

Symposium:  
Dante Six Hundred Years  
After

THREE ADDRESSES

Read before the

Chicago Literary Club

Monday Evening, January 3  
1921



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### DANTE: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Delivered *Ex Tempore* on the  
Same Evening

By DOCTOR THEODORE W. KOCH  
*of Northwestern University*

## FOREWORD

As the Chicago Literary Club will hold no meetings in September next, in which month falls the anniversary we now celebrate, the Committee on Arrangements and Exercises set apart the first meeting of the year 1921 for our Dante Memorial.

While the Club rarely goes outside of its membership for contributions to its programs, it seemed wise to do so on that occasion.

The leader of the meeting, Mr. Merritt Starr, accordingly invited three eminent Dante scholars of the Middle West to take part: Dr. Theodore W. Koch, of Northwestern University; Professor Kenneth McKenzie, of the University of Illinois; and Professor Ernest H. Wilkins, of the University of Chicago.

Dr. Koch's address, illustrated by lantern slides, was delivered *ex tempore*, and therefore cannot be included herein. A topical outline, however, will be found on page 51. The Introduction and the other two addresses form the body of this publication.

The Chicago Literary Club and all four participants in this Symposium are members of the Dante Society of Cambridge, Massachusetts, founded by Charles Eliot Norton. This Society has to its credit the complete Concordances of Dante's works, and thirty-eight annual reports with accompanying monographs.

Dr. Koch, besides being the author of the important compilation mentioned near the end of the Introduction, was, before assuming the responsibilities of his present position of librarian of Northwestern University, librarian of the Fiske Dante Collection of Cornell University, a collection largely augmented during his administration.

Professor McKenzie was awarded the Dante Society prize in 1894 for his essay on the *Sweet New Style* in Italian literature, and its development up to the time of Dante.

Professor Wilkins, a member of the Dante Society for twenty-four years, is the author of an excellent outline bibliography of Dan'tesque works, prepared especially for students of Italian literature.

The Dante Memorial Meeting was inspiring and profitable. The Chicago Literary Club welcomes this opportunity of honoring Dante's memory by publishing these papers, well aware that thereby it honors itself.

May, 1921

## INTRODUCTION

We memorialize tonight the six-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the life of Dante Alighieri. In so doing we commemorate the greatest man of letters who ever trod the footpaths of Italy, or walked the Roman streets. In saying this we do not forget that our terms include Vergil and Horace, Milton and Goethe.

Our hero was a poet having the seeing eye and the singing voice, who molded from the common speech of the people a marvellously beautiful casket to enshrine the illumination which flooded his vision. He was a man of affairs, who fought in battle, ruled the State, negotiated treaties, and planned a league of nations.

Forerunner of Rienzi, Lorenzo, Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour; theologian, man of science, reformer, apostle, and prophet of new Italy; lover, husband, father; most masculine of men, he yet saw in the faithful love of woman the type of redeeming love with which "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have everlasting life."

And seeing this and devoting himself to singing the praise of divine love so embodied, he studied to the utmost of his power, so that it pleased God to prolong his life and enable him to say of her what was never said of any woman (*V.N.* XLIII).

And of his Divine Comedy when finished he wrote:

"But the aim of the whole, and of each part," he tells Can Grande, "is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery, and to guide them to a state of happiness."

He proclaimed the need of civil government on the one hand, and of religious government on the other;

he made clear that there was a distinct and separate field for each; and he insisted upon the separation of Church and State. We think of that as a commonplace of the American constitution. We got it from Dante, and he from one who said: "Render unto Caesar the things that be Caesar's" (*Mon.* III).

He proclaimed the perfectibility of the human spirit, and the wide-reaching, universal salvation by divine grace to all who repent and believe, by the divine grace that embraces the dying thief, the excommunicate Manfred who repented in the moment of death (*Purg.* III, 112; IV, 14), and Rhipeus the righteous Trojan (*Par.* XX, 68); and he placed in the mystical Rose of Paradise the blessed souls of children who died in infancy (*Par.* XXXII).

He taught that illuminating grace transforms the ransomed soul by clothing with oblivion every error, sin, and sorrow, and vivifying with new life the purified soul made fit to mount unto the stars.

Here we may, in preference to any other sketch, condense from Lowell's essay:

"Dante (Durante, by contraction Dante) degli Alighieri was born at Florence in 1265, probably during the month of May. . . .

"He lost his father while yet a child. This circumstance may have been not without influence in muscularizing his nature to that character of self-reliance which shows itself so constantly and sharply during his after-life. . . .

"He went through the *trivium* (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy) of the then ordinary university course. To these he afterward added painting (or at least drawing—*designavo un angelo sopra certe tavolette*), theology, and medicine. . . ."

Mr. Lowell here gives the number of quotations in the *Convito* from the poets and philosophers of the past.

His example has been followed and applied to the entire list of Dante's works with the following results:

Dr. Edward Moore (Studies, 1st Series, pp. 321-58) tabulates from Dante's works 434 quotations and 156 probable references to Scripture. Without tracing his subdivisions into "direct," "indirect," and "probable" quotations or allusions, he lists passages from Dante and the quoted author, showing references as follows: 401 to Aristotle, 57 to Cicero, 39 to Boethius, 20 to Orosius, 19 to Livy, 13 to St. Augustine, 8 to Plato, 6 to Seneca, 5 to Valerius Maximus, 3 to Ptolemy, 1 each to Suetonius, Galen, and Euclid; and of the poets, 193 to Vergil, 99 to Ovid, 47 to Lucan, 28 to Statius, 14 to Horace, 6 to Juvenal, 6 to Homer, 1 to Lucretius (2 to Aesop). Mr. Lowell adds 3 to Avicenna, 3 to the Digest, and 1 to Algazzali. Mr. Paget Toynbee adds 11 to the Arabian astronomer Alfraganus (*ob.* 833 A.D., translated into Latin in 1242); to Pythagoras 8, and to Albertus Magnus 8; and lists 28 popes and 21 emperors of the several Roman Empires as alluded to by Dante. Unnumbered mythologic and historic characters, localities, church leaders, and citizens of Florence, and of other Italian cities, throng his pages. The list of references (or derivations from) is great but uncounted to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bernard; to *Magnae Derivationes* or Latin Dictionary of Uguccione da Pisa (as Mr. Toynbee shows), and to *Le Tresor*, an encyclopaedia of mediaeval science, and *Tesoretto*, a poem on the conduct of life, both by Brunetto Latini, Dante's tutor. Such condition, before printing and modern libraries, is rare.

Counting the Divine Comedy as three, the *Vita Nuova* as one, and the minor poems as one, he left us five books of poetry, balanced by five of prose (*De Monarchia*, *Convito*, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, *De Aqua et Terra*, and the letters).

"But," says Lowell, "it was not only in the closet and from books that Dante received his education.

He acquired, perhaps, the better part of it in the streets of Florence, and later, in those homeless wanderings which led him (as he says) wherever the Italian tongue was spoken. . . ."

Of this period Mr. Lowell says that "during a couple of such centuries the cathedrals of Florence, Pisa, and Siena got built; Cimabue, Giotto, Arnolfo, the Pisani, Brunelleschi, and Ghiberti gave the impulse to modern art, or brought it in some of its branches to its culminating point; modern literature took its rise; commerce became a science; and the middle class came into being. It was a time of fierce passions and sudden tragedies, of picturesque transitions and contrasts. It found Dante, shaped him by every experience that life is capable of,—rank, ease, love, study, affairs, statecraft, hope, exile, hunger, dependence, despair,—until he became endowed with a sense of the nothingness of this world's goods possible only to the rich, and a knowledge of man possible only to the poor. . . .

