason by the priors of Florence and condemned to death. The Pope retaliated by threatening to excommunicate the priors. The message from the Pope to the priors did not seem to take and they again banished and exiled some of the nobles of the Neri party of Donati. These accused men were exiled because of their assaults upon the members of the Guilds. The matter was now out of the hands of Pope Boniface VIII and he called for aid of Charles of Valois to enter Italy and capture Florence and even help Charles II of Naples recapture Sicily from the Hohenstaufen.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Ferdinand Schevill, History of Florence (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), pp. 161-193.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Charles of Valois was the son of Philip III, King of France. In 1290 he married a daughter of Charles II, King of Naples, and had the throne of Aragon offered to him by Pope Martin IV who had excommunicated its king. (Pedro III).⁴⁹

Charles of Valois entered Florence in 1301 and made his intentions clear that he had come only at the request of Pope Boniface and that he was only to restore some form of order. Charles then had to contend with Donati and his party the Neri (the Black) who entered the city and ransacked the houses of the Florentine priors. One of these houses was Dante's home.

Soon the whole city of Florence was in an uproar. There were killings, riots, robbing and the wealthy bankers lost whole fortunes to those people who would brazenly enter their houses and demand their money or their lives. Finally the Blacks gained power and ousted the old priors and elected new ones. The Whites were condemned and exiled. Over three hundred were condemned to death but most of these were allowed to escape.

During all the trouble, Charles of Valois did not seem to have control of the situation. After order was restored

⁴⁹"Charles," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), V, p. 936.

by the Blacks, Charles left for Sicily.⁵⁰

In Canto X there is the reference to Frederick II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, King of Sicily and Jerusalem. Dante asked a shade what lies within Hell and the shade replied "More than a thousand with me here are laid. Within is Frederick, second of the name, and the Lord Cardinal."⁵¹

The reference to the Lord Cardinal concerns Cardinal Octavian Ubaldini. He was Cardinal of Florence at the time of the Guelfs' and Ghibellines' struggle for power.

He used his powers wherever possible to help the Ghibellines in Florence or even in the court of the Pope in Rome.

He was from the Ubaldini family of Florence and he was so used by the Ghibellines that he said, "If there is a soul, I have lost mine a thousand times for the Ghibellines."⁵²

Frederick II of Germany was often referred to as "the wonder of the world" (stupor mundi). This reference was made probably because of his scholarship, his widespread interest in science and medicine, his interest in ornithology,

⁵⁰Niccolo Machiavelli, History of Florence (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, Publishers, 1910), pp. 65-72.

⁵¹Cary, p. 43.

⁵²Ibid.

his transcendent political goals, his refusal to bow before the powers of the papacy, and his great services to education (he was founder of the University of Naples). He was also a bitter and implacable partisan in his struggle for the control of Italy. Born in 1194 at the town of Iesi (or Jesi),⁵³ a town in the march of Ancona northeast of Rome, his parents were Constance, daughter of Roger II of Sicily, and Emperor Henry VI, son of Frederick Barbarossa.

Since Frederick was the only child of Henry VI and Constance, she took every precaution to make sure he would not be deprived of his rightful ascendance to the German throne.

Constance was thirty when she married Henry, forty-two when she gave birth to her only child. Fearing doubts of her pregnancy, she had a tent erected in the market place at Jesi (near Ancona); and there, in the sight of all, she was delivered of the boy who was to become the most fascinating figure of the culminating Medieval century . . .⁵⁴

Frederick was a wild boy. He was left to run loose in the streets of Jesi without regard for his safety. He was never systematically educated, yet he was a poet, spoke six languages, and was acquainted with mathematics. When he was four years old (in 1198) he was crowned King of

⁵³C. W. Previte-Orton, The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History (At the Cambridge University Press, England, 1952), p. 612.

⁵⁴Durant, p. 714.

Sicily. At the death of his mother, Constance, Pope Innocent III was appointed to be his guardian. At the age of twelve he told Pope Innocent III that he no longer needed a guardian, dismissed the deputy regent and took over his own government. At fourteen he came of age, and at fifteen, married Constance of Aragon.⁵⁵

When Pope Innocent III excommunicated Otto IV of Germany, the German throne was open to Frederick. With the help of Innocent III, the barons and bishops of the empire elected Frederick Emperor. Innocent III extracted the promise from Frederick that he would defend the papal states. Frederick was to give up Sicily and turn it over to his son; he was to maintain all powers of the church in his kingdom; and he was to go crusading for the Holy Church. After Philip Augustus defeated Otto's army at Bouvines, Frederick was crowned Emperor at Aachen in 1215.⁵⁶

After Frederick's coronation at Aachen in 1215, he did not follow his vow to instigate another crusade. Otto's brother, Henry, raised an army against him and he had to defend his new kingdom. After the defeat of Henry, he granted almost absolute power to nobles and gave charters of

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 714-715.

⁵⁶Ibid.

self-government to certain cities. The effect of these charters was temporarily beneficial to Frederick, but in the long run it undermined imperial government.

Delays kept him from going on his intended crusade. The barons in southern Italy and the Saracens in Sicily revolted and Frederick argued that he must put these down before any campaign could be waged in the form of a crusade.

Finally in 1227 Frederick began gathering a large fleet of men and arms at Brindisi. By now Gregory IX was the Pope and he would accept no excuses for not starting the vowed crusade. Frederick himself was sick with an infection and the crusading army had come to a standstill. Gregory IX, due to his lack of patience and understanding of the problems then excommunicated Frederick.

The crusade did start, but not until 1228--almost seven months after its first preparation started. While Frederick was gone, Gregory IX started negotiations with the German nobles to absolve them from their oaths of crusade. He also tried to find ways to dispose of Frederick. In the meantime Frederick made a peace with Al-Kamil, the Saracen, and was granted Jerusalem which he took without losing a life. While at Jerusalem, he crowned himself King. One Bishop in the church declared that Jerusalem was desecrated by the mere presence of Frederick and stopped all religious services until he left.

After leaving Jerusalem, he proceeded back to Italy where he again organized an army with the intention of recapturing the Italian city-states and the countryside that had been captured by the papal army while he was on the crusade. Finally Frederick and Pope Gregory IX agreed to peace and signed the Treaty of San Germano in 1230.⁵⁷

Frederick was an able Emperor. He established the University of Naples in 1224. He delved into the arts of alchemy and astrology and other occult sciences. He had a zoological garden for study and he passed laws that allowed further advancements in the arts of medicine.

Frederick was not only a leader in the arts of science, mathematics, medicine and philosophy, but perhaps he saw in the medieval age a new period ahead that would change the world as he knew it. He allowed the practice of religious freedom to those of different faiths in his kingdom. Jews, Greek Catholics and Mohammedans were allowed to practice their own different religions as they pleased without being harassed and molested by him. Yet these people could not teach or hold office in any public form.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 715-717.

Even though Frederick had given some forms of religious freedoms, people could not convert from Christianity to Judaism or Islam without severe punishment. He did not even go so far as to allow freedom of speech to the professors of the University of Naples. This freedom was reserved for only Frederick II, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.⁵⁸

Frederick entered the struggle for the power in the city of Florence in 1247. He supported the Uberti faction of the Ghibellines and sent them a selection of German knights to help secure the government. The Ghibelline nobles ruled with the help of Frederick's son whom he sent to keep order among the leaders in power. However, in 1250 at the death of Frederick II, the Guelfs revolted and again captured the government.

Frederick, "the wonder of the world," died in 1250. He had been Emperor for thirty-five years.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 720-721.

CHAPTER III

INFERNO: CHAPTERS X-XVII

In Dante's journey through Hell he comes to the very edge of the precipice that encloses the seventh circle. Here he sees the tomb of Pope Anastasius, the supposed heretic.⁵⁹ Dante states that on the edge of the striking abyss,

. . . behind the lid Of a great monument we stood retired, Wheron this scroll I mark'd: "I have in charge Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus drew From the right path."⁶⁰ [sic]

It is very possible that Dante confused Pope Anastasius with the Emperor of the same time.⁶¹ Pope Anastasius II was Pope from 496-498. He succeeded Pope Gelasius and it was hoped that he could bring the "Acacian Schism" to an end.

⁵⁹Cary, p. 43.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 44.

⁶¹The Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I (491-518 A.D.) is the person Dante confused with Pope Anastasius II. He was a Monophysite. His rule as Emperor was troubled by the "Henoticon" (a document issued in 482 by the Byzantine Emperor Zeno in an attempt to heal the breach between the Monophysites and Chalcedonians). He was a good administrator, and he reorganized the interior administration. He tried to impose Monophysitism on the Eastern Bishops with the help of Severus of Antioch and Phioxenus of Madbugh. H. Chirat, "Acacian Schism," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 61-62; and, Ibid., J. Chaplin, "Anastasius II, Pope," pp. 478-479.

With his election the news was sent to all parts of the empire and to the Emperor Anastasius I. Pope Anastasius was prepared to make some concession in the Acacian controversy by proposing to recognize the baptisms and ordinations of the Acacians. The Roman clergy was greatly upset with Pope Anastasius for his friendly reception of Photinus. Photinus had been sent to Rome by the archbishop of Thessalonica who was an ardent supporter of the Acacians.⁶²

The problem of the "Acacian Schism" (484-519) was an outgrowth of Monophysitism. Monophysitism, or "Eutychianism," "taught that Christ had but one personality and a single nature."⁶³ Monophysitism was an outgrowth of an earlier form of heresy known as Apollinarism. Apollinarism was extremely successful with monks because it enlarged the divinity of Christ and deemphasized the humanity. This belief was in opposition to the views of the Nestorians and their belief in dualism.⁶⁴

The ideas of Monophysitism had come from Eutyches (c. 378-454), who had been in a monastery since the age of ten in Constantinople. He wanted to oust Nestorians from

⁶²Ibid., pp. 478-479.

