



CANTO 26

Fixed stars, examination of the pilgrim, continued: love—causes of his love of God—sight restored—Adam—length of his stay in Eden, nature of his sin, his language

- 1 While I was fearful for my extinguished sight,
 from the intense flame that had put it out came a
 breath that made me attentive,
- 4 saying: "Until you regain the sight you have
 consumed in me, it is well that by speaking you
 make up for it.
- 7 Begin therefore; and tell where your soul is
 focussed, and be assured that sight is absent
 but not defunct in you,
- 10 for the lady who leads you through this bright
 region has in her glance the power of the hand
 of Ananias."
- 13 I said: "At her pleasure, soon or late, let the
 remedy come for my eyes, which were the gates
 when she entered with the fire that always burns
 in me.
- 16 The Good that satisfies this court is Alpha
 and O of all the writing that Love reads to me,
 whether soft or loud."
- 19 That same voice which had relieved my fear

at my sudden dazzlement now made me
concerned to speak further,

22 saying: "Surely you must sift with a finer sieve:
you must tell who aimed your bow at such a target."

25 And I: "By philosophical arguments and by
authority descending from here, that love is
necessarily imprinted in me:

28 for the good, in so far as it is good, as soon
as it is known kindles love, and the greater, the
more goodness it comprehends within itself.

31 Therefore toward the Essence that so
surpasses others that every good found
outside it, is nothing but a ray of its light,

34 more than toward anything else, the mind must
move in love, in anyone who discerns the truth
on which this proof is founded.

37 This truth is set forth for my intellect by him
who demonstrates the first love of all the semiperternal
substances.

40 The voice of the truthful Author sets it forth,
who says to Moses, speaking of himself: 'I will
make you see every Goodness.'

43 You set it forth for me as well, beginning the
high proclamation that cries out the secrets of
this realm down there, beyond all other blazoning."

46 And I heard: **"According to human intellect and**
authorities agreeing with it, the highest of your
loves keep turned toward God.

49 But say again if you feel other cords drawing
you toward him, so that you sound out with how

- many teeth this love bites you."
- 52 The holy intention of Christ's eagle was not
 hidden from me, for I grasped where he wished to
 lead my profession.
- 55 Therefore I began again: "All the piercings that
 can turn our hearts to God have worked together
 in my charity:
- 58 for the existence of the world and my
 existence, the death that he underwent that I
 might live, and what each believer hopes for, as I do,
- 61 along with the aforesaid lively knowledge, have
 drawn me from the sea of twisted love and placed
 me on the shore of right love.
- 64 The leaves wherewith all the orchard of the eternal
 Gardener flourishes, do I love in the measure of the
 goodness that is conveyed from him to them."
- 67 When I fell silent, a most sweet singing
 resounded through the heaven, and my lady was
 singing with the others, "Holy, holy, holy!"
- 70 And as one awakens at a bright light, because
 of the spirit of sight that is drawn to the splendor
 that goes through tunic after tunic,
- 73 and the one awakened recoils from what he
 sees, so unknowing is sudden wakefulness until
 the power of estimation comes to its aid:
- 76 thus from my eyes every impurity was put to
 flight by Beatrice with the radiance of hers, for
 she was shining a thousand thousand times
 more brightly,
- 79 and so I saw better than before, and as one

- stupified I asked about a fourth light that I saw
among us.
- 82 And my lady: "Within those rays the first soul
 that the first Power ever created is worshipping
 its Maker."
- 85 Like a branch that bends its summit at the
 passing of the wind and then lifts itself again, its
 own strength driving it upward:
- 88 so did I as she spoke, marveling, and then I
 gained confidence again from a desire to speak
 that burned within me,
- 91 and I began: "O fruit uniquely born mature, O
 ancient father to whom each bride is daughter and
 daughter-in-law,
- 94 as devoutly as I can I supplicate you to speak
 with me: you see my wish, and to hear you
 sooner I do not tell it."
- 97 Sometimes a hidden animal stirs in such a way
 that its affect appears as its covering follows it:
- 100 similarly the first-made soul made me see
 through its wrapping how gaily it came to please
 me.
- 103 Then it breathed: "Without its being expressed
 by you, I discern your desire better than you do
 whatever is most sure to you,
- 106 for I see it in the truthful Mirror that makes itself
 like other things, but other things cannot make
 him like them.
- 109 You wish to know how long ago God placed
 me in the high garden where she there readied

- you for so long a stairway,
- 112 and how long it was a delight to my eyes, and
 the true reason for his great anger, and the
 language that I spoke and that I devised.
- 115 Now, my son, not the tasting of the tree in itself
 was the cause of so long an exile, but only the
 going beyond the mark.
- 118 Down there whence your lady sent Virgil, for
 four thousand, three hundred and two turnings of
 the sun I yearned for this assembly,
- 121 and I saw him return along the road of all his
 lights nine hundred thirty times, while I lived on
 earth.
- 124 The language that I spoke was all extinct
 before Nimrod's people became intent on the
 unfinishable work,
- 127 for no rational effect, because of human
 preference, which changes following the
 heavens, has ever been enduring.
- 130 It is a natural operation that man speaks, but
 whether in this way or that, Nature allows you to
 do as it may please you.
- 133 Before I descended to the oppression of Hell,
 the highest Good, whence comes the gladness
 that envelopes me, was called / on earth
- 136 and later was called *El*. And that is necessary,
 for the usage of mortals is like a leaf on the
 branch, which departs and another comes.
- 139 On the mountain that most lifts itself above the
 waves I lived, with pure and sinful life, from the

first hour to that which comes,

142 as the sun shifts quadrants, after the sixth hour."



CANTO 26

Mentr' io dubbiava per lo viso spento,
de la fulgida fiamma che lo spense
uscì un spiro che mi fece attento,
dicendo: "Intanto che tu ti risense
de la vista che haï in me consunta,
ben è che ragionando la compense.

1

Comincia dunque, e dì ove s'appunta
l'anima tua, e fa ragion che sia
la vista in te smarrita e non defunta,
perché la donna che per questa dia
region ti conduce ha ne lo sguardo
la virtù ch' ebbe la man d'Anania."

4

Io dissi: "Al suo piacere e tosto e tardo
vegna remedio a li occhi, che fuor porte
quand' ella entrò col foco ond' io sempr' ardo.

7

Lo ben che fa contenta questa corte
Alfa e O è di quanta scrittura
mi legge Amore o lievemente o forte."

10

Quella medesma voce che paura
tolta m'avea del sùbito abbarbaglio
di ragionare ancor mi mise in cura,
e disse: "Certo a più angusto vaglio
ti conviene schiarar: dicer convienti
chi drizzò l'arco tuo a tal berzaglio."