"In 1274 occurred what we may call his spiritual birth, the awakening in him of the imaginative faculty, and of that profounder and more intense consciousness which springs from the recognition of beauty through the antithesis of sex. It was in that year that he first saw Beatrice Portinari. In 1289 he was present at the battle of Campaldino, fighting on the side of the Guelfs, who there utterly routed the Ghibellines, and where, he says characteristically enough, 'I was present, not a boy in arms, and where I felt much fear, but in the end the greatest pleasure, from the various changes of the fight.' In the same year he assisted at the siege and capture of Caprona. In 1290 died Beatrice, married to Simone dei Bardi, precisely when is uncertain, but before 1287, as appears by a mention of her in her father's will, bearing the date January 15 of that year. Dante's own marriage is assigned to various years, ranging from 1291 to 1294; but the earlier date seems the more probable, as he was the father of seven children (the youngest, a daughter, named



Beatrice) in 1301. His wife was Gemma dei Donati, and through her, Dante, whose family, though noble, was of the lesser nobility, became closely connected with Corso Donati, the head of a powerful clan of the *grandi*, or greater nobles. In 1293 occurred what is called the revolution of Gian Della Bella, in which the priors of the trades took the power into their own hands, and made nobility a disqualification for office. . . .

"The *grandi* continuing turbulent, many of the lesser nobility, among them Dante, drew over to the side of the citizens, and between 1297 and 1300 there is found inscribed in the book of the physicians and apothecaries, *Dante d'Aldighiero, degli Aldighieri, poeta Fiorentino*. . . ."

Dante became by election the leading one of the six priors, in June, 1300, and procured the banishment from Florence of the leaders of both parties, including his wife's relative Corso Donati, of the Blacks, and his poet friend Guido Cavalcanti, of the Whites. The Blacks with the aid of Pope Boniface VIII and Charles of Valois entered Florence in October, 1301, and January 27, 1302, indicted, tried, and convicted Dante during his absence at Rome, imposed a heavy fine, confiscated his goods, banished him, and two months later sentenced him to be burned alive if taken within the boundaries of Florence.

Driven from Florence, he traveled from place to place throughout Italy, and thence to Paris; and a doubtful tradition says that he studied at Oxford.

"During the nineteen years of Dante's exile, it would be hard to say where he was not. In certain districts of Northern Italy there is hardly a village that has not its tradition of him, its *sedia*, *rocca*, *spelonca* or *torre di Dante*."

The period from October, 1310, to August, 1313, was occupied by the military expedition into Italy, of Emperor Henry VII (of Luxemburg), from which Dante formed high hopes of the re-establishment at Rome of the Empire, and the deliverance of the Church from the exile at Avignon.

His vivid political letters are of this time. The death of Henry, and the failure of his expedition, left Dante again a broken man.

"According to Balbo, Dante spent the time from August, 1313, to November, 1314, in Pisa and Lucca, and then took refuge with Can Grande della Scala at Verona, where he remained till 1318. . . .

"It is certain that he was in Ravenna in 1320, and that, on his return thither from an embassy to Venice (concerning which a curious letter, forged probably by Doni, is extant), he died on September 14, 1321."

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The series of wars between the Guelfs, or anti-imperialistic citizens, and the Ghibellines, or imperialistic forces, had continued for over a century before Dante was born.

The papacy reached its highest attainment of temporal power about a half-century before his birth, when Pope Innocent III constrained King John of England to become his vassal, and denounced Magna Charta as null and void. And shortly thereafter the empire begins visibly to decline.

The Council of Lyons in 1274, when Dante was nine years old, proclaimed the papal crusade, and the unity (which proved only temporary) of the Greek and Latin churches. The crusade was abortive; and in 1291, when Dante was twenty-six, the crusaders' "Kingdom of Jerusalem" fell; and the accomplishments of the crusaders came to an end.

In 1300 Boniface VIII held his golden jubilee, declared himself emperor as well as pontifex; and in 1302 (having been instrumental in the overthrow of the Bianchi of Florence and the banishment of Dante) issued the *Unam Sanctam*, proclaiming that the One Holy Church wielded both the temporal and the spiritual swords, and that the temporal was subject to the spiritual authority. A year later he was seized at Anagni by an armed band hired by Philip IV, king of the French, was rescued by the

people, and returned to Rome to die. And in 1305 the papacy was carried away captive to Avignon.

It was against the papal claims as formulated by Boniface that Dante wrote his *De Monarchia*. He asserted that the Empire also existed by divine right, and was the equal of, and in the temporal sphere, independent of the Church.

But while the Empire and the papacy as temporal powers were growing steadily weaker, other powers were rising. The year 1241 saw the beginnings of the Hanseatic league of free cities. A century before that, the study of Roman law had been revived at Bologna. Municipal self-government had existed at Rome; and, adopted by the flourishing towns of Northern Italy, developed free republics at war both with the Church and the Emperor. Florence had maintained a government of selectmen ruling in the name of the people for a century and a half before Dante was born. Out of these rising institutions came the new force that was to overthrow the old order and form the ruling principle of modern government, nationality.

We have quoted Mr. Lowell. Let us also read from his associates, the other American triumvirs of Dantesque study. In an informal letter, discussing Dante's political theories, our revered teacher, Charles Eliot Norton, wrote as follows:

SHADY HILL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

DEAR MR. STARR:

February 11, 1907

You put your finger on the defect of Mr. Symonds' brief characterizations of the various centuries of Italian history; for it shows an imperfect understanding of that history or a careless use of English, to speak of the Italian people during any period of the Dark and Middle Ages as a "nation;" that is, as an organized society with a determinate sovereign, law, and territory. The name of Italy was rather a geographical expression than one with a political significance. Men who lived within the borders of the land reckoned themselves not Italians, but Romans or Tuscans, Genoese or Venetians, and the

very definiteness of these territorial divisions, together with historic tradition, prevented the Italians from attaining a sense of nationality. There was, indeed, little national consciousness among the people of any country of Europe during the mediaeval period. The sixth canto of the *Purgatory* and the magnificent canzone which begins,

“O Patria, degna di trionfal fama,”

show the highest point of such national sentiment as there was in Italy, but indicate at the same time how weak that sentiment was among the great body of the Italian people.

The main political ideal of the Middle Ages was the unity of Christendom, in which national distinctions were obliterated. The importance of the coronation of Charlemagne at Rome lay in the fact that it was a partial expression of this ideal, which on its civil side was largely inspired by memories of the world-wide dominion of ancient Rome, and on the religious side by the sentiment of the brotherhood, if not of all men, at least of all the children of the Church.

The Empire stood for one part of this ideal, the Church for the other, during at least four centuries of confused endeavor to give organization to the theory of government involved in it—four centuries of bitter division and conflict in which the two powers were struggling for the mastery.

The sixth canto of the *Purgatory* and the thirty-second serve very well for a commentary on the *De Monarchia*, and they set forth what had been the result to Italy of the long struggle. Dante's political views were more intelligent than those of most of his mediaeval predecessors and contemporaries. They were based upon some reflection on the lessons of history, and on a consideration of the permanent qualities of human nature as exhibited in society. The intelligence of his view is the more striking because of his deserting in these political speculations the guidance of St. Thomas Aquinas, whom in theological matters he so closely follows. St. Thomas exalts the Church above the Empire, while the *De Monarchia* is a

treatise of ideal Ghibellinism. If we disregard the mediaeval form of the argument, there is much in the substance of the little book to justify its claim to being the first political treatise in which something of the modern rational spirit is apparent. . . .

But I am making my letter too long.