⁶³Newman C. Eberhardt, A Summary of Catholic History (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1961), p. 253.

⁶⁴Ibid.

Constantinople, Syria, and Egypt.

The Monophysite doctrine spread, but in 448 at the Synod of Constantinople, Eutyches was excommunicated and expelled from the priesthood. He appealed to the Pope and the Emperor but was unsuccessful. In 449 a council was held at Ephesus where all who opposed Eutyches were kept from speaking. Following the vote of reprieve by Dioscorus of Alexandria with imperial troops to aid him, the rest of the council repudiated and rescinded the ruling of the Synod of Constantinople of 448. When Emperor Theodosius heard of the resolves of Ephesus he agreed, not knowing how the vote was obtained.⁶⁵

The "Acacian Schism," was an outgrowth of the Monophysites, Chalcedonians and the opposing papal views. When Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople, came to power in 472 he opposed the then Emperor, Basiliscus. When the Emperor Zeno was restored to power in 476 he disposed of Peter the Fuller of Antioch and other Monophysite bishops. He also, with the insistence of the Emperor, consecrated the Chalcedonian, Caladion, as a Bishop of Antioch. This action drew heavy complaint from Pope Simplicius (468-483) because of unwarranted interference outside his jurisdiction. Acacius refused to adhere to the wishes of the Pope, so in

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 253-258.

484 Pope Felix III excommunicated him in a Roman Synod. In the year 485 the excommunication of Acacius was upheld and the members who had been taken from their patriarchs were restored.⁶⁶

In 491 Emperor Anastasius I ascended the Byzantine throne. Before he was allowed to accept the crown he had to sign a declaration of faith in the Council of Chalcedon. During the same time, Patriarch Euphemius tried to make a reconciliation with Pope Gelasius (492-496). When Pope Anastasius II ascended the papal throne in 492, he still maintained that Acacius and his followers were schismatic. Pope Anastasius later pardoned some of the followers of Acacius due to their change in views. Acacius, however, remained forever excommunicated from the church.⁶⁷

Pope Anastasius had hoped to bring reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople. In his negotiations he was believed to have joined the followers of Acacius because of his pardoning of Archbishop Andrew of Thessalonica and his reception of Photinus in Rome. The people of Rome and some of the clergy did not seem to realize that Archbishop Andrew had given up the beliefs of Acacius and had been accepted back into the church.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Chirat, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 62.

⁶⁸Brusher, p. 100.

So Pope Anastasius II, a mild-mannered and kind man, was condemned to Hell by Dante. The Pope's followers in Rome also condemned him on a misunderstanding and a few indiscreet remarks by Photinus, who was Archbishop Andrew's representative to the Pope in Rome. Pope Anastasius died in 498, still unable to bring his most wanted unity and peace back to his beloved church.⁶⁹

In Dante's lifetime there was a great contempt for the practice of usury. In his journey through Hell he mentioned the practice twice. By placing it in Hell, Dante effectively showed his contempt for the practice. He mentioned the two cities of "Sodom and Cahors"⁷⁰ as being marked with a seal. Cahors was a town in Guyenne (Gienne), a province of France. The town was noted for its usury and from here the usurer took his vice and services to other parts of Europe. The Germans referred to the usurers of Europe as "Kawerschen," meaning men from Cahors.⁷¹ Later, in the same Canto (Canto XI) Dante again referred to the usurer by remarking "in another path the usurer walks."⁷²

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Cary, p. 45.

⁷¹J. R. Tanner (ed.), The Cambridge Medieval History (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1929), VI, p. 486.

⁷²Cary, p. 47.

The practice of usury had long been condemned by St. Ambrose, Aristotle, and even the Old Testament had regulations to prevent it among the Israelites. But in the Middle Ages usury was simply defined as the charging of interest, not of excessive interest. One of the main occupations of the church in the medieval period was to prevent usury in any and all forms. The Council of Nicaea in 325 had passed rules that prohibited the clergy from any form of usury. The church looked upon usury as a moral problem and a sin which fell under the ban of the church as any other sin. The church took such punitive measures as excommunication, banning the person from entering a church, and disapproval of burial on ground consecrated by the church. The severity of the church drove the practice underground for a while. When usury emerged again, the church could not control the Jews with the severe canon law of the Catholic Church, so the Jews continued to practice usury. The whole period of the middle ages raged with the theological argumentation of usury. Future Popes, including Alexander III, Innocent III, and Gregory IX, all forbade different forms of usury. However, the Franciscans started a mutual credit institution which received from the borrower 10 per cent on the grounds that this percentage was needed as expenses. Later two ecumenical councils ratified the practice. This

ratification opened the doors to liberalism and the practice was used elsewhere.⁷³

Usury was practiced in some parts of Europe prior to the twelfth century. But, beginning in the twelfth century, the economic influence of Italian banking and financial circles was gradually extended over the Alps. The availability of ready capital progressed throughout Europe in the form of loans or speculation. In 1250 Florentine gold found its way as far as England because of its availability and its quality. Also this form of good quality coin brought an opening up of negotiable currency. While other areas practiced the policy of life insurance, it did not come to Italy until the fourteenth century. The church attacked this form of money usage as usury.

Pope Innocent III and other Popes had tried since the beginning of the thirteenth century to outlaw usury, but they were unsuccessful. The usurers left Italy and went to France and Germany. The denunciations of the practice go as far back as the eighth century when it was denounced by the English and Carolingian churches. However, by the thirteenth century, usury had swept the whole of Europe.

⁷³M. M. Postan (ed.), The Cambridge Economic History of Europe (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), III, pp. 564-570.

Hardly a country, or recognized organization, or king had not used it for profit, or lost at it.⁷⁴

The men of Asti⁷⁵ were among the first to migrate in considerable numbers beyond the Alps, and with them migrations seemed to have become a habit. According to their own chronicler it was "in the year of our lord 1226" [sic] that they "began to lend and practise usury in France . . . beyond the mountains." [sic] Sometimes they handled the high as well as the low finance."⁷⁶

The practice of usury was degrading mainly because of the people who usually had need of the service. These people were the poor of the social system and the interest charged was outrageous. It is very doubtful if the borrower even knew how much he was to pay back, or even understood the interest computations. The high interest rate was common throughout Europe.

Various types of Italian financiers are to be found in the North. They are humble usurers, who wander over France and Germany, doing a little buying and selling, but occupied mainly, like some lending to small folk who pawn their household goods to get advances at the well-known usurer's rate, $43\frac{1}{2}$ per cent . . . ⁷⁷

⁷⁴Tanner, VI, pp. 485-495.

⁷⁵A small town located close to Turin and the Pennine Alps in Italy. In 1291-1513 this area was the Duchy of Savoy. This area is in present day Northern Italy. Inset reference Ihp. 90; Db p. 95.
William R. Sheperd, Historical Atlas (ninth edition; New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1964), pp. 90, 95.

⁷⁶Tanner, VI, p. 486.

⁷⁷Ibid.

The practice of usury was never fully controlled. Later it developed to form banking houses and by this time popes, kings and still the everyday men were totally involved in this form of borrowing. It is interesting to note that even the religious orders of the Templars and the Teutonic Knights practiced a related form of usury. Technically, they were not practicing usury, but did carry on a similar business in the form of monastic contracts.⁷⁸ It is easy to see why such a condemned practice survived. The need for capital in most cases finds the available capital that will be lent for profit--so the business has flourished in one form or another until the present day.

In Canto Twelve Dante makes a reference to Alexander. It is not known whether he is referring to Alexander the Great or Alexander of Pherae. Dante probably placed both Alexanders in Hell because they were not Christians. Dante states, "Here they wail aloud Their merciless wrong. Here Alexander dwells, And Dionysius fell, who for many a year of woe wrought for fair Sicily."⁷⁹ [sic]

Alexander of Pherae (died c. 359 B.C.) ruled Pherae in Thessaly from 369-358 B.C. During his rule, he was so despotic that Alexander II of Macedon tried to intervene.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 491.

⁷⁹Cary, p. 51.

When Alexander II left Thessaly, after his attempt at intervention, Alexander of Pherae ruled just as cruelly and despotically as ever. The people of Thessaly then asked help from Thebes, but the envoy from Thebes to Pherae was captured and thrown into prison in 368. Later in 368, the Theban General Epaminondas rescued the Theban envoy by force. In 364 Alexander lost the battle of Cynoscephalae to the Thebans and was forced to recognize the freedom of the Thessalian city. In 359 he was killed by his brother at the insistence of his wife.⁸⁰

Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) was the son of Philip of Macedon. He was taught by the famous Aristotle. During the time of Alexander, Philip, his father, was bringing Macedon up into a military state to gain leadership of the Greek city-states in the South. Philip's hope had been to firmly unite the Greek states into a well-run machine for war against Persia.

At the age of sixteen, young Alexander commanded the Macedon army, and in his father's absence, he put down a revolt that could have crumbled the state. In 336 Alexander's father was assassinated while celebrating the marriage of his daughter to Alexander I of Epirus. The throne was open for young Alexander III. His command of the army enabled

⁸⁰Edwin Robert Bevan, "Alexander III," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.; New York: Encyclopedia Britannica Company, 1910), I, p. 552.

him to override the other claimants to the throne. He had the new son of Philip by Cleopatra put to death as well as his cousin, Amyntas. After this he united the country and postponed the plans for his father's attack upon Persia.

