

# THE DIVINE COMEDY OF DANTE

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## PARADISO

### Paradiso: Canto I

The glory of Him who moveth everything  
Doth penetrate the universe, and shine  
In one part more and in another less.

Within that heaven which most his light receives  
Was I, and things beheld which to repeat  
Nor knows, nor can, who from above descends;

Because in drawing near to its desire  
Our intellect ingulphs itself so far,  
That after it the memory cannot go.

Truly whatever of the holy realm  
I had the power to treasure in my mind  
Shall now become the subject of my song.

O good Apollo, for this last emprise  
Make of me such a vessel of thy power  
As giving the beloved laurel asks!

One summit of Parnassus hitherto  
Has been enough for me, but now with both  
I needs must enter the arena left.

Enter into my bosom, thou, and breathe  
As at the time when Marsyas thou didst draw  
Out of the scabbard of those limbs of his.

O power divine, lend'st thou thyself to me  
So that the shadow of the blessed realm  
Stamped in my brain I can make manifest,

Thou'lt see me come unto thy darling tree,  
And crown myself thereafter with those leaves

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Of which the theme and thou shall make me worthy.

So seldom, Father, do we gather them  
For triumph or of Caesar or of Poet,  
(The fault and shame of human inclinations,)

That the Peneian foliage should bring forth  
Joy to the joyous Delphic deity,  
When any one it makes to thirst for it.

A little spark is followed by great flame;  
Perchance with better voices after me  
Shall prayer be made that Cyrrha may respond!

To mortal men by passages diverse  
Uprises the world's lamp; but by that one  
Which circles four uniteth with three crosses,

With better course and with a better star  
Conjoined it issues, and the mundane wax  
Tempers and stamps more after its own fashion.

Almost that passage had made morning there  
And evening here, and there was wholly white  
That hemisphere, and black the other part,

When Beatrice towards the left-hand side  
I saw turned round, and gazing at the sun;  
Never did eagle fasten so upon it!

And even as a second ray is wont  
To issue from the first and reascend,  
Like to a pilgrim who would fain return,

Thus of her action, through the eyes infused  
In my imagination, mine I made,  
And sunward fixed mine eyes beyond our wont.

There much is lawful which is here unlawful  
Unto our powers, by virtue of the place  
Made for the human species as its own.

Not long I bore it, nor so little while  
But I beheld it sparkle round about  
Like iron that comes molten from the fire;

And suddenly it seemed that day to day  
Was added, as if He who has the power  
Had with another sun the heaven adorned.

With eyes upon the everlasting wheels  
Stood Beatrice all intent, and I, on her  
Fixing my vision from above removed,

Such at her aspect inwardly became  
As Glaucus, tasting of the herb that made him  
Peer of the other gods beneath the sea.

To represent transhumanise in words  
Impossible were; the example, then, suffice  
Him for whom Grace the experience reserves.

If I was merely what of me thou newly  
Createdst, Love who governest the heaven,  
Thou knowest, who didst lift me with thy light!

When now the wheel, which thou dost make eternal  
Desiring thee, made me attentive to it  
By harmony thou dost modulate and measure,

Then seemed to me so much of heaven enkindled  
By the sun's flame, that neither rain nor river  
E'er made a lake so widely spread abroad.

The newness of the sound and the great light  
Kindled in me a longing for their cause,  
Never before with such acuteness felt;

Whence she, who saw me as I saw myself,  
To quiet in me my perturbed mind,  
Opened her mouth, ere I did mine to ask,

And she began: "Thou makest thyself so dull  
With false imagining, that thou seest not  
What thou wouldst see if thou hadst shaken it off.

Thou art not upon earth, as thou believest;  
But lightning, fleeing its appropriate site,  
Ne'er ran as thou, who thitherward returnest."

If of my former doubt I was divested  
By these brief little words more smiled than spoken,  
I in a new one was the more ensnared;

And said: "Already did I rest content  
From great amazement; but am now amazed  
In what way I transcend these bodies light."

Whereupon she, after a pitying sigh,  
Her eyes directed tow'rds me with that look

A mother casts on a delirious child;

And she began: "All things whate'er they be  
Have order among themselves, and this is form,  
That makes the universe resemble God.

Here do the higher creatures see the footprints  
Of the Eternal Power, which is the end  
Whereto is made the law already mentioned.

In the order that I speak of are inclined  
All natures, by their destinies diverse,  
More or less near unto their origin;

Hence they move onward unto ports diverse  
O'er the great sea of being; and each one  
With instinct given it which bears it on.

This bears away the fire towards the moon;  
This is in mortal hearts the motive power  
This binds together and unites the earth.

Nor only the created things that are  
Without intelligence this bow shoots forth,  
But those that have both intellect and love.

The Providence that regulates all this  
Makes with its light the heaven forever quiet,  
Wherein that turns which has the greatest haste.

And thither now, as to a site decreed,  
Bears us away the virtue of that cord  
Which aims its arrows at a joyous mark.

True is it, that as oftentimes the form  
Accords not with the intention of the art,  
Because in answering is matter deaf,

So likewise from this course doth deviate  
Sometimes the creature, who the power possesses,  
Though thus impelled, to swerve some other way,

(In the same wise as one may see the fire  
Fall from a cloud,) if the first impetus  
Earthward is wrested by some false delight.

Thou shouldst not wonder more, if well I judge,  
At thine ascent, than at a rivulet  
From some high mount descending to the lowland.

Marvel it would be in thee, if deprived  
Of hindrance, thou wert seated down below,  
As if on earth the living fire were quiet.”

Thereat she heavenward turned again her face.

Paradiso: Canto II

O Ye, who in some pretty little boat,  
Eager to listen, have been following  
Behind my ship, that singing sails along,

Turn back to look again upon your shores;  
Do not put out to sea, lest peradventure,  
In losing me, you might yourselves be lost.

The sea I sail has never yet been passed;  
Minerva breathes, and pilots me Apollo,  
And Muses nine point out to me the Bears.

Ye other few who have the neck uplifted  
Betimes to th’ bread of Angels upon which  
One liveth here and grows not sated by it,

Well may you launch upon the deep salt-sea  
Your vessel, keeping still my wake before you  
Upon the water that grows smooth again.

Those glorious ones who unto Colchos passed  
Were not so wonder-struck as you shall be,  
When Jason they beheld a ploughman made!

The con-created and perpetual thirst  
For the realm deiform did bear us on,  
As swift almost as ye the heavens behold.

Upward gazed Beatrice, and I at her;  
And in such space perchance as strikes a bolt  
And flies, and from the notch unlocks itself,

Arrived I saw me where a wondrous thing  
Drew to itself my sight; and therefore she  
From whom no care of mine could be concealed,

Towards me turning, blithe as beautiful,  
Said unto me: ”Fix gratefully thy mind  
On God, who unto the first star has brought us.”

It seemed to me a cloud encompassed us,  
Luminous, dense, consolidate and bright

As adamant on which the sun is striking.

Into itself did the eternal pearl  
Receive us, even as water doth receive  
A ray of light, remaining still unbroken.

If I was body, (and we here conceive not  
How one dimension tolerates another,  
Which needs must be if body enter body,)

More the desire should be enkindled in us  
That essence to behold, wherein is seen  
How God and our own nature were united.

There will be seen what we receive by faith,  
Not demonstrated, but self-evident  
In guise of the first truth that man believes.

I made reply: "Madonna, as devoutly  
As most I can do I give thanks to Him  
Who has removed me from the mortal world.

But tell me what the dusky spots may be  
Upon this body, which below on earth  
Make people tell that fabulous tale of Cain?"

Somewhat she smiled; and then, "If the opinion  
Of mortals be erroneous," she said,  
"Where'er the key of sense doth not unlock,

Certes, the shafts of wonder should not pierce thee  
Now, forasmuch as, following the senses,  
Thou seest that the reason has short wings.

But tell me what thou think'st of it thyself."  
And I: "What seems to us up here diverse,  
Is caused, I think, by bodies rare and dense."

And she: "Right truly shalt thou see immersed  
In error thy belief, if well thou hearest  
The argument that I shall make against it.

Lights many the eighth sphere displays to you  
Which in their quality and quantity  
May noted be of aspects different.

If this were caused by rare and dense alone,  
One only virtue would there be in all  
Or more or less diffused, or equally.

Virtues diverse must be perforce the fruits  
Of formal principles; and these, save one,  
Of course would by thy reasoning be destroyed.

Besides, if rarity were of this dimness  
The cause thou askest, either through and through  
This planet thus attenuate were of matter,

Or else, as in a body is apportioned  
The fat and lean, so in like manner this  
Would in its volume interchange the leaves.

Were it the former, in the sun's eclipse  
It would be manifest by the shining through  
Of light, as through aught tenuous interfused.

This is not so; hence we must scan the other,  
And if it chance the other I demolish,  
Then falsified will thy opinion be.

But if this rarity go not through and through,  
There needs must be a limit, beyond which  
Its contrary prevents the further passing,

And thence the foreign radiance is reflected,  
Even as a colour cometh back from glass,  
The which behind itself concealeth lead.

Now thou wilt say the sunbeam shows itself  
More dimly there than in the other parts,  
By being there reflected farther back.

From this reply experiment will free thee  
If e'er thou try it, which is wont to be  
The fountain to the rivers of your arts.

Three mirrors shalt thou take, and two remove  
Alike from thee, the other more remote  
Between the former two shall meet thine eyes.

Turned towards these, cause that behind thy back  
Be placed a light, illuming the three mirrors  
And coming back to thee by all reflected.

Though in its quantity be not so ample  
The image most remote, there shalt thou see  
How it perforce is equally resplendent.

Now, as beneath the touches of warm rays  
Naked the subject of the snow remains

Both of its former colour and its cold,

Thee thus remaining in thy intellect,  
Will I inform with such a living light,  
That it shall tremble in its aspect to thee.

Within the heaven of the divine repose  
Revolves a body, in whose virtue lies  
The being of whatever it contains.

The following heaven, that has so many eyes,  
Divides this being by essences diverse,  
Distinguished from it, and by it contained.

The other spheres, by various differences,  
All the distinctions which they have within them  
Dispose unto their ends and their effects.

Thus do these organs of the world proceed,  
As thou perceivest now, from grade to grade;  
Since from above they take, and act beneath.

Observe me well, how through this place I come  
Unto the truth thou wishest, that hereafter  
Thou mayst alone know how to keep the ford

The power and motion of the holy spheres,  
As from the artisan the hammer's craft,  
Forth from the blessed motors must proceed.

The heaven, which lights so manifold make fair,  
From the Intelligence profound, which turns it,  
The image takes, and makes of it a seal.

And even as the soul within your dust  
Through members different and accommodated  
To faculties diverse expands itself,

So likewise this Intelligence diffuses  
Its virtue multiplied among the stars.  
Itself revolving on its unity.

Virtue diverse doth a diverse alloyage  
Make with the precious body that it quickens,  
In which, as life in you, it is combined.

From the glad nature whence it is derived,  
The mingled virtue through the body shines,  
Even as gladness through the living pupil.

From this proceeds whate'er from light to light  
Appeareth different, not from dense and rare:  
This is the formal principle that produces,

According to its goodness, dark and bright."

Paradiso: Canto III

That Sun, which erst with love my bosom warmed,  
Of beauteous truth had unto me discovered,  
By proving and reproof, the sweet aspect.

And, that I might confess myself convinced  
And confident, so far as was befitting,  
I lifted more erect my head to speak.

But there appeared a vision, which withdrew me  
So close to it, in order to be seen,  
That my confession I remembered not.

Such as through polished and transparent glass,  
Or waters crystalline and undisturbed,  
But not so deep as that their bed be lost,

Come back again the outlines of our faces  
So feeble, that a pearl on forehead white  
Comes not less speedily unto our eyes;

Such saw I many faces prompt to speak,  
So that I ran in error opposite  
To that which kindled love 'twixt man and fountain.

As soon as I became aware of them,  
Esteeming them as mirrored semblances,  
To see of whom they were, mine eyes I turned,

And nothing saw, and once more turned them forward  
Direct into the light of my sweet Guide,  
Who smiling kindled in her holy eyes.

"Marvel thou not," she said to me, "because  
I smile at this thy puerile conceit,  
Since on the truth it trusts not yet its foot,

But turns thee, as 'tis wont, on emptiness.  
True substances are these which thou beholdest,  
Here relegate for breaking of some vow.

Therefore speak with them, listen and believe;  
For the true light, which giveth peace to them,

Permits them not to turn from it their feet.”

And I unto the shade that seemed most wishful  
To speak directed me, and I began,  
As one whom too great eagerness bewilders:

”O well-created spirit, who in the rays  
Of life eternal dost the sweetness taste  
Which being untasted ne’er is comprehended,

Grateful ’twill be to me, if thou content me  
Both with thy name and with your destiny.”  
Whereat she promptly and with laughing eyes:

”Our charity doth never shut the doors  
Against a just desire, except as one  
Who wills that all her court be like herself.

I was a virgin sister in the world;  
And if thy mind doth contemplate me well,  
The being more fair will not conceal me from thee,

But thou shalt recognise I am Piccarda,  
Who, stationed here among these other blessed,  
Myself am blessed in the slowest sphere.

All our affections, that alone inflamed  
Are in the pleasure of the Holy Ghost,  
Rejoice at being of his order formed;

And this allotment, which appears so low,  
Therefore is given us, because our vows  
Have been neglected and in some part void.”

Whence I to her: ”In your miraculous aspects  
There shines I know not what of the divine,  
Which doth transform you from our first conceptions.

Therefore I was not swift in my remembrance;  
But what thou tellest me now aids me so,  
That the refiguring is easier to me.

But tell me, ye who in this place are happy,  
Are you desirous of a higher place,  
To see more or to make yourselves more friends?”

First with those other shades she smiled a little;  
Thereafter answered me so full of gladness,  
She seemed to burn in the first fire of love:

”Brother, our will is quieted by virtue  
Of charity, that makes us wish alone  
For what we have, nor gives us thirst for more.

If to be more exalted we aspired,  
Discordant would our aspirations be  
Unto the will of Him who here secludes us;

Which thou shalt see finds no place in these circles,  
If being in charity is needful here,  
And if thou lookest well into its nature;

Nay, ’tis essential to this blest existence  
To keep itself within the will divine,  
Whereby our very wishes are made one;

So that, as we are station above station  
Throughout this realm, to all the realm ’tis pleasing,  
As to the King, who makes his will our will.

And his will is our peace; this is the sea  
To which is moving onward whatsoever  
It doth create, and all that nature makes.”

Then it was clear to me how everywhere  
In heaven is Paradise, although the grace  
Of good supreme there rain not in one measure.

But as it comes to pass, if one food sates,  
And for another still remains the longing,  
We ask for this, and that decline with thanks,

E’en thus did I; with gesture and with word,  
To learn from her what was the web wherein  
She did not ply the shuttle to the end.

”A perfect life and merit high in-heaven  
A lady o’er us,” said she, ”by whose rule  
Down in your world they vest and veil themselves,

That until death they may both watch and sleep  
Beside that Spouse who every vow accepts  
Which charity conformeth to his pleasure.

To follow her, in girlhood from the world  
I fled, and in her habit shut myself,  
And pledged me to the pathway of her sect.

Then men accustomed unto evil more  
Than unto good, from the sweet cloister tore me;

God knows what afterward my life became.

This other splendour, which to thee reveals  
Itself on my right side, and is enkindled  
With all the illumination of our sphere,

What of myself I say applies to her;  
A nun was she, and likewise from her head  
Was ta'en the shadow of the sacred wimple.

But when she too was to the world returned  
Against her wishes and against good usage,  
Of the heart's veil she never was divested.

Of great Costanza this is the effulgence,  
Who from the second wind of Suabia  
Brought forth the third and latest puissance."

Thus unto me she spake, and then began  
"Ave Maria" singing, and in singing  
Vanished, as through deep water something heavy.

My sight, that followed her as long a time  
As it was possible, when it had lost her  
Turned round unto the mark of more desire,

And wholly unto Beatrice reverted;  
But she such lightnings flashed into mine eyes,  
That at the first my sight endured it not;

And this in questioning more backward made me.

Paradiso: Canto IV

Between two viands, equally removed  
And tempting, a free man would die of hunger  
Ere either he could bring unto his teeth.

So would a lamb between the ravings  
Of two fierce wolves stand fearing both alike;  
And so would stand a dog between two does.

Hence, if I held my peace, myself I blame not,  
Impelled in equal measure by my doubts,  
Since it must be so, nor do I commend.

I held my peace; but my desire was painted  
Upon my face, and questioning with that  
More fervent far than by articulate speech.

Beatrice did as Daniel had done  
Relieving Nebuchadnezzar from the wrath  
Which rendered him unjustly merciless,

And said: "Well see I how attracteth thee  
One and the other wish, so that thy care  
Binds itself so that forth it does not breathe.

Thou arguest, if good will be permanent,  
The violence of others, for what reason  
Doth it decrease the measure of my merit?

Again for doubting furnish thee occasion  
Souls seeming to return unto the stars,  
According to the sentiment of Plato.

These are the questions which upon thy wish  
Are thrusting equally; and therefore first  
Will I treat that which hath the most of gall.

He of the Seraphim most absorbed in God,  
Moses, and Samuel, and whichever John  
Thou mayst select, I say, and even Mary,

Have not in any other heaven their seats,  
Than have those spirits that just appeared to thee,  
Nor of existence more or fewer years;

But all make beautiful the primal circle,  
And have sweet life in different degrees,  
By feeling more or less the eternal breath.

They showed themselves here, not because allotted  
This sphere has been to them, but to give sign  
Of the celestial which is least exalted.

To speak thus is adapted to your mind,  
Since only through the sense it apprehendeth  
What then it worthy makes of intellect.

On this account the Scripture condescends  
Unto your faculties, and feet and hands  
To God attributes, and means something else;

And Holy Church under an aspect human  
Gabriel and Michael represent to you,  
And him who made Tobias whole again.

That which Timaeus argues of the soul  
Doth not resemble that which here is seen,

Because it seems that as he speaks he thinks.

He says the soul unto its star returns,  
Believing it to have been severed thence  
Whenever nature gave it as a form.

Perhaps his doctrine is of other guise  
Than the words sound, and possibly may be  
With meaning that is not to be derided.

If he doth mean that to these wheels return  
The honour of their influence and the blame,  
Perhaps his bow doth hit upon some truth.

This principle ill understood once warped  
The whole world nearly, till it went astray  
Invoking Jove and Mercury and Mars.

The other doubt which doth disquiet thee  
Less venom has, for its malevolence  
Could never lead thee elsewhere from me.

That as unjust our justice should appear  
In eyes of mortals, is an argument  
Of faith, and not of sin heretical.

But still, that your perception may be able  
To thoroughly penetrate this verity,  
As thou desirest, I will satisfy thee.

If it be violence when he who suffers  
Co-operates not with him who uses force,  
These souls were not on that account excused;

For will is never quenched unless it will,  
But operates as nature doth in fire  
If violence a thousand times distort it.

Hence, if it yieldeth more or less, it seconds  
The force; and these have done so, having power  
Of turning back unto the holy place.

If their will had been perfect, like to that  
Which Lawrence fast upon his gridiron held,  
And Mutius made severe to his own hand,

It would have urged them back along the road  
Whence they were dragged, as soon as they were free;  
But such a solid will is all too rare.

And by these words, if thou hast gathered them  
As thou shouldst do, the argument is refuted  
That would have still annoyed thee many times.

But now another passage runs across  
Before thine eyes, and such that by thyself  
Thou couldst not thread it ere thou wouldst be weary.

I have for certain put into thy mind  
That soul beatified could never lie,  
For it is near the primal Truth,

And then thou from Piccarda might'st have heard  
Costanza kept affection for the veil,  
So that she seemeth here to contradict me.

Many times, brother, has it come to pass,  
That, to escape from peril, with reluctance  
That has been done it was not right to do,

E'en as Alcmaeon (who, being by his father  
Thereto entreated, his own mother slew)  
Not to lose pity pitiless became.

At this point I desire thee to remember  
That force with will commingles, and they cause  
That the offences cannot be excused.

Will absolute consenteth not to evil;  
But in so far consenteth as it fears,  
If it refrain, to fall into more harm.

Hence when Piccarda uses this expression,  
She meaneth the will absolute, and I  
The other, so that both of us speak truth."

Such was the flowing of the holy river  
That issued from the fount whence springs all truth;  
This put to rest my wishes one and all.

"O love of the first lover, O divine,"  
Said I forthwith, "whose speech inundates me  
And warms me so, it more and more revives me,

My own affection is not so profound  
As to suffice in rendering grace for grace;  
Let Him, who sees and can, thereto respond.

Well I perceive that never sated is  
Our intellect unless the Truth illumine it,

Beyond which nothing true expands itself.

It rests therein, as wild beast in his lair,  
When it attains it; and it can attain it;  
If not, then each desire would frustrate be.

Therefore springs up, in fashion of a shoot,  
Doubt at the foot of truth; and this is nature,  
Which to the top from height to height impels us.

This doth invite me, this assurance give me  
With reverence, Lady, to inquire of you  
Another truth, which is obscure to me.

I wish to know if man can satisfy you  
For broken vows with other good deeds, so  
That in your balance they will not be light.”

Beatrice gazed upon me with her eyes  
Full of the sparks of love, and so divine,  
That, overcome my power, I turned my back

And almost lost myself with eyes downcast.

Paradiso: Canto V

”If in the heat of love I flame upon thee  
Beyond the measure that on earth is seen,  
So that the valour of thine eyes I vanquish,

Marvel thou not thereat; for this proceeds  
From perfect sight, which as it apprehends  
To the good apprehended moves its feet.

Well I perceive how is already shining  
Into thine intellect the eternal light,  
That only seen enkindles always love;

And if some other thing your love seduce,  
'Tis nothing but a vestige of the same,  
Ill understood, which there is shining through.

Thou fain wouldst know if with another service  
For broken vow can such return be made  
As to secure the soul from further claim.”

This Canto thus did Beatrice begin;  
And, as a man who breaks not off his speech,  
Continued thus her holy argument:

”The greatest gift that in his largess God  
Creating made, and unto his own goodness  
Nearest conformed, and that which he doth prize

Most highly, is the freedom of the will,  
Wherewith the creatures of intelligence  
Both all and only were and are endowed.

Now wilt thou see, if thence thou reasonest,  
The high worth of a vow, if it he made  
So that when thou consentest God consents:

For, closing between God and man the compact,  
A sacrifice is of this treasure made,  
Such as I say, and made by its own act.

What can be rendered then as compensation?  
Think'st thou to make good use of what thou'st offered,  
With gains ill gotten thou wouldst do good deed.

Now art thou certain of the greater point;  
But because Holy Church in this dispenses,  
Which seems against the truth which I have shown thee,

Behoves thee still to sit awhile at table,  
Because the solid food which thou hast taken  
Requireth further aid for thy digestion.

Open thy mind to that which I reveal,  
And fix it there within; for 'tis not knowledge,  
The having heard without retaining it.

In the essence of this sacrifice two things  
Convener together; and the one is that  
Of which 'tis made, the other is the agreement.

This last for evermore is cancelled not  
Unless complied with, and concerning this  
With such precision has above been spoken.

Therefore it was enjoined upon the Hebrews  
To offer still, though sometimes what was offered  
Might be commuted, as thou ought'st to know.

The other, which is known to thee as matter,  
May well indeed be such that one errs not  
If it for other matter be exchanged.

