
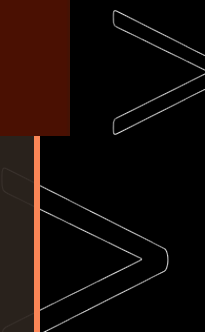


The background is a monochromatic, reddish-orange illustration of Dante Alighieri from the poem 'The Inferno'. He is depicted in a long, flowing robe, looking back over his right shoulder with a somber expression. The setting is a dark, cavernous space with jagged rock formations and a large, gnarled tree on the left. The overall tone is dramatic and somber.

The Inferno, Part I: **The Descent into Hell**

by Barbara Harrington, PhD

- 
- The Divine Comedy encompasses Dante's vision of God's judgment on every significant aspect of human life.
 - It is the supreme and culminating work of medieval thought.
 - Dante gives expression to nearly every major intellectual and moral issue of the Middle Ages, including his own concerns about public morality, the power of love, and the quest for spiritual salvation.
- 

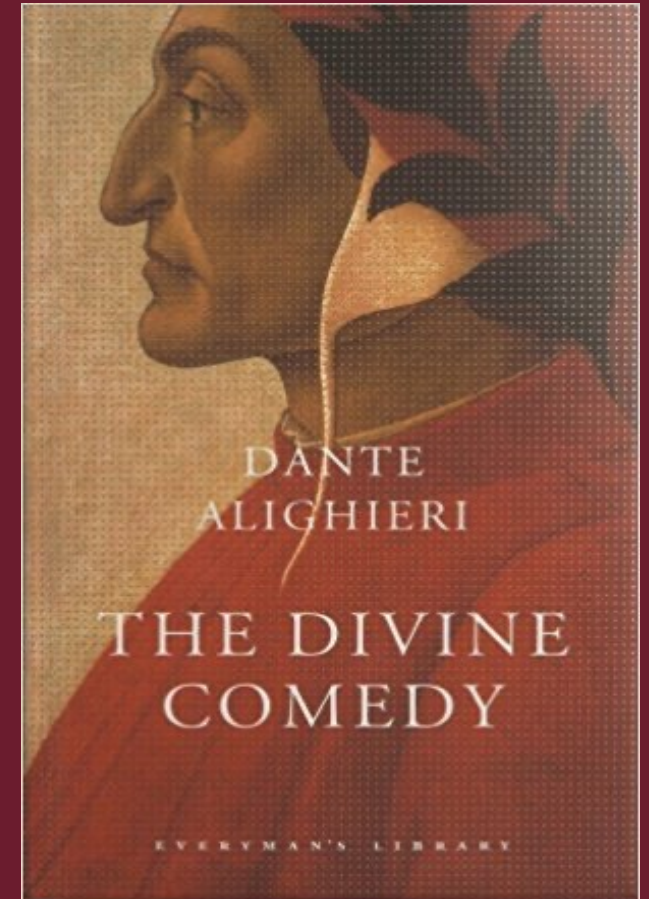
Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

- Florentine linguist, philosopher, poet, politician
- A “White Guelf” (opposed to papal political power)
- Excommunicated in 1298 by Pope Boniface VIII (with the whole city of Florence)
- In 1302 Exiled by the Black Guelfs for corruption while he was city *prior*. Family lands and money confiscated.
- He was rehabilitated by Pope Benedict XV in 1921, and by the City of Florence in 2008.



- Written between 1308 and 1321.
- A way of processing his exile (Dante's brooding over his own sins and factionalism)
- Over 100 English translations
- Music composed for it by Tchaikovsky and Liszt

“Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them,” he wrote.
“There is no third.” *TS Eliot*



Structure of an Epic Masterpiece

- The Divine Comedy is divided into three parts: Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradisio.
- Each part has exactly 33 Cantos (plus 1 for the Introduction), making the entire Poem exactly 100 Cantos long (10x10).
- Each Canto is divided in lines of Terza Rima, which are rhyming lines grouped in 3's.
- Each line has exactly 11 syllables, for a total of 33 syllables per stanza.

Why “The Divine **Comedy**”?



- Because it is first and foremost a fantastic tale. Not theology.
- Because it ends up with a happy ending.
- Because it was written in lowly Italian instead of lofty Latin.
- The word “komos” from the Greek meant “a carnival” or a “rousing party.” How we end up in heaven is God’s carnival.

Principle One:

There are only two eternal destinations, heaven and hell.



Purgatory is the antechamber to heaven.





Principle II: The path to paradise begins in hell.

Principle III: Sinners are found in all three levels. Damned souls are unrepentant.

“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God ‘will give to each person according to what he has done.’”

ROMANS 2:5-6





Principle IV:

The souls in hell have lost the true use of reason. They are liars and generally crazy.