13

E io: "Per filosofici argomenti
e per autorità che quinci scende
cotale amor convien che in me si 'mprenti:

16

19

22

25

ché 'l bene, in quanto ben, come s'intende
così accende amore, e tanto maggio
quanto più di bontate in sé comprende.

28

Dunque a l'essenza ov' è tanto avvantaggio

31

che ciascun ben che fuor di lei si trova

altro non è ch' un lume di suo raggio,

più che in altra, convien che si mova

34

la mente, amando, di ciascun che cerne

il vero in che si fonda questa prova.

Tal vero a l'intelletto mío sterne

37

colui che mi dimostra il primo amore

di tutte le sustanze sempiterne.

Sternel la voce del verace autore,

40

che dice a Moïsè, di sé parlando:

'Io ti farò vedere ogne valore.'

Sternilmi tu ancora, incominciando

43

l'alto preconio che grida l'arcano

di qui là giù sovra ogni altro bando."

E io udi': "Per intelletto umano

46

e per autoritadi a lui concorde,

d'i tuoi amori a Dio guarda il sovrano.

Ma dì ancor se tu senti altre corde

49

tirarti verso lui, sì che tu suone

con quanti denti questo amor ti morde."

Non fu latente la santa intenzione

52

de l'aguglia di Cristo, anzi m'accorsi

dove volea menar la mia professione.

Però ricominciai: "Tutti quei morsi

55

che posson far lo cor volgere a Dio

a la mia caritate son concorsi:

ché l'essere del mondo e l'esser mio,
la morte ch' el sostenne perch' io viva,
e quel che spera ogne fedel com' io,

58

con la predetta conoscenza viva,
tratto m'hanno del mar de l'amor torto
e del diritto m'han posto a la riva.

61

Le fronde onde s'infronda tutto l'orto
de l'Ortolano eterno am' io cotanto
quanto da lui a lor di bene è porto."

64

Sì com' io tacqui, un dolcissimo canto
risonò per lo cielo, e la mia donna
dicea con li altri: "Santo, santo, santo!"

67

E come a lume acuto si disonna
per lo spirto visivo che ricorre
a lo splendor che va di gonna in gonna,
e lo svegliato ciò che vede aborre,
sì nescia è la sùbita vigilia
fin che la stimativa non soccorre:

70

così de li occhi miei ogne quisquilia
fugò Beatrice col raggio d'i suoi,
che rifulgea da più di mille milia,
onde mei che dinanzi vidi poi,
e quasi stupefatto domandai
d'un quarto lume ch'io vidi tra noi.

73

E la mia donna: "Dentro da quei rai
vagheggia il suo Fattor l'anima prima
che la prima Virtù creasse mai."

76

Come la fronda che flette la cima
nel transito del vento, e poi si leva
per la propria virtù che la soblima:

79

fec' io in tanto in quant' ella diceva,
stupendo, e poi mi rifece sicuro
un disio di parlare ond' ïo ardeva,

88

e cominciai: "O pomo che maturo
solo prodotto fosti, O padre antico
a cui ciascuna sposa è figlia e nuro,
divoto quanto posso a te supplico
perché mi parli: tu vedi mia voglia,
e per udirti tosto non la dico."

91

Talvolta un animal coverto broglia
sì che l'affetto convien che si paia
per lo seguir che face a lui la 'nvoglia:
e similmente l'anima primaia
mi facea trasparer per la coverta
quant' ella a compiacermi venìa gaia.

97

Indi spirò: "Sanz' essermi proferta
da te, la voglia tua discerno meglio
che tu qualunque cosa t'è più certa,
perch' io la veggio nel verace Speglio
che fa di sé pareggio a l'altre cose,
e nulla face lui di sé pareggio.

100

Tu vuogli udir quant' è che Dio mi puose
ne l'eccelso giardino ove costei
a così lunga scala ti dispouse,
e quanto fu diletto a li occhi miei,
e la propria cagion del gran disdegno,
e l'idïoma ch'usai e che fei.

103

Or, figliuol mio, non il gustar del legno
fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio,
ma solamente il trapassar del segno.

106

109

112

115

Quindi onde mosse tua donna Virgilio
quattromilia trecento e due volumi
di sol desiderai questo concilio,
e vidi lui tornare a tutt' i lumi
de la sua strada novecento trenta
fiate mentre ch' io in terra fu'mi.

118

La lingua ch' io parlai fu tutta spenta
innanzi che a l'ovra inconsommabile
fosse la gente di Nembròt attenta,
ché nullo effetto mai razionabile,
per lo piacere uman, che rinnovella
seguendo il cielo, sempre fu durabile.

124

Opera naturale è ch' uom favella,
ma così o così, Natura lascia
poi fare a voi secondo che v'abbella.

127

Pria ch' i' scendessi a l'infernale ambascia,
/ s'appellava in terra il sommo Bene
onde vien la letizia che mi fascia,
e *El* si chiamò poi. E ciò convene,
ché l'uso d'i mortali è come fronda
in ramo, che sen va e altra vene.

130

Nel monte che si leva più da l'onda
fu' io, con vita pura e disonesta,
da la prim' ora a quella che seconda,
come 'l sol muta quadra, l'ora sesta."

133

136

139

142

NOTES

1–69. While I was fearful ... Holy, holy, holy: In his answers to John the Evangelist, the pilgrim does not define, but lays claim to the third, supreme theological virtue, that of Love, or charity ("the greatest of these is charity," 1 Cor. 13.13). John's formulation "God is love" (1 John 4.16; and cf. *Inf.* 3.6; *Par.* 4.118, 6.11) and his testimony to God's love of the world (John 3.16) qualify him as examiner; for his special closeness to Christ, see 25.112–17 and note.

1–15. While I was fearful ... that always burns in me: While blinded, the pilgrim is questioned on his love, after which his sight is restored. John's questioning is less formal than that of the previous two examiners. Virgil had defined and explained love to fill in the time when the pilgrim was unable to ascend; see *Purg.* 17.91–139, 18.19–39 and notes.

7–9. Begin therefore ... not defunct in you: "Is focused" [*s'appunta*] is an optical metaphor, implying God as the focal point (see 28.16–39 and note). The pilgrim's "absent" [*smarrita*] sight echoes the term for the lost path at the beginning of the poem (*Inf.* 1.3, 15.50).

10–12. for the lady who leads you ... the hand of Ananias: Beatrice will restore the pilgrim's vision with her eyes, as Ananias, a disciple of Christ, restored with his hands the vision of Saul of Tarsus after he was blinded when Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.17–18). Here John takes the role of Christ; some commentators view Beatrice as representing the pure early Church (see *Purg.* 32.31–36 and note).

