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Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, vol. 3 (Paradiso)*  
(*English trans.*) [1321]

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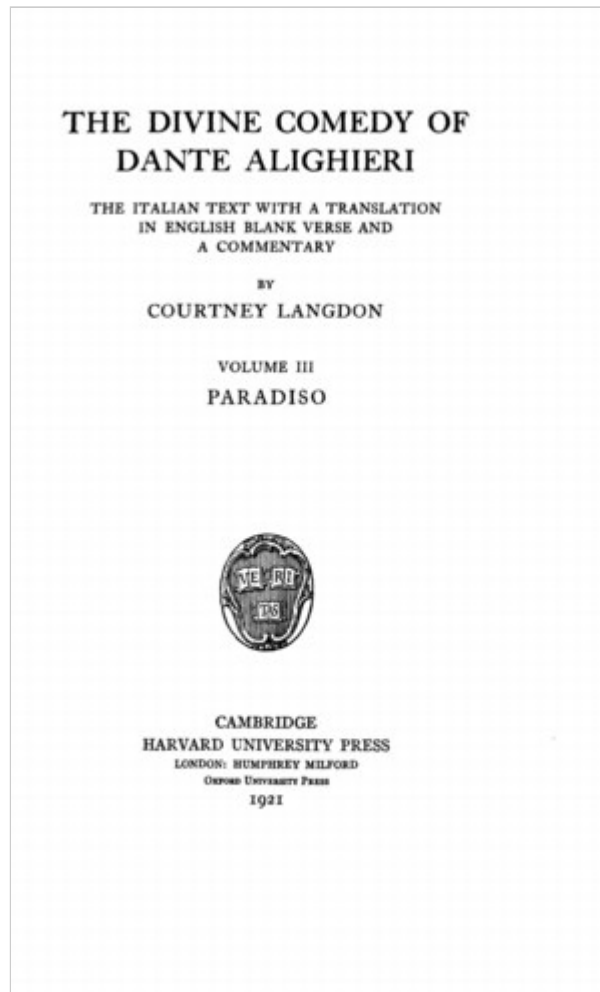
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## Edition Used:

*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. The Italian Text with a Translation in English Blank Verse and a Commentary by Courtney Langdon, Vol. 3 Paradiso* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921).

Author: [Dante Alighieri](#)

Translator: [Courtney Langdon](#)

## About This Title:

Dante's masterwork is a 3 volume work written in Italian rather than Latin. It embraces human individuality and happiness in a way which suggests the beginning of the Renaissance. This volume contains the English translation only. Vol. 3 Paradiso (Heaven) shows the beauty and the rewards awaiting those who have been blessed by God.

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## Table Of Contents

[The Trinity of Love](#)  
[Preface](#)  
[Paradiso I](#)  
[Paradiso Ii](#)  
[Paradiso Iii](#)  
[Paradiso Iv](#)  
[Paradiso V](#)  
[Paradiso Vi](#)  
[Paradiso Vii](#)  
[Paradiso Viii](#)  
[Paradiso Ix](#)  
[Paradiso X](#)  
[Paradiso Xi](#)  
[Paradiso Xii](#)  
[Paradiso Xiii](#)  
[Paradiso Xiv](#)  
[Paradiso Xv](#)  
[Paradiso Xvi](#)  
[Paradiso Xvii](#)  
[Paradiso Xviii](#)  
[Paradiso Xix](#)  
[Paradiso Xx](#)  
[Paradiso Xxi](#)  
[Paradiso Xxii](#)  
[Paradiso Xxiii](#)  
[Paradiso Xxiv](#)  
[Paradiso Xxv](#)  
[Paradiso Xxvi](#)  
[Paradiso Xxvii](#)  
[Paradiso Xxviii](#)  
[Paradiso Xxix](#)  
[Paradiso Xxx](#)  
[Paradiso Xxxi](#)  
[Paradiso Xxxii](#)  
[Paradiso Xxxiii](#)

ALLA MIA

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## ***THE TRINITY OF LOVE***

*“That God may be All in all.”*

*1 Cor. XV, 28.*

*When Life had withdrawn me from all but my God,  
And the birth pangs of dying had ceased,  
“Where now is the world, Lord,” I asked, as I sighed,  
“And the light of the sun, and the starlight, which vied  
With its glory, when I was released?” —  
“Asleep in my dreamland,” God said with a smile  
Which lighted my soul’s new sky,  
“The real world is only where thou and I are;  
The earth is but space, and but sun-time each star  
To such as are thou and I.” —  
“Where, then, are my fellows and loved ones,” I asked,  
“The dead I had hoped to see,  
And the living I left, when to Thee I was sped?” —  
“Thy loved ones are dreams in my dreamland,” God said,  
“And real for thee only in Me;  
Hence all are here with thee, each separate soul  
As deathless, as each was dear.  
Look into My heart, and thy living thou ’lt find;  
Or call, and thy dead will awake in My mind.  
Enough that we two are here!” —  
“But why, though ashamed, am I feeling no dread,  
Now that here I am with Thee alone?  
That I was a sinner I know but too well,  
And that this is Thy Heaven. But what of the Hell,  
Where the guilty are said to atone?” —  
“A sin-born delusion,” God said, as He sighed,  
“A fear born of blindness and night;  
For Love, even now, is atoning in Me  
For all that thy world-life made sinful in thee,  
Ere death tore its veil from My Light.” —  
“But what, then, am I, whom our Oneness can thus  
Both humble and glorify?” —  
“A realized dream!” from the Silence above  
Whispered He who is Lover and Loved One and Love,  
“For lo! There is no One but I!”*

*Nov. 16, 1920.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PREFACE

A SEPARATELY published translation or interpretation of the Divine Comedy's last part is obliged to face one of the strangest facts in the history of great literature. The Paradiso is the least known and the least understood, and consequently the least likely to be read of the three Canticles of the "Sacred Poem." And yet for all genuine Dante lovers it is what, from the point of view of art, it ought to be, the crown of the whole prophetic work, the last glorious part "for which the first was made." In fact, it was because of this that its author, following in mediaeval fashion the usage of antiquity, called his poem a Comedy, and not a Tragedy. Though beginning unhappily in Hell, it ends happily in the joy of Heaven.

This relative, if not positive, unpopularity of the Paradiso has been variously accounted for. Professor Grandgent's statement that "of the three parts of the *Commedia*, the *Purgatorio* seems to a twentieth-century reader most modern, the *Paradiso* most mediaeval," might find a brief explanation in the predominance of so-called practical interests and beliefs in our brilliant but essentially superficial age. Loving his struggling life on the earth's surface as never before, and absorbed by his intellectual conquest of matter, the modern man, as such, merely patronizes a visionary spiritual Heaven. Believing in material evolution and progress on earth, he unconsciously sees something of himself and of his age in the illustrations afforded by the lifelike topography of the *Purgatorio*, but very little in the suggestions of the crude mediaeval geology and astrology of the *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, with whose apparently static and everlasting damnation and perfection he has, and very rightly, but little sympathy.

But even to those, who love the Paradiso as it deserves to be loved, in spite of its antiquated cosmogony and intellectualistic and dogmatic theology, each separate part of the Divine Comedy makes almost as different an appeal, as if the exclusive and unrelated subjects of each were Satan, Man, and God.

The appeal of the *Inferno* is the grim strength of its fearless portrayal of that inexorable moral Law in whose God even "devils believe and tremble." The horrid fascination of its dark etchings of the nature and results of sin may possibly account for the relatively greater popularity which for so many has associated its author's name exclusively with Hell. Its thrills are the sensational surface thrills of terror, morbidity and pain.

The appeal of the *Purgatorio*'s more familiar world, whose days are diversified by lights and shades and colors drawn from sea and land and sky, whose dawns and evening twilights are infinitely charming, and whose nights are "quieted by hope" and happy dreams, is its winning struggle for freedom, its ever increasing beauty, and the veiled apotheosis of man's soul in its last canto.

Quite other than either of these is the dazzling, but discriminating, appeal of Dante's matchless *Paradiso*, of whose conclusion a Lowell could say that "nothing in all

poetry approaches” its “imaginative grandeur.” The distinct appeal of the Paradiso is its pervading and ever intenser sublimity, which renders invisible its ether-like strength, and veils the ultra-violet hues of its spiritual beauty from all who have not attuned their inner hearing and vision to the ever developing overtones of its love, and to the splendor of its ever dawning light. Its thrills are those that stir subconscious depths. Here, however, the reader, who has left behind him the outer, as well as the under world of life, is warned by the poet himself not to go on, unless very differently prepared than before, to follow closely in the spiritual wake of his fearless leader’s aëroplane. Materialists and the merely intellectual are not bidden to this spirit feast.

What, then, is the task of the translator of the words of Dante’s wonderful third canticle, if he would also be its interpreter, or the translator of the buds, as well as of the full blown flowers, of its creative original thought? If, under the very jealous eyes of the original Italian text, which frowns at a translation made poetical at its expense, he has tried to better his previous efforts to achieve a metrical version at once accurate and readable; and if, in the trust that poetical results will follow, he has fused the simplest English words he can find, in verse for whose rhythm he has patiently listened, he must next prepare to reap the prophetic harvest of intuitions far deeper and subtler than any he had met before.

Furthermore, he must take to himself a much more serious warning than that which Dante gives to those who would merely be his readers. For, to try to interpret the Paradiso otherwise than by laboriously illucidating the well nigh worn out historical, philosophical and theological media of its pregnant intuitions, will call rather for the daring imagination of a child, than for the timid, though entrenched, learning of a scholar. The latter, as such, can do little more than correct, or find new references to “sources,” and quote “authorities,” in the uninspiring hope of doing in a possibly better way what had been often done well, though futilely, before. The child in him, on the other hand, subconsciously knowing why it was that he was set in his elders’ midst, and being spiritually hard to please, will insist upon creating out of the dust of dogmas what his soul desires, if what is offered to his credulity by the static scholarship of the past be not enough to sate his craving for dynamic belief.

Many an interpreter has doubtlessly been praised or blamed, by being told that his interpretations were due to his reading “between the lines” what Dante’s or some other poet’s words may have possibly suggested to him, but what the poet himself certainly neither thought, nor meant to teach. Yes, should have been his answer, you have stated it correctly, “between the lines.” For, if by the “meaning” of Dante’s words one refer, beyond their literal equivalent in English, to their living or creative, and not to their dead, or atrophied, significance, where else shall one look for it, than apart from, though still in close proximity to, the words to which was left the hard task of expressing and of transmitting that meaning’s spirit? Or are we never to learn that the spiritual meaning of poetry lies in the greatest thought it can consistently be helped to create, rather than in the mere words of the less developed thought, however great, which dropped it as the living seed of its dying self?

Our age being predominantly, if not despotically, scientific and historical, men are more apt to inquire as to the provenience of an idea and its authoritatively accepted

position in intellectual society, than as to its intrinsic merit and spiritual legitimacy. An independent interpreter will, therefore, have to share with others in being asked that very old Gospel question which is susceptible of being adapted to endless secondary occasions: "By what authority" sayest "thou these things?"

Not caring to add myself unnecessarily to the already sufficient number of competent theological and philological scribes who limit their function as interpreters to quoting accurately from well "documented" sources, and from orthodoxly authoritative expositions of Dante's teaching, I think that a brief discussion of authority in the field of great poetical literature is fairly in order here. Indeed, what could be a better place for it than the preface to the Cantic of the Divine Comedy which, far more than the other two, has tempted its interpreter to present views which might very plausibly be accused of forgetting a proper regard for the too prevalent dogmatic lack of personal opinion on the part of Dante scholars?

What, then, is authority? I would answer this question, which is the main subject of this preface, by saying that it is a power to win approval for a truth, which does not reside in the person of him who utters it, but in the dynamic persuasiveness of the truth it was given him to utter. An authoritative interpretation, therefore, is one which will be seen to be the natural flowering of the seed of truth latent in the thought interpreted, by readers or hearers who have kept their freedom to listen to their own minds and hearts.

As to the function of scholarship, if being "scholarly" in the field of creative literature consist in applying to the interpretation of works of intuitive imagination and art the methods properly and successfully used in the field of physical science and history, then some other term must be found for the openly avowed ambition of one who, if not exclusively, is far more interested in what is unique, vitally new and creative in a poet's thought, than he is in what the latter shared with others, or in what he "owed" to his predecessors, or to the times in which he lived. "Sources," then, and "authorities" could usefully be left, as their interesting specialty, to genealogically minded scholars who think it is more important to know where an idea came from, and by whom it had been accepted, than what its intrinsic value is, and to what further truth it can lead.

Science, in dealing with anything purely material or intellectual, very properly ignores what seems unique in it, or attempts to reduce it to intellectual terms by analyzing it into elements common to it and to other things or events in the past or present. In the spiritual field, however, by which I mean the field of intuition and imagination, which it is the function of poetry to express and enlarge, what is true in the field of scientific and historical facts ceases to apply. What is unique, new and germinal is here the main thing, everything else being properly viewed as its accessory outer case, and as interesting and valuable only as all well fitting and appropriate clothing is.

Now what is unique, new and creative cannot be explained at all by analysis or by an investigation of its sources in the past, but only by a sympathetic appreciation of its creative vitality in the present, the essential question being not what it originally meant, or was early thought to mean, but what it has grown to mean in the fuller light



that can now be thrown upon it by the richer experience of man. What sayest *thou* that I mean? is the question which a real poet asks of his reader.

Of this truth I had an interesting illustration many years ago at Cornell University. Professor Corson, having elicited some doubt as to whether he had given a correct interpretation of one of Browning's poems upon which he had been lecturing, settled the question by referring it to the poet whom he knew intimately. In due time the latter's answer came from England, and was to the effect that, to tell the truth, he did not mean what Professor Corson thought he meant, when he wrote the poem, but that he was very glad to recognize the latter's interpretation of his thought as its fuller meaning now. Similarly, if I may refer to a poem which I owe to Dante, what of the meaning of the verses I have set before this preface? I wrote them as an imaginative means of suggesting what I feel is the Paradiso's supreme teaching, namely, the ultimate oneness of all spirit, and the infinitely close relation between the consciousness of man and the supra-consciousness of God. Now I myself know that these verses mean a great deal more to me now, than they did when I first sketched out their essential thought many years ago; and I also hope, whether or not their meaning will have grown for me, that they will come to mean whatever *more* they may be capable of meaning to any who hereafter shall apply their suggestions to their own richer spiritual circumstances or needs. As to whether they exactly express Dante's thought, I cannot tell, as I cannot ask him yet; if, therefore, they have any value, it will be that of throwing a little light on what Dante's poem can mean, not to ultra historical Dantists who insist that "Dante was wholly of his time," but to those who will contribute their own loving imagination and spiritual experience to the illucidation of truth germs which make him "not of an age, but for all time." So with my interpretation as a whole. I do not claim that it shows only what the Divine Comedy's teaching meant for Dante, nor for Boccaccio, but for me, too, as a vicarious representative of many readers now, who are, of course, free to endorse, modify or reject any or all of my interpretations, but whom I cannot uphold in attributing a stationary significance to living and dynamic words, still winged for far higher flights of meaning than even this age's eyes can see.

Of a jest Shakespeare said that its prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it. So is it, likewise, with all vital truth. Its worth lies in the creative imagination of him who can put it to use, and breed therewith other, if not fairer, truths. In the field of history of the purely scientific kind, "sources" must, of course, be consulted to make sure that statements about events are based upon actual facts, though even there it should not be forgotten that, as Rostand said, there is often more truth in a legend than in a document. But here the source, paradoxical as it may at first seem, is in the reader's potential intuitive imagination, and is more apt to be found in unborn ears than in dead mouths. Hence, as in the case of art, it is the supreme duty of those who constitute themselves the guardians of the winged truth that lives and moves in great poetry, to see to it that it be not "made tongue-tied by authority" of the devitalizing static kind.

Having, therefore, done his duty to the avowedly necessary and useful philological parts of his interpretative work, what, then, is left for one who holds such views as those expressed above, but to recall Sir Philip Sydney's words, and "look into his

heart and write,” even though the result risk the danger of proving a comfort and an inspiration to himself alone?

Something like this, the present annotator has tried to accomplish in the sporadic and compressed notes to the Paradiso, which, with those of the Inferno and Purgatorio, are intended to illuminate the historical, and expand the spiritual, significance of individual words, lines and passages. Incidentally he hopes that these notes will also serve to interest the reader or student in the attitude to be assumed toward the Divine Comedy in the forthcoming Commentary, whose aim is to be a popularly readable, though serious, essay on the poem as a whole, and on Dante’s prophetic moral and spiritual message, if read not so much in the light thrown upon it by his age, as in that which can be thrown upon it by ours without making Dante’s insight other than it was.

And here this preface might well close for the satisfied, all others being referred to the two previous prefaces and to notes in the fourth volume, which will try to meet criticisms of individual translations or interpretations.

To any, however, who may have been led to misunderstand my general position, I avail myself reluctantly of this opportunity of saying accumulatively that the only criticism I deprecate is that of not having done well, or exclusively, what I never proposed to do at all, or at least not exclusively, because it had been so well done before, namely, show what the Divine Comedy meant to Dante or his age; that I avow no disdain for the historical fact, even if I do feel that there are other kinds of facts about a great world poem which may be more important for us than what was its exact meaning six hundred years ago in the opinion of predominantly historical scholars now; that I have made no claim of reproducing in English Dante’s ‘curious felicities,’ since I do not believe that any translation has, or could have, done that, though I do think that my version might have been somewhat more poetical, had it been less accurate, and a little more accurate, had it been less rhythmical; that I never said that, if living now, Dante would judge many things differently, though I did say that he would be able to express his wonderful intuitions more fully, and in a way more easily apprehended by us; that I agree that the problem of literary interpretation concerns itself with what an author did teach when he lived, though I hasten to add that what he taught when living includes the more that his seed-bearing words and insight can consistently seem to teach, now that they have fallen into better soil than his age could afford them; and, finally, that to claim for my work in a first preface that it was “only a personal interpretation” of the poem’s “latent spiritual significance” coupled with the express warning that it should be separated from “scholarly” information based upon the authoritative work of others, would seem to be a sufficiently sincere avowal of its nature and purpose. Claiming, in short, that the Divine Comedy belongs exclusively neither to the Church nor to historical science, this interpretation, to quote in part from Bishop W. Boyd Carpenter, is simply an attempt to steer between “the misconceptions into which a rationalistic theology had plunged the Church,” and those into which dogmatic scientism is prone to plunge the study of literature, with the object of showing “the full significance of the Love in which Dante so profoundly believed.”

To those, however, who in studying Dante want to be on more “orthodox” ground than I can claim to stand on, if they have read Lowell’s Essay on Dante, in my opinion the greatest of all, I sincerely recommend Professor J. B. Fletcher’s excellent little book on the same poet, with only the “reservations” due to the difference in our points of view. It links the thought of Dante’s masterpiece to that of his previous more or less mystifying works so lucidly and consistently, brings the meaning of the dogmatic theology and complex symbolic system of the Divine Comedy down to 1321, so convincingly, and describes Dante’s art so brilliantly, and sympathetically that, for the purposes of my own Commentary, I could gratefully wish it had been much expanded.

And now, to follow the example set by the two previous prefaces, this one will also end with a final word about Dante’s Italy. A new era is undoubtedly opening up for her wonderful people who, having seen so many of the ages of civilization, may have begun this one by harking back to the wisdom of their dawn as a political entity. If Italy prove to be the first of modern nations to solve the vexed problem of the relation of labor and capital to each other, it will be because she will have applied to it the twenty-five century old fable of Menenius Agrippa, who persuaded the Roman plebeians to compromise for the state’s sake, by telling them the fable of the belly and the members. The despotism of a class is not to be feared in the mother-land of law and order. Nor has the utter defeat of Austria superannuated the old Italian cry “Fuori i Barbari!” for, in spite of hopes rendered futile by weakness, Europe’s Rome-born civilization is still menaced from the Teutonic and Scythian North-East. It may prove fortunate, therefore, that Italy has so largely achieved the strategic as well as the other aims referred to in the sonnet at the head of the Inferno, for nearly hers at last is the barrier-wall of those Alps, which Nature long ago assigned to her people, when she made Latin or Italian all the material, human and spiritual flora and fauna of the sunny valleys sloping eastward, southward and westward from their highest peaks. As to Italy’s Adriatic claims, as to Fiume, henceforth a “local habitation and a name” forever Italian in spirit, and as to d’Annunzio, what shall I say but *vedremo*, and *pazienza*? Shakespeare said of the strange performance witnessed by his cool-headed statesman, Theseus of Athens, that lunatics, lovers and poets, “of imagination all compact,” apprehended “more than cool reason ever comprehends.” And it was he, too, who went on to say in Hippolyta’s words: “But all the story of the night told over, and all their minds transfigured so together, more witnesseth than fancy’s images, and grows to something of great constancy.” So will it prove, I think, with Italy’s secular racial and national aspirations. The story of the Fiume trouble, inexplicable to us, is essentially a frontier story, which finds its explanation in “ancestral voices prophesying war.” We shall see it, and be glad to see it “grow,” for the good of all the West, “to something of great constancy.”

Meanwhile 1921 is Dante’s year in Italy; and from now on until after mid-September, who says one will largely say the other. May he more than ever be hers, and she his, and both the world’s, is the wish of every American lover of Dante, and mine, as I close this version of his joyously creative poem, by gratefully addressing to his spirit the words he addressed to Virgil’s at his poem’s inception:

O light and glory of the other poets,

let the long study, and the ardent love  
which made me con thy book, avail me now!

Courtney Langdon.

Brown University, December 22, 1920.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO I

*Introduction to the Paradiso. Invocation of Apollo. Ascent through the Sphere of Fire.  
The Order of the Universe*

The Glory of Him who moveth everything,  
penetrates all the Universe, and shines  
more brightly in one part, and elsewhere less.  
Within the Heaven which most receives His Light  
I was; and saw what he who thence descends  
neither knows how, nor hath the power, to tell;  
for as it draweth near to its Desire,  
our intellect so deeply sinks therein,  
that recollection cannot follow it.  
As much, however, of the holy Realm  
as in my memory I could treasure up,  
shall now become the subject of my song.  
O Good Apollo, for my final task  
make me as worthy a vessel of Thy Power,  
as Thou dost ask for Thy dear laurel's gift.  
One of Parnassus' peaks hath hitherto  
sufficed me; but with both of them I now  
must start upon the course which still remains.  
Enter my breast, and breathe Thou as of old  
Thou didst, when from the scabbard of his limbs  
Thou drewest Marsyas forth.  
O Power Divine,  
if Thou but lend Thyself to me so much,  
that I may show the blessèd Kingdom's shadow  
which in my mind is stamped; to Thy dear tree  
Thou 'lt see me come, and crown me with the leaves  
my theme and Thou shall cause me to deserve.  
So seldom, Father, are there any picked,  
to grace a Caesar's or a Poet's triumph,  
(the fault of human wills, and to their shame),  
that His Peneian leaf should bring forth joy  
within the Joyous Delphic Deity,  
when for itself it causes one to thirst.  
A great flame follows from a little spark;  
perhaps with better voices after me  
shall men so pray, that Cyrrha will reply.  
For mortal men the lantern of the world  
rises through divers passes; but from that  
which with three crosses brings four rings together,  
it issues on a more propitious course,  
and in conjunction with a kinder star,

and more in its own image moulds and seals  
the mundane wax. A pass almost like this  
had made it morning there and evening here;  
and all that hemisphere was white, and black  
the other side; when Beatrice I saw  
turned toward her left, and looking at the sun;  
no eagle ever gazed at it so keenly.  
And even as from the first a second ray  
is wont to come, and upward start again,  
as would a pilgrim longing to return;  
even so to her act, by mine eyes infused  
through my imagination, mine conformed;  
and on the sun I gazed beyond our wont.  
Much is permitted there, which is not here  
allowed our faculties, thanks to the site  
created as the human race's home.  
Not long did I endure it, nor so briefly,  
as not to see it sparkle all around,  
as molten iron doth, when out of fire  
it issues boiling; day then all at once  
seemed joined to day, as if the One who can  
had with another sun adorned the sky.  
With eyes fixed wholly on the eternal wheels  
stood Beatrice; and I on her fixed mine,  
from there above removed. Looking at her,  
I such became within, as Glaucus did  
on tasting of the herb, which in the sea  
made him a fellow of the other Gods.  
Transhumanizing could not be expressed  
by words; let this case, therefore, him suffice,  
for whom Grace holds experience in reserve.  
If I, O Love that rulest Heaven, was only  
that part of me, which Thou didst last create,  
Thou know'st, that with Thy Light didst raise me up.  
When the rotation Thou, by being longed for,  
dost make eternal, drew me to itself  
by harmonies distributed and tuned  
by Thee, it seemed that so much of the sky  
was by the sun's flame set on fire, that rain  
nor river ever made so broad a lake.  
The newness of the sound, and brilliant light  
kindled in me a wish to know their cause,  
never with so great keenness felt; whence she,  
who saw me ev'n as I behold myself,  
opened her mouth to calm my troubled mind,  
ere I did mine to question, and began:  
"With false imagining dost thou so dull  
thyself, that thou perceivest not what else

thou wouldst perceive, if thou hadst thrown it off.  
Thou 'rt not on earth, as thou dost think thyself;  
but lightning fleeing from its proper place  
ne'er ran as thou, that art thereto returning.”  
If I was by her little smiled-out words  
of my first doubt relieved, within a new one  
was I the more ensnared; I therefore said:  
“Already sated, I had found repose  
from great amazement; but I wonder now  
how I can these light elements transcend.”  
Heaving, thereat, a pitying sigh, she turned  
her eyes upon me with the look a mother  
gives her delirious child; and then began:  
“All things, whate'er they be, an order have  
among themselves; and form this order is,  
which makes the Universe resemble God.  
Therein exalted creatures see the trace  
of that Eternal Worth, which is the end  
for which the mentioned order is created.  
Within the ordered state whereof I speak,  
all natures have their place with different lots,  
as nearer to their source they are, or less;  
wherefore toward different ports they wend their way  
through the vast sea of being, each endowed  
with instinct, granted it to bear it on.  
This instinct toward the moon impelleth fire;  
this is the motive force in mortal hearts;  
this binds together and unites the earth;  
nor doth this bow impel those creatures only  
which lack intelligence, but those that have  
intelligence and love. The Providence  
which ordereth all this, with Its own Light  
e'er calms the heaven, inside of which revolves  
the one that moveth with the greatest speed.  
And thither now, as to a place ordained,  
that bowstring's power is bearing us along,  
which to a glad mark speeds whate'er it shoots.  
'T is true that, as a form is frequently  
discordant with the intention of an art,  
because its matter in response is deaf;  
so likewise from this natural course at times  
a creature turns away; for power it hath,  
though thus impelled, to bend aside elsewhere,  
(as one may see fire falling from a cloud),  
if, by false pleasure drawn, that primal impulse  
turn it aside to earth. If well I judge,  
no further shouldst thou wonder at thy rising,  
than at a stream thou dost, which to its foot

down from a lofty mountain's top descends.  
As great a marvel would it be in thee,  
if, rid of hindrance, thou hadst sat thee down,  
as rest, on earth, would in a living flame.”  
Then toward the sky she turned her face again.