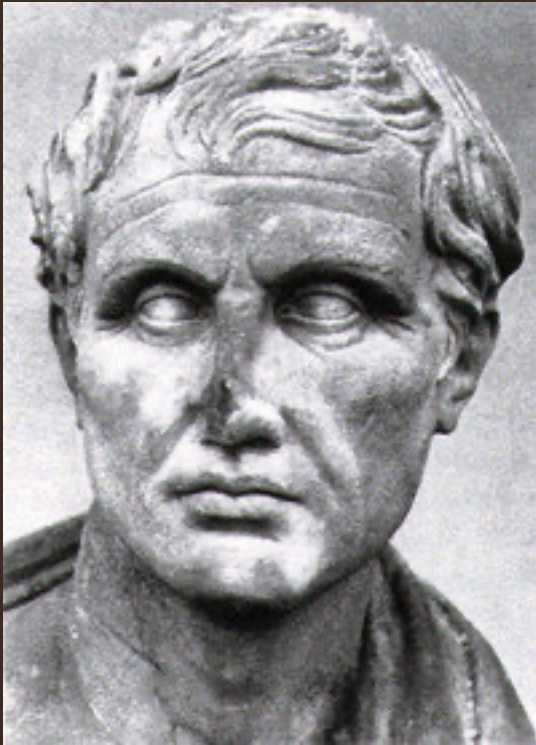
Principle V:

The geography of hell (and some of purgatory) is determined by the sins of those in each place.

In hell, the sinners are getting exactly what they have wanted in their lives on earth.

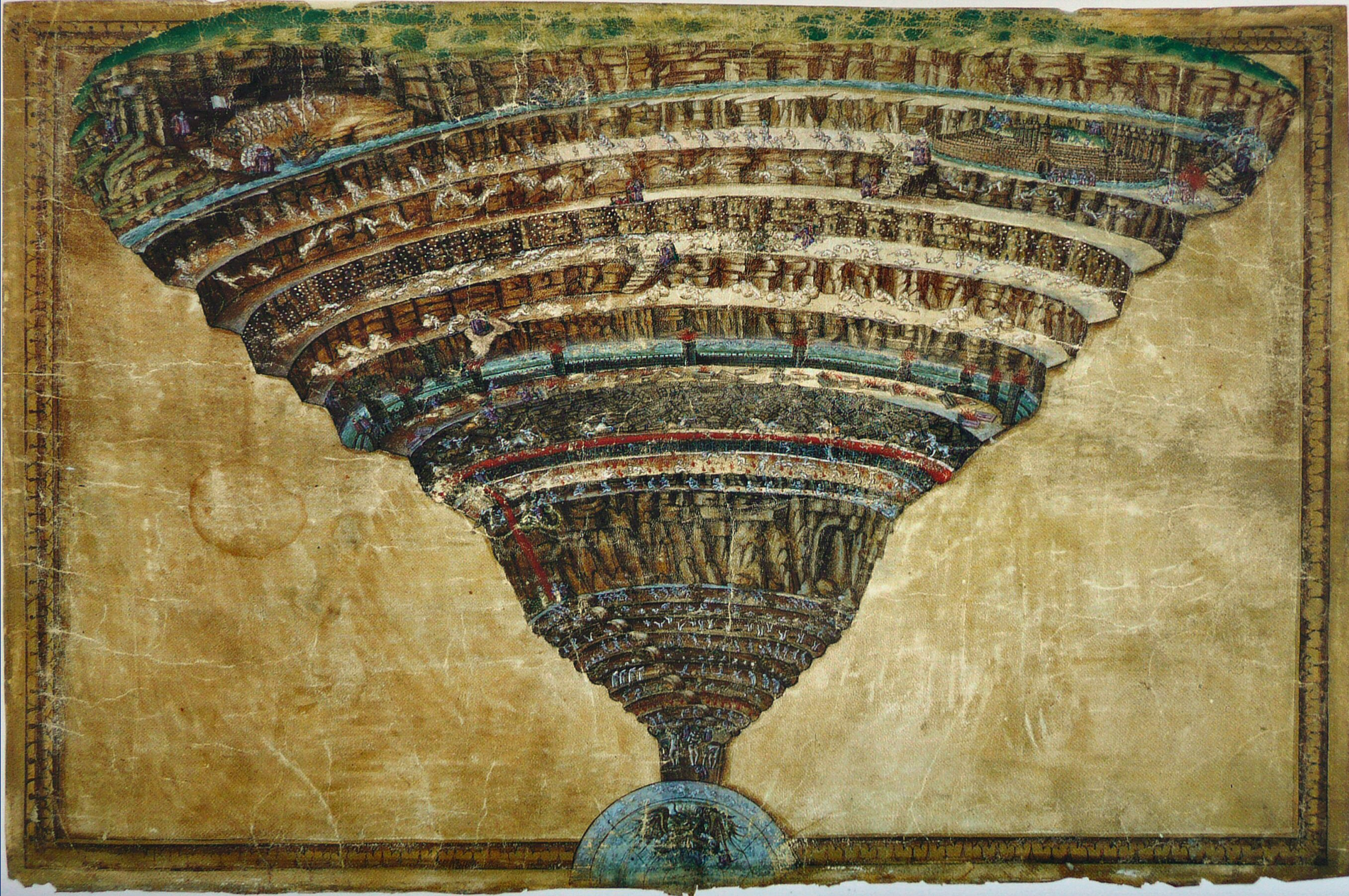


Principle VI:
The cast of characters is from history and fiction;
many Italians from fifty years before Dante's time.