I am, as always,

Very sincerely yours,

C. E. NORTON

Of Canzone XX, *Laudes Florentiae*, so mentioned by Mr. Norton, we adapt a few lines from Dean Plumptre's rendering:

*Dear country, worthy of triumphal fame,  
Mother of high-souled sons, . . . .  
Lift up the sinking hearts, and warm their blood! . . . .*

*Thou reignedst happy in the fair past days,  
When each that was thine heir  
Sought that all virtues might thy pillars be;  
Home of true peace and mother of all praise,  
Thou in one faith sincere  
Wert blest, and with the sisters four and three.<sup>†</sup>*

*And will thou that the virtues victors be,  
So that thy faithful ones,  
Now hidden, rise with right, and sword in hand,  
Follow where still Justinian's beacons stand,  
And thine unrighteous and revengeful laws  
Correct, as wisdom draws,  
That they may gain the praise of heaven and earth.*

*If thou dost this, thou shalt in honor reign,  
And thy high name, which now with shame we hear,  
On thee, Fiorenza, rest.*

<sup>†</sup> The four cardinal virtues and the three Graces

We note that the Christian jubilee of 1300 saw him at Rome, where he met the great men gathered from all parts of Europe; that the French Pope, Clement V, established the Holy See at Avignon in 1305, where it remained through the seventy-two years of Babylonian exile covering the terms of seven popes, until 1377; that the Knights Templar were suppressed in 1312; that Dante was the great-grandson of a crusader (Cacciaguida) and (the elder Rossetti assures us) was himself a Knight Templar; and that, while he adopted in the main the views of St. Thomas Aquinas as to the need of the papacy in maintaining peace and harmony among the churches, he himself insisted on the like necessity for the Empire as the supreme authority and arbiter to maintain peace among the nations, and on the need that each confine itself to its own sphere. His thought shows plainly the liberalizing influence of the comparative view of many peoples, many rulers, and many governments. His fundamental teaching is the freedom of the human will. Born a mystic, idealist poet, he mastered all the science of his time, at first called Aristotle master, and became a man of public affairs. Defeated there, he turns back to the things of the spirit, and devotes himself to the poem of the spiritual world. So Mr. Lowell says:

"It cannot be too often repeated that Dante's Other World is not in its first conception a place of *departed spirits*. It is the Spiritual World, whereof we become *denizens* by birth and *citizens* by adoption."

Systematic, mathematical, and symmetrical as his images are, they are each and all representative of spiritual analogues. The literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the inspirational are blended in his work. Our deeds, beliefs, tendencies, hopes, all are given place. And the end and destiny of man lead him to mount through the entire range of experience to the ultimate life which he calls contemplation of God, or in the terms of the catechism,—“to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

"And it is called Empyrean, which is the heaven blazing with fire and ardor, not because there is in it a material fire or burning, but a spiritual one, which is blessed love or charity" (Dante's letter to Can Grande).

It is the greatest of all allegories; "yet," as Dean Church says, "the most certain and detailed commentary, one which should assign the exact reason for every image or allegory, and its place and connection in a general scheme, would add little to the charm or use of the poem. . . . This, then, seems to us the end and purpose of the *Commedia*—to produce on the mind a sense of the judgments of God, analogous to that produced by Scripture itself."

The man of letters; the poetic energy and poetic art of his writings; these are great themes at which we can merely glance. But most valuable is the authentic report of his own judgment of his mastery of the verse-form given by L'Ottimo Comento, viz., "I the writer heard Dante say that never a rhyme had led him to say other than he would, but that many a time and oft he had made words say in his rhymes what they were not wont to express for other poets."

Rare indeed is this bit of biography and self-criticism, but thoroughly justified by the facts, and in harmony with both his infrequent, self-regarding expressions, and the traditions which surround his name. Just once in the poems does his name appear and then in the first words addressed to him by Beatrice:

*Dante, because Vergilius has departed,  
Do not weep yet a while;  
For by another sword thou needs must weep.*

And then follows that rarest of greetings, the rebuke, and admonition to penitential tears.

He is intense in all things and intensely personal, just as Shakespeare is intensely impersonal. They occupy the two summits of Parnassus.

After evincing perfect mastery of the Latin, he sang his great songs in the language of the people.

Alfieri made a volume of elegant extracts from Dante, and at its conclusion said that if he were to begin over again he would extract every line that Dante wrote. Our portfolios are full of such extracts. We must omit them here. But for those who would have one sample of Dante's appreciation of nature, let us spend a moment on this introduction to the *Earthly Paradise*:

*Eager to search around, within,  
That forest thick, alive, divine,  
Whereby the new day's light  
Was tempered to my sight,  
I waited not, but left the shore,  
And slowly moved the champaign o'er,  
That underneath my feet  
Allwhere breathed odors sweet.*

*A gentle breeze, that ever seemed  
Steady and still, about me streamed,  
And on my forehead broke,  
As wind of softest stroke.  
Whereat the trembling branches leant,  
And all obediently were bent  
Whither its morning shade  
The holy mountain made.*

*Yet ne'er so far away they fell,  
But on their tops the birds could dwell,  
Their wonted art pursue,  
And keep their office due.  
Yea, but with full delight their song  
Welcomed the morning gale among  
The leaves, whose rustling chime  
Kept burden to their rime.*



This is Shadwell's rendering (in the stanzas of Marvell's *Horatian Ode*) of the opening lines of the twenty-eighth canto of the *Purgatory*.

Dante had the seeing eye, which Carlyle says, "discloses the inner harmony of things." He was an intense, accurate, and vivid observer. As Lowell says, "his illustrations from outward things [and their number is legion] are almost invariably drawn from actual eyesight." His expressions are definite; his pictures are sharp and clean-cut; his phrasings are of greatest brevity, intensity, and elegance. Every line is an aphorism; every canto was given birth and life with pain. Changing the figure, the stream of his thought flowed to a definite goal, through long, long meditation, until it ran crystal clear. Usually he etches the salient, characteristic line, visualizes it with indelible clearness, and lets that stand for the whole.

As he journeys along by the side of Vergil, he makes the reader feel that he is one of the group and sees what Dante sees. He wrote from the heart: "I am one, who, whenever love inspires, do sing, and, in such wise as he within meditates, give my outward sign."

Music is inseparable from his verse. His very thought was musical. "A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the melody that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul.

"His simple *terza rima* doubtless helped him in this. One reads along naturally with a sort of *liet*. . . . Its depth and rapt passion and sincerity make it musical. Go *deep* enough, there is music everywhere. A true inward symmetry, what one calls an architectural harmony, reigns in it, proportionates it all; architectural, which also partakes of the character of music. The three Kingdoms, Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, look out on one another like compartments of a great edifice: a great

supernatural world-cathedral, piled up there, stern, solemn, awful; Dante's World of Souls! It is at bottom the *sincerest* of all Poems. . . .

"And so in this Dante, had ten silent centuries in a very strange way, found a voice. The *Divina Commedia* is of Dante's writing; yet in truth it belongs to ten Christian centuries, only the finishing of it is Dante's. . . . Dante is the spokesman of the Middle Ages; the thought they lived by stands here, in everlasting music" (Carlyle).

"Dante," to use the words of Shelley, "was the first awakener of entranced Europe: he created a language, in itself music and persuasion, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarisms."

He may well be called the forerunner of the Renaissance. In his time there was no united Italy. But as he went from city to city, from province to province, and from one Knights' Templar lodge to another, he learned the speech of all. The different cities and provinces of Italy talked a degenerate Latin mingled with elements of Tuscan, Gothic, Lombardic, Norman, Graeco-Roman, Provençal, and other Mediterranean tongues. Dante found the speech that pervaded them all, and casting aside his Latin, wrote in the sweet new style of Italy, and established its place in literature. Thenceforward Italians wrote Italian, and left Latin to professional and learned works. And from giving them a united language he passed on to give them a vision of a united Italy, a vision that has inspired the patriots and statesmen of Italy from his day to ours, a vision which in our own time we have seen accomplished, the final winning of Irredenta being achieved by the aid of American arms.

It is worth our while to note that English literature in a century and a half ending about 1904 produced twenty-eight English translations of some complete work of Dante's, either of prose or poetry, and seventy-five poetical translations of important extracts.

In the century which saw Dante's work, Chaucer gave to England fifteen extracts from Dante and allusions to him. Precious is his allusion in the *Monk's Tale* (ll. 470-72), renewed to us by Mr. Saintsbury's *Dante and the Grand Style*, to

—the grete poete of Itaille,  
That highte Dant, for he can al devyse  
Fro point to point, nat o word wol he faille.