[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO II

*The First Heaven. The Moon. Reflected Happiness*

*Inconstant Spirits who failed to keep their Vows*

O ye who, in a little boat embarked,  
have, fain to listen, followed in the wake  
of this my ship, which, singing, ploughs ahead,  
go back to see your shores again! Start not  
upon the ocean; for, if me ye lost,  
ye might, perhaps, be left behind astray.  
The seas I sail were never crossed before;  
Minerva breathes, Apollo is my guide,  
and all nine Muses point me out the Bears.  
Ye other few, who early raised your necks  
for Angels' bread, on which one here on earth  
subsists, but with which none are ever sated,  
ye well may start your vessel on the deep  
salt sea, if in the furrow of my ship  
ye stay, ere smooth again the waves become.  
Those glorious ones, who crossed the seas to Colchis,  
were not so much amazed, as ye shall be,  
when Jason turned a ploughman they beheld.  
The innate and ceaseless thirsting for the Realm  
in God's own image made, was bearing us  
as swiftly as ye see the heavens revolve.  
On high looked Beatrice, and I on her;  
and in the time, perhaps, an arrow takes  
to light, and fly, and from the notch be freed,  
I saw that I had come to where a marvel  
turned to itself my sight; hence she, from whom  
the working of my mind could not be hid,  
as glad as she was lovely, turned toward me,  
and said: "Direct thy grateful mind to God,  
who with the first star hath united us."  
Meseemed as if a cloud were covering us,  
as luminous and dense, as hard and polished,  
as is a diamond smitten by the sun.  
Within itself the eternal pearl received us,  
as water, though unbroken it remain,  
receives within itself a ray of light.  
If body I was (nor can one here conceive  
how one dimension could endure another,  
which needs must be, if body enter body),  
the more should we be kindled by the wish

that Essence to behold, wherein is seen  
how once with God our nature was conjoined.  
Thère will be seen, what here we hold by faith,  
not demonstrated, but will self-known be,  
as is the primal truth which men believe.  
“My Lady,” I replied, “as best I can  
do I devoutly render thanks to Him,  
who from the mortal world hath severed me.  
But tell me what this body’s dark spots are,  
which cause the folk down yonder on the earth  
to tell each other fables about Cain.”  
She smiled a little, then she said: “If mortals’  
opinion therein errs, where key of sense  
unlocketh not, surely the shafts of wonder  
ought not to pierce thee now;  
for thou perceivest  
that short are Reason’s wings, when following sense.  
But tell me what thou think’st thereof thyself.”  
And I: “What seems to us diverse up here,  
is caused, I think, by bodies thin and dense.”  
And she: “Thou ’lt surely see that thy belief  
is sunk in error, if but well thou heed  
the arguments I ’ll now oppose to it.  
The eighth sphere shows you many shining stars,  
which both in quality and magnitude,  
may be observed to differ in their looks.  
If only rarity and density  
caused this, among them all one single virtue  
would more, and less, and equally be shared.  
Virtues that differ needs must be the fruit  
of formal principles, and these, save one,  
would, by thy way of reasoning, be destroyed.  
Again, if thinness caused the dusky spots  
which thou dost ask about, this planet would,  
in portions, through its bulk its matter lack,  
or, as a body what is fat and lean  
distributes, so would this one alternate  
its volume’s leaves. If true the former were,  
't would in the sun’s eclipses be revealed,  
because the latter’s light would then shine through,  
as when in other thin things introduced.  
This does not happen; hence the other one  
must be considered now; and should I chance  
to quash it, false will thy opinion prove.  
If, therefore, it be so that this thin part  
extends not through, a limit there must be,  
beyond which what is contrary thereto  
allows it not to pass; the other’s ray

is, hence, reflected, as color from a glass  
returns, which back of it concealeth lead.  
Thou 'lt now say that the ray seems dimmer there  
than in the other parts it is, because  
from further back reflected. From this retort  
experimenting, which is wont to be  
the fountain of the rivers of your arts,  
can, if thou ever try it, set thee free.  
Thou 'lt take three mirrors; two of them removed  
at equal distance from thee, let the third,  
placed 'tween them, more remotely meet thine eyes.  
Then, turning toward them, let a lamp stand so  
between them, as to shine upon all three,  
and be reflected on thee from them all.  
Though the most distant light will not extend  
so much in quantity, thou 'lt see thereby  
how it must needs with equal brightness shine.  
And now, as at the stroke of burning rays,  
what lies beneath the snow is wholly bared  
of what were previously its cold and color;  
thee, thus remaining in thine intellect,  
will I inform with such a living light,  
that it will quiver when thou seest it.  
Within the heaven of Peace Divine revolves  
a body, subject to whose influence lies  
the being of whatever it contains.  
The next, which hath so many eyes, distributes  
that being 'mong the different essences,  
distinguished from it, and contained by it.  
The other spheres, by various differences,  
dispose to their effects and causes those  
distinctions which within themselves they have.  
These organs of the world so go their way,  
as thou perceivest now, from grade to grade,  
that from above they take, and downward act.  
Give me good heed, as through this argument  
I seek the truth thou wishest, that henceforth  
thou mayst know how to cross the ford alone.  
The holy circles' influence and motion,  
as from the blacksmith doth the hammer's art,  
must from the blessèd Motors be inspired;  
and that heaven which so many lights adorn,  
receives its impress from the Mind profound,  
which turneth it, and makes thereof a seal.  
And as the soul which lives within your dust  
unfolds itself through members, which are different,  
and unto different potencies conformed;  
so likewise, multiplied among the stars,

doth that Intelligence unfold its goodness,  
while on its unity itself revolves.  
Each different power a different alloy makes,  
mixed with the precious body which it quickens,  
and with which it unites, as life in you.  
Because of that glad nature whence it flows,  
the mingled virtue through the body shines,  
as, through a living pupil, joy. From this  
comes what 'tween light and light a difference seems,  
and not from rarity and density;  
this is the formal principle which makes,  
according to its strength, things dark and bright.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO III

*The First Heaven. The Moon. Reflected Happiness*

*Inconstant Spirits who failed to keep their Vows*

That sun which erst had warmed my heart with love,  
by proving and refuting, had revealed  
to me the pleasing face of lovely truth;  
and I, in order to confess myself  
corrected and assured, lifted my head  
as high as utterance of assent required.  
But, that I might behold it, there appeared  
a sight, which to itself so closely held me,  
that my confession I remembered not.  
Even as from polished or transparent glasses,  
or waters clear and still, but not so deep,  
that wholly lost to vision is their bed,  
the features of our faces are returned  
so faintly, that upon a pallid brow  
a pearl comes no less faintly to our eyes;  
thus saw I many a face that longed to speak;  
I therefore ran into the fault opposed  
to that which kindled love 'tween man and fount.  
As soon as I became aware of them,  
supposing they were mirrored images,  
to find out whose they were, I turned mine eyes;  
and seeing nothing, back again I turned them  
straight on into the light of my sweet Guide,  
whose holy eyes were glowing as she smiled.  
“Be not surprised” she said, “that I should smile  
at what is childish in thy present thought,  
since on the truth it trusts not yet its foot,  
but, as its wont is, turneth thee in vain.  
Real substances are these whom thou perceivest,  
assigned here for a vow not wholly kept.  
Speak to them, then, and hear them, and believe;  
for from Itself the True Light which contents them,  
permits them not to turn their feet away.”  
And I addressed me to the shade which seemed  
most eager to converse, and I began,  
like one confounded by too great desire:  
“O well-created spirit, that in rays  
of life eternal dost that sweetness taste,  
which never is, untasted, understood,  
't will grateful be to me, if thou content me

with thine own name, and thy companions' lot."  
Hence promptly and with laughing eyes she said:  
"Not otherwise doth our love lock its doors  
against a just desire, than that Love doth,  
who wills that all His court be like Himself.  
A virgin sister was I in the world;  
and if within itself thy mind look well,  
my being fairer will not hide me from thee,  
but thou wilt recognize that I 'm Piccarda,  
who, placed here with these other blessed ones,  
am happy in the slowest moving sphere.  
Our wishes, which are only set on fire  
by that which is the Holy Spirit's pleasure,  
rejoice in that our joy was willed by Him.  
And this allotment, which appears so low,  
is therefore giv'n to us, because our vows  
neglected were, and not completely kept."  
Hence I to her: "In these your wondrous faces  
there shines I know not what that is divine,  
which from your old appearance changes you;  
hence in remembering you I was not quick;  
but what thou now dost tell me helps me so,  
that I more easily recall thy face.  
But, tell me, ye who here so happy are,  
are ye desirous of a higher place,  
that ye may see more friends, or make you more?"  
First with those other shades she smiled a little,  
and then replied to me so joyously,  
that she appeared to burn with love's first fire:  
"Brother, love's virtue sets our will at rest,  
and makes us wish for only what we have,  
and doth not make us thirsty for aught else.  
If higher we desired to be, our wishes  
would be discordant with the will of Him,  
who here discerneth us, which, thou wilt see,  
can in these circles not occur, if love  
be necessary to existence here,  
and if love's nature thou consider well.  
Nay more, essential to this blessed life  
it is, that we should be within the Will  
Divine, whereby our wills become one will;  
and so, even as we are, from grade to grade  
throughout this Realm, to all the Realm is pleasing,  
as to its King, who in His Will in-wills us;  
and His Will is our Peace; and that  
the Ocean is, whereunto moveth all  
that It creates, and all that Nature makes."  
Clear was it then to me that every where

in Heaven is Paradise, and yet the Grace  
of Good Supreme rains there in many ways.  
But as it happens that, if one food sate,  
and longing for another still remain,  
for one we ask, and one decline with thanks;  
even thus with word and act did I, to learn  
from her what was the nature of the web,  
whose shuttle she drew not unto its end.  
“High worth and perfect life in-heaven” she said,  
“a lady higher up here, in whose rule  
the robe and veil are worn, that, till death come,  
both watch and sleep they may beside that Spouse,  
who every vow accepts, which love conforms  
to that which pleases Him. To follow her,  
when I was but a girl I fled the world,  
and in her habit clothing me, I promised  
that I would keep within her order’s path.  
Thereafter men more used to ill than good,  
out of that pleasant cloister dragged me forth,  
and God knows what my life was after that.  
This other splendor also, which reveals  
itself to thee upon my right, and glows  
with all the radiance of this sphere of ours,  
takes to herself what of myself I say;  
a nun she was, and likewise from her head  
the shadow of the sacred veils was torn.  
But when she, too, was brought back to the world  
against her wishes and against good usage,  
she never from the heart’s veil freed herself.  
This is the splendor of the great Costanza,  
who by the second Wind of Swabia gave  
the third and final Power birth.” She thus  
addressed me, and thereat ‘*Ave, Maria*’  
began to sing, and, singing, disappeared,  
as through deep water heavy objects do.  
Mine eyes which followed after her as far  
as it was possible, on losing her,  
back to the mark of greater longing turned,  
and unto Beatrice reverted wholly;  
but she so flashed upon me, as I gazed,  
that first my sight endured it not; and this  
the slower made me in my questioning.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO IV

*The First Heaven. The Moon. Reflected Happiness*

*Inconstant Spirits who failed to keep their Vows*

A free man, 'tween two viands equally  
attractive and removed, would die of hunger,  
before he carried either to his teeth;  
thus would a lamb, between the ravings  
of two fierce wolves, keep fearing each alike;  
thus would a dog remain between two does.  
Hence, by my doubts impelled in equal measure,  
if I was silent, I reproach me not,  
nor do I praise, since thus it had to be.  
I held my peace; but my desire was painted  
upon my face, and far more warmly thus  
I asked, than had it been by uttered speech.  
Hence Beatrice did ev'n as Daniel once,  
when in Nebuchadnezzar he appeased  
the wrath, which had unjustly made him cruel;  
and "Clearly do I see" she said, "how both  
thy wishes so attract thee, that thy thought  
is so self-bound, that it is not expressed.  
Thou arguest thus: 'If my good will endure,  
why doth the violence of others cause  
the measure of my merit to be less?'  
Again it gives thee cause for doubt, that souls  
seem to return unto the stars again,  
according to the opinion Plato held.  
These are the questions which upon thy will  
are thrusting equally; I'll hence deal first  
with that one which hath most of venom for thee.  
Of all the Seraphs he who most in-Gods  
himself, or Moses, Samuel, or, I say,  
whichever John thou choose, or even Mary,  
have in no other heaven their seats, than have  
those spirits which appeared to thee just now,  
nor for their being more or fewer years;  
but all make beautiful the highest sphere,  
and each in different ways enjoys sweet life,  
through feeling more and less the Eternal Breath.  
They did not here reveal themselves, because  
this special sphere had been allotted them,  
but to express the lowest heavenly state.  
Thus must one speak to your intelligence,



since only from sense-objects can it learn  
what it thereafter fits for understanding.  
Because of this the Scriptures condescend  
to your capacity, and feet and hands  
ascribe to God, and yet mean something else;  
and Holy Church in human form presents  
Gabriel and Michael to you, and the other,  
who to Tobias once restored his health.  
That which Timaeus teaches of the soul  
is not like that which one up here beholds,  
for, as he says it, so he seems to mean.  
He says that each soul to its star returns,  
because he thinks that it was severed thence,  
when Nature granted it as form; and yet  
his doctrine is, perhaps, of other guise,  
than what his words imply, and may possess  
a meaning which is not to be despised.  
In case he mean that to these wheel-like spheres  
returns their influence's praise or blame,  
his bow may hit, perhaps, upon a truth.  
This principle, ill understood, once turned  
nigh all the world awry, so that, in naming  
Jove, Mercury and Mars, it went astray.  
The other doubt whereby thy mind is stirred,  
less venom hath, because its harmfulness  
could not conduct thee elsewhere from my side.  
That this our Justice should appear to be  
unjust in the eyes of mortals, argues faith,  
and not heretical depravity.  
But here, because your human understanding  
can penetrate this truth with ease, I'll now,  
as thou desirest, render thee content.  
If violence it be, when he who suffers  
contributes naught to him who uses force,  
these souls were not excused because of that;  
for will, unless it willeth, is not quenched,  
but acts as Nature acts in fire, though turned  
a thousand times aside by violence;  
for, whether it be bent or much or little,  
it yieldeth to the force; and so did these,  
when able to regain the holy place.  
For if their will had been as absolute  
as that which held Lorenzo on his grate,  
or that which to his hand made Mutius cruel,  
it would, as soon as freed, have urged them back  
along the road o'er which they once were dragged;  
but wills as firm as that are very rare!  
And by these words, if thou hast gathered them,

as it behooved thee to, that doubt is quashed,  
which often would have troubled thee again.  
But now athwart thine eyes another pass  
appears, one such, that from it by thyself  
thou wouldst not issue, but wouldst weary first.  
I surely have instilled this in thy mind,  
that spirits who are happy could not lie,  
since such are always near the Primal Truth;  
yet from Piccarda thou mayst next have heard  
that Constance for the veil retained her love;  
she, therefore, seems to contradict me here.  
Oft hath it happened, brother, heretofore,  
that, to escape from danger, one has done,  
against one's will, what was not right to do;  
as, at his father's hest, Alcmaeon did,  
who impious made himself, his mother killing,  
in order not to fail in piety.  
In such a case I'd have thee think that force  
mingles with will, and that they so behave,  
that sinful actions cannot be excused.  
Absolute will consenteth not to wrong,  
but in so far consenteth, as it fears,  
unless it yield, to be more greatly harmed.  
Hence, when Piccarda puts the matter thus,  
she means it of the will that 's absolute,  
and of the other I; hence both speak true.  
Such was the rippling of the holy stream,  
which issued from the Fount whence every truth  
derives; and such, it set both doubts at rest.  
"O thou beloved of the Primal Lover,  
O goddess," said I then, "whose speech both warms  
and inundates me so, that more and more  
it quickens me with life, not deep enough  
is my love to return thee grace for grace;  
but let Who sees and can, provide for this.  
I well see that our mind is never sated,  
unless it be illumined by the Truth,  
outside of which no truth extends. Therein  
it rests, as doth a wild beast in its lair,  
as soon as it attains it; and it can  
attain it; else would all desires be vain.  
Hence like a shoot doubt rises at the foot  
of truth; and this is Nature, which from height  
to height impels us toward the mountain's top.  
This biddeth me, and this assurance gives me,  
Lady, with reverence to inquire of you  
about another truth that 's dark to me.  
I wish to know if one can so content you

for broken vows by means of other things,  
that these shall not prove light upon your scales.”  
Then Beatrice looked at me with her eyes  
filled so divinely with the sparks of love,  
that, overcome, my vision turned in flight,  
and I with bowed eyes almost lost myself.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO V

*The First Heaven. The Moon. The Second Heaven. Mercury*

*The Happiness of Beneficent Activity. Ambitious Spirits*

“If in the heat of love I flame on thee  
beyond the measure which is seen on earth,  
and vanquish thus the power of thine eyes,  
wonder thou not thereat, for this proceeds  
from perfect sight, which, as it sees, directs  
its feet to penetrate the good perceived.  
I clearly see that in thine intellect  
the Light Eternal is already shining,  
which, if but seen, always enkindles love;  
and if aught else seduce the love of men,  
't is nothing but some vestige of that Light,  
which there, ill-recognized, is shining through.  
Thou now wouldst know if for an unkept vow,  
one could with other service pay enough,  
'gainst prosecution to ensure the soul.”  
'T was thus that Beatrice began this canto;  
and ev'n as one who cuts not short his speech,  
her holy argument continued thus:  
“The greatest gift which, of His bounty, God  
bestowed, when He created, and the nearest  
like His own Goodness, and the one most prized  
by Him, was Freedom of the Will,  
wherewith all creatures with intelligence,  
and they alone, both were and are endowed.  
Now, if from this thou argue, thou 'lt perceive  
a vow's high value, if so made it be,  
that God gives His consent, when thou giv'st thine;  
for when this pact is closed 'tween God and man  
a sacrifice is made of this great treasure,  
whereof I speak, and made by its own act.  
What, then, in compensation can be given?  
In thinking thou canst use thine offering well,  
good wouldst thou do with wrongly gotten gain.  
On the chief question thou art now informed;  
but since in this thing Holy Church exempts,  
which seems against the truth I showed to thee,  
a little longer must thou sit at table,  
because the solid food which thou hast taken,  
requires for thy digestion further help.  
Open thy mind to what I now reveal,

and fix it therewithin; for having heard  
without retaining doth not knowledge make.  
In the essence of this sacrifice two things  
combine; one, that whereof the sacrifice  
is made; the other is the pact itself.  
This last can never cancelled be, except  
by being kept; and very definite  
concerning this is what was said above.  
The Hebrews, therefore, were alone compelled  
to make an offering, though their offer might,  
in some events, be changed, as thou must know.  
The other, which thou knowest as its matter,  
may well be such, that there will be no sin,  
if for some other matter it be changed.  
But at his own free will let no one shift  
the burden he has placed upon his back,  
unless the white and yellow Keys are turned;  
and let him deem all permutations foolish,  
unless the thing abandoned be contained  
in that which is assumed, as four in six.  
Whatever, then, weighs by its worth so much,  
that it can cause all scales to tip, can not,  
by any other spending, be made good.  
Let mortals not act lightly with their vows!  
Be faithful, and in this thing be not thoughtless,  
as Jephthah was, when offering up 'the first,'  
who should have said: 'I wrongly did,' than keep  
his vow, and so do worse; and thou mayst deem  
as impious that great leader of the Greeks,  
because of whom Iphigenia mourned  
for her fair face, and for herself made fools  
and wise men weep, who heard of such a rite.  
Ye Christians, be more serious when ye act!  
Be not like feathers in all winds, nor think  
that any water will avail to cleanse you!  
Ye have the Testaments, both Old and New,  
to guide you, and the Shepherd of the Church;  
let this for your salvation be enough.  
If evil greed should teach you otherwise,  
be men, and not like undiscerning sheep,  
that in your midst no Jew may laugh at you.  
Nor do as doth a little lamb, that leaves  
its mother's milk, and like a wanton fool,  
against itself for its own pleasure fights."  
Thus Beatrice to me, even as I write;  
then full of eagerness she turned in that  
direction, where the world is most alive.  
Her silence and her change of countenance

silence imposed upon my eager mind,  
which had ahead of it new questions now.  
Then as an arrow doth, which strikes the mark,  
before the bowstring is at rest, even so  
did we speed on into the second realm.  
So joyous did I see my Lady there,  
as into that heaven's light she entered, that,  
because of it, the planet brighter grew.  
And if the star was changed and smiled, what, then,  
did I become, who, by my very nature,  
in all ways am susceptible of change!  
As in a fishpond which is still and clear,  
the fish draw near to that which from without  
so cometh, that they take it for their food;  
I thus saw far more than a thousand splendors  
approaching us, and there was heard in each:  
"Lo, here is one, who shall increase our loves."  
And as each one came up to me, the shade  
was seen replete with joy within the bright  
effulgence issuing from its midst.  
Think, Reader, if what here is entered on  
should not proceed, how full of pain would be  
thy craving to know more; and by thyself  
thou 'lt see how great was my desire to hear  
from these, about the state of their existence,  
as soon as to mine eyes they were revealed.  
"O well-born spirit, to whom Grace permits  
to see the thrones of Heaven's eternal triumph,  
ère thy life militant be left behind,  
we by the light throughout all Heaven diffused  
are kindled; hence, wouldst thou inform thyself  
respecting us, be sated at thy will."  
Thus was it said to me by one of those  
kind spirits; and by Beatrice: "Speak, speak,  
with freedom, and, as thou wouldst gods, believe!"  
"I clearly see how thou in thine own light  
dost nest thyself, and from thine eyes dost flash it,  
they beam so radiantly, when thou dost smile;  
but who thou art I know not, nor why thou,  
deserving soul, hast that sphere's grade, which veils  
itself from mortals with another's rays."  
Thus I, when I had turned me toward the light  
which had addressed me first; far brighter then  
it made itself than it had been before.  
As doth the sun, which by exceeding splendor  
itself conceals itself, whene'er its heat  
has gnawed away the tempering of dense mists;  
so by increase of joy that holy form

in its own radiance hid itself from me;  
and, wholly thus wrapped up, in such a way  
replied to me, as sings the following song.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO VI

*The Second Heaven. Mercury. The Happiness of Beneficent*

*Activity. Ambitious Spirits*

When Constantine had turned the Eagle back,  
counter the course of heaven its flight pursued  
behind the Ancient who Lavinia wedded,  
a hundred and a hundred years and more  
the Bird of God on Europe's verge abode,  
hard by the mountains whence it issued first;  
and 'neath the shadow of its sacred plumes  
it governed there the world from hand to hand,  
and, changing thus, reached mine. Caesar I was,  
and am Justinian, he, who by the will  
of that First Love which now I feel, withdrew  
the useless and excessive from the laws.  
And I, before attending to this work,  
believed that Christ one only nature had,  
not more, and was with such a faith content;  
but blessèd Agapètus, who was then  
the highest Shepherd, set me by his words  
upon the pathway of the genuine faith.  
Him I believed, and what was in his faith  
I now see clearly, even as thou dost see  
that contradictions are both false and true.  
As soon as with the Church I moved my feet,  
God, of His Grace, with that great task was pleased  
to inspire me, and thereto I gave me wholly;  
war to my Belisarius I entrusted,  
to whom Heaven's right hand was so well conjoined,  
it seemed a sign that from it I should rest.  
Here, then, to thy first question ends my answer;  
its nature, though, constrains me to go on  
with something more,  
that thou mayst see how rightly  
against the holy Standard moves both who  
appropriates, and who opposes, it.  
See what great virtue caused it to deserve  
respect; for from that moment it began,  
when Pallas died to give it sovereignty.  
Thou knowest that in Alba it sojourned  
three hundred years and more, till finally  
three against three fought for its sake again;  
thou knowest, too, what from the Sabines' wrong,



through seven kings, till Lucretia's grief, it did,  
conquering the neighboring peoples all around.  
Thou knowest what it did, 'gainst Brennus borne,  
and Pyrrhus, and against the other Kings  
and self-ruled States, by Rome's elect, whereby  
Torquatus, Quinctius, for his unkempt locks  
surnamed, the Decii and Fabii,  
acquired the fame which gladly I embalm.  
It brought the pride of those Arabians low,  
who traversed, in the wake of Hannibal,  
those Alpine rocks, whence thou, Po, glidest down.  
Scipio and Pompey triumphed under it  
when young; and bitter to that hill it seemed,  
beneath which thou wast born. Then, near the time  
when willed it was by Heaven, that all the world  
should be reduced to its own peaceful state,  
Caesar assumes it at the hest of Rome.  
And that which from the Var unto the Rhine  
it did, the Saône, Isère and Seine perceived,  
and every valley whence the Rhone is filled.  
What next it did, when, issuing from Ravenna,  
it leaped the Rubicon, was such a flight,  
that neither tongue nor pen could follow it.  
Toward Spain it wheeled its host around; then turned  
Durazzo-ward; and smote Pharsalia so,  
that to the torrid Nile the pain was felt.  
Antandros and the Simois, whence it started,  
it saw again, and there where Hector lies;  
then, ill for Ptolemy, it roused itself.  
Thence with the speed of lightning it swooped down  
on Juba: toward your West it next turned back,  
for there it heard Pompeian trumpets blow.  
For what it did with its next Standard-bearer,  
Brutus, and Cassius with him, barks in Hell;  
Mòdena and Perugia, too, it grieved.  
Sad Cleopatra, who, before it fleeing,  
took from the asp a dark and sudden death,  
is weeping still for what with him it did.  
With him it reached the distant Red Sea's shore;  
with him it brought the world to such a state  
of peace, that Janus had his temple closed.  
But what the Sign which causes me to speak,  
had done before, and after was to do,  
throughout the mortal world which owns its sway,  
comes to seem small and dark, if in the hand  
of its third Caesar it be looked upon  
with clearly seeing eyes and spirit pure;  
because the Living Justice which inspires me,

granted that Sign, when in the latter's hand,  
the glory of carrying out its wrath's revenge.  
Now wonder here at what I further tell thee:  
when this was done, with Titus it ran on  
to avenge the avenging of the ancient sin.  
And later, when the tooth of Lombardy  
the Holy Church had bitten, Charles the Great  
came to her help by conquering 'neath its wings.  
Thou now canst judge of those I charged above,  
and of their sins, which all your woes produced.  
Against the public Standard one sets up  
the yellow Fleur-de-lys, while yet another  
appropriates it to a party's use;  
hence hard it is to see which sinneth most.  
Let, then, the Ghibellines their tricks perform  
under some other sign; for this one he  
e'er follows ill, who it from justice parts!  
Nor let this new Charles smite it with his Guelfs,  
but let him rather fear the taloned claws,  
which from a greater lion once stripped off  
his hide! Often have sons ere now bewailed  
their father's guilt; hence let none think that God  
will for his Lilies change His Coat-of-arms!  
This little star of ours adorns itself  
with those good spirits who have active been,  
that fame and honor might live after them;  
and when, thus deviating, one's desires  
tend thitherward, the rays of true love needs  
must upward mount with less intensity.  
But in the balancing of our rewards  
with our deserts, part of our joy consists,  
because we see them as nor more nor less.  
Hereby the Living Justice sweetens so  
our love in us, that it can nevermore  
be turned aside to any kind of wrong.  
Voices that differ make on earth sweet music;  
so in this life of ours its different grades  
produce sweet harmony among these spheres.  
And in the present pearl there shines the light  
of Romeo, he whose beautiful and great  
performance was ungratefully repaid.  
And yet the Provençals who 'gainst him worked,  
laugh not; he, therefore, takes an evil path,  
who to his harm another's good deeds turns.  
Four daughters, and each one of them a queen,  
had Raymond Berenger; and, though low-born  
and alien, Romeo 't was did this for him;  
then slandering words led Raymond to demand

a reckoning of this upright man, who five  
and seven had rendered him for every ten.  
Thereat, though poor and old, he went his way;  
and if the world but knew the heart he had,  
while crust by crust he begged his livelihood,  
much as it praises, it would praise him more!”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO VII