The Map of Hell

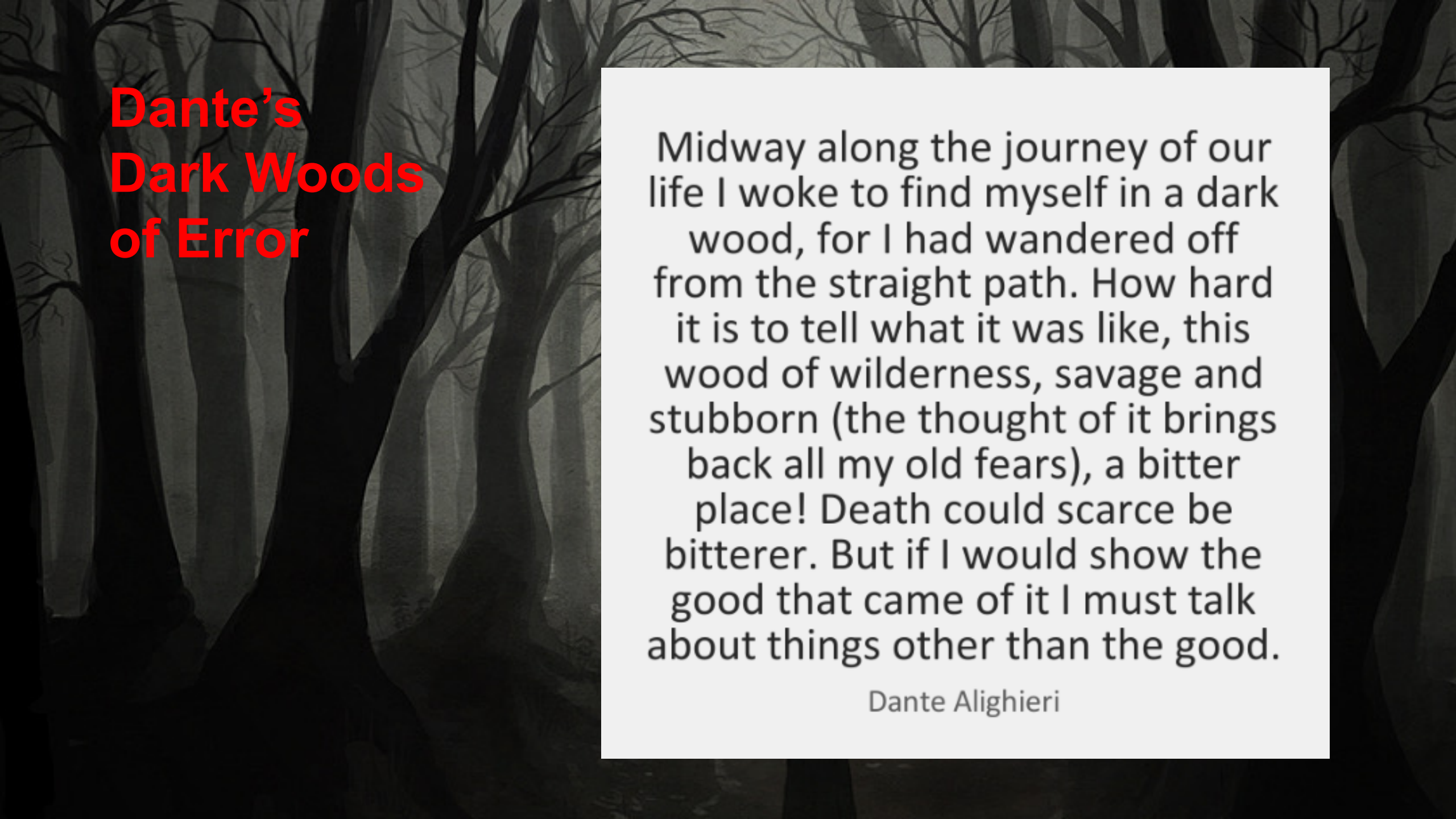
More
common
sins in
the
wider
circles.



About Dante the Pilgrim....

- He's a mess. The story is basically of a Divine intervention;
- He's cowardly, licentiate, proud, ignorant, and irresolute.
- He's doing it for the wrong reason.





Dante's Dark Woods of Error

Midway along the journey of our life I woke to find myself in a dark wood, for I had wandered off from the straight path. How hard it is to tell what it was like, this wood of wilderness, savage and stubborn (the thought of it brings back all my old fears), a bitter place! Death could scarce be bitterer. But if I would show the good that came of it I must talk about things other than the good.

Dante Alighieri

“Mid-way through the journey of life...”





“I went astray from the straight road....”