Gower in 1390 enriched his *Confessio Amantis* with an allusion. In the period following until the year 1844, with which ended the life of Henry F. Carey, the great translator of the Divine Comedy, as Paget Toynbee has shown, some five hundred and seventy English authors, or over one for each of the years, made similar extracts, comments, or allusions—ten hundred and thirty-three in number—to the works of Dante. (Toynbee's *Dante in English Literature*.)

It is hoped that Dr. Paget Toynbee, who has so greatly increased our knowledge of Dante and enriched English literature concerning Dante, will bring this list down to and including this anniversary year 1921. Such a list would show the great increase in the influence of Dante upon English literature which attended and followed the year 1865, the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth.

And these authors and extracts, few in number at first, grow more numerous and important with each generation.

Batine's *Bibliografia Dantesca*, published many years ago, and Scartazzini's *Encyclopedia Dantesca*, finished fifteen years ago, each occupied three large octavo volumes.

Among the notable English works centering in, and following, 1865 are *The Vernon Dante*, in three volumes, produced by the collaboration of distinguished artists and men of letters covering twenty years, and privately printed at Florence in 1858, 1862, and 1865 by G. G. Warren, Lord Vernon, at a cost of £20,000 (see his son

Warren Vernon's *Recollections of Seventy-Two Years*, pp. 253-58); and the preparation by the same Lord Vernon of a copy of the Laurentian manuscript of the comment of Benvenuto da Imola (1864-65), which was edited at the request of his son Augustus by the Italian Senator Jacopo Lacaita (who was naturalized in England in 1855) and printed and published by Augustus and Warren Vernon in 1883-86 at a cost of upward of £1,000 (*ibid.*, p. 332); and the publication in 1889, 1894, and 1900 of six volumes of *Readings from Dante* by Warren Vernon embodying series of studies under the guidance of Lacaita, Scartazzini, Edward Moore, and Paget Toynbee; and other Dantesque studies, the production of which continued through the greater portion of his life.

It is worthy of note that Lacaita served as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne from 1857 to 1863, went with Gladstone in 1858 to the Ionian Islands, and was made Sir James Lacaita K.C.M.G. for his services in 1859.

In 1860, at the request of Cavour, Lacaita pressed upon Lord Russell, British Minister of Foreign Affairs, the need that "United Italy be made now or never" (*Lady Agatha Russell's Memoirs of Her Mother*, p. 187; Vernon's *Recollections*, p. 201). The invalid Lacaita went to Lord Russell's house, learned that Lord John was closeted in conference with the French and Neapolitan ambassadors, invaded the invalid Lady Russell's boudoir, enlisted her good offices, and through her succeeded in breaking off that conference; and then, in spite of his own exhaustion and sickness, so convincingly impressed Lord Russell with the importance of allowing Garibaldi to proceed, that the French-British-Neapolitan treaty was defeated, the intervention on behalf of King Bomba was not undertaken, Garibaldi crossed into Italy to the Volturno, and to union with the army of Victor Emanuel; and United Italy became a fact. It was a poor Italian scholar, inspired by his readings of Dante, who did this. (Vernon, *Recollections*, pp. 200-2; Trevelyan, *Garibaldi*

and the Making of Italy, Appendix A; *The Russell Papers*, p. 315.)

It may be noted as of local interest that there are now two hundred and twenty-seven works on Dante in the Chicago Public Library, and that the copy of Mazzini's essay on *The Minor Works of Dante*, has been worn out by much reading.

A monograph entitled *Dante in America*, by Dr. Theodore W. Koch, published in 1896, assembles for the ninety years ending with that year examples of four hundred and thirty-nine American publications of Dante material. Some of these have been distributed in many thousands of copies.

These facts feebly illustrate the place of Dante in American life. Most important in this body of American literature is the output of 1865 (and the years immediately following) which signalized the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth. Such has been the American interest in Dante that Scartazzini in his handbook refers to "America, the new Ravenna of the great poet." A similar expansion may follow the memorials of the present year.

And so we may say that we unite in his commemoration on this six-hundredth anniversary: because he is the father of the Italian, and founder of modern literature, and forerunner of the Renaissance; because he is the father of united Italy; because he is the supreme Christian poet; because he taught the separation of Church and State, the perfectibility of human nature through divine grace; and because he is one of the greatest men of all time.

He gave to Italy the first great use of her language in literature; and he inspired her with an ideal of nationality. He gave to Christendom a reasoned faith. He gave to literature the epic of the human spirit.

The ultimate union of the human spirit with its beneficent Author and Saviour is his certainty. His science is outgrown. His systems give place to others, but his

faith is eternal; and his poem will remain to future ages the embodiment of the religious aspiration of the thousand years which preceded him, and of milleniums yet to be. He pictures the human spirit in the aspect of eternity. He visualizes regeneration. He sees two streams flowing from one source; he is plunged in each and drinks of each;—Lethe, purging desire and memory of sin,—and Eunoë, the sweet new mind, vivifying the memory of good, and emerges with renewed life, reborn into the eternal, pure, and meet to mount unto the stars. We rise from reading the Earthly Paradise with the abiding message,

*Short while shalt thou be here a forester,  
And thou shalt be with me forever more  
A citizen of that Rome where Christ is Roman.*

*Purg. XXXII, 100-102*

Dante combined the clear vision of the mystic seer, the systematic thoroughness of the trained and practical logician, the rhetorical skill of a master of words and verse forms, the pervading delicacy of a natural musician, the lyric sweetness of a singer, the high purpose of a patriot, the comprehensive knowledge of a scientist, the abiding confidence in God and his government of the Angelic Doctor, and the reasons for his faith of the profoundest philosopher. He foresaw Italy united and free, under a sovereign who presided at a league of nations, and a Church united and free, under the kindly guidance of the successors of Peter. He saw and heard the peoples of Christendom speaking each in its own sweet new style, and uniting under a system of law originating in the customs of the people, taking form under the guidance of Roman jurists, and embodied in free institutions sustained by Imperial authority. A free Church in a free State for free people, complemented by individual responsibility under direction of free will, as tending to the ultimate realization of human salvation and happiness—these were the high points in the vision which he cherished.

Accusation, conviction, exile, impoverishment, defeat, solitude, public scorn, private contumely—nothing could shake his confidence in the justice of God and the triumph of redeeming love.

Dante's thought was interpenetrated, suffused by poetic emotion to a degree beyond any poet who has followed him. He had more of the seer's vision than any of his successors. And the effect of this suffusion of his thought by his poetic energy was to give his thought a higher order and a more lasting influence. He was and still is *par excellence* the poet of the future in the life of the world, and the poet of the future life.

Carlyle, discoursing in 1840, likened the Divine Comedy to a cathedral. In 1865, Longfellow expanded the simile; and Lowell's essay, published in 1876, developed its applications. Longfellow's lines are still the best expression of our thought:

*I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze  
With forms of saints and holy men who died,  
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;  
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays  
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,  
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;  
And Beatrice again at Dante's side  
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.  
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs  
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love  
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;  
And the melodious bells among the spires  
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above  
Proclaim the elevation of the Host.*

*O star of morning and of liberty!  
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines  
Above the darkness of the Apennines,  
Forerunner of the day that is to be!*

*The voices of the city and the sea,  
The voices of the mountains and the pines,  
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines  
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!*

With one accord we echo the voice that Dante heard  
greeting Vergil as the twain drew near to the circle of  
the poets:

*Onorate l' altissimo poeta.*



DANTE AND ITALIAN POLITICS

By KENNETH McKENZIE

## DANTE AND ITALIAN POLITICS

Dante died without seeing the moral and political regeneration which he hoped would come to Italy, and his ideal remained for centuries an ideal of poets and philosophers. Five hundred years later, after a period of comparative indifference, men were turning to the intelligent study of his works, and coming to regard him as a great citizen, the poet of Italian nationality as well as of religion. "The fainting muse," as Mazzini puts it, "was plunged in his powerful and masculine thought, so as to draw from it holy aspirations of patriotism and humanity." In their general outlines, Dante's political ideas are well known; but in this year which marks the six-hundredth anniversary of his death and the end of the hundred-year period during which Italy has step by step achieved independence and unity, it is appropriate to examine them once more, and consider how far they have been carried out in actual history, if indeed they do not represent an impracticable mediaeval dream which constitutes an ideal that our civilization has not yet attained.