After allusions earlier in *Paradiso* (see 1.4–6, 73–75, 2.37–45 and notes; also 15.28–30 and note), this is the second explicit reference in the *Comedy* to Paul as a model for the pilgrim (see *Inf.* 2.28, 32 and notes; and see 30.49–51 and note).

13–15. I said ... always burns in me: The pilgrim's answers to John begin with recall of his first sight of Beatrice (VN 2.3–6). Dante juxtaposes his love for Beatrice with his love of God; when rightly ordered, love of the creature leads to the Creator (cf. Rom. 1.20, cited in Additional Note 14).

16–66. The Good ... from him to them: The pilgrim states that the chief object of his love is God, the supreme Good (Lines 7–18), to which he was directed by philosophical arguments and authority (19–39), by the witness of OT and NT writers (40–48), and by gratitude for the creation and redemption of mankind (55–66). God, "the good as such," is inherently lovable; loving Him brings satisfaction and rest [*quietus*] (cf. 1.97 and note; also 3.70). See *Purg.* 18.46–75, 55–60 and notes.

16–18. The Good that satisfies ... whether soft or loud: A circumlocution,

appropriately enough, names God with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as in the beginning and final chapters of Apocalypse (1.8, 17–18; 21.6, and especially 22.13: “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”). That God satisfies (*contenta*) the heavens conceals a pun, for he also “contains” them (cf. 8.98; see 28.64–78, 30.10–12 and notes). God is the alphabet of all the pilgrim’s loves (Carroll). See Additional Note 14.

17–18. all the writing ... whether soft or loud: Like a monastic lector or university teacher, a personified Love reads aloud from a written text, a typical use of books in manuscript culture (see *VN* 25 and *Purg.* 24.48–52, with notes); that the pilgrim is blinded foregrounds the auditory message. The varying intensity of Love’s reading may reflect the importance of the texts invoked, including those in this canto (see note to lines 43–45). For a scene of reading leading to error, see *Inf.* 5.127–38, with notes.

17. Alpha and O: Greek *omega* (ω) in the text of Apocalypse was only rarely written out as a word in medieval Latin Bibles. That God is both beginning and end reiterates the pattern of procession and return: as the last book of the Bible, Apocalypse predicts the end of time (cf. 10.6–7) as Genesis describes its beginning (see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 16, “O qui perpetua” lines 27–28 and notes, *Ep.* 13.90). For this sphere as the origin of time, see 27.100–120 and note, and Additional Note 3.

The text of Apocalypse is itself represented as a book dictated to John by the “Son of Man,” the form in which Christ appears to the evangelist (Apoc. 1.10–11). Judgments are read out of a great book (Apoc. 5.1); an angel gives a book to the evangelist to eat (Apoc. 10.8–10), signifying his prophetic vocation (cf. *Par.* 17.130–32, 18.1–3 and notes); finally, “the heavens departed as a book folded up” (Apoc. 6.14; see 23.112 and note). Codicological terms are used for some of the biblical sources in the pilgrim’s examinations (see 24.93). For similar metaphors, see notes to *Purg.* 26.112–14, 115–17, and *Inter cantica* there.

19–24. That same voice ... aimed your bow at such a target: John wants to know how the pilgrim came to aim his desire (his bow; see 15.43–45, *Purg.* 16.48 and notes) at the target, God. For the bow as signifying God’s intention, see 1.118–26; 8.103–5 and notes, and 29.24.

22. saying: Surely you must sift with a finer sieve: A sieve separates out different sizes of material (cf. *DVE* 1.11.6, where the metaphor refers to the sifting of Italian dialects): John requires more particulars.

28–36. for the good ... this proof is founded: Syllogistic reasoning shows that: the good is lovable in proportion to its goodness; but God is the supreme Good (*summum bonum*), so God will be loved above all things. Aquinas cites Pseudo-Dionysius: “[He says] the good is attributed to God as first efficient cause, saying that God is called good, ‘as from whom all things exist’” (*ST* 1a. q. 6 a. 1). Lady Philosophy at *Consol.* 3.pr.2, 3.pr.9–11 affirms the consensus that the good is lovable, that it is the first cause and principle of unity; that the good and ultimate blessedness are one; and that the good is the goal of all things.

31–36. Therefore toward the Essence ... this proof is founded: This part of the argument probably relies on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (12.7–8; see 28.40–42 and note) and on the *Liber de causis* pr.4 (see 1.4–5 and note, and Additional Note 10) cited at *Conv.* 3.2.7: "Because, as is read in the aforementioned book, 'the first thing is existence, and before that nothing is,' the human soul wishes to exist with all its desire, and because its existence depends from God and through him is preserved, naturally it desires to be united with God."

33. is nothing but a ray of its light: Cf. *Ep.* 13.70: "Every causative power is a ray emanating from the first cause that is God," where the secondary causes (the angels) are "rays" of the first cause; here the light imagery applies to all creatures.

37–39. This truth is set forth ... sempiternal substances: The author alluded to here is Aristotle, known as "the Philosopher" [lover of wisdom] by antonomasia, and for Dante "master of those who know" (*Inf.* 4.131). In *Metaphysics* 12.8 Aristotle posits that for the universe to be preserved, there must be an eternal first heaven moving in a circle, which is moved by an unmoved mover; as this mover is supremely good, it moves by being desired: "We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God." Dante refers to a philosophical demonstration, so the author alluded to cannot be, as some commentators affirm, Pseudo-Dionysius, whose knowledge of divine things derived from Paul's authority (see 10.115–17 and note).

It has surprised commentators that Dante cites Aristotle before mentioning Scripture, but this is consistent with Dante's view that rational demonstration, deducible from first principles, is logically prior to revelation by authority. According to Virgil human awareness of "first knowables," as well as love of "first desirables," including the supreme Good, are innate (*Purg.* 18.49–54, 55–60, with notes). Aquinas bases his five proofs of God's existence (*ST* 1a q. 2 a. 2–3) on the idea that it is demonstrable without appeal to revelation, and cites with approval Aristotle's definition of God as the unmoved mover. See Additional Note 2.

40–45. The voice of the truthful Author ... beyond all other blazoning: The pilgrim's authorities are Moses ("the lawgiver" [*Moisè legista, Inf.* 4.57]), to whom the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, were traditionally attributed; and the last NT author, John, author, for medieval readers, of the fourth and last Gospel and of Apocalypse, as well as of two catholic Epistles; see *Purg.* 29.142–44 and note): thus first and last, Alpha and Omega, once more.

40–42. The voice of the truthful Author ... see every Goodness: God is both the represented speaker of the words spoken to Moses in Ex. 33.19 ("I will show thee all good [*bonum*]") and, having inspired Moses's words, the true author of Exodus; Bonaventura cites the same words to describe God's goodness (*Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 5.8).