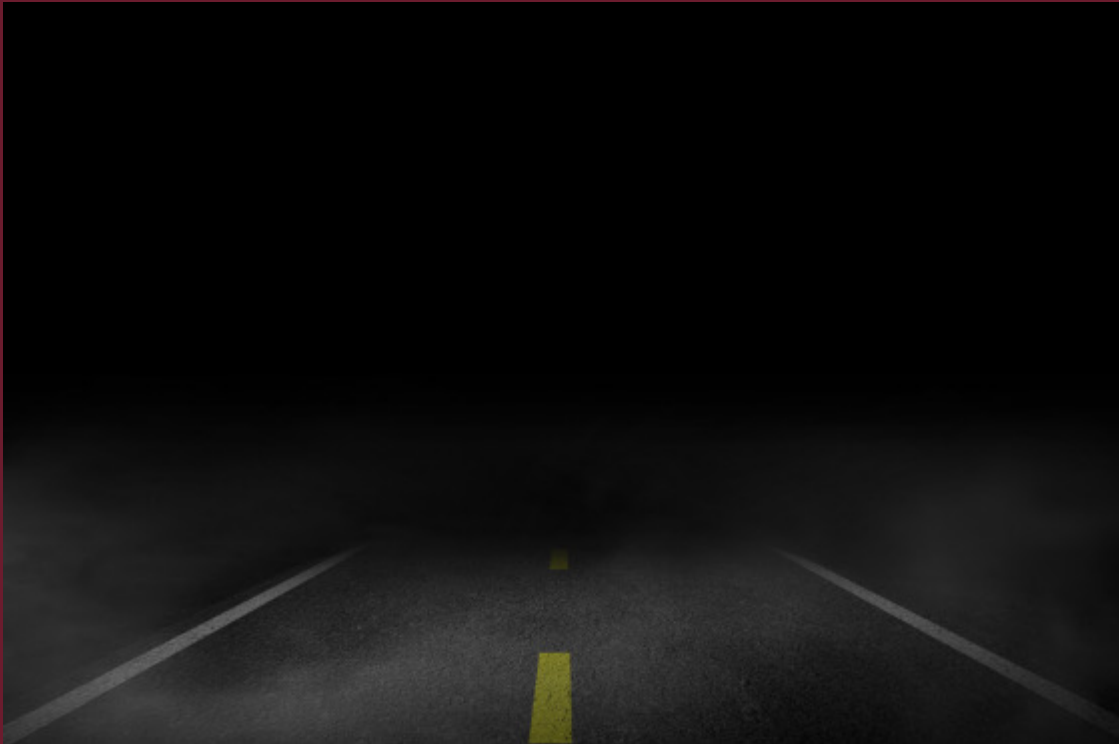
A dark, atmospheric photograph of a forest. Tall, slender tree trunks are visible, some in sharp focus and others blurred in the background. The scene is shrouded in a thick mist or fog, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The color