Even when studying his political opinions, we must remember that Dante was a poet. The eminent Minister of Public Instruction in the present Italian government, Benedetto Croce, opening the "Dante year" with an official discourse at Ravenna on September 14, 1920, pleads for the reading and re-reading of Dante's poetry as not only the simplest but also the noblest and truest means of honoring his memory; by so doing, he continues, men whose social and political views are antagonistic can be brought to realize that Italy is really one, and that by diverse means all Italians are striving for the same end;

but those who celebrate in Dante the apostle of Italian nationality must realize that with the passing of time he, like other supreme figures in history, has become a symbol, and can be said to express the ideals of our day only symbolically—for the ideals of his day were not the same. In truth, it is hardly possible to avoid thinking of Dante as a symbol; his own allegorical system of interpretation makes it easy to read into his works ideas which he may not have intended, and to make him the type not merely in a general way of mankind on its pilgrimage, but of the Italian patriot in particular. To him the problems of individual conduct and the problems of the Italian people as a whole were not separate and distinct. If we exclude any of the great conceptions which formed the guiding principles of his life, we voluntarily belittle his genius. Let us, then, think of him as a supreme poet not only in his vivid descriptions of nature, his delineations of character, his outbursts of enthusiasm and of righteous indignation, but in his scientific or polemical discussions—whether metaphysical, ethical, philological, or political.

What is Dante's political theory, after all, but a great poetical ideal? For, as Mazzini puts it in his essay on *The Minor Works of Dante*, "What is Poetry but the faculty of symbolization consecrated to the service of a great idea?" And what, we may add, is patriotism in general but a great poetical ideal, often at variance with practical utilitarian interests? Political idealists are dreamers and poets, for their conceptions, while really based on idealization of the past, are remote from the present, and look for their possible fulfilment to the future. Many points of analogy can be found between Dante's political system and that of Machiavelli. The author of *The Prince* is usually thought of as an eminently practical man, who subordinated ethical and religious considerations to those of expediency, and had no poetry in his soul; but *The Prince*, like Dante's treatise *On Monarchy*, is the exposition of a political system which is unreal because

created by the imagination rather than by actual conditions. The concluding chapter of *The Prince*, with its appeal to the Medici to assume the leadership and redeem Italy from her position of impotence by driving out the foreign invaders and abolishing mercenary armies, can stand beside the appeals made by Dante, similar in purpose, if widely different in the actual method recommended. In both cases the theory remained impossible of practical execution because a feeling of national unity was lacking among Italians in general. Very few men of Dante's time had this sentiment at all, and it was overlaid by so many mediaeval conceptions that it remained fantastic and without result. Nevertheless, the germ was there, and it came to light in the utterances of a long line of forward-looking poets and patriots, until the idea finally took possession of a sufficient number of individuals to become an active force and dominate the old tendency to separation.

In the eighteenth century, as in the sixteenth and in the fourteenth, a considerable number of mutually antagonistic units divided the Italian territory, which might have formed, like France or England, a united nation. This political anarchy was fostered by those who wished to keep in their hands the balance of power, without regard to the effect on the country; and it rendered inevitable the interference of foreign nations, whose Italian expeditions, even when undertaken at the request of the Italians, were naturally not calculated to advance the interests of Italy. The problem was to oppose a unifying principle to the forces of disunion. According to the usual interpretation of the first canto of the *Inferno*, Dante indicates these forces as self-indulgence, pride, and avarice. In the face of such forces as these, which governed the actions of individuals, and through individuals the broader policies of political bodies, and in the face of the tenacity with which the separate regions of Italy maintained their localism, tendencies toward unification remained for a long

time without practical result. Nevertheless, a national consciousness did exist in Italy from the Middle Ages on, at least in the minds of the more intelligent classes. The ideals of generation after generation added with cumulative effect to the potential force of this consciousness. A practical object-lesson was given by Bonaparte's creation of a kingdom of Italy, and this was not forgotten even when the forces of separation temporarily regained the upper hand. Finally, in the nineteenth century the ideal of national union entered the realm of practical politics.

What has just been said indicates that in Dante politics cannot be separated from ethics and morality. Similarly, his views on linguistic matters are intimately related to his political theory. In his unfinished Latin work *On Vulgar Speech* he attacks and condemns the dialects spoken in the several parts of Italy, and the literature produced in these dialects; he believes in the existence of a literary language common to the whole nation, corresponding to no single dialect, but more noble than any of them. This literary language, used by distinguished poets in all parts of Italy, was alone worthy to express the national ideal. The conception is a metaphysical one, not accepted by modern philologists as scientific; for it is now believed that literary Italian is founded on one dialect, which prevailed over the others for the very reason that Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, and a host of lesser men in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, wrote in it, and not because it was the most noble, or, in a Platonic sense, the formal principle which determined the character of the others. It is also true that many of the dialects are even today the medium of literary production of no little merit. Nevertheless, Dante's conception of a common literary language has prevailed, and is today one of the potent elements of national unity.

A century ago, when Milan was the cultural and literary center of Italy, the question of the language was

not always answered in the same way. Silvio Pellico, for instance, believed that precisely because Italy lacked political unity it was useless to strive for linguistic unity. Vincenzo Monti, on the other hand, who in spite of his readiness to swear allegiance to any form of government that seemed to guarantee him personal safety, was devoted to the idea of a united Italy, declared that "the Italian language is the only bond which holds Italians together, a bond which neither the blows of time and of fortune, nor our own follies, have yet been able to destroy." Vittorio Alfieri, the Piedmontese, and Alessandro Manzoni, the Lombard, both went to live in Tuscany for a considerable time, with the express purpose of mastering the Italian language in its purest form, considering this to be a matter of the highest importance in the cause of developing a national consciousness. Alfieri's ideas may have been somewhat vague, but (in the words of Vittorio Rossi, in his inaugural address at the University of Rome, 1916-17—*Nazione e Letteratura in Italia*) he was the first poet since Dante who gave expression to the indomitable will which was necessary to bring into action the ideas of unity. A Sicilian critic (G. A. Cesareo, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*) has said that Manzoni is the first since Dante in whom are found once more united the essential elements of Dante's works: strong feeling for truth and justice, together with an overwhelming devotion to the moral, religious, and national regeneration of Italy. In the intervening centuries Italian literature had a spiritual unity that enabled it to influence the progress of civilization throughout the world; but it lacked the will-power to transform this spiritual unity into a political reality.

