

The song of roland



Inferno is about Dante being led through the circles of hell by the Virgil. Within each circle, he is taken through the stages, which begin from that of punishment of the inhabitants. They are punished of the sins they are most guilty of. Dante's Satan is portrayed to be ugly and impotent. He is trapped in the ice that is created by the constant flapping of his own wings. The Satan has nothing useful that could appeal even to the rebellious young adults. While in The Song of Roland, vassalage, God's will, man's place on earth and duty are among the key themes of the poem. In the two stories, people are forced to go on a journey within themselves in order to overcome fears and the dark shadows affecting their lives according to the wills of God. The struggle between evil and good brings about God's perfection and thus God was moved to create Hell by justice.

The Benevolent God in Inferno is portrayed to be the all-powerful and all-good; the same is assumed by the medieval characters in The Song of Roland. All the characters in Inferno assume that God intervenes in all events to bring justice. This proves reasonable to believe, for example, when it was decided at Ganelon's trial that it should be done by combat. It is for duty that Charlemagne went to fight against the forces of Islam. The sense of duty made Roland fight to death at the battle in Rencesvals. All these characters are forced by the inner desire to take a journey within themselves in order to find justice or be punished for the sins they have committed. Hell is made to exist to punish sin and thus, the suitability of God's punishment in Dante's greater moral message. The whole poem assures that the guiding principle of justice in the poem brings about balance. As it brings out different levels of sins, we realize that everyone receives punishment according to the sin

they have committed. The text emphasizes on the infinite wisdom of divine justice.

The Song of Roland, on the other hand, is valuable epic that takes place during the time of the Crusaders. The poem talks of the years in which the valiant Christian King was fighting against Saracens in Spain to find justice, but only one stronghold Moslem remained. The city was under the rule of King Marsile of Saragossa. Certain that the defeat was inevitable, the king hatched a plot to raid Spain in order to be a Christian covert in exchange for the Charlemagne's departure trying to change from his earlier ways of sin.

From the theme of good and evil, we are able to realize how humans are taking journeys within themselves so as to be good or evil. Justice comes to them and all sinners despite its harshness for example; homosexuals have to endure eternity of walking on hot sand while those charged of charging interest on loans are to sit on fire. As it is shown in The Song of Roland, evil is brought out to be pure and simple in terms of wars and styles (Cook, 1987). We are not able to see the horror of war in its intensity due to the ambiguous moral justification. Here, heroes are not deterred by compassion for the enemy, but by the glamour of war. The cost of war is heavy, but it is only experienced by the heroes and thus justice. The villains, on the other hand, neither deserve compassion nor grief they are punished by death. The Franks, according to The Song of Roland, represent pure good in the heart of man and are moved by the will of God (Haidu, 1993). The Saracens here are depicted to be evil, and when they die, it is portrayed that their souls are dragged down to hell by the devil.

On the contrary, in *Inferno*, unhappiness is brought about by human desire and arises from God's separation and punishment to sinners. Free human beings live in misery, but God takes them to state of happiness but punishes sinners. This proves how God creates happiness in the man's life. The story contributes much to this purpose through the embodiment of the theme that separates love from divinity. It is said that love moves the sun and the stars and leads inevitably to unhappiness. Thus, the more one chooses to harm others in an attempt to get happiness in *Inferno*, the further one draws away from the real love becomes a sinner and all that brings unhappiness. In essence, these people act focusing on ego instead of divine love. Ego-centeredness, according to *Inferno*, rots and corrupts individuals and society as a whole.

The war in *The Song of Roland* is in the end not a holy mission but the issue of loyalty and vassalage. It touches on heroism and is based on feudal ideas, and as such, even pagans are considered heroes in the poem since they are evaluated in terms of vassalage and loyalty. This system of ideology links lords and vassals with a chain of obligations and devotion. In the poem, it is evident that a vassal gave its loyalty in exchange for vengeance and protection should it be killed in service for its lord. The vassal is depicted to be parallel to Christianity, and, thus, Roland's ultimate liege is God. The vassal is serving Charlemagne and fulfills Roland's duties as a Christian. This is also an illustration of man's will in this journey. On the other hand, hell is embodied in the theme of unhappiness in *Inferno*. It is a vast pit that reaches to the surface from the center of the earth (Bonney, 1989). As one goes down, it grows darker and narrower; and thus, further down, Dante and Virgil

go to the stronger grows of claustrophobia. At the bottom of the pit is an ice cold absence of life. From Inferno, people who give in to lust, gluttony, anger, and greed occupy 'high positions'. The second stage involves those who choose to do violence in the pursuit of their goals. Finally, there are those who deliberately misuse the distinctive human power to think, speak, and reveal the truth to other humans.

In The Song of Roland, God is viewed as the Almighty. He is believed to stand behind all the events. Despite this, evil things also happen. Thus, unhappiness is to some extent also a part of the God's plan (Latorre, 2010). In the second story, Satan makes the theme of unhappiness even more obvious since he is contrasted with the other known images we have in Inferno. The Satan of Milton's paradise is depicted to have some powers and beauty when he was still a powerful and beautiful angel. He is still mighty and is able to make powerful speeches in hell. Thus, Satan's rhetoric has convinced readers that there is some truth and nobleness in his decision to go against God and that it was better for Satan to reign in hell than serve in Heaven.

From The Song of Roland, we are able to see that God commands while man acts. Despite this, man often needs divine help to carry out plans of God. Most of the hard works were done by men like Charlemagne. Men had to have faith in their entire endeavor, since faith is benevolent; and it is a part of God's plan to have men carry out His wishes. God is all providing, but it is through man's commitment that one is able to achieve great levels of achievements.

In *Inferno*, on the other hand, happiness as a theme revolves around the idea that humans are guided by the natural bond of love that surrounds and unites all people. The natural bond honors the special bond of love that is created by kinship and is shared naturally (Alighieri, 1995). The theme embodies how people's souls relate to each other. This is portrayed by the way Francesca and Paolo's soul seem to be related. On the contrary, no soul in hell seems to show any concern for any other since they are surrounded by hostility towards one another. The souls even try to make the suffering of one another worse. The ice at the bottom of the pit symbolizes the paralysis of life and the feeling we see in Ruggieri and Ugolino. The two are joined by hatred for eternity as they gnaw at one another. This image is heightened by the contrast we see in how Virgil and Dante treat one another.

In *The Song of Roland*, apart from vassalage, God's will, and man's place on earth, duty is also among the key values of the poem. It is for duty that Charlemagne went to battle to fight against the forces of Islam. The sense of duty made Roland fight to death at the battle in Rencesvals (Bonney, 1989). Duty made Charlemagne avenge of the death of Roland. Duty from the poem is linked to love, and, thus, it formed the bond between Roland and Charlemagne and also between Roland and his men. The duty and loyalty between these men are marked by respect and affection. Duty, therefore, spontaneously arises from love. It follows naturally from sublime love. The other idea presented in Dante's *Inferno* is that of Human wisdom, which is never enough. Even though human wisdom is essential in moving a person from a state of misery to that of happiness, it is never enough, and, thus, we must ultimately rely on divine grace, love and happiness.

Thus, both Dante's *Inferno* and *The Song of Roland* represent the themes of internal journeys on which people embark in order to overcome fears affecting their lives and so as to fulfill the wills of Ultimate Powers: Satan (*Inferno*) and God (*The Song of Roland*).