But let none shift the burden on his shoulder  
At his arbitrament, without the turning

Both of the white and of the yellow key;

And every permutation deem as foolish,  
If in the substitute the thing relinquished,  
As the four is in six, be not contained.

Therefore whatever thing has so great weight  
In value that it drags down every balance,  
Cannot be satisfied with other spending.

Let mortals never take a vow in jest;  
Be faithful and not blind in doing that,  
As Jephthah was in his first offering,

Whom more beseemed to say, 'I have done wrong,  
Than to do worse by keeping; and as foolish  
Thou the great leader of the Greeks wilt find,

Whence wept Iphigenia her fair face,  
And made for her both wise and simple weep,  
Who heard such kind of worship spoken of.'

Christians, be ye more serious in your movements;  
Be ye not like a feather at each wind,  
And think not every water washes you.

Ye have the Old and the New Testament,  
And the Pastor of the Church who guideth you  
Let this suffice you unto your salvation.

If evil appetite cry aught else to you,  
Be ye as men, and not as silly sheep,  
So that the Jew among you may not mock you.

Be ye not as the lamb that doth abandon  
Its mother's milk, and frolicsome and simple  
Combats at its own pleasure with itself."

Thus Beatrice to me even as I write it;  
Then all desireful turned herself again  
To that part where the world is most alive.

Her silence and her change of countenance  
Silence imposed upon my eager mind,  
That had already in advance new questions;

And as an arrow that upon the mark  
Strikes ere the bowstring quiet hath become,  
So did we speed into the second realm.

My Lady there so joyful I beheld,  
As into the brightness of that heaven she entered,  
More luminous thereat the planet grew;

And if the star itself was changed and smiled,  
What became I, who by my nature am  
Exceeding mutable in every guise!

As, in a fish-pond which is pure and tranquil,  
The fishes draw to that which from without  
Comes in such fashion that their food they deem it;

So I beheld more than a thousand splendours  
Drawing towards us, and in each was heard:  
"Lo, this is she who shall increase our love."

And as each one was coming unto us,  
Full of beatitude the shade was seen,  
By the effulgence clear that issued from it.

Think, Reader, if what here is just beginning  
No farther should proceed, how thou wouldst have  
An agonizing need of knowing more;

And of thyself thou'lt see how I from these  
Was in desire of hearing their conditions,  
As they unto mine eyes were manifest.

"O thou well-born, unto whom Grace concedes  
To see the thrones of the eternal triumph,  
Or ever yet the warfare be abandoned

With light that through the whole of heaven is spread  
Kindled are we, and hence if thou desirest  
To know of us, at thine own pleasure sate thee."

Thus by some one among those holy spirits  
Was spoken, and by Beatrice: "Speak, speak  
Securely, and believe them even as Gods."

"Well I perceive how thou dost nest thyself  
In thine own light, and drawest it from thine eyes,  
Because they coruscate when thou dost smile,

But know not who thou art, nor why thou hast,  
Spirit august, thy station in the sphere  
That veils itself to men in alien rays."

This said I in direction of the light  
Which first had spoken to me; whence it became

By far more lucent than it was before.

Even as the sun, that doth conceal himself  
By too much light, when heat has worn away  
The tempering influence of the vapours dense,

By greater rapture thus concealed itself  
In its own radiance the figure saintly,  
And thus close, close enfolded answered me

In fashion as the following Canto sings.

Paradiso: Canto VI

"After that Constantine the eagle turned  
Against the course of heaven, which it had followed  
Behind the ancient who Lavinia took,

Two hundred years and more the bird of God  
In the extreme of Europe held itself,  
Near to the mountains whence it issued first;

And under shadow of the sacred plumes  
It governed there the world from hand to hand,  
And, changing thus, upon mine own alighted.

Caesar I was, and am Justinian,  
Who, by the will of primal Love I feel,  
Took from the laws the useless and redundant;

And ere unto the work I was attent,  
One nature to exist in Christ, not more,  
Believed, and with such faith was I contented.

But blessed Agapetus, he who was  
The supreme pastor, to the faith sincere  
Pointed me out the way by words of his.

Him I believed, and what was his assertion  
I now see clearly, even as thou seest  
Each contradiction to be false and true.

As soon as with the Church I moved my feet,  
God in his grace it pleased with this high task  
To inspire me, and I gave me wholly to it,

And to my Belisarius I commended  
The arms, to which was heaven's right hand so joined  
It was a signal that I should repose.

Now here to the first question terminates  
My answer; but the character thereof  
Constrains me to continue with a sequel,

In order that thou see with how great reason  
Men move against the standard sacrosanct,  
Both who appropriate and who oppose it.

Behold how great a power has made it worthy  
Of reverence, beginning from the hour  
When Pallas died to give it sovereignty.

Thou knowest it made in Alba its abode  
Three hundred years and upward, till at last  
The three to three fought for it yet again.

Thou knowest what it achieved from Sabine wrong  
Down to Lucretia's sorrow, in seven kings  
O'ercoming round about the neighboring nations;

Thou knowest what it achieved, borne by the Romans  
Illustrious against Brennus, against Pyrrhus,  
Against the other princes and confederates.

Torquatus thence and Quinctius, who from locks  
Unkempt was named, Decii and Fabii,  
Received the fame I willingly embalm;

It struck to earth the pride of the Arabians,  
Who, following Hannibal, had passed across  
The Alpine ridges, Po, from which thou glidest;

Beneath it triumphed while they yet were young  
Pompey and Scipio, and to the hill  
Beneath which thou wast born it bitter seemed;

Then, near unto the time when heaven had willed  
To bring the whole world to its mood serene,  
Did Caesar by the will of Rome assume it.

What it achieved from Var unto the Rhine,  
Isere beheld and Saone, beheld the Seine,  
And every valley whence the Rhone is filled;

What it achieved when it had left Ravenna,  
And leaped the Rubicon, was such a flight  
That neither tongue nor pen could follow it.

Round towards Spain it wheeled its legions; then  
Towards Durazzo, and Pharsalia smote

That to the calid Nile was felt the pain.

Antandros and the Simois, whence it started,  
It saw again, and there where Hector lies,  
And ill for Ptolemy then roused itself.

From thence it came like lightning upon Juba;  
Then wheeled itself again into your West,  
Where the Pompeian clarion it heard.

From what it wrought with the next standard-bearer  
Brutus and Cassius howl in Hell together,  
And Modena and Perugia dolent were;

Still doth the mournful Cleopatra weep  
Because thereof, who, fleeing from before it,  
Took from the adder sudden and black death.

With him it ran even to the Red Sea shore;  
With him it placed the world in so great peace,  
That unto Janus was his temple closed.

But what the standard that has made me speak  
Achieved before, and after should achieve  
Throughout the mortal realm that lies beneath it,

Becometh in appearance mean and dim,  
If in the hand of the third Caesar seen  
With eye unclouded and affection pure,

Because the living Justice that inspires me  
Granted it, in the hand of him I speak of,  
The glory of doing vengeance for its wrath.

Now here attend to what I answer thee;  
Later it ran with Titus to do vengeance  
Upon the vengeance of the ancient sin.

And when the tooth of Lombardy had bitten  
The Holy Church, then underneath its wings  
Did Charlemagne victorious succor her.

Now hast thou power to judge of such as those  
Whom I accused above, and of their crimes,  
Which are the cause of all your miseries.

To the public standard one the yellow lilies  
Opposes, the other claims it for a party,  
So that 'tis hard to see which sins the most.

Let, let the Ghibellines ply their handicraft  
Beneath some other standard; for this ever  
Ill follows he who it and justice parts.

And let not this new Charles e'er strike it down,  
He and his Guelfs, but let him fear the talons  
That from a nobler lion stripped the fell.

Already oftentimes the sons have wept  
The father's crime; and let him not believe  
That God will change His scutcheon for the lilies.

This little planet doth adorn itself  
With the good spirits that have active been,  
That fame and honour might come after them;

And whensoever the desires mount thither,  
Thus deviating, must perforce the rays  
Of the true love less vividly mount upward.

But in commensuration of our wages  
With our desert is portion of our joy,  
Because we see them neither less nor greater.

Herein doth living Justice sweeten so  
Affection in us, that for evermore  
It cannot warp to any iniquity.

Voices diverse make up sweet melodies;  
So in this life of ours the seats diverse  
Render sweet harmony among these spheres;

And in the compass of this present pearl  
Shineth the sheen of Romeo, of whom  
The grand and beauteous work was ill rewarded.

But the Provincals who against him wrought,  
They have not laughed, and therefore ill goes he  
Who makes his hurt of the good deeds of others.

Four daughters, and each one of them a queen,  
Had Raymond Berenger, and this for him  
Did Romeo, a poor man and a pilgrim;

And then malicious words incited him  
To summon to a reckoning this just man,  
Who rendered to him seven and five for ten.

Then he departed poor and stricken in years,  
And if the world could know the heart he had,

In begging bit by bit his livelihood,

Though much it laud him, it would laud him more."

Paradiso: Canto VII

"Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaoth,  
Superillustrans claritate tua  
Felices ignes horum malahoth!"

In this wise, to his melody returning,  
This substance, upon which a double light  
Doubles itself, was seen by me to sing,

And to their dance this and the others moved,  
And in the manner of swift-hurrying sparks  
Veiled themselves from me with a sudden distance.

Doubting was I, and saying, "Tell her, tell her,"  
Within me, "tell her," saying, "tell my Lady,"  
Who slakes my thirst with her sweet effluences;

And yet that reverence which doth lord it over  
The whole of me only by B and ICE,  
Bowed me again like unto one who drowns.

Short while did Beatrice endure me thus;  
And she began, lighting me with a smile  
Such as would make one happy in the fire:

"According to infallible advisement,  
After what manner a just vengeance justly  
Could be avenged has put thee upon thinking,

But I will speedily thy mind unloose;  
And do thou listen, for these words of mine  
Of a great doctrine will a present make thee.

By not enduring on the power that wills  
Curb for his good, that man who ne'er was born,  
Damning himself damned all his progeny;

Whereby the human species down below  
Lay sick for many centuries in great error,  
Till to descend it pleased the Word of God

To where the nature, which from its own Maker  
Estranged itself, he joined to him in person  
By the sole act of his eternal love.

Now unto what is said direct thy sight;  
This nature when united to its Maker,  
Such as created, was sincere and good;

But by itself alone was banished forth  
From Paradise, because it turned aside  
Out of the way of truth and of its life.

Therefore the penalty the cross held out,  
If measured by the nature thus assumed,  
None ever yet with so great justice stung,

And none was ever of so great injustice,  
Considering who the Person was that suffered,  
Within whom such a nature was contracted.

From one act therefore issued things diverse;  
To God and to the Jews one death was pleasing;  
Earth trembled at it and the Heaven was opened.

It should no longer now seem difficult  
To thee, when it is said that a just vengeance  
By a just court was afterward avenged.

But now do I behold thy mind entangled  
From thought to thought within a knot, from which  
With great desire it waits to free itself.

Thou sayest, 'Well discern I what I hear;  
But it is hidden from me why God willed  
For our redemption only this one mode.'

Buried remaineth, brother, this decree  
Unto the eyes of every one whose nature  
Is in the flame of love not yet adult.

Verily, inasmuch as at this mark  
One gazes long and little is discerned,  
Wherefore this mode was worthiest will I say.

Goodness Divine, which from itself doth spurn  
All envy, burning in itself so sparkles  
That the eternal beauties it unfolds.

Whate'er from this immediately distils  
Has afterwards no end, for ne'er removed  
Is its impression when it sets its seal.

Whate'er from this immediately rains down  
Is wholly free, because it is not subject

Unto the influences of novel things.

The more conformed thereto, the more it pleases;  
For the blest ardour that irradiates all things  
In that most like itself is most vivacious.

With all of these things has advantaged been  
The human creature; and if one be wanting,  
From his nobility he needs must fall.

'Tis sin alone which doth disfranchise him,  
And render him unlike the Good Supreme,  
So that he little with its light is blanched,

And to his dignity no more returns,  
Unless he fill up where transgression empties  
With righteous pains for criminal delights.

Your nature when it sinned so utterly  
In its own seed, out of these dignities  
Even as out of Paradise was driven,

Nor could itself recover, if thou notest  
With nicest subtilty, by any way,  
Except by passing one of these two fords:

Either that God through clemency alone  
Had pardon granted, or that man himself  
Had satisfaction for his folly made.

Fix now thine eye deep into the abyss  
Of the eternal counsel, to my speech  
As far as may be fastened steadfastly!

Man in his limitations had not power  
To satisfy, not having power to sink  
In his humility obeying then,

Far as he disobeying thought to rise;  
And for this reason man has been from power  
Of satisfying by himself excluded.

Therefore it God behoved in his own ways  
Man to restore unto his perfect life,  
I say in one, or else in both of them.

But since the action of the doer is  
So much more grateful, as it more presents  
The goodness of the heart from which it issues,

Goodness Divine, that doth imprint the world,  
Has been contented to proceed by each  
And all its ways to lift you up again;

Nor 'twixt the first day and the final night  
Such high and such magnificent proceeding  
By one or by the other was or shall be;

For God more bounteous was himself to give  
To make man able to uplift himself,  
Than if he only of himself had pardoned;

And all the other modes were insufficient  
For justice, were it not the Son of God  
Himself had humbled to become incarnate.

Now, to fill fully each desire of thine,  
Return I to elucidate one place,  
In order that thou there mayst see as I do.

Thou sayst: 'I see the air, I see the fire,  
The water, and the earth, and all their mixtures  
Come to corruption, and short while endure;

And these things notwithstanding were created;'  
Therefore if that which I have said were true,  
They should have been secure against corruption.

The Angels, brother, and the land sincere  
In which thou art, created may be called  
Just as they are in their entire existence;

But all the elements which thou hast named,  
And all those things which out of them are made,  
By a created virtue are informed.

Created was the matter which they have;  
Created was the informing influence  
Within these stars that round about them go.

The soul of every brute and of the plants  
By its potential temperament attracts  
The ray and motion of the holy lights;

But your own life immediately inspires  
Supreme Beneficence, and enamours it  
So with herself, it evermore desires her.

And thou from this mayst argue furthermore  
Your resurrection, if thou think again

How human flesh was fashioned at that time

When the first parents both of them were made.”

Paradiso: Canto VIII

The world used in its peril to believe  
That the fair Cypria delirious love  
Rayed out, in the third epicycle turning;

Wherefore not only unto her paid honour  
Of sacrifices and of votive cry  
The ancient nations in the ancient error,

But both Dione honoured they and Cupid,  
That as her mother, this one as her son,  
And said that he had sat in Dido’s lap;

And they from her, whence I beginning take,  
Took the denomination of the star  
That woos the sun, now following, now in front.

I was not ware of our ascending to it;  
But of our being in it gave full faith  
My Lady whom I saw more beauteous grow.

And as within a flame a spark is seen,  
And as within a voice a voice discerned,  
When one is steadfast, and one comes and goes,

Within that light beheld I other lamps  
Move in a circle, speeding more and less,  
Methinks in measure of their inward vision.

From a cold cloud descended never winds,  
Or visible or not, so rapidly  
They would not laggard and impeded seem

To any one who had those lights divine  
Seen come towards us, leaving the gyration  
Begun at first in the high Seraphim.

And behind those that most in front appeared  
Sounded ”Osanna!” so that never since  
To hear again was I without desire.

Then unto us more nearly one approached,  
And it alone began: ”We all are ready  
Unto thy pleasure, that thou joy in us.

We turn around with the celestial Princes,  
One gyre and one gyration and one thirst,  
To whom thou in the world of old didst say,

'Ye who, intelligent, the third heaven are moving;  
And are so full of love, to pleasure thee  
A little quiet will not be less sweet.'

After these eyes of mine themselves had offered  
Unto my Lady reverently, and she  
Content and certain of herself had made them,

Back to the light they turned, which so great promise  
Made of itself, and "Say, who art thou?" was  
My voice, imprinted with a great affection.

O how and how much I beheld it grow  
With the new joy that superadded was  
Unto its joys, as soon as I had spoken!

Thus changed, it said to me: "The world possessed me  
Short time below; and, if it had been more,  
Much evil will be which would not have been.

My gladness keepeth me concealed from thee,  
Which rayeth round about me, and doth hide me  
Like as a creature swathed in its own silk.

Much didst thou love me, and thou hadst good reason;  
For had I been below, I should have shown thee  
Somewhat beyond the foliage of my love.

That left-hand margin, which doth bathe itself  
In Rhone, when it is mingled with the Sorgue,  
Me for its lord awaited in due time,

And that horn of Ausonia, which is town'd  
With Bari, with Gaeta and Catona,  
Whence Tronto and Verde in the sea disgorge.

Already flashed upon my brow the crown  
Of that dominion which the Danube waters  
After the German borders it abandons;

And beautiful Trinacria, that is murky  
'Twixt Pachino and Peloro, (on the gulf  
Which greatest scath from Eurus doth receive,)

Not through Typhoeus, but through nascent sulphur,  
Would have awaited her own monarchs still,

Through me from Charles descended and from Rudolph,

If evil lordship, that exasperates ever  
The subject populations, had not moved  
Palermo to the outcry of 'Death! death!'

And if my brother could but this foresee,  
The greedy poverty of Catalonia  
Straight would he flee, that it might not molest him;

For verily 'tis needful to provide,  
Through him or other, so that on his bark  
Already freighted no more freight be placed.

His nature, which from liberal covetous  
Descended, such a soldiery would need  
As should not care for hoarding in a chest."

"Because I do believe the lofty joy  
Thy speech infuses into me, my Lord,  
Where every good thing doth begin and end

Thou seest as I see it, the more grateful  
Is it to me; and this too hold I dear,  
That gazing upon God thou dost discern it.

Glad hast thou made me; so make clear to me,  
Since speaking thou hast stirred me up to doubt,  
How from sweet seed can bitter issue forth."

This I to him; and he to me: "If I  
Can show to thee a truth, to what thou askest  
Thy face thou'lt hold as thou dost hold thy back.

The Good which all the realm thou art ascending  
Turns and contents, maketh its providence  
To be a power within these bodies vast;

And not alone the natures are foreseen  
Within the mind that in itself is perfect,  
But they together with their preservation.

For whatsoever thing this bow shoots forth  
Falls foreordained unto an end foreseen,  
Even as a shaft directed to its mark.

If that were not, the heaven which thou dost walk  
Would in such manner its effects produce,  
That they no longer would be arts, but ruins.

This cannot be, if the Intelligences  
That keep these stars in motion are not maimed,  
And maimed the First that has not made them perfect.

Wilt thou this truth have clearer made to thee?"  
And I: "Not so; for 'tis impossible  
That nature tire, I see, in what is needful."

Whence he again: "Now say, would it be worse  
For men on earth were they not citizens?"  
"Yes," I replied; "and here I ask no reason."

"And can they be so, if below they live not  
Diversely unto offices diverse?  
No, if your master writeth well for you."

So came he with deductions to this point;  
Then he concluded: "Therefore it behoves  
The roots of your effects to be diverse.

Hence one is Solon born, another Xerxes,  
Another Melchisedec, and another he  
Who, flying through the air, his son did lose.

Revolving Nature, which a signet is  
To mortal wax, doth practise well her art,  
But not one inn distinguish from another;

Thence happens it that Esau differeth  
In seed from Jacob; and Quirinus comes  
From sire so vile that he is given to Mars.

A generated nature its own way  
Would always make like its progenitors,  
If Providence divine were not triumphant.

Now that which was behind thee is before thee;  
But that thou know that I with thee am pleased,  
With a corollary will I mantle thee.

Evermore nature, if it fortune find  
Discordant to it, like each other seed  
Out of its region, maketh evil thrift;

And if the world below would fix its mind  
On the foundation which is laid by nature,  
Pursuing that, 'twould have the people good.

But you unto religion wrench aside  
Him who was born to gird him with the sword,

And make a king of him who is for sermons;

Therefore your footsteps wander from the road.”

Paradiso: Canto IX

Beautiful Clemence, after that thy Charles  
Had me enlightened, he narrated to me  
The treacheries his seed should undergo;

But said: ”Be still and let the years roll round;”  
So I can only say, that lamentation  
Legitimate shall follow on your wrongs.

And of that holy light the life already  
Had to the Sun which fills it turned again,  
As to that good which for each thing sufficeth.

Ah, souls deceived, and creatures impious,  
Who from such good do turn away your hearts,  
Directing upon vanity your foreheads!

And now, behold, another of those splendours  
Approached me, and its will to pleasure me  
It signified by brightening outwardly.

The eyes of Beatrice, that fastened were  
Upon me, as before, of dear assent  
To my desire assurance gave to me.

”Ah, bring swift compensation to my wish,  
Thou blessed spirit,” I said, ”and give me proof  
That what I think in thee I can reflect!”

Whereat the light, that still was new to me,  
Out of its depths, whence it before was singing,  
As one delighted to do good, continued:

”Within that region of the land depraved  
Of Italy, that lies between Rialto  
And fountain-heads of Brenta and of Piava,

Rises a hill, and mounts not very high,  
Wherefrom descended formerly a torch  
That made upon that region great assault.

Out of one root were born both I and it;  
Cunizza was I called, and here I shine  
Because the splendour of this star o’ercame me.

But gladly to myself the cause I pardon  
Of my allotment, and it does not grieve me;  
Which would perhaps seem strong unto your vulgar.

Of this so luculent and precious jewel,  
Which of our heaven is nearest unto me,  
Great fame remained; and ere it die away

This hundredth year shall yet quintupled be.  
See if man ought to make him excellent,  
So that another life the first may leave!

And thus thinks not the present multitude  
Shut in by Adige and Tagliamento,  
Nor yet for being scourged is penitent.

But soon 'twill be that Padua in the marsh  
Will change the water that Vicenza bathes,  
Because the folk are stubborn against duty;

And where the Sile and Cagnano join  
One lordeth it, and goes with lofty head,  
For catching whom e'en now the net is making.

Feltro moreover of her impious pastor  
Shall weep the crime, which shall so monstrous be  
That for the like none ever entered Malta.

Ample exceedingly would be the vat  
That of the Ferrarese could hold the blood,  
And weary who should weigh it ounce by ounce,

Of which this courteous priest shall make a gift  
To show himself a partisan; and such gifts  
Will to the living of the land conform.

Above us there are mirrors, Thrones you call them,  
From which shines out on us God Judicant,  
So that this utterance seems good to us."

Here it was silent, and it had the semblance  
Of being turned elsewhere, by the wheel  
On which it entered as it was before.

The other joy, already known to me,  
Became a thing transplendent in my sight,  
As a fine ruby smitten by the sun.

Through joy effulgence is acquired above,  
As here a smile; but down below, the shade

Outwardly darkens, as the mind is sad.

"God seeth all things, and in Him, blest spirit,  
Thy sight is," said I, "so that never will  
Of his can possibly from thee be hidden;

Thy voice, then, that for ever makes the heavens  
Glad, with the singing of those holy fires  
Which of their six wings make themselves a cowl,

Wherefore does it not satisfy my longings?  
Indeed, I would not wait thy questioning  
If I in thee were as thou art in me."

"The greatest of the valleys where the water  
Expands itself," forthwith its words began,  
"That sea excepted which the earth engarlands,

Between discordant shores against the sun  
Extends so far, that it meridian makes  
Where it was wont before to make the horizon.

I was a dweller on that valley's shore  
'Twi't Ebro and Magra that with journey short  
Doth from the Tuscan part the Genoese.

With the same sunset and same sunrise nearly  
Sit Buggia and the city whence I was,  
That with its blood once made the harbour hot.