Thus, while Dante's idea of a national language was metaphysical rather than philological in character, it has been justified by results. Similarly, his views on government are metaphysical in their basis; with logical method they are expounded and defended in his treatise *On Monarchy* and in passages in his other works. The theory

of monarchy, that is, of a universal ruler holding a position in civil government analogous to that of the pope, and superior to all kings and princes, had previously been developed on a legal or practical basis. Dante treats it philosophically. The legal mind was interested in the rights of the emperor, and the duties of men, his subjects; the mind of the philosopher-poet was interested rather in the rights of humanity and the duties of the monarch, whom he called not the lord of all, but the servant of all. But in itself the idea of monarchy was based on history. The Italians realized even less than other civilized peoples that the ancient world had come to an end. They might boast that Italy was the only country which had two histories, ancient and modern; but they were not conscious of a break between the two, and felt that the institutions of the Middle Ages were a continuation of those of the Roman Empire. In fact, an institution full of vitality, the Church, arose amid the dying life of the Empire; Christianity was already a political force when Constantine adopted it as the religion of the Empire. The Church gradually adapted to its own uses the imperial system, and enforced uniformity of doctrine; thus it inherited no small part of the prestige which had belonged to the Empire, and perpetuated the influence of Rome as a universal rather than a national power. The pope became independent of the secular government, and Charles the Great received the imperial crown as the rightful heir to the ancient universal dominion in secular affairs. Thus there arose a dual system—the Roman Emperor, exercising dominion without necessarily having territory as a basis for it, and the Roman Pope, having similar authority over the church universal. Both were regarded as the vicars of God in their respective spheres of authority. This scheme of world-government, “as sublime as it was impracticable,” in the words of Mr. Bryce, broke down in practice because, for one thing, the popes aspired to temporal as well as spiritual power, and

declared the Church not merely independent of the Empire but superior to it. Many historians from Machiavelli on have pointed out that the temporal ambition of the popes caused them to keep up the fiction of the Holy Roman Empire, with the result that Italy developed a large number of municipal republics, and was prevented from becoming a nation. But the ancient glory of Rome cast its irresistible spell over the minds of patriots like Dante, and led them to strive for some means of reconciling with this theory the unpromising facts of political life.

When in the Middle Ages philosophers began once more to turn their attention to political theory, they looked backward for their ideals. Thus Dante's political theory is not founded on a pragmatic study of the situation, but on ancient precedent and on the *a priori* principle of unity: just as a man is governed by his intellect, so must the world be governed by a monarch. If he had followed the method of Aristotle more closely, he might have come nearer to the principles of modern times. In many ways, however, he anticipates the spirit of these principles. His plea for the separation of church and state, in spite of the fantastic arguments which he uses, is modern in its wisdom. He saw Italy, once the mistress of the world, now weak because divided, "a ship without a pilot in a great tempest;" he saw the papacy gone astray, the Empire debased and powerless; and he was hopeful enough to believe in the possibility of the establishment of a strong government based on law and faith. Again and again he raises a passionate cry for someone to restore liberty by checking the license of municipal misgovernment, so as to bring peace and unity in accordance with what he conceived to be the divinely ordained principle. In his imagination he saw all Christendom permanently organized, like the ancient world, as one great state with Rome at its head. It mattered little that in his day the Empire was Teutonic rather than Roman; that was an unimportant detail, provided the emperor would fulfil his duty of ruling the



world with Rome as his capital. He foresaw the coming of a leader who should drive back to Hell the wolf of avarice, the most serious obstacle to a righteous life. The cause that he had at heart was better than the arguments that he advanced. He first gave expression to the ideal of Italian unity, and to him United Italy looks back, not only as its greatest poet, but as its prophet.

To restore the divinely ordained system, war may be necessary; but Dante constantly insists that mankind can carry on its proper functions only in a state of peace. Liberty is also necessary for the development of men's intellect and character—liberty governed by laws which are instituted for the general good. And this ideal condition of universal peace and liberty can be secured only when there is one authority, supreme in temporal affairs over all other authorities, and therefore free to rule with justice because unhampered by ambition or avarice. A real monarch would thus be able to embody perfect justice, and having no enemies, to insure peace. This is, in brief, the subject of the first book of the treatise *On Monarchy*, and with Dante's plea for peace as the necessary condition of the progress of civilization, we can fully agree today. The weary exile, wandering to every region where the Italian tongue was spoken, saw with his own eyes the consequences of disunion, hostility, ambition, covetousness—in a word, disregard of the divine principles of right living. An old tradition represents him as knocking one night at the door of a monastery, and as replying, when asked by the doorkeeper what he wished, with the one word, "Peace."

With all his belief in the necessity of restoring the authority of the Roman Empire, Dante was not oblivious of the advantages of local self-government as exemplified in the prevailing communal system. The two were not inconsistent, and he never abated his love for his native city, which in the *Convivio* he calls "the most beautiful and most famous daughter of Rome—Florence." Exiled

because he was an obstacle to the political designs of Boniface VIII, he carefully distinguishes between the individual pope and the divinely instituted papacy, as well as between his beloved city and its perverse inhabitants. Hardly one just man remained in Florence; envy, pride, and avarice, he said, possessed the souls of her citizens. Yet, so far as his personal fortunes were concerned, his one desire was to have the decrees against him revoked, so that he could return with honor to the city of his birth. This could be brought about, he repeatedly intimates, if peace should prevail—universal peace, the greatest blessing of mankind; for the angels sang, not of riches or pleasure, not of honors or length of life or health or strength or beauty, but of peace on earth.

Having established the principle of universal monarchy as being necessary to insure peace, Dante gives in the second book of the treatise his reasons for believing that the Roman people rightfully assumed the government of the world. At one time, he tells us, it seemed to him that they had acquired their position by violence; but he was convinced by further study that Divine Providence had directed the course of history and had put Rome in possession of the monarchy. This opinion was confirmed by the words of the *Aeneid*: "*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*," and it was by no accident that Dante chose as his guide through Hell and Purgatory and as his symbol of human reason, Vergil, the poet of the origin and greatness of Rome as well as a master of style. And if Christ had not suffered under a government whose jurisdiction included the whole human race, then the sin of Adam was not punished and mankind was not redeemed by Christ's death. In the center of the lowest circle of Hell the three arch-traitors are made to suffer—Judas who betrayed Christ, and Brutus and Cassius who betrayed the founder of the Roman Empire. The Church and the Empire are in Dante's mind equally divine. Man's eternal and spiritual interests are more important than his

temporal interests, so that the emperor owes deference to the pope; but nevertheless both pope and emperor receive their authority direct from God, whom in their respective spheres of activity they represent on earth.

The third book of the treatise *On Monarchy* is devoted to proving that the emperor did not receive his authority from the pope. To us this hardly requires proof; but in Dante's day there were many churchmen, influenced by their zeal or by their private interests, who took the opposite view. It was historically true, as St. Thomas Aquinas maintained, that the universal dominion of the Roman Empire was perpetuated more effectively by the Church than by the mediaeval Empire.

There is grandeur that appeals to the imagination in Dante's system of social organization, based as it is on an idea of unity, and yet, for reasons of practical necessity, a dualism. "Rome, which made the world virtuous, once had two suns which lighted the two roads, that of the world and that of God" (*Purg.* XVI, 106-8). "That holy and glorious people, free from avarice which is always the enemy of the state, and loving universal peace with liberty" (*Mon.* II, 5). However much our ideas differ from those of the fourteenth century, at least two of the principles defended in the treatise involved a much-needed lesson. Several centuries had to pass before the world learned, as it has perhaps not completely learned even today, that church and state must be separate. "A free Church in a free State" was one of the battle cries in Italy's struggle for freedom in the nineteenth century; and there are many who believe that a large part of her embarrassments in the last generation came from the fact that the principle has not been recognized as fully as it should be. And what shall we say of the longing for universal peace? Is it not even now regarded by many as an idealistic dream rather than an attainable reality? What would Dante have said if he had foreseen that for six hundred years after his death the world would be

afflicted by almost continual warfare; that finally a scheme would be proposed for preventing future wars by means of the creation of a power superior to that of any one state which should express the conscience of mankind and insure justice; and that the nation which made the loudest protestations of loving peace and hating violence would refuse to support the scheme, declaring its intention of attending to its own affairs without regard to the welfare of the rest of the world? If we regard his system of world-government as fantastic or obsolete, can we point to any successful method devised since his time for attaining the object of universal peace, or have we not yet come to believe with him that the object is desirable? We need not attempt to decide what opinion he would have had of a man-made league of nations as contrasted with his divine institution of monarchy, which was designed to secure exactly the same ends.