Before Alexander III could hope to control lower Greece, he first had to put down rebellions from barbarian tribes close to his own border. This done, he moved into Greece proper and took Thebes. After this he strengthened his alliance with Thebes, Athens, and Sparta. In the spring of 334 he crossed into Asia with an army of 35,000 men.⁸¹

At the spring crossing of the Dardanelles, Alexander was commander and chief of the Macedonians and the League of Corinth. He commanded 30,000 foot soldiers and upwards of 5,000 horses.⁸²

The amount of troops that Alexander the Great took with him was large for Greece. His army might meet a larger force in the field, but that force would hardly be as well-prepared and trained as his. He gathered his troops from wherever he could in Greece and in any territory that he controlled. His horsemen were made up primarily of Macedonians,

⁸¹ Ibid., Robert B. Edwyn, "Alexander III," I, pp. 545-547.

⁸² J. B. Bury (ed.), The Cambridge Ancient History (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1927), VI, p. 358.

. . . Of Alexander's Infantry, 12,000 were Macedonians, viz. The Phalanx, 9,000, in six territorial battalions, and the hypaspits, 3,000, in three battalions; and 12,000 were Greek, composed of allies (League hoplites) and mercenaries (partly peltasts). The remaining infantry were light armed: Agrianian Javelin-men, Cretan archers, and Thracians.⁸³ [sic]

In 334 Alexander defeated the Persians at the Battle of Granicus and then proceeded to Ephesus. He moved further in 334 to Gordium, the location of the famous "Gordian Knot." In 333 he met and defeated Darius, the king of the Persians, at the Battle of Issus even though Darius had the larger army. In 331 Alexander pressed his army further into Persia and in the same year he fought the Battle of Arbela. His conquest led him as far as Beas in India. Here the army refused to go further and Alexander turned home. During the returning trip he died.⁸⁴

Dante's reference to Alexander of Pherae or Alexander the Great also included the mention of Dionysius of Syracuse. "And Dionysius fell, who many a year of woe wrought for fair Sicily."⁸⁵

Dionysius I of Syracuse (c. 432-367 B.C.) was also known as "The Elder." He supposedly began life as a clerk in a public office in the government of Syracuse. Over the

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 358-422.

⁸⁵Cary, p. 51.

years he improved his position and made himself ruler of Syracuse. Under his rule Syracuse was turned into a military state and under his power he ruled almost all of Sicily. His rule of Syracuse extended from Sicily into southern Italy, all of which he ruled with an iron hand. He carried on a war with Carthage in the hope of capturing all of Sicily and ending the Carthaginian influence on the island. The territory he captured was kept by right of a treaty he signed with Carthage.⁸⁶ This treaty allowed that,

. . . Carthage was to keep Acragas, Selinus and Thermae and the Elyman and Sican towns were to remain her subjects. Gela and Camarina were to tributary and unwallled cities. The Sicels were to be free, and Messina and Leontini were to be recognized as independent commonwealths. The Carthaginians were to guarantee the rule of Dionysius over Syracuse and the integrity of Syracusan territory.⁸⁷

Out of this treaty, Dionysius had gained recognition from Carthage as the ruler and leader of Syracuse. Having thus achieved recognition by Carthage, he was even more firmly established in Syracuse. He enlarged his powers by extending the army and enlarging the naval fleet. He strengthened the fortifications of Syracuse and ruled the city stringently. He adopted the title "Ruler of Sicily," though he was not all of Sicily's ruler. In 398-392 B.C.

⁸⁶Bury, VI, pp. 108-133.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 113.

war broke out between Syracuse and Carthage again. During this period he carried on a hit-and-run war with the Carthaginian navy, and defended the towns of Syracusan possession as well as he could in Sicily. During the campaign Dionysius besieged a city named Motya. When he had captured it, he massacred all the inhabitants. The wars with Carthage were on and off again. In 369 Dionysius had to send troops to Sparta to uphold an agreement with that city-state in defense against the Thebans.⁸⁸

Dionysius died in 367 B.C. During his rule the state of Syracuse far exceeded her natural boundaries of a Greek city-state. The policies of Dionysius helped encourage the growth of Syracuse in trade, prestige, and military influence. Dionysius I, King of Syracuse, was succeeded to the throne by his son of the same name who became Dionysius II, The Younger.

In Canto XII Dante makes a reference to Ezzelino (Azzolino or Ezzelin) III da Romano. "And that forehead which has such black hair is Azzolino."⁸⁹ The same sentence continued refers to Obizzo of Este, "that with flaxen locks Obizzo of Este, in the world destroyed by his foul stepson."⁹⁰

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 112-134.

⁸⁹Norton, p. 17.

⁹⁰Cary, p. 51.

Ezzelino II da Romano was the most horrible dictator of all northern Italy. He has often been referred to as the "Son of the Devil." During Frederick II's lifetime he aligned himself with Frederick in the wars against the Popes. He ruled the cities of Verona, Padua and Vicenza. He ruled from the great Trevisan march in northern Italy.⁹¹

Ezzelino was a member of the Ghibelline party. He was always at war with the Guelf party and the Pope because the Pope openly supported the Guelf party. He used every opportunity he had to obstruct the power and function of the church within his own provinces.

In 1255 Alexander IV decided to act against Ezzelino III. He appointed Philip da Pistoia, a papal legate, to lead an army against Ezzelino III who also acted as leader of the imperialists in Lombardy. Philip gained the aid of Venice and they gave the army soldiers and ships. In 1256 Philip captured Padua while Ezzelino was busy raiding Mantua. Upon Ezzelino's return, he found he could not capture Brescia in 1258 with the help of a fellow noble, Pelavicini. After the conquest, he supposedly cheated his ally, Pelavicini. Pelavicini then turned and formed a league to oppose him in 1258.⁹²

⁹¹Bury, VI, pp. 166-167.

⁹²Ibid., p. 180.

In 1259 Ezzelino invaded the Milanese and here,
 . . . he was outgeneralled, outnumbered, and defeated,
 and then taken prisoner at Cassano by the passage of
 the river Adda, to die by tearing the bandages from
 his wounds on October 1, 1259.⁹³

The actions and despotic behavior of Ezzelino III da Romano were perhaps the worst of the Italian dictatorial rulers of the 13th century. His behavior was used as a form of prototype to the 14th century rulers of Italy. His cruelty extended to friends and foe alike and he knew no bounds to his tyrannical behavior except his own imagination.

In the same reference to Ezzelino III, Dante also mentions Obizzo of Este. Little is found of Obizzo of Este except that he was the fourth Marquis of Ferrara and was the grandson of Azzo III Novello. It was Azzo III who was one of the leaders in the campaigns against the dictator, Ezzelino. Azzo III was murdered in 1293 by his grandson, Azzo VIII, who was his successor.⁹⁴

Dante again mentions a tragic bit of history in Canto XII. "He cleft, in the bosom of God, the heart that still is honored on Thames."⁹⁵

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Cary, p. 51.

⁹⁵Norton, p. 17.

This reference is related to the death of Henry III's nephew, son of the Earl of Cornwall. Richard, Earl of Cornwall, (1209-1272), was the brother of Henry III of England. He was the godfather to Edward I as was Simon de Montfort. In 1240 he was present at Acre where he joined Simon de Montfort, and in the same year Richard fortified the city of Acalon and negotiated a treaty with opposing forces. In May he left Acre and proceeded to Sicily where he met Frederick II and accepted letters from Frederick for delivery to the Pope. By 1242 Richard had returned to London.

In 1257 Richard was elected King of the Romans by a small majority of German electors. He was elected because of his wealth and connection with the Hohenstaufen party and his friendliness to the Papacy. Between 1257-1268, Richard made four trips to Germany, where he gained recognition in the Rhineland as King of the Romans. But he was never crowned Emperor at Rome because of the opposition of Urban VI, who had as his candidate Alfonso X of Castile. Even though Richard was never crowned, his recognition as King of the Romans, a preliminary stage to becoming Emperor, was firm; and considerable prestige attached to the condition. Even though the title King of Romans was not inheritable, his son, later killed, would have inherited all his other titles.⁹⁶

⁹⁶Thomas F. Tout, "Richard, Earl of Cornwall," Dictionary of National Biography (London: Oxford University Press, 1937-1938), XVI, pp. 1051-1061.

The murder of Richard's son by Guy de Montfort was in retaliation for the death of Simon de Montfort. Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester and Guy's father, was killed at the Battle of Evesham by the hands of Prince Edward, his nephew and son of Henry III.

Guy de Montfort (1243-1288)⁹⁷ came from a long line of Montforts originally from France. Guy's father, Simon de Montfort (c. 1208-1265), had come from France and was the fourth son of Simon de Montfort IV. Simon's father had been the leader of the Albigensian crusade. Simon de Montfort, the Elder, went to England in 1207 and proclaimed himself heir to the Beaumont estate to which he was entitled by his mother. King John granted him the earldom of Leicester in 1207, but he lost it all through the French war of Philip Augustus and King John.⁹⁸

In 1230 Simon de Montfort's fourth son, Simon, went to England and became a close friend of Henry III. Simon was an unusual person and fitted into the English society as though he had been born there.

⁹⁷ Guy de Montfort was the third son of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, and his wife Eleanor. Sir George Smith and Sir Sidney Lee, The Dictionary of National Biography (London: Oxford University Press, 1937-1938), XIII, p. 730.

⁹⁸ Henry W. C. Davis, "Montfort, Simon D.," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XVIII, p. 781.