*The Second Heaven. Mercury. The Happiness of*

*Beneficent Activity. Ambitious Spirits*

“Hosanna, O Thou Holy God of Hosts,  
that with Thy Clarity dost brighter make  
the happy fires of these celestial realms!”  
As thus to his own song he turned himself,  
by me that substance was seen singing now,  
o’er which a double light two-folds itself;  
and to their dance both that one and the rest  
addressed themselves; and then, like swiftest sparks,  
with sudden distance veiled themselves from me.  
In doubt I was, and to myself kept saying:  
“Tell, tell it to her; tell” I said, “my Lady,  
who with her sweet distillings slakes my thirst!”  
That reverence, though, which masters all of me  
by the mere syllables of be and ice,  
bowed me like one that ’s overcome by sleep.  
A short while Beatrice endured me thus;  
then, lighting up my face with such a smile,  
as, even in fire, would bless one, she began:  
“As I am unmistakably aware,  
how a just vengeance could have been avenged  
with justice, hath occasioned thee to doubt;  
but I shall quickly liberate thy mind;  
hence listen, for my words will now bestow  
on thee the present of a mighty truth.  
By not accepting for the power that wills  
a helpful curb, the man who was not born,  
damning himself, damned all his progeny;  
wherefore the human race lay sick below  
in serious sin for many centuries,  
until the Word of God was pleased descend  
to where the nature, which had wandered far  
from its Creator, to His Self He joined,  
by the mere act of His Eternal Love.  
Now turn thy sight to what is argued now!  
This nature, thus united to its Maker,  
was, as when first created, pure and good;  
but through its own fault was in banishment  
exiled from Paradise, because it turned  
out of the path of truth and its own life.  
As to the suffering, therefore, which the cross

afforded, none so justly ever bit,  
if measured by the nature thus assumed;  
and likewise none was ever so unjust,  
considering who the person was that suffered,  
within whom such a nature was conjoined.  
From one act, therefore, issued things diverse;  
for one same death pleased both the Jews, and God;  
it caused the earth to quake, and opened Heaven.  
No longer strange should it appear to thee  
henceforth, when it is said a just revenge  
was by a just court afterward avenged.  
But I perceive that now, from thought to thought,  
thy mind is in a knot tied up, from which  
with great desire it seeks to free itself.  
Thou sayest: 'What I hear I clearly see;  
but from me hidden is why God should will  
for our redemption just this way alone.'  
Buried, my brother, lieth this decree  
from all men's eyesight, whose intelligence  
hath not in love's flame reached maturity.  
However, inasmuch as on this mark  
great is the gazing, and but little seen,  
I'll say why this one was the worthiest way.  
Goodness Divine, which spurneth from Itself  
all envy, burning in Itself, so sparkles,  
that Its eternal beauties It displays.  
Whatever from It is immediately  
distilled, hath afterward no end; for when  
It sets Its seal, Its stamp is not removed.  
Whatever from It is immediately  
rained down, is wholly free, for that lies not  
under the power of secondary things.  
Since most like It, it gives It greatest pleasure;  
because the Holy Fire which lighteth all things,  
is brightest in what most resembles It.  
The human creature is by all these things  
advantaged; hence, if one of them be lacking,  
it needs must fall from its nobility.  
Nothing but sin deprives it of its freedom,  
and maketh it unlike the Highest Good,  
hence little is it whitened by Its Light;  
and to its dignity it ne'er returns,  
unless, where sin has emptied, it fill up,  
for evil pleasures, with just penalties.  
When in its seed your nature wholly sinned,  
it was of all these dignities deprived,  
as well as banished far from Paradise;  
nor could they be regained by any path,

if with due subtlety thou pay attention,  
except by crossing one of these two fords:  
either that of His courtesy alone,  
God should forgive it, or that by itself  
mankind should for its folly make amends.  
Fixed as attentively upon my words  
as thou art able, thrust thou now thine eye  
within the Eternal Counsel's deep abyss!  
Since finite, man could never make amends,  
because unable in humility,  
by new obedience, to descend as far,  
as, disobeying, he had meant to mount;  
and this the reason is why man was barred  
from making satisfaction by himself.  
It, hence, behooved that God by His own ways  
should reinstate man in his perfect life,  
by one, I mean, or else by both at once.  
But since so much more grateful is the work  
a workman does, the more it represents  
the goodness of the heart from which it comes,  
Goodness Divine, which on the world imprints  
Its seal, was pleased to move by all Its paths  
to raise you up again. Nor hath there been,  
nor will there ever be, by either way,  
between the first of days and last of nights,  
so high and so magnificent a plan;  
for God was far more bountiful in giving  
Himself, to make man fit to raise himself,  
than had He only of Himself forgiven;  
therefore all other means had fallen short  
of Justice, if the Son of God had not  
humbled Himself, incarnate to become.  
But, wholly to fulfill thine every wish,  
I'll now go back to clarify one point,  
that thou mayst see as plainly there as I.  
Thou say'st: 'I see that water, nay, I see  
that fire and air and earth, and all their mixtures  
become corrupt, and but a little while  
endure; and yet created things were these!  
If, therefore, what was said above were true,  
safe from corruption ought these things to be.'  
The Angels, brother, and the perfect world,  
in which thou now art, may be called created,  
such as they are, in their perfected state;  
the elements, however, thou hast named,  
and those things which by means of them are made,  
by a created virtue are informed.  
Created was the matter which they have;

created was the informing influence  
in all these stars, which round about them move.  
The rays and motion of the holy lights  
draw from pure matter's potentiality  
the soul of every brute and every plant.  
But without agency doth Kindliness  
Supreme breathe your life forth, and with Itself  
enamors it so greatly, that thereafter  
it always longs for It. And, furthermore,  
thou canst from this infer your resurrection,  
if thou recall how human flesh was made,  
when both of man's first parents were created."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO VIII

*The Third Heaven. Venus. The Happiness of Love*

*The Spirits of Lovers*

The world was at its peril wont to think  
that, in the third of epicycles circling,  
fair Cypria beamed her sensual love abroad;  
the ancient peoples, therefore, in their ancient  
error, with sacrifice and votive cry,  
honored not her alone, but with Diòne  
Cupid as well, the former as her mother,  
the latter as her son; and used to say  
that he had sat of old in Dido's lap;  
and took from her, from whom I here begin,  
the name-word of the star, at which the sun  
looks fondly, now behind, and now in front.  
Of our ascending to it I was not  
aware; but that we in it were, my Lady,  
whom grown more fair I saw, assured me fully.  
And then, as in a flame a spark is seen,  
and as within a voice a voice is heard,  
when one remains and the other goes and comes;  
so I in that light other lamps beheld,  
whirling with greater speed or less, I think,  
according to each lamp's eternal vision.  
Out of cold clouds there ne'er descended winds,  
or visible or not, so swiftly moving,  
that they would not appear restrained and slow  
to one who had perceived those lights divine  
draw near to us, when they had ceased the circling,  
among the exalted Seraphs first begun.  
And in the foremost to appear, "*Hosanna*"  
resounded so, that I have never since  
lacked the desire of hearing it again.  
One then drew nearer to us, and alone  
began: "We all are ready at thy pleasure,  
that thou mayst have thy joy of all of us.  
In one ring, with one circling and one thirst,  
we with the heavenly Principalities  
revolve, to whom once from the world thou saidst:  
'*Ye who the third heaven by your knowledge move;*'  
and we 're so full of love, that, thee to please,  
a little quiet will not seem less sweet."  
After mine eyes had toward my Lady turned



with reverent questioning, and she herself  
had with herself contented and assured them,  
back toward the light they turned, which of itself  
had made such promise, and “Who are ye, say?”  
was what I voiced with great affection toned.  
And how much greater did I see it grow,  
in size and quality, with that new joy,  
which, when I spoke, was added to its joys!  
Grown thus, it said to me: “The world below  
had me not long; but had it done so longer,  
much evil that will be, would not have been.  
The gladness which around me radiates,  
and, like a creature by its own silk swathed,  
conceals me here, now keeps me hidden from thee.  
Much didst thou love me, and good cause hadst thou  
therefor; since, had I been on earth, much more  
would I have shown thee than the leaves of love.  
That left-hand bank, which by the Rhone is washed,  
just after it has mingled with the Sorgue,  
looked in due time to have me as its lord;  
as did the Ausonian horn, which is with Bari,  
Gaëta and Crotona towned, and whence  
the Tronto and Verde pour into the sea.  
Upon my brow already blazed the crown  
of that land which the Danube irrigates,  
when it abandons its Germanic banks;  
and fair Trinacria, which grows dark with smoke  
between Pachynus’ and Pelorus’ capes  
over the gulf which Eurus vexes most,  
not through Typhoëus, but through nascent sulphur,  
would still be waiting for its kings, through me  
from Charles and Rudolph sprung,  
had not ill rule,  
which always angers subject peoples, stirred  
Palermo to the point of shouting: “Die!”  
And did my brother but foresee this now,  
the greedy poverty would he avoid  
of Catalonia, that it harm him not;  
for verily provision must be made  
by him, or by another, that no load  
be further laid upon his burdened bark.  
His nature, which descended mean from one  
which liberal was, would such retainers need,  
as would not care to fill their coffers up.  
“Since I, my lord, believe the joy profound  
thy speech infuses in me, is by thee  
perceived, where every good thing both begins  
and ends, as I perceive it, all the more

grateful it is; and I am also glad  
that this thou see'st by looking up at God.  
As thou hast made me happy, make it clear,  
for thou hast moved me by thy words to doubt,  
how out of sweet seed bitter seed can spring.”  
This I to him; and he: “If I can show  
a truth to thee, to that which thou dost ask  
thou 'lt hold thy face, as thou dost now thy back.  
The Good which turns and sateth all the Realm  
through which thou mountest, makes His providence  
a power within these mighty bodies here;  
and not alone are natures in that Mind  
foreseen, which of Its own self perfect is,  
but they themselves, and with them their well-being;  
hence, all this bow shoots forth falls predisposed  
unto an end foreseen, as would an arrow  
aimed at its destined mark. Were this not so,  
the heaven through which thou now art journeying,  
in such a way would its effects produce,  
that ruins they would be, not works of art;  
nor can this be, unless the Intellects  
which move these stars are faulty, and the First,  
who failed to make them perfect, faulty, too.  
Wouldst have this truth become more white for thee?”  
And I: “No, truly, for I see that Nature,  
in what is needful, cannot get fatigued.”  
Then he: “Now say: would it be worse on earth  
for man, if he were not a citizen?”  
“Yes,” I replied, “nor do I here ask why.”  
“And can he be, unless men there below  
in different ways for different functions live?  
No, if thereon your teacher writeth well.”  
So far he came, deducing thus; then closed:  
“Because of this the roots of your effects  
must different be; hence one is Solon born,  
Xerxes another, and Melchisedech  
another, and another he, who lost his son  
while flying through the air. Revolving Nature,  
which is a seal to mortal wax, performs  
her function well, but no distinction makes  
'tween one and any other dwelling-place.  
It hence results that Esau in his seed  
differs from Jacob, while Quirinus comes  
from such a common father, that ascribed  
to Mars he is. A generated nature,  
unless divine foresight prevailed, would always  
follow along its generators' path.  
Now that which was behind thee is before;

but that thou know that thou dost give me pleasure,  
I 'd have a corollary mantle thee.  
Nature, whene'er she finds a destiny  
discordant with her, like all other seed  
in soil unsuited to it, always fails;  
and if the world down there but set its mind  
upon the basal plan which Nature lays,  
and followed it, 't would have its people good.  
But to religion ye now wrest aside  
one that is born to gird him with a sword;  
and make a king of one that 's fit to preach;  
the course ye take is, therefore, off the road."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO IX

*The Third Heaven. Venus. The Happiness of Love.*

*The Spirits of Lovers*

After thy Charles, fair Clemence, had resolved  
my doubts, he told me of the treacheries,  
his offspring were to undergo; and said:  
“Be silent now, and let the years roll by!”  
Hence I can only say to you that tears  
will justly follow on your people’s wrongs.  
And now the spirit of that holy light  
back to the Sun, which filleth it, had turned,  
as to the Good which sateth everything.  
Alas, ye souls deceived and impious creatures,  
who from such goodness tear your hearts away,  
and turn your temples unto vanity!  
And hereupon, another of those splendors  
in my direction came, and signified,  
by brightening outwardly, its wish to please me.  
The eyes of Beatrice, which, as before,  
were fixed upon me, gave me full assurance  
of her beloved assent to my desire.  
“Prithee, blest spirit, satisfy my wish  
at once,” I therefore said, “and give me proof  
that what I think, I can reflect in thee.”  
Whereat the light which still was new to me,  
out of its depths, whence it had sung before,  
went on, like one whom doing good delights:  
“In that part of Italia’s evil land,  
which ’tween Rialto’s island and the Brenta’s  
and Piave’s fountain-heads is situated,  
a hill ascends, nor rises very high,  
whence once a torch came down, which terribly  
assaulted all the country round about.  
From one same root both I and it were born;  
Cunizza called, I here refulgent am,  
because the light of this star vanquished me.  
But gladly I forgive myself the cause  
of my allotment here, which grieves me not;  
which to your common people might seem strange.  
Of this dear brilliant jewel of our heaven,  
which nearest is to me, a mighty fame  
remains behind; and, ere it die away,  
this hundredth year will yet quintupled be.

See whether one should excellent become,  
so that the first may leave another life!  
But thus the present mob, the Adige's  
and Tagliamento's streams enclose, thinks not;  
nor doth it yet, though scourged by wars, repent.  
But at the Marsh 't will happen soon that Padua  
will change the waters which Vicenza bathe,  
because its folk were restive to their duty.  
And where the Sile and Cagnano mate,  
one lordeth it and goes with head erect,  
for trapping whom even now the net is made.  
Feltro will yet bewail the faithlessness  
of its bad shepherd, which will be so foul,  
that Malta was not entered for the like.  
Too large would be the wine-vat which could hold  
all the Ferrara blood — and weary one  
who tried to weigh it ounce by ounce —  
which shall this courteous priest's donation be,  
to prove his party loyalty; and gifts  
like this will with the country's life conform.  
Mirrors there are above, (ye call them Thrones),  
whence on us God as Judge reflects His light;  
so that these words of ours seem good to us.”  
She here ceased speaking; then intent she seemed  
on something else, because she set herself  
to wheel around, as previously she did.  
The other joy, already known to me  
as something noble, in my sight became  
a perfect ruby smitten by the sun.  
Splendor up yonder is by joy acquired,  
as smiles are here; but down below a shade  
outwardly darkens, when the mind grows sad.  
“God seeth all,” I said, “and thy will so  
in-Hims itself, blest spirit, that no wish  
can rob thee of itself. Therefore thy voice,  
which, with the song of those devoted fires,  
who with their six wings make themselves a cowl,  
is always charming Heaven, why gives it not  
contentment to my wishes? I, indeed,  
would not await thy asking me, if I  
in-thee'd myself as thou in-me'est thee.”  
“The greatest valley o'er which water spreads”  
thereat his words began, “except the sea  
which forms a garland round the earth, extends  
counter the sun so far 'tween alien shores,  
that it can make meridian of a place,  
where it is wont to make horizon first.  
On that sea's shore I dwelt, 'tween Ebro's mouth

and Magra's, which, for but a short way, parts  
the Tuscan region from the Genoese.  
With almost equal set and rise of sun  
sits both Buggèa and the city whence  
I was, which with its blood once warmed its port.  
Folco that people called me, unto whom  
my name was known; and this heaven is by me  
impressed, as I was formerly by it;  
for Belus' daughter, when she troubled both  
Sichaeus and Creùsa, burned no more  
than I, as long as it beseemed my hair;  
nor did that Rhodopean maid, whose love  
Demòphoön deceived, nor yet Alcides,  
while in his heart he kept Iole locked.  
Yet we are not repenting here, but smiling,  
not for the sin, which to our minds returns not,  
but for the Worth which ordered and foresaw.  
Here at the art we gaze which beautifies  
so great a work, and only see the Goodness  
whereby the world above turns that below.  
But so that thou mayst bear away with thee  
thy wishes all fulfilled, which in this sphere  
were born, still further must I needs proceed.  
Who is within this light, thou fain wouldst know,  
which right here at my very side is sparkling,  
as rays of sunlight shine in limpid water.  
Know, then, that Rahab finds her rest therein;  
and, to our order being joined, with her  
it stamps itself in a supreme degree.  
By this heaven, where the shadow your world makes  
ends in a point, before all other souls  
was she received, that triumph with the Christ.  
It well behooved to leave her in some heaven  
to be a palm of that great victory,  
which by both hands was won,  
because she favored  
Joshua's first glory in the Holy Land,  
which little stirs the memory of the Pope.  
Thy town, which is a plant once sowed by him,  
who first against his Maker turned his back,  
and through whose envy many tears are shed,  
brings forth and spreads abroad the cursèd flower,  
which, having of the shepherd made a wolf,  
hath caused both sheep and lambs to go astray.  
The Gospels and great Doctors are for this  
despised; and only the Decretals conned,  
as is apparent by their margins' state.  
On this are Pope and Cardinals intent;

their thoughts turn not toward Nazareth, where Gabriel  
once oped his wings. But both the Vatican  
and all the other chosen parts of Rome,  
of old the burial place of that militia,  
which followed in the path which Peter trod,  
will soon be freed from this adultery.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO X

*The Fourth Heaven. The Sun. Intellectual Happiness*

*The Spirits of Theologians and Philosophers*

Looking upon His Son with all the Love,  
which both of them eternally breathe forth,  
the Primal and Unutterable Power  
with so great order made whate'er revolves  
through mind or space, that none who look at it  
can ever be without a taste of Him.  
Lift, therefore, Reader, to the heavenly wheels  
thine eyes with me, directly to the region,  
where one of their two motions strikes the other;  
and there begin to contemplate with love  
that Master's art, who in Himself so loves it,  
that never doth His eye abandon it.  
And now see how from thence the oblique ring,  
which bears the planets with it, branches off,  
to please the world which calls upon them; how,  
in case their path were not thus bent aside,  
in vain would be much virtue in the heavens,  
and dead well nigh all potencies down here;  
and how, if from the straight line, more or less  
removed, it swerved, much in the mundane order  
would lacking be below and up above.  
Now, Reader, on thy bench remain, and what  
is here foretasted, follow out in thought,  
if thou, e'er weary, wouldst be very glad.  
Food have I set before thee; feed thou now  
thyself; because the theme, whose scribe I 'm made,  
unto itself is wresting all my care!  
The greatest of the ministers of Nature,  
which with the power of Heaven imprints the world,  
and with its light measures our time for us,  
joined with the section touched upon above,  
was circling now around the spiral rings,  
wherein it earlier shows itself each day;  
and I was in it, but was not aware  
of my ascent, except as one, before  
a thought has come, is conscious of its coming.  
'T is Beatrice, who thus from good to better  
conducts one with such swiftness, that her act  
extendeth not through time. In its own self  
how bright must that have been, which in the Sun,



which I had entered, was not visible  
by color, but by light! Though I on genius,  
practice and art should call, I could not so  
describe it, that it e'er could be imagined;  
but it can be believed, and sight of it  
should be desired! And for such heights if low  
be our imagination, is no wonder;  
for no eye ever reached beyond the sun.  
Such the fourth family here of that Exalted  
Father, who ever states it by revealing  
how He breathes forth, and how He generates.  
And Beatrice began: "Give thanks, give thanks  
unto the Angels' Sun, who, of His Grace,  
hath raised thee up to this material one!"  
No mortal heart was ever so disposed  
to be devoted, and with all its pleasure  
give itself up to God, as I became  
at those last words of hers; hence all my love  
set itself so on Him, that Beatrice  
in my forgetting mind became eclipsed.  
And she disliked it not, but smiled at it,  
so that the splendor of her laughing eyes  
shared with more things my undivided mind.  
I many keen and dazzling splendors saw,  
who, sweeter voiced than in appearance bright,  
made us a center and themselves a crown.  
Latona's daughter we behold at times  
thus girded, when so pregnant is the air,  
that it retains the thread that forms her zone.  
Within the court of Heaven, whence I return,  
are many jewels found, so fair and precious,  
that from the Kingdom they may not be moved;  
and of these was the singing of those lights.  
Let him who doth not feather him to fly  
up there, await the dumb for news from thence.  
And then, when singing thus, those burning suns  
had all around us whirled themselves three times,  
like stars, that near unmoving poles revolve,  
ladies they seemed to me, who though not through  
with dancing, yet in silence stop a while, and list  
till they have caught the music's coming notes.  
In one I heard beginning: "Since the ray  
of Grace, whereby true love is set on fire,  
and afterward, by dint of loving, grows  
and multiplies, is shining in thee so,  
that it conducts thee upward o'er the stairs  
which none without remounting e'er descends;  
he who thy thirst the wine within his flask

refused, would be no more at liberty,  
than water is which falls not to the sea.  
Thou fain wouldst know what blooms this wreath enflowers  
itself withal, which, circling round her, woos  
the Lady fair who makes thee strong for Heaven.  
One of that holy flock's young lambs was I,  
which Dominic leads along the path, whereon  
one thriveth well, if one go not astray.  
The nearest on my right here was my brother  
and teacher; he was Albert of Cologne,  
and Thomas of Aquinum I. If thus  
of all the other lights thou wouldst be sure,  
follow behind my speaking with thy face  
revolving upward round the blessed wreath.  
That other flaming issues from the smile  
of Gratian, who to both the courts of law  
was such a help, that Paradise is pleased.  
The next, who at his side adorns our choir,  
that Peter was, who, like the needy widow,  
offered his treasure up to Holy Church.  
The fifth light, which is fairest in our midst,  
is with such love inspired, that all the world  
down there is hungry to have news of it.  
In it is that great mind, wherein was placed  
wisdom so deep, that if the truth be true,  
no second hath arisen to see so much.  
See next to it that candle's light which saw  
most inwardly, when in the flesh below,  
the Angels' nature and their ministry.  
In the next little light that advocate  
of Christian times is smiling, of whose work  
in Latin Augustine availed himself.  
If now thy mind's eye thou art moving on,  
from light to light, behind my words of praise,  
thou now remainest thirsting for the eighth.  
Because it sees all good things, therewithin  
that holy soul rejoices, which reveals  
the cheating world to one who hears him well.  
Down yonder in Cieldauro lies the body,  
from which this soul was driv'n; and to this peace  
from martyrdom and banishment it came.  
Flaming beyond it see the burning breath  
of Isidore, of Bede, and of Riccardo,  
who was in speculation more than man.  
And this, from whom thy glance returns to me,  
the light is of a spirit, unto whom,  
in deep thoughts lost, it seemed that death came slowly.  
This is the light eternal of Sigièri,

who, when he lectured in the Street of Straw,  
proved by his syllogisms displeasing truths.  
Then like a clock, which calls us at the hour,  
at which the Bride of God awakes to sing  
her Spouse a morning-song, and win His love,  
and as one part or draws or drives the other,  
and sounds '*Ting, ting*' with such delightful notes,  
that spirits well disposed are filled with love;  
even so I saw that glorious circle move,  
and fuse its voices in a harmony,  
and with a sweetness, which can not be known,  
except where joy is self-eternalized.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XI