At one time during Dante's life it seemed possible that his system, which of course was not his alone, might be carried into practice. The book *On Monarchy* was probably, though not certainly, written in connection with the Italian expedition of Emperor Henry VII. At any rate, it reads like a commentary on the career of that intelligent and high-minded monarch. When Henry announced his intention of coming to Italy with the pope's approval to receive the imperial crown in Rome, Dante was jubilant with hope; at last the divine will was to be carried into practice. As "a Florentine and undeservedly an exile" he wrote a letter "to those most infamous Florentines within the city," calling upon them to receive the prince selected by God. Another letter he addressed "To the Princes and Peoples of Italy." Henry's magnanimous character struck even his adversaries; but revolts against him broke out, Florence taking a leading part in them. He did in fact reach Rome and receive the crown in 1312; but in the following year he died without having achieved his purpose of uniting Italy. Thus ended the last serious

attempt to carry out the system in which Dante believed; nothing remained for him but to assign to Henry a lofty seat in Paradise: "In that great seat over which thou see'st the crown will sit the soul of Henry, who will come to set Italy straight before she is ready" (*Par.* XXX, 133-38).

No one can fail to see the importance in all Dante's writings of the political element. He is often spoken of as a Ghibelline, because he opposed the policy of the papacy; but even in the case of Boniface VIII, whom he considered a usurper and assigned to Hell as a simonist, he recognized the sacredness of the papal office. As a matter of fact, his opinions were not much more Ghibelline than they were Guelf. He makes Justinian in Paradise condemn both parties for their resistance to the banner of the Empire. He rose to a level of principle far above the factions which divided Florence into Blacks and Whites, and Italy into Guelfs and Ghibellines. No words could be clearer than those which he puts into the mouth of his ancestor Cacciaguida: "The heaviest burden will be the wicked and foolish company into which thou wilt fall; the result will show their brutishness, so that it will be well for thee to have made a party by thyself" (*Par.* XVII, 61-69). Had Dante confined his attention to the present and the past, he might well have despaired; but he believed that in the end, in spite of the resistance of men, the divine plan must triumph. He makes both Vergil and Beatrice foretell the coming of a deliverer.

Among the reasons which Dante gives for condemning Boniface VIII is that he made war not against the enemies of Christianity, but close to Rome, between Christians, between Italians. The enthusiastic greeting between Vergil and Sordello in Purgatory, when they discover that they came from the same city, gives the occasion for one of Dante's most eloquent outbursts against the perversity which kept Italy divided, and therefore powerless to resist tyranny within or invasion from without: "Ah, enslaved

Italy, dwelling-place of woe! . . . . Thy inhabitants cannot exist without war, and those enclosed by one city-wall gnaw each other. Search around thy shores, wretched one, and then within thy bosom, and see if any part of thee enjoys peace" (*Purg.* VI, 76, 82-87). Then he urges the Emperor Albert to descend to the garden of the Empire where widowed Rome calls upon him. Doubtless if the thoroughly Germanized emperors had extended their dominion to Italy, the result would have been far different from what Dante hoped for. Petrarca was more alive to the possible dangers when he asserted that the Creator had placed the Alps as a protection to Italy against her northern neighbors. But the essential need of the situation, whatever means might be taken to meet it, was then, as it was five hundred years later, the union of Italians in a common purpose to achieve their national destiny. If we think Dante shortsighted, let us remember that an emperor from the north did give a strong impulse in this direction. The struggle to bring into one nation the people who speak the language of *si* has taken a whole century; for even after 1866 and 1870 there remained outside the political frontiers territory which Dante knew, and which all Italians knew, belonged within them. Now these too have been redeemed, and the constant appeals which, while the process was going on, have been made to the spirit of Dante, show to what an extent he has been consecrated the prophet of Italy. Let us hope that this year, which marks the centenary of his death, will mark also for Italy the beginning of a long and happy period of that peace for which he labored, and which will owe so much to the inspiration drawn from his words of patriotic fire and political wisdom.

DANTE AS APOSTLE  
By ERNEST HATCH WILKINS

## DANTE AS APOSTLE

During the youthful days when Dante wrote and lived the *Vita Nuova* he was primarily a poet. But in early manhood, moved by the death of Beatrice, moved by increasing knowledge of the rough world about him, he turned to the resolute study of the fundamental human problems—the problem of life on earth in a society racked with war and wickedness, the problem of the life eternal.

Following with free judgment the still recent doctrine of St. Thomas, his wrestling mind achieved a clear and unified conception of human destiny, a conception which seemed to him to offer the solution of all problems, a conception which from that time forth completely dominated his thought and his will.

Accepting as scene of the universal drama the orthodox earth, hell, purgatory, and heaven, he defined the purpose of human life as being the attainment of two joys, the temporal and the eternal. The temporal joy, possible to man during his life on earth, consists in the actuation of his divinely given nobility, and is in itself twofold; for it embraces the joy of the active life and the joy of the contemplative life. The joy of the active life consists in the development and the energetic assertion of one's finest specific power; the joy of the contemplative life consists in the contemplation of the nature of God, as manifested in his works. The joy of the active life is attained through practice of the moral virtues: justice, temperance, fortitude. The joy of the contemplative life is attained through practice of the intellectual virtues: prudence, art, wisdom, discernment, knowledge. For the attainment of the temporal joy, man has the guidance of philosophy, and the



government of the emperor. The temporal joy is symbolized by the Terrestrial Paradise.

The eternal joy consists in the contemplation of God in heaven. This joy is the reward of him whose soul is at the moment of death in harmony with God. Such harmony is attained through practice of the theological virtues: faith, hope, charity. For the attainment of such harmony, man has the guidance of revealed truth, and the government of the pope. The eternal joy is symbolized by the Celestial Paradise.

Between death and the attainment of the eternal joy there intervenes a finite period of purification, long and painful in proportion to the sinfulness of the life on earth. This state is symbolized by Purgatory.

For him whose soul at the moment of death is not in harmony with God, there wait eternal remorse and eternal deprivation of the sight divine. This state is symbolized by Hell.

Not only did Dante achieve this conception with a clarity and a firmness unsurpassed, but he deduced therefrom, with a relentless logic, manifold implications for individual conduct and for social organization, and he sped the keenness of his wonderful imagination throughout the life of the other world. With the intensity of the mystic, but with the distinctness of the realist, he conceived the contemplation of God as being the supreme experience of power, of knowledge, and of love; his consciousness of the horror of sin was strong in the strength of his consciousness of the eternal joy; logic and visual might combined to construct for him the agonies of an eternal hell.

And he had the consciousness of eternity as few men have it. Eternity to the average man is but a great, vague length of time, comparable with the length of life on earth as a long blurred line is comparable with a line that is short and clear. Eternity to Dante is, in truth, eternity, comparable with the length of life on earth as an infinite line is comparable with a point infinitesimal.

Filled in mind and soul with this conception of the universal scheme, Dante could not hold his peace. He knew that he saw these things with a unique intensity of vision; he knew that he could express them with a unique power of utterance. He felt that a unique and divinely given responsibility rested upon him. He accepted that responsibility with all the eager force of his great will; and he thus became, and to the end of his life remained, primarily an apostle—the apostle of the temporal and of the eternal joy.

In the minor works of his maturity, he is in particular the apostle of the temporal joy. The temporal joy is to be attained, as we have seen, under the guidance of philosophy: and as apostle of philosophy Dante appears throughout the *Convivio*. The temporal joy is to be attained, as we have seen, under the government of the emperor: and as apostle of empire Dante appears throughout the *De Monarchia*, in two eloquent chapters of the *Convivio*, and in several of the Letters.

These and lesser phases of apostleship persist in the Divine Comedy, but in the Divine Comedy Dante is in particular the apostle of the eternal joy.

The purpose of the poem, as Dante himself states in the Letter Dedicatory of the Paradise, is this: "To remove those living in this life from a state of woe, and to lead them into a state of joy": *removere viventes in hac vita de statu miseriae, et perducere ad statum felicitatis*.