palette is dominated by dark blues, greys, and blacks, with some lighter, hazy areas where the mist is thicker. The overall mood is somber and eerie.

**“Savage and stubborn,
a bitter place.”**



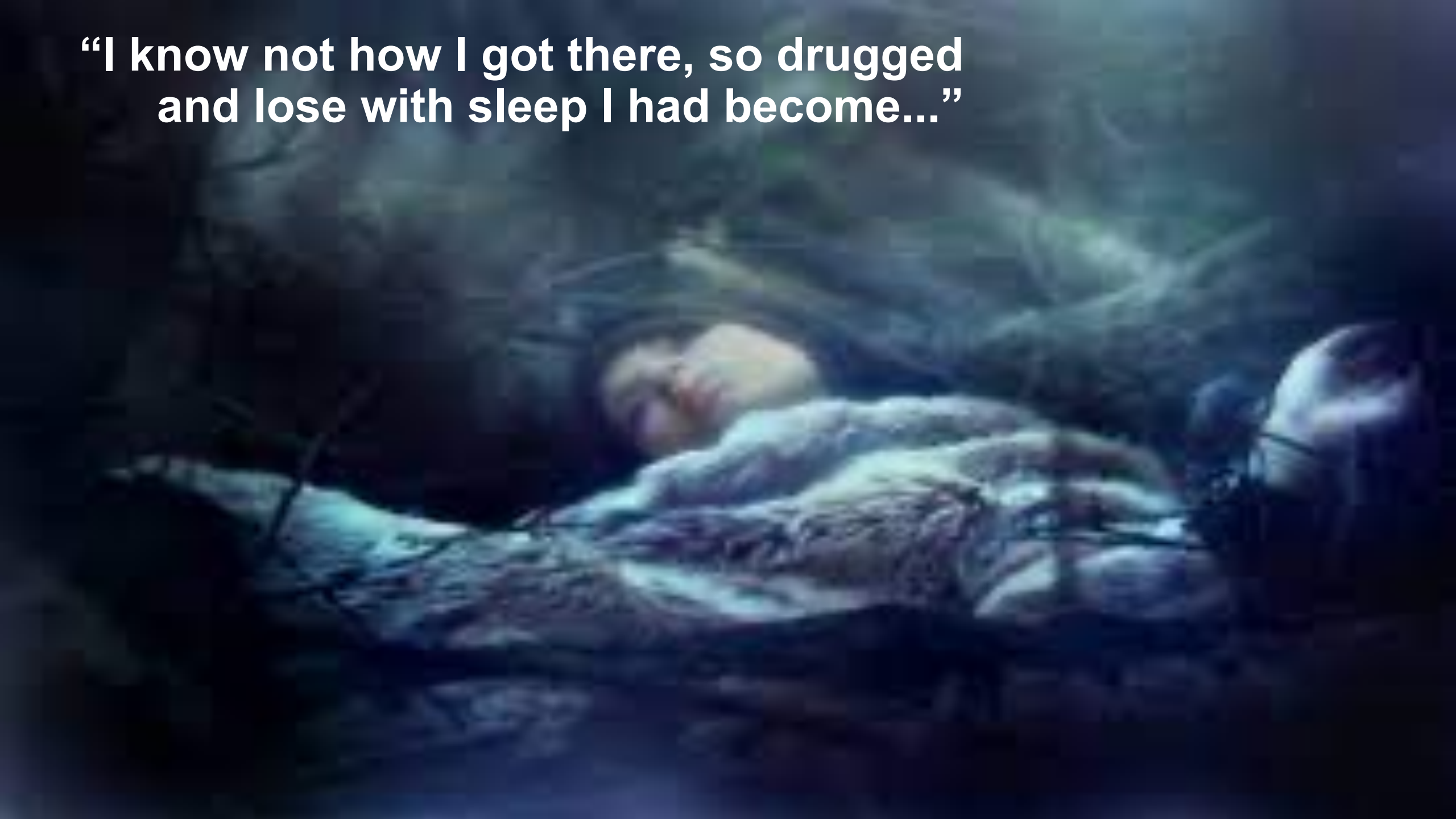
“The thought of it brings back all my old fears.”