*The Fourth Heaven. The Sun. Intellectual Happiness*

*The Spirits of Theologians and Philosophers. St. Francis*

O foolish care of mortal men, how full  
of fallacies the syllogisms, which cause thee  
over a nether course to beat thy wings!  
One given to legal learning went his way,  
one medicine, the priesthood one pursued,  
and lordship one, by force or sophistry;  
one practised theft, and public business one,  
one, in the pleasures of the flesh involved,  
was growing weary, one to idleness  
and ease was giving up his life, while I,  
from all these things set free, was up in Heaven  
with Beatrice so gloriously received.  
When each had to the point returned again,  
where in the ring he was before, he stayed there,  
still as a candle in a candle-stick.  
And I within the light which had before  
addressed me, heard one smilingly begin,  
as more and more resplendent it became:  
“As with Its radiance I am shining here,  
so I, by gazing at the Eternal Light,  
learn whence thou tak’st occasion for thy thoughts.  
In doubt, thou wouldst that I repeat, in words  
so clear and so distinct that they will suit  
thine understanding, that late speech of mine,  
wherein I said: ‘Whereon one thriveth well,’  
and where I said: ‘No second hath arisen;’  
for clearly must one needs distinguish here.  
The Providence, which with that counsel rules  
the world, whereby, before it reach the bottom,  
every created sight is overcome,  
in order that the Bride of Him, who cried  
aloud, and spoused her with His blessed blood,  
might go toward her Delight, safe in herself,  
and unto Him more faithful, too, ordained  
in her behalf two Princes who should serve  
as guides to her on this side and on that.  
One, in his burning love, was all Seraphic;  
the other, by his wisdom, was on earth  
a splendor of Cherubic light. I ’ll speak  
of one of them, for both are spoken of,

when one is praised, whichever one be taken,  
for to the same end were the deeds of both.  
Between Tupino and the stream that flows  
adown the hill which blest Ubaldo chose,  
a lofty mountain's fertile slope impends,  
from which Perugia feels at Porta Sole  
both cold and heat; while, for their heavy yoke,  
behind it Gualdo and Nocera weep.  
Out of this hillside, where it breaketh most  
its steepness, to the world a sun was born,  
as out of Ganges this one is at times;  
therefore let him who talks about that place  
not say Ascesi, which were not enough;  
but Orient say, if he would rightly speak.  
Not distant from his rising was he yet,  
when he began to cause the world to feel  
somewhat encouraged by his wondrous virtue;  
for, still a youth, he strove against his father  
for such a Lady's sake, that unto her,  
as unto death, none open pleasure's door;  
and then, before his church's legal court,  
and in his father's presence, joined himself  
to her; and ever after day by day  
loved her the more intensely. She, bereft  
of her First Husband, slighted and scorned, remained  
unwooed eleven hundred years and more,  
till that one came; nor aught availed to hear,  
that he, whom all the world was fearing, found her  
undaunted, with Amyclas, by his voice;  
nor aught, her being so unmoved and firm,  
that ev'n when Mary stayed beneath it, she  
went up with Christ upon the cross.  
But now,  
lest in my long talk I proceed too darkly,  
take Poverty and Francis as these lovers.  
Their concord and their joyful countenance  
caused wonder, love and gentle looks to end  
in others' holy thoughts; and so much so,  
that venerable Bernard was the first  
to bare his feet, and run behind such peace,  
and, running, feel that he was slow of foot.  
O wealth unrealized, O fertile goodness!  
Egidio bares his feet, Sylvester his,  
behind the groom, so pleasing is the bride!  
That father, then, and master went his way  
with both his Lady and that family,  
which now was girding on the humble cord;  
nor let base-heartedness weigh down his brow

for being Peter Bernardone's son,  
nor yet for seeming so contemptible  
to others; but revealed his stern resolve  
to Innocent with royal dignity,  
and won from him his Order's primal seal.  
When Poverty's beloved followers  
had grown behind the man, whose wondrous life  
would in the glory of Heaven be better sung,  
the holy purpose of this head of flocks  
was through Honorius by the Holy Spirit  
crowned with a second crown. Thereafter, when,  
by reason of his thirst for martyrdom,  
Christ and the rest, His followers, he had preached  
before the haughty Soldan; and, on finding  
his folk too restive to conversion, not  
to stay in vain, returned to pick the fruit  
of Latin fields; among the savage rocks,  
which 'tween the Tiber and the Arno rise,  
he took from Christ himself the final seal,  
which on his limbs he bore for two whole years.  
When Him it pleased, who granted him such weal,  
to draw him up to that reward, which he,  
by making himself lowly, had deserved,  
to his own brethren, as to rightful heirs,  
he recommended his most precious Lady,  
and ordered them to love her faithfully;  
then from her bosom his illustrious soul  
willed to depart, and to its realm returned,  
and for its body wished no other bier.  
Think now what he was, who, as his companion,  
was worthy deemed to keep the bark of Peter  
true to its course, when sailing on the deep!  
That was our Patriarch; thou, hence, canst see  
that he who follows him as he commands,  
loadeth his vessel with good merchandise.  
And yet his flock, so greedy for new food  
hath grown, that it can hardly fail to scatter  
through various wood and mountain pasture lands;  
and hence, the more his sheep like vagabonds  
wander away, and further go from him,  
emptier of milk do they regain the fold.  
Yet surely some there are, who, dreading harm,  
cling to their shepherd; but so few are these,  
that little cloth will furnish them with cowls.  
If, now, my words have not been indistinct,  
and if thy hearing hath attentive been,  
and thou recall to mind what I have said,  
partly contented will thy wishes be;

because thou 'lt see the plant whence hewn they are,  
and what the limitation means: 'Whereon  
one thriveth well, *if* one go not astray.'"

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XII

*The Fourth Heaven. The Sun. Intellectual Happiness*

*The Spirits of Theologians and Philosophers. St. Dominic*

As soon as e'er the blessèd flame had voiced  
its final word, the holy wheel began  
to whirl; and in its circling had not moved  
around completely, ere another wheel  
enclosed it in a ring, and each to each  
matched with its own its motions and its songs;  
songs which, in those sweet pipes, as far surpass  
our Muses and our Sirens, as a primal  
splendor surpasses one reflected from it.  
As when, both parallel and like in hue,  
two rainbows o'er a tender cloud are drawn,  
when Juno issues orders to her maid,  
the outer being from the inner born,  
as is the speaking of that wandering nymph,  
whom love consumed as mists are by the sun;  
and cause folk here, by reason of the pact  
which God with Noah made, to prophesy  
about the world, that it will not again  
be flooded; so, of those eternal roses  
the two wreaths turned around us there, and so  
the outer with the inmost harmonized.  
After the dance and great high feast of song,  
and flaming interplay of light with light  
in joyful happiness and tender love,  
had of a sudden and with one accord  
grown quiet, even as eyes do, which must close  
and open at the will of what attracts them;  
out of the heart of one of those new lights  
a voice came forth, as to its 'where' I turned,  
which made me seem a needle to its star.  
And it began: "The love which lends me beauty,  
draws me to talk about that other Leader,  
for whose sake mine is so well talked of here.  
Where one is, right it is to introduce  
the other; so that, since they fought together,  
their glories likewise may together shine.  
Christ's host, which cost so much to arm anew,  
was slowly, timidly, and small in numbers  
moving behind its Standard, when the Emperor  
who ever reigns, provided, of His Grace



alone, for His endangered host, and not  
because of its deserts; and helped His Bride,  
as it hath here been said, with champions twain,  
through whom, because of what they did and said,  
the people who had strayed away returned.  
In those parts where sweet Zephyr's breezes rise  
to open spring-time's foliage, wherewithal  
Europe is seen to clothe herself again,  
not very distant from the beating waves,  
behind which, through his long career, the sun  
conceals himself at times from every one,  
fortunate Calaroga hath her seat,  
guarded by that great shield, in which the lion  
both subjugates, and is subdued. Therein  
the amorous lover of the Christian Faith  
was born, the holy athlete, well disposed  
toward those he loved, and toward his foes severe;  
and even at its creation was his mind  
with such live virtue filled, that in his mother  
it caused her to become a prophetess.  
After the spousal 'tween the Faith and him  
had at the sacred font been held, where each  
with mutual health had dowered each, the lady  
who answered for him in a dream, beheld  
the wondrous fruit, that was to come from him  
and from his heirs. And that he might by name  
be what he was, a spirit went from hence,  
to give him the possessive of the One  
who wholly owned him.  
Dominic he was called;  
and of him as the husbandman I speak,  
whom Christ, to help him in His garden, chose.  
He truly seemed Christ's messenger and servant,  
because the first love which appeared in him,  
was for the primal counsel given by Christ.  
Often was he discovered by his nurse  
lying awake and silent on the ground,  
as if he meant thereby: 'I came for this.'  
O Felix, of a truth, his father was!  
O truly Joan, his mother, if it mean  
what it is said to, when interpreted!  
Not for the world's sake, for which men now toil,  
following the man of Ostia, and Taddèo,  
but for the love of spirit-food, so great  
a teacher did he shortly make himself,  
that he began to go about the vineyard,  
which withers soon, if idle be the vintner;  
and of the Chair, which to the righteous poor

was formerly more kind, not through its own,  
but through the fault of him who, sitting there,  
degenerates, he asked not for the right  
to give or two or three for six, nor yet  
the income of the earliest vacancy,  
nor even the tithes, which to God's poor belong;  
but leave to fight against the erring world  
for that seed's sake, whereof plants twenty-four  
are girding thee. With doctrine thereupon,  
and will, to apostolic sanction joined,  
he started, like a torrent by a high  
source urged, and on all stocks heretical  
his onset smote, and ever there most strongly,  
where strongest the resistance was. From him  
there afterward flowed divers streams, wherewith  
the garden Catholic is watered so,  
that all the fresher are its tender shrubs.  
If such was one wheel of the Car, whereby  
the Holy Church, herself defending, won  
the civil struggle in her own domain,  
the other's excellence should certainly  
be very plain to thee, concerning whom  
Thomas so courteous was, ere I appeared.  
And yet the rut, formed by the highest part  
of its circumference, so forsaken is,  
that there where crust was, now is mould. His household,  
which started out aright, and kept their feet  
upon his footprints, hath so turned around,  
that that which is in front now treads on what  
was once behind; and this will soon be seen  
by the bad culture's harvest, when the tares  
will of their loss of granaries complain.  
And yet I say that one who, page by page,  
should search our book, would still some paper find,  
where he could read: 'What I was wont to be,  
I am;' but from Casale he 'll not come,  
nor yet from Acquasparta, whence such men  
approach the rule, that one evades, and one  
contracts its scope. Bonaventura's life  
am I, of Bagnoregio, who in great  
positions set sinister cares behind.  
Here are Illuminàto and Aùgustin,  
who were among the first bare-footed poor,  
and, corded, made themselves the friends of God.  
Hugh of St. Victor here among them is,  
and Peter Mangiadòr, and Peter of Spain,  
who in a dozen books still shines on earth;  
Nathan the prophet, and metropolitan

Chrysòstom, Anselm, aye, and that Donatus,  
who to the first art deigned to set his hand;  
Raban is here; and at my side is shining  
the abbot of Calabria, Joachim,  
who with prophetic spirit was endowed.  
The flaming courtesy of brother Thomas  
and his discerning speech have moved me thus  
to celebrate so great a paladin,  
and with me likewise moved this company.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XIII

*The Fourth Heaven. The Sun. Intellectual Happiness*

*Spirits of Theologians and Philosophers. Solomon's Wisdom*

Let him imagine, who would understand  
aright what now I saw, (and let him hold  
the image like a steadfast rock, the while  
I speak), the fifteen stars which vivify  
the sky at different points with such clear light,  
that vanquished is all denseness in the air;  
let him imagine next that Wain, whereto  
the bosom of our sky suffices so  
both night and day, that, as its pole revolves,  
it never disappears; and let him then  
imagine furthermore that trumpet's mouth,  
which at the axle's point begins, whereon  
the first wheel turns; and that all these had made  
two constellations of themselves, like that  
which Minos' daughter fashioned when she felt  
the cold of death; and one to have its rays  
within the other, and both to so revolve,  
that one moved forward, and the other back;  
and he will of the actual constellation  
a shadow have, and of the double dance,  
which circled round the place where I then was;  
for it as far surpasses our experience,  
as swifter than the Chiana moves the heaven  
which outspeeds all the others. There they praised  
nor Bacchus nor Apollo, but three Persons  
in one sole nature, the divine, and that,  
in but one Person with the human joined.  
The song and dance completed each its measure;  
whereat those holy lights gave heed to us,  
rejoicing thus to pass from care to care.  
And then the light, wherein the wondrous life  
of God's dear pauper had been told to me,  
of those harmonious gods the silence broke,  
and said: "Whereas one straw has now been threshed,  
and as its seed hath now been stored away,  
sweet love inviteth me to beat the other.  
Thou think'st that in the breast from which the rib  
was drawn, which went to form the lovely cheek,  
whose palate cost so much to all the world,  
and that in that one which, before and after

the lance had pierced it, made such satisfaction,  
as to outweigh all sins,  
whatever light  
our human nature is allowed, the whole,  
was by that Power infused, which made them both;  
thou, hence, art marvelling at what above  
I said, when I narrated that the good  
enclosed within the fifth light had no second.  
Ope now thine eyes to what I answer thee;  
and thou 't see that my words and thy belief  
grow one in truth, as in a ring its center.  
That which dies not, and that which mortal is,  
are naught but that Idea's reflected light,  
to which our Sire, by loving, giveth birth;  
for that Bright Light, which from its Lucent Source  
so flows, that It is not divided from Him,  
nor from the Love which with Them is intrined,  
out of Its goodness gathers up Its radiance,  
mirrored, as 't were, in nine subsistences,  
Itself eternally remaining one.  
Thence to the lowest creatures It descends  
from act to act, and such becomes, that naught  
It makes but brief contingencies; and these  
contingencies I understand to be  
those generated things the moving heavens  
produce by means of seed and without seed.  
Of these the wax, and that which mouldeth it,  
are not of one same kind; hence, underneath  
the ideal stamp, they more or less reflect it;  
it hence results that, after its own kind,  
one selfsame plant bears better fruit and worse;  
and that with different natures ye are born.  
If tempered to perfection were the wax,  
and if the heavens were at their height of power,  
the whole light of the seal would be revealed;  
but Nature, working as an artist doth,  
who hath, though skilled and toward his art disposed,  
a trembling hand, e'er gives it with a flaw.  
Hence, if the Flaming Love dispose and stamp  
the Lucid Vision of the Primal Power,  
complete perfection is therein acquired.  
Thus rendered worthy of an animal's  
complete perfection was the earth of old;  
thus also was the Virgin rendered pregnant;  
hence thine opinion I as true commend,  
that human nature never was, nor will be,  
such as it once in those two persons was.  
And now, if I no further went, 'How, then,

could he be peerless?' would thy words begin.  
But, that what seems not so may now seem clear,  
think who he was, and what the cause which moved him  
in his request, when 'Ask' was said to him.  
I have not spoken so, that thou shouldst not  
see clearly that a king he was, who asked  
wisdom to be a worthy king; and not  
to know the number of the Angels here;  
nor whether from a necessary premise,  
with one contingent, a necessity  
e'er followed as result; nor yet to know  
if a first motion needs must granted be,  
nor whether a triangle could be made,  
with no right angle, in a semicircle.  
Hence, if thou note both what I said and this,  
a royal wisdom is that peerless vision,  
on which the shaft of my intention strikes;  
and if to 'hath arisen' thou direct  
clear eyes, thou 'lt see that it refers to kings  
alone, who many are, and few the good.  
With this distinction take thou what I said;  
for it can stand with that which thou believ'st  
of man's first father, and of our Delight.  
And let this e'er be lead unto thy feet,  
to make thee, like one weary, slowly move  
to both the Yea and Nay thou seest not;  
for very low among the fools is he,  
who affirms without distinction, or denies,  
in one, as in the other, case; because  
it happens that a quickly formed opinion  
is often in a wrong direction turned;  
and then the feelings bind the intellect.  
For worse than vainly leaveth he the shore,  
who fishes for the truth and hath no skill,  
since, such as he set out, he comes not back;  
and in the world are patent proofs of this  
Parmenides, Melissus, Bryson, aye,  
and many who advanced, but knew not whither.  
So did Sabellius, Arius and those fools  
who to the Scriptures were as sword-blades are,  
in making faces crooked, which were straight.  
In judging, let not people be too sure,  
like him who in the field computes the ears,  
or ever they are ripe;  
for I have seen  
a thorn-bush seem all winter stiff and wild,  
and later bear a rose upon its top;  
and once I saw a vessel running straight

and swiftly o'er the sea through all her course,  
and end by sinking at the harbor's mouth.  
Let not dame Bertha or sir Martin think,  
on seeing one man rob, and one give alms,  
that they behold them as they seem to God;  
for that one may get up, and this one fall."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XIV

*The Fourth Heaven. The Sun. The Fifth Heaven*

*Mars. The Happiness of Heroism*

In rounded vessels water moves from rim  
to center, and from center so to rim,  
according as one strikes it from without  
or from within. What I am saying here  
fell suddenly into my mind, when once  
the glorious life of Thomas ceased to speak,  
because of the resemblance which arose  
between his speech and that of Beatrice,  
who, after him, was pleased to speak as follows:  
“This spirit needs, although he tells you so  
neither by voice, nor ev’n by thinking it,  
to reach the root of still another truth.  
Tell him, then, if the light, wherewith your substance  
is flowering, will remain with you the same  
eternally as even now it is;  
and if it still remain so, tell him how,  
when ye have been made visible again,  
it can be such as not to hurt your sight.”  
As when impelled and drawn by greater gladness,  
those who are dancing lift at times their voices,  
and give their actions greater sprightliness;  
so, at that prompt and reverent request,  
the holy circles showed new joyousness,  
both in their whirl and in their wondrous song.  
He that lamenteth that we die down here  
to live up yonder, hath not seen up there  
the comfort of the eternal rain. That One  
and Two and Three, who ever lives and reigns  
in Three and Two and One, uncircumscribed,  
and circumscribing everything, was there  
by each and all of yonder spirits sung  
with such a melody, that it would be  
a just reward for any one’s desert.  
And in the smallest ring’s divinest light  
I heard a gentle voice, like that with which,  
perhaps, the Angel spoke to Mary, answer:  
“As long as Paradise’s joy shall last,  
so long our love will radiate around it  
a garment such as this. Its clarity  
is patterned on our ardor, and our ardor



upon our vision, and as keen is that,  
as is the grace it hath above its worth.  
When with our glorious and perfected flesh  
we 're clothed again, our persons will give greater  
pleasure, because of being all complete;  
wherefore, whatever freely given light  
the Good Supreme may grant us, will increase —  
a light permitting us to see Him; whence  
our vision needs must grow; and grow the ardor  
which from it is enkindled, and hence grow  
the radiance, likewise, which proceeds from this.  
But as a burning coal emits a flame,  
and by its vivid glow surpasses it,  
so that its own appearance is maintained;  
so will this brightness which surrounds us now  
be vanquished in appearance by the flesh,  
which still is covered by the earth; nor will  
so great a light avail to weary us,  
because our body's organs will be strong  
for whatso'er is able to delight us.”  
So quick and careful seemed both choirs to say  
'Amen!'; that clearly a desire they showed  
to have their buried bodies; and not, perhaps,  
for their own sakes alone, but for their mothers,  
and fathers and the others, who were dear  
to them, ere they became eternal flames.  
Then round us everywhere, of equal brightness,  
outside the luster there, another rose,  
like an horizon which is growing clear;  
and as new apparitions come in sight  
throughout the sky, at early evening's rise,  
so that one's vision seems, and seems not, true;  
meseemed that new subsistences I there  
began to see, and that a ring was forming  
outside the other two circumferences.  
O thou true sparkling of the Holy Spirit!  
How suddenly and glowingly it flashed  
before mine eyes, which, vanquished, stood it not!  
But Beatrice revealed herself so fair  
and smiling, that this vision must be left  
'mong those that followed not my memory.  
I hence gained strength to raise mine eyes again;  
and with my Lady alone I saw myself  
borne to a higher grade of blessedness.  
I well perceived that I was higher up,  
by reason of the star's enkindled smile,  
which ruddier seemed to me than is its wont.  
With all my heart and with that kind of speech

which is the same in all, I made to God  
such holocaust as was befitting this  
new grace; and the ardor of my offered self  
had not yet been exhausted from my breast,  
when I perceived that sacrifice was welcome  
and pleasing; for to me there then appeared  
splendors between two rays, so bright and red,  
that I exclaimed: "O Helios, who dost so  
adorn them!" As the Galaxy, bedecked  
with smaller and with greater lights, so glimmers  
'tween the world's poles, that even the wise are led  
to doubt; thus, constellated in the depths  
of Mars, those rays described the honored sign,  
which in a circle quadrant-joinings make.  
My memory overcomes my genius here;  
because that Cross so lightened forth the Christ,  
that I can find therefor no fit example;  
but whosoever taketh up his cross  
and follows Christ, will pardon me again  
for what I leave, when in that glow he sees  
the Christ flash forth. Lights moved about from arm  
to arm, and 'tween the summit and the base,  
and sparkled brightly when they met, and when  
they passed each other. Thus we here see, straight  
and crooked, swift and slow, and ever  
renewing their appearance, particles  
of bodies long and short, as through a ray  
they move, whereby at times that shade is streaked,  
which folk, to shield them, make with skill and art.  
And as a viol or a harp, attuned  
with many strings, a pleasant tinkling makes  
for one by whom the music is not caught;  
so from the lights which there appeared to me,  
a melody was gathered through the Cross,  
which rapt me, though I made not out the hymn.  
I well perceived it was of lofty praise,  
because 'Arise!' and 'Conquer!' came to me,  
as to who heard, but did not understand.  
So much in love with it did I become,  
that naught had ever fettered me before  
with such sweet bonds. My words, perhaps,  
appear too bold, in that they lower set  
the pleasure giv'n me by the lovely eyes,  
looking in which my longing finds its rest;  
but who considers that the living seals  
of all fair things do more, the higher up,  
and that I had not there looked up at them,  
may pardon me for what, to be excused,

I 'm self-accused, and see that I speak true;  
for here the holy joy is not excluded,  
since, as it mounts, the purer it becomes.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XV

*The Fifth Heaven. Mars. The Happiness of Heroism*

*Martyrs of Religion and Altruism. Cacciaguida*

The kindly will, wherein is always shown  
the love which is by righteousness inspired,  
as greed is in the evil will revealed,  
silence imposed on that sweet singing lyre,  
and caused those holy chords to be at rest,  
which Heaven's right hand slackens, and draweth tight.  
How shall those substances to righteous prayers  
be deaf, who ceased from song with one accord,  
to give me the desire to pray to them?  
'T is well that he should boundlessly lament,  
who for the sake of that which lasteth not,  
deprives himself forever of that love.  
As through serene and quiet evening skies  
there darts from time to time a sudden fire,  
which startles tranquil eyes that were at rest,  
and seems to be a star which changes place;  
saving that naught is missing where it flashed,  
and that itself lasts but a little while;  
so, from the arm which to the right extends,  
down to that cross's foot there ran a star  
drawn from the constellation shining there;  
nor from its ribbon did the gem depart,  
but through the radial band ran on, and looked  
like fire when back of alabaster moving.  
With like affection did Anchises' shade  
reach forth, if our best Muse deserve belief,  
when in Elysium he perceived his son.  
"O thou my blood, O overflowing Grace  
of God, to whom, as unto thee, was e'er  
the Gate of Heaven unlocked a second time?"  
Thus spoke that light; hence I thereto gave heed;  
then to my Lady turning back my face,  
I was on this side and on that amazed;  
for such a smile was glowing in her eyes,  
that I with mine thought I had touched the depths  
both of my grace and of my Paradise.  
Thereat, a pleasure both to hear and see,  
the spirit joined to his beginning things  
I did not fathom, so profound his speech;  
nor did he hide himself from me by choice,

but by necessity; for his conception  
set itself higher than a mortal's aim.  
And when the bow of his impassioned love  
had so relaxed its tension, that his words  
descended to the level of our mind,  
the first thing that was understood by me  
was "Blest be Thou, that, Trine and One, hast been  
so courteous to my seed!" And he went on:  
"A pleasing and a long-protracted fast  
derived from reading in the Mighty Volume,  
wherein nor white nor dark is ever changed,  
hast thou relieved, my son, within this light  
in which I now address thee, thanks to her,  
who for the lofty flight hath feathered thee.  
Thou deemest that to me thy thoughts flow down  
from Him who Primal is, as from a one,  
if known it be, proceeds a five and six;  
yet who I am, thou dost not ask of me,  
nor wherefore I appear to thee more glad  
than any other in this joyous throng.  
Thou deemest what is true; because the small  
and great of this life at that Mirror gaze,  
wherein, before thou think, thou show'st thy thought.  
But that the holy love, wherewith I watch  
with sight perpetual, and which causes me  
to thirst with sweet desire, may be fulfilled  
the better, let thy voice, firm, bold, and glad,  
proclaim the will, proclaim the wish, whereto  
my answer has already been decreed!"  
To Beatrice I turned, and she had heard  
before I spoke, and smiled a nod to me,  
which caused the wings of my desire to grow.  
Then I thus: "When the First Equality  
revealed Himself to you, wisdom and love  
became for each of you of equal weight;  
because the Sun, whose heat and light illumed  
and warmed you, is of such equality,  
that all comparisons therewith are poor.  
But in the case of mortals, will and speech,  
because of reasons manifest to you,  
are differently feathered in their wings;  
hence I, who mortal am, now realize  
this inequality, and render thanks  
with heart alone to thy paternal greeting.  
I earnestly beseech thee, living topaz,  
set in this precious jewel like a gem,  
that with thy name thou make me satisfied.  
"O thou my leaf, in whom I pleasure took,

while still awaiting thee, thy root I was.”  
He thus, as he replied to me, began;  
and then he said to me: “The one from whom  
thy family is named, and who hath circled  
the Mountain for a hundred years and more  
around the first ledge, was my son, and thy  
great-grand-sire; well behooveth it that thou  
shouldst shorten by thy works his long fatigue.  
Florence, within the ancient ring of walls,  
from which she still receives her tierce and nones,  
sober and modest still, abode in peace.  
No bracelets had she then, nor coronets,  
nor dames with ornamented shoes, or belts  
more likely to be looked at than themselves;  
nor did a daughter frighten yet at birth  
her father; for her marriage-age and dowry  
outran in neither way due measure yet.  
No houses had she void of families;  
nor yet had a Sardanapàlus come,  
to show us what could be achieved in halls.  
Not yet had Montemalo been surpassed  
by your Uccellatoio, which, outdone  
in its ascent, will be so in its fall.  
Bèllincion Berti going girt I saw  
with bone and leather, and his lady leave  
her looking-glass without a painted face;  
and Nerli’s lord I saw, and the Del Vecchio’s  
with unlined skins contented, and their dames  
with spindle and with thread.  
O lucky women!  
Sure of her burial place was each, and none  
as yet deserted in her bed for France.  
One stayed awake, absorbed in cradle cares,  
and used, in comforting, the speech which forms  
a father’s and a mother’s first delight;  
another, from her distaff drawing flax,  
repeated for her household olden tales  
about the Trojans, Fiesole and Rome.  
As great a marvel then would a Cianghella,  
or Lapo Salterello have been held,  
as Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.  
To such a calm and beautiful town life,  
to such a safe community, to such  
a pleasant inn, did Mary, called aloud,  
give me; and at the same time I became  
within your ancient baptist’ry a Christian,  
and Cacciaguida. Moronto was my brother,  
and Elisèò; from the Po’s valley came

my lady to me, and from hère name thine  
was formed. The Emperor Conrad afterward  
I followed, and among his chivalry  
he belted me a knight, by my good deeds  
I so obtained his favor. In his train  
I went against that law's iniquity,  
whose people, through your shepherds' fault, usurps  
your jurisdiction.  
There by that vile folk  
was I released from that deceitful world,  
the love of which debases many souls,  
and from my martyrdom attained this peace.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XVI