This purpose Dante seeks to fulfil by the portrayal of a Hell so justly terrible as to create a compelling fear of damnation; by the portrayal of a Purgatory so painful as to instil the dread of sin, yet so hopeful as to stir the sweetness of like hope; and by the portrayal of a Paradise so supremely joyous as to inspire the will to win like joy.

The temporal joy, as we have seen, is to be attained under the guidance of philosophy, and is symbolized by the Terrestrial Paradise: so Vergil, typifying philosophy, guides Dante to Eden on its mount remote. The eternal

joy, as we have seen, is to be attained under the guidance of revealed truth, and is symbolized by the Celestial Paradise: so Beatrice, typifying revealed truth, guides Dante upward through the stars into the Empyrean.

So, too, the apostolic purpose permeates the whole great structure, determining alike plan and elevation, clustered pier and window luminant, frescoed chapel, graven pulpit, perfect shrine.

And as the gifts of art render the cathedral a more fitting place to worship God, so is the message of the Divine Comedy the more effective for its wondrous beauty; for Dante, though apostle now, is none the less poet, and the poetry of the Divine Comedy, though freely subservient to its apostolic message, is, nevertheless, the noblest poetry that ever issued from the heart and mind and will of man.

Six centuries have passed. The universe itself has changed. This earth, no more the center of its nine attendant spheres, moves but as one of an infinite throng. The sudden call of creation echoes no more; we hear instead the measured throb of a greater symphony. Many a premise of Dante's thought has failed. What then of his apostleship?

Obsolete, indeed, are some phrases of his message, some elements of his great design. But the heart of it lives still with a vitality that transcends the years, for the heart of it is spiritual, not formal; moral, not abstract; not fabulous, but true. His Lucifer is anthropomorphous, but not his God.

The study of the *Commedia* can scarcely fail to bring a quickening of religious and moral sensitiveness. The punishments of the Hell are not arbitrary, but are assigned in such a way as to reveal the intimate foulness of the several sins—represent, indeed, those sins externalized. One shudders not only at the torment, but at the perversion that is its cause. Many of Dante's judgments

are ineradicably impressive: his infinite scorn for the morally neutral; the depersonalizing result of financial excess; the icy-heartedness of treachery. And there is equal force in his revelation of the nature of life within the will of God—a life of intellectual completion, of mutual love unhindered and increased, of service with a sense of infinite power. The Hell and the Paradise intensify each the effect of the other: the ideal glows with a more wondrous beauty in contrast with the lurid tragedy of failure; sin is the more criminal, the more insane, in that it shuts out the light of an ideal such as this.

Dante judges *sub specie aeternitatis*. Looking down from Gemini on that earth which he none the less thought the center of the universe, he could but smile at the meanness of the thing—"the little threshing floor we grow so fierce about": *L'aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci*. Yet there are those of us whose vision scarce can overtop the high horizon, and fails, like a broken-winged seaplane, if we bid it cross to other boundaries. Dante is conscious alike of the reality and the significance of past and future. Treasure of wisdom and of righteousness is to be had from ancestral memories; our work will condition life among the generations that are to come. Yet there are those of us who ignore the rich inheritance; and there are those of us who would compromise a coming century for the sake of respite in a coming year.

Dante is intensely purposeful. "In matters of conduct," he says, "the ultimate purpose is the fundamental cause and criterion": *principium et causa omnium est ultimus finis*. So he casts the whole individual and social ethic in the mold of his great unifying conception. What would he think of a person or a community, of an industrial or an educational system, of a national or an international order, content to stumble down the devious line of least resistance?

Dante assumes the brotherhood of man, or, to use a phrase more nearly like his own, the natural bond of

friendship among all men. In the *Convivio* he calls it *la naturale amistà per la quale tutti a tutti semo amici*; in the Divine Comedy he calls it *lo vinco d'amor che fa natura*.

Dante held a most exalted idea of the political function and responsibility. As the ministers of the church are ordained by God for the government of man in the attainment of the eternal joy, so the ministers of the state are ordained by God for the government of man in the attainment of the temporal joy. The officer who misuses government for his own ends is guilty, then, not only of personal dishonesty but of malfeasance against the whole plan of God. More than once, in the Divine Comedy, Dante arrays and arraigns the potentates of his time. What would he think of some of those who govern us? And of their electors?

The temporal joy, as we have seen, embraces the active life and the contemplative. And of these two felicities, Dante says, "though the first be good, the second is better." And again, "by sitting in quietness is a man made perfect in prudence and wisdom." *Sedendo et quiescendo* are strange words for a strenuous age; but would not life be a richer and a finer thing if we gave some heed to this phase of Dante's message?

The joy of the active life finds with us a readier sympathy, and Dante's summons is stirring indeed, as he calls for the development and the energetic assertion of one's finest specific power, for a participation in life that shall bring to full reality all the potential excellence of body, mind, and heart. No selfish or withdrawn religion this, though voiced in a distant mediaeval twilight.

Yet this activity is for the sake of ultimate peace. For the soul of man, come into life amid trailing clouds of joyousness, turns ever to that which gives it joy, finds ever that the seeming joys are far from ultimate, moves ever on in restless search until it shall find peace in God,

who is our home. For the fruition of human endeavor is in communion with God.

And that such fruition is possible to man Dante declares by the claim, simple and intense, that he, like Richard of St. Victor, like Bernard, like Augustine, has himself experienced that communion.

Such, in broadest outline, are some of the elements of the continuing message of Dante as apostle.

Synopsis of  
DANTE: THE MAN AND HIS WORK  
By THEODORE W. KOCH

## SYNOPSIS

INTRODUCTORY: Revival of literature in Italy during the thirteenth century—Provençal poetry and chivalrous love—the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*—the imagery of the *Vita Nuova*—Dante's growth and development—his political activity—Florentine feuds—Dante as an exile—his apostrophe to Italy (*Purgatorio* VI)—Henry VII crowned as emperor—plan to re-establish the old universal monarchy of Rome—death of Henry in 1313—the *Divina Commedia* the great fruit of Dante's exile.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Florence in Dante's time—the baptistery and cathedral—Michelino's fresco—Dante's house—Sante Croce (cenotaph and monument)—Bargello portrait—decree of exile—Ravenna—tomb—the so-called death mask and the Naples bust—the Torrigiani mask—portrait from the Riccardian Codex No. 1040—Raphael and Dante—the Tofanelli portrait.

The *Vita Nuova*—Boccaccio's story of the first meeting of Dante and Beatrice (Simeon Solomon)—the second meeting as treated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Henry Holiday—Guido Cavalcanti and the "Boat of Love" (Rossetti)—Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix" and "Dante's Dream"—"Dante on the Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" (Rossetti)—"The Lady of Pity" (Rossetti).

Cosmography of the *Divina Commedia* (Duke of Sermoneta)—mediaeval conceptions of the nether world (bas-relief from the cathedral of Orvieto)—pictorial representations of the Last Judgment and of the future life, showing the influence of Dante's conception (Camposanto at Pisa; Fra Angelico; frescoes by Orcagna in Santa Maria Novella and by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel)—the



opening scenes of the *Divina Commedia*—Paolo and Francesca (Rossetti, Cabanel, Hofmann-Zeitz, Ary Scheffer, G. F. Watts)—Dante and Vergil crossing the lake of the city of Dis (Delacroix)—the centaurs (Francesco Scaramuzza)—the wood of the suicides (Scaramuzza)—Brunetto Latini (Scaramuzza)—the barrators (Scaramuzza)—the Malebranche (Otto Greiner)—Agnello Brunelleschi (Josef Anton Koch)—Guido da Montefeltro (J. A. Koch)—Ugolino (Sir Joshua Reynolds)—the ascent to Purgatory—La Pia (Rossetti)—Matilda (Albert Maignan)—“Salutatio Beatricis” (Rossetti)—Paradiso (Botticelli).

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