Folco that people called me unto whom  
My name was known; and now with me this heaven  
Imprints itself, as I did once with it;

For more the daughter of Belus never burned,  
Offending both Sichaeus and Creusa,  
Than I, so long as it became my locks,

Nor yet that Rodophean, who deluded  
was by Demophoon, nor yet Alcides,  
When Iole he in his heart had locked.

Yet here is no repenting, but we smile,  
Not at the fault, which comes not back to mind,  
But at the power which ordered and foresaw.

Here we behold the art that doth adorn  
With such affection, and the good discover  
Whereby the world above turns that below.

But that thou wholly satisfied mayst bear  
Thy wishes hence which in this sphere are born,  
Still farther to proceed behoveth me.

Thou fain wouldst know who is within this light  
That here beside me thus is scintillating,  
Even as a sunbeam in the limpid water.

Then know thou, that within there is at rest  
Rahab, and being to our order joined,  
With her in its supremest grade 'tis sealed.

Into this heaven, where ends the shadowy cone  
Cast by your world, before all other souls  
First of Christ's triumph was she taken up.

Full meet it was to leave her in some heaven,  
Even as a palm of the high victory  
Which he acquired with one palm and the other,

Because she favoured the first glorious deed  
Of Joshua upon the Holy Land,  
That little stirs the memory of the Pope.

Thy city, which an offshoot is of him  
Who first upon his Maker turned his back,  
And whose ambition is so sorely wept,

Brings forth and scatters the accursed flower  
Which both the sheep and lambs hath led astray  
Since it has turned the shepherd to a wolf.

For this the Evangel and the mighty Doctors  
Are derelict, and only the Decretals  
So studied that it shows upon their margins.

On this are Pope and Cardinals intent;  
Their meditations reach not Nazareth,  
There where his pinions Gabriel unfolded;

But Vatican and the other parts elect  
Of Rome, which have a cemetery been  
Unto the soldiery that followed Peter

Shall soon be free from this adultery."

Paradiso: Canto X

Looking into his Son with all the Love  
Which each of them eternally breathes forth,

The Primal and unutterable Power

Whate'er before the mind or eye revolves  
With so much order made, there can be none  
Who this beholds without enjoying Him.

Lift up then, Reader, to the lofty wheels  
With me thy vision straight unto that part  
Where the one motion on the other strikes,

And there begin to contemplate with joy  
That Master's art, who in himself so loves it  
That never doth his eye depart therefrom.

Behold how from that point goes branching off  
The oblique circle, which conveys the planets,  
To satisfy the world that calls upon them;

And if their pathway were not thus inflected,  
Much virtue in the heavens would be in vain,  
And almost every power below here dead.

If from the straight line distant more or less  
Were the departure, much would wanting be  
Above and underneath of mundane order.

Remain now, Reader, still upon thy bench,  
In thought pursuing that which is foretasted,  
If thou wouldst jocund be instead of weary.

I've set before thee; henceforth feed thyself,  
For to itself diverteth all my care  
That theme whereof I have been made the scribe.

The greatest of the ministers of nature,  
Who with the power of heaven the world imprints  
And measures with his light the time for us,

With that part which above is called to mind  
Conjoined, along the spirals was revolving,  
Where each time earlier he presents himself;

And I was with him; but of the ascending  
I was not conscious, saving as a man  
Of a first thought is conscious ere it come;

And Beatrice, she who is seen to pass  
From good to better, and so suddenly  
That not by time her action is expressed,

How lucent in herself must she have been!  
And what was in the sun, wherein I entered,  
Apparent not by colour but by light,

I, though I call on genius, art, and practice,  
Cannot so tell that it could be imagined;  
Believe one can, and let him long to see it.

And if our fantasies too lowly are  
For altitude so great, it is no marvel,  
Since o'er the sun was never eye could go.

Such in this place was the fourth family  
Of the high Father, who forever sates it,  
Showing how he breathes forth and how begets.

And Beatrice began: "Give thanks, give thanks  
Unto the Sun of Angels, who to this  
Sensible one has raised thee by his grace!"

Never was heart of mortal so disposed  
To worship, nor to give itself to God  
With all its gratitude was it so ready,

As at those words did I myself become;  
And all my love was so absorbed in Him,  
That in oblivion Beatrice was eclipsed.

Nor this displeased her; but she smiled at it  
So that the splendour of her laughing eyes  
My single mind on many things divided.

Lights many saw I, vivid and triumphant,  
Make us a centre and themselves a circle,  
More sweet in voice than luminous in aspect.

Thus girt about the daughter of Latona  
We sometimes see, when pregnant is the air,  
So that it holds the thread which makes her zone.

Within the court of Heaven, whence I return,  
Are many jewels found, so fair and precious  
They cannot be transported from the realm;

And of them was the singing of those lights.  
Who takes not wings that he may fly up thither,  
The tidings thence may from the dumb await!

As soon as singing thus those burning suns  
Had round about us whirled themselves three times,

Like unto stars neighbouring the steadfast poles,

Ladies they seemed, not from the dance released,  
But who stop short, in silence listening  
Till they have gathered the new melody.

And within one I heard beginning: "When  
The radiance of grace, by which is kindled  
True love, and which thereafter grows by loving,

Within thee multiplied is so resplendent  
That it conducts thee upward by that stair,  
Where without reascending none descends,

Who should deny the wine out of his vial  
Unto thy thirst, in liberty were not  
Except as water which descends not seaward.

Fain wouldst thou know with what plants is enflowered  
This garland that encircles with delight  
The Lady fair who makes thee strong for heaven.

Of the lambs was I of the holy flock  
Which Dominic conducteth by a road  
Where well one fattens if he strayeth not.

He who is nearest to me on the right  
My brother and master was; and he Albertus  
Is of Cologne, I Thomas of Aquinum.

If thou of all the others wouldst be certain,  
Follow behind my speaking with thy sight  
Upward along the blessed garland turning.

That next effulgence issues from the smile  
Of Gratian, who assisted both the courts  
In such wise that it pleased in Paradise.

The other which near by adorns our choir  
That Peter was who, e'en as the poor widow,  
Offered his treasure unto Holy Church.

The fifth light, that among us is the fairest,  
Breathes forth from such a love, that all the world  
Below is greedy to learn tidings of it.

Within it is the lofty mind, where knowledge  
So deep was put, that, if the true be true,  
To see so much there never rose a second.

Thou seest next the lustre of that taper,  
Which in the flesh below looked most within  
The angelic nature and its ministry.

Within that other little light is smiling  
The advocate of the Christian centuries,  
Out of whose rhetoric Augustine was furnished.

Now if thou trainest thy mind's eye along  
From light to light pursuant of my praise,  
With thirst already of the eighth thou waitest.

By seeing every good therein exults  
The sainted soul, which the fallacious world  
Makes manifest to him who listeneth well;

The body whence 'twas hunted forth is lying  
Down in Cieldauro, and from martyrdom  
And banishment it came unto this peace.

See farther onward flame the burning breath  
Of Isidore, of Beda, and of Richard  
Who was in contemplation more than man.

This, whence to me returneth thy regard,  
The light is of a spirit unto whom  
In his grave meditations death seemed slow.

It is the light eternal of Sigier,  
Who, reading lectures in the Street of Straw,  
Did syllogize invidious verities."

Then, as a horologe that calleth us  
What time the Bride of God is rising up  
With matins to her Spouse that he may love her,

Wherein one part the other draws and urges,  
Ting! ting! resounding with so sweet a note,  
That swells with love the spirit well disposed,

Thus I beheld the glorious wheel move round,  
And render voice to voice, in modulation  
And sweetness that can not be comprehended,

Excepting there where joy is made eternal.

Paradiso: Canto XI

O Thou insensate care of mortal men,  
How inconclusive are the syllogisms

That make thee beat thy wings in downward flight!

One after laws and one to aphorisms  
Was going, and one following the priesthood,  
And one to reign by force or sophistry,

And one in theft, and one in state affairs,  
One in the pleasures of the flesh involved  
Wearied himself, one gave himself to ease;

When I, from all these things emancipate,  
With Beatrice above there in the Heavens  
With such exceeding glory was received!

When each one had returned unto that point  
Within the circle where it was before,  
It stood as in a candlestick a candle;

And from within the effulgence which at first  
Had spoken unto me, I heard begin  
Smiling while it more luminous became:

"Even as I am kindled in its ray,  
So, looking into the Eternal Light,  
The occasion of thy thoughts I apprehend.

Thou doubttest, and wouldst have me to resift  
In language so extended and so open  
My speech, that to thy sense it may be plain,

Where just before I said, 'where well one fattens,'  
And where I said, 'there never rose a second;'  
And here 'tis needful we distinguish well.

The Providence, which governeth the world  
With counsel, wherein all created vision  
Is vanquished ere it reach unto the bottom,

(So that towards her own Beloved might go  
The bride of Him who, uttering a loud cry,  
Espoused her with his consecrated blood,

Self-confident and unto Him more faithful,  
Two Princes did ordain in her behoof,  
Which on this side and that might be her guide.

The one was all seraphical in ardour;  
The other by his wisdom upon earth  
A splendour was of light cherubical.

One will I speak of, for of both is spoken  
In praising one, whichever may be taken,  
Because unto one end their labours were.

Between Tupino and the stream that falls  
Down from the hill elect of blessed Ubald,  
A fertile slope of lofty mountain hangs,

From which Perugia feels the cold and heat  
Through Porta Sole, and behind it weep  
Gualdo and Nocera their grievous yoke.

From out that slope, there where it breaketh most  
Its steepness, rose upon the world a sun  
As this one does sometimes from out the Ganges;

Therefore let him who speaketh of that place,  
Say not Ascési, for he would say little,  
But Orient, if he properly would speak.

He was not yet far distant from his rising  
Before he had begun to make the earth  
Some comfort from his mighty virtue feel.

For he in youth his father's wrath incurred  
For certain Dame, to whom, as unto death,  
The gate of pleasure no one doth unlock;

And was before his spiritual court  
'Et coram patre' unto her united;  
Then day by day more fervently he loved her.

She, reft of her first husband, scorned, obscure,  
One thousand and one hundred years and more,  
Waited without a suitor till he came.

Naught it availed to hear, that with Amyclas  
Found her unmoved at sounding of his voice  
He who struck terror into all the world;

Naught it availed being constant and undaunted,  
So that, when Mary still remained below,  
She mounted up with Christ upon the cross.

But that too darkly I may not proceed,  
Francis and Poverty for these two lovers  
Take thou henceforward in my speech diffuse.

Their concord and their joyous semblances,  
The love, the wonder, and the sweet regard,

They made to be the cause of holy thoughts;

So much so that the venerable Bernard  
First bared his feet, and after so great peace  
Ran, and, in running, thought himself too slow.

O wealth unknown! O veritable good!  
Giles bares his feet, and bares his feet Sylvester  
Behind the bridegroom, so doth please the bride!

Then goes his way that father and that master,  
He and his Lady and that family  
Which now was girding on the humble cord;

Nor cowardice of heart weighed down his brow  
At being son of Peter Bernardone,  
Nor for appearing marvellously scorned;

But regally his hard determination  
To Innocent he opened, and from him  
Received the primal seal upon his Order.

After the people mendicant increased  
Behind this man, whose admirable life  
Better in glory of the heavens were sung,

Incoronated with a second crown  
Was through Honorius by the Eternal Spirit  
The holy purpose of this Archimandrite.

And when he had, through thirst of martyrdom,  
In the proud presence of the Sultan preached  
Christ and the others who came after him,

And, finding for conversion too unripe  
The folk, and not to tarry there in vain,  
Returned to fruit of the Italic grass,

On the rude rock 'twixt Tiber and the Arno  
From Christ did he receive the final seal,  
Which during two whole years his members bore.

When He, who chose him unto so much good,  
Was pleased to draw him up to the reward  
That he had merited by being lowly,

Unto his friars, as to the rightful heirs,  
His most dear Lady did he recommend,  
And bade that they should love her faithfully;

And from her bosom the illustrious soul  
Wished to depart, returning to its realm,  
And for its body wished no other bier.

Think now what man was he, who was a fit  
Companion over the high seas to keep  
The bark of Peter to its proper bearings.

And this man was our Patriarch; hence whoever  
Doth follow him as he commands can see  
That he is laden with good merchandise.

But for new pasturage his flock has grown  
So greedy, that it is impossible  
They be not scattered over fields diverse;

And in proportion as his sheep remote  
And vagabond go farther off from him,  
More void of milk return they to the fold.

Verily some there are that fear a hurt,  
And keep close to the shepherd; but so few,  
That little cloth doth furnish forth their hoods.

Now if my utterance be not indistinct,  
If thine own hearing hath attentive been,  
If thou recall to mind what I have said,

In part contented shall thy wishes be;  
For thou shalt see the plant that's chipped away,  
And the rebuke that lieth in the words,

'Where well one fattens, if he strayeth not.'

Paradiso: Canto XII

Soon as the blessed flame had taken up  
The final word to give it utterance,  
Began the holy millstone to revolve,

And in its gyre had not turned wholly round,  
Before another in a ring enclosed it,  
And motion joined to motion, song to song;

Song that as greatly doth transcend our Muses,  
Our Sirens, in those dulcet clarions,  
As primal splendour that which is reflected.

And as are spanned athwart a tender cloud  
Two rainbows parallel and like in colour,

When Juno to her handmaid gives command,

(The one without born of the one within,  
Like to the speaking of that vagrant one  
Whom love consumed as doth the sun the vapours,)

And make the people here, through covenant  
God set with Noah, presageful of the world  
That shall no more be covered with a flood,

In such wise of those sempiternal roses  
The garlands twain encompassed us about,  
And thus the outer to the inner answered.

After the dance, and other grand rejoicings,  
Both of the singing, and the flaming forth  
Effulgence with effulgence blithe and tender,

Together, at once, with one accord had stopped,  
(Even as the eyes, that, as volition moves them,  
Must needs together shut and lift themselves,)

Out of the heart of one of the new lights  
There came a voice, that needle to the star  
Made me appear in turning thitherward.

And it began: "The love that makes me fair  
Draws me to speak about the other leader,  
By whom so well is spoken here of mine.

'Tis right, where one is, to bring in the other,  
That, as they were united in their warfare,  
Together likewise may their glory shine.

The soldiery of Christ, which it had cost  
So dear to arm again, behind the standard  
Moved slow and doubtful and in numbers few,

When the Emperor who reigneth evermore  
Provided for the host that was in peril,  
Through grace alone and not that it was worthy;

And, as was said, he to his Bride brought succour  
With champions twain, at whose deed, at whose word  
The stragglers were together drawn.

Within that region where the sweet west wind  
Rises to open the new leaves, wherewith  
Europe is seen to clothe herself afresh,

Not far off from the beating of the waves,  
Behind which in his long career the sun  
Sometimes conceals himself from every man,

Is situate the fortunate Calahorra,  
Under protection of the mighty shield  
In which the Lion subject is and sovereign.

Therein was born the amorous paramour  
Of Christian Faith, the athlete consecrate,  
Kind to his own and cruel to his foes;

And when it was created was his mind  
Replete with such a living energy,  
That in his mother her it made prophetic.

As soon as the espousals were complete  
Between him and the Faith at holy font,  
Where they with mutual safety dowered each other,

The woman, who for him had given assent,  
Saw in a dream the admirable fruit  
That issue would from him and from his heirs;

And that he might be construed as he was,  
A spirit from this place went forth to name him  
With His possessive whose he wholly was.

Dominic was he called; and him I speak of  
Even as of the husbandman whom Christ  
Elected to his garden to assist him.

Envoy and servant sooth he seemed of Christ,  
For the first love made manifest in him  
Was the first counsel that was given by Christ.

Silent and wakeful many a time was he  
Discovered by his nurse upon the ground,  
As if he would have said, 'For this I came.'

O thou his father, Felix verily!  
O thou his mother, verily Joanna,  
If this, interpreted, means as is said!

Not for the world which people toil for now  
In following Ostiense and Taddeo,  
But through his longing after the true manna,

He in short time became so great a teacher,  
That he began to go about the vineyard,

Which fadeth soon, if faithless be the dresser;

And of the See, (that once was more benignant  
Unto the righteous poor, not through itself,  
But him who sits there and degenerates,)

Not to dispense or two or three for six,  
Not any fortune of first vacancy,  
'Non decimas quae sunt pauperum Dei,'

He asked for, but against the errant world  
Permission to do battle for the seed,  
Of which these four and twenty plants surround thee.

Then with the doctrine and the will together,  
With office apostolical he moved,  
Like torrent which some lofty vein out-presses;

And in among the shoots heretical  
His impetus with greater fury smote,  
Wherever the resistance was the greatest.

Of him were made thereafter divers runnels,  
Whereby the garden catholic is watered,  
So that more living its plantations stand.

If such the one wheel of the Biga was,  
In which the Holy Church itself defended  
And in the field its civic battle won,

Truly full manifest should be to thee  
The excellence of the other, unto whom  
Thomas so courteous was before my coming.

But still the orbit, which the highest part  
Of its circumference made, is derelict,  
So that the mould is where was once the crust.

His family, that had straight forward moved  
With feet upon his footprints, are turned round  
So that they set the point upon the heel.

And soon aware they will be of the harvest  
Of this bad husbandry, when shall the tares  
Complain the granary is taken from them.

Yet say I, he who searcheth leaf by leaf  
Our volume through, would still some page discover  
Where he could read, 'I am as I am wont.'

'Twill not be from Casal nor Acquasparta,  
From whence come such unto the written word  
That one avoids it, and the other narrows.

Bonaventura of Bagnoregio's life  
Am I, who always in great offices  
Postponed considerations sinister.

Here are Illuminato and Agostino,  
Who of the first barefooted beggars were  
That with the cord the friends of God became.

Hugh of Saint Victor is among them here,  
And Peter Mangiador, and Peter of Spain,  
Who down below in volumes twelve is shining;

Nathan the seer, and metropolitan  
Chrysostom, and Anselmus, and Donatus  
Who deigned to lay his hand to the first art;

Here is Rabanus, and beside me here  
Shines the Calabrian Abbot Joachim,  
He with the spirit of prophecy endowed.

To celebrate so great a paladin  
Have moved me the impassioned courtesy  
And the discreet discourses of Friar Thomas,

And with me they have moved this company."

Paradiso: Canto XIII

Let him imagine, who would well conceive  
What now I saw, and let him while I speak  
Retain the image as a steadfast rock,

The fifteen stars, that in their divers regions  
The sky enliven with a light so great  
That it transcends all clusters of the air;

Let him the Wain imagine unto which  
Our vault of heaven sufficeth night and day,  
So that in turning of its pole it fails not;

Let him the mouth imagine of the horn  
That in the point beginneth of the axis  
Round about which the primal wheel revolves,—

To have fashioned of themselves two signs in heaven,  
Like unto that which Minos' daughter made,

The moment when she felt the frost of death;

And one to have its rays within the other,  
And both to whirl themselves in such a manner  
That one should forward go, the other backward;

And he will have some shadowing forth of that  
True constellation and the double dance  
That circled round the point at which I was;

Because it is as much beyond our wont,  
As swifter than the motion of the Chiana  
Moveth the heaven that all the rest outspeeds.

There sang they neither Bacchus, nor Apollo,  
But in the divine nature Persons three,  
And in one person the divine and human.

The singing and the dance fulfilled their measure,  
And unto us those holy lights gave need,  
Growing in happiness from care to care.

Then broke the silence of those saints concordant  
The light in which the admirable life  
Of God's own mendicant was told to me,

And said: "Now that one straw is trodden out  
Now that its seed is garnered up already,  
Sweet love invites me to thresh out the other.

Into that bosom, thou believest, whence  
Was drawn the rib to form the beauteous cheek  
Whose taste to all the world is costing dear,

And into that which, by the lance transfixed,  
Before and since, such satisfaction made  
That it weighs down the balance of all sin,

Whate'er of light it has to human nature  
Been lawful to possess was all infused  
By the same power that both of them created;

And hence at what I said above dost wonder,  
When I narrated that no second had  
The good which in the fifth light is enclosed.

Now ope thine eyes to what I answer thee,  
And thou shalt see thy creed and my discourse  
Fit in the truth as centre in a circle.

That which can die, and that which dieth not,  
Are nothing but the splendour of the idea  
Which by his love our Lord brings into being;

Because that living Light, which from its fount  
Effulgent flows, so that it disunites not  
From Him nor from the Love in them intrined,

Through its own goodness reunites its rays  
In nine subsistences, as in a mirror,  
Itself eternally remaining One.

Thence it descends to the last potencies,  
Downward from act to act becoming such  
That only brief contingencies it makes;

And these contingencies I hold to be  
Things generated, which the heaven produces  
By its own motion, with seed and without.

Neither their wax, nor that which tempers it,  
Remains immutable, and hence beneath  
The ideal signet more and less shines through;

Therefore it happens, that the selfsame tree  
After its kind bears worse and better fruit,  
And ye are born with characters diverse.

If in perfection tempered were the wax,  
And were the heaven in its supremest virtue,  
The brilliance of the seal would all appear;

But nature gives it evermore deficient,  
In the like manner working as the artist,  
Who has the skill of art and hand that trembles.

If then the fervent Love, the Vision clear,  
Of primal Virtue do dispose and seal,  
Perfection absolute is there acquired.

Thus was of old the earth created worthy  
Of all and every animal perfection;  
And thus the Virgin was impregnate made;

So that thine own opinion I commend,  
That human nature never yet has been,  
Nor will be, what it was in those two persons.

Now if no farther forth I should proceed,  
'Then in what way was he without a peer?'

Would be the first beginning of thy words.

But, that may well appear what now appears not,  
Think who he was, and what occasion moved him  
To make request, when it was told him, 'Ask.'

I've not so spoken that thou canst not see  
Clearly he was a king who asked for wisdom,  
That he might be sufficiently a king;

'Twas not to know the number in which are  
The motors here above, or if 'necesse'  
With a contingent e'er 'necesse' make,

'Non si est dare primum motum esse,'  
Or if in semicircle can be made  
Triangle so that it have no right angle.

Whence, if thou notest this and what I said,  
A regal prudence is that peerless seeing  
In which the shaft of my intention strikes.

And if on 'rose' thou turnest thy clear eyes,  
Thou'lt see that it has reference alone  
To kings who're many, and the good are rare.

With this distinction take thou what I said,  
And thus it can consist with thy belief  
Of the first father and of our Delight.

And lead shall this be always to thy feet,  
To make thee, like a weary man, move slowly  
Both to the Yes and No thou seest not;

For very low among the fools is he  
Who affirms without distinction, or denies,  
As well in one as in the other case;

Because it happens that full often bends  
Current opinion in the false direction,  
And then the feelings bind the intellect.

Far more than uselessly he leaves the shore,  
(Since he returneth not the same he went,)  
Who fishes for the truth, and has no skill;

And in the world proofs manifest thereof  
Parmenides, Melissus, Brissus are,  
And many who went on and knew not whither;

Thus did Sabellius, Arius, and those fools  
Who have been even as swords unto the Scriptures  
In rendering distorted their straight faces.

Nor yet shall people be too confident  
In judging, even as he is who doth count  
The corn in field or ever it be ripe.

For I have seen all winter long the thorn  
First show itself intractable and fierce,  
And after bear the rose upon its top;

And I have seen a ship direct and swift  
Run o'er the sea throughout its course entire,  
To perish at the harbour's mouth at last.

Let not Dame Bertha nor Ser Martin think,  
Seeing one steal, another offering make,  
To see them in the arbitrament divine;

For one may rise, and fall the other may."