*The Fifth Heaven. Mars. The Happiness of Heroism*

*The Old and the New Population of Florence*

O thou our small nobility of blood!  
That thou shouldst make some people boast of thee  
down here, where languid our affections are,  
will never be to me a wondrous thing;  
for there, where love turns not aside, in Heaven  
I mean, ev'n I myself was proud of thee.  
Thou truly art a cloak which soon grows short;  
so that from day to day, if thou be not  
patched out, time goes around thee with its shears.  
Hence with the "you," which Rome the first endured,  
and in whose use her race least perseveres,  
my words began again; whence Beatrice,  
who at a little distance from me stood,  
by smiling here, resembled her who coughed  
at the first fault ascribed to Guinevere.  
"You are my father," I began to say;  
"you to my speech complete assurance give;  
you so uplift me, that I 'm more than I.  
My mind is by so many brooklets filled  
with joy, that it congratulates itself  
that, without breaking, it can stand the strain  
Tell me, then, you my dear progenitor,  
who were your ancestors, and what the years  
which in your boyhood's time were chronicled;  
and tell me of the sheepfold of St. John,  
how large it was, and who were in it then,  
that in the highest seats deserved to sit."  
As at the breathing of the winds a coal  
is quickened into flame, ev'n so I saw,  
at my endearing words, that bright light glow;  
and to mine eyes as fairer it became,  
so with a gentler and a sweeter voice,  
but not in this our modern form of speech,  
it said to me: "From that day on, when 'Hail'  
was uttered, to the child-birth when my mother,  
who now is sainted, was relieved of me  
who burdened her, this fire had to its Lion  
four hundred fifty and thirty times returned  
to light itself again beneath its paws.  
My first progenitors and I were born



just there where first the town's last ward is found  
by him who runneth in your annual race.  
Let of my forebears this suffice to hear;  
for as to who they were, and whence came hither,  
silence is more commendable than speech.  
All those that 'tween Mars's statue and the Baptist  
who at that time were able to bear arms,  
were but the fifth of those that live there now;  
but then its citizens, who now with men  
from Campi, Certaldo and Figghine mix,  
were in the lowest artisan seen pure.  
Oh, how much better it would be to keep  
as neighbors those to whom I here refer,  
and at Galluzzo and Trespiano mark  
our boundary, than have them in our town,  
and bear the stench of Aguglione's churl,  
and Signa's, who for graft hath sharpened eyes!  
If those who in the world are lowest fallen,  
had not step-mother-like to Caesar been,  
but kind, as to her son a mother is;  
one such is now a Florentine, and barter  
and trades, who would have turned to Semifonti,  
where formerly his grandsire mounted guard.  
The Conti still would own their Montemurlo,  
the Cerchi in Acone's parish be,  
and in the Valdigueve still, perhaps,  
the Buondelmonti. Ever was the mixing  
of clans the fountain of the city's woe,  
as of the body's ill superfluous food;  
for sooner will a blinded bull succumb  
than will a blinded lamb, and one sword oft  
will cut both more and better than will five.  
If thou consider Luni and Urbisaglia  
how they have gone, and how now in their wake  
Chiusi and Sinigaglia go their way,  
it will not seem or strange for thee or hard,  
to hear how families degenerate,  
since even cities have their term of life.  
All your creations die, as well as you;  
but death conceals itself in some that long  
endure, while individual lives are short!  
And as the turning of the lunar sphere  
covers and bares earth's shores without surcease,  
ev'n so doth Fortune deal with Florence; hence,  
it should not seem a wondrous thing to thee  
what I of those great Florentines shall say,  
whose fame is hidden in the folds of time.  
I saw the Ughi, and saw the Catellini,

Filippi, Greci, Ormanni and Alberichi,  
though in decline, illustrious citizens;  
and I, as great as they were ancient, saw,  
with him of La Sanella, him of L'Arca,  
the Soldanieri, Ardinghi and Bostichi.  
Over the gate which is at present burdened  
with recent felony of such great weight,  
that there will soon be jetsam from the bark,  
the Ravignani dwelt, from whom there sprung  
Count Guido, and whoever since his time  
hath noble Bellincione's name assumed.  
He of La Pressa knew already how  
to rule; and Galigàio in his house  
already had a gilded hilt and pummel.  
Mighty already were the Column of the Vair,  
Sachetti, Giuochi, Fifanti and Barucci,  
the Galli, and those that for the bushel blush.  
The stock whence the Calfucci sprang was great  
already; while already were the Sizzii  
and Arigucci raised to curule chairs.  
And oh, how great I saw those now undone  
through arrogance! Then, too, the golden balls  
decked Florence forth in all her mighty deeds.  
So likewise fared the ancestors of those,  
who, when your church is vacant, always fatten  
by staying in consistory together.  
The haughty race, which like a dragon deals  
with those that flee, and unto those that show  
their teeth or purse, is peaceful as a lamb,  
was rising now, but from so low a clan,  
that Ubertin Donati was displeased,  
when by his own wife's father made their kin.  
Already had the Caponsacco dropped  
from Fiesole into the Market, while,  
as townsmen, good were Guida and Infangato.  
I'll tell a thing incredible and true:  
the small ring then was entered by a gate,  
which from the della Pera took its name.  
Each one who bears that mighty Baron's arms,  
whose name and whose renown the festival  
of Thomas keepeth green, received from him  
knighthood and privilege; though he, today  
consorteth with the people, who surrounds  
them with a border. Both the Gualterotti  
and Importuni were already there;  
and now their Borgo would more quiet be,  
if from new neighbors it were fasting still.  
The family, which to your tears gave birth,

through the just scorn which brought about your death,  
and put an end to your once happy life,  
was honored, in itself and in its kin.  
How, Buondelmonte, ill-advised thou wast  
to flee their marriage, counselled by another!  
Many would happy be, who now are sad,  
if God had to the Ema granted thee,  
when coming for the first time into town;  
but Florence to that mutilated stone  
which guards the bridge, must needs a sacrifice  
afford, when in her final hour of peace.  
With these same families, and others with them  
Florence I saw in such a state of rest,  
that no occasion had she then for tears;  
with these same families I saw her then  
so glorious and so righteous, that the Lily  
was never set upon a staff reversed,  
nor made, because of her divisions, red.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XVII

*The Fifth Heaven. Mars. The Happiness of Heroism*

*Foreknowledge and Freedom. Dante's Exile and First Refuge*

As that one came to Clymenē, who still  
to sons makes fathers chary, to be sure  
of that which he had heard against himself;  
even such was I, and such was felt to be  
by Beatrice, and by the holy lamp,  
who first on my account had changed his place.  
Wherefore my Lady said to me: “Express  
thy wish’s ardor, so that it may issue  
clearly impressed by its internal stamp;  
not that our knowledge may the greater grow  
by words of thine, but that thou mayst get used  
to tell thy thirst, that we may pour thee drink!”  
“O my dear root, that so dost lift thyself,  
that, as terrestrial minds perceive that no  
triangle holds two angles which are both  
obtuse; thou, likewise, gazing at the Point  
to which all things are present, dost perceive  
contingent things, ere in themselves they are;  
while I by Virgil was accompanied,  
upward around the Mount which healeth souls,  
and downward through the region of the dead,  
grave words were told me of my future life;  
although, indeed, I feel myself foursquare  
against the blows of fortune; my desire  
would hence contented be, were I to hear  
what kind of fortune is approaching me,  
for slower comes an arrow when foreseen.”  
Thus to that light I spoke, which had before  
addressed me; and, as Beatrice had willed,  
so was my wish confessed. Not in vague terms,  
in which the foolish folk of old were wont  
to get entangled, ere the Lamb of God,  
who taketh sins away, was put to death,  
but with clear words and unambiguous speech,  
that father’s love replied, which by its smile  
was both concealed and rendered manifest:  
“Contingence, which outside your matter’s volume  
doth not extend, is in the Eternal Vision  
wholly depicted; yet it taketh not  
necessity therefrom, save as a ship,

while down a current moving, doth from eyes  
which mirror it.  
Therefrom, as from an organ  
sweet harmony attains one's ears, the time  
which is for thee preparing strikes my sight.  
As through his false and cruel step-mother  
Hippolytus left Athens, so must thou  
leave Florence. This is willed already, this  
is sought, and soon will be achieved by him  
who meditates it there where every day  
Christ is both bought and sold. As usually,  
the blame will be imputed to the wronged  
in public outcry; but revenge for it  
will witness to the truth dispensing it.  
Thou shalt abandon all that thou hast loved  
with greatest tenderness; and of its shafts  
this is the one which exile's bow shoots first.  
Thou shalt find out how salt another's bread  
is wont to taste, and what a painful thing  
is going up and down another's stairs.  
But what will bow thy shoulders most will be  
the bad and foolish company, with whom  
thou 'lt fall into this vale; for all ungrateful,  
mad and malevolent will it become  
against thee; but soon thereafter, it, not thou,  
will have its forehead red with blood. Its deeds  
will furnish proof of its bestiality;  
hence well-becoming will it be for thee  
to have made thyself a party by thyself.  
Thy earliest refuge and first lodging-place  
shall be the courtesy of that great Lombard,  
who on the Ladder bears the holy Bird;  
and who will have for thee such kind regard,  
that 'tween you two, in doing and in asking,  
that will be first, which is with others last.  
With him the man thou 'lt see, who was, when born,  
so stamped by this strong star, that notable  
will be his deeds. By reason of his youth,  
the nations are not yet aware of him,  
for only nine years have these wheels revolved  
around him; but, before the Gascon cheat  
the noble Henry, sparks of his character  
will manifest themselves by disregard  
for money or for toil. And so well known  
will his munificence hereafter be,  
that ev'n his enemies will not be able  
to still their tongues at it. On him rely,  
and on his favors; many will be changed

because of him, the rich and those that beg  
exchanging states; and written on thy mind  
shalt thou bear hence, but shalt not tell it," — here  
he told me things incredible to those  
who shall be present. Then he added: "Son,  
glosses are these on what was said to thee;  
behold the snares which lie concealed behind  
not many circlings of the sun. And yet  
I would not have thee envious toward thy neighbors,  
because thy life far longer will extend  
than will the punishment of their bad faith."  
When by his silence that blest soul had showed  
that he was through with weaving in the woof  
of that same web which I had given him warped,  
then I began, like one who, doubting, longs  
for counsel from a man who both perceives,  
wills righteously and loves: "I clearly see,  
my father, how toward me a time spurs on,  
to deal me such a blow as heaviest is  
to him who gives least heed to it; 't is, therefore, well  
that I should so with foresight arm myself,  
that if the place which is to me most dear  
be taken from me, I lose not the rest  
by these my verses. Downward through the world  
whose bitterness is endless, and around  
the Mount, from whose fair top my Lady's eyes  
have lifted me, and afterward through Heaven  
from light to light, things have I heard which, if  
repeated, will for many have the taste  
of bitter herbs; and yet, if I 'm to truth  
a timid friend, I fear lest life I lose  
with those who shall of this age speak as ancient."  
The light, wherein that treasure smiled, which there  
I found, sparkled at first, as in a sunbeam  
a golden mirror would; and then replied:  
"A conscience gloomy either with its own,  
or with another's shame, will feel, indeed,  
the harshness of thy words; yet, none the less,  
all falsehood having been removed from it,  
cause thy whole vision to be manifest,  
and where the itch is let the scratching be!  
For if, when tasted first, thy voice shall prove  
offensive, it will after leave behind it,  
when once digested, vital nourishment.  
This cry of thine will do as doth the wind,  
which strikes the loftiest summits most; and this  
will no slight honor prove. Hence only souls  
well known to fame were shown thee in these Heavens,

upon the Mount, and in the woeful Vale;  
because the mind of him who hears rests not,  
nor strengthens its belief by illustrations  
based upon what is hidden and unknown,  
or by an argument that is not clear.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XVIII

*The Fifth Heaven. Mars. The Spirits of Heroes*

*The Sixth Heaven. Jupiter. The Happiness of Justice*

That blessèd mirror was enjoying now  
its thoughts alone, and I was tasting mine,  
tempering their sweetness with their bitterness;  
when that same Lady who was leading me  
to God, said: "Change thy thought; recall that near  
I am to Who unburdens every wrong."  
I turned me at my Comfort's loving voice;  
and in her holy eyes what kind of love  
I then beheld, I here refrain from saying;  
not only since mine own words I distrust,  
but since my mind can not return so far  
above itself, unless Another guide it.  
This only of that moment can I tell,  
that my affection, while I gazed at her,  
was freed from longing for all other things,  
as long as Joy Eternal, which directly shone  
on Beatrice, with its reflected aspect  
was from her lovely face contenting me.  
Conquering me with the splendor of a smile,  
she said: "Turn round and hark; for Paradise  
is not exclusively within my eyes."  
As our affection here is seen at times  
upon our countenance, if such it be  
that our whole spirit is thereby absorbed;  
so, in the flaming of the blest effulgence  
to whom I turned, I recognized his wish  
to have a little further talk with me.  
"In this fifth threshold of the Tree," it then  
began, "which from its summit draws its life,  
always bears fruit, and never loses leaves,  
are blessèd spirits, who, before they came  
to Heaven, enjoyed so great a fame below,  
that every Muse would be thereby enriched.  
Gaze, therefore, at the Cross's arms; and he,  
whom I shall name, will there perform the act,  
which in a cloud its own swift fire performs."  
I saw a splendor drawn along the Cross  
at Joshua's name, the moment it was uttered,  
nor did I note the name before the deed.  
And at great Maccabaeus' name, I saw



another spirit whirling as he moved;  
and gladness was the whip that turned the top.  
Likewise, at Charlemagne's and Roland's names,  
my gaze intently followed two of them,  
as doth a falconer's eye his flying bird.  
Then William afterward, and Renoart,  
Duke Godfrey next, and Robert Guiscard drew  
my sight along that Cross. And then,  
moving and mingling with the other lights,  
the soul which had addressed me, showed how great  
an artist 'mong Heaven's choristers he was.  
Round to my right I turned me to behold  
in Beatrice my duty, signified  
by speech or act;  
and I beheld her eyes  
so joyous and so clear, that what she seemed  
surpassed her other and her latest wont.  
And as, because of feeling more delight  
in doing good, a man from day to day  
perceiveth that his virtue is increasing;  
ev'n so, on seeing that that miracle  
was fairer now, I noticed that the arc  
of my revolving with the heavens had grown.  
And as within a little space of time  
a lady turneth white, whene'er her face  
rids itself of the burden of its shame;  
such to mine eyes the change, when I had turned,  
through the white color of the temperate  
sixth star, which had received me in itself.  
I saw within that Jovial torch of light  
the sparkling of the love contained in it,  
shaping our language forth before mine eyes;  
and even as birds on rising from the shore,  
as if in gratulation at the food they've found,  
form groups, now round, and now of other shapes;  
thus holy creatures in those lights were singing,  
as here and there they flew, and with their forms  
made of themselves now *D*, now *I*, now *L*.  
Each singing to its note, they moved at first;  
then, on becoming one of these same letters,  
they stopped a little while, and silent kept.  
O thou divine Pegàsean Muse, that glorious  
dost make men's genius, and dost render it  
long-lived, as it through thee doth towns and realms,  
so shed thy light on me, that I may here  
describe their figures ev'n as I perceived them;  
in these brief verses let thy power appear!  
They then displayed themselves in consonants

and vowels five times seven; and as their parts  
seemed to be said to me, I noted them.  
Diligite Justitiam were first verb  
and noun of all that was depicted there;  
Qui Judicatis Terram were the last.  
Then in the fifth word's *M* they so remained  
arranged, that Jupiter seemed silver there  
pricked out with gold.  
And other lights I saw  
descend upon the summit of the *M*,  
and rest there, singing, I believe, the Good  
which draws them to Itself. Then, as when logs  
are struck while burning, endless sparks fly up,  
whence fools are wont to draw their auguries;  
more than a thousand lights appeared to rise,  
and upward move, some much, and some a little,  
even as the Sun, which setteth them on fire,  
allotted them; and when they quiet were,  
each in its place, an Eagle's head and neck  
I saw portrayed by that outstanding fire.  
He who paints there hath none to be His guide,  
but is His own guide; and from Him derives  
the instinct which is formative in nests.  
The other blest ones, who at first appeared  
content to form a Lily on the *M*,  
went slowly on to shape the Eagle's form.  
O gentle star, what and how many gems  
proved to me that our justice here results  
from that heaven's influence which is gemmed by thee!  
I therefore pray the Mind, wherein thy motion  
and virtue start, that It may so regard  
the source, whence comes the smoke which spoils thy rays,  
that It may now a second time be wroth  
with sale and purchase in that temple's court,  
whose walls were built with blood and martyrdom.  
O soldiers of the heaven I contemplate,  
pray ye for those that are on earth, all gone  
astray behind the bad example there!  
War was once carried on with swords; but now  
by taking here and there that bread away,  
the Pitying Father keepeth locked from none.  
But thou, that writest but to cancel, think  
that Peter and Paul, who for that vineyard died,  
which thou art laying waste, are still alive!  
Well mayst thou say: "So set is my desire  
on him, whose will it was to live alone,  
and for a dance was led to martyrdom,  
that I know neither Fisherman nor Paul."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XIX

*The Sixth Heaven. Jupiter. The Happiness of Justice*

*Inscrutability of God's Justice. Unjust Princes*

Before me now, with wings outspread, appeared  
the lovely image, which in sweet fruition  
those joyous interwoven spirits made.  
Each one of them a little ruby seemed,  
wherein a ray of sunlight burned so brightly,  
that it was mirrored back into mine eyes.  
And what I now must needs relate, no voice  
hath e'er reported, nor hath ink inscribed,  
nor hath imagination ever grasped;  
for I both saw and heard the beak converse,  
and utter in its voice both 'I' and 'My,'  
when in its meaning it was 'We' and 'Our.'  
And it began: "Because of being just  
and merciful, I'm to a glory raised  
up here, which doth not let itself be won  
by mere desire; and such a fame I left  
on earth, that evil people there commend it,  
but fail to follow its recorded works."  
As out of many embers one sole heat  
makes itself felt, so from that image, formed  
by many loves, a single voice came forth.  
Hence I thereafter: "O perpetual flowers  
of joy eternal, who let all your odors  
seem only one to me, by breathing, break  
the painful fast,  
which long hath given me hunger,  
for I on earth have found no food for it.  
Well do I know that, even if in Heaven  
Justice Divine makes of another realm  
its looking-glass, yours apprehends it not  
through any veil. Ye know with what attention  
I gird myself to listen; and ye know  
the doubt which is so old a fast for me."  
And as a falcon, from his hood set free,  
tosses his head, and, flapping his proud wings,  
displays his eagerness, and plumes himself;  
such I beheld the symbol which is weaved  
by praises of the Grace Divine, become  
with songs, which who up there rejoices knows.  
It then began: "He who His compass turned

around the world's last verge, and in it parted  
its many hidden things from those revealed,  
was not so able to impress His Virtue  
on all the world, that His conceived ideal  
should not remain in infinite excess.  
And this assures one that the first proud being  
who greater was than all created spirits,  
through not awaiting light, untimely fell;  
it hence results that every lesser nature  
is but a scant recipient for the Good  
which hath no end, and measures Self by Self.  
Your vision, therefore, which must needs be one  
of that Mind's rays,  
wherewith all things are filled,  
of its own nature cannot be so strong,  
that it should not perceive its Source as being  
far greater than is all that it can see.  
The vision, therefore, which your world receives,  
into Eternal Justice penetrates  
as doth an eye into the sea; because,  
though it perceive its bottom near the shore,  
when on the deep it sees it not; yet there  
it is, but its great depth conceals it.  
That is not light, which comes not from the Sky  
which never clouds itself; but rather darkness,  
a shadow of the flesh, or else its poison.  
Sufficiently disclosed to thee is now  
the hiding-place which once concealed from thee  
the Living Justice, which so frequently  
it was thy wont to question; for thou saidst:  
'A man is born upon the Indus' banks,  
with no one there to speak of Christ, or read,  
or write; and all his actions and desires  
are good, as far as human reason sees,  
and without sin in either life or speech;  
then, unbaptized and without faith, he dies.  
Wherein consists the Justice which condemns him?  
Where is his fault, if he believeth not?'  
Now who art thou, that as a judge would'st sit  
to judge of things a thousand miles away  
with the short vision of a human span?  
Surely for him who subtly strives with me,  
were not the Scriptures ruling over you,  
wondrous occasions would there be for doubt.  
O earthly creatures! O uncultured minds!  
The Primal Will, which of Itself is Good,  
ne'er from Itself, the Highest Goodness, moved.  
That much is just, which is therewith accordant;

no good created draws It to itself,  
but It by radiating causes it.”  
As o’er her nest a stork moves circling round,  
after the feeding of her little ones,  
and as the one that ’s fed looks up at her;  
such did the blessed shape become, which moved  
its pinions, by so many counsels urged,  
and, likewise, so did I lift up my brows.  
Wheeling around, it sang and said: “As now  
my notes to thee, that understand’st them not,  
such to you mortals is Eternal Justice.”  
When those bright flamings of the Holy Spirit  
had come to rest, still in the shape which caused  
the Romans to be honored by the world,  
“None to this Kingdom” it began again,  
“ever ascended without faith in Christ,  
either before, or after He was nailed  
upon the tree. But many, lo! shout ‘Christ!’  
who at the Judgment shall be far less near Him,  
than will be such an one who knows not Christ;  
Christians like these the Ethiop will condemn,  
when parted shall the two assemblies be,  
one rich eternally, the other poor.  
What will the Persians to your rulers say,  
when lying open they shall see the Book,  
wherein all their dispraises are inscribed?  
There will be seen, among the deeds of Albert,  
that which ere long will move the pen, because  
thereby Prague’s kingdom will become a waste.  
There will be seen the woe, which on the Seine  
he who shall perish by a boar skin’s blow,  
bringeth about by falsifying coin.  
There will be seen the pride and thirsty greed,  
which makes the Scot and Englishman so mad,  
that neither can remain within his bounds.  
One will see there the easy life and lust  
of him of Spain, and of Bohemia, too,  
who neither of them knew, nor cared for, valor.  
One will see there, marked with a single *I*,  
the virtues of Jerusalem’s lame king,  
whereas an *M* will mark the contrary.  
One will see there the greed and cowardice  
of him who ruleth o’er the isle of fire,  
where once Anchises ended his long life.  
And, to explain his insignificance,  
his record will consist of shortened words,  
which in a little space will notice much.  
And there to each and all will be revealed

the foul deeds of his uncle and his brother,  
who two crowns and a noble line disgraced.  
And he of Portugal, and he of Norway,  
will there be known, as also Rascia's prince,  
who in an ill hour saw Venetia's coin.  
O happy Hungary, if she no more  
shall let herself be wronged! Happy Navarre,  
if with her girding hills she arm herself!  
And both these should believe that Nicosia  
and Famagosta, as a proof of this,  
are wailing now, and raging at their beast,  
because he does not differ from the rest."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XX

