

Those that died and were not buried will not be allowed to cross the river, until they have wandered wretched on its banks for a hundred years. No wonder the ancients laid great stress upon funeral rites.

Across the river is a region occupied by the souls of those who for some reason failed to complete the allotted span of human life and yet died without crime. Here are infants, suicides, victims of unjust sentences, victims of unrequited love, and warriors slain in battle. This region corresponds somewhat to the modern purgatory. Next is hell with its manifold horrors most vividly described by the poet, who has evidently furnished Milton with some of his burning imagery. Here are those who in the world above hated their brothers, or struck their father in anger, lawyers who cheated their clients, misers and stingy rich men, adulterers, slaves rebellious against their masters, and traitors to the State. Here, too, are the giants that made war upon the gods, and mortals guilty of blasphemy. "This one betrayed his country for gold and gave it a tyrant master; that one made and unmade laws for a price; they all dared some monstrous wickedness and accomplished what they dared."

The next region is the Elysian Fields—heaven.

"Here sees he the illustrious dead  
Who fighting for their country bled;  
Priests, who while earthly life remained,  
Preserved that life unsoiled, unstained;  
Blest bards, transparent souls and clear,  
Whose song was worthy Phœbus' ear;  
Inventors, who by arts refined  
The common life of human kind,  
With all who grateful memory won  
By services to others done;  
A goodly brotherhood, bedight  
With coronals of virgin white."

Here Æneas finds the spirit of Anchises, who points out to him the course of Roman history for a thousand years, and explains the origin of life and the mystery of death. It is interesting to observe that his explanation of the origin of life dimly suggests the modern doctrine of evolution, and that the final perfection or purification of the human soul through suffering and by means of successive stages of metempsychosis is set forth somewhat as in the religious philosophy of Buddha.

"One life through all the immense creation runs,  
One spirit is the moon's, the sea's, the sun's;  
All forms in the air that fly, in the earth that creep;  
And the unknown nameless monsters of the deep,—  
Each breathing thing obeys one Mind's control;  
And in all substance is a single Soul."