Line 42 also paraphrases the first line of Guido Cavalcanti's answer to the first poem of Dante's *Vita nova*, narrating a dream of Beatrice and Love: "You saw, it seems to me, all worthiness" [*Vedeste al mio parere onne valore*]; the force of *valore* in the two cases is distinct;

Cavalcanti was thinking of the god of love of literary tradition. See *VN* 24, *Inf.* 10.63–72, *Par.* 13.130–42 and notes, and Durling 2003.

43–45. You set it forth ... all other blazoning: Both John's Gospel and the Apocalypse have been put forward as the text here alluded to: the Gospel, because its prologue opens with "In the beginning" (cf. line 43), and its narrative with the Baptist's heralding of Christ (by "crying out" [*clamat*], John 1.15); and because *preconio* ("proclamation") seems synonymous with *Evangelium* ("good news"). In favor of Apocalypse is "blazoning" [*bando*], used for the "last trump" at *Purg.* 30.13 (and see 30.34); the Apocalypse also refers, with "Alpha and O," to a beginning (1.8), and "cries out" with mention of "a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Apoc. 1.10). Though "secrets" (line 44) might favor the riddling Apocalypse, the prologue to John's Gospel (lines 1–14) also reveals mysteries, and indeed digests NT theology: the Creation, the procession of the Word, the Word made flesh, and the redemption of Man are all topics touched on by the pilgrim's answers. Given the use of other texts by John for the pilgrim's answers (e.g. 1 John 4.7–9), John's entire corpus is probably to be kept in mind, with the Gospel uppermost.

43. You set it forth for me as well: *Sterne* [set forth], literally "stretches out," is used at lines 37, 40, and here, once for each main authority; we can imagine books open, or scrolls unrolled, for consultation. Cf. *Purg.* 6.34, Virgil's "my writing is plain" [*piana*], i.e., "flat"). See note to line 17, and Additional Notes 13 and 14.

46–66. And I heard ... from him to them: John wants to hear other reasons why God is worthy of love (lines 49–51): the pilgrim cites the creation of the world and of his own existence (line 58), and in last place (lines 64–66), the existence of others. The most important reason is the Redemption, with the promise of the Resurrection (lines 59–60): implicitly, it is the pilgrim's faith in these that brought about his rescue from moral peril (lines 62–63).

With his questions, John is focusing the pilgrim's love on its object, as implied by his first query (lines 7–8; see also lines 22–23, 25); this prepares the pilgrim's later reacquisition of vision (lines 70–73) and reception of a "bright light" [*lume acuto*], literally "sharp light."

49–51. But say again ... this love bites you: The language of cords and bites (*morsi*) echoes the diction of Dante's harsh love lyrics, the *rime petrose* (see "Così nel mio parlar," verses 22–26, 31–33; and Chapter 5 of Durling/Martinez 1990): another phase of the poet's career echoed in this canto.

52–53. The holy intention ... to lead my profession. The eagle was said to possess sight strong enough to gaze directly into the sun (see 1.46–48, 20.31–37 and notes); compare lines 7–8. John, whose emblem since early Christian times was the eagle of Apoc. 4.7 (see *Purgatorio*, fig. 9) is eaglelike in focusing the pilgrim on the intended conclusion.

55–57. Therefore I began again ... in my charity: "Piercings" here is, again, literally "bites, stings" [*morsi*] that drive the heart to love God; angels, too, are "pierced" or "stung" with desire (28.43–45 and note). The goads at *Inf.* 3.64–66 are distant, distorted echoes of

these.

59. the death that he underwent that I might live: Christian theology understands the Redemption as springing from God's love for man; see John 3.16 and 1 John 4.9, "By this hath the charity of God appeared to us, because God hath sent his only begotten son into the world, that we may live by him," a close parallel with the end of line 59; see also 7.91–120 and notes.

60. what each believer hopes for, as I do: Professing love, the pilgrim confirms that he has faith and hope, the virtues previously examined.

63–64. have drawn me ... the shore of right love: The pilgrim's salvation, too, is an effect of God's love. Mention of sea and shore recall the first simile in the poem, comparing the pilgrim to a survivor of shipwreck (*Inf.* 1.22–24; on that occasion, too, the season of creation helped the pilgrim, *Inf.* 1.37–43 and note). Also evoked is the Exodus through the Red Sea, Dante's model for the meaning of the pilgrim's journey (see Introduction, p. 10; *Purg.* 2.46–48 and note; and our introduction to *Purgatorio*, pp. 12–15).

62. twisted love: Purgatory rectifies deviant human love (cf. *Purg.* 10.3 and note, and *Purg.* 17.100–102, 25.109–11).

64–66. The leaves wherewith ... from him to them: The creation is God's garden (cf. *Purg.* 28.103–20 and note); its trees and leaves are the creatures, which the pilgrim loves in proportion to their participation in the supreme Good. Commentators find this profession tepid; but of the eight uses of *Amor* and *amare* in the canto, only this last has the pilgrim actually say "he loves" [*am' io*].

For the horticultural imagery, cf. Christ's words in John 15.1 ("I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman [*agricola*]") and 12.71–72, 82–87 and notes; tree imagery is found in the canto again at lines 85–86 and 137–138, suitable to the former custodian of the garden of Eden (line 110; Gen. 2.15).

67–69. When I fell silent ... Holy, holy, holy: With the angels and the blessed, Beatrice joins in singing the *Sanctus*, the song of the seraphim and the evangelists around the divine throne (Is. 6.3, and Apoc. 4.8); and, on earth, the *hymnus angelicus* sung as the conclusion to the Preface to the Mass, heralding the coming of the Lord in the Eucharist (see 7.1–3[4] and notes); here the *Sanctus* is given in the vernacular, in anticipation of lines 124–38; see note to 27.1–3). The song expresses joy in the pilgrim's witness to his love and heralds a new arrival whose special relation to Christ justifies his reception. See Additional Note 4.

70–142. And as one awakens ... after the sixth hour: The second half of the canto narrates the pilgrim's meeting with Adam, the father of the human race (cf. Wisdom 10.1–2, Conv. 4.15.4, and see note to lines 91–96). Adam's creation confirms the pilgrim's affirmation of God's love and goodness in creating the world and humankind (see *Purg.* 17.91–92, 25.70–72 and notes).

For earlier scenes of awakening in confusion, cf. *Purg.* 9.34–42, 32.61–90 and notes (and *Inf.* 1.1–9); in *Ep.* 13.77–80, Paul's ignorance after his rapture, and the fact that the Apostles Peter, James, and John "fell upon their face" before Christ's transfiguration, are treated as precedents for the oblivion that limits the narration of the pilgrim's experience in *Paradiso* (in fact the three apostles are told by Christ to remain silent about their vision—they do not lose consciousness; see Matt. 17.1–9).