*The Sixth Heaven. Jupiter. The Happiness of Justice*

*Just Princes. Faith and Salvation. Predestination*

When he who sheddeth light on all the world  
so far below our hemisphere descends,  
that daylight fades away on every side,  
the sky, once lighted up by him alone,  
is quickly rendered visible again  
by many lights, whereof one only shines;  
and I this happening in the sky recalled,  
when silent in the blessed beak became  
the Standard of the world and of its leaders;  
for, brighter far,  
those living lights commenced  
songs which have fled and fallen from my mind.  
O thou sweet Love, that with a smile dost cloak thee,  
how ardent in those flutes didst thou appear,  
whose only breath was that of holy thoughts!  
After those precious and pellucid jewels  
wherewith I saw the sixth great light engemmed,  
had brought to silence their angelic chimes,  
I seemed to hear the murmur of a brook,  
which, flowing limpid down from rock to rock,  
reveals the abundance of its mountain-springs.  
And as a sound takes from a cittern's neck  
its form, even as the air that enters it  
doth from the vent-hole of a shepherd's pipe,  
so, all delay of waiting laid aside,  
that murmur of the Eagle mounted up  
along its neck, as if it hollow were.  
A voice it there became, and through its beak  
it issued forth in words, such as the heart  
whereon I wrote them down, was longing for.  
"That part of me which sees, and braves the sun,  
in mortal eagles," it began again,  
"must now be looked upon attentively,  
for of the fires wherewith I shape me, those  
wherewith the eye is sparkling in my head,  
the highest are of all their ordered grades.  
He that as pupil in the middle shines,  
was once the singer of the Holy Spirit,  
who bore the Ark about from town to town;  
he now knows how deserving was his song,

so far as it resulted from his will,  
by the reward proportioned to its merit.  
Of five that make a circle for my brow,  
the spirit nearest to my beak was he,  
who comforted the widow for her son;  
he now knows by his personal experience  
of this sweet life and of its opposite,  
how dear it costs one not to follow Christ.  
In the circumference of which I speak,  
he that comes next upon the rising arc,  
delayed his death by genuine repentance;  
he now knows that Eternal Justice brooks  
no change, whenever worthy prayers below  
to-morrow's make of that which was today's.  
The one who follows, with the laws and me,  
with good intentions which produced bad fruits,  
made himself Greek by ceding to the Shepherd;  
he now knows that the ill, from his good deed  
derived, is not a cause of harm to him,  
although thereby the world may be destroyed.  
He whom thou seest in the downward arc,  
the William was, for whom that country mourns,  
which weeps because its Charles and Frederick live;  
he now knows how Heaven loves a righteous king,  
and by his splendor's glow  
reveals it still.  
Who in the erring world below would think  
that Ripheus the Trojan was the fifth  
among the holy lights which form this curve?  
He now knows many of the things the world  
is impotent to see in Grace Divine,  
although his sight discerneth not its depths.  
Like a young lark which, as it soars through space,  
first sings, and then is silent, satisfied  
with the last sweetness which contented her;  
such seemed to me the image of the seal  
of that Eternal Pleasure, by whose will  
each thing becometh what it is. And though,  
with reference to my doubt, up there I was,  
as glass is to the color which it clothes,  
it could not bear to bide its time in silence;  
but by the very force of its own weight  
urged from my mouth the words, "What things are these?"  
whereat I saw a glorious feast of sparkling.  
Thereafter, with its eye the more enkindled,  
the blessed Sign, in order not to keep me  
in wondering suspense, replied to me:  
"I see that thou believest all these things,



because I say them, but dost not see how;  
and therefore, though believed in, they are hidden.  
Thou dost as one who fully knows a thing  
by name, but cannot see just what it is,  
unless another make it manifest.  
*Regnum Coelorum* suffers violence  
from burning love, and from a living hope,  
which vanquishes the Will Divine; though not  
as man o'ercometh man, but conquers it  
because it willeth to be overcome;  
and so, though vanquished, by its goodness wins.  
The first life in the eyebrow, and the fifth  
cause thee to be amazed, because therewith  
thou see'st the region of the Angels painted.  
They did not issue Gentiles from their bodies,  
as thou dost think, but Christians, with firm faith,  
one in the Feet that were to suffer, one,  
in those that had. For one, to claim his bones,  
came back from Hell, where no one ever wills  
the good again; and this was the reward  
of living hope; of living hope which put  
its trust in prayers addressed to God to raise him,  
that thus his will might have a chance to act.  
The glorious soul I speak of, when the flesh  
had been regained, wherein he stayed not long,  
believed in Him, who had the power to help him;  
and through belief so warmed to genuine love,  
that he was worthy at his second death  
to come to this festivity. The other,  
through grace from so profound a spring distilled,  
that never hath the eye of any creature  
reached its first wave, set all his love below  
on righteousness; hence God, from grace to grace,  
to our redemption which is still to be,  
opened his eyes; he hence believed in it,  
and afterward endured no more the stench  
of Paganism; and for it he rebuked  
those who perverted were. And those three Ladies  
thou sawest at the right wheel of the Car,  
in lieu of baptism, were as sponsors for him  
more than a thousand years ere baptism was.  
O thou Predestination, how remote  
are thy foundations from the sight of those  
who do not see the First Cause as a whole!  
And ye, O mortals, keep yourselves in check,  
when judging men; for we, who God behold,  
know not as yet all those that are elect;  
and pleasant is such ignorance to us,

because our good is in this good refined,  
that what is willed by God, we also will.”  
Thus, then, by that divinely pictured image,  
to make the shortness of my vision clear,  
a pleasant medicine was granted me.  
And as a skillful cithern player makes  
the string’s vibrations follow a good singer,  
whereby the song acquires more power to please;  
even so, while it was speaking, I recall  
that both those blessèd lights I then beheld,  
as when, in winking, eyes concordant are,  
moving their flamelets to the Eagle’s words.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXI

*The Seventh Heaven. Saturn. The Happiness of Contemplation. The Golden Ladder. Predestination. St. Peter Damian*

And now mine eyes upon my Lady's face  
were fixed again, and therewithal my mind,  
which from all other objects had withdrawn.  
Nor was she smiling then; but: "Should I smile,"  
she said, addressing me, "like Sèmelè  
wouldst thou become, when she to ashes turned;  
because my beauty, which along the stairs  
of this eternal palace brighter burns,  
as thou hast seen, the higher we ascend,  
is so resplendent that thy mortal strength  
at its effulgence, were it not restrained,  
would be as is a bough which lightning rends.  
Up to the seventh splendor we are raised,  
which now beneath the burning Lion's breast  
is raying downward mingled with his strength.  
Intently fix thy mind behind thine eyes,  
and cause them to be mirrors of the figure  
which in this mirror will appear to thee."  
He that should know what, in the blessèd face,  
the nature of my vision's pasture was,  
when I transferred me to another care,  
would know, since one  
was outweighed by the other,  
how gladly I obeyed my heavenly Guide.  
Within the crystal which, as round the world  
it whirls, bears its illustrious leader's name,  
under whose rule all wickedness lay dead,  
colored like gold whereon a sun-beam shone,  
a Ladder I beheld, which so high up  
ascended, that my eye pursued it not.  
I saw, moreover, coming down its steps  
so many glowing splendors, that I thought  
that every star seen shining in the sky  
had been poured out of it. And even as daws,  
as is their natural wont, when day begins,  
together move to warm their chilly plumes;  
and then without returning some fly off,  
and some go back to whence they started first,  
while others, whirling in a circle, stay;  
such was, it seemed to me, the fashion here  
within the sparkling throng which came together,

whene'er they met upon a certain round;  
and that which nearest to me there remained,  
became so bright, that in my thoughts I said:  
"I clearly see the love thou showest me."  
But she, whence I await the how and when  
of silence and of speech, keeps still; hence I,  
against my will, do well by asking naught.  
She, thereupon, who in the sight of Him  
who seeth everything, my silence saw,  
said unto me: "Appease thy warm desire!"  
And I began: "My merit doth not make me  
worthy of thy reply; but, for the sake  
of her who granteth me the right to ask,  
make known to me, blest life that art concealed  
in thine own joy, the cause which draweth thee  
so closely to my side; and tell me why  
that gentle symphony of Paradise  
is silent in this wheel, which down below  
sounds so devoutly through the other spheres."  
"Thy hearing is as mortal as thy sight;"  
it answered me; "there is no singing here  
because of that which hinders Beatrice  
from smiling. Down the holy Ladder's steps  
have I so far descended, but to give thee  
a welcome with my words and with the light  
which mantles me; nor hath a greater love  
caused me to be more ready; for as much  
or more love burns up yonder, as those flames  
reveal to thee; but that great charity  
which makes us ready servants of the Counsel  
which rules the world, allots here, as thou seest."  
"I well perceive, O holy lamp," said I,  
"how that free love is in this court enough  
for following the Eternal Providence;  
but this is what seems hard for me to see,  
why thou alone among thy consorts here  
predestinated wert for just this task."  
No sooner had I come to my last word,  
than, like a rapid millstone whirling round,  
the light had of its middle made its center;  
and then the love within it answered me:  
"Piercing the light wherein I'm here embosomed,  
a ray of light divine upon me falls,  
whose virtue, as it mingles with my sight,  
so lifts me o'er myself, that I behold  
that Highest Essence whence it emanates.  
Hence comes the joy with which I'm flaming now,  
for with my sight, as far as it is clear,

I equalize the clearness of my flame.  
And yet the most enlightened soul in Heaven,  
the Seraph who hath eyes most fixed on God,  
would not avail to satisfy thy question;  
for what thou askest plumbeth so the depths  
of God's eternal statute, that from all  
created vision it is cut away.  
And to the mortal world, on thy return,  
carry this charge, that it presume no more  
to move its feet toward such a distant goal.  
The mind which shineth here, on earth is smoky;  
consider, hence, how it can do down there  
what, though assumed to Heaven, it cannot do.”  
So all-conclusive were his words to me,  
that, giving up the question, I confined me  
to asking humbly of him who he was.  
“’Tween Italy's two seashores cliffs arise,  
not very far from thine own native place,  
so high, that thunders peal much lower down;  
and form a lofty ridge called Càtria,  
'neath which a hermitage is consecrate,  
whose wont to worship only gives it up.”  
He thus began for me his third address,  
and then, continuing, said: “To serving God  
I there became so steadfastly devoted,  
that, feeding upon olive juice alone,  
I readily endured both heat and cold,  
and was with thoughts contemplative content.  
That cloister's wont it was to yield these heavens  
abundant fruit; but it hath now become  
so empty, that its state must soon be known.  
In that place I was known as Peter Damian;  
and Sinning Peter in Our Lady's House  
I was, upon the Adriatic shore.  
But little mortal life remained to me,  
when I was sought, and forced to take the hat,  
which always passes on from bad to worse.  
Lean and barefooted Cephas came, and then,  
the Holy Spirit's mighty Vessel came,  
eating the food of any hostelry;  
our modern shepherds now on either side  
need help to prop them, help — they weigh so much! —  
to guide, and help to hold them up behind.  
They cover so their palfreys with their cloaks,  
that two beasts walk beneath a single hide.  
O Patience, that dost tolerate so much!”  
More flamelets at these words I saw descend  
from step to step, and whirl; and every whirl

caused each of them to grow more beautiful;  
and round this flame they came, and having stopped,  
uttered so deep a cry, that none could here  
resemble it; nor did I understand  
its words; its thunder overcame me so.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXII

*The Seventh Heaven. Saturn. St. Benedict*

*The Eighth or Starry Heaven. The Twins*

Oppressed with stupor, to my Guide I turned,  
as would a little child who always runs  
for help to where he most confides; and she,  
as doth a mother who at once assists  
her pale and breathless offspring with her voice,  
whose wont is to assure him, said to me:  
“Knowest thou not that thou art now in Heaven?  
and know’st thou not that all of Heaven is holy,  
and that of good zeal cometh all done here?  
To what extent the song, as well as I  
by smiling, would have changed thee, thou canst now  
imagine, since the cry has shocked thee so;  
in it, if thou hadst understood its prayers,  
already were that vengeance known to thee,  
which thou shalt see before thou die. Our sword  
up here cuts nor in haste nor tardily,  
save as to one it seems, who waits for it  
with either apprehension or desire.  
But turn thyself around toward others now;  
for many illustrious spirits shalt thou see,  
if, as I tell thee, thou direct thine eyes.  
Mine eyes I then directed as she pleased,  
and saw a hundred little spheres which, gathering,  
by mutual rays each other fairer made.  
Like one I was, who checks within himself  
the goad of his desire, and dares not ask,  
so great his fear lest he may ask too much.  
The largest and most lustrous of those pearls  
came forward thereupon, to sate my wish  
concerning it.  
Within it then I heard:  
“If thou, as I do, couldst behold the love  
which burns among us here, thy thoughts would be  
expressed; but lest, by waiting, thou delay  
thy lofty aim, I’ll answer now the thought  
which causes thee to so restrain thyself.  
That mountain on whose slope Casino stands,  
was once frequented on its top by folk,  
who both deluded were and ill-disposed.  
And he am I, who first up yonder bore

the name of Him, who carried down to earth  
the truth which here exalteth us so much;  
and such abundant grace upon me shone,  
that I withdrew the neighboring villages  
from that vain worship which seduced the world.  
These other fires were all contemplatives,  
men who were kindled by the heat which brings  
the flowers and fruits of holiness to birth.  
Here is Macarius, Romuald is here,  
and here are those my brethren, who remained  
in cloisters, and who steadfast kept their hearts.”  
And I to him: “The affection shown by thee,  
in talking with me, and the kindness  
I see and note in all your burning flames,  
have opened wide my trust, even as the sun  
dilates the rose, whene’er its petals ope  
as widely as they can. Because of this  
I pray thee, father; do thou, then, inform me  
if I am worthy to receive such grace,  
as to behold thee with thy face unveiled.”  
Then “Brother,” he replied, “thy great desire  
in the last sphere above shall be fulfilled,  
where all thine others are, and mine as well.  
Every desire is perfect there, mature  
and whole; in that sphere only is each part  
where it has always been; for it is not  
in space, nor turns on poles, and up to it  
our Ladder reaches; and because of this  
it steals itself away beyond thy ken.  
Jacob, the patriarch, beheld it stretch  
thus far its upper portion, when of old  
laden with Angels it appeared to him.  
But from the earth, to climb it, no one now  
removes his feet, and my monastic rule  
remains but as a means of wasting paper.  
Walls which of old an abbey used to be,  
have now become the dens of thieves, and cowls  
are sacks now, filled with naught but wretched meal.  
But heavy usury doth not rebel  
against God’s will, as much as doth the fruit  
which renders so insane the hearts of monks;  
for, whatsoe’er the Church may hold in trust,  
is all for those that ask it in God’s name,  
and not for relatives, or what is worse.  
So soft the flesh of mortals is, that good  
beginnings do not last as long below,  
as from an oak’s until its acorn’s birth.  
Peter began with neither gold nor silver,



and I, with prayers and fasts began my convent,  
as Francis, with humility, did his.  
And if thou look at each of these beginnings,  
and then consider whither each hath run,  
thou 't see that what was white hath turned to brown.  
Jordan turned backward, and the water fleeing  
when God so willed, were much more wonderful  
to see, in fact, than succor would be here.”  
He thus addressed me; to his company  
thereat returning, they together closed;  
then, like a whirlwind, all were upward rapt.  
The gentle Lady up that Ladder's rounds  
urged me behind them by a sign alone,  
her virtue so o'ercame my natural weight;  
nor here below, where one goes up and down  
by natural law, was motion e'er so swift,  
as to be equal to my pinions' flight.  
So may I, Reader, once again return  
to that celestial triumph, for whose sake  
I oft bewail my sins and smite my breast;  
thou hadst not drawn away and put thy finger  
as quickly into fire, as I beheld  
the sign which follows Taurus, and was in it.  
O glorious stars, O light, that pregnant art  
with mighty virtue, from which I acknowledge  
all of my genius, whatsoe'er it be;  
with you was born, and in your midst was hiding  
he who is father of all mortal life,  
when first I breathed the Tuscan air; and then,  
when grace had been bestowed upon me here  
to enter that high wheel which turns you round,  
your region was the one allotted me.  
To you my sighing soul devoutly prays,  
that it may now acquire the power it needs  
for that hard task, which draws her to itself.”  
“To Ultimate Salvation thou art now  
so near,” in answer Beatrice began,  
“that clear should be thine eyes, and keen their sight.  
Therefore, ere further thou in-it thyself,  
look downward, and behold how great a world  
I have already set beneath thy feet;  
so that thy heart, as joyous as it can,  
may show itself to that triumphant throng  
which happy comes through this ethereal sphere.”  
Then with my vision I returned through one  
and all seven spheres, and this globe I beheld  
such that its mean appearance made me smile;  
hence that opinion I approve as best

which deems it least; and just may he  
be called, who sets his thought on something else.  
Latona's daughter I enkindled saw  
without the shadow which was once the cause  
of my believing her both rare and dense.  
The countenance, Hyperion, of thy son  
I here sustained; and saw how near to him  
both Maia and Diòne round him move.  
And after this, the temperance of Jove  
appeared to me, between his son and sire;  
and clear the reason for their change of place.  
All seven of them were thus revealed to me,  
how great they are, how swift, and far apart  
in their abodes. The little threshing-floor  
which maketh us so fierce, was as a whole  
revealed to me, from hills to river-mouths,  
while I was circling with the eternal Twins.  
Back to the lovely eyes I then turned mine.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXIII

*The Eighth Heaven. The Fixed Stars. The Twins*

*Triumphant Spirits. The Son of God. The Mother of Christ*

Even as a bird, among the leaves she loves,  
settles upon the nest of her sweet brood  
throughout the night, which hides things from our eyes,  
and then — that she may see their longed for looks,  
and find the food wherewith to nourish them,  
in doing which she deems hard work a pleasure —  
comes forth betimes upon an outer branch,  
and gazing steadfastly with burning love,  
waits for the sun till break of dawn; so stood  
my Lady, toward that region turned intent,  
'neath which the sun  
appears to show least haste;  
hence I, on seeing her absorbed in thought,  
became like one who, yearning with desire  
for other things, contents himself with hope.  
But little time elapsed between each 'when,'  
I mean from when I waited, till the sky  
I saw grow more and more suffused with light.  
Then Beatrice exclaimed: "Behold the hosts  
of Christ's victorious triumph, and all the fruit  
ingathered by the circling of these spheres!"  
To me her countenance seemed all on fire,  
and so replete with happiness her eyes,  
that I must pass without describing them.  
As, when in cloudless skies the moon is full,  
Trivia among those nymphs eternal smiles,  
who deck with light the whole expanse of heaven;  
so I, above a thousand thousand lamps,  
beheld a Sun which kindled one and all,  
as our sun kindles all the stars on high;  
and through the living light the Shining Substance  
was so transparent, and so brightly shone  
upon my face, that I endured it not.  
O Beatrice, thou dear and gentle Guide!  
"That which o'erwhelms thee is a Power," she said,  
"against which nothing can defend itself.  
This is the Wisdom, this the Virtue is,  
which opened wide the road 'tween Heaven and earth,  
which was in olden times so long desired."  
As fire is liberated from a cloud,

when so dilating that it finds no room,  
and falls, against its nature, to the earth;  
even so my mind, as it became enlarged  
among those viands, issued from itself;  
but what it then became, can not recall.  
“Open thine eyes, and see what now I am!  
Such things hast thou perceived, that thou art now  
equipped with power to look upon my smile.”  
I was like one who, when aroused from sleep,  
is of a dream aware which he forgets,  
and tries in vain to bring it back to mind,  
when I had heard a bidding which deserves  
such gratitude, that never from the book  
which holds past records will it be effaced.  
If now, to help me, all those tongues should speak,  
which Polyhymnia and her sisters fed  
most richly with the sweetest of their milk,  
the thousandth portion of the truth would not  
be reached, ev’n though they sang the holy smile,  
and how it lighted up the holy face;  
hence, painting Paradise,  
the sacred Poem  
must leap like one who finds his path cut off.  
But none, who to its weighty theme gave thought,  
and to the mortal shoulder bearing it,  
would blame it, should it tremble ’neath its load.  
No waters for a little boat are these,  
my daring plow goes cleaving on its way,  
nor for a pilot who would spare himself.  
“Why doth my countenance enamor thee  
so much, that to the garden beautiful  
thou turnest not, which blooms beneath Christ’s rays?  
Here is the Rose, in which the Word Divine  
became incarnate; here the Lilies are,  
whose scent led men to take the righteous path.”  
Thus Beatrice; and I, who for her counsels  
was wholly ready, gave myself again  
to fight the battle of the feeble brows.  
As once my overshadowed eyes beheld  
a field of flowers in a ray of sunlight  
which through a riven cloud was shining clear;  
thus many a throng of splendors saw I now,  
illumined from on high by burning rays,  
but not the source of their refulgent light.  
O Kindly Virtue, who dost thus impress them,  
thou didst uplift thyself, to give mine eyes,  
which were not strong yet, greater room to see.  
The name of that fair Flower which I invoke

each morn and evening, too, forced all my mind  
to turn its gaze upon the greatest fire;  
but when in both mine eyes the magnitude  
and splendor of that living Star was painted,  
which vanquishes up there, as once down here;  
a torch, formed ring-wise like a crown, descended  
from midmost heaven, and girdling her about,  
around her whirled. Whatever melody  
sounds sweetest here on earth, and to itself  
most strongly draws the soul, would seem a peal  
of thunder breaking from a cloud,  
if measured by the music of the lyre,  
with which that lovely Sapphire crowned itself,  
whereby ensaphired glows the brightest heaven.  
“Angelic Love am I, and circle round  
the exalted gladness breathing from the womb  
which was the hostelry of our Desire;  
and I shall whirl around it, Lady of Heaven,  
until thy Son thou follow, and diviner  
render the loftiest sphere by entering it.”  
The circling melody thus closed itself  
as with a seal; and all the other lights  
made Mary’s name resound. The royal robe  
of all the convolutions of the world,  
which burneth most,  
and by the breath and ways  
of God is quickened with the greatest life,  
had its internal shore so far above us,  
that, where I was, its semblance was not yet  
revealed to me; mine eyes, hence, could not follow  
the Flame which, crowned,  
behind its Offspring rose.  
And as a child, who, having had its milk,  
stretches its little arms up toward its mother,  
urged by the love which outwardly flames forth;  
thus each of those white spirits with its flame  
stretched up in such a way, that its deep love  
for Mary was made manifest to me.  
Thereafter they remained there in my presence,  
singing ‘*O Queen of Heaven*’ so tenderly  
that its delight hath never left me since.  
Oh, how abundant is the store heaped up  
in those most wealthy coffers, which were once  
good husbandmen for sowing seed below!  
Here, living on it, they enjoy the treasure,  
which, weeping in their exile, they acquired  
in Babylon, where gold was left untouched.  
Here triumphs, subject to the Exalted Son

of God and Mary, in His victory,  
together with the councils old and new,  
he who of such great glory holds the Keys.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXIV

*The Eighth or Starry Heaven. The Twins*

*St. Peter examines Dante on Faith*

“O Fellowship elected to the banquet  
of that Blest Lamb, who feedeth you so well,  
that ever sated is your appetite;  
since, by the grace of God, this man enjoys  
a foretaste of what falleth from your table,  
or ever death have set his time for him,  
heed his immense desire, and on him shed  
a little of your dew! Ye from the Source  
forever drink, whence cometh what he thinks.”  
Thus Beatrice; thereat those happy spirits  
arranged themselves in spheres on steady poles,  
emitting brilliant flames, as comets do.  
And ev’n as wheels within the works of clocks  
so turn, for one who heeds them, that the first  
seems quiet, while the last appears to fly;  
even so, since at a different speed they whirled,  
those carol-dances, whether swift or slow,  
permitted me to estimate their wealth.  
From that one which I deemed of greatest beauty,  
I saw a fire so happy issue forth,  
that none it left of greater brightness there;  
then around Beatrice it turned three times  
with so divine a song, that even my fancy  
repeats it not for me; and so my pen  
takes a leap forward, and I write it not;  
for our imagination, much more speech,  
too bright a color is to paint such folds.  
“O holy sister mine, who so devoutly  
dost pray to us, thou, by thine ardent love,  
withdrewest me from yonder lovely sphere.”  
When once at rest again, that blessed fire  
turned toward my Lady with his voice, which spoke  
as I have said. And she replied to him:  
“O thou eternal life of that great man,  
to whom of this great joy our Lord bequeathed  
the Keys which He brought down; test thou this man  
as pleases thee, on questions light and grave  
pertaining to the Faith, which formerly  
enabled thee to walk upon the sea.  
If well he love, well hope, and well believe,

is not concealed from thee, because thy sight  
is thither turned where all is seen depicted;  
but since this Realm hath through the true Faith won  
its citizens, 't is well that, to its glory,  
it should befall him now to speak of it.”  
Even as a bachelor equips himself  
— nor speaks, until the master states the question —  
to furnish proofs, but not decide the same;  
so I, while she was speaking, armed myself,  
with every proof, that I might ready be  
for such a questioner, and such confession.  
“Speak now, good Christian, and declare thyself;  
What, then, is Faith?” Thereat I raised my brow  
toward the bright light from which these words were breathed;  
and then I turned around toward Beatrice,  
and she by rapid signals bade me pour  
the water forth from my internal fount.  
“The Grace which grants that I confess myself  
before the first Centurion,” I began,  
“cause my conceptions to be well expressed.”  
And I continued: “As the truthful pen  
of thy dear brother, Father, who with thee  
set Rome upon the right way, wrote of it,  
Faith is the substance of the hoped for things,  
and the evidence of those that are not seen;  
this seems to me its essence.” Then I heard:  
“Thou thinkest right, if well thou understand  
why with the substances he placed it first,  
and with the evidences afterward.”  
Thereat I answered: “Those deep truths which here  
are freely making themselves known to me,  
from eyes down yonder are so far concealed,  
that their existence lies in Faith alone,  
and thereupon the lofty Hope is based;  
it, therefore, takes the nature of a substance;  
and from this Faith one needs must syllogize  
without the help of any other sight; it, therefore,  
assumes the nature of an evidence.”  
And then I heard: “If thus were understood  
all that for doctrine is acquired below,  
there 'd be no room there for the sophist's mind.”  
These words were breathed from that enkindled love,  
which added then: “Already have this coin's  
alloy and weight been very well examined;  
but tell me if thou hast it in thy purse.”  
I, therefore: “Yes, so shining and so round,  
that nothing in its coinage makes me doubt.”  
Then issued from the deep light shining there:



“Whence did this precious jewel come to thee,  
whereon all virtues else are based?” And I:  
“The abundant showers of the Holy Spirit,  
outpoured upon the parchments old and new,  
a syllogism have formed,  
which prove it true  
so clearly to me, that, all other proofs  
seem inconclusive when compared with it.  
“The Ancient Premise and the New,” I then  
heard asked, “which so conclusive are to thee,  
why dost thou take them for the word of God?”  
And I: “The proof which showeth me the truth,  
are those great works which followed, works for which  
Nature ne’er heated iron, nor anvil smote.”  
Then I was answered: “Say what makes thee sure  
that those works e’er occurred? The very thing  
which calls for proof, none other, tells thee so.”  
“If to Christianity the world was turned,”  
I said, “unhelped by miracles, then this  
is such, that not a hundredth are the rest;  
for thou didst poor and fasting go afield,  
to sow the goodly plant, which was of old  
a vine, and now has turned into a thorn.”  
This ending thus, the high and holy Court  
resounded through the spheres a “God we praise!”  
sung to the melody they sing up there.  
That Baron then, who thus from branch to branch  
had tested me, and now had led me on,  
until the final leaves were drawing near,  
began again: “The Grace which with thy mind  
holds loving converse, hitherto hath oped  
thy mouth as it should be; hence I approve  
of that which it hath uttered; but it now  
behooves thee say what thou believest in,  
and whence it has been offered to thy faith.”  
“O holy father, spirit that dost now  
behold what thou didst so believe, that thou  
didst outrun toward the tomb far younger feet,”  
I thus began, “thou ’dst have me now reveal  
the essential part of my sincere belief,  
and thou dost also ask the cause of it.  
And I reply: In One God I believe,  
Sole and Eternal, who, Himself unmoved,  
moves all the heavens with Love and with Desire;  
and I, for so believing, have not only  
proofs physical and metaphysical,  
but that truth also yieldeth me its proof,  
which hence rains down through Moses, psalms and prophets,

and through the Gospel, and through you, who wrote  
after the Flaming Spirit made you shepherds.  
And I believe in three Eternal Persons,  
and these to be one Essence, so both one  
and trine, that they can be conjoined by *are* and *is*.  
Of the divine profound estate whereto  
I now refer, the teaching of the Gospel  
sets many times the seal upon my mind.  
This is the fountain-head, and this the spark,  
which after spreads into a living flame,  
and in me glows, as stars do in the sky.”  
As when a lord, hearing what pleases him,  
rejoices in the news his servant brings,  
and takes him to his arms, when he is silent;  
so, giving me his blessing as he sang,  
that Apostolic light, at whose command  
I spoke, when I had ceased, thrice girdled me;  
so greatly had I pleased him by my words.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXV

*The Eighth or Starry Heaven. The Twins*

*Triumphant Spirits. St. James examines Dante on Hope*

If e'er it happen that the Sacred Poem,  
to which both Heaven and earth have so set hand,  
that it hath made me lean for many years,  
o'ercome the fierceness which against me bars  
the lovely fold, where as a lamb I slept,  
though hostile to the wolves that give it war;  
then, with another voice and other fleece  
a Poet I'll return, and at the font  
of mine own baptism take the laurel crown;  
for there I entered first into the Faith,  
which makes souls known to God, and Peter later,  
because of my belief, thus wreathed my brow.  
Then toward us, after this, there moved a light  
out of the sphere, from which the first-fruit issued,  
which of his vicars Christ once left behind;  
and, full of joy, my Lady said to me:  
"Look, look! Behold the Baron, for whose sake  
men go to see Galicia down on earth!"  
As, when a dove alighteth near its mate,  
each, by its circling and its cooing, shows  
the other its affection; thus I saw  
one great and glorious Prince the other greet,  
and praise the food  
which sateth them up there.  
But when their mutual gratulations ceased,  
before me each in silence stopped, and flamed  
so brightly, that my face was forced to bow.  
Then, smiling, Beatrice: "Illustrious life,  
by whom the generous liberality  
of our basilica was once described,  
let Hope resound upon these heavenly heights;  
thou know'st that thou didst stand for it, as oft  
as Jesus showed most brightness to the three."  
"Lift up thy head, and reassure thyself;  
for all that cometh from the mortal world  
up hither, must be ripened in our rays."  
This comfort reached me from the second fire;  
hence to the hills I raised mine eyes, which erst  
had bowed them down by their excessive weight.  
"Since, of His Graciousness, our Emperor wills

that thou, before thy death, shouldst face His Counts  
in His most secret hall; that, having seen  
the truth in this our court, thou mayst confirm,  
both in thyself and other souls, the Hope,  
which rightfully enamors men on earth;  
say what it is, and how therewith thy mind  
is blossoming, and whence it came to thee.”  
Thus, further, did the second light proceed.  
And that kind soul who to so high a flight  
had led the feathers of my wings, forestalled  
my answer thus:

“No child of greater hope  
hath the Church Militant, as in the Sun  
is written, which irradiates all our band,  
it, therefore, hath been granted him to come  
from Egypt to Jerusalem, and see,  
or e’er the period of his warfare end.  
Thine other two requests, made not for knowledge,  
but so that he may carry back with him  
to what extent this virtue pleases thee,  
I leave to him, for they will not be hard  
for him, nor matter for self-praise; to these  
let him reply, and may God’s Grace assist him.”  
Even as in that wherein he expert is,  
a pupil readily and willingly  
answers his teacher, that his worth be shown;  
“Hope is” I said, “a steadfast expectation  
of future glory, which by Grace divine  
and by preceding merit is produced.  
This light from many stars comes down to me;  
but he into my heart instilled it first,  
who was the Greatest Leader’s greatest bard.  
For “Let them hope in Thee, that know Thy Name!”  
the latter in his theody declares,  
and, if he have my faith, who knows it not?  
Then, thou with his instilling, didst so greatly  
instill that hope in me with thine epistle,  
that, filled with it, I pour your rain on others.”  
While I was speaking, in the living bosom  
of that great fire, a bright effulgence quivered  
quickly and often, like a lightning-flash;  
and then it breathed: “The love wherewith I still  
warm to the virtue which once followed me,  
till with the palm I issued from the field,  
would have me give my breath to thee again,  
that dost therein delight; and I am pleased  
to have thee say what promise Hope affords thee.”  
And I: “The Scriptures, both the new and old

the goal establish of the souls whom God  
hath made His friends; this points it out to me.  
Isaiah says that each in his own land  
will in a double garment be arrayed;  
and his own land is this sweet life of ours;  
and, in a more explicit way, thy brother  
makes this same revelation manifest  
to us, where of the snow white robes the treats.”  
After these words had ended, first was heard  
above us, “Let them hope in Thee,” whereto  
all of the carols made reply; and then  
a light became so brilliant in their midst,  
that, if the Crab had such a crystal star,  
winter would have a month of one sole day.  
And as a happy maiden, rising, goes,  
in honor of the bride, to join the dance,  
and not for any failing on her part;  
even so I saw the splendor, brighter grown,  
approach the two, who in a wheel were turning,  
as it behooved the ardor of their love.  
Into the song and music then it entered;  
and on the three my Lady kept her gaze,  
silent and motionless as would a bride.  
“This is the one who on His breast reclined,  
who is our Pelican, and from the Cross  
selected was, to hold the filial office.”  
Even thus my Lady spoke;  
but no more after did her words withdraw  
her eyes from fixed attention, than before.  
Even as is he, who gazes at the sun,  
and tries to see it partially eclipsed,  
and who, because of seing, groweth blind;  
such I became before that latest fire,  
till this was said: “Why dost thou blind thyself,  
to see a thing which hath no being here?  
Earth is my body on the earth, and there  
will with the others stay, until our number  
shall with the eternal purpose correspond.  
With both their garments in the blessed cloister  
are those two Lights alone, which hither rose;  
and this shalt thou take back unto your world.”  
Stilled was the flaming circle at these words,  
and with them that sweet mixture which was formed  
out of the music of the threefold breath,  
as, from fatigue or danger to escape,  
oars, which had stroked the water just before,  
are at a whistle’s sound all brought to rest.  
Ah, how disturbed in mind I then became,

when I turned round to look at Beatrice,  
because I could not see her now, though close  
to her I was, and in the happy world!

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXVI

*The Eighth or Starry Heaven. The Twins*

*St. John examines Dante on Love. Adam*

While I was frightened by my loss of vision,  
from the refulgent flaming which had quenched it,  
a breath, which caused me to give heed, came forth,  
and said: "Till thou regain the sense of sight  
which thou hast spent by gazing up at me,  
't is well that thou make up for it by speech.  
Therefore begin to speak; and say toward what  
thy soul aspires, and also bear in mind  
that sight in thee is lost, but not destroyed;  
because the Lady who is leading thee  
through this divine expanse, hath in her look  
the power possessed by Ananias' hand."  
"At her own pleasure, soon or late," I said,  
let the cure reach the eyes which portals were,  
when with that fire she entered, wherewithal  
I ever burn. The Good which sates this court  
is alpha and omega of all scriptures  
Love reads to me in tones or low or loud."  
And that same voice which rid me of the fear  
the sudden blinding blaze had given me,  
inspired me with a wish to speak again,  
and said: "Thou surely through a finer sieve  
must pass thy meaning; it behooves thee say  
who toward so great a target turned thy bow."  
And I: "By philosophic arguments,  
and by authority which from up here descends,  
must such a love needs stamp itself on me;  
because the good, when understood as such,  
enkindles love, and all the greater love,  
the more it holds of goodness in itself.  
Hence to that Being who so perfect is,  
that every good which lies outside of Him  
is nothing but a beam of His own radiance,  
more than to any other must the mind  
in love be moved, of all who recognize  
the truth on which this argument is based.  
He to mine understanding shows this truth,  
who demonstrates to me the Primal Love  
of all the sempiternal substances;  
the Truthful Author's voice revealeth it,

when, speaking of Himself, He saith to Moses:  
‘All goodness shall I have thee see.’ Thou, too,  
revealest it to me when thou beginnest  
the loud announcement which o’er other trumps  
heralds on earth the secrets of this state.”  
Thereat I heard: “By human understanding,  
and by authorities therewith concordant,  
the sovereign of thy loves is turned to God.  
But further say if other cords thou feel  
attract thee toward Him; so that thou mayst say  
how many of love’s teeth are biting thee.”  
Not hidden was the purpose of Christ’s Eagle;  
nay, rather, I perceived to what he wished  
to lead my love’s profession to declare;  
hence, “All those bitings” I began again,  
“which possibly could turn one’s heart to God,  
have with my love of Him concurrent been;  
for, both the world’s existence, and mine own,  
the death which He endured that I might live,  
and that which all the faithful hope as I,  
together with the mentioned living knowledge,  
have drawn me from the sea of wrong desires,  
and set me on the shore of righteous love.  
I love the several leaves wherewith enleaved  
is all the garden of the Eternal Gardener,  
according to the good He giveth each.”  
As soon as I had ceased, a most sweet song  
throughout all heaven resounded, and my Lady  
said: “Holy, Holy, Holy!” with the rest.  
And ev’n as at a vivid flash of light  
one wakes from sleep, because one’s visual power  
turns toward the ray which moves from coat to coat;  
and as the one awakened shrinketh back  
from that which he hath seen, so senseless is  
his sudden waking, till reflection helps;  
thus Beatrice drove all motes from mine eyes  
by the mere radiance of her own, whose light  
shone further than a thousand miles away;  
I, therefore, saw far better than before;  
then, since I was amazed at it, I asked  
about a fourth light I beheld with us.  
My Lady then: “In yonder radiant light  
the first soul which the first Power e’er created  
is gazing joyfully upon his Maker.”  
Even as a bough which, while the wind is passing,  
bends its top down, and then uplifts itself,  
by innate strength which raises it again;  
even so did I, amazed, while she was speaking;



and then the wish to speak, wherewith I burned,  
made me feel reassured, and I began:  
“O fruit that wast alone produced when ripe,  
O ancient Father, thou to whom each bride  
is both a daughter and a daughter-in-law,  
I beg thee as devoutly as I can  
to speak to me; thou see’st my wish, hence I,  
that I may quickly hear thee, tell it not.”  
At times a covered animal so stirs,  
that its own movement needs must be revealed,  
because its covering corresponds to it;  
so likewise did the first of souls display  
to me, through that which covered it, how gladly  
he came to give me pleasure. Then it breathed:  
“Without its being told to me by thee,  
better do I perceive what thou desirest,  
than thou perceivest what thou knowest best;  
for I behold it in the Truthful Mirror,  
which of Itself makes other things a likeness,  
though naught makes It a likeness of itself.  
Thou fain wouldst hear how long it is since God  
in that high garden placed me, where this Lady  
prepared thee for so long a flight of stairs;  
how long it was a pleasure to mine eyes;  
the real occasion for the mighty wrath;  
and what the tongue, which I both used and made.  
Now, son, the tasting of the tree was not  
itself the cause of such a banishment,  
but only the transgression of the bound.  
In that place, whence thy Lady started Virgil,  
I, hence, for this assembly longed four thousand  
three hundred revolutions of the sun  
and two; and him I saw return again  
to all his highway’s lights nine hundred times  
and thirty, while I still abode on earth.  
The tongue I spoke had quite extinct become  
a long time e’er the people under Nimrod  
attempted their unfinishable task;  
for never was a product of man’s reason  
apt to endure, for human appetite  
renews itself according to the heavens.  
That mankind speaks, a work of Nature is,  
but if in this or that way, Nature then  
leaves you to do according to your pleasure.  
Ere I descended to the grieving place  
below, the Highest Good, from whom proceeds  
the joy which swathes me, was on earth called *I*;  
*EL* was He called thereafter; this must be,

for human custom is, as on a bough  
a leaf, which goeth as another comes.  
Upon the Mount which highest from the sea  
ascends, I lived, in innocence and sin,  
from the first hour until the one which follows,  
after the sun's first quadrant change, the sixth.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXVII

*The Eighth or Starry Heaven. St. Peter's Invective*

*The Ninth Heaven. Primum Mobile. The Angelic Hierarchies*

“Glory to Father, Son and Holy Ghost!”  
all Paradise in such a way began,  
that its sweet song intoxicated me.  
What I was seeing seemed to me a smile  
as of the Universe; for through both sight  
and hearing my intoxication entered.  
O joy! O gladness inexpressible!  
O life by love and peace completely filled!  
O wealth no longer longed for, but assured!  
Before mine eyes the torches four remained  
on fire, and that which was the first to come,  
began to grow more luminous; and such  
in its appearance it became, as Jove  
would come to be, if he and Mars were birds,  
and interchanged the plumage of their wings.  
The Providence, which there above assigns  
both turn and office, silence had imposed  
upon the blessed choir on every side,  
when “If I change my color, marvel not”;  
I heard him say, “for ev’n while I am speaking,  
thou shalt behold all these change color, too.  
He who on earth usurps my place, my place,  
my place, which in the sight  
of God’s own Son  
is vacant, of my burial ground hath made  
a sewer of blood and stench; whereby the Pervert,  
who fell from hence, is there below appeased.”  
The whole of Heaven I then beheld o’erspread  
with that same hue which colors clouds both morn  
and evening, when the sun lies opposite;  
and as a modest lady, who feels sure  
of her own self, but at another’s fault,  
on merely hearing of it, timid grows;  
so Beatrice changed her appearance then,  
and such as hers, I think, was Heaven’s eclipse,  
what time the Sovereign Power suffered pain.  
Thereat his words proceeded in a voice  
so changed from what had been its wonted self,  
that his appearance had no further changed:  
“The Bride of Christ was not by my blood fed,

nor by the blood of Linus, nor by that  
of Cletus, to be used for gain of gold;  
but for the winning of this happy life,  
both Sixtus, Pius, Urban and Calixtus  
after much lamentation shed their blood.  
'T was not our purpose that upon the right  
of our successors one part of the folk  
of Christ should sit, and on the left another;  
nor that the Keys bestowed in trust on me,  
should on a banner come to be an emblem,  
and warfare wage on those that were baptized;  
nor I become an image on a seal  
for privileges venal and deceptive,  
which often make me blush and flame with wrath.  
Rapacious wolves disguised in shepherds' clothes  
are seen in all the pastures from up here.  
Vengeance of God, why art thou quiet still?  
Men of Cahors and Gascons even now  
prepare to drink our blood. O good beginning,  
to what vile ending thou art doomed to fall!  
But that high Providence, which saved for Rome,  
through Scipio's help, the glory of the world,  
will quickly succor her, as I conceive;  
and thou, my son, who, for thy mortal weight  
art to return below, open thy mouth,  
and hide not that which I do not conceal!"  
Ev'n as our atmosphere lets fall great flakes  
of frozen vapor, when the horn of heaven's  
she-Goat is in conjunction with the sun;  
so I beheld the sky grow beautiful  
and upward flaked with those triumphant flames  
which for a while had sojourned with us there.  
My sight was following their forms, and followed,  
till the mid space, by reason of its vastness,  
prevented it from passing further on.  
Thereat the Lady who had seen that freed  
I was from gazing up, said: "Lower now  
thine eyes, and see how far thou hast revolved."  
I saw that since the hour when I had first  
looked downward, I had moved through all the arc  
the first of climates makes from mid to end;  
past Cadiz, hence, Ulysses' insane track  
I saw, and nearly to the seashore where  
Europa made herself so sweet a load.  
And of this little threshing-floor, much more  
would have been shown me; but the sun was circling  
beneath my feet, a sign or more removed.  
And my enamored mind, which in my Lady

always takes pleasure, more than ever now  
was burning to restore mine eyes to her.  
And if or art or Nature e'er made baits  
in human flesh or in its painted forms,  
to catch men's eyes, and capture thus their minds,  
they all together would seem naught, compared  
to that divine delight which on me shone,  
when to her smiling face I turned around;  
the virtue, therefore, which that look vouchsafed,  
removed me from fair Leda's lovely nest,  
and urged me on into the swiftest heaven.  
Its nearest and its most exalted parts  
are all so uniform, I cannot tell  
which Beatrice selected as my place.  
But she who saw my wish began to speak,  
and smiled so happily, that God appeared  
to be rejoicing in her countenance:  
"The nature of the world, which quiet holds  
the center, and around it moves the rest,  
beginneth here as from its starting-point.  
And this heaven hath no other 'where' than in  
the Mind Divine, where kindled is the Love  
which turns it, and the Power itself rains down.  
One circle's Light and Love encircle it,  
as it the other heavens; and He alone  
this precinct understands, who girdeth it.  
Its motion is not measured by another,  
but all the others are by this, as ten  
is measured by its half and by its fifth.  
And now how time in such a flowerport  
can have its hidden roots, and in the rest  
its leaves, hereafter can be manifest to thee."  
O thou Cupidity, that 'neath thyself  
dost sink all mortals so, that none avails  
out of thy waters to withdraw his eyes!  
The will in human beings blossoms well,  
but constant rains turn into blighted fruit  
the genuine plums.  
And faith and innocence  
are found in children only, but take flight,  
before their cheeks are covered up with hair.  
While still a prattler, one observeth fasts,  
who later, when his tongue is free, devours,  
under whatever moon, whatever food;  
and one who, while still lisping, loves  
and harkens to his mother, later on  
when speaking well, would see her in her grave.  
Thus in the Primal Sight becometh black

the white face of the lovely child of him,  
who brings the morn and leaves the eventide.  
And that thou marvel not at this, recall  
that there is none on earth who rules; and hence  
the human family goes thus astray.  
And yet ere January's month become  
wholly unwintered, through the hundredth part  
neglected there below, these upper spheres  
shall roar so, that the storm so long foreseen  
will turn the sterns to where the prows are now,  
so that the fleet will run its course aright,  
and good fruit follow on the blossom's flower."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXVIII

*The Ninth Heaven. Primum Mobile. The Angelic Hierarchies*

*The Point. The Nine Orders of Angels and the Nine Heavens*

After the truth against the present life  
of wretched mortals had been shown to me  
by her who lifts my mind to Paradise,  
as in a mirror he perceives its flame,  
who from behind is lighted by a torch,  
before he has it in his sight or thought,  
and turns around to notice if the glass  
have told the truth, and sees that it accords  
therewith, as with its music's time a song;  
so likewise now my memory recalls  
that I did, as I gazed in those fair eyes,  
whence Love had made a cord to capture me.  
And as I turned around, and mine were touched  
by that which in that sphere becomes apparent,  
whene'er one looks intently at its center,  
a Point I saw, which rays out light so keen  
that eyes which it enkindles needs must close  
by reason of its great intensity;  
and any star that from down here seems smallest,  
would seem to be a moon, if set beside it,  
as at each other's side the stars are set.  
Perhaps as near as e'er a halo seems  
to gird the light around, which colors it,  
when densest is the air which gives it form;  
a ring of fire was whirling round the Point  
so swiftly, that it would have overcome  
the motion which most quickly girds the world;  
and by another this was girt around,  
that by a third, as this one by a fourth,  
then by a fifth the fourth, and by a sixth  
the fifth. The seventh came next, outside of these  
so widely spread, that Juno's messenger,  
full circled, were too narrow to contain it.  
Like these the eighth ring and the ninth; and each  
more slowly moved, as in its order's number  
it whirled at greater distance from the first;  
and that one had the clearest flame of all,  
whence the Pure Spark least distant was, because,  
I think, it most in-truths itself therein.  
My Lady, who profoundly lost in thought

beheld me, said to me: "On yonder Point  
Heaven and the whole of Nature are dependent.  
Look at the circle most conjoined to It;  
and know thou that it moves so rapidly  
because spurred onward by its burning love."  
And I to her: "If ordered were the world  
as I perceive it is in yonder wheels,  
what is before me set had sated me;  
but in the world of sense all revolutions  
may be perceived to be the more divine  
as from the center they are more remote;  
hence, if my longing is to be appeased  
in this mirific and angelic temple,  
whose only boundaries are light and love,  
't is fit that I hear further why the example  
and its exemplar do not correspond;  
for by myself I think on this in vain."  
"No wonder is it, if for such a knot  
thy fingers insufficient are, so hard  
hath it become, through lack of being tried!"  
My Lady thus; she then continued: "Take  
what I shall tell thee, wouldst thou sated be;  
and on it subtly concentrate thy mind.  
The embodied circles wide or narrow are,  
according to the more or less of virtue  
distributed through all their several parts.  
A greater goodness makes for greater weal;  
a greater body greater weal bespeaks,  
if all its parts are perfect equally.  
Hence that which with itself sweeps onward all  
the universe remaining, corresponds  
to yonder circle which most loves and knows.  
If, then, thou stretch thy measure round the virtue,  
not round the appearance, of the substances  
which seem arranged in circles to thy sight,  
thou 'lt see a marvelous conformity  
of more to larger and of less to smaller,  
in every heaven, to its Intelligence."  
Even as the hemisphere of air remains  
resplendent and serene, when Boreas blows  
out of the cheek, from which he mildest proves,  
whereby the fog which troubled it before,  
is cleansed and cleared, until the welkin smiles  
upon us with the charms of all its wards;  
even such did I become, when once my Lady  
had with her clear reply provided me,  
and, like a star in heaven, the truth was seen.  
And when her words had ceased, not otherwise



doth iron when still boiling scintillate,  
than yonder circles sparkled. Every spark  
followed its Kindler; and so many were they,  
that their whole number far more thousands counts,  
than ever did the doubling of the chess.  
From choir to choir I heard Hosanna sung  
to that Fixed Point which holds them at the 'where,'  
and ever will, where they have always been.  
And she who in my mind my doubtful thoughts  
was seeing, said: "The primal rings have shown  
the Seraphs to thee, and the Cherubim.  
Thus swiftly do they heed their bonds, to make them  
as like the Point as may be, and as like It  
they can be, as their vision is sublime.  
Those other loves that round about them move,  
Thrones of the Countenance Divine are called,  
and for this reason end the primal triad.  
And thou shouldst know that all of them are happy,  
according as their vision plumbs the Truth,  
wherein all understanding is at rest.  
From this it may be seen how blessedness  
is founded on the faculty which sees,  
and not on that which loves and follows after;  
the measure of this vision is the merit,  
which both of Grace and of good will is born;  
such, then, is their advance from grade to grade.  
The second triad which, like that above,  
produces buds in this eternal spring,  
whose foliage no nocturnal Aries spoils,  
sings endlessly its vernal song of praise  
to three sweet melodies, which sound in three  
orders of joy, wherewith it trines itself.  
Three goddesses are in that hierarchy;  
the Dominations first, the Virtues next;  
the third one is the Order of the Powers.  
Then, in the last two dancing choirs but one,  
with Principalities Archangels whirl;  
the last is wholly of Angelic Joys.  
All these Angelic orders upward look,  
and downward so prevail, that all to God  
attracted are, and all in turn attract.  
And Dionysius with such great desire  
gave himself up to contemplate these orders,  
that he both named and graded them as I;  
but with him, later, Gregory disagreed,  
and hence, as soon as ever in this heaven  
he oped his eyes, at his own self he smiled.  
Nor would I have thee wonder that on earth

a mortal should disclose a truth so secret,  
for he who saw it here, revealed it to him,  
with many other truths about these rings.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXIX

*The Ninth Heaven. Primum Mobile. The Angelic Hierarchies*

*The Creation, the Nature and the Number of the Angels*

When, by the Ram and by the Scales surmounted,  
both children of Latona make together  
a girdle of the earth's horizon line,  
as long as from the moment when the zenith  
holds them in equipoise, till from that girdle  
both free themselves by changing hemisphere;  
only so long did Beatrice keep silent,  
a smile her face adorning, as she gazed  
intently on the Point which vanquished me.  
She then began: "I tell, but do not ask,  
what thou art fain to hear, for I have seen it  
where every Where and every When is fixed.  
Not for the gain of good unto Himself,  
which is not possible, but that His Splendor  
might in resplendency declare 'I AM,'  
in His Eternity, outside of time,  
out of all limits else, the Eternal Love,  
as pleased Him, in new loves disclosed Himself.  
Nor yet ere this did He remain inert,  
for neither after nor before, occurred  
God's going to and fro upon these waters.  
Both form and matter, simple and conjoined,  
came into being which had no defect,  
even as three arrows from a three-stringed bow;  
and as in glass, in amber or in crystal,  
a ray so shines, that from the time it comes  
till its completion, is no interval;  
thus from its Lord did that triform effect  
ray forth into its being all at once,  
without distinction as to its beginning.  
Order was concreate, and for the substances  
ordained; and highest in the world were those  
in whom activity was brought forth pure.  
Pure potentiality the lowest place assumed;  
and 'tween these two so strong a bond activity  
and potentiality conjoined, that never will it be unbound.  
Jerome concerning Angels wrote for you  
that their creation was an age-long tract  
of time before the remnant world was made;  
but written is this truth in many places

by writers of the Holy Ghost; and there  
thou 'lt see it, if but carefully thou look;  
and reason, too, sees this to some extent,  
for it could not acknowledge that the Motors  
could be so long deprived of their perfection.  
And now thou knowest where and when these loves  
created were, and how; hence in thy longing  
three ardors have already been extinguished.  
Nor, counting, would one reach as far as twenty,  
as quickly as a portion of the Angels  
disturbed the lowest of your elements.  
The rest remained; and with such great delight  
began the art, which thou beholdest here,  
that never from their circling have they ceased.  
The Fall's occasion was the cursèd pride  
of him, whom thou didst see oppressed by all  
the burdens of the world. Those whom thou here  
beholdest, modest were, and recognized  
themselves as from that Goodness sprung, which apt  
had made them for such great intelligence.  
And therefore by illuminating Grace,  
and by their merit, was their sight so raised,  
that now a full and steadfast will is theirs.  
Nor would I have thee doubt, but be assured,  
that to receive God's Grace is meritorious,  
according as affection opes to it.  
And now concerning this consistory,  
much canst thou contemplate without more help,  
if thou hast apprehended well my words.  
But seeing that on earth throughout your schools  
men teach that such the Angelic nature is,  
that it both understands, recalls and wills,  
I'll further speak, that thou the simple truth  
mayst see, which there below confounded is,  
because the doctrine taught equivocates.  
These substances, e'er since the face of God  
first gladdened them, have not withdrawn  
their eyes therefrom, whence nothing is concealed.  
They have no vision which is interrupted,  
therefore, by objects new to them, and hence  
need not remember by divided thought;  
folk, therefore, dream down there, though not asleep,  
some thinking that their words are true, some not;  
but greater is the latter's sin and shame.  
And ye down yonder follow not one path,  
when ye philosophize; so much doth love  
of show, and being famed for it, transport you.  
And yet with even less disdain is this

endured up here, than when the Holy Scripture  
is set aside, or turned to wrong account.  
No one considers there how much it costs  
to sow it in the world, or how much he,  
who humbly clings to it, gives pleasure here.  
Each strives to call attention to himself,  
making his own inventions; these are taught  
by preachers, while the Gospel's voice is stilled.  
One says that while the Christ was suffering death  
the moon turned back, and interposed herself;  
and hence the sun's light failed to reach the earth;  
others that of its own accord the light  
concealed itself, hence its eclipse affected  
Spaniards and Hindoos, as it did the Jews.  
Florence hath not so many Lapi and Bindi  
as fables such as these, which all year long  
are shouted from the pulpits everywhere;  
hence the poor sheep, who do not know, return  
from pasture fed on wind; nor doth the fact  
that they see not that they are harmed, excuse them.  
Christ did not say to His first company:  
"Go and preach idle stories to the world!"  
but gave them a foundation for the truth;  
and that alone found utterance from their lips;  
therefore, when striving to enkindle faith,  
they used the Gospel as their shield and lance.  
Men now go forth to preach with jests and tricks,  
and so, if but a hearty laugh is raised,  
the cowl puffs up, and nothing more is asked.  
But in its tail there nestles such a bird,  
that if the crowd perceived it, it would see  
what that forgiveness is, in which it trusts;  
therefore such folly hath increased on earth,  
that without proof or other attestation,  
to any kind of promise men would flock.  
Saint Anthony is fattening thus his pig,  
and others also fouler far than his,  
by paying money void of coinage stamp.  
But since a great digression we have made,  
turn thine eyes backward to the straight road now,  
that thus our way be shortened with our time.  
This nature so exceedingly extends  
in number, that there never was or speech,  
or mortal thought, that could extend so far.  
And if thou look at that which is disclosed  
by Daniel, thou wilt see that in his 'thousands'  
no well determined number is revealed.  
The Primal Light, which rays out on it all,

is in as many ways therein received,  
as are the lights wherewith It pairs Itself;  
hence, since affection follows on the act  
which understands, love's sweetness is therein  
burning or warm in different degrees.  
And now see how exceeding high and broad  
is that Eternal Worth, which makes Itself  
so many mirrors, whereupon It breaks,  
while in Itself, as erst, remaining One!"