In 1230 Henry recognized Simon's claim to the Earldom of Leicester and granted him a yearly pension. He took his place in the court of Henry III and became a great favorite with the King. However, Simon de Montfort was an

. . . advocate of reform, and one of the first statesmen to see that a middle element, below the baronage but above the peasants, was beginning to emerge in English society. In a great need of support, he courted this middle element.⁹⁹

Simon de Montfort married Henry III's daughter and this gave him a close tie to the court. Henry placed him in a high administrative position but was unsatisfied and later removed him and placed him on trial. This was the beginning of separation between the two men. The forces in England that were on the side of Simon gathered with him and on May 14, 1264, Simon's forces defeated the army of King Henry III at the Battle of Lewes. The government fell into the hands of Simon de Montfort as well as the King of England who was taken prisoner along with other major lords on the royalist side. In 1265 Simon de Montfort was killed at the Battle of Evesham by his godson, Edward, son of Henry III. This battle held a horrible mutilation for Simon de Montfort.

The disaster held its tragic ironies. King Henry was wounded and would have been slain if he had not been saved by Roger Legburn--the man who had been foremost in the recent civil war and in the invitation

⁹⁹David Harris Willson, A History of England (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967), p. 115.

to Earl Simon to return to England. The Earl's body (Simon de Montfort) was dismembered by William John Giffard, at Lewes. The head was sent as a gift to Roger Mortimer's wife at Wigmore. The trunk was buried by the monks of Evesham.¹⁰⁰

Later, in 1267, Pope Clement requested that appointed people in England inquire into the death of Simon de Montfort to see if he received a Christian burial.¹⁰¹

Simon de Montfort's defeat at Evesham was a great defeat for his son, Guy de Montfort, also. Guy de Montfort was wounded at Evesham and was taken prisoner. In 1266 he escaped and made his way to France. While in France, he tried to develop a plan for revenge against Henry III and Edward. During this time he served in Italy, he became governor of Tuscany with the help of Charles of Anjou. Sometime between 1270 and 1271 Guy returned to England to take revenge on Henry III or his family.¹⁰²

On March 13th, 1271, he and his brother, Simon the Younger, murdered their cousin, Henry of Cornwall (the Son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall) in a church at Viterbo,

¹⁰⁰F. M. Powicke, King Henry III and the Lord Edward (Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1947), II, p. 502.

¹⁰¹"On 27 April, 1267, Pope Clement IV sent a mandate to the Legate Ottobuono to make inquiry and report about an assertion made by the Earl's son, Amaur: that although the Earl obtained absolution before battle, his body did not have ecclesiastical burial." Ibid., p. 502.

¹⁰²Smith and Lee, p. 730.

Guy taking the most prominent and brutal part in the crime, which he called vengeance for his father's death.¹⁰³

The actions of Simon de Montfort did not call for the complete mutilation of his body, nor did it call for the revenge enacted by his son, Guy. This, however, was the manner in which the political losers were handled. The dismemberment of Simon's body, unusual even for that time, showed not only the depths of hatred dividing the contending parties, but also helped to account for the murder of Earl Richard's son. Cary, in his translation of Dante, states that after the murder of the Earl of Cornwall's son, "The heart of the murdered prince was brought back to London in a gold casket."¹⁰⁴ The murder of the son of Earl Richard "in the bosom of God," as Dante says, refers to the horrible desecration of the church at Vitebo by the violence. In medieval times, the actual church was a place of peace, undefiled by angry political feuds and war; and people often took refuge there from lawful authorities.¹⁰⁵ As a result of this murder in the church Guy de Montfort was excommunicated and imprisoned by the Pope until 1274, when he was released due to a payment to the Pope by a follower of Guy

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Cary, p. 52.

¹⁰⁵Even after World War II the British incurred the wrath of the church and population of Trieste by killing a man inside the church to which he had fled for refuge.

de Montfort. Guy de Montfort later died in a Sicilian prison in 1288 after he had been captured by Roger de Loria as he attempted to retake a French fort at Catania in 1287.¹⁰⁶

Dante, in his passage through Hell, sees all the men of the world who should be there in his estimation. "There Heaven's stern justice lays chastising hand on Attila, who was the scourge of earth on Sextus and on Pyrrhus."¹⁰⁷

Attila (d. c. 453 A.D.) became King of the Huns in 433.

He was the son of Mundicich and his brothers were Octar and Ruas who are said to have ruled before Attila, though not over quite so many tribes. After their deaths, he succeeded to the throne of the Huns, together with his brother, Bleda, . . . he sought to increase his strength by murder. Thus he proceeded from the destruction of his own kinder to the menace of all others. . . Now when his brother Bleda, who ruled a great part of the Huns, had been slain by his treachery, Attila united all the people under his own rule.¹⁰⁸

After Attila's rise to power in 445, he spent a period of almost eight years welding his tribes together into a fierce fighting force. His attacks upon the Roman

¹⁰⁶Smith and Lee, p. 730.

¹⁰⁷Cary, p. 52.

¹⁰⁸Charles Christopher Mierow, The Gothic History of Jordanes (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960), pp. 101-102.

empire were so fierce that the Roman Emperor collected a tax which was given to the Huns to bribe them and keep them out of Rome. The Romans, between 443 and 450, paid the Huns 22,000 pounds of gold.¹⁰⁹

Between 443 and 447, the Roman government enjoyed an unstable peace with the Huns. However, in 450 with the death of Theodosius II, Attila joined forces with the Franks and the Vandals and led his men to the Rhine. He crossed in 451 A.D. and sacked most of Belgic Gaul. Attila pushed on and besieged the city of Orleans on the Loire River (France). In 451 he met the Roman-Gothic army in the Catalaunian plains under their prospective leaders Aetius and Theodoric. It is said that between 175,000 to 300,000 men were slain. King Theodoric was killed and Attila had lost so many men that he withdrew from the field. After the battle, Attila ravaged the countryside and burned the chief city of Venetia. He also attacked towns at the head of the Adriatic. The city of Venice was reported to have been started by refugees from him who took refuge in the shallow waters off the coast, building on piles. Attila finally died in 453 in his Pannonian

¹⁰⁹C. D. Gordon, The Age of Attila (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 67.

camp after a banquet celebrating his marriage to a new wife, Ildico.¹¹⁰

The acknowledgment of Sextus that occurred in the same reference to Attila concerns Sextus Pompeius Magnus (c. 66-35 B.C.). Sextus Pompeius was the younger son of Pompey the Great. Sextus was a member of a plebeian family known as Pompeius. His father was Pompey the Great who was considered to be the most able administrator and general in the Roman republic until his defeat by Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. at the Battle of Pharsalus. Pompey campaigned with Sulla in the social war, fighting in Spain and Italy. In 71 B.C. he defeated the remaining forces of the rebellious slave Spartacus. Later Pompey, Caesar and Crassus formed the first triumvirate. Pompey and Caesar began to quarrel over control of the Roman state. The Senate favored Pompey at the death of Crassus, Pompey began to lose the support of the city of Rome--especially that of the commoners, who favored Caesar. Both Caesar and Pompey's powers were revoked by the Senate in 50 B.C. and they were told to disband their armies. Pompey refused and Caesar fearing Pompey's power invaded Italy. The Senate then sided with Pompey and many of its members joined him. Not being able to cope with Caesar in Italy

¹¹⁰Thomas Hodgkin, "Attila," Encyclopaedia Britannica, II, pp. 885-886.

he departed to Greece and war ensued in 49 B.C. This war lasted until 48 B.C. when Pompey was defeated at Pharsalus. He was later killed in Egypt by treacherous Egyptians who were afraid of his power and position.¹¹¹

At the death of Pompey in 48 B.C. the struggle against Caesar, and later Octavian, was carried on by Sextus Pompeius Magnus. At the death of his father, Sextus joined his followers in Africa who had held out during the civil war against Caesar. Later Sextus Pompeius fled to northern Spain where he hid out and practiced piracy on a small scale. After the death of Caesar he was still located in northern Spain where he had gathered a large army and navy. With the forming of the Second Triumvirate Sextus had insufficient military strength to attack the Second Triumvirate on land. He was forced to resort to his navy to press the triumvirate from the sea.¹¹²

In 43 B.C. Sextus Pompeius had gained control of the islands of Sicily and Sardinia and he was lord of the western Mediterranean. His fleet, during this period, had grown from one squadron to over three hundred ships. With

¹¹¹"Pompey," Encyclopaedia Britannica, (11th ed.), XXII, pp. 56-57.

¹¹²Frank Burr Marsh, A History of the Roman World From 146 B.C. to 30 B.C., (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd.), V, pp. 288-293.

them he ravaged the coast of Italy and triumvirate of Octavian, Antony and Lepidus.¹¹³

From 42 to 40 he applied steadily more irritating pressure on Italy through his control of the sea, raiding the coast and cutting off the grain supply of Rome almost entirely.¹¹⁴

The position of Sextus in the Mediterranean did not affect Antony's part of the empire. However it did affect Octavian and the people of Italy. Finally in 39 B.C. Octavian and Antony were forced to come to an agreement with Sextus in which, if he let up on Italy proper, then a treaty would be made whereby he could hold Sicily and Sardinia de jure as well as de facto. The truce did not last long but it gave Octavian time in which to rebuild his fleet and in 36 B.C. Octavian again engaged Sextus but this time with a new and better trained fleet. The spring of 36 B.C.--Octavian opened his campaign with the aid of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Sicily was invaded by Octavian's forces from both Africa and Italy, supported by his navy. The navies of Octavian and Sextus engaged in battle while at the same time his land forces on the island of Sicily fell

¹¹³Chester C. Starr, The Roman Imperial Navy, 31 B.C. to 324 A.D. (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967), pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 6.

to Mark Antony. Sextus did escape, however, but was later captured and executed by the forces of Octavian and Mark Antony.¹¹⁵

It is probable that Sextus is mentioned in the Inferno as being in Hell because he challenged the power of the Republic. Dante was a great believer in the early Republic as well as the idea of empire. Perhaps Sextus finds himself in Hell due to Dante's belief that the Republic and later the Empire was to Dante the greatest achievement of man--especially the Romans. Dante seems to have no patience with those who tampered with his political concepts of a great state such as Rome and he clearly shows this in his work "De Monarchia."