70–81. And as one awakens ... that I saw among us: The pilgrim's sight meets the light reflected from Adam. In describing an inner light joined to an external one, these lines suggest how visual sensation models the act of intellectual sight or understanding (see 30.82–90 and note, and Additional Note 3). Cf. John 1.9: "That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." Adam is a forerunner of Christ (just seen at 23.79–84).

70–75. And as one awakens ... comes to its aid: Dante explains the mechanism of sight at *Conv.* 2.9.4–5 and 3.9.7–9, as he derived it from Plato, Galen, and their medieval commentators, especially Avicenna and Albertus Magnus: the "spirit of sight," one of the "animal spirits" that mediate between the senses and the brain (*VN* 2.4–7), receives the optical image (the immaterial form) of the external object in the lens of the eye, and channels it to the common sense, the internal sensitive faculty and "fountain" or principle of all the senses, in the forebrain; this sense offers the image for evaluation by the "power of estimation," the faculty that classifies and recognizes images (see also *Purg.* 18.22–27, 61–66 and notes).

72. through tunic after tunic: The clothing metaphor in *gonna* recalls the technical term used by medieval physiology for certain ocular membranes [*tunicae*]; see *Conv.* 3.9.13; here the eyelids are also meant. The process of sight itself, said to be instantaneous like the propagation of light (see *Conv.* 3.9.9), is rhetorically slowed by line 72, acknowledging the solemn meeting ahead.

76–78. thus from my eyes ... thousand times more brightly: "Impurities" [*quisquilia*], or "chaff," as at Amos 8.6, recalls the restoration of Paul's sight: "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales [*squamae*], and he received his sight; and rising up, he was baptized" (Acts 9.18).

79–81. and so I saw better ... that I saw among us: In Acts 9.7 Christ speaks to Paul, but is apparently visible only to him: "Now the men who went in company with him, stood amazed, hearing indeed a voice, but seeing no man."

82–96. And my lady ... I do not tell it: Within his wrapping of light, Adam is desiring [*vagheggiando*] God, echoing the pilgrim's testimony of his own love for God (see especially lines 64–66), and note to lines 133–35.

85–90. Like a branch ... that burned in me: The image testifies to the natural emboldening of the pilgrim in the presence of his first ancestor (see 16.16–18, which recalls *Inf.* 2.121–132). Despite other parallels advanced (e.g., Statius, *Theb.* 6.854–57), this adapts

Consol. 3.m.2.27–30, illustrating the force of natural desire for the good:

Bend now with all your strength,
a sapling's top to the ground:
but if the right hand bowing it lets go
its top again points straight at the sky [*recto spectat vertice caelum*].

91–96. and I began ... I do not tell it: Made directly by God (Gen. 2.7), Adam came into existence fully grown; since Eve was shaped from a rib in his side (Gen. 2.21–23), and as he fathered Eve's daughters, he is the ancestor of every woman born, and, since women marry his male descendants, every woman's father-in-law (cf. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 15.16). Dante also calls Adam the "man never born" (7.26), since he was formed with neither mother nor milk (*DVE* 1.6.1).

91. and I began: O fruit uniquely born: Some have thought it tactless to compare Adam to the fruit of Eden (cf. *Purg.* 22.132; 23.34, 68; 24.104), but as a symbol of what is desirable, the *pomo* drives the pilgrim to recover Eden (*Inf.* 16.61; *Purg.* 27.45, 115). In Eden, Christ is the apple tree that yields the fruit of the heavenly wedding feast (*Purg.* 32.74).

92. O ancient father: Adam is last but one of the father figures the pilgrim meets in his ascent of the ladder of time and causation, as well as space; the only prior origin of his being will be God himself. See 16.16–21 and note.

97–114. Sometimes a hidden animal ... that I invented: Adam transmits his joy at the meeting through the light mantling him (lines 97–102), and intuits in God the pilgrim's four questions for him (lines 103–14).

97–102. Sometimes a hidden animal ... to please me: Some commentators see a hooded hawk or caparisoned horse implied, but Dante's language is generic. Adam's delight ("gaily") means he is not only well disposed, but joyful (see lines 134–35). Compare *Inf.* 26.48, 58–60 and notes, and *Inter cantica* to *Purgatorio* 26.

103–8. Then it breathed ... cannot make him like them: God's mind is like a mirror in which all things are reflected; insofar as he causes all universals and singulars, God resembles all things (*ST* 1a q. 57 a. 2, *Conv.* 3.14.2–3); but no created thing can fully mirror or comprehend God (see 9.73–81 and note)

109–14. You wish to know ... and that I devised: The pilgrim has four questions: how long ago was Adam created and placed in Eden? How long did he remain there, and why did God cast him out? What language did he fashion and speak?

114. the language that I spoke and that I devised: Note the inversion (*hysteron proteron*), by which Adam appears to speak before he has language. Adam uses It. *fe [c] i [I]* made] of the language he spoke; compare *DVE* 1.6.7, of Adam's language (which Dante then

supposed had been Hebrew), "that language which the first speakers crafted [*fabricaverunt*] with their lips." See note to lines 124–38, and see *Purg.* 26.115–17 and note.

115–42. Now, my son ... after the sixth hour. Answering the four questions, Adam changes the order in which they were asked (3, 1, 4, 2): first, he gives the *cause* of the long exile; second, the *length* of that exile, which lasted until the Resurrection (see *Par.* 7.28–33 and note); third, he asserts the *mutability* of language (with mention of the tower of Babel, described as an additional Fall at *DVE* 1.7.2–3); and fourth, he gives the *duration* of his stay in Eden. Emphasis on the hour of the Fall, traditionally thought also to be the hour of the Crucifixion (see *Conv.* 4.23.11), surely influenced the placement of this last answer (see note to lines 139–42), but the order of answers also means that they begin and end with Eden. As they also include mention of the earth, Limbo (Hell), and Heaven, they sketch in words a journey through all time and space; see note to line 133.

115–17. Now, my son ... the going beyond the mark: Adam first answers the third and most consequential question: his fault was not the violation of God's ban on eating from a specific tree, but his disregard for a prohibition as such (see *Purg.* 32.37–60 and note). The Fall was due to proud disobedience, the radical sin that included all the others (see Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 14.12–14, *ST* 2a 2ae q. 163 a. 1), including the vice of gluttony (see *Purg.* 24.115–18); thus Dante can refer elsewhere to the sin of Adam and Eve as one of tasting and eating (cf. Gen. 3.3, and see 13.39, 32.121–123, and 1.68 and note). For evocations of the Fall in Dante's Eden, see *Purg.* 29.22–30, 30.52–54 and notes.