Why are we afraid of the dark?



1. Nocturnal creatures
2. Can't see
3. Feels like death.

**“I know not how I got there, so drugged
and lose with sleep I had become...”**





Glimmer of hope in
the distance...

“But at the far end
of that valley of
evil...that planet
whose shining
strengthened me
against the fright...”



The First Thing That
stops us from seeking
God... **Sensuality.**

“And lo!
Almost at the
beginning of the rise,
I faced a spotted
Leopard,
all tremor and flow
and gaudy pelt...”

➤ Sensuality = Incontinence

An imbalance where important things are undervalued and lesser things are prioritized.



“Our body has this defect that, the more it is provided care and comforts, the more needs and desires it finds.”

St. Teresa of Avila

Three Types of Sin

(Dante Alighieri)

✓ **Incontinence** (Level 1)

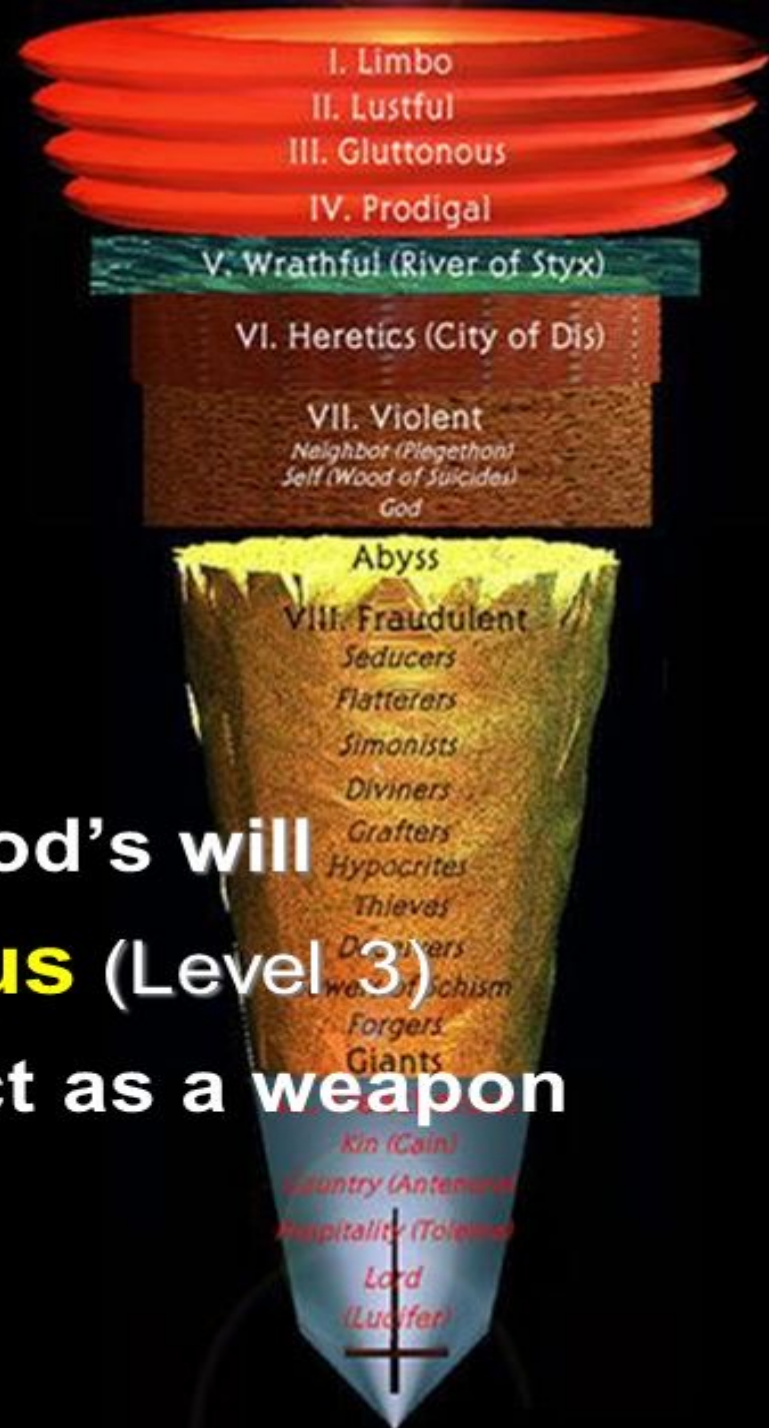
- ✓ Lack of self control


✓ **Violence** (Level 2)

- ✓ Conscious violation of God's will

✓ **Fraudulent and Traitorous** (Level 3)

- ✓ Using reason and intellect as a weapon



A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and dark tie, is shown from the chest up. He is covering his face with his right hand, with his fingers spread, suggesting shame or distress. His left hand is raised, palm facing forward, in a gesture of surrender or confession. The background is a dark, textured grey. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

How do sins of the
flesh divert us from
intimacy with God?



The Second Beast....

Sins of Violence

“I shook with dread at sight of a great lion that broke upon me raging with hunger; it’s enormous head held high as if to strike...”



Sins of Violence



- Against Others
- Against Ourselves
- Against God

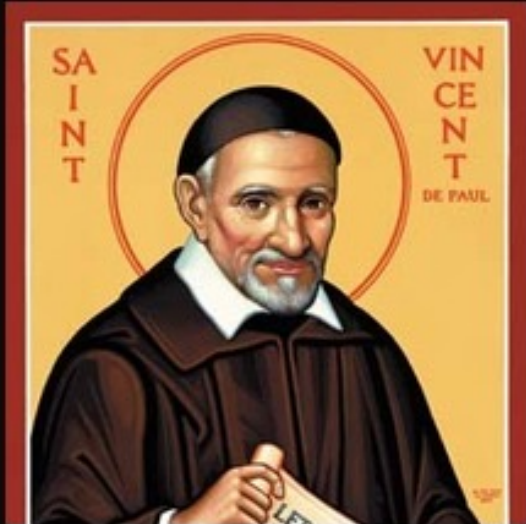


Third Beast Lies

“..a She-Wolf drove
upon me,
A starved horror,
Ravening and wasted
beyond all belief..”



What kind of lies keep us from intimacy with God?



Humility is nothing but truth,
and pride is nothing but lying.

~ Vincent de Paul



Virgil is a fellow poet.
Someone Dante admires
sent by Heaven

Symbolizes Grace:
We can't find salvation on
our own.

Symbolizes Human Reason:
In order to understand sin,
you have to separate from it
emotionally.

Virgil “seemed hoarse from long silence.”



That is, Dante hasn't been pending time in deeper thought lately.