In the same reference that refers to Sextus Pompeius Dante also makes reference to Pyrrhus. Pyrrhus, King of Epirus (c. 318-272 B.C.), was the son of Aeacides whose family claimed that they descended from Achilles. Pyrrhus established himself as king of Epirus by marrying Antigone, the stepdaughter of Ptolemy. He was educated at the court of Ptolemy and was an ally of Ptolemy. In 281 with 25,000 troops he prepared for war against the Romans and later met them at the Battle of Heraclea. Here he defeated the

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 6-8.

Romans under the command of Valerius Laevinus, but lost so many troops that it was later referred to as a "Pyrrhic victory." Again in 279 he defeated another Roman army at Asculum (Ascoli) in Apulia. He then left Italy and went to Sicily where he wanted to make himself head of the Sicilian Greeks. There he drove out the Carthaginians and decided to go back to Italy but a large amount of his fleet was destroyed by the Carthaginians. He finally reached Italy in 275 where he was defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Beneventum. With this defeat he returned to Epirus in Greece and in 272 he was killed when he fell from his horse in a street fight in Argos where he had gone to settle a dispute over the succession to the throne of Sparta.¹¹⁶

The remaining references in this section of Cantos concern the fights and conflicts between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. This section deals with a period in which Dante was involved--this has already been discussed. It seems that Dante the poet never relinquished his chance to take a political cut at the Ghibelline party. He mentioned Guelfs as well, such as Brunetto Latini. Dante noticed him in Hell with the remark, "Ser Brunetto And are you here?"¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶"Pyrrhus," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), XXII, p. 697.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 63.

Ser Brunetto was a philosopher and politician who was born in Florence. He was an ardent Guelf and he introduced the art of oratory into Florentine schools. It is believed that Brunetto was the teacher of Dante.¹¹⁸

In Canto XVII Dante acknowledges the two symbols of the Guelf and the Ghibellines.

A yellow purse I saw with azure wrought. That wore a lion's countenance and port. Then still my sight pursuing its career, another I beheld, than blood more red, a goose displayed of whiter wing than curd.¹¹⁹

The reference to the lion was the symbol that appeared on the flag of the Gianfigliuzzi. The Gianfigliuzzi lived in Florence and were Guelf supporters. The goose symbol appeared upon the flag of the Ubbriachi, who were Ghibelline supporters.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Cary, p. 72.

¹²⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

INFERNO: CANTOS XVIII-XXXIV

In Canto XVIII Dante makes reference to the first jubilee that was held in Rome during the reign of Pope Boniface VIII.

Even thus the Romans, when the year returns of Jubilee, with better speed. Hitherward they came meeting our forces from the middle point; with us beyond, but with a larger stride. E'en thus the Romans, when the year returns Of Jubilee, with better speed to rid the thronging multitudes, their means devised for such as pass the bridge.¹²¹
[sic]

The jubilee was supposed to last from Christmas of 1299 to Christmas 1300. During the jubilee Boniface had announced that "full and complete remissions of sins would be accorded to all those who visited the tombs of the apostles during that year."¹²²

The jubilee that Pope Boniface held beginning in 1299 was a direct outgrowth of his troubles with Philip IV, known as Philip the Fair, King of France. The conflict between Philip and Boniface was that of Church vs. State.

Philip IV was trying to extend French territory into the English possession of Gascony. The hostilities between

¹²¹Cary, p. 76.

¹²²Wood, p. 47.

the French and the English over territory on the continent held by Edward I was prompted by open conflict of the Gascon seaman against the Normans on the Briton Coast. Edward I was summoned to the Parliament of Paris to explain. Edward I could do little because of his preoccupation with Scotland whom Philip the Fair was befriending with aid. Edward, being occupied by Scotland, left Gascony open for Philip which he took. The French and English conflict was later given over to Boniface VIII to arbitrate, but in the meantime Edward declared war. The conflict was on the basis of the 100 Years War with France and England.¹²³

In order to raise money for his campaign, Philip decided to tax the Church in France. The French clergy did not mind because they knew that the state was their main defense. They objected only to the point that the tax might become uncontrolled and therefore would become power for the King to use to destroy the Church or hold it in virtual captivity.

Philip's power over the French clergy had already been felt. He had taken them out of positions in the royal court and from positions in the King's government and council. The clergy feared this tax would become oppressive in France.

¹²³C. W. Previte-Orton, A History of Europe (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1960), III, p. 161.

Some of the French clergy refused to pay the tax and petitioned the Pope. This plea for help by the French clergy placed Boniface in a bad position between the French king, Philip, and the French clergy. Boniface felt if any state began taxing the property of the Church without the approval of the papacy then it would soon weaken the French church financially and ultimately the papacy. Also, it was setting a bad precedent to permit the taxation of the Church by the state.

The position that Philip took was that the Church should share in the cost of the operation of the state which always protected it. This, of course, is a natural position to take if there is wealth in the country and it always goes out of the country to another power like the papacy. Also Philip was willing to defend his position because he was in bad need of the revenues that the Church could give him in the form of taxes.¹²⁴

Boniface decided that he must take action. He issued a papal bull aimed at Philip the Fair.

The bull *Clericis laicos* (1296, with no month given, but before August 18), which excommunicated both those who levied imposts on the clergy and the ecclesiastic who paid them, was applicable to the whole Christian world.¹²⁵ [sic]

¹²⁴Durant, pp. 812-813.

¹²⁵Wood, p. 31.

Boniface had issued the bull in a moment of extreme irritation. The bull itself was perhaps almost impossible to enforce and only angered Philip more than before. Philip counteracted with action by forbidding the export of gold, silver, precious stones, or food, and also by forbidding all foreign merchants to remain in France. With this Philip had cut off the main source of monies and goods that had been flowing into the papacy. This not only hurt the coffers of the papacy but also cut off all sources of monies that were being raised for the crusades.¹²⁶

Finding the papacy cut off from revenue sources in France, Boniface issued another bull in September, 1296.

The bull *Ineffabilis amor* corrected what its predecessor had made absolute. Philip could levy subsidies on the clergy, with the consent of the Pope, who, if the kingdom was threatened, would order contributions for its defense up to the sale of sacred vessels. Boniface asked in the same bull for an explanation of the prohibition recently placed on the export of gold and silver, and merchandise from the kingdom, a prohibition that threatened to cut off one of the principal revenues of Rome.¹²⁷ [sic]

It is also stated that the royal proclamation forbidding exports and dealing with merchants by Philip was

¹²⁶Durant, pp. 812-813.

¹²⁷Wood, p. 31.

not only directed to Boniface for issuing the bull Clericis Laicos, but was moreover intended to hit the English and the Flemings with whom Philip was at war.¹²⁸

Finally Philip recalled the orders issued on exports and he and Edward of England accepted Boniface as mediator of their disputes. Boniface, probably in a rare mood, decided most of the disputes in the favor of Philip the Fair.

The struggle was at peace for a moment. However, it opened up again in 1300 with a dispute between Philip and the papal legate, Denard Saisset. The quarrel seemed to concern the conduct of the Pope. There were those who stated that he was full of greed, avarice, and unmentionable heresies. The people who believed this sided with King Philip. The papal legate took the other side and argued against the king. The king felt that the legate was working up insurrection and had him charged with inciting insurrection.¹²⁹

In retaliation to Philip's action, Boniface issued the bull Ausculda fili in December, 1301. The bull was burned in Paris before the king. Philip then called the first States-General ever held in Paris. It was attended by the nobility, the clergy, and the commoners. From this

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 32.

¹²⁹Durant, p. 814.

council came a reply issued to Boniface stating that in temporal powers the state is the power and not the Church. Philip even demanded the resignation of Boniface, but the Pope refused. Boniface was even briefly held prisoner in 1302 in his palace at Anagni by Philip's soldiers under the command of William of Nogaret. He was rescued by members of the Orsini family from Italy who led over four-hundred horsemen into the city to free him. He retired to the Vatican in Rome and died on October 11, 1303. This so-called humiliation of Anagni was one of the most striking humiliations of the Church by the state to be found in history. It was a reversal of the medieval confrontation at Canossa where the state was humiliated by the Church. It proved to be the nadir of the medieval papacy.¹³⁰

The Pope who replaced Boniface was Benedict XI.

Benedict XI served as papal head from October 22, 1303 when he was elected by the Cardinals, to his death on July 7, 1304. Dante does not seem to be concerned with him in the Divine Comedy.

In Canto XIX Dante continues his work with a reference to the medieval practice of simony. The reference even gives the name of the man from whom the practice of simony is derived.

¹³⁰Ibid., pp. 814-815.

Woe to thee, Simon Magnus! woe to you, His wretched followers! who the things of God, which should be wedded unto goodness, them, Rapacious as ye are, do prostitute for gold and silver in Adultery!¹³¹ [sic]

The practice of simony was common during the Middle Ages. The worst period was from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. Simony is defined as "a deliberate design of selling or buying something spiritual or annexed to the spiritual."¹³²

The term seems to be derived from a man named Simon Magnus as mentioned by Dante. Simon was supposedly a sorcerer who believed that the gift of God could be bought by the giving of gold.¹³³ Reference to Simon Magnus can be found in the Bible in Acts of the Apostles.¹³⁴

During the medieval period many offices in the papacy or under papal control were purchased for money. This practice included selling the sacraments, prayers, and indulgences and the buying of benefices. The selling of indulgences and Holy Orders was one of the primary ways of getting money in the Middle Ages. Later, during the

¹³¹Cary, p. 79.

