
The Punishment Is Justifiable For The Sin

In Dante's *Inferno*, written by Dante Alighieri, each of the Cantos signifies a sin, each sin has a punishment created by Dante. In Canto 34, the punishment for betrayal is being chewed in one of Satan's mouth for eternity. The punishment is justifiable towards the sin because each punishment correlates.

Each of the levels get lower which mean the sinners lose their ability of movement. In the beginning of the Canto, Dante sees souls frozen in a lake. The souls are of sinners who are traitors. "Where the sinners are buried even deeper in the ice, so that they cannot move their heads at all and must stare perpetually down at the frozen lake" (Bloom 3). Being trapped in the ice proves the point that because they could not control their minds and bodies when they were alive, now all they can do is stay still with repentance in their hearts. Also, their tears freeze over their eyes which makes them more comfortable. They can see and speak very slightly. Dante and Virgil reach the center and notice Satan. "Dante's Lucifer is a giant, far larger than Antaeus...covered with shaggy hair and as a former seraph retains his six wings, although the wings are now like those of bats" (Bloom 7).

Canto 34 shows Dante witnessing Satan chewing on three sinners being chewed and scratched upon by Satan. In Dante's opinion, they are the worst sinners in the history of the world. In the center is Judas who suffers the most from this punishment. When Dante sees Judas he is being chewed differently than the other two men, "He kicks his legs on the fiery chin and has his head inside" (61-62). Judas being chewed with his head first signifies he was the biggest backstabber. Before Jesus Christ was killed, Judas gave him a kiss on the cheek. Judas is being tortured mouth to mouth because he did betray Jesus Christ with his lies about his love towards him. The center face of Satan is colored red which signifies anger. After betraying Jesus, Judas was angry at himself for what he had done.

The second sinner is Brutus. Brutus betrayed Julius Caesar and the Roman Empire. Brutus is being chewed feet-first. Brutus loved Julius but loved Rome more. "...the one who dangles from the black face is Brutus: note how he writhes without a word"(64-65). The second face of Satan signifies the absence of intellect. Brutus was asked by Cassius to help make up a plan to assassinate Julius. "...Brutus in turn lost a subsequent battle and took his own life as well" (Raffa 130). Suicide is one of the gravest sins a person can commit. Initially, it was Cassius who he held resentment towards Julius. Brutus being influenced by Julius' alleged royalty behavior showed his lack of intelligence which is way he is being chewed upon by the black face of Satan. Also, Brutus being put feet first can signify when he ran across the senate to attack Caesar.

The final sinner is Cassius. Cassius with Brutus was on of the main conspirators for the assassination of Julius. Also like Brutus, Cassius is chewed feet first. But unlike Brutus, Cassius held resentment toward Julius. "...against Caesar's dictatorship and enlisted the aid of Brutus in a conspiracy to kill Caesar and reestablish the republic" (Raffa 130). Cassius is located on the third face of Satan, which is off-white. The color represents the lack of purity. Cassius should have not held any form of bitterness towards Caesar. Caesar offered Brutus and Cassius high positions in the senate but they still betrayed him. Cassius committed suicide before

Brutus, which shows his lack of purity and also his lack of genuinity for his friendship with Casear. He was discontent from the beginning which proves that all the words he spoke to Julius or all the things he did for him were inauthentic.

Some people consider Satan to be the King of Hell but he is also a sufferer too. "But for Dante the fallen angel is the principal sinner of the universe, and his punishment is the same as that of the other sinners" (Bloom 16). The frozen ice cuts into Satan's waist as he tries to release himself. Satan's three faces are a parody on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Judas being the worst sinner is the Father, Brutus the Son, and Cassius the Holy Spirit. It is almost a reminder of the sin he committed and of his punishment. "His angelic beauty perverted to hideous grossness, and he is frozen in the ice of Cocytus, forever separated from the warmth of divine love" (Bloom 16). His punishment is not just being the king of the underworld but not being able to experience God's love. "In Dante's symbolism weight signifies sin" (Bloom 20). After he was thrown out of Heaven, Satan fell down to the center of the earth but he got stuck upside down. "This final image of Lucifer thus resembles the sight of the simonists, in particular Pope Nicholas III" (Raffa 129). Satan's position allows him to feel all the weight of the other sins on him.

The poem shows Dante using different levels of meaning to express the justifiability of each Canto. Most of the Cantos have a symbolic or literal meaning towards their sin and how it contributes to the punishment. "Symbolic meanings involve the figures of speech, images, and ideas...to convey an artistic or a philosophical vision" (Heseltine 648). In Canto 34, specifically, the three worst sinners that are being chewed and scratched mostly on their backs shows the symbolic meaning of being backstabbers and how they betrayed the people who trusted them by making them believe the lies they said from their mouths. Also, the symbolic and literal meaning of having Judas being tortured differently than the others proves that he is the worst one. "...placed headfirst inside Lucifer's central mouth, with his back skinned by the devil's claws" (Raffa 130).

Canto 34 shows the punishment is justifiable towards the sin because it correlates to the sinner. Each punishment is uniquely designed for each sin. Also, the writing technique used by Dante and the translation signifies deeper meanings about each Canto.