Paradiso: Canto XIV

From centre unto rim, from rim to centre,  
In a round vase the water moves itself,  
As from without 'tis struck or from within.

Into my mind upon a sudden dropped  
What I am saying, at the moment when  
Silent became the glorious life of Thomas,

Because of the resemblance that was born  
Of his discourse and that of Beatrice,  
Whom, after him, it pleased thus to begin:

"This man has need (and does not tell you so,  
Nor with the voice, nor even in his thought)  
Of going to the root of one truth more.

Declare unto him if the light wherewith  
Blossoms your substance shall remain with you  
Eternally the same that it is now;

And if it do remain, say in what manner,  
After ye are again made visible,  
It can be that it injure not your sight."

As by a greater gladness urged and drawn  
They who are dancing in a ring sometimes

Uplift their voices and their motions quicken;

So, at that orison devout and prompt,  
The holy circles a new joy displayed  
In their revolving and their wondrous song.

Whoso lamenteth him that here we die  
That we may live above, has never there  
Seen the refreshment of the eternal rain.

The One and Two and Three who ever liveth,  
And reigneth ever in Three and Two and One,  
Not circumscribed and all things circumscribing,

Three several times was chanted by each one  
Among those spirits, with such melody  
That for all merit it were just reward;

And, in the lustre most divine of all  
The lesser ring, I heard a modest voice,  
Such as perhaps the Angel's was to Mary,

Answer: "As long as the festivity  
Of Paradise shall be, so long our love  
Shall radiate round about us such a vesture.

Its brightness is proportioned to the ardour,  
The ardour to the vision; and the vision  
Equals what grace it has above its worth.

When, glorious and sanctified, our flesh  
Is reassumed, then shall our persons be  
More pleasing by their being all complete;

For will increase whate'er bestows on us  
Of light gratuitous the Good Supreme,  
Light which enables us to look on Him;

Therefore the vision must perforce increase,  
Increase the ardour which from that is kindled,  
Increase the radiance which from this proceeds.

But even as a coal that sends forth flame,  
And by its vivid whiteness overpowers it  
So that its own appearance it maintains,

Thus the effulgence that surrounds us now  
Shall be o'erpowered in aspect by the flesh,  
Which still to-day the earth doth cover up;

Nor can so great a splendour weary us,  
For strong will be the organs of the body  
To everything which hath the power to please us.”

So sudden and alert appeared to me  
Both one and the other choir to say Amen,  
That well they showed desire for their dead bodies;

Nor sole for them perhaps, but for the mothers,  
The fathers, and the rest who had been dear  
Or ever they became eternal flames.

And lo! all round about of equal brightness  
Arose a lustre over what was there,  
Like an horizon that is clearing up.

And as at rise of early eve begin  
Along the welkin new appearances,  
So that the sight seems real and unreal,

It seemed to me that new subsistences  
Began there to be seen, and make a circle  
Outside the other two circumferences.

O very sparkling of the Holy Spirit,  
How sudden and incandescent it became  
Unto mine eyes, that vanquished bore it not!

But Beatrice so beautiful and smiling  
Appeared to me, that with the other sights  
That followed not my memory I must leave her.

Then to uplift themselves mine eyes resumed  
The power, and I beheld myself translated  
To higher salvation with my Lady only.

Well was I ware that I was more uplifted  
By the enkindled smiling of the star,  
That seemed to me more ruddy than its wont.

With all my heart, and in that dialect  
Which is the same in all, such holocaust  
To God I made as the new grace beseemed;

And not yet from my bosom was exhausted  
The ardour of sacrifice, before I knew  
This offering was accepted and auspicious;

For with so great a lustre and so red  
Splendours appeared to me in twofold rays,

I said: "O Helios who dost so adorn them!"

Even as distinct with less and greater lights  
Glimmers between the two poles of the world  
The Galaxy that maketh wise men doubt,

Thus constellated in the depths of Mars,  
Those rays described the venerable sign  
That quadrants joining in a circle make.

Here doth my memory overcome my genius;  
For on that cross as levin gleamed forth Christ,  
So that I cannot find ensample worthy;

But he who takes his cross and follows Christ  
Again will pardon me what I omit,  
Seeing in that aurora lighten Christ.

From horn to horn, and 'twixt the top and base,  
Lights were in motion, brightly scintillating  
As they together met and passed each other;

Thus level and aslant and swift and slow  
We here behold, renewing still the sight,  
The particles of bodies long and short,

Across the sunbeam move, wherewith is listed  
Sometimes the shade, which for their own defence  
People with cunning and with art contrive.

And as a lute and harp, accordant strung  
With many strings, a dulcet tinkling make  
To him by whom the notes are not distinguished,

So from the lights that there to me appeared  
Ungathered through the cross a melody,  
Which rapt me, not distinguishing the hymn.

Well was I ware it was of lofty laud,  
Because there came to me, "Arise and conquer!"  
As unto him who hears and comprehends not.

So much enamoured I became therewith,  
That until then there was not anything  
That e'er had fettered me with such sweet bonds.

Perhaps my word appears somewhat too bold,  
Postponing the delight of those fair eyes,  
Into which gazing my desire has rest;

But who bethinks him that the living seals  
Of every beauty grow in power ascending,  
And that I there had not turned round to those,

Can me excuse, if I myself accuse  
To excuse myself, and see that I speak truly:  
For here the holy joy is not disclosed,

Because ascending it becomes more pure.

Paradiso: Canto XV

A will benign, in which reveals itself  
Ever the love that righteously inspires,  
As in the iniquitous, cupidity,

Silence imposed upon that dulcet lyre,  
And quieted the consecrated chords,  
That Heaven's right hand doth tighten and relax.

How unto just entreaties shall be deaf  
Those substances, which, to give me desire  
Of praying them, with one accord grew silent?

'Tis well that without end he should lament,  
Who for the love of thing that doth not last  
Eternally despoils him of that love!

As through the pure and tranquil evening air  
There shoots from time to time a sudden fire,  
Moving the eyes that steadfast were before,

And seems to be a star that changeth place,  
Except that in the part where it is kindled  
Nothing is missed, and this endureth little;

So from the horn that to the right extends  
Unto that cross's foot there ran a star  
Out of the constellation shining there;

Nor was the gem dissevered from its ribbon,  
But down the radiant fillet ran along,  
So that fire seemed it behind alabaster.

Thus piteous did Anchises' shade reach forward,  
If any faith our greatest Muse deserve,  
When in Elysium he his son perceived.

"O sanguis meus, O superinfusa  
Gratia Dei, sicut tibi, cui

Bis unquam Coeli janua reclusa?"

Thus that effulgence; whence I gave it heed;  
Then round unto my Lady turned my sight,  
And on this side and that was stupefied;

For in her eyes was burning such a smile  
That with mine own methought I touched the bottom  
Both of my grace and of my Paradise!

Then, pleasant to the hearing and the sight,  
The spirit joined to its beginning things  
I understood not, so profound it spake;

Nor did it hide itself from me by choice,  
But by necessity; for its conception  
Above the mark of mortals set itself.

And when the bow of burning sympathy  
Was so far slackened, that its speech descended  
Towards the mark of our intelligence,

The first thing that was understood by me  
Was "Benedight be Thou, O Trine and One,  
Who hast unto my seed so courteous been!"

And it continued: "Hunger long and grateful,  
Drawn from the reading of the mighty volume  
Wherein is never changed the white nor dark,

Thou hast appeased, my son, within this light  
In which I speak to thee, by grace of her  
Who to this lofty flight with plumage clothed thee.

Thou thinkest that to me thy thought doth pass  
From Him who is the first, as from the unit,  
If that be known, ray out the five and six;

And therefore who I am thou askest not,  
And why I seem more joyous unto thee  
Than any other of this gladsome crowd.

Thou think'st the truth; because the small and great  
Of this existence look into the mirror  
Wherein, before thou think'st, thy thought thou showest.

But that the sacred love, in which I watch  
With sight perpetual, and which makes me thirst  
With sweet desire, may better be fulfilled,

Now let thy voice secure and frank and glad  
Proclaim the wishes, the desire proclaim,  
To which my answer is decreed already.”

To Beatrice I turned me, and she heard  
Before I spake, and smiled to me a sign,  
That made the wings of my desire increase;

Then in this wise began I: ”Love and knowledge,  
When on you dawned the first Equality,  
Of the same weight for each of you became;

For in the Sun, which lighted you and burned  
With heat and radiance, they so equal are,  
That all similitudes are insufficient.

But among mortals will and argument,  
For reason that to you is manifest,  
Diversely feathered in their pinions are.

Whence I, who mortal am, feel in myself  
This inequality; so give not thanks,  
Save in my heart, for this paternal welcome.

Truly do I entreat thee, living topaz!  
Set in this precious jewel as a gem,  
That thou wilt satisfy me with thy name.”

”O leaf of mine, in whom I pleasure took  
E’en while awaiting, I was thine own root!”  
Such a beginning he in answer made me.

Then said to me: ”That one from whom is named  
Thy race, and who a hundred years and more  
Has circled round the mount on the first cornice,

A son of mine and thy great-grandsire was;  
Well it behoves thee that the long fatigue  
Thou shouldst for him make shorter with thy works.

Florence, within the ancient boundary  
From which she taketh still her tierce and nones,  
Abode in quiet, temperate and chaste.

No golden chain she had, nor coronal,  
Nor ladies shod with sandal shoon, nor girdle  
That caught the eye more than the person did.

Not yet the daughter at her birth struck fear  
Into the father, for the time and dower

Did not o'errun this side or that the measure.

No houses had she void of families,  
Not yet had thither come Sardanapalus  
To show what in a chamber can be done;

Not yet surpassed had Montemalo been  
By your Uccellatojo, which surpassed  
Shall in its downfall be as in its rise.

Bellincion Berti saw I go begirt  
With leather and with bone, and from the mirror  
His dame depart without a painted face;

And him of Nerli saw, and him of Vecchio,  
Contented with their simple suits of buff  
And with the spindle and the flax their dames.

O fortunate women! and each one was certain  
Of her own burial-place, and none as yet  
For sake of France was in her bed deserted.

One o'er the cradle kept her studious watch,  
And in her lullaby the language used  
That first delights the fathers and the mothers;

Another, drawing tresses from her distaff,  
Told o'er among her family the tales  
Of Trojans and of Fesole and Rome.

As great a marvel then would have been held  
A Lapo Salterello, a Cianghella,  
As Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.

To such a quiet, such a beautiful  
Life of the citizen, to such a safe  
Community, and to so sweet an inn,

Did Mary give me, with loud cries invoked,  
And in your ancient Baptistery at once  
Christian and Cacciaguida I became.

Moronto was my brother, and Eliseo;  
From Val di Pado came to me my wife,  
And from that place thy surname was derived.

I followed afterward the Emperor Conrad,  
And he begirt me of his chivalry,  
So much I pleased him with my noble deeds.

I followed in his train against that law's  
Iniquity, whose people doth usurp  
Your just possession, through your Pastor's fault.

There by that execrable race was I  
Released from bonds of the fallacious world,  
The love of which defileth many souls,

And came from martyrdom unto this peace."

Paradiso: Canto XVI

O thou our poor nobility of blood,  
If thou dost make the people glory in thee  
Down here where our affection languishes,

A marvellous thing it ne'er will be to me;  
For there where appetite is not perverted,  
I say in Heaven, of thee I made a boast!

Truly thou art a cloak that quickly shortens,  
So that unless we piece thee day by day  
Time goeth round about thee with his shears!

With 'You,' which Rome was first to tolerate,  
(Wherein her family less perseveres,)  
Yet once again my words beginning made;

Whence Beatrice, who stood somewhat apart,  
Smiling, appeared like unto her who coughed  
At the first failing writ of Guenever.

And I began: "You are my ancestor,  
You give to me all hardihood to speak,  
You lift me so that I am more than I.

So many rivulets with gladness fill  
My mind, that of itself it makes a joy  
Because it can endure this and not burst.

Then tell me, my beloved root ancestral,  
Who were your ancestors, and what the years  
That in your boyhood chronicled themselves?

Tell me about the sheepfold of Saint John,  
How large it was, and who the people were  
Within it worthy of the highest seats."

As at the blowing of the winds a coal  
Quickens to flame, so I beheld that light

Become resplendent at my blandishments.

And as unto mine eyes it grew more fair,  
With voice more sweet and tender, but not in  
This modern dialect, it said to me:

"From uttering of the 'Ave,' till the birth  
In which my mother, who is now a saint,  
Of me was lightened who had been her burden,

Unto its Lion had this fire returned  
Five hundred fifty times and thirty more,  
To reinflame itself beneath his paw.

My ancestors and I our birthplace had  
Where first is found the last ward of the city  
By him who runneth in your annual game.

Suffice it of my elders to hear this;  
But who they were, and whence they thither came,  
Silence is more considerate than speech.

All those who at that time were there between  
Mars and the Baptist, fit for bearing arms,  
Were a fifth part of those who now are living;

But the community, that now is mixed  
With Campi and Certaldo and Figghine,  
Pure in the lowest artisan was seen.

O how much better 'twere to have as neighbours  
The folk of whom I speak, and at Galluzzo  
And at Trespiano have your boundary,

Than have them in the town, and bear the stench  
Of Aguglione's churl, and him of Signa  
Who has sharp eyes for trickery already.

Had not the folk, which most of all the world  
Degenerates, been a step-dame unto Caesar,  
But as a mother to her son benignant,

Some who turn Florentines, and trade and discount,  
Would have gone back again to Simifonte  
There where their grandsires went about as beggars.

At Montemurlo still would be the Counts,  
The Cerchi in the parish of Acone,  
Perhaps in Valdiguevie the Buondelmonti.

Ever the intermingling of the people  
Has been the source of malady in cities,  
As in the body food it surfeits on;

And a blind bull more headlong plunges down  
Than a blind lamb; and very often cuts  
Better and more a single sword than five.

If Luni thou regard, and Urbisaglia,  
How they have passed away, and how are passing  
Chiusi and Sinigaglia after them,

To hear how races waste themselves away,  
Will seem to thee no novel thing nor hard,  
Seeing that even cities have an end.

All things of yours have their mortality,  
Even as yourselves; but it is hidden in some  
That a long while endure, and lives are short;

And as the turning of the lunar heaven  
Covers and bares the shores without a pause,  
In the like manner fortune does with Florence.

Therefore should not appear a marvellous thing  
What I shall say of the great Florentines  
Of whom the fame is hidden in the Past.

I saw the Ughi, saw the Catellini,  
Filippi, Greci, Ormanni, and Alberichi,  
Even in their fall illustrious citizens;

And saw, as mighty as they ancient were,  
With him of La Sannella him of Arca,  
And Soldanier, Ardinghi, and Bostichi.

Near to the gate that is at present laden  
With a new felony of so much weight  
That soon it shall be jetsam from the bark,

The Ravignani were, from whom descended  
The County Guido, and who'er the name  
Of the great Bellincione since hath taken.

He of La Pressa knew the art of ruling  
Already, and already Galigajo  
Had hilt and pommel gilded in his house.

Mighty already was the Column Vair,  
Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifant, and Barucci,

And Galli, and they who for the bushel blush.

The stock from which were the Calfucci born  
Was great already, and already chosen  
To curule chairs the Sizzii and Arrigucci.

O how beheld I those who are undone  
By their own pride! and how the Balls of Gold  
Florence enflowered in all their mighty deeds!

So likewise did the ancestors of those  
Who evermore, when vacant is your church,  
Fatten by staying in consistory.

The insolent race, that like a dragon follows  
Whoever flees, and unto him that shows  
His teeth or purse is gentle as a lamb,

Already rising was, but from low people;  
So that it pleased not Ubertain Donato  
That his wife's father should make him their kin.

Already had Caponsacco to the Market  
From Fesole descended, and already  
Giuda and Infangato were good burghers.

I'll tell a thing incredible, but true;  
One entered the small circuit by a gate  
Which from the Della Pera took its name!

Each one that bears the beautiful escutcheon  
Of the great baron whose renown and name  
The festival of Thomas keepeth fresh,

Knighthood and privilege from him received;  
Though with the populace unites himself  
To-day the man who binds it with a border.

Already were Gualterotti and Importuni;  
And still more quiet would the Borgo be  
If with new neighbours it remained unfed.

The house from which is born your lamentation,  
Through just disdain that death among you brought  
And put an end unto your joyous life,

Was honoured in itself and its companions.  
O Buondelmonte, how in evil hour  
Thou fled'st the bridal at another's promptings!

Many would be rejoicing who are sad,  
If God had thee surrendered to the Ema  
The first time that thou camest to the city.

But it behoved the mutilated stone  
Which guards the bridge, that Florence should provide  
A victim in her latest hour of peace.

With all these families, and others with them,  
Florence beheld I in so great repose,  
That no occasion had she whence to weep;

With all these families beheld so just  
And glorious her people, that the lily  
Never upon the spear was placed reversed,

Nor by division was vermilion made.”

Paradiso: Canto XVII

As came to Clymene, to be made certain  
Of that which he had heard against himself,  
He who makes fathers chary still to children,

Even such was I, and such was I perceived  
By Beatrice and by the holy light  
That first on my account had changed its place.

Therefore my Lady said to me: ”Send forth  
The flame of thy desire, so that it issue  
Imprinted well with the internal stamp;

Not that our knowledge may be greater made  
By speech of thine, but to accustom thee  
To tell thy thirst, that we may give thee drink.”

”O my beloved tree, (that so dost lift thee,  
That even as minds terrestrial perceive  
No triangle containeth two obtuse,

So thou beholdest the contingent things  
Ere in themselves they are, fixing thine eyes  
Upon the point in which all times are present,)

While I was with Virgilius conjoined  
Upon the mountain that the souls doth heal,  
And when descending into the dead world,

Were spoken to me of my future life  
Some grievous words; although I feel myself

In sooth foursquare against the blows of chance.

On this account my wish would be content  
To hear what fortune is approaching me,  
Because foreseen an arrow comes more slowly.”

Thus did I say unto that selfsame light  
That unto me had spoken before; and even  
As Beatrice willed was my own will confessed.

Not in vague phrase, in which the foolish folk  
Ensnared themselves of old, ere yet was slain  
The Lamb of God who taketh sins away,

But with clear words and unambiguous  
Language responded that paternal love,  
Hid and revealed by its own proper smile:

”Contingency, that outside of the volume  
Of your materiality extends not,  
Is all depicted in the eternal aspect.

Necessity however thence it takes not,  
Except as from the eye, in which ’tis mirrored,  
A ship that with the current down descends.

From thence, e’en as there cometh to the ear  
Sweet harmony from an organ, comes in sight  
To me the time that is preparing for thee.

As forth from Athens went Hippolytus,  
By reason of his step-dame false and cruel,  
So thou from Florence must perforce depart.

Already this is willed, and this is sought for;  
And soon it shall be done by him who thinks it,  
Where every day the Christ is bought and sold.

The blame shall follow the offended party  
In outcry as is usual; but the vengeance  
Shall witness to the truth that doth dispense it.

Thou shalt abandon everything beloved  
Most tenderly, and this the arrow is  
Which first the bow of banishment shoots forth.

Thou shalt have proof how savoureth of salt  
The bread of others, and how hard a road  
The going down and up another’s stairs.

And that which most shall weigh upon thy shoulders  
Will be the bad and foolish company  
With which into this valley thou shalt fall;

For all ingrate, all mad and impious  
Will they become against thee; but soon after  
They, and not thou, shall have the forehead scarlet.

Of their bestiality their own proceedings  
Shall furnish proof; so 'twill be well for thee  
A party to have made thee by thyself.

Thine earliest refuge and thine earliest inn  
Shall be the mighty Lombard's courtesy,  
Who on the Ladder bears the holy bird,

Who such benign regard shall have for thee  
That 'twixt you twain, in doing and in asking,  
That shall be first which is with others last.

With him shalt thou see one who at his birth  
Has by this star of strength been so impressed,  
That notable shall his achievements be.

Not yet the people are aware of him  
Through his young age, since only nine years yet  
Around about him have these wheels revolved.

But ere the Gascon cheat the noble Henry,  
Some sparkles of his virtue shall appear  
In caring not for silver nor for toil.

So recognized shall his magnificence  
Become hereafter, that his enemies  
Will not have power to keep mute tongues about it.

On him rely, and on his benefits;  
By him shall many people be transformed,  
Changing condition rich and mendicant;

And written in thy mind thou hence shalt bear  
Of him, but shalt not say it"—and things said he  
Incredible to those who shall be present.

Then added: "Son, these are the commentaries  
On what was said to thee; behold the snares  
That are concealed behind few revolutions;

Yet would I not thy neighbours thou shouldst envy,  
Because thy life into the future reaches

Beyond the punishment of their perfidies.”

When by its silence showed that sainted soul  
That it had finished putting in the woof  
Into that web which I had given it warped,

Began I, even as he who yearneth after,  
Being in doubt, some counsel from a person  
Who seeth, and uprightly wills, and loves:

”Well see I, father mine, how spurreth on  
The time towards me such a blow to deal me  
As heaviest is to him who most gives way.

Therefore with foresight it is well I arm me,  
That, if the dearest place be taken from me,  
I may not lose the others by my songs.

Down through the world of infinite bitterness,  
And o’er the mountain, from whose beauteous summit  
The eyes of my own Lady lifted me,

And afterward through heaven from light to light,  
I have learned that which, if I tell again,  
Will be a savour of strong herbs to many.

And if I am a timid friend to truth,  
I fear lest I may lose my life with those  
Who will hereafter call this time the olden.”

The light in which was smiling my own treasure  
Which there I had discovered, flashed at first  
As in the sunshine doth a golden mirror;

Then made reply: ”A conscience overcast  
Or with its own or with another’s shame,  
Will taste forsooth the tartness of thy word;

But ne’ertheless, all falsehood laid aside,  
Make manifest thy vision utterly,  
And let them scratch wherever is the itch;

For if thine utterance shall offensive be  
At the first taste, a vital nutriment  
’Twill leave thereafter, when it is digested.

This cry of thine shall do as doth the wind,  
Which smiteth most the most exalted summits,  
And that is no slight argument of honour.

Therefore are shown to thee within these wheels,  
Upon the mount and in the dolorous valley,  
Only the souls that unto fame are known;

Because the spirit of the hearer rests not,  
Nor doth confirm its faith by an example  
Which has the root of it unknown and hidden,

Or other reason that is not apparent.”

Paradiso: Canto XVIII

Now was alone rejoicing in its word  
That soul beatified, and I was tasting  
My own, the bitter tempering with the sweet,

And the Lady who to God was leading me  
Said: ”Change thy thought; consider that I am  
Near unto Him who every wrong disburdens.”

Unto the loving accents of my comfort  
I turned me round, and then what love I saw  
Within those holy eyes I here relinquish;

Not only that my language I distrust,  
But that my mind cannot return so far  
Above itself, unless another guide it.

Thus much upon that point can I repeat,  
That, her again beholding, my affection  
From every other longing was released.

While the eternal pleasure, which direct  
Rayed upon Beatrice, from her fair face  
Contented me with its reflected aspect,

Conquering me with the radiance of a smile,  
She said to me, ”Turn thee about and listen;  
Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise.”

Even as sometimes here do we behold  
The affection in the look, if it be such  
That all the soul is wrapt away by it,

So, by the flaming of the effulgence holy  
To which I turned, I recognized therein  
The wish of speaking to me somewhat farther.