¹³²J. Gilchrist, "Simony," New Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, p. 227.

¹³³Cary, p. 79.

¹³⁴Bible, Acts, 8: 9-24.

Reformation, the practice was dropped because of the disturbance and the break it caused in the Church during the time of Martin Luther.¹³⁵

Dante speaks of Clement V harshly and with notable disgust: "For after him, One yet of deeds more ugly shall arrive, From forth the west, a shepherd without law, Fated to cover both his form and mine."¹³⁶ [sic]

Dante's reference to Clement's coming from the west was an allusion to his French nationality. He took the papacy from Rome to Avignon, in the papal county of Venaissin, an area completely surrounded by French territory in the south of France.

Clement V was born Bertrand de Gouth of a noble family in 1264. He was made a chaplain by Boniface VIII. He was elected Pope at Perugia on the 5th of June in 1305. It is thought that Clement V owed his papal election to the statesmanship of Philip the Fair of France. At the time of the election he was in Bordeaux, France. He decided to remain in France rather than Rome due to the turmoil of the times. Clement's coronation took place at Lyons, France on the 14th day of November in 1305. Beginning with

¹³⁵J. Gilchrist, XIII, pp. 227-228.

¹³⁶Cary, pp. 81-82.

Clement's reign is the period of seventy years rule of the Popes of Avignon, known as the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church."¹³⁷

The idea of Pope Clement V taking residence outside of Rome was not new. Popes preceeding Clement had been elected outside of Rome such as Pope Innocent VI (1243-1254) who was elected and consecrated at Anagni. In addition, Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) only spent four years in Rome out of a fourteen year reign. Pope Gregory X (1271-1276) spent two months in Rome and five years and ten months away from Rome. The practice of living away from Rome had been established before the fourteenth century. The difference in the case of Clement I, which apparently made his case worse in the eyes of Dante and most Italians, was his apparent domination and control by Philip IV.¹³⁸

During his reign at Avignon, Clement V was terrified of Philip the Fair. Philip seemed to sense that Clement V did fear him. Philip thus pushed to get his revenge on Pope Boniface VIII by trying to get Clement V to condemn Boniface as a heretic. Philip seemed to have frightened

¹³⁷William R. Smith, "Clement V," Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.), VI, p. 484.

¹³⁸G. Mollat, The Popes at Avignon: 1305-1378. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), pp. X-XIII.

and bullied the Pope into starting the actual procedure, but later Clement delayed the process until Philip just decided to abandon the whole matter.¹³⁹

Clement V's weak and cowardly attitude toward Philip the Fair almost virtually assured a succession of French Popes at Avignon. This was done by creating a majority of French Cardinals during the pontificate of Clement V. This majority of French Cardinals kept continually electing French Popes until 1378. The seven Popes of Avignon named 134 Cardinals--113 of whom were French. Not only did Clement start the creations of French Cardinals but he also spent the papacy's money extravagantly and favored a system of nepotism. The papal finances of the thirteenth century finances were just as bad because of the cost of a new papal palace at Avignon and the funds used to help restore peace to Italy.¹⁴⁰

Philip the Fair of France tried to harass Pope Clement in any way possible. After he had dropped the heretic charges against Boniface VIII, he tried to get the Pope on his side for the destruction of the Knights Templars.

¹³⁹Brusher, p. 530.

¹⁴⁰James A. Corbett, The Papacy: A Brief History (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 43-44.

The order of the Knights Templars had enormous wealth and Philip IV needed it in his war with England. Philip attacked the Knights Templars in every way possible. He used methods of torture to get the Templars to confess to sins and crimes that they did not commit. Philip hoped that these confessions would help convince Clement V to disband the order. Clement decided not to condemn the Knights but he did suppress them, giving the major amounts of their property to the Knights of St. John. Philip, angered at this action, decided to seize all property and money the Templars possessed in France.¹⁴¹

Pope Clement V was well-educated. He was good-natured and amicable, but his precedent of having the papacy at Avignon caused a dislike and a lowering of respect for the papacy. The papacy at Avignon as well as western Europe was filled with greedy, corrupted Cardinals and other papal officials.

The Popes of Avignon started in 1305 with the election of Clement V, and they stayed until 1378. In 1378 the last French Pope moved to Rome and there died. His Cardinals elected an Italian, Pope Urban VI (1378-1389). During his reign the papacy remained at Rome, in spite of the subsequent

¹⁴¹Brusher, p. 386.

75

schism caused by the election of the Frenchman, Clement V, and his removal to Avignon.

Canto XIX contains another important reference by Dante. This reference is to the Donation of Constantine and to the Emperor Constantine I: "Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth, not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower which the first wealthy Father gain'd from thee."¹⁴² [sic]

Again in Canto XXVII there appears a corresponding reference to Constantine and Pope Sylvester: "As in Soracte, Constantine besought to cure his Leprosy, Sylvester's aid."¹⁴³ [sic]

Constantine I (c. 288-337) was generally known as "The Great." He was the illegitimate son of Constantius I and Flavia Helena. Constantine served with his father, Constantius, in Britain and upon his father's death he accepted the army's proclamation as Augustus. Through intrigue and alliances, Constantine became Emperor of the Western Roman Empire in 313 and later Emperor of the East. He was the first Roman Emperor to recognize Christianity as a religion in the Empire. He did this as a political move to secure his position as Emperor. It was during the reign of Constantine I that the supposed document of the Donation

¹⁴²Cary, p. 83.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 116.

of Constantine was issued because of the aid Pope Sylvester I gave in healing him from leprosy.¹⁴⁴

Dante's reference "the first wealthy Father,"¹⁴⁵ concerns Pope Sylvester who was Pope from 314 to 335. Pope Sylvester was said to have baptized Constantine I, but this was only a legend.¹⁴⁶ Pope Sylvester was the man to whom Constantine I supposedly gave the Constantine Donation.

As the legend goes, the Donation of Constantine was granted to Pope Sylvester because of Constantine's thankfulness for having been cured of leprosy. The document itself was divided into twenty articles. Each article explained what Constantine was giving Pope Sylvester, why and what the gift entailed. Article VI stated Constantine's religious experience: ". . . blessed apostles (Peter and Paul) . . . caused His (God's) splendor to shine upon me."¹⁴⁷

Article XI praised Pope Sylvester for his help in restoring health to Constantine.

¹⁴⁴Henry S. Jones, "Constantine I," Encyclopaedia Britannica, (11th ed.), VI, pp. 988-990.

¹⁴⁵Cary, p. 83.

¹⁴⁶Constantine died in 337 A.D. Since he was baptized on his deathbed, he could not have been baptized by Sylvester, who died in 335.

¹⁴⁷Norman F. Cantor (ed.), The Medieval World: 300-1300 (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1968), p. 133.

. . . with the blessed Sylvester as my teacher,
I had learned that I had been restored to full
health through the kindness of St. Peter him-
self. . . . ¹⁴⁸

After the statement of the cause and explanation of the cure by Sylvester, the document mentioned what would be given to Sylvester for his cure of Constantine and his religious guidance. Article XII stated that the Pope should have certain dominion over territory.

We ordain and decree that he (Pope Sylvester, as the papal authority) should have dominion over the four principal dioceses of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, as well as over all the Churches of God in the world.¹⁴⁹

Article XIII reaffirmed Article XII in stating the extension of papal authority.

Through our sacred imperial decrees we have given them (the Church) our gift of land in the East and West, and in the Northern and Southern regions: namely in Judaea, Greece, Asia, Thrace, Africa, Italy and various islands. . . .¹⁵⁰

Article XVII mentioned Constantine's gift of the city of Rome to Pope Sylvester and all Popes to follow.

We do give and relinquish to the power and dominion of the oft mentioned most blessed pontiff, our Father Sylvester, the Universal Pope, and his successors our palace, the city of Rome.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 138.

Article XVIII told where the new city of Constantine would be built and where the power of the Emperor would be transferred.

We deem it fitting to have the empire and the power of our kingdom transferred to the Eastern regions; to have a city erected in our name in the most suitable spot in the province of Byzantium. . .¹⁵²

The Donation of Constantine was actually written in the eighth century, probably during the reign of Pope Stephen II (752-757). The document was used against King Pepin of France to exert temporal powers over that King. Later, in the reign of Pope Leo IX (1049-1054), the document was used to try and show papal powers over the Byzantines.¹⁵³

The authenticity of the Donation of Constantine had been disputed as early as the eleventh century. However, nothing was proven until 1440 when an Italian Humanist scholar, Lorenzo Valla, (1407-1457) published his work called "On the False Donation of Constantine."

Lorenzo Valla was employed by King Alfonso of Naples. At the time of Valla's publication, Naples was held by Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447). Pope Eugene and Alfonso of Naples were very embittered enemies and Alfonso was trying

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Walter A. Phillips, "Donation of Constantine," Encyclopaedia Britannica, (11th ed.), VIII, p. 409.

to recapture his city from papal troops. The document was to show that the Church had no temporal powers over the king except through a false document, and the document itself was illegal. Therefore, the papal idea of temporal powers was illegal.¹⁵⁴

Lorenzo Valla's attack upon the Donation was one of logic, linguistics, and a refined sense of historical knowledge.

Valla's first argument was that Constantine did not have the legal right to make such a donation. Secondly, that the supposedly granted territories always remained under the rule and control of the Emperors. Thirdly, that Constantine was not baptized by Sylvester and only gave gifts of ordinary means to a previous Pope. Lastly, Valla maintained that the Donation was not found in precious documents or a History of Sylvester.¹⁵⁵ Valla continued to state that "the document itself contains inconsistencies, improbabilities, idiocies, barbarisms, and some nonsense."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴R. Montano, "Lorenzo Valla," New Catholic Encyclopedia, XIV, pp. 522-523.