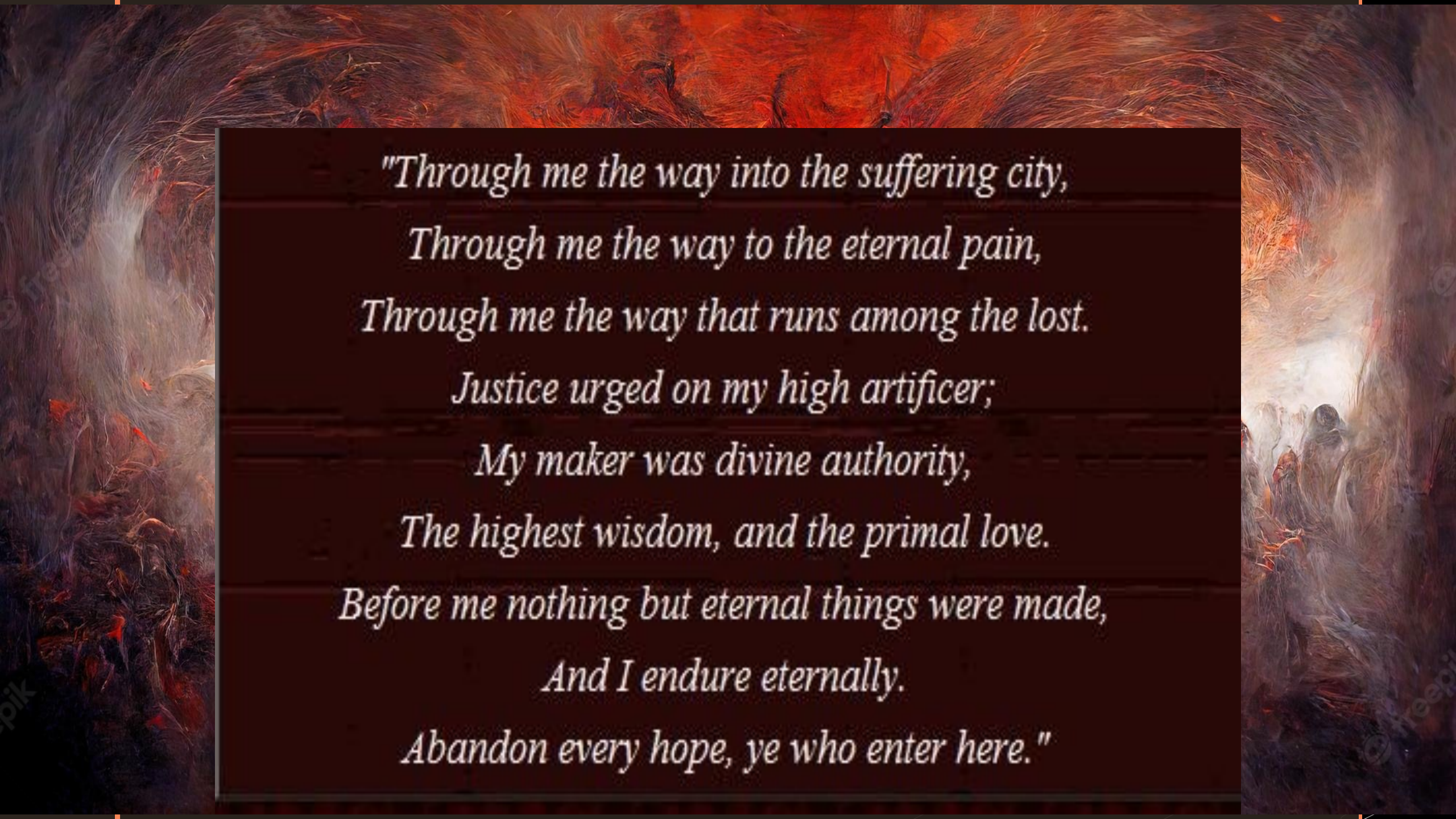
Canto II – Second Thoughts Until....Beatrice!



We often do the right thing for the wrong reason.
God can work with that.

Canto III - The Gates of Hell





*"Through me the way into the suffering city,
Through me the way to the eternal pain,
Through me the way that runs among the lost.
Justice urged on my high artificer;
My maker was divine authority,
The highest wisdom, and the primal love.
Before me nothing but eternal things were made,
And I endure eternally.
Abandon every hope, ye who enter here."*

Virgil: “Here you shall pass among the fallen people, souls who have lost the good of intellect.”



The Biggest Group of Souls: the Uncommitted

And I, all eyes, saw a whirling banner that ran so fast it seemed as though it never could find rest.

At once with certainty I understood this was that worthless crew hateful alike to God and to His foes.

These wretches, who never were alive ran naked in a swarm of wasps and hornets yhat goaded them..."







“These are the nearly soulless whose lives concluded
neither blame nor praise.” - The Lukewarm

“The Fallen Angels”