And it began: ”In this fifth resting-place  
Upon the tree that liveth by its summit,

And aye bears fruit, and never loses leaf,

Are blessed spirits that below, ere yet  
They came to Heaven, were of such great renown  
That every Muse therewith would affluent be.

Therefore look thou upon the cross's horns;  
He whom I now shall name will there enact  
What doth within a cloud its own swift fire."

I saw athwart the Cross a splendour drawn  
By naming Joshua, (even as he did it,)  
Nor noted I the word before the deed;

And at the name of the great Maccabee  
I saw another move itself revolving,  
And gladness was the whip unto that top.

Likewise for Charlemagne and for Orlando,  
Two of them my regard attentive followed  
As followeth the eye its falcon flying.

William thereafterward, and Renouard,  
And the Duke Godfrey, did attract my sight  
Along upon that Cross, and Robert Guiscard.

Then, moved and mingled with the other lights,  
The soul that had addressed me showed how great  
An artist 'twas among the heavenly singers.

To my right side I turned myself around,  
My duty to behold in Beatrice  
Either by words or gesture signified;

And so translucent I beheld her eyes,  
So full of pleasure, that her countenance  
Surpassed its other and its latest wont.

And as, by feeling greater delectation,  
A man in doing good from day to day  
Becomes aware his virtue is increasing,

So I became aware that my gyration  
With heaven together had increased its arc,  
That miracle beholding more adorned.

And such as is the change, in little lapse  
Of time, in a pale woman, when her face  
Is from the load of bashfulness unladen,

Such was it in mine eyes, when I had turned,  
Caused by the whiteness of the temperate star,  
The sixth, which to itself had gathered me.

Within that Jovial torch did I behold  
The sparkling of the love which was therein  
Delineate our language to mine eyes.

And even as birds uprisen from the shore,  
As in congratulation o'er their food,  
Make squadrons of themselves, now round, now long,

So from within those lights the holy creatures  
Sang flying to and fro, and in their figures  
Made of themselves now D, now I, now L.

First singing they to their own music moved;  
Then one becoming of these characters,  
A little while they rested and were silent.

O divine Pegasea, thou who genius  
Dost glorious make, and render it long-lived,  
And this through thee the cities and the kingdoms,

Illume me with thyself, that I may bring  
Their figures out as I have them conceived!  
Apparent be thy power in these brief verses!

Themselves then they displayed in five times seven  
Vowels and consonants; and I observed  
The parts as they seemed spoken unto me.

'Diligite justitiam,' these were  
First verb and noun of all that was depicted;  
'Qui judicatis terram' were the last.

Thereafter in the M of the fifth word  
Remained they so arranged, that Jupiter  
Seemed to be silver there with gold inlaid.

And other lights I saw descend where was  
The summit of the M, and pause there singing  
The good, I think, that draws them to itself.

Then, as in striking upon burning logs  
Upward there fly innumerable sparks,  
Whence fools are wont to look for auguries,

More than a thousand lights seemed thence to rise,  
And to ascend, some more, and others less,

Even as the Sun that lights them had allotted;

And, each one being quiet in its place,  
The head and neck beheld I of an eagle  
Delineated by that inlaid fire.

He who there paints has none to be his guide;  
But Himself guides; and is from Him remembered  
That virtue which is form unto the nest.

The other beatitude, that contented seemed  
At first to bloom a lily on the M,  
By a slight motion followed out the imprint.

O gentle star! what and how many gems  
Did demonstrate to me, that all our justice  
Effect is of that heaven which thou ingemmet!

Wherefore I pray the Mind, in which begin  
Thy motion and thy virtue, to regard  
Whence comes the smoke that vitiates thy rays;

So that a second time it now be wroth  
With buying and with selling in the temple  
Whose walls were built with signs and martyrdoms!

O soldiery of heaven, whom I contemplate,  
Implore for those who are upon the earth  
All gone astray after the bad example!

Once 'twas the custom to make war with swords;  
But now 'tis made by taking here and there  
The bread the pitying Father shuts from none.

Yet thou, who writest but to cancel, think  
That Peter and that Paul, who for this vineyard  
Which thou art spoiling died, are still alive!

Well canst thou say: "So steadfast my desire  
Is unto him who willed to live alone,  
And for a dance was led to martyrdom,

That I know not the Fisherman nor Paul."

Paradiso: Canto XIX

Appeared before me with its wings outspread  
The beautiful image that in sweet fruition  
Made jubilant the interwoven souls;

Appeared a little ruby each, wherein  
Ray of the sun was burning so enkindled  
That each into mine eyes refracted it.

And what it now behoves me to retrace  
Nor voice has e'er reported, nor ink written,  
Nor was by fantasy e'er comprehended;

For speak I saw, and likewise heard, the beak,  
And utter with its voice both 'I' and 'My,'  
When in conception it was 'We' and 'Our.'

And it began: "Being just and merciful  
Am I exalted here unto that glory  
Which cannot be exceeded by desire;

And upon earth I left my memory  
Such, that the evil-minded people there  
Commend it, but continue not the story."

So doth a single heat from many embers  
Make itself felt, even as from many loves  
Issued a single sound from out that image.

Whence I thereafter: "O perpetual flowers  
Of the eternal joy, that only one  
Make me perceive your odours manifold,

Exhaling, break within me the great fast  
Which a long season has in hunger held me,  
Not finding for it any food on earth.

Well do I know, that if in heaven its mirror  
Justice Divine another realm doth make,  
Yours apprehends it not through any veil.

You know how I attentively address me  
To listen; and you know what is the doubt  
That is in me so very old a fast."

Even as a falcon, issuing from his hood,  
Doth move his head, and with his wings applaud him,  
Showing desire, and making himself fine,

Saw I become that standard, which of lauds  
Was interwoven of the grace divine,  
With such songs as he knows who there rejoices.

Then it began: "He who a compass turned  
On the world's outer verge, and who within it

Devised so much occult and manifest,

Could not the impress of his power so make  
On all the universe, as that his Word  
Should not remain in infinite excess.

And this makes certain that the first proud being,  
Who was the paragon of every creature,  
By not awaiting light fell immature.

And hence appears it, that each minor nature  
Is scant receptacle unto that good  
Which has no end, and by itself is measured.

In consequence our vision, which perforce  
Must be some ray of that intelligence  
With which all things whatever are replete,

Cannot in its own nature be so potent,  
That it shall not its origin discern  
Far beyond that which is apparent to it.

Therefore into the justice sempiternal  
The power of vision that your world receives,  
As eye into the ocean, penetrates;

Which, though it see the bottom near the shore,  
Upon the deep perceives it not, and yet  
'Tis there, but it is hidden by the depth.

There is no light but comes from the serene  
That never is o'ercast, nay, it is darkness  
Or shadow of the flesh, or else its poison.

Amplly to thee is opened now the cavern  
Which has concealed from thee the living justice  
Of which thou mad'st such frequent questioning.

For saidst thou: 'Born a man is on the shore  
Of Indus, and is none who there can speak  
Of Christ, nor who can read, nor who can write;

And all his inclinations and his actions  
Are good, so far as human reason sees,  
Without a sin in life or in discourse:

He dieth unbaptised and without faith;  
Where is this justice that condemneth him?  
Where is his fault, if he do not believe?'

Now who art thou, that on the bench wouldst sit  
In judgment at a thousand miles away,  
With the short vision of a single span?

Truly to him who with me subtilizes,  
If so the Scripture were not over you,  
For doubting there were marvellous occasion.

O animals terrene, O stolid minds,  
The primal will, that in itself is good,  
Ne'er from itself, the Good Supreme, has moved.

So much is just as is accordant with it;  
No good created draws it to itself,  
But it, by raying forth, occasions that."

Even as above her nest goes circling round  
The stork when she has fed her little ones,  
And he who has been fed looks up at her,

So lifted I my brows, and even such  
Became the blessed image, which its wings  
Was moving, by so many counsels urged.

Circling around it sang, and said: "As are  
My notes to thee, who dost not comprehend them,  
Such is the eternal judgment to you mortals."

Those lucent splendours of the Holy Spirit  
Grew quiet then, but still within the standard  
That made the Romans reverend to the world.

It recommenced: "Unto this kingdom never  
Ascended one who had not faith in Christ,  
Before or since he to the tree was nailed.

But look thou, many crying are, 'Christ, Christ!'  
Who at the judgment shall be far less near  
To him than some shall be who knew not Christ.

Such Christians shall the Ethiop condemn,  
When the two companies shall be divided,  
The one for ever rich, the other poor.

What to your kings may not the Persians say,  
When they that volume opened shall behold  
In which are written down all their dispraises?

There shall be seen, among the deeds of Albert,  
That which ere long shall set the pen in motion,

For which the realm of Prague shall be deserted.

There shall be seen the woe that on the Seine  
He brings by falsifying of the coin,  
Who by the blow of a wild boar shall die.

There shall be seen the pride that causes thirst,  
Which makes the Scot and Englishman so mad  
That they within their boundaries cannot rest;

Be seen the luxury and effeminate life  
Of him of Spain, and the Bohemian,  
Who valour never knew and never wished;

Be seen the Cripple of Jerusalem,  
His goodness represented by an I,  
While the reverse an M shall represent;

Be seen the avarice and poltroonery  
Of him who guards the Island of the Fire,  
Wherein Anchises finished his long life;

And to declare how pitiful he is  
Shall be his record in contracted letters  
Which shall make note of much in little space.

And shall appear to each one the foul deeds  
Of uncle and of brother who a nation  
So famous have dishonoured, and two crowns.

And he of Portugal and he of Norway  
Shall there be known, and he of Rascia too,  
Who saw in evil hour the coin of Venice.

O happy Hungary, if she let herself  
Be wronged no farther! and Navarre the happy,  
If with the hills that gird her she be armed!

And each one may believe that now, as hansen  
Thereof, do Nicosia and Famagosta  
Lament and rage because of their own beast,

Who from the others' flank departeth not."

Paradiso: Canto XX

When he who all the world illuminates  
Out of our hemisphere so far descends  
That on all sides the daylight is consumed,

The heaven, that erst by him alone was kindled,  
Doth suddenly reveal itself again  
By many lights, wherein is one resplendent.

And came into my mind this act of heaven,  
When the ensign of the world and of its leaders  
Had silent in the blessed beak become;

Because those living luminaries all,  
By far more luminous, did songs begin  
Lapsing and falling from my memory.

O gentle Love, that with a smile dost cloak thee,  
How ardent in those sparks didst thou appear,  
That had the breath alone of holy thoughts!

After the precious and pellucid crystals,  
With which begemmed the sixth light I beheld,  
Silence imposed on the angelic bells,

I seemed to hear the murmuring of a river  
That clear descendeth down from rock to rock,  
Showing the affluence of its mountain-top.

And as the sound upon the cithern's neck  
Taketeth its form, and as upon the vent  
Of rustic pipe the wind that enters it,

Even thus, relieved from the delay of waiting,  
That murmuring of the eagle mounted up  
Along its neck, as if it had been hollow.

There it became a voice, and issued thence  
From out its beak, in such a form of words  
As the heart waited for wherein I wrote them.

"The part in me which sees and bears the sun  
In mortal eagles," it began to me,  
"Now fixedly must needs be looked upon;

For of the fires of which I make my figure,  
Those whence the eye doth sparkle in my head  
Of all their orders the supremest are.

He who is shining in the midst as pupil  
Was once the singer of the Holy Spirit,  
Who bore the ark from city unto city;

Now knoweth he the merit of his song,  
In so far as effect of his own counsel,

By the reward which is commensurate.

Of five, that make a circle for my brow,  
He that approacheth nearest to my beak  
Did the poor widow for her son console;

Now knoweth he how dearly it doth cost  
Not following Christ, by the experience  
Of this sweet life and of its opposite.

He who comes next in the circumference  
Of which I speak, upon its highest arc,  
Did death postpone by penitence sincere;

Now knoweth he that the eternal judgment  
Suffers no change, albeit worthy prayer  
Maketh below to-morrow of to-day.

The next who follows, with the laws and me,  
Under the good intent that bore bad fruit  
Became a Greek by ceding to the pastor;

Now knoweth he how all the ill deduced  
From his good action is not harmful to him,  
Although the world thereby may be destroyed.

And he, whom in the downward arc thou seest,  
Guglielmo was, whom the same land deplores  
That weepeth Charles and Frederick yet alive;

Now knoweth he how heaven enamoured is  
With a just king; and in the outward show  
Of his effulgence he reveals it still.

Who would believe, down in the errant world,  
That e'er the Trojan Ripheus in this round  
Could be the fifth one of the holy lights?

Now knoweth he enough of what the world  
Has not the power to see of grace divine,  
Although his sight may not discern the bottom."

Like as a lark that in the air expatiates,  
First singing and then silent with content  
Of the last sweetness that doth satisfy her,

Such seemed to me the image of the imprint  
Of the eternal pleasure, by whose will  
Doth everything become the thing it is.

And notwithstanding to my doubt I was  
As glass is to the colour that invests it,  
To wait the time in silence it endured not,

But forth from out my mouth, "What things are these?"  
Extorted with the force of its own weight;  
Whereat I saw great joy of coruscation.

Thereafterward with eye still more enkindled  
The blessed standard made to me reply,  
To keep me not in wonderment suspended:

"I see that thou believest in these things  
Because I say them, but thou seest not how;  
So that, although believed in, they are hidden.

Thou doest as he doth who a thing by name  
Well apprehendeth, but its quiddity  
Cannot perceive, unless another show it.

'Regnum coelorum' suffereth violence  
From fervent love, and from that living hope  
That overcometh the Divine volition;

Not in the guise that man o'ercometh man,  
But conquers it because it will be conquered,  
And conquered conquers by benignity.

The first life of the eyebrow and the fifth  
Cause thee astonishment, because with them  
Thou seest the region of the angels painted.

They passed not from their bodies, as thou thinkest,  
Gentiles, but Christians in the steadfast faith  
Of feet that were to suffer and had suffered.

For one from Hell, where no one e'er turns back  
Unto good will, returned unto his bones,  
And that of living hope was the reward,—

Of living hope, that placed its efficacy  
In prayers to God made to resuscitate him,  
So that 'twere possible to move his will.

The glorious soul concerning which I speak,  
Returning to the flesh, where brief its stay,  
Believed in Him who had the power to aid it;

And, in believing, kindled to such fire  
Of genuine love, that at the second death

Worthy it was to come unto this joy.

The other one, through grace, that from so deep  
A fountain wells that never hath the eye  
Of any creature reached its primal wave,

Set all his love below on righteousness;  
Wherefore from grace to grace did God unclothe  
His eye to our redemption yet to be,

Whence he believed therein, and suffered not  
From that day forth the stench of paganism,  
And he reproved therefor the folk perverse.

Those Maidens three, whom at the right-hand wheel  
Thou didst behold, were unto him for baptism  
More than a thousand years before baptizing.

O thou predestination, how remote  
Thy root is from the aspect of all those  
Who the First Cause do not behold entire!

And you, O mortals! hold yourselves restrained  
In judging; for ourselves, who look on God,  
We do not know as yet all the elect;

And sweet to us is such a deprivation,  
Because our good in this good is made perfect,  
That whatsoever God wills, we also will."

After this manner by that shape divine,  
To make clear in me my short-sightedness,  
Was given to me a pleasant medicine;

And as good singer a good lutanist  
Accompanies with vibrations of the chords,  
Whereby more pleasantness the song acquires,

So, while it spake, do I remember me  
That I beheld both of those blessed lights,  
Even as the winking of the eyes concords,

Moving unto the words their little flames.

Paradiso: Canto XXI

Already on my Lady's face mine eyes  
Again were fastened, and with these my mind,  
And from all other purpose was withdrawn;

And she smiled not; but "If I were to smile,"  
She unto me began, "thou wouldst become  
Like Semele, when she was turned to ashes.

Because my beauty, that along the stairs  
Of the eternal palace more enkindles,  
As thou hast seen, the farther we ascend,

If it were tempered not, is so resplendent  
That all thy mortal power in its effulgence  
Would seem a leaflet that the thunder crushes.

We are uplifted to the seventh splendour,  
That underneath the burning Lion's breast  
Now radiates downward mingled with his power.

Fix in direction of thine eyes the mind,  
And make of them a mirror for the figure  
That in this mirror shall appear to thee."

He who could know what was the pasturage  
My sight had in that blessed countenance,  
When I transferred me to another care,

Would recognize how grateful was to me  
Obedience unto my celestial escort,  
By counterpoising one side with the other.

Within the crystal which, around the world  
Revolving, bears the name of its dear leader,  
Under whom every wickedness lay dead,

Coloured like gold, on which the sunshine gleams,  
A stairway I beheld to such a height  
Uplifted, that mine eye pursued it not.

Likewise beheld I down the steps descending  
So many splendours, that I thought each light  
That in the heaven appears was there diffused.

And as accordant with their natural custom  
The rooks together at the break of day  
Bestir themselves to warm their feathers cold;

Then some of them fly off without return,  
Others come back to where they started from,  
And others, wheeling round, still keep at home;

Such fashion it appeared to me was there  
Within the sparkling that together came,

As soon as on a certain step it struck,

And that which nearest unto us remained  
Became so clear, that in my thought I said,  
"Well I perceive the love thou showest me;

But she, from whom I wait the how and when  
Of speech and silence, standeth still; whence I  
Against desire do well if I ask not."

She thereupon, who saw my silentness  
In the sight of Him who seeth everything,  
Said unto me, "Let loose thy warm desire."

And I began: "No merit of my own  
Renders me worthy of response from thee;  
But for her sake who granteth me the asking,

Thou blessed life that dost remain concealed  
In thy beatitude, make known to me  
The cause which draweth thee so near my side;

And tell me why is silent in this wheel  
The dulcet symphony of Paradise,  
That through the rest below sounds so devoutly."

"Thou hast thy hearing mortal as thy sight,"  
It answer made to me; "they sing not here,  
For the same cause that Beatrice has not smiled.

Thus far adown the holy stairway's steps  
Have I descended but to give thee welcome  
With words, and with the light that mantles me;

Nor did more love cause me to be more ready,  
For love as much and more up there is burning,  
As doth the flaming manifest to thee.

But the high charity, that makes us servants  
Prompt to the counsel which controls the world,  
Allotteth here, even as thou dost observe."

"I see full well," said I, "O sacred lamp!  
How love unfettered in this court sufficeth  
To follow the eternal Providence;

But this is what seems hard for me to see,  
Wherefore predestinate wast thou alone  
Unto this office from among thy consorts."

No sooner had I come to the last word,  
Than of its middle made the light a centre,  
Whirling itself about like a swift millstone.

When answer made the love that was therein:  
"On me directed is a light divine,  
Piercing through this in which I am embosomed,

Of which the virtue with my sight conjoined  
Lifts me above myself so far, I see  
The supreme essence from which this is drawn.

Hence comes the joyfulness with which I flame,  
For to my sight, as far as it is clear,  
The clearness of the flame I equal make.

But that soul in the heaven which is most pure,  
That seraph which his eye on God most fixes,  
Could this demand of thine not satisfy;

Because so deeply sinks in the abyss  
Of the eternal statute what thou askest,  
From all created sight it is cut off.

And to the mortal world, when thou returnest,  
This carry back, that it may not presume  
Longer tow'rd such a goal to move its feet.

The mind, that shineth here, on earth doth smoke;  
From this observe how can it do below  
That which it cannot though the heaven assume it?"

Such limit did its words prescribe to me,  
The question I relinquished, and restricted  
Myself to ask it humbly who it was.

"Between two shores of Italy rise cliffs,  
And not far distant from thy native place,  
So high, the thunders far below them sound,

And form a ridge that Catria is called,  
'Neath which is consecrate a hermitage  
Wont to be dedicate to worship only."

Thus unto me the third speech recommenced,  
And then, continuing, it said: "Therein  
Unto God's service I became so steadfast,

That feeding only on the juice of olives  
Lightly I passed away the heats and frosts,

Contented in my thoughts contemplative.

That cloister used to render to these heavens  
Abundantly, and now is empty grown,  
So that perforce it soon must be revealed.

I in that place was Peter Damiano;  
And Peter the Sinner was I in the house  
Of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore.

Little of mortal life remained to me,  
When I was called and dragged forth to the hat  
Which shifteth evermore from bad to worse.

Came Cephas, and the mighty Vessel came  
Of the Holy Spirit, meagre and barefooted,  
Taking the food of any hostelry.

Now some one to support them on each side  
The modern shepherds need, and some to lead them,  
So heavy are they, and to hold their trains.

They cover up their palfreys with their cloaks,  
So that two beasts go underneath one skin;  
O Patience, that dost tolerate so much!"

At this voice saw I many little flames  
From step to step descending and revolving,  
And every revolution made them fairer.

Round about this one came they and stood still,  
And a cry uttered of so loud a sound,  
It here could find no parallel, nor I

Distinguished it, the thunder so o'ercame me.

Paradiso: Canto XXII

Oppressed with stupor, I unto my guide  
Turned like a little child who always runs  
For refuge there where he confideth most;

And she, even as a mother who straightway  
Gives comfort to her pale and breathless boy  
With voice whose wont it is to reassure him,

Said to me: "Knowest thou not thou art in heaven,  
And knowest thou not that heaven is holy all  
And what is done here cometh from good zeal?"

After what wise the singing would have changed thee  
And I by smiling, thou canst now imagine,  
Since that the cry has startled thee so much,

In which if thou hadst understood its prayers  
Already would be known to thee the vengeance  
Which thou shalt look upon before thou diest.

The sword above here smiteth not in haste  
Nor tardily, howe'er it seem to him  
Who fearing or desiring waits for it.

But turn thee round towards the others now,  
For very illustrious spirits shalt thou see,  
If thou thy sight directest as I say."

As it seemed good to her mine eyes I turned,  
And saw a hundred spherules that together  
With mutual rays each other more embellished.

I stood as one who in himself represses  
The point of his desire, and ventures not  
To question, he so feareth the too much.

And now the largest and most luculent  
Among those pearls came forward, that it might  
Make my desire concerning it content.

Within it then I heard: "If thou couldst see  
Even as myself the charity that burns  
Among us, thy conceits would be expressed;

But, that by waiting thou mayst not come late  
To the high end, I will make answer even  
Unto the thought of which thou art so chary.

That mountain on whose slope Cassino stands  
Was frequented of old upon its summit  
By a deluded folk and ill-disposed;

And I am he who first up thither bore  
The name of Him who brought upon the earth  
The truth that so much sublimateth us.

And such abundant grace upon me shone  
That all the neighbouring towns I drew away  
From the impious worship that seduced the world.

These other fires, each one of them, were men  
Contemplative, enkindled by that heat

Which maketh holy flowers and fruits spring up.

Here is Macarius, here is Romualdus,  
Here are my brethren, who within the cloisters  
Their footsteps stayed and kept a steadfast heart.”

And I to him: ”The affection which thou showest  
Speaking with me, and the good countenance  
Which I behold and note in all your ardours,

In me have so my confidence dilated  
As the sun doth the rose, when it becomes  
As far unfolded as it hath the power.

Therefore I pray, and thou assure me, father,  
If I may so much grace receive, that I  
May thee behold with countenance unveiled.”

He thereupon: ”Brother, thy high desire  
In the remotest sphere shall be fulfilled,  
Where are fulfilled all others and my own.

There perfect is, and ripened, and complete,  
Every desire; within that one alone  
Is every part where it has always been;

For it is not in space, nor turns on poles,  
And unto it our stairway reaches up,  
Whence thus from out thy sight it steals away.