¹⁵⁵G. R. Elton (ed.), Renaissance and Reformation 1300-1648, (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1968), p. 49.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

Lorenzo Valla's attack continued upon the Donation in the form of philosophical argument. He was a noted Latin scholar at the time of his work on the Donation. He argued that the document failed in the use of Latin alone. He held that Latin was not used, rather a Latin vulgate. He insisted that the document contained Frankish and Germanic words and phrases. Later, in the pontificate of Nicholas V (1447-1455), the document was dismissed as a forgery.

It is significant to note here Dante's imperialistic bias: "To how much ill gave birth. . . that plenteous dower. . ." This remark shows a sad acceptance of the myth of the Donation coupled with a harsh criticism of evils following it. These evils created a great papal power in the West and destroyed the Holy Roman Empire. The revival of this Empire, or its continuation, was dear to Dante's heart.¹⁵⁷

In Canto XXVIII there is a reference to King John of England. The reference also referred to Bertrand de Born,

¹⁵⁷Dante remarked about the Donation of Constantine: "I say that it has no force, because Constantine had not the power to alienate the imperial dignity, nor had the church the power to recieve it." "Dante's De Monarchia," Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West, (third edition: New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), I, p. 315.

the French troubadour who constantly set the sons of Henry II against each other and even against their father, Henry II.

Now behold this grievous torment, thou, who breathing go'st To spy the dead: behold, if any else Be terrible as this. And, that on earth Thou mayst bear tidings of me, Know that I Am Bertrand, he of Born, who gave King John The counsel mischievous. Father and son I set at mutual war.¹⁵⁸ [sic]

This statement, according to the footnote in Cary, was apparently mistranslated. There

. . . are two alternative readings,; il Re Giovanni ("King John"), adopted by Cary; and il re giovane (the "Young King"), which is the one generally accepted at the present day. The person meant is Prince Henry.¹⁵⁹ [sic]

Prince Henry (1155-1183) was the first son of King Henry II (1133-1189), and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Crowned in his father's lifetime, Prince Henry was known as the "Young King" and Henry II was known as the "Old King."

The family of Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of turmoil. Henry II and Eleanor had four sons, two of whom died before Henry, and three daughters. At the time Henry II was crowned King of England in 1154, he already ruled more territory in France than the French King, Louis VII. Henry II took the throne

¹⁵⁸Cary, p. 121.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

at the age of twenty-one, having already ruled Anjou, Maine, Touraine and Normandy.

When Henry II took office, he established new reforms in law based upon parts of Anglo-Saxon and Norman law. He improved the system of king's courts. He developed the theory that the King was the fountain of justice. He also established the Accusing or Presentment or Grand Jury where members of the village or shire must declare the names of the persons committing crimes in their area.¹⁶⁰

Henry II quarreled with his sons and even with the Church. After Becket's death in 1170, his quarrels with his sons continued to mount. Henry II had crowned Prince Henry King of England. The power of the King had remained in the hands of the Justiciars.¹⁶¹ Barons under the "Young King," incited him to rebel against Henry II for the full rights of the kingship in England. The young King's armies were defeated by Henry II. The young King fled to the court of Louis VII of France. The young King Henry also

¹⁶⁰Willson, pp. 90-94.

¹⁶¹Justiciars. The word Justiciars is the same as Justiciary Power. "In the early English History the chief administrator of both government and Justice. The Justiciary or chief Justiciary was the King's deputy from the time of William the Conqueror to that of Henry II., presiding in the King's court and the exchequer, supervising all departments of government, and acting as regent in the king's absence." William D. Whitney (ed.), The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia (New York: The Century Company, 1899), VI, p. 3258.

resented the independence of Richard (later Richard I of England, third son of Henry II and Eleanor), as ruler of Aquitane. The young King Henry again rebelled against Henry II and in 1182 joined an alliance to oppose him, but was defeated again and remained in exile at Martel. He died there in 1183 and his body was stolen by the people of Le Mans as it was being taken to Normandy. Later Henry II ordered the boy brought to Rouen and buried.¹⁶²

Bertrand de Born, mentioned with Prince Henry, is closely linked to Henry II and his sons. Bertrand de Born was also known as Lord of Hautefort. He has been called, "the prince of mischief-makers."¹⁶³

Bertrand de Born was a man of little moral character. He was constantly at war with one noble or another in southern France. His powers of intrigue extended to Henry II and his sons. He was "lord when he would of King Henry of England and his sons."¹⁶⁴ It seems that de Born was only happy when there was feuding and turmoil between

¹⁶²Kate Norgate, "Henry," The Dictionary of National Biography, IX, pp. 546-547.

¹⁶³H. W. C. Davis, England Under the Normans and Angevins (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1961), p. 255.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

Henry II and his sons and even including the King of France.

At times he wished that father and son should be at war with each other; and brother at war with brother, and always he would that Kings of France and England should be enemies.¹⁶⁵

Bertrand de Born was a knight and lord of a castle in Perigux named Hautefort. He had a brother named Constantine and Bertrand spent much of his time forcing Constantine out of his castle. Constantine, however, invariably came right back and retook the castle from Bertrand. Bertrand wanted to gain Constantine's inheritance but was prevented from doing so by Henry II of England. Bertrand spent most of his life writing poetry and fighting his neighbors and his brother. The castle of Hautefort had been willed to both Constantine and Bertrand de Born. This joint inheritance was a constant cause of friction in southern France. It is thought that Bertrand de Born was the man responsible for encouraging the young King Henry to rebel against his father and even to conduct a war against his brother, Richard.¹⁶⁶

When the young King Henry rebelled for the last time with the rebellion of Limoges, "de Born saw with

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Alfred Duggan, Devil's Brood: The Angevin Family (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp. 164-165.

pleasure that all of France south of the Loire was in exactly the condition that suited him."¹⁶⁷ The primary reason for existence for de Born, it seemed, was to precipitate trouble. The ability to keep Henry and his sons fighting gave him power and he probably could not have lived without it. He was a man of many talents and "the most distinguished of the Provençal troubadors, and composed a striking poem on the death of the "Young English King" (Henry 1183), which is still preserved."¹⁶⁸ Bertrand de Born supposedly died in 1215 as a Cistercian monk,¹⁶⁹ a strange ending for such a lively man of talent and intrigue.

The last major reference in Dante's "Inferno" is found in Canto XXXI. The reference is to Roland and Charlemagne and is included to show the difference between historical fact and legend: "So terrible a blast Orlando Blew not, when that dismal rout O'erthrew the host of Charlemagne and quench'd His saintly warfare."¹⁷⁰

This reference is to Roland, known in Italian as Orlando. The "Song of Roland" is legend, but it is based

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁶⁸Cary, p. 121.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 131.

upon fact. The incident occurred during the reign of Charlemagne while he was campaigning against the Arabs, fighting their entry into southern France in the eighth century. Against the Arabs

. . . he had undertaken seven expeditions in twenty years. He experienced some reverses, of which the most famous was the massacre of his rear-guard at Ronceval by the Basque mountaineers, sworn enemies of the Franks.¹⁷¹ [sic]

Charlemagne was known as Charles the Great (c. 742-814). He was the son of Pepin the Short, King of France. Pepin had another son, Carloman. The empire of Pepin was divided between the two sons in 768.

In 771 Charlemagne ruled all of France and began his campaign to convert the Northern Germanic pagans to Christianity. He incorporated them into his domain. In 774 he became King of the Lombards and gave lands to Pope Leo IV. Between 774 and 777 Charlemagne was asked by the Saracens to help them in Spain. This was the same group of people who had been defeated at Tours in 732.¹⁷²

In 777, while Charles was at Paderborn intent upon the problem of the Saxons, this same Soliman

¹⁷¹ Lucien Romier, A History of France (New York: St. Martins Press, 1953), p. 60.

¹⁷² Arthur W. Holland, "Charlemagne," Encyclopaedia Britannica, (11th ed.), V, pp. 891-892.

or another that bore the same name and was now Governor of Saragossa, came at the head of an embassy of Saracen chiefs with an offer of an northern Spain in return for help against the government of Cordova.¹⁷³

Charlemagne decided to enter a campaign against the ruler of Cordova. Spain had a numerous body of Christian subjects and they complained of the cruelty of the Cordovan ruler. "Charles was the titular defender of the Christian faith and foremost Christian ruler."¹⁷⁴ Therefore, he felt it was his duty to defend the Spanish Christians in Spain.

Charlemagne divided his forces and marched into Spain in 778. He sent his army by different routes, later to meet at a pre-chosen city. His army met at Pampelona and the city surrendered. Later the city of Barcelona surrendered, and Charlemagne moved to the city of Saragossa. In the same year (778) he decided to leave Saragossa without having captured it and return to France. As Charlemagne left Spain he climbed up the pass in the Pyrenees Mountains with his army behind him.

On August 18, 778, the troopers reached the summit of the Pyrenees. No enemy was in sight; the march was peaceful and carefree. The first division had

¹⁷³ Charles E. Russell, Charlemagne First of the Moderns (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 151.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

crossed the divide and was swinging down the desert toward the North. . . . The Franks were taken by surprise and encumbered with heavy armor and baggage, were thrown into confusion.¹⁷⁵

The conflict lasted until nightfall and every man in the pass at the time was killed. The Battle of Roncevalles was the only major defeat for Charlemagne. For centuries it inspired the remarks of poets and others. Those that fell at the Battle of Roncevalles were

Egghard, the King's High Steward, Anselm, the Seneschal; and above all "Hruoland, warden of the Breton March," who became the immortal Roland of songs, sonnets, ballads and ballades, . . . ¹⁷⁶ [sic]

Charlemagne returned to the pass and the site of the ambush of his troops. He tried to catch the assailants, but they were never found.

