

Let him, who would conceive what now I saw,  
Imagine (and retain the image firm,  
As mountain rock, the whilst he hears me speak),  
Of stars fifteen, from midst the ethereal host  
Selected, that, with lively ray serene,  
O'ercome the massiest air: thereto imagine  
The wain, that, in the bosom of our sky,  
Spins ever on its axle night and day,  
With the bright summit of that horn which swells  
Due from the pole, round which the first wheel rolls,  
T' have rang'd themselves in fashion of two signs  
In heav'n, such as Ariadne made,  
When death's chill seized her; and that one of them  
Did compass in the other's beam; and both  
In such sort whirl around, that each should tend  
With opposite motion and, conceiving thus,  
Of that true constellation, and the dance  
Twofold, that circled me, he shall attain  
As 't were the shadow; for things there as much  
Surpass our usage, as the swiftest heav'n  
Is swifter than the Chiana. There was sung  
No Bacchus, and no Io Paeon, but  
Three Persons in the Godhead, and in one  
Substance that nature and the human join'd.

The song fulfill'd its measure; and to us  
Those saintly lights attended, happier made

At each new minist'ring. Then silence brake,  
Amid th' accordant sons of Deity,  
That luminary, in which the wondrous life  
Of the meek man of God was told to me;  
And thus it spake: "One ear o' th' harvest thresh'd,  
And its grain safely stor'd, sweet charity  
Invites me with the other to like toil.

"Thou know'st, that in the bosom, whence the rib  
Was ta'en to fashion that fair cheek, whose taste  
All the world pays for, and in that, which pierc'd  
By the keen lance, both after and before  
Such satisfaction offer'd, as outweighs  
Each evil in the scale, whate'er of light  
To human nature is allow'd, must all  
Have by his virtue been infus'd, who form'd  
Both one and other: and thou thence admir'st  
In that I told thee, of beatitudes  
A second, there is none, to his enclos'd  
In the fifth radiance. Open now thine eyes  
To what I answer thee; and thou shalt see  
Thy deeming and my saying meet in truth,  
As centre in the round. That which dies not,  
And that which can die, are but each the beam  
Of that idea, which our Soverign Sire  
Engendereth loving; for that lively light,  
Which passeth from his brightness; not disjoin'd

From him, nor from his love triune with them,  
Doth, through his bounty, congregate itself,  
Mirror'd, as 't were in new existences,  
Itself unalterable and ever one.

“Descending hence unto the lowest powers,  
Its energy so sinks, at last it makes  
But brief contingencies: for so I name  
Things generated, which the heav'nly orbs  
Moving, with seed or without seed, produce.  
Their wax, and that which molds it, differ much:  
And thence with lustre, more or less, it shows  
Th' ideal stamp impress: so that one tree  
According to his kind, hath better fruit,  
And worse: and, at your birth, ye, mortal men,  
Are in your talents various. Were the wax  
Molded with nice exactness, and the heav'n  
In its disposing influence supreme,  
The lustre of the seal should be complete:  
But nature renders it imperfect ever,  
Resembling thus the artist in her work,  
Whose faltering hand is faithless to his skill.  
Howe'er, if love itself dispose, and mark  
The primal virtue, kindling with bright view,  
There all perfection is vouchsafed; and such  
The clay was made, accomplish'd with each gift,  
That life can teem with; such the burden fill'd

The virgin's bosom: so that I commend  
Thy judgment, that the human nature ne'er  
Was or can be, such as in them it was.

"Did I advance no further than this point,  
'How then had he no peer?' thou might'st reply.  
But, that what now appears not, may appear  
Right plainly, ponder, who he was, and what  
(When he was bidden 'Ask'), the motive sway'd  
To his requesting. I have spoken thus,  
That thou mayst see, he was a king, who ask'd  
For wisdom, to the end he might be king  
Sufficient: not the number to search out  
Of the celestial movers; or to know,  
If necessary with contingent e'er  
Have made necessity; or whether that  
Be granted, that first motion is; or if  
Of the mid circle can, by art, be made  
Triangle with each corner, blunt or sharp.

"Whence, noting that, which I have said, and this,  
Thou kingly prudence and that ken mayst learn,  
At which the dart of my intention aims.  
And, marking clearly, that I told thee, 'Risen,'  
Thou shalt discern it only hath respect  
To kings, of whom are many, and the good  
Are rare. With this distinction take my words;

And they may well consist with that which thou  
Of the first human father dost believe,  
And of our well-beloved. And let this  
Henceforth be led unto thy feet, to make  
Thee slow in motion, as a weary man,  
Both to the 'yea' and to the 'nay' thou seest not.  
For he among the fools is down full low,  
Whose affirmation, or denial, is  
Without distinction, in each case alike  
Since it befalls, that in most instances  
Current opinion leads to false: and then  
Affection bends the judgment to her ply.

"Much more than vainly doth he loose from shore,  
Since he returns not such as he set forth,  
Who fishes for the truth and wanteth skill.  
And open proofs of this unto the world  
Have been afforded in Parmenides,  
Melissus, Bryso, and the crowd beside,  
Who journey'd on, and knew not whither: so did  
Sabellius, Arius, and the other fools,  
Who, like to scymitars, reflected back  
The scripture-image, by distortion marr'd.

"Let not the people be too swift to judge,  
As one who reckons on the blades in field,  
Or ere the crop be ripe. For I have seen

The thorn frown rudely all the winter long  
And after bear the rose upon its top;  
And bark, that all the way across the sea  
Ran straight and speedy, perish at the last,  
E'en in the haven's mouth seeing one steal,  
Another brine, his offering to the priest,  
Let not Dame Birtha and Sir Martin thence  
Into heav'n's counsels deem that they can pry:  
For one of these may rise, the other fall."