117. the going beyond the mark: Adam's phrasing has recalled to readers Ulysses' transgression of the limits established by Hercules (see *Inf.* 26.90–142, especially 107–9 and 142 with notes, and *Inferno* Additional Note 11). As a failed explorer and deceptive counselor, Ulysses is a persistent if problematic parallel to the pilgrim (see *Purg.* 1.130–32, 19.16–24 and notes; see *Par.* 27.82–84 and note).

118–23. Down there whence your lady ... while I lived on earth: Adam's answer to the first question is indirect and nonchronological: he first recalls the 4,302 years spent in Limbo after his death, then adds his 930 years of life (Gen. 5.5), expressed as solar years, that is, the motion of the sun around the zodiac (cf. 16.34–39 and note). There he stops, with a total of 5,232 years. To arrive at the figure the pilgrim requests, the 1,266 years must be added between Christ's atonement, at 34 years of age, for Adam's sin, until the present: the total is 6,498 years, the age of the world calculated for the emperor Constantine by Eusebius of Caesarea (see 6.1–3 and note). For one implication of this reordering, see note to line 133.

118. Down there whence your lady ... I yearned for this assembly: Adam shared the yearning of the just in Limbo for the coming of Christ, as dramatized in the Gospel of Nicodemus (see *Inf.* 4.52–63, 9.64–72, 12.31–45 and notes). Adam's desire for this "assembly" echoes Cacciaguida's for sight of the pilgrim (see 15.49–54 and note).

118. Down there whence your lady moved Virgil: Virgil's name appears for the last

time in the poem, rhyming with "exile" [*essilio*], as it does at *Inf.* 23.126 and *Purg.* 21.18 (and see 23.134, 136). Taken with mention of God as "true author" (line 40), in contrast to Virgil as "my author" (*Inf.* 1.85), this passage suggests the subordination of Virgil's authority to that of Scripture; see also lines 26 and 47. (See Brownlee 1984b, and especially Ascoli 2008).

124–38. The language ... departs and another comes: Adam's third answer, which reflects Dante's interest in the question of the origin of language, responds to the pilgrim's last question, and is granted more space (five terzinas; the others receive one or two). In *DVE* 1.4–6 Dante shared the widely held assumption that Hebrew had been Adam's language, and that, unaffected by the confusion of tongues (Gen. 11.7–9), it had survived to be spoken by Christ. Dante's Adam now corrects this view: where, in the treatise, only Hebrew survives the confusion of Babel, Adam now thinks of Hebrew as a later development and includes it with the languages Dante held to be mutable (see *DVE* 1.9.6–10).

124–29. The language ... has ever been enduring: Adam reveals that before Nimrod planned the tower of Babel (as explained in Augustine, *De civ. Dei*; see *Inf.* 31.67–81 and note), his original language had gone out of use. Since man after the Fall is a "most unstable and variable animal" (*DVE* 1.9.6), a language unfixed by grammar and literature will, like all things fashioned by man, vary with time and place (see also *Conv.* 1.5.7–9). The influence of the heavens on natural linguistic change is implicit in the references to solar motion in lines 118–24.

130–32. It is a natural operation ... as it may please you: That language is mutable and arbitrary is spelled out in Aristotle, Boethius, and other texts, but also in Horace, *Ars poetica* 70–72: "Many words shall rise again that formerly fell away, and those now honored shall decline, if usage wills it, which is the arbiter, law, and rule of speech," cited at *Conv.* 2.13.10.

132. as it may please you: "Please" [*abbella*] echoes, though in subjunctive mood, the first words of a canzone by Folquet of Marseilles (see 9.37–42 and note, *DVE* 2.6.6), also used to begin the Provençal lines spoken by Arnaut Daniel (*Purg.* 26.140). The association of Adam's original speech with the origins of vernacular poetry continues (see Contini 1970). See note to lines 134–35.

133–38. Before I descended ... one departs and another comes: Variation of the names of God exemplifies the changes languages undergo over time. First the "supreme Good" was known as I or J, to indicate the first integer, standing for God's unity (see *Consol.* 3.pr.12.33 and 4.pr.6.8, cited in note to 20.19–21). Later, Adam explains, God was addressed as *EI*, identified by Isidore of Seville as the first name given to God by the Jews (*Etym.* 7.1). See Chiavacci Leonardi, note to 134–35, and *DVE* 1.4.4.

133. Before I descended to the oppression of Hell: Adam mentions key stages in the pilgrim's journey: Beatrice receiving him in Purgatory (line 111) and her earlier visit to Limbo to arrange his rescue (line 118). The phrase *infernale ambascia* [oppression of Hell], was used by

the pilgrim to Marco Lombardo, of his passage through Hell (*Purg.* 16.39). Adam and the pilgrim, both exiles, have shared "the journey of our life" (*Inf.* 1.1).

134–35. the highest Good ... gladness that envelops me: Because all joy is in God, and God is all joy, "God" had to be, according to Dante, the first word spoken by Adam, for it was suitable that he begin in joy (*DVE* 1.4.4). Though God did not need Adam to speak audibly, he wished him to do so, "so that in the unfolding of such a gift he who freely endowed us should be glorified [*gloriaretur ipse*]" (*DVE* 1.5.2). Significantly, the first noun in *Paradiso* is *gloria*.

The connection between the origin of language (see lines 82–83, 102) and Dante's use of Italian *gioia*, the term used in early love lyric for the sexual enjoyment of love (Provençal *joie*; see note to 9.37), is suggestive: God's creation through the Word is the archetype of speech and of poetic utterance.

137–38. for the usage of mortals ... one departs and another comes: Dante draws on Horace's *Ars poetica*, lines 60–63 (as well as on lines 70–72, cited in the note to lines 130–32 of this canto):

Ut silvae foliis pronos mutantur in annos,
prima cadunt, ita verborum vetus interit aetas,
et iuvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.
[As the forests change their leaves in the declining year,
and the earliest fall; so an old age of words passes away,
and, as youth will, those just born flower and thrive.]

137–38. like a leaf on the branch: Cf. "orchard" (line 64), "gardener" (65), "leaves" and "branch" (64, 85), and fallen Adam himself, the first apple (*pomo*, "fruit," 91). Adam despoiled the tree in Eden, which makes his family tree deciduous, so to speak; see *Inf.* 3.112–17 (the damned offspring of Adam as dead leaves), and *Purg.* 11.115–17 and notes. As in *Purg.* 32.37–60, however, the tree is renewed by Christ, thus also linked to lines 137–38 (see "renews" [*rinovella*] at line 128, also used for the renewal of the pilgrim; see *Purg.* 33.142–45 and note).