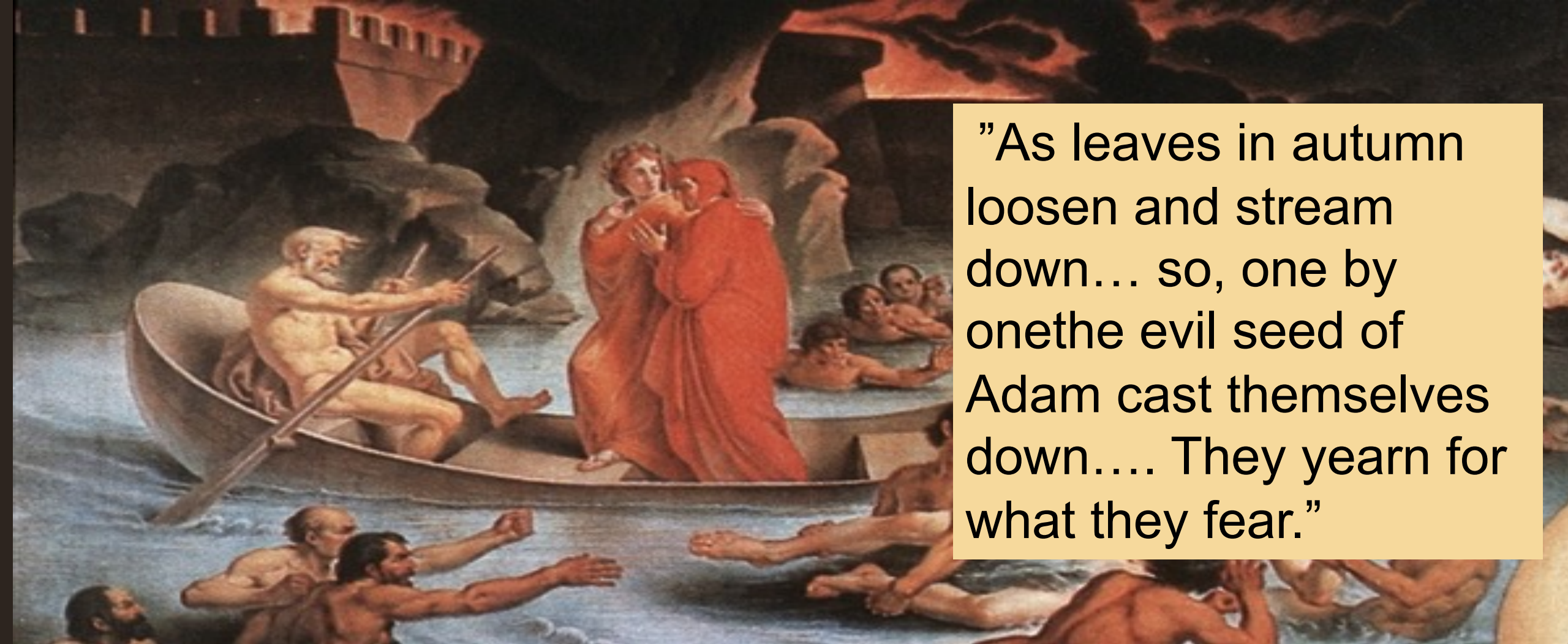
by Peter
Paul Ribens

“Neither for
God nor
Satan, but
only for
themselves.”





First Pope to
Resign:
Pope St.
Celestine V

A detail from Michelangelo's fresco 'The Beach at Acheron' (part of 'The Descent into Hell'). It depicts Charon, an elderly man with a long white beard and a red loincloth, rowing a boat across a turbulent river. In the boat, a man and a woman in red robes are embracing. Several other figures are in the water, some reaching out towards the boat. In the background, a stone bridge or castle is visible on a rocky shore under a dark, stormy sky.

"As leaves in autumn
loosen and stream
down... so, one by
one the evil seed of
Adam cast themselves
down.... They yearn for
what they fear."

The Beach at Acheron....
The Rude Awakening – The Anti-birth

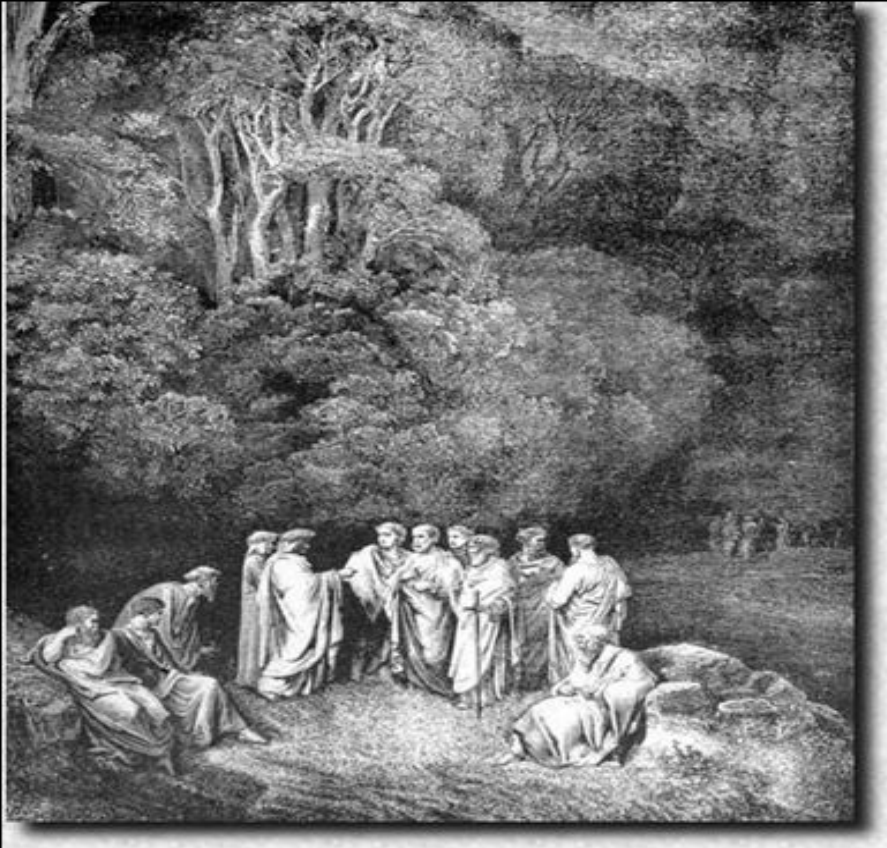
The souls waiting to cross the river into hell...

“In despair, they blasphemed God,
their parents,
their time on earth,
The race of Adam,
And the day and hour that gave
them birth.”



Canto IV: Virtuous Pagans

Limbo



- First Circle - Limbo: These souls created no evil. They were good men who used reason to live by but because they were never baptized, they reside in an area in Hell called Limbo.
- *Image by Gustave Dore*



“I thought how
worthy were these
souls suspended
in that Limbo...”