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXX

*The Empyrean. GOD. The Angels and the Blest. The River of Light. The Mystic Rose.  
The Throne of Henry VII*

The sixth hour glows perhaps six thousand miles  
away from us, and now our world inclines  
its shadow to a nearly level bed;  
mid-heaven the while, which lies so deep above us,  
is growing such, that now and then a star  
is lost to our perception here below;  
till, as the brightest handmaid of the sun  
advances further, star by star, the sky,  
even to the fairest, closes to our view.  
Not otherwise the Triumph, which forever  
plays round about the Point which vanquished me,  
and seems contained by what Itself contains,  
little by little faded from my sight;  
my seeing nothing, therefore, and my love  
forced me to look again at Beatrice.  
If what has hitherto been said of her  
were all included in a single praise,  
but little would it serve my present turn.  
The beauty which I then beheld, transcends  
not us alone, but truly I believe  
its Maker only can enjoy it all.  
And herewith I confess myself o'erwhelmed  
more than a tragic or a comic poet  
was ever by a crisis in his theme;  
for as the sun the sight that trembles most,  
so the remembrance of her lovely smile  
deprives my memory of its very self.  
From the first day when I beheld her face  
in this life, till this present sight of it,  
I've never ceased from following her in song;  
but now must my pursuit desist from tracing  
her beauty's progress further in my verse,  
as at his utmost every artist must.  
Such, as I leave her to a louder cry  
than that of mine own trump, which draweth now  
its arduous matter to its closing, she,  
with a quick leader's mien and voice, resumed:  
"We now have issued from the greatest body  
into the Heaven which is itself pure Light;  
Light intellectual which is full of Love,  
Love of true Goodness which is full of Joy;

Joy which transcendeth every kind of Pleasure.  
Here both the soldieries of Paradise  
shalt thou behold, and one in that array,  
which at the Final Judgment thou shalt see.”  
Like a quick lightning-flash which scatters so  
the visual faculties that it prevents  
the eye’s reacting to the brightest objects;  
ev’n so a living Light around me shone,  
and left me swathed about by such a veil  
of its effulgence, that I lost my sight.  
“The Love which calms this last heaven always welcomes  
into its midst by greetings such as this,  
and thus adapts the candle to the flame.”  
No sooner had these few brief words of hers  
attained mine inner ear, than I perceived  
that I was being raised above my powers;  
hence, with new sight I so rekindled me,  
that there cannot exist so bright a light  
that now mine eyes could not endure to see it.  
Light in a River’s form I then beheld,  
which glowed refulgently between two banks,  
adorned with wondrous hues of early spring.  
And from this River issued living sparks,  
which settled everywhere among the flowers,  
and looked like rubies set in gold; and then,  
as if intoxicated by its odors,  
into the wondrous River plunged again,  
another coming out, if one went in.  
“The deep desire which now inflameth thee,  
and urges thee to know what thou art seeing,  
the better pleases me, the more it grows.  
But of this water it behooves thee drink,  
before so great a thirst as thine is slaked.”  
So said to me the Sunlight of mine eyes.  
“The River and the topaz lights, which come  
and go,” she added, “and the smiling grass  
are prefaces foreshadowing their truth;  
not that imperfect in themselves they are,  
but that deficiency exists in thee,  
because thy sight is not yet strong enough.”  
There is no little child that turns its face  
so quickly toward its milk, on waking up  
much later than hath been its wont, as I,  
to make far better mirrors of mine eyes,  
leaned over toward the Stream which only flows  
that we therein may be the better made.  
Soon as mine eyelids’ eaves had drunk of it,  
it seemed to me transformed from long to round;



and then, like folk who under masks have been,  
and different seem from what they were before,  
when once divested of the alien looks,  
wherein their self had disappeared; ev'n so  
the flowers and sparks had changed themselves for me  
into a feast far greater, so that clearly  
I now beheld both Courts of Heaven revealed.  
O Splendor of my God, whereby I saw  
the exalted Triumph of the Realm of Truth,  
give me the power to tell what I perceived!  
There is a Light up yonder, which allows  
its Maker to be seen by every creature  
which only hath its peace in seeing Him;  
and in a circle's form it spreadeth out  
to such extent, that its circumference  
would be too broad a girdle for the sun.  
Its whole appearance from a ray proceeds  
reflected from the summit of the First  
Moved Sphere, which from it takes its life and potency.  
And as within the water at its base  
a hill reflects itself, as if to see  
its slopes adorned, when rich with leaves and flowers;  
thus, ranged above and all around the Light,  
mirrored on o'er a thousand tiers I saw  
all that of us have yet returned up there.  
And if the lowest row within itself  
gathers so great a light, how great must be  
this Rose's width in its remotest petals?  
Nor did my vision of its breadth or height  
lose itself in them, but embraced the whole  
extent and inmost nature of this Joy.  
There near, nor far, nor add, nor take away;  
for there where God unmediated rules,  
in no way doth the natural law obtain.  
Into the yellow of the Eternal Rose,  
which outward spreads in tiers, whose fragrance praises  
the Sun which makes an everlasting spring,  
was I, like one who, fain to speak, keeps silent,  
led on by Beatrice, who said to me:  
"Behold how vast the white robed Convent is!  
Behold how wide the circuit of our Town!  
Behold our benches so completely filled,  
that few are now the people longed for here!  
On that great seat, whereon thine eyes are fixed  
by reason of the crown which rests there now,  
or e'er thou sup at this our wedding feast,  
shall sit the soul, august to be below,  
of that great Henry who shall come to set

Italia straight, ere she shall be prepared.  
The blinding greed which now bewitches you  
hath made you mortals like a child, who, though  
he die of hunger, drives his nurse away.  
And in the sacred Forum such an one  
shall Prefect be, that he'll not go one road  
with him, in open or in covert ways.  
But in his holy office he will not  
be long endured by God; for hurled he'll be  
where Simon Magus is for his reward,  
and deeper down shall thrust Alagna's man."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXXI

*The Empyrean. GOD. The Angels and the Blest. St. Bernard*

*Dante's Last Words with Beatrice. The Glory of Mary*

In semblance, therefore, of a pure white Rose  
the sacred soldiery which with His blood  
Christ made His Bride, revealed itself to me;  
meanwhile the other host, which, flying, sees  
the glory of Him who wins its love, and sings  
the goodness which had made them all so great,  
was, like a swarm of bees, which now inflowers  
itself, and now returns to where its toil  
is sweetened, ever coming down to enter  
the spacious Flower, which with so many leaves  
adorns itself, and reascending thence  
to where its Love forever makes His home.  
The faces of them all were living flames,  
their wings were golden, and the rest so white,  
that never is such whiteness reached by snow.  
When down into the Flower they came, they spread  
from bench to bench the peace and ardent love,  
which by the fanning of their sides they won.  
Nor did so vast a host of flying forms  
between the flower and that which o'er it lies,  
hinder the sight, or dim the splendor seen;  
because the Light Divine so penetrates  
the Universe, according to its worth,  
that naught can be an obstacle thereto.  
And this secure and joyous Kingdom, thronged  
by people of the ages old and new,  
wholly on one Mark set its looks and love.  
O Trinal Light, that in a Single Star,  
sparkling before their eyes, dost so appease them,  
look down upon our tempest here below!  
If the Barbarians — coming from a region,  
above which Helicë looms every day,  
while circling with the son who is her joy,  
on seeing Rome and all her lofty buildings,  
what time the Lateran rose eminent  
o'er every mortal thing — were wonderstruck;  
how overwhelmed with awe must I have been,  
I, who from human things, to things divine,  
from time, into eternity had come,  
from Florence — to a people just and sane!

Because of this, indeed, and of my joy,  
it pleased me to be mute and hear no sound.  
And ev'n as in the temple of his vow,  
when hoping to describe it all some day,  
a pilgrim looks around him, and is cheered;  
ev'n so, while wandering through the living Light,  
I turned mine eyes on all the graded ranks,  
circling now up, now down, and now around.  
There love-persuasive faces I beheld,  
decked by Another's light and their own smiles,  
and gestures fraught with grace and dignity.  
My look now as a whole had comprehended  
the general form of Paradise, but had not yet  
settled especially on any part;  
and I was longing with rekindled wish  
to ask my Lady as to many things,  
concerning which my mind was in suspense.  
Though one thing I had meant, another answered;  
thinking to look at Beatrice, an elder  
I saw arrayed as are the glorious folk.  
His eyes and cheeks were all suffused with joy  
and kindness, and such his pious mien,  
as fitting is a father's tenderness.  
Hence "Where is she?" I said impulsively;  
and he: "To bring thy longing to an end,  
was I by Beatrice from mine own place  
withdrawn; and if upon the highest rank's  
third round thou look, thou shalt again behold her  
enthroned where her deserts allotted her."  
Without reply I lifted up mine eyes,  
and saw her, as, reflecting from herself  
the eternal rays, she made herself a crown.  
Not from the tract whence highest thunders peal  
is any mortal eye so far removed  
from whatsoever sea it fathoms most.  
as Beatrice was distant from mine eyes;  
but naught was that to me, because her face  
came down to me unblurred by aught between.  
"O Lady, thou in whom my hope is strong,  
and who for my salvation didst endure  
to leave the traces of thy feet in Hell,  
I recognize the virtue and the grace  
of all the many things which I have seen,  
as coming from thy power and kindness.  
From slavery to freedom thou hast drawn me  
in every way, and over every path,  
within thy power to achieve that end.  
Guard thou in me the fruitage of thy bounty,

that thus my soul, restored to health by thee,  
may, when it leaves my body, please thee still!"  
I thus implored; and she, though so far off  
she seemed, looked down at me and smiled;  
then to the Eternal Fount she turned again.  
Thereat the holy elder said: "That thou  
mayst bring thy journey to its perfect end,  
for which both prayers and holy love have sent me,  
hover about this Garden with thine eyes,  
for to have seen it will prepare thy look  
to rise still higher through the Ray Divine.  
The Queen of Heaven, for whom I wholly burn  
with love, will grant us this and very grace,  
for I her faithful servant Bernard am."  
As he who from Croatia comes, perchance,  
to look at our Veronica, and who,  
because of its old fame, is never sated,  
but says in thought, as long as it is shown:  
"My Lord, Christ Jesus, God in very truth,  
was, then, your countenance like unto this?"  
even such was I, as on the living love  
I gazed on him, who in this world received  
a taste, in contemplation, of that Peace.  
"This glad existence, son of Grace," he then  
began, "will not be known to thee, if fixed  
at this low level only are thine eyes.  
Look at the circles, to the most remote,  
till yonder thou behold that Queen enthroned,  
to whom devoutly subject is this Realm."  
I raised mine eyes; and as at early morn  
the horizon's eastern parts excel in light  
the regions where the sun is setting; so,  
as with mine eyes from vale to mount I moved,  
I saw a region at the utmost verge  
vanquish in light all other parts before me.  
And as the skies where one awaits the car  
which Phaethon badly drove, more brightly gleam,  
while pale the light on either side becomes;  
so likewise, brilliant in the middle loomed  
that peaceful Oriflamme, and on each side  
the fire in equal measure burned less bright.  
And clustered there with wings outspread I saw  
more than a thousand Angels jubilant,  
and each distinct in splendor and in speed;  
while smiling down upon their sports and songs  
a Beauty I beheld, who was the joy  
within the eyes of all the other Saints.  
And even if I in utterance were as rich

as in imagination, I 'd not dare  
attempt to tell the least of its delight.  
When Bernard saw mine eyes intently fixed  
upon the object of his ardent love,  
he turned to it his own with such affection,  
that mine more eager grew to look again.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXXII

*The Empyrean. GOD. The Angels and the Blest. The Order of the Rose. The Blessed Children. The Great Patricians*

Intent on his delight, that contemplator  
the office of a teacher took unasked,  
and thereupon began these holy words:  
“The one so beautiful at Mary’s feet  
is she who opened and who made the wound,  
which Mary closed again, and then anointed.  
In the order which up there the third seats make,  
Rachel beneath her sits with Beatrice,  
as thou perceivest.  
Sarah, Rebecca, Judith,  
and she who was that singer’s ancestress,  
who said when he was grieving for his sin:  
“Have mercy on me,” thou canst thus behold  
downward from rank to rank, as each I name,  
and through the Rose decline from leaf to leaf.  
Descending from the seventh row of seats,  
even as above it, Hebrew women follow,  
dividing all the tresses of the Flower;  
for in accordance with the attitude  
their faith assumed toward Christ, these women form  
the wall which separates the sacred steps.  
On this side, where full-bloomed the Flower is,  
complete with all its leaves, are seated those  
who in the Christ that was to come believed;  
and on the other, where the semicircles  
are interrupted by still vacant seats,  
are those who faced toward Christ already come.  
And as on this side here the glorious throne  
of Heaven’s own Lady, and the other seats  
beneath it, such a great partition make;  
so, opposite, the seat of that great John,  
who, ever holy, underwent the desert  
and martyrdom, and then two years in Hades;  
while Francis, Benedict and Augustine  
beneath him were decreed to form the line  
with others down to here, from round to round.  
And now behold how great God’s foresight is;  
for each of these two aspects of the Faith  
will fill this Garden to the same extent.  
And know that downward from the row of seats,  
which midway separates the two divisions,

no one is seated for his own deserts,  
but for another's, under fixed conditions;  
for all of these are spirits who were freed  
before they had the power to really choose.  
This by their faces thou canst well perceive,  
and by their childish voices furthermore,  
if, looking at them well, thou listen, too.  
Thou doubtst now, and, doubting, thou art silent;  
but I will set thee free from that strong bond  
wherein thy subtle thoughts are holding thee.  
Within the ample nature of this Realm  
nothing can any more occur by chance,  
than either sadness, thirst or hunger can;  
for in accordance with eternal law  
is settled all thou seest, so that here  
close-fitting to the finger is the ring.  
These people, therefore, who before their time  
have reached true life, are not without good cause  
more excellent, or less, among themselves.  
The King, through whom this Kingdom finds repose  
in such delight and love, that no one's will  
is bold enough to long for any greater;  
creating all minds in His own glad sight,  
as Him it pleases, dowers each with Grace  
in divers ways; here let the fact suffice.  
And this is clearly and expressly marked  
for you in Holy Scripture by those twins  
who in their mother had their wrath aroused.  
According to the color of the hair  
of that Grace, therefore, must the Light supreme  
be worthily accorded as a crown.  
Without deserving aught, then, for their deeds,  
are these to different grades assigned, which differ  
in their innate keen-sightedness alone.  
The faith of parents only was, indeed,  
with innocence, enough for their salvation,  
throughout the centuries of early times.  
Then, when the primal ages had elapsed,  
males were by circumcision forced to win  
the virtue needed by their guileless wings;  
but later, when the age of Grace had come,  
without the perfect baptism in the Christ,  
such innocence was there below retained.  
But now look at the face which to the Christ  
is most resemblant; for its light alone  
can make thee ready to behold the Christ.”  
I saw such gladness raining down on her,  
borne by those holy minds, created such



that they might fly across those altitudes,  
that whatsoever I had seen before  
ne'er held me with such admiration poised,  
nor showed me such resemblance unto God.  
And that same love which first descended there,  
“*Ave Maria, Gratia plena,*” singing,  
spread out his open wings in front of her.  
And on all sides the beatific Court  
made such an answer to the song divine,  
that every face became the more serene.  
“O holy father, who for me dost bear  
to be down here, and leave the pleasant place,  
where by eternal lot thou hast thy seat,  
who is that Angel who with such delight  
is at our Queen's eyes gazing, and is so  
enamored, that he seems to be on fire?”  
For teaching I had thus recourse again  
to him who was from Mary drawing beauty,  
as from the sun the early morning star.  
And he to me: “As much self-trust and grace  
as can be in an Angel or a soul,  
are all in him; and we would have it so;  
for he it was who carried down the palm  
to Mary, when God's Son upon Himself  
was pleased to take the burden of our flesh.  
But with thine eyes now follow after me,  
as I keep speaking; and note the great Patricians  
of this most just and kind Imperial State.  
The two that have the happiest seats up there,  
because the nearest to Augusta's throne,  
are, as it were, the two roots of this Rose.  
He that upon the left is at her side,  
that Father is, because of whose bold taste  
the human species tastes such bitterness;  
and on her right thou see'st that ancient Father  
of Holy Church, to whom Christ gave in trust  
the Keys of this fair Flower. And he who saw,  
ere dying, all that fair Bride's troubled days,  
who with the spear and with the nails was won,  
beside him sits; and at the other's side  
that Leader rests, 'neath whom the ingrate folk,  
stiff-necked and fickle-minded, lived on manna.  
Anna thou seest sitting opposite  
to Peter, so content to see her daughter,  
that never from her doth she move her eyes,  
although ‘Hosanna!’ singing; o'er against  
the oldest Father of a family  
Lucia sits, who had thy Lady go,

when thou thy brows in downward flight didst turn.  
But since apace thy slumber-time is fleeing,  
here will we pause, as that good tailor does,  
who cuts his gown according to his cloth;  
and toward the Primal Love direct our eyes,  
that, looking toward Him, thou mayst penetrate  
as far into His Splendor as thou canst.  
But lest, perchance, by moving thine own wings,  
thou shouldst recede, believing to advance,  
Grace needs must be obtained for thee by prayer;  
Grace from the one who hath the power to help thee;  
hence follow after me with thine affection,  
that from my words thy heart turn not aside.”  
He then began the following holy prayer:

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## PARADISO XXXIII

*The Empyrean. GOD. St. Bernard's Prayer to Mary*

*The Vision of God. Ultimate Salvation*

“O Virgin Mother, Daughter of thy Son,  
humbler and loftier than any creature,  
eternal counsel's predetermined goal,  
thou art the one that such nobility  
didst lend to human nature, that its Maker  
scorned not to make Himself what He had made.  
Within thy womb rekindled was the Love,  
through whose warm influence in the eternal Peace  
this Flower hath blossomed thus. Here unto us  
thou art a noonday torch of Charity;  
and down below 'mong mortal men, thou art  
a living fount of Hope. Lady, so great  
thou art, and hast such worth, that one who longs  
for Grace, and unto thee hath not recourse,  
wingless would wish to have his longing fly.  
Not only doth thy Kindliness give help  
to him that asketh it, but many times  
it freely runs ahead of his request.  
In thee is Mercy, Pity is in thee,  
in thee Magnificence, and all there is  
of Goodness in a creature meets in thee.  
Now doth this man, who from the lowest drain  
of the Universe hath one by one beheld,  
as far as here, the forms of spirit-life,  
beseech thee, of thy grace, for so much strength  
that with his eyes he may uplift himself  
toward Ultimate Salvation higher still.  
And I, who never for mine own sight burned  
more than I do for his, offer thee all  
my prayers, and pray that they be not too poor,  
that thou with thy prayers so dissolve each cloud  
of his mortality, that unto him  
the Highest Pleasure may unfold Itself.  
And furthermore, I pray to thee, O Queen,  
who canst whate'er thou wilt, that, after such  
a sight, thou keep all his affections sound.  
His human promptings let thy care defeat;  
see with how many blest ones Beatrice  
is clasping for my prayers her hands to thee!”  
The eyes belovèd and revered by God,

intent on him who prayed, revealed to us  
how grateful unto her are earnest prayers.  
Thence they addressed them to the Eternal Light,  
wherein it may not be believed the eye  
of any creature finds so clear a way.  
And I, who to the End of all desires  
was drawing near, within me, as I ought,  
brought to its goal the ardor of desire.  
Bernard was smiling, and was making signs  
for me to look on high; but, as he wished,  
I was already of mine own accord;  
because my sight, as purer it became,  
was penetrating more and more the radiance  
of that High Light, which of Itself is true.  
From this time onward greater was my sight  
than is our speech, which yields to such a vision,  
and memory also yields to such excess.  
And such as he, who seeth in a dream,  
and after it, the imprinted feeling stays,  
while all the rest returns not to his mind;  
even such am I; for almost wholly fades  
my vision, yet the sweetness which was born  
of it is dripping still into my heart.  
Even thus the snow is in the sun dissolved;  
even thus the Sibyl's oracles, inscribed  
on flying leaves, were lost adown the wind.  
O Light Supreme, that dost uplift Thyself  
so far from mortal thought, relend my mind  
a little of what Thou didst seem to be,  
and cause my tongue to be so powerful,  
that of Thy Glory it may leave at least  
a spark unto the people still to come;  
for to my mem'ry if it but a while  
return, and speak a little in these lines,  
more of Thy Victory will be conceived.  
I think the keenness of the living Ray  
which I endured would have confounded me,  
if from it I had turned away mine eyes.  
And I recall that I, because of this,  
the bolder was to bear it, till I made  
my vision one with Value Infinite.  
O the abundant Grace, whereby I dared  
to pierce the Light Eternal with my gaze,  
until I had therein exhausted sight!  
I saw that far within its depths there lies,  
by Love together in one volume bound,  
that which in leaves lies scattered through the world;  
substance and accident, and modes thereof,

fused, as it were, in such a way, that that,  
whereof I speak, is but One Simple Light.  
This union's general form I think I saw,  
since, saying so, I feel that I the more  
rejoice. Of more forgetfulness for me  
one moment is, than centuries twenty-five  
are for the enterprise which once caused Neptune  
to wonder at the shadow Argo cast.  
My mind, thus wholly in suspense, was gazing  
steadfast and motionless, and all intent,  
and, gazing, grew enkindled more and more.  
Such in that Light doth one at last become,  
that one can never possibly consent  
to turn therefrom for any other sight;  
because the Good, which is the will's real object,  
is therein wholly gathered, and, outside,  
that is defective which is perfect there.  
Ev'n as to what I do remember, mine  
will now be shorter than an infant's speech,  
who at the breast still bathes his tongue. 'T was not  
that there was other than a simple semblance  
within the Living Light wherein I gazed,  
which always is what It hath been before;  
but through my sight, which in me, as I looked,  
was gathering strength, because I changed, one sole  
appearance underwent a change for me.  
Within the Lofty Light's profound and clear  
subsistence there appeared to me three Rings,  
of threefold color and of one content;  
and one, as Rainbow is by Rainbow, seemed  
reflected by the other, while the third  
seemed like a Fire breathed equally from both.  
Oh, how, to my conception, short and weak  
is speech! And this, to what I saw, is such,  
that it is not enough to call it small.  
O Light Eternal, that alone dost dwell  
within Thyself, alone dost understand  
Thyself, and love and smile upon Thyself,  
Self-understanding and Self-understood!  
That Circle which appeared to be conceived  
within Thyself as a Reflected Light,  
when somewhat contemplated by mine eyes,  
within Itself, of Its own very color,  
to me seemed painted with our Human Form;  
whence wholly set upon It was my gaze.  
Like the geometer, who gives himself  
wholly to measuring the circle, nor,  
by thinking, finds the principle he needs;

ev'n such was I at that new sight. I wished  
to see how to the Ring the Image there  
conformed Itself, and found therein a place;  
but mine own wings were not enough for this;  
had not my mind been smitten by a flash  
of light, wherein what it was willing came.  
Here power failed my high imagining;  
but, like a smoothly moving wheel, that Love  
was now revolving my desire and will,  
which moves the sun and all the other stars.

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