In 800, two years after the Battle of Roncevalles, Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor. He ruled until 814 when he died still fighting the Germanic pagans north of the Rhine River and also trying to keep the Vikings out of France.

The Battle of Roncevalles thus made not only a monumental place in history by the battle itself but also by the actions of its figures. This aspect has been greatly expanded upon in the Song of Roland.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 155.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Dante's Divine Comedy is a work not only of literary value but also of historical value. That the work has historical value as much as literary is demonstrated by Dante's keen awareness of the important historical events of his time. He strove to show that man was not divided from man by the Church vs. State controversy. Rather, he believed that men of all calibers, whether nobles or not, had the same general experiences, but were separated by degrees of individual experiences. He used both the good and the bad of his time to illustrate that man contained both good and evil.

Dante was very much involved with the political developments of his time. He felt that both the Church and the state had its place and each should become more aware of its use of power for good. He lived in a time when a new class of bankers and guildsmen were ascending society's hierarchy. He was aware that Florence and other cities were experiencing "the struggle of the rising banking and industrial classes against the feudal nobility."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷Thomas G. Bergin, Dante (New York: The Orion Press, 1965), p. 17.

Dante was interested in the Church fulfilling its rights of spiritual leadership. He felt that Clement V at Avignon had given the Church to the King of France, by allowing the Holy See to be at Avignon. At the death of Clement V he wrote a letter to the Italian Cardinals asking them to exert all forms of pressure to see that a Pope would be elected who would bring the papacy back to Rome. Even though he had eventually learned to accept his exile from Florence, he could never accept the exile of the Church from Rome. Dante felt that the Church should be free of political turmoil, that "the function of the Church as such was not to achieve political order under law but to foster spiritual peace through divine grace."¹⁷⁸

Dante believed that the Church should not involve itself in temporal affairs. He felt that the Church could not achieve world peace in his time because this, to Dante, was a political problem only. He felt that political problems were best settled by political leaders and not by the Church. Dante saw that the Church had serious enough problems in its religious body, without seeking temporal political domination.

¹⁷⁸Gerald G. Walsh, Dante Alighieri Citizen of Christendom (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1946), p. 86.

Dante was very severe with the Church. He cast Popes and non-believers into Hell at his discretion--most often because of their religious deeds.

In the "Inferno," Canto III, Dante placed Celestine V in Hell because he gave up the papal throne. In Canto XI he placed Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini in Hell because of his affiliations with the Ghibellines of Florence. Pope Anastasius II, in Canto XI, was assigned to Hell simply because Dante confused him with the Byzantine Emperor of the same name. Pope Nicholas III, in Canto XIV, was condemned to Hell again because Dante confused him with someone else, namely Boniface VIII. Clement V, in Canto XIX, is passionately hated by Dante because he believed that Clement had given the Church to the French King, Philip the Fair, when he changed the Papal See to Avignon. For this Dante placed him in Hell also. Dante did not like Boniface VIII, and in Canto XXVII he called him a Pharisee and placed him in Hell. In the same Canto, Dante consigned Pope Sylvester I to Hell because of his acceptance of the Donation of Constantine. He felt that the Pope should not have taken it because the Church should have no temporal powers. Dante did not know that the document was a forgery.

Dante apparently never felt that the Church had any other reason for existence than the fulfillment of religious

experience for its followers. He was harsh on the Church because he felt that its position was a matter that should not be compromised, nor profit made from it no matter what the reason.

Not only did Dante despise churchmen who violated their positions in the Church by gaining political power or money, he also hated the practice of usury. He mentioned it twice in Canto XI and once again in Canto XVI. In his hatred of usury he was a typical product of his age. The Church also condemned it as a sin.

In Canto XIX Dante speaks of selling religious relics and Holy Orders, known as simony, and places in Hell Simon Magnus for whom the practice was named. He felt that the practice of simony debased the religious position of the Church.

Dante was not adverse to assigning other medieval leaders to Hell. He did not choose just to exercise his literary prowess on the Church. He went beyond the Church and condemned to Hell noted political leaders of both ancient and medieval times. He cast Saladin, the Mohammedan leader of the crusades, into Hell in Canto IV because he was a non-Christian. Frederick II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, was cast into Hell in Canto XI because Dante adhered to the belief popular in his times, that Frederick II was a sensualist and an atheist. However, Dante admired

Frederick II because he felt that Frederick II was right in his stand against the Church on temporal powers of the Holy Roman Empire. Dante disliked the tyrants of Italy and in Canto XII, he cast Ezzelino III da Romano into Hell because of his extreme cruelty toward his people as Lord of Verona. In the same Canto Dante also condemned Guy de Montfort of England to Hell, because he killed his cousin Richard, son of Richard Earl of Cornwall, in retaliation for his father's death at the hands of Prince Edward's forces at Evesham. Edward was acting for his father, Henry III, elder brother of the Earl of Cornwall. Attila is also included in Canto XII as a condemned shade. Dante felt that Attila hastened the fall of his beloved Roman Empire.

In Canto XX Dante made Constantine I an occupant of Hell because of his gift to Pope Sylvester. The Donation of Constantine was wrong in Dante's mind because he felt that the Emperor Constantine I did not have the authority to give such a gift.

Dante was very exact with whom he placed in Hell. The "Inferno" is full of minor characters found in Hell because of their political beliefs. Dante was a Guelf, but he placed members of his own party in Hell because he felt, in some way, they betrayed the Guelf cause. The Ghibellines are perhaps the personages most often found in

94

Hell. He saw them as vile, despicable men--usually for no other reason than they were the opposing party against the Guelfs.

Dante's "Divine Comedy must be read from three points of approach: as a history of the period of barbarism in Italy, as a source of the fairest Tuscan speech, and as an example of sublime poetry."¹⁷⁹ Historical understanding is important in Dante if one is to understand his ideas of Empire.

Dante's work De Monarchia explains his ideas about Empire. The work was thought to have been written in 1309 in hope of influencing a restoration of imperial rule. Dante had great hopes that Henry VII (1269-1313), the Holy Roman Emperor, would be able to bring about a revival of the Roman Empire. Henry VII was unable to effect a revival of the Empire and he died in 1313. Dante hoped he would help Italy but he did not.

In De Monarchia Dante gives the "view that the Emperor was designated by God to rule all mankind."¹⁸⁰ Also, "that authority of the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, does not supersede that of the Emperor, in secular matters."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹Irma Brandeis (ed.), Discussions of the Divine Comedy (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1961), p. 11.

¹⁸⁰Fergusson, p. 76.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

Dante "maintains that mankind, in his time, must recognize one secular monarch, the Emperor, as well as the Pope, whose authority (he assumes) is supreme in religious matters."¹⁸²

Dante believed in the old Roman Empire. The Empire to Dante was a politically sound state. He felt that it offered a standard form of justice. He also believed that it brought world unity and kept the civilized world from splintering politically and destroying itself. Dante's opinion was that a world community under a strong Emperor could offer stability to political problems. He also felt that a revision of the Empire concept would unite Europe and bring it out of its medieval turmoil.

Dante's method of argument for Empire was historical. He believed that "the world was never so peaceful as it was at the time of the rule of Augustus."¹⁸³ He argued that the Empire was so good that Christ came during its peacefulness. Dante also believed that the Romans ruled because they were noble and that they always did what was best for the commonwealth of Rome.¹⁸⁴ He felt that the Church and

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Bergin, p. 184.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 186.

the state could rule equally. The Empire would exercise the temporal powers and the Church would exercise the religious powers.

Dante, in short, wanted a world commonly controlled by a strong Emperor and a strong Church. He did not want separate nations because he felt that they bred separate interests and separate interests bred wars and distrust. While Dante expounded his ideas of Empire, Europe was going in the opposite direction. "In medieval fact, the dominant trend was toward the building of separate nation states."¹⁸⁵

In the "Inferno" Dante referred to twenty-three countries or national groups. He referred to in fact or mentioned in some form Italy, the Israelites, the Trojans, Egypt, Greece and Macedonia, Persia, Crete, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, Germany, Libya, India, Spain, Portugal and Cyprus. These references indicate the historical influence of the classics and of great dead civilizations on a great medieval mind--Dante's. They also show the constrictions laid upon the medieval man by the geographical limitations of the Middle Ages.

Dante made reference to the Church or the papacy a total of thirty times not including nine different Popes. Dante listed or mentioned Popes Celestine V (1294-1295),

¹⁸⁵ Ewart Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 430.

Boniface VIII (1295-1303), Anastasius II (496-498), Clement V (1305-1314), Nicholas III (1277-1280), Nicholas II (1059-1061), Gregory I (590-604), and Martin IV (1281-1285). Historical references that pertain to ancient history before 476 are mentioned forty times. References that apply to the medieval period are considered a total of forty-one times. In relation to local aspects, those of Florence and the Guelf and Ghibelline struggle, there are forty-nine references. These numerous references imply Dante's understanding and political awareness of his times. The chief problems and eras of history that had gone before Dante were reflected in his "Inferno." These included--the ancient period, with its wealth of literature and history, with its historical lessons; the great issue of his day, Pope vs. Emperor; the great Italian institution of the Papacy; the Guelf-Ghibelline struggle in Italy; and references alluding to the medieval period, already fast drawing to its close.

Dante's "Inferno" then is a precise historical work, definitive in the sense that it refers to the occurrences that affected the history of the Middle Ages, which, in turn, was affected by the struggle of Church and State. The entire work can be read as a history as well as a major work of literature.

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