Up to that height the Patriarch Jacob saw it  
Extending its supernal part, what time  
So thronged with angels it appeared to him.

But to ascend it now no one uplifts  
His feet from off the earth, and now my Rule  
Below remaineth for mere waste of paper.

The walls that used of old to be an Abbey  
Are changed to dens of robbers, and the cowls  
Are sacks filled full of miserable flour.

But heavy usury is not taken up  
So much against God’s pleasure as that fruit  
Which maketh so insane the heart of monks;

For whatsoever hath the Church in keeping  
Is for the folk that ask it in God’s name,  
Not for one’s kindred or for something worse.

The flesh of mortals is so very soft,  
That good beginnings down below suffice not  
From springing of the oak to bearing acorns.

Peter began with neither gold nor silver,  
And I with orison and abstinence,  
And Francis with humility his convent.

And if thou lookest at each one's beginning,  
And then regardest whither he has run,  
Thou shalt behold the white changed into brown.

In verity the Jordan backward turned,  
And the sea's fleeing, when God willed were more  
A wonder to behold, than succour here."

Thus unto me he said; and then withdrew  
To his own band, and the band closed together;  
Then like a whirlwind all was upward rapt.

The gentle Lady urged me on behind them  
Up o'er that stairway by a single sign,  
So did her virtue overcome my nature;

Nor here below, where one goes up and down  
By natural law, was motion e'er so swift  
That it could be compared unto my wing.

Reader, as I may unto that devout  
Triumph return, on whose account I often  
For my transgressions weep and beat my breast,—

Thou hadst not thrust thy finger in the fire  
And drawn it out again, before I saw  
The sign that follows Taurus, and was in it.

O glorious stars, O light impregnated  
With mighty virtue, from which I acknowledge  
All of my genius, whatsoe'er it be,

With you was born, and hid himself with you,  
He who is father of all mortal life,  
When first I tasted of the Tuscan air;

And then when grace was freely given to me  
To enter the high wheel which turns you round,  
Your region was allotted unto me.

To you devoutly at this hour my soul  
Is sighing, that it virtue may acquire

For the stern pass that draws it to itself.

"Thou art so near unto the last salvation,"  
Thus Beatrice began, "thou oughtest now  
To have thine eyes unclouded and acute;

And therefore, ere thou enter farther in,  
Look down once more, and see how vast a world  
Thou hast already put beneath thy feet;

So that thy heart, as jocund as it may,  
Present itself to the triumphant throng  
That comes rejoicing through this rounded ether."

I with my sight returned through one and all  
The sevenfold spheres, and I beheld this globe  
Such that I smiled at its ignoble semblance;

And that opinion I approve as best  
Which doth account it least; and he who thinks  
Of something else may truly be called just.

I saw the daughter of Latona shining  
Without that shadow, which to me was cause  
That once I had believed her rare and dense.

The aspect of thy son, Hyperion,  
Here I sustained, and saw how move themselves  
Around and near him Maia and Dione.

Thence there appeared the temperateness of Jove  
'Twixt son and father, and to me was clear  
The change that of their whereabouts they make;

And all the seven made manifest to me  
How great they are, and eke how swift they are,  
And how they are in distant habitations.

The threshing-floor that maketh us so proud,  
To me revolving with the eternal Twins,  
Was all apparent made from hill to harbour!

Then to the beauteous eyes mine eyes I turned.

Paradiso: Canto XXIII

Even as a bird, 'mid the beloved leaves,  
Quiet upon the nest of her sweet brood  
Throughout the night, that hideth all things from us,

Who, that she may behold their longed-for looks  
And find the food wherewith to nourish them,  
In which, to her, grave labours grateful are,

Anticipates the time on open spray  
And with an ardent longing waits the sun,  
Gazing intent as soon as breaks the dawn:

Even thus my Lady standing was, erect  
And vigilant, turned round towards the zone  
Underneath which the sun displays less haste;

So that beholding her distraught and wistful,  
Such I became as he is who desiring  
For something yearns, and hoping is appeased.

But brief the space from one When to the other;  
Of my awaiting, say I, and the seeing  
The welkin grow resplendent more and more.

And Beatrice exclaimed: "Behold the hosts  
Of Christ's triumphal march, and all the fruit  
Harvested by the rolling of these spheres!"

It seemed to me her face was all aflame;  
And eyes she had so full of ecstasy  
That I must needs pass on without describing.

As when in nights serene of the full moon  
Smiles Trivia among the nymphs eternal  
Who paint the firmament through all its gulfs,

Saw I, above the myriads of lamps,  
A Sun that one and all of them enkindled,  
E'en as our own doth the supernal sights,

And through the living light transparent shone  
The lucent substance so intensely clear  
Into my sight, that I sustained it not.

O Beatrice, thou gentle guide and dear!  
To me she said: "What overmasters thee  
A virtue is from which naught shields itself.

There are the wisdom and the omnipotence  
That oped the thoroughfares 'twixt heaven and earth,  
For which there erst had been so long a yearning."

As fire from out a cloud unlocks itself,  
Dilating so it finds not room therein,

And down, against its nature, falls to earth,

So did my mind, among those aliments  
Becoming larger, issue from itself,  
And that which it became cannot remember.

”Open thine eyes, and look at what I am:  
Thou hast beheld such things, that strong enough  
Hast thou become to tolerate my smile.”

I was as one who still retains the feeling  
Of a forgotten vision, and endeavours  
In vain to bring it back into his mind,

When I this invitation heard, deserving  
Of so much gratitude, it never fades  
Out of the book that chronicles the past.

If at this moment sounded all the tongues  
That Polyhymnia and her sisters made  
Most lubrical with their delicious milk,

To aid me, to a thousandth of the truth  
It would not reach, singing the holy smile  
And how the holy aspect it illumed.

And therefore, representing Paradise,  
The sacred poem must perforce leap over,  
Even as a man who finds his way cut off;

But whoso thinketh of the ponderous theme,  
And of the mortal shoulder laden with it,  
Should blame it not, if under this it tremble.

It is no passage for a little boat  
This which goes cleaving the audacious prow,  
Nor for a pilot who would spare himself.

”Why doth my face so much enamour thee,  
That to the garden fair thou turnest not,  
Which under the rays of Christ is blossoming?”

There is the Rose in which the Word Divine  
Became incarnate; there the lilies are  
By whose perfume the good way was discovered.”

Thus Beatrice; and I, who to her counsels  
Was wholly ready, once again betook me  
Unto the battle of the feeble brows.

As in the sunshine, that unsullied streams  
Through fractured cloud, ere now a meadow of flowers  
Mine eyes with shadow covered o'er have seen,

So troops of splendours manifold I saw  
Illumined from above with burning rays,  
Beholding not the source of the effulgence.

O power benignant that dost so imprint them!  
Thou didst exalt thyself to give more scope  
There to mine eyes, that were not strong enough.

The name of that fair flower I e'er invoke  
Morning and evening utterly enthralled  
My soul to gaze upon the greater fire.

And when in both mine eyes depicted were  
The glory and greatness of the living star  
Which there excelleth, as it here excelled,

Athwart the heavens a little torch descended  
Formed in a circle like a coronal,  
And cinctured it, and whirled itself about it.

Whatever melody most sweetly soundeth  
On earth, and to itself most draws the soul,  
Would seem a cloud that, rent asunder, thunders,

Compared unto the sounding of that lyre  
Wherewith was crowned the sapphire beautiful,  
Which gives the clearest heaven its sapphire hue.

"I am Angelic Love, that circle round  
The joy sublime which breathes from out the womb  
That was the hostelry of our Desire;

And I shall circle, Lady of Heaven, while  
Thou followest thy Son, and mak'st diviner  
The sphere supreme, because thou interest there."

Thus did the circulated melody  
Seal itself up; and all the other lights  
Were making to resound the name of Mary.

The regal mantle of the volumes all  
Of that world, which most fervid is and living  
With breath of God and with his works and ways,

Extended over us its inner border,  
So very distant, that the semblance of it

There where I was not yet appeared to me.

Therefore mine eyes did not possess the power  
Of following the incoronated flame,  
Which mounted upward near to its own seed.

And as a little child, that towards its mother  
Stretches its arms, when it the milk has taken,  
Through impulse kindled into outward flame,

Each of those gleams of whiteness upward reached  
So with its summit, that the deep affection  
They had for Mary was revealed to me.

Thereafter they remained there in my sight,  
'Regina coeli' singing with such sweetness,  
That ne'er from me has the delight departed.

O, what exuberance is garnered up  
Within those richest coffers, which had been  
Good husbandmen for sowing here below!

There they enjoy and live upon the treasure  
Which was acquired while weeping in the exile  
Of Babylon, wherein the gold was left.

There triumpheth, beneath the exalted Son  
Of God and Mary, in his victory,  
Both with the ancient council and the new,

He who doth keep the keys of such a glory.

Paradiso: Canto XXIV

"O company elect to the great supper  
Of the Lamb benedight, who feedeth you  
So that for ever full is your desire,

If by the grace of God this man foretaste  
Something of that which falleth from your table,  
Or ever death prescribe to him the time,

Direct your mind to his immense desire,  
And him somewhat bedew; ye drinking are  
For ever at the fount whence comes his thought."

Thus Beatrice; and those souls beatified  
Transformed themselves to spheres on steadfast poles,  
Flaming intensely in the guise of comets.

And as the wheels in works of horologes  
Revolve so that the first to the beholder  
Motionless seems, and the last one to fly,

So in like manner did those carols, dancing  
In different measure, of their affluence  
Give me the gauge, as they were swift or slow.

From that one which I noted of most beauty  
Beheld I issue forth a fire so happy  
That none it left there of a greater brightness;

And around Beatrice three several times  
It whirled itself with so divine a song,  
My fantasy repeats it not to me;

Therefore the pen skips, and I write it not,  
Since our imagination for such folds,  
Much more our speech, is of a tint too glaring.

"O holy sister mine, who us implorest  
With such devotion, by thine ardent love  
Thou dost unbind me from that beautiful sphere!"

Thereafter, having stopped, the blessed fire  
Unto my Lady did direct its breath,  
Which spake in fashion as I here have said.

And she: "O light eterne of the great man  
To whom our Lord delivered up the keys  
He carried down of this miraculous joy,

This one examine on points light and grave,  
As good beseemeth thee, about the Faith  
By means of which thou on the sea didst walk.

If he love well, and hope well, and believe,  
From thee 'tis hid not; for thou hast thy sight  
There where depicted everything is seen.

But since this kingdom has made citizens  
By means of the true Faith, to glorify it  
'Tis well he have the chance to speak thereof."

As baccalaureate arms himself, and speaks not  
Until the master doth propose the question,  
To argue it, and not to terminate it,

So did I arm myself with every reason,  
While she was speaking, that I might be ready

For such a questioner and such profession.

"Say, thou good Christian; manifest thyself;  
What is the Faith?" Whereat I raised my brow  
Unto that light wherefrom was this breathed forth.

Then turned I round to Beatrice, and she  
Prompt signals made to me that I should pour  
The water forth from my internal fountain.

"May grace, that suffers me to make confession,"  
Began I, "to the great centurion,  
Cause my conceptions all to be explicit!"

And I continued: "As the truthful pen,  
Father, of thy dear brother wrote of it,  
Who put with thee Rome into the good way,

Faith is the substance of the things we hope for,  
And evidence of those that are not seen;  
And this appears to me its quiddity."

Then heard I: "Very rightly thou perceivest,  
If well thou understandest why he placed it  
With substances and then with evidences."

And I thereafterward: "The things profound,  
That here vouchsafe to me their apparition,  
Unto all eyes below are so concealed,

That they exist there only in belief,  
Upon the which is founded the high hope,  
And hence it takes the nature of a substance.

And it behoveth us from this belief  
To reason without having other sight,  
And hence it has the nature of evidence."

Then heard I: "If whatever is acquired  
Below by doctrine were thus understood,  
No sophist's subtlety would there find place."

Thus was breathed forth from that enkindled love;  
Then added: "Very well has been gone over  
Already of this coin the alloy and weight;

But tell me if thou hast it in thy purse?"  
And I: "Yes, both so shining and so round  
That in its stamp there is no peradventure."

Thereafter issued from the light profound  
That there resplendent was: "This precious jewel,  
Upon the which is every virtue founded,

Whence hadst thou it?" And I: "The large outpouring  
Of Holy Spirit, which has been diffused  
Upon the ancient parchments and the new,

A syllogism is, which proved it to me  
With such acuteness, that, compared therewith,  
All demonstration seems to me obtuse."

And then I heard: "The ancient and the new  
Postulates, that to thee are so conclusive,  
Why dost thou take them for the word divine?"

And I: "The proofs, which show the truth to me,  
Are the works subsequent, whereunto Nature  
Ne'er heated iron yet, nor anvil beat."

'Twas answered me: "Say, who assureth thee  
That those works ever were? the thing itself  
That must be proved, nought else to thee affirms it."

"Were the world to Christianity converted,"  
I said, "withouten miracles, this one  
Is such, the rest are not its hundredth part;

Because that poor and fasting thou didst enter  
Into the field to sow there the good plant,  
Which was a vine and has become a thorn!"

This being finished, the high, holy Court  
Resounded through the spheres, "One God we praise!"  
In melody that there above is chanted.

And then that Baron, who from branch to branch,  
Examining, had thus conducted me,  
Till the extremest leaves we were approaching,

Again began: "The Grace that dallying  
Plays with thine intellect thy mouth has opened,  
Up to this point, as it should opened be,

So that I do approve what forth emerged;  
But now thou must express what thou believest,  
And whence to thy belief it was presented."

"O holy father, spirit who beholdest  
What thou believedst so that thou o'ercamest,

Towards the sepulchre, more youthful feet,"

Began I, "thou dost wish me in this place  
The form to manifest of my prompt belief,  
And likewise thou the cause thereof demandest.

And I respond: In one God I believe,  
Sole and eterne, who moveth all the heavens  
With love and with desire, himself unmoved;

And of such faith not only have I proofs  
Physical and metaphysical, but gives them  
Likewise the truth that from this place rains down

Through Moses, through the Prophets and the Psalms,  
Through the Evangel, and through you, who wrote  
After the fiery Spirit sanctified you;

In Persons three eterne believe, and these  
One essence I believe, so one and trine  
They bear conjunction both with 'sunt' and 'est.'

With the profound condition and divine  
Which now I touch upon, doth stamp my mind  
Ofttimes the doctrine evangelical.

This the beginning is, this is the spark  
Which afterwards dilates to vivid flame,  
And, like a star in heaven, is sparkling in me."

Even as a lord who hears what pleaseth him  
His servant straight embraces, gratulating  
For the good news as soon as he is silent;

So, giving me its benediction, singing,  
Three times encircled me, when I was silent,  
The apostolic light, at whose command

I spoken had, in speaking I so pleased him.

Paradiso: Canto XXV

If e'er it happen that the Poem Sacred,  
To which both heaven and earth have set their hand,  
So that it many a year hath made me lean,

O'ercome the cruelty that bars me out  
From the fair sheepfold, where a lamb I slumbered,  
An enemy to the wolves that war upon it,

With other voice forthwith, with other fleece  
Poet will I return, and at my font  
Baptismal will I take the laurel crown;

Because into the Faith that maketh known  
All souls to God there entered I, and then  
Peter for her sake thus my brow encircled.

Thereafterward towards us moved a light  
Out of that band whence issued the first-fruits  
Which of his vicars Christ behind him left,

And then my Lady, full of ecstasy,  
Said unto me: "Look, look! behold the Baron  
For whom below Galicia is frequented."

In the same way as, when a dove alights  
Near his companion, both of them pour forth,  
Circling about and murmuring, their affection,

So one beheld I by the other grand  
Prince glorified to be with welcome greeted,  
Lauding the food that there above is eaten.

But when their gratulations were complete,  
Silently 'coram me' each one stood still,  
So incandescent it o'ercame my sight.

Smiling thereafterwards, said Beatrice:  
"Illustrious life, by whom the benefactions  
Of our Basilica have been described,

Make Hope resound within this altitude;  
Thou knowest as oft thou dost personify it  
As Jesus to the three gave greater clearness."—

"Lift up thy head, and make thyself assured;  
For what comes hither from the mortal world  
Must needs be ripened in our radiance."

This comfort came to me from the second fire;  
Wherefore mine eyes I lifted to the hills,  
Which bent them down before with too great weight.

"Since, through his grace, our Emperor wills that thou  
Shouldst find thee face to face, before thy death,  
In the most secret chamber, with his Counts,

So that, the truth beholden of this court,  
Hope, which below there rightfully enamours,

Thereby thou strengthen in thyself and others,

Say what it is, and how is flowering with it  
Thy mind, and say from whence it came to thee.”  
Thus did the second light again continue.

And the Compassionate, who piloted  
The plumage of my wings in such high flight,  
Did in reply anticipate me thus:

”No child whatever the Church Militant  
Of greater hope possesses, as is written  
In that Sun which irradiates all our band;

Therefore it is conceded him from Egypt  
To come into Jerusalem to see,  
Or ever yet his warfare be completed.

The two remaining points, that not for knowledge  
Have been demanded, but that he report  
How much this virtue unto thee is pleasing,

To him I leave; for hard he will not find them,  
Nor of self-praise; and let him answer them;  
And may the grace of God in this assist him!”

As a disciple, who his teacher follows,  
Ready and willing, where he is expert,  
That his proficiency may be displayed,

”Hope,” said I, ”is the certain expectation  
Of future glory, which is the effect  
Of grace divine and merit precedent.

From many stars this light comes unto me;  
But he instilled it first into my heart  
Who was chief singer unto the chief captain.

’Sperent in te,’ in the high Theody  
He sayeth, ’those who know thy name;’ and who  
Knoweth it not, if he my faith possess?

Thou didst instil me, then, with his instilling  
In the Epistle, so that I am full,  
And upon others rain again your rain.”

While I was speaking, in the living bosom  
Of that combustion quivered an effulgence,  
Sudden and frequent, in the guise of lightning;

Then breathed: "The love wherewith I am inflamed  
Towards the virtue still which followed me  
Unto the palm and issue of the field,

Wills that I breathe to thee that thou delight  
In her; and grateful to me is thy telling  
Whatever things Hope promises to thee."

And I: "The ancient Scriptures and the new  
The mark establish, and this shows it me,  
Of all the souls whom God hath made his friends.

Isaiah saith, that each one garmented  
In his own land shall be with twofold garments,  
And his own land is this delightful life.

Thy brother, too, far more explicitly,  
There where he treateth of the robes of white,  
This revelation manifests to us."

And first, and near the ending of these words,  
"Spent in te" from over us was heard,  
To which responsive answered all the carols.

Thereafterward a light among them brightened,  
So that, if Cancer one such crystal had,  
Winter would have a month of one sole day.

And as uprises, goes, and enters the dance  
A winsome maiden, only to do honour  
To the new bride, and not from any failing,

Even thus did I behold the brightened splendour  
Approach the two, who in a wheel revolved  
As was beseeming to their ardent love.

Into the song and music there it entered;  
And fixed on them my Lady kept her look,  
Even as a bride silent and motionless.

"This is the one who lay upon the breast  
Of him our Pelican; and this is he  
To the great office from the cross elected."

My Lady thus; but therefore none the more  
Did move her sight from its attentive gaze  
Before or afterward these words of hers.

Even as a man who gazes, and endeavours  
To see the eclipsing of the sun a little,

And who, by seeing, sightless doth become,

So I became before that latest fire,  
While it was said, "Why dost thou daze thyself  
To see a thing which here hath no existence?"

Earth in the earth my body is, and shall be  
With all the others there, until our number  
With the eternal proposition tallies.

With the two garments in the blessed cloister  
Are the two lights alone that have ascended:  
And this shalt thou take back into your world."

And at this utterance the flaming circle  
Grew quiet, with the dulcet intermingling  
Of sound that by the trinal breath was made,

As to escape from danger or fatigue  
The oars that erst were in the water beaten  
Are all suspended at a whistle's sound.

Ah, how much in my mind was I disturbed,  
When I turned round to look on Beatrice,  
That her I could not see, although I was

Close at her side and in the Happy World!

Paradiso: Canto XXVI

While I was doubting for my vision quenched,  
Out of the flame refulgent that had quenched it  
Issued a breathing, that attentive made me,

Saying: "While thou recoverest the sense  
Of seeing which in me thou hast consumed,  
'Tis well that speaking thou shouldst compensate it.

Begin then, and declare to what thy soul  
Is aimed, and count it for a certainty,  
Sight is in thee bewildered and not dead;

Because the Lady, who through this divine  
Region conducteth thee, has in her look  
The power the hand of Ananias had."

I said: "As pleaseth her, or soon or late  
Let the cure come to eyes that portals were  
When she with fire I ever burn with entered.

The Good, that gives contentment to this Court,  
The Alpha and Omega is of all  
The writing that love reads me low or loud.”

The selfsame voice, that taken had from me  
The terror of the sudden dazzlement,  
To speak still farther put it in my thought;

And said: ”In verity with finer sieve  
Behoveth thee to sift; thee it behoveth  
To say who aimed thy bow at such a target.”

And I: ”By philosophic arguments,  
And by authority that hence descends,  
Such love must needs imprint itself in me;

For Good, so far as good, when comprehended  
Doth straight enkindle love, and so much greater  
As more of goodness in itself it holds;

Then to that Essence (whose is such advantage  
That every good which out of it is found  
Is nothing but a ray of its own light)

More than elsewhere must the mind be moved  
Of every one, in loving, who discerns  
The truth in which this evidence is founded.

Such truth he to my intellect reveals  
Who demonstrates to me the primal love  
Of all the sempiternal substances.

The voice reveals it of the truthful Author,  
Who says to Moses, speaking of Himself,  
'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.'

Thou too revealest it to me, beginning  
The loud Evangel, that proclaims the secret  
Of heaven to earth above all other edict.”

And I heard say: ”By human intellect  
And by authority concordant with it,  
Of all thy loves reserve for God the highest.

But say again if other cords thou feelest,  
Draw thee towards Him, that thou mayst proclaim  
With how many teeth this love is biting thee.”

The holy purpose of the Eagle of Christ  
Not latent was, nay, rather I perceived

Whither he fain would my profession lead.

Therefore I recommenced: "All of those bites  
Which have the power to turn the heart to God  
Unto my charity have been concurrent.

The being of the world, and my own being,  
The death which He endured that I may live,  
And that which all the faithful hope, as I do,

With the forementioned vivid consciousness  
Have drawn me from the sea of love perverse,  
And of the right have placed me on the shore.

The leaves, wherewith embowered is all the garden  
Of the Eternal Gardener, do I love  
As much as he has granted them of good."

As soon as I had ceased, a song most sweet  
Throughout the heaven resounded, and my Lady  
Said with the others, "Holy, holy, holy!"

And as at some keen light one wakes from sleep  
By reason of the visual spirit that runs  
Unto the splendour passed from coat to coat,

And he who wakes abhorreth what he sees,  
So all unconscious is his sudden waking,  
Until the judgment cometh to his aid,

So from before mine eyes did Beatrice  
Chase every mote with radiance of her own,  
That cast its light a thousand miles and more.

Whence better after than before I saw,  
And in a kind of wonderment I asked  
About a fourth light that I saw with us.

And said my Lady: "There within those rays  
Gazes upon its Maker the first soul  
That ever the first virtue did create."

Even as the bough that downward bends its top  
At transit of the wind, and then is lifted  
By its own virtue, which inclines it upward,

Likewise did I, the while that she was speaking,  
Being amazed, and then I was made bold  
By a desire to speak wherewith I burned.