139–42. On the mountain ... after the sixth hour: With further mention of the place of Eden (see line 110) on the mountain in the southern hemisphere at the antipode of Jerusalem (see *Inf.* 26.133–35, 34.106–26; *Purg.* 3.12–15, 4.79–84, 28.97–102 and notes), Adam affirms that he dwelt there innocently until the seventh hour of the day, counting from prime (about 6 AM); thus his Fall came shortly after noon, a view widely shared. According to the Gospels, Christ was crucified about noon and died at about 3 PM, at the end of the sixth or midday canonical hour; for Dante, Christ's death occurred near noon, beginning the sixth hour (cf. *Conv.* 4.23.9–11, 16; *Inf.* 21.112–14 and note). Both the Fall and the Crucifixion occurred on a Friday, the sixth day of the week. See also 30.1–3 and notes. For the pilgrim's six hours in this heaven, see 27.79–81 and note.



CANTO 27

Fixed stars, continued: saint Peter denounces the popes—backward glance again—ascent to Primum mobile—inversion of values on earth

- 1 "To the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit,"
 all Paradise began, "glory!" so that the sweet
 sing-ing inebriated me.
- 4 What I saw seemed a smile of the universe;
 thus my intoxication came in through hearing
 and through sight.
- 7 Oh joy! Oh ineffable happiness! Oh life made
 whole with love and peace! Oh riches secure
 without greed!
- 10 Before my eyes the four torches stood
 flaming, and the one that had come first began
 to glow more vigorously
- 13 and in appearance became such as Jove
 would be, if he and Mars were birds and
 exchanged feathers.
- 16 The Providence that distributes turns and
 duties there, had imposed silence on the
 blessed choir on every side
- 19 when I heard: "If I change color, do not
 marvel, for while I speak you will see all these

- change color.
- 22 He who on earth usurps my place, my place,
 my place, which is vacant in the presence of
 the Son of God,
- 25 has made my burial place a sewer of the
 blood and stench that placate the perverted one
 down there, who fell from up here."
- 28 With that color which the opposing sun paints
 on a cloud at evening and at morning, I then
 saw all Heaven suffused.
- 31 And like a virtuous lady who remains sure of
 herself but, merely hearing of another's fault, is
 abashed by it:
- 34 so did Beatrice transmute her appearance,
 and such an eclipse, I believe, took place in
 Heaven at the death of the supreme Power.
- 37 Then his words proceeded with a voice so
 transmuted that his appearance was not more
 changed:
- 40 "The bride of Christ was not raised up by my
 blood, by Linus's, by that of Anacletus, to be
 used for acquiring gold,
- 43 but to acquire this happy life did Sixtus and
 Pius and Calixtus and Urban shed their blood
 after much weeping.
- 46 It was not our intention that on the right hand
 of our successors one part of the Christian people
 should sit, and the other on the other side,
- 49 nor that the keys granted to me should
 become an emblem on a standard warring

- against the baptized,
- 52 nor that I should be a figure on a seal for
privileges sold and falsified, for which I often
blush and shoot sparks.
- 55 In shepherds' clothing rapacious wolves can
be seen from up here in all the pastures! O
protection of God, why are you still inert?
- 58 Cahorsans and Gascons prepare to drink our
blood! O good beginning, to what base end
must you fall!
- 61 But the high Providence that with Scipio
defended in Rome the glory of the world, will
come to our aid soon, as I conceive,
- 64 and you, my son, who because of your mortal
weight will go back down again, open your
mouth and hide not what I do not hide."
- 67 As with frozen vapors our air snows
downward when the horn of the heavenly Goat
touches the sun:
- 70 so did I see the aether grow adorned and
snow upward with the triumphant vapors that
had sojourned there with us.
- 73 My sight was following their semblances, and
it followed them until the intervening medium,
being great, deprived it of passing further.
- 76 Therefore my lady, who saw me absolved
from looking up, said to me: "Lower your gaze,
and see how you have turned."
- 79 Since the hour when I had first looked, I saw
that I had moved through all the arc that the first

- clime makes from its middle to its end,
82 so that I saw beyond Gades the mad crossing
 of Ulysses and, nearer here, the shore where
 Europa made herself a sweet burden.
- 85 And the site of this little threshing-floor would
 have been further discovered to me, but the sun
 below my feet was proceeding more than a sign
 ahead.
- 88 My enamored mind, that ever courts my lady,
 more than ever burned to turn my eyes back to her,
- 91 and if Nature or art have ever made bait to
 capture the eyes and so gain the mind in human
 flesh or paintings of it,
- 94 all, gathered together, would seem nothing
 next to the divine beauty that shone on me
 when I turned to her smiling eyes.
- 97 And the power her glance instilled in me
 uprooted me from Leda's lovely nest and lifted
 me up to the heaven that is swiftest.
- 100 Its closest and its highest parts are all so
 uniform that I cannot say which Beatrice chose
 to be my place,
- 103 but she, seeing my desire, began, smiling so
 happily that God seemed to be rejoicing in her
 face:
- 106 "The nature of the world, which stills its center
 and moves all the rest around it, here begins as
 from its goal,
- 109 and this heaven has no other *where* than the
 mind of God, in which is kindled the love that

- turns it and the power that it rains down.
- 112 Light and love enclose it with one sphere, as
 this does all the others, and that girding only he
 who girds it understands.
- 115 Its motion is not marked by another's, but the
 others are measured by this one, as ten is
 measured by half and fifth,
- 118 and how time keeps its roots in this flowerpot,
 and its foliage in the others, can now be
 manifest to you.
- 121 O cupidity, you so submerge mortals that
 none has the power to raise his eyes above
 your waves!
- 124 True, the desire still blooms in men, but your
 continual rain converts the healthy plums into
 blasted ones.
- 127 Faith and innocence are found only in little
 ones; then both flee before the cheeks are covered.
- 130 This one, while still a babbler, observes fasts,
 and later, when his tongue is loosed, devours
 whatever food in whatever month,
- 133 and this one, while still a babbler, loves
 and obeys his mother, and later, with full command
 of speech, desires to see her buried.
- 136 Thus their white skin turns black at the first
 sight of the lovely daughter of him who brings
 morning and leaves evening.
- 139 You, so that it will not amaze you, consider
 that on earth there is none who governs, and
 thus the human family goes astray.

142 But before January altogether unwinters itself
 with the hundredth they neglect down there,
 these supernal spheres will radiate in such a way
145 that the tempest so long awaited will turn the
 sterns where the prows are now, so that the
 fleet will sail aright,
148 and true fruit will come after the flower."



CANTO 27

"Al Padre, al Figlio, a lo Spirito Santo,"
cominciò, "gloria!" tutto 'l Paradiso
sì che m'inebriava il dolce canto.

Ciò ch'io vedeva mi sembiava un riso
de l'universo, per che mia ebbrezza
intrava per l'udire e per lo viso.

Oh gioia! Oh ineffabile allegrezza!
Oh vita intègra d'amore e di pace!
Oh sanza brama sicura ricchezza!