And I began: "O apple, that mature  
Alone hast been produced, O ancient father,  
To whom each wife is daughter and daughter-in-law,

Devoutly as I can I supplicate thee  
That thou wouldst speak to me; thou seest my wish;  
And I, to hear thee quickly, speak it not."

Sometimes an animal, when covered, struggles  
So that his impulse needs must be apparent,  
By reason of the wrappage following it;

And in like manner the primeval soul  
Made clear to me athwart its covering  
How jubilant it was to give me pleasure.

Then breathed: "Without thy uttering it to me,  
Thine inclination better I discern  
Than thou whatever thing is surest to thee;

For I behold it in the truthful mirror,  
That of Himself all things parhelion makes,  
And none makes Him parhelion of itself.

Thou fain wouldst hear how long ago God placed me  
Within the lofty garden, where this Lady  
Unto so long a stairway thee disposed.

And how long to mine eyes it was a pleasure,  
And of the great disdain the proper cause,  
And the language that I used and that I made.

Now, son of mine, the tasting of the tree  
Not in itself was cause of so great exile,  
But solely the o'erstepping of the bounds.

There, whence thy Lady moved Virgilius,  
Four thousand and three hundred and two circuits  
Made by the sun, this Council I desired;

And him I saw return to all the lights  
Of his highway nine hundred times and thirty,  
Whilst I upon the earth was tarrying.

The language that I spake was quite extinct  
Before that in the work interminable  
The people under Nimrod were employed;

For nevermore result of reasoning  
(Because of human pleasure that doth change,

Obedient to the heavens) was durable.

A natural action is it that man speaks;  
But whether thus or thus, doth nature leave  
To your own art, as seemeth best to you.

Ere I descended to the infernal anguish,  
'El' was on earth the name of the Chief Good,  
From whom comes all the joy that wraps me round

'Eli' he then was called, and that is proper,  
Because the use of men is like a leaf  
On bough, which goeth and another cometh.

Upon the mount that highest o'er the wave  
Rises was I, in life or pure or sinful,  
From the first hour to that which is the second,

As the sun changes quadrant, to the sixth."

Paradiso: Canto XXVII

"Glory be to the Father, to the Son,  
And Holy Ghost!" all Paradise began,  
So that the melody inebriate made me.

What I beheld seemed unto me a smile  
Of the universe; for my inebriation  
Found entrance through the hearing and the sight.

O joy! O gladness inexpressible!  
O perfect life of love and peacefulness!  
O riches without hankering secure!

Before mine eyes were standing the four torches  
Enkindled, and the one that first had come  
Began to make itself more luminous;

And even such in semblance it became  
As Jupiter would become, if he and Mars  
Were birds, and they should interchange their feathers.

That Providence, which here distributeth  
Season and service, in the blessed choir  
Had silence upon every side imposed.

When I heard say: "If I my colour change,  
Marvel not at it; for while I am speaking  
Thou shalt behold all these their colour change.

He who usurps upon the earth my place,  
My place, my place, which vacant has become  
Before the presence of the Son of God,

Has of my cemetery made a sewer  
Of blood and stench, whereby the Perverse One,  
Who fell from here, below there is appeased!"

With the same colour which, through sun adverse,  
Painteth the clouds at evening or at morn,  
Beheld I then the whole of heaven suffused.

And as a modest woman, who abides  
Sure of herself, and at another's failing,  
From listening only, timorous becomes,

Even thus did Beatrice change countenance;  
And I believe in heaven was such eclipse,  
When suffered the supreme Omnipotence;

Thereafterward proceeded forth his words  
With voice so much transmuted from itself,  
The very countenance was not more changed.

"The spouse of Christ has never nurtured been  
On blood of mine, of Linus and of Cletus,  
To be made use of in acquest of gold;

But in acquest of this delightful life  
Sixtus and Pius, Urban and Calixtus,  
After much lamentation, shed their blood.

Our purpose was not, that on the right hand  
Of our successors should in part be seated  
The Christian folk, in part upon the other;

Nor that the keys which were to me confided  
Should e'er become the escutcheon on a banner,  
That should wage war on those who are baptized;

Nor I be made the figure of a seal  
To privileges venal and mendacious,  
Whereat I often redden and flash with fire.

In garb of shepherds the rapacious wolves  
Are seen from here above o'er all the pastures!  
O wrath of God, why dost thou slumber still?

To drink our blood the Caorsines and Gascons  
Are making ready. O thou good beginning,

Unto how vile an end must thou needs fall!

But the high Providence, that with Scipio  
At Rome the glory of the world defended,  
Will speedily bring aid, as I conceive;

And thou, my son, who by thy mortal weight  
Shalt down return again, open thy mouth;  
What I conceal not, do not thou conceal."

As with its frozen vapours downward falls  
In flakes our atmosphere, what time the horn  
Of the celestial Goat doth touch the sun,

Upward in such array saw I the ether  
Become, and flaked with the triumphant vapours,  
Which there together with us had remained.

My sight was following up their semblances,  
And followed till the medium, by excess,  
The passing farther onward took from it;

Whereat the Lady, who beheld me freed  
From gazing upward, said to me: "Cast down  
Thy sight, and see how far thou art turned round."

Since the first time that I had downward looked,  
I saw that I had moved through the whole arc  
Which the first climate makes from midst to end;

So that I saw the mad track of Ulysses  
Past Gades, and this side, well nigh the shore  
Whereon became Europa a sweet burden.

And of this threshing-floor the site to me  
Were more unveiled, but the sun was proceeding  
Under my feet, a sign and more removed.

My mind enamoured, which is dallying  
At all times with my Lady, to bring back  
To her mine eyes was more than ever ardent.

And if or Art or Nature has made bait  
To catch the eyes and so possess the mind,  
In human flesh or in its portraiture,

All joined together would appear as nought  
To the divine delight which shone upon me  
When to her smiling face I turned me round.

The virtue that her look endowed me with  
From the fair nest of Leda tore me forth,  
And up into the swiftest heaven impelled me.

Its parts exceeding full of life and lofty  
Are all so uniform, I cannot say  
Which Beatrice selected for my place.

But she, who was aware of my desire,  
Began, the while she smiled so joyously  
That God seemed in her countenance to rejoice:

"The nature of that motion, which keeps quiet  
The centre and all the rest about it moves,  
From hence begins as from its starting point.

And in this heaven there is no other Where  
Than in the Mind Divine, wherein is kindled  
The love that turns it, and the power it rains.

Within a circle light and love embrace it,  
Even as this doth the others, and that precinct  
He who encircles it alone controls.

Its motion is not by another meted,  
But all the others measured are by this,  
As ten is by the half and by the fifth.

And in what manner time in such a pot  
May have its roots, and in the rest its leaves,  
Now unto thee can manifest be made.

O Covetousness, that mortals dost ingulf  
Beneath thee so, that no one hath the power  
Of drawing back his eyes from out thy waves!

Full fairly blossoms in mankind the will;  
But the uninterrupted rain converts  
Into abortive wildings the true plums.

Fidelity and innocence are found  
Only in children; afterwards they both  
Take flight or e'er the cheeks with down are covered.

One, while he prattles still, observes the fasts,  
Who, when his tongue is loosed, forthwith devours  
Whatever food under whatever moon;

Another, while he prattles, loves and listens  
Unto his mother, who when speech is perfect

Forthwith desires to see her in her grave.

Even thus is swarthy made the skin so white  
In its first aspect of the daughter fair  
Of him who brings the morn, and leaves the night.

Thou, that it may not be a marvel to thee,  
Think that on earth there is no one who governs;  
Whence goes astray the human family.

Ere January be unwintered wholly  
By the centesimal on earth neglected,  
Shall these supernal circles roar so loud

The tempest that has been so long awaited  
Shall whirl the poops about where are the prows;  
So that the fleet shall run its course direct,

And the true fruit shall follow on the flower.”

Paradiso: Canto XXVIII

After the truth against the present life  
Of miserable mortals was unfolded  
By her who doth imparadise my mind,

As in a looking-glass a taper's flame  
He sees who from behind is lighted by it,  
Before he has it in his sight or thought,

And turns him round to see if so the glass  
Tell him the truth, and sees that it accords  
Therewith as doth a music with its metre,

In similar wise my memory recollecteth  
That I did, looking into those fair eyes,  
Of which Love made the springes to ensnare me.

And as I turned me round, and mine were touched  
By that which is apparent in that volume,  
Whenever on its gyre we gaze intent,

A point beheld I, that was raying out  
Light so acute, the sight which it enkindles  
Must close perforce before such great acuteness.

And whatsoever star seems smallest here  
Would seem to be a moon, if placed beside it.  
As one star with another star is placed.

Perhaps at such a distance as appears  
A halo cincturing the light that paints it,  
When densest is the vapour that sustains it,

Thus distant round the point a circle of fire  
So swiftly whirled, that it would have surpassed  
Whatever motion soonest girds the world;

And this was by another circumcinct,  
That by a third, the third then by a fourth,  
By a fifth the fourth, and then by a sixth the fifth;

The seventh followed thereupon in width  
So ample now, that Juno's messenger  
Entire would be too narrow to contain it.

Even so the eighth and ninth; and every one  
More slowly moved, according as it was  
In number distant farther from the first.

And that one had its flame most crystalline  
From which less distant was the stainless spark,  
I think because more with its truth imbued.

My Lady, who in my anxiety  
Beheld me much perplexed, said: "From that point  
Dependent is the heaven and nature all.

Behold that circle most conjoined to it,  
And know thou, that its motion is so swift  
Through burning love whereby it is spurred on."

And I to her: "If the world were arranged  
In the order which I see in yonder wheels,  
What's set before me would have satisfied me;

But in the world of sense we can perceive  
That evermore the circles are diviner  
As they are from the centre more remote

Wherefore if my desire is to be ended  
In this miraculous and angelic temple,  
That has for confines only love and light,

To hear behoves me still how the example  
And the exemplar go not in one fashion,  
Since for myself in vain I contemplate it."

"If thine own fingers unto such a knot  
Be insufficient, it is no great wonder,

So hard hath it become for want of trying.”

My Lady thus; then said she: ”Do thou take  
What I shall tell thee, if thou wouldst be sated,  
And exercise on that thy subtlety.

The circles corporal are wide and narrow  
According to the more or less of virtue  
Which is distributed through all their parts.

The greater goodness works the greater weal,  
The greater weal the greater body holds,  
If perfect equally are all its parts.

Therefore this one which sweeps along with it  
The universe sublime, doth correspond  
Unto the circle which most loves and knows.

On which account, if thou unto the virtue  
Apply thy measure, not to the appearance  
Of substances that unto thee seem round,

Thou wilt behold a marvellous agreement,  
Of more to greater, and of less to smaller,  
In every heaven, with its Intelligence.”

Even as remaineth splendid and serene  
The hemisphere of air, when Boreas  
Is blowing from that cheek where he is mildest,

Because is purified and resolved the rack  
That erst disturbed it, till the welkin laughs  
With all the beauties of its pageantry;

Thus did I likewise, after that my Lady  
Had me provided with her clear response,  
And like a star in heaven the truth was seen.

And soon as to a stop her words had come,  
Not otherwise does iron scintillate  
When molten, than those circles scintillated.

Their coruscation all the sparks repeated,  
And they so many were, their number makes  
More millions than the doubling of the chess.

I heard them sing hosanna choir by choir  
To the fixed point which holds them at the ’Ubi,’  
And ever will, where they have ever been.

And she, who saw the dubious meditations  
Within my mind, "The primal circles," said,  
"Have shown thee Seraphim and Cherubim.

Thus rapidly they follow their own bonds,  
To be as like the point as most they can,  
And can as far as they are high in vision.

Those other Loves, that round about them go,  
Thrones of the countenance divine are called,  
Because they terminate the primal Triad.

And thou shouldst know that they all have delight  
As much as their own vision penetrates  
The Truth, in which all intellect finds rest.

From this it may be seen how blessedness  
Is founded in the faculty which sees,  
And not in that which loves, and follows next;

And of this seeing merit is the measure,  
Which is brought forth by grace, and by good will;  
Thus on from grade to grade doth it proceed.

The second Triad, which is germinating  
In such wise in this sempiternal spring,  
That no nocturnal Aries despoils,

Perpetually hosanna warbles forth  
With threefold melody, that sounds in three  
Orders of joy, with which it is intrined.

The three Divine are in this hierarchy,  
First the Dominions, and the Virtues next;  
And the third order is that of the Powers.

Then in the dances twain penultimate  
The Principalities and Archangels wheel;  
The last is wholly of angelic sports.

These orders upward all of them are gazing,  
And downward so prevail, that unto God  
They all attracted are and all attract.

And Dionysius with so great desire  
To contemplate these Orders set himself,  
He named them and distinguished them as I do.

But Gregory afterwards dissented from him;  
Wherefore, as soon as he unclosed his eyes

Within this heaven, he at himself did smile.

And if so much of secret truth a mortal  
Proffered on earth, I would not have thee marvel,  
For he who saw it here revealed it to him,

With much more of the truth about these circles.”

Paradiso: Canto XXIX

At what time both the children of Latona,  
Surmounted by the Ram and by the Scales,  
Together make a zone of the horizon,

As long as from the time the zenith holds them  
In equipoise, till from that girdle both  
Changing their hemisphere disturb the balance,

So long, her face depicted with a smile,  
Did Beatrice keep silence while she gazed  
Fixedly at the point which had o’ercome me.

Then she began: ”I say, and I ask not  
What thou dost wish to hear, for I have seen it  
Where centres every When and every ’Ubi.’

Not to acquire some good unto himself,  
Which is impossible, but that his splendour  
In its resplendency may say, ’Subsisto,’

In his eternity outside of time,  
Outside all other limits, as it pleased him,  
Into new Loves the Eternal Love unfolded.

Nor as if torpid did he lie before;  
For neither after nor before proceeded  
The going forth of God upon these waters.

Matter and Form unmingled and conjoined  
Came into being that had no defect,  
E’en as three arrows from a three-stringed bow.

And as in glass, in amber, or in crystal  
A sunbeam flashes so, that from its coming  
To its full being is no interval,

So from its Lord did the triform effect  
Ray forth into its being all together,  
Without discrimination of beginning.

Order was con-created and constructed  
In substances, and summit of the world  
Were those wherein the pure act was produced.

Pure potentiality held the lowest part;  
Midway bound potentiality with act  
Such bond that it shall never be unbound.

Jerome has written unto you of angels  
Created a long lapse of centuries  
Or ever yet the other world was made;

But written is this truth in many places  
By writers of the Holy Ghost, and thou  
Shalt see it, if thou lookest well thereat.

And even reason seeth it somewhat,  
For it would not concede that for so long  
Could be the motors without their perfection.

Now dost thou know both where and when these Loves  
Created were, and how; so that extinct  
In thy desire already are three fires.

Nor could one reach, in counting, unto twenty  
So swiftly, as a portion of these angels  
Disturbed the subject of your elements.

The rest remained, and they began this art  
Which thou discernest, with so great delight  
That never from their circling do they cease.

The occasion of the fall was the accursed  
Presumption of that One, whom thou hast seen  
By all the burden of the world constrained.

Those whom thou here beholdest modest were  
To recognise themselves as of that goodness  
Which made them apt for so much understanding;

On which account their vision was exalted  
By the enlightening grace and their own merit,  
So that they have a full and steadfast will.

I would not have thee doubt, but certain be,  
'Tis meritorious to receive this grace,  
According as the affection opens to it.

Now round about in this consistory  
Much mayst thou contemplate, if these my words

Be gathered up, without all further aid.

But since upon the earth, throughout your schools,  
They teach that such is the angelic nature  
That it doth hear, and recollect, and will,

More will I say, that thou mayst see unmixed  
The truth that is confounded there below,  
Equivocating in such like prelections.

These substances, since in God's countenance  
They jocund were, turned not away their sight  
From that wherefrom not anything is hidden;

Hence they have not their vision intercepted  
By object new, and hence they do not need  
To recollect, through interrupted thought.

So that below, not sleeping, people dream,  
Believing they speak truth, and not believing;  
And in the last is greater sin and shame.

Below you do not journey by one path  
Philosophising; so transporteth you  
Love of appearance and the thought thereof.

And even this above here is endured  
With less disdain, than when is set aside  
The Holy Writ, or when it is distorted.

They think not there how much of blood it costs  
To sow it in the world, and how he pleases  
Who in humility keeps close to it.

Each striveth for appearance, and doth make  
His own inventions; and these treated are  
By preachers, and the Evangel holds its peace.

One sayeth that the moon did backward turn,  
In the Passion of Christ, and interpose herself  
So that the sunlight reached not down below;

And lies; for of its own accord the light  
Hid itself; whence to Spaniards and to Indians,  
As to the Jews, did such eclipse respond.

Florence has not so many Lapi and Bindi  
As fables such as these, that every year  
Are shouted from the pulpit back and forth,

In such wise that the lambs, who do not know,  
Come back from pasture fed upon the wind,  
And not to see the harm doth not excuse them.

Christ did not to his first disciples say,  
'Go forth, and to the world preach idle tales,'  
But unto them a true foundation gave;

And this so loudly sounded from their lips,  
That, in the warfare to enkindle Faith,  
They made of the Evangel shields and lances.

Now men go forth with jests and drolleries  
To preach, and if but well the people laugh,  
The hood puffs out, and nothing more is asked.

But in the cowl there nestles such a bird,  
That, if the common people were to see it,  
They would perceive what pardons they confide in,

For which so great on earth has grown the folly,  
That, without proof of any testimony,  
To each indulgence they would flock together.

By this Saint Anthony his pig doth fatten,  
And many others, who are worse than pigs,  
Paying in money without mark of coinage.

But since we have digressed abundantly,  
Turn back thine eyes forthwith to the right path,  
So that the way be shortened with the time.

This nature doth so multiply itself  
In numbers, that there never yet was speech  
Nor mortal fancy that can go so far.

And if thou notest that which is revealed  
By Daniel, thou wilt see that in his thousands  
Number determinate is kept concealed.

The primal light, that all irradiates it,  
By modes as many is received therein,  
As are the splendours wherewith it is mated.

Hence, inasmuch as on the act conceptive  
The affection followeth, of love the sweetness  
Therein diversely fervid is or tepid.

The height behold now and the amplitude  
Of the eternal power, since it hath made

Itself so many mirrors, where 'tis broken,

One in itself remaining as before.”

Paradiso: Canto XXX

Perchance six thousand miles remote from us  
Is glowing the sixth hour, and now this world  
Inclines its shadow almost to a level,

When the mid-heaven begins to make itself  
So deep to us, that here and there a star  
Ceases to shine so far down as this depth,

And as advances bright exceedingly  
The handmaid of the sun, the heaven is closed  
Light after light to the most beautiful;

Not otherwise the Triumph, which for ever  
Plays round about the point that vanquished me,  
Seeming enclosed by what itself encloses,

Little by little from my vision faded;  
Whereat to turn mine eyes on Beatrice  
My seeing nothing and my love constrained me.

If what has hitherto been said of her  
Were all concluded in a single praise,  
Scant would it be to serve the present turn.

Not only does the beauty I beheld  
Transcend ourselves, but truly I believe  
Its Maker only may enjoy it all.

Vanquished do I confess me by this passage  
More than by problem of his theme was ever  
O'ercome the comic or the tragic poet;

For as the sun the sight that trembles most,  
Even so the memory of that sweet smile  
My mind depriveth of its very self.

From the first day that I beheld her face  
In this life, to the moment of this look,  
The sequence of my song has ne'er been severed;

But now perforce this sequence must desist  
From following her beauty with my verse,  
As every artist at his uttermost.

Such as I leave her to a greater fame  
Than any of my trumpet, which is bringing  
Its arduous matter to a final close,

With voice and gesture of a perfect leader  
She recommenced: "We from the greatest body  
Have issued to the heaven that is pure light;

Light intellectual replete with love,  
Love of true good replete with ecstasy,  
Ecstasy that transcendeth every sweetness.

Here shalt thou see the one host and the other  
Of Paradise, and one in the same aspects  
Which at the final judgment thou shalt see."

Even as a sudden lightning that disperses  
The visual spirits, so that it deprives  
The eye of impress from the strongest objects,

Thus round about me flashed a living light,  
And left me swathed around with such a veil  
Of its effulgence, that I nothing saw.

"Ever the Love which quieteth this heaven  
Welcomes into itself with such salute,  
To make the candle ready for its flame."

No sooner had within me these brief words  
An entrance found, than I perceived myself  
To be uplifted over my own power,

And I with vision new rekindled me,  
Such that no light whatever is so pure  
But that mine eyes were fortified against it.

And light I saw in fashion of a river  
Fulvid with its effulgence, 'twixt two banks  
Depicted with an admirable Spring.

Out of this river issued living sparks,  
And on all sides sank down into the flowers,  
Like unto rubies that are set in gold;

And then, as if inebriate with the odours,  
They plunged again into the wondrous torrent,  
And as one entered issued forth another.

"The high desire, that now inflames and moves thee  
To have intelligence of what thou seest,

Pleaseth me all the more, the more it swells.

But of this water it behoves thee drink  
Before so great a thirst in thee be slaked.”  
Thus said to me the sunshine of mine eyes;

And added: ”The river and the topazes  
Going in and out, and the laughing of the herbage,  
Are of their truth foreshadowing prefaces;

Not that these things are difficult in themselves,  
But the deficiency is on thy side,  
For yet thou hast not vision so exalted.”

There is no babe that leaps so suddenly  
With face towards the milk, if he awake  
Much later than his usual custom is,

As I did, that I might make better mirrors  
Still of mine eyes, down stooping to the wave  
Which flows that we therein be better made.

And even as the penthouse of mine eyelids  
Drank of it, it forthwith appeared to me  
Out of its length to be transformed to round.

Then as a folk who have been under masks  
Seem other than before, if they divest  
The semblance not their own they disappeared in,

Thus into greater pomp were changed for me  
The flowerets and the sparks, so that I saw  
Both of the Courts of Heaven made manifest.

O splendour of God! by means of which I saw  
The lofty triumph of the realm veracious,  
Give me the power to say how it I saw!

There is a light above, which visible  
Makes the Creator unto every creature,  
Who only in beholding Him has peace,

And it expands itself in circular form  
To such extent, that its circumference  
Would be too large a girdle for the sun.

The semblance of it is all made of rays  
Reflected from the top of Primal Motion,  
Which takes therefrom vitality and power.

And as a hill in water at its base  
Mirrors itself, as if to see its beauty  
When affluent most in verdure and in flowers,

So, ranged aloft all round about the light,  
Mirrored I saw in more ranks than a thousand  
All who above there have from us returned.

And if the lowest row collect within it  
So great a light, how vast the amplitude  
Is of this Rose in its extremest leaves!

My vision in the vastness and the height  
Lost not itself, but comprehended all  
The quantity and quality of that gladness.

There near and far nor add nor take away;  
For there where God immediately doth govern,  
The natural law in naught is relevant.

Into the yellow of the Rose Eternal  
That spreads, and multiplies, and breathes an odour  
Of praise unto the ever-vernal Sun,

As one who silent is and fain would speak,  
Me Beatrice drew on, and said: "Behold  
Of the white stoles how vast the convent is!

Behold how vast the circuit of our city!  
Behold our seats so filled to overflowing,  
That here henceforward are few people wanting!

On that great throne whereon thine eyes are fixed  
For the crown's sake already placed upon it,  
Before thou suppest at this wedding feast

Shall sit the soul (that is to be Augustus  
On earth) of noble Henry, who shall come  
To redress Italy ere she be ready.

Blind covetousness, that casts its spell upon you,  
Has made you like unto the little child,  
Who dies of hunger and drives off the nurse.

And in the sacred forum then shall be  
A Prefect such, that openly or covert  
On the same road he will not walk with him.

But long of God he will not be endured  
In holy office; he shall be thrust down

Where Simon Magus is for his deserts,

And make him of Alagna lower go!"

Paradiso: Canto XXXI

In fashion then as of a snow-white rose  
Displayed itself to me the saintly host,  
Whom Christ in his own blood had made his bride,

But the other host, that flying sees and sings  
The glory of Him who doth enamour it,  
And the goodness that created it so noble,

Even as a swarm of bees, that sinks in flowers  
One moment, and the next returns again  
To where its labour is to sweetness turned,

Sank into the great flower, that is adorned  
With leaves so many, and thence reascended  
To where its love abideth evermore.

Their faces had they all of living flame,  
And wings of gold, and all the rest so white  
No snow unto that limit doth attain.

From bench to bench, into the flower descending,  
They carried something of the peace and ardour  
Which by the fanning of their flanks they won.

Nor did the interposing 'twixt the flower  
And what was o'er it of such plenitude  
Of flying shapes impede the sight and splendour;

Because the light divine so penetrates  
The universe, according to its merit,  
That naught can be an obstacle against it.

This realm secure and full of gladness,  
Crowded with ancient people and with modern,  
Unto one mark had all its look and love.

O Trinal Light, that in a single star  
Sparkling upon their sight so satisfies them,  
Look down upon our tempest here below!

If the barbarians, coming from some region  
That every day by Helice is covered,  
Revolving with her son whom she delights in,

Beholding Rome and all her noble works,  
Were wonder-struck, what time the Lateran  
Above all mortal things was eminent,—

I who to the divine had from the human,  
From time unto eternity, had come,  
From Florence to a people just and sane,

With what amazement must I have been filled!  
Truly between this and the joy, it was  
My pleasure not to hear, and to be mute.

And as a pilgrim who delighteth him  
In gazing round the temple of his vow,  
And hopes some day to retell how it was,

So through the living light my way pursuing  
Directed I mine eyes o'er all the ranks,  
Now up, now down, and now all round about.

Faces I saw of charity persuasive,  
Embellished by His light and their own smile,  
And attitudes adorned with every grace.

The general form of Paradise already  
My glance had comprehended as a whole,  
In no part hitherto remaining fixed,

And round I turned me with rekindled wish  
My Lady to interrogate of things  
Concerning which my mind was in suspense.

One thing I meant, another answered me;  
I thought I should see Beatrice, and saw  
An Old Man habited like the glorious people.

O'erflowing was he in his eyes and cheeks  
With joy benign, in attitude of pity  
As to a tender father is becoming.

And "She, where is she?" instantly I said;  
Whence he: "To put an end to thy desire,  
Me Beatrice hath sent from mine own place.

And if thou lookest up to the third round  
Of the first rank, again shalt thou behold her  
Upon the throne her merits have assigned her."

Without reply I lifted up mine eyes,  
And saw her, as she made herself a crown

Reflecting from herself the eternal rays.

Not from that region which the highest thunders  
Is any mortal eye so far removed,  
In whatsoever sea it deepest sinks,

As there from Beatrice my sight; but this  
Was nothing unto me; because her image  
Descended not to me by medium blurred.

”O Lady, thou in whom my hope is strong,  
And who for my salvation didst endure  
In Hell to leave the imprint of thy feet,

Of whatsoever things I have beheld,  
As coming from thy power and from thy goodness  
I recognise the virtue and the grace.

Thou from a slave hast brought me unto freedom,  
By all those ways, by all the expedients,  
Whereby thou hadst the power of doing it.

Preserve towards me thy magnificence,  
So that this soul of mine, which thou hast healed,  
Pleasing to thee be loosened from the body.”

Thus I implored; and she, so far away,  
Smiled, as it seemed, and looked once more at me;  
Then unto the eternal fountain turned.

And said the Old Man holy: ”That thou mayst  
Accomplish perfectly thy journeying,  
Whereunto prayer and holy love have sent me,

Fly with thine eyes all round about this garden;  
For seeing it will discipline thy sight  
Farther to mount along the ray divine.

And she, the Queen of Heaven, for whom I burn  
Wholly with love, will grant us every grace,  
Because that I her faithful Bernard am.”

As he who peradventure from Croatia  
Cometh to gaze at our Veronica,  
Who through its ancient fame is never sated,

But says in thought, the while it is displayed,  
”My Lord, Christ Jesus, God of very God,  
Now was your semblance made like unto this?”

Even such was I while gazing at the living  
Charity of the man, who in this world  
By contemplation tasted of that peace.

"Thou son of grace, this jocund life," began he,  
"Will not be known to thee by keeping ever  
Thine eyes below here on the lowest place;

But mark the circles to the most remote,  
Until thou shalt behold enthroned the Queen  
To whom this realm is subject and devoted."

I lifted up mine eyes, and as at morn  
The oriental part of the horizon  
Surpasses that wherein the sun goes down,

Thus, as if going with mine eyes from vale  
To mount, I saw a part in the remoteness  
Surpass in splendour all the other front.

And even as there where we await the pole  
That Phaeton drove badly, blazes more  
The light, and is on either side diminished,

So likewise that pacific oriflamme  
Gleamed brightest in the centre, and each side  
In equal measure did the flame abate.

And at that centre, with their wings expanded,  
More than a thousand jubilant Angels saw I,  
Each differing in effulgence and in kind.

I saw there at their sports and at their songs  
A beauty smiling, which the gladness was  
Within the eyes of all the other saints;

And if I had in speaking as much wealth  
As in imagining, I should not dare  
To attempt the smallest part of its delight.

Bernard, as soon as he beheld mine eyes  
Fixed and intent upon its fervid fervour,  
His own with such affection turned to her

That it made mine more ardent to behold.

Paradiso: Canto XXXII

Absorbed in his delight, that contemplator  
Assumed the willing office of a teacher,

And gave beginning to these holy words:

”The wound that Mary closed up and anointed,  
She at her feet who is so beautiful,  
She is the one who opened it and pierced it.

Within that order which the third seats make  
Is seated Rachel, lower than the other,  
With Beatrice, in manner as thou seest.

Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and her who was  
Ancestress of the Singer, who for dole  
Of the misdeed said, 'Miserere mei,'

Canst thou behold from seat to seat descending  
Down in gradation, as with each one's name  
I through the Rose go down from leaf to leaf.

And downward from the seventh row, even as  
Above the same, succeed the Hebrew women,  
Dividing all the tresses of the flower;

Because, according to the view which Faith  
In Christ had taken, these are the partition  
By which the sacred stairways are divided.

Upon this side, where perfect is the flower  
With each one of its petals, seated are  
Those who believed in Christ who was to come.

Upon the other side, where intersected  
With vacant spaces are the semicircles,  
Are those who looked to Christ already come.

And as, upon this side, the glorious seat  
Of the Lady of Heaven, and the other seats  
Below it, such a great division make,

So opposite doth that of the great John,  
Who, ever holy, desert and martyrdom  
Endured, and afterwards two years in Hell.

And under him thus to divide were chosen  
Francis, and Benedict, and Augustine,  
And down to us the rest from round to round.

Behold now the high providence divine;  
For one and other aspect of the Faith  
In equal measure shall this garden fill.

And know that downward from that rank which cleaves  
Midway the sequence of the two divisions,  
Not by their proper merit are they seated;

But by another's under fixed conditions;  
For these are spirits one and all assoiled  
Before they any true election had.

Well canst thou recognise it in their faces,  
And also in their voices puerile,  
If thou regard them well and hearken to them.

Now doubtest thou, and doubting thou art silent;  
But I will loosen for thee the strong bond  
In which thy subtile fancies hold thee fast.

Within the amplitude of this domain  
No casual point can possibly find place,  
No more than sadness can, or thirst, or hunger;

For by eternal law has been established  
Whatever thou beholdest, so that closely  
The ring is fitted to the finger here.

And therefore are these people, festinate  
Unto true life, not 'sine causa' here  
More and less excellent among themselves.

The King, by means of whom this realm reposes  
In so great love and in so great delight  
That no will ventureth to ask for more,

In his own joyous aspect every mind  
Creating, at his pleasure dowers with grace  
Diversely; and let here the effect suffice.

And this is clearly and expressly noted  
For you in Holy Scripture, in those twins  
Who in their mother had their anger roused.

According to the colour of the hair,  
Therefore, with such a grace the light supreme  
Consenteth that they worthily be crowned.

Without, then, any merit of their deeds,  
Stationed are they in different gradations,  
Differing only in their first acuteness.

'Tis true that in the early centuries,  
With innocence, to work out their salvation

Sufficient was the faith of parents only.

After the earlier ages were completed,  
Behoved it that the males by circumcision  
Unto their innocent wings should virtue add;

But after that the time of grace had come  
Without the baptism absolute of Christ,  
Such innocence below there was retained.

Look now into the face that unto Christ  
Hath most resemblance; for its brightness only  
Is able to prepare thee to see Christ."

On her did I behold so great a gladness  
Rain down, borne onward in the holy minds  
Created through that altitude to fly,

That whatsoever I had seen before  
Did not suspend me in such admiration,  
Nor show me such similitude of God.

And the same Love that first descended there,  
"Ave Maria, gratia plena," singing,  
In front of her his wings expanded wide.

Unto the canticle divine responded  
From every part the court beatified,  
So that each sight became serener for it.

"O holy father, who for me endurest  
To be below here, leaving the sweet place  
In which thou sittest by eternal lot,

Who is the Angel that with so much joy  
Into the eyes is looking of our Queen,  
Enamoured so that he seems made of fire?"

Thus I again recourse had to the teaching  
Of that one who delighted him in Mary  
As doth the star of morning in the sun.

And he to me: "Such gallantry and grace  
As there can be in Angel and in soul,  
All is in him; and thus we fain would have it;

Because he is the one who bore the palm  
Down unto Mary, when the Son of God  
To take our burden on himself decreed.

But now come onward with thine eyes, as I  
Speaking shall go, and note the great patricians  
Of this most just and merciful of empires.

Those two that sit above there most enrapture  
As being very near unto Augusta,  
Are as it were the two roots of this Rose.

He who upon the left is near her placed  
The father is, by whose audacious taste  
The human species so much bitter tastes.

Upon the right thou seest that ancient father  
Of Holy Church, into whose keeping Christ  
The keys committed of this lovely flower.

And he who all the evil days beheld,  
Before his death, of her the beauteous bride  
Who with the spear and with the nails was won,

Beside him sits, and by the other rests  
That leader under whom on manna lived  
The people ingrate, fickle, and stiff-necked.

Opposite Peter seest thou Anna seated,  
So well content to look upon her daughter,  
Her eyes she moves not while she sings Hosanna.

And opposite the eldest household father  
Lucia sits, she who thy Lady moved  
When to rush downward thou didst bend thy brows.

But since the moments of thy vision fly,  
Here will we make full stop, as a good tailor  
Who makes the gown according to his cloth,

And unto the first Love will turn our eyes,  
That looking upon Him thou penetrate  
As far as possible through his effulgence.

Truly, lest peradventure thou recede,  
Moving thy wings believing to advance,  
By prayer behoves it that grace be obtained;

Grace from that one who has the power to aid thee;  
And thou shalt follow me with thy affection  
That from my words thy heart turn not aside.”

And he began this holy orison.

Paradiso: Canto XXXIII

"Thou Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,  
Humble and high beyond all other creature,  
The limit fixed of the eternal counsel,

Thou art the one who such nobility  
To human nature gave, that its Creator  
Did not disdain to make himself its creature.

Within thy womb rekindled was the love,  
By heat of which in the eternal peace  
After such wise this flower has germinated.

Here unto us thou art a noonday torch  
Of charity, and below there among mortals  
Thou art the living fountain-head of hope.

Lady, thou art so great, and so prevailing,  
That he who wishes grace, nor runs to thee,  
His aspirations without wings would fly.

Not only thy benignity gives succour  
To him who asketh it, but oftentimes  
Forerunneth of its own accord the asking.

In thee compassion is, in thee is pity,  
In thee magnificence; in thee unites  
Whate'er of goodness is in any creature.

Now doth this man, who from the lowest depth  
Of the universe as far as here has seen  
One after one the spiritual lives,

Supplicate thee through grace for so much power  
That with his eyes he may uplift himself  
Higher towards the uttermost salvation.

And I, who never burned for my own seeing  
More than I do for his, all of my prayers  
Proffer to thee, and pray they come not short,

That thou wouldst scatter from him every cloud  
Of his mortality so with thy prayers,  
That the Chief Pleasure be to him displayed.

Still farther do I pray thee, Queen, who canst  
Whate'er thou wilt, that sound thou mayst preserve  
After so great a vision his affections.

Let thy protection conquer human movements;  
See Beatrice and all the blessed ones  
My prayers to second clasp their hands to thee!"

The eyes beloved and revered of God,  
Fastened upon the speaker, showed to us  
How grateful unto her are prayers devout;

Then unto the Eternal Light they turned,  
On which it is not credible could be  
By any creature bent an eye so clear.

And I, who to the end of all desires  
Was now approaching, even as I ought  
The ardour of desire within me ended.

Bernard was beckoning unto me, and smiling,  
That I should upward look; but I already  
Was of my own accord such as he wished;

Because my sight, becoming purified,  
Was entering more and more into the ray  
Of the High Light which of itself is true.

From that time forward what I saw was greater  
Than our discourse, that to such vision yields,  
And yields the memory unto such excess.

Even as he is who seeth in a dream,  
And after dreaming the imprinted passion  
Remains, and to his mind the rest returns not,

Even such am I, for almost utterly  
Ceases my vision, and distilleth yet  
Within my heart the sweetness born of it;

Even thus the snow is in the sun unsealed,  
Even thus upon the wind in the light leaves  
Were the soothsayings of the Sibyl lost.

O Light Supreme, that dost so far uplift thee  
From the conceits of mortals, to my mind  
Of what thou didst appear re-lend a little,

And make my tongue of so great puissance,  
That but a single sparkle of thy glory  
It may bequeath unto the future people;

For by returning to my memory somewhat,  
And by a little sounding in these verses,

More of thy victory shall be conceived!

I think the keenness of the living ray  
Which I endured would have bewildered me,  
If but mine eyes had been averted from it;

And I remember that I was more bold  
On this account to bear, so that I joined  
My aspect with the Glory Infinite.

O grace abundant, by which I presumed  
To fix my sight upon the Light Eternal,  
So that the seeing I consumed therein!

I saw that in its depth far down is lying  
Bound up with love together in one volume,  
What through the universe in leaves is scattered;

Substance, and accident, and their operations,  
All interfused together in such wise  
That what I speak of is one simple light.

The universal fashion of this knot  
Methinks I saw, since more abundantly  
In saying this I feel that I rejoice.

One moment is more lethargy to me,  
Than five and twenty centuries to the emprise  
That startled Neptune with the shade of Argo!

My mind in this wise wholly in suspense,  
Steadfast, immovable, attentive gazed,  
And evermore with gazing grew enkindled.

In presence of that light one such becomes,  
That to withdraw therefrom for other prospect  
It is impossible he e'er consent;

Because the good, which object is of will,  
Is gathered all in this, and out of it  
That is defective which is perfect there.

Shorter henceforward will my language fall  
Of what I yet remember, than an infant's  
Who still his tongue doth moisten at the breast.

Not because more than one unmingled semblance  
Was in the living light on which I looked,  
For it is always what it was before;

But through the sight, that fortified itself  
In me by looking, one appearance only  
To me was ever changing as I changed.

Within the deep and luminous subsistence  
Of the High Light appeared to me three circles,  
Of threefold colour and of one dimension,

And by the second seemed the first reflected  
As Iris is by Iris, and the third  
Seemed fire that equally from both is breathed.

O how all speech is feeble and falls short  
Of my conceit, and this to what I saw  
Is such, 'tis not enough to call it little!

O Light Eterne, sole in thyself that dwellest,  
Sole knowest thyself, and, known unto thyself  
And knowing, lovest and smilest on thyself!

That circulation, which being thus conceived  
Appeared in thee as a reflected light,  
When somewhat contemplated by mine eyes,

Within itself, of its own very colour  
Seemed to me painted with our effigy,  
Wherefore my sight was all absorbed therein.

As the geometrician, who endeavours  
To square the circle, and discovers not,  
By taking thought, the principle he wants,

Even such was I at that new apparition;  
I wished to see how the image to the circle  
Conformed itself, and how it there finds place;

But my own wings were not enough for this,  
Had it not been that then my mind there smote  
A flash of lightning, wherein came its wish.

Here vigour failed the lofty fantasy:  
But now was turning my desire and will,  
Even as a wheel that equally is moved,

The Love which moves the sun and the other stars.

#### APPENDIX

SIX SONNETS ON DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY  
BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882)

## I

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door  
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,  
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet  
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor  
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;  
Far off the noises of the world retreat;  
The loud vociferations of the street  
Become an undistinguishable roar.  
So, as I enter here from day to day,  
And leave my burden at this minster gate,  
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,  
The tumult of the time disconsolate  
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,  
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

## II

How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!  
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves  
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves  
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,  
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!  
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves  
Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,  
And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!  
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,  
What exultations trampling on despair,  
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,  
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,  
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,  
This mediaeval miracle of song!

## III

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom  
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!  
And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine.  
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;  
The congregation of the dead make room  
For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;  
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's groves of pine,  
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.  
From the confessionals I hear arise  
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,  
And lamentations from the crypts below  
And then a voice celestial that begins  
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins

As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."

IV

With snow-white veil, and garments as of flame,  
She stands before thee, who so long ago  
Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe  
From which thy song in all its splendors came;  
And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy name,  
The ice about thy heart melts as the snow  
On mountain heights, and in swift overflow  
Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.  
Thou makest full confession; and a gleam  
As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,  
Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;  
Lethe and Eunoë—the remembered dream  
And the forgotten sorrow—bring at last  
That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

V

I Lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze  
With forms of saints and holy men who died,  
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;  
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays  
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,  
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;  
And Beatrice again at Dante's side  
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.  
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs  
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love  
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;  
And the melodious bells among the spires  
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above  
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!

VI

O star of morning and of liberty!  
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines  
Above the darkness of the Apennines,  
Forerunner of the day that is to be!  
The voices of the city and the sea,  
The voices of the mountains and the pines,  
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines  
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!  
Thy fame is blown abroad from all the heights,  
Through all the nations; and a sound is heard,  
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,  
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,

In their own language hear thy wondrous word,  
And many are amazed and many doubt.

#### POSTSCRIPT

'Ich habe unter meinen Papieren ein Blatt gefunden,  
wo ich die Baukunst eine erstarrte Musik nenne.'  
(Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1829 March 23)

I found Dante in a bar. The Poet had indeed lost the True Way to be found reduced to party chatter in a Capitol Hill basement, but I had found him at last. I must have been drinking in the Dark Tavern of Error, for I did not even realize I had begun the dolorous path followed by many since the Poet's journey of A.D. 1300. Actually no one spoke a word about Dante or his Divine Comedy, rather I heard a second-hand Goethe call architecture "frozen music." Soon I took my second step through the gate to a people lost; this time on a more respectable occasion—a lecture at the Catholic University of America. Clio, the muse of history, must have been aiding Prof. Schumacher that evening, because it sustained my full three-hour attention, even after I had just presented an all-night project. There I heard of a most astonishing Italian translation of 'la Divina Commedia' di Dante Alighieri. An Italian architect, Giuseppe Terragni, had translated the Comedy into the 'Danteum,' a projected stone and glass monument to Poet and Poem near the Basilica of Maxentius in Rome.

Do not look for the Danteum in the Eternal City. In true Dantean form, politics stood in the way of its construction in 1938. Ironically this literature-inspired building can itself most easily be found in book form. Reading this book I remembered Goethe's quote about frozen music. Did Terragni try to freeze Dante's medieval miracle of song? Certainly a cold-poem seems artistically repulsive. Unflattering comparisons to the lake of Cocytus spring to mind too. While I cannot read Italian, I can read some German. After locating the original quotation I discovered that 'frozen' is a problematic (though common) translation of Goethe's original 'erstarrte.' The verb 'erstarren' more properly means 'to solidify' or 'to stiffen.' This suggests a chemical reaction in which the art does not necessarily chill in the transformation. Nor can simple thawing yield the original work. Like a chemical reaction it requires an artistic catalyst, a muse. Indeed the Danteum is not a physical translation of the Poem. Terragni thought it inappropriate to translate the Comedy literally into a non-literary work. The Danteum would not be a stage set, rather Terragni generated his design from the Comedy's structure, not its finishes.

The poem is divided into three canticles of thirty-three cantos each, plus one extra in the first, the Inferno, making a total of one hundred cantos. Each canto is composed of three-line tercets, the first and third lines rhyme, the second line rhymes with the beginning of the next tercet, establishing a kind of overlap, reflected in the overlapping motif of the Danteum design. Dante's realms are further subdivided: the Inferno is composed of nine

levels, the vestibule makes a tenth. Purgatory has seven terraces, plus two ledges in an ante-purgatory; adding these to the Earthly Paradise yields ten zones. Paradise is composed of nine heavens; Empyrean makes the tenth. In the *Inferno*, sinners are organized by three vices—Incontinence, Violence, and Fraud—and further subdivided by the seven deadly sins. In Purgatory, penance is ordered on the basis of three types of natural love. Paradise is organized on the basis of three types of Divine Love, and further subdivided according to the three theological and four cardinal virtues. (Thomas Schumacher, "The Danteum," Princeton Architectural Press, 1993)

By translating the structure, Terragni could then layer the literal and the spiritual meanings of the Poem without allowing either to dominate. These layers of meaning are native to the *Divine Comedy* as they are native to much medieval literature, although modern readers and tourists may not be so familiar with them. They are literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. I offer you St. Thomas of Aquinas' definition of these last three as they relate to Sacred Scripture:

. . .this spiritual sense has a threefold division. . .so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense. (*Summa Theologica* I, 1, 10)

Within the *Danteum* the Poet's meanings lurk in solid form. An example: the *Danteum* design does have spaces literally associated with the *Comedy*—the Dark Wood of Error, *Inferno*, Purgatorio, and the Paradiso—but these spaces also relate among themselves spiritually. Dante often highlights a virtue by first condemning its corruption. Within Dante's system Justice is the greatest of the cardinal virtues; its corruption, Fraud, is the most contemptible of vices. Because Dante saw the papacy as the most precious of sacred institutions, corrupt popes figure prominently among the damned in the Poet's *Inferno*. In the *Danteum* the materiality of the worldly Dark Wood directly opposes the transcendence of the Paradiso. In the realm of error every thought is lost and secular, while in heaven every soul's intent is directed toward God. The shadowy *Inferno* of the *Danteum* mirrors the Purgatorio's illuminated ascent to heaven. Purgatory embodies hope and growth where hell chases its own dark inertia. Such is the cosmography shared by Terragni and Dante.

In this postscript I intend neither to fully examine the meaning nor the plan of the *Danteum*, but rather to evince the power that art has acted as a catalyst to other artists. The *Danteum*, a modern design inspired by a medieval poem, is but one example. Dante's poem is filled with characters

epitomizing the full range of vices and virtues of human personalities. Dante's characters come from his present and literature's past; they are mythological, biblical, classical, ancient, and medieval. They, rather than Calliope and her sisters, were Dante's muses.