Dinanzi a li occhi miei le quattro face
stavano accese, e quella che prima venne
incominciò a farsi più vivace,
e tal ne la sembianza sua divenne
qual diverrebbe love, s'elli e Marte
fossero augelli e cambiassersi penne.

La Provedenza, che quivi comparte
vice e officio, nel beato coro
silenzio posto avea da ogne parte,
quand' io udi': "Se io mi trascoloro,
non ti maravigliar, ché, dicend' io,
vedrai trascolorar tutti costoro.

Quelli ch' usurpa in terra il luogo mio,
il luogo mio, il luogo mio, che vaca
ne la presenza del Figliuol di Dio,
fatt' ha del cimitero mio cloaca
del sangue e de la puzza onde 'l perverso
che cadde di qua sù, là giù si placa."

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

Di quel color che per lo sole avverso
nube dipigne da sera e da mane
vid' io allora tutto 'l ciel cosperso.

28

E come donna onesta che permane
di sé sicura e per l'altrui fallanza,
pur ascoltando, timida si fane:

31

così Beatrice trasmutò sembianza,
e tale eclissi credo che 'n Cielo fue
quando patì la suprema Possanza.

34

Poi procedetter le parole sue
con voce tanto da sé trasmutata
che la sembianza non si mutò più:

37

"Non fu la sposa di Cristo allevata
del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,
per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata,
ma per acquisto d'esto viver lieto
e Sisto e Pio e Calisto e Urbano
sparser lo sangue dopo molto fletto.

40

Non fu nostra intenzion ch' a destra mano
d'i nostri successor parte sedesse,
parte da l'altra del popol cristiano,

43

né che le chiavi che mi fuor concesse
divenisser signaculo in vessillo
che contra battezzati combattesse,

46

né ch'io fossi figura di sigillo
a privilegi venduti e mendaci,
ond' io sovente arrosso e disfavillo.

49

In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci
si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi!
O difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci?

52

55

Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi
s'apparecchian di bere! O buon principio,
a che vil fin convien che tu caschi!

58

Ma l'alta Provedenza, che con Scipio
difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,
soccorrà tosto, sì com' io concipio,
e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo
ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca
e non asconder quel ch' io non ascondo."

61

Sì come di vapor gelati fiocca
in giuso l'aere nostro quando 'l corno
de la capra del ciel col sol si tocca:
in sù vid' io così l'etera addorno
farsi e fioccar di vapor triunfanti
che fatto avien con noi quivi soggiorno.

64

Lo viso mio seguiva i suoi sembianti,
e seguì fin che 'l mezzo, per lo molto,
li tolse il trapassar del più avanti.

70

Onde la donna, che mi vide assolto
de l'attendere in sù, mi disse: "Adima
il viso e guarda come tu se' volto."

73

Da l'ora ch' io avea guardato prima
i' vidi mosso me per tutto l'arco
che fa dal mezzo al fine il primo clima,
sì ch'io vedea di là da Gade il varco
folle d'Ulisse, e di qua presso il lito
nel qual si fece Europa dolce carco.

76

E più mi fora discoveredo il sito
di questa aiuola, ma 'l sol procedea
sotto i mie' piedi un segno e più partito.

79

82

85

- La mente innamorata, che donnea 88
con la mia donna sempre, di ridure
ad essa li occhi più che mai ardea,
e se Natura o arte fé pasture 91
da pigliare occhi per aver la mente
in carne umana o ne le sue pitture,
tutte adunate parrebber niente 94
ver' lo piacer divin che mi refulse
quando mi volsi al suo viso ridente.

E la virtù che lo sguardo m'indulse 97
del bel nido di Leda mi divelse
e nel ciel velocissimo m'impulse.

La parti sue vicinissime e eccelse 100
sì uniforme son ch' i' non so dire
qual Béatrice per loco mi scelse,
ma ella, che vedëa 'l mio disire, 103
incominciò, ridendo tanto lieta
che Dio parea nel suo volto gioire:
"La natura del mondo, che quïeta 106
il mezzo e tutto l'altro intorno move,
quinci comincia come da sua meta,
e questo cielo non ha altro dove 109
che la mente divina, in che s'accende
l'amor che 'l volge e la virtù ch' ei piove.

Luce e amor d'un cerchio lui comprende, 112
sì come questo li altri, e quel precinto
colui che 'l cinge solamente intende.

Non è suo moto per altro distinto, 115
ma li altri son mensurati da questo,
sì come diece da mezzo e da quinto,

e come il tempo tegna in cotal testo
le sue radici e ne li altri le fronde
omai a te può esser manifesto.

118

O cupidigia, che i mortali affonde
sì sotto te che nessuno ha podere
di trarre li occhi fuor de le tue onde!

121

Ben fiorisce ne li uomini il volere,
ma la pioggia continüa converte
in bozzacchioni le sosine vere.

124

Fede e innocenza son reperte
solo ne' parvoletti; poi ciascuna
pria fugge che le guance sian coperte.

127

Tale, balbužiendo ancor, digiuna,
che poi divora, con la lingua sciolta,
qualunque cibo per qualunque luna,

130

e tal, balbužiendo, ama e ascolta
la madre sua, che con loquela intera
disia poi di vederla sepolta.

133

Così si fa la pelle bianca nera
nel primo aspetto de la bella figlia
di quel ch' apporta mane e lascia sera.

136

Tu, perché non ti facci maraviglia,
pensa che 'n terra non è chi governi,
onde sì svia l'umana famiglia.

139

Ma prima che gennaio tutto si sverni
per la centesma ch' è là giù negletta,
raggeran sì questi cerchi superni
che la fortuna che tanto s'aspetta
le poppe volgerà u' son le prore,
sì che la classe correrà diretta,

142

145

e vero frutto verrà dopo 'l fiore."

148

NOTES

1–9. To the Father ... riches secure without greed: As the pilgrim prepares to enter the ninth celestial sphere, the first nine lines of Canto 27 (= 3 x 3 x 3) play on one, three and nine: the first line addresses the three persons of the Trinity (three in one), and the third terzina consists of three lines beginning anaphorically with *Oh* (3 x 3 = 9). Cf. *VN* 29.2–3, and *Inf.* 3.1–9 and note.

1–3. To the Father ... inebriated me: Heraldng the end of the pilgrim's long stay in Gemini, which requires six cantos (22.100–27.96, 728 lines), the assembly sings the first part of the *Gloria*, addressed to the Trinity. Sung in the Mass and Office after psalms, canticles, and responsories, here it celebrates completion of the pilgrim's examinations: on faith, marked by the *Te deum laudamus* (in the vernacular, *Dio laudamo*, 24.112–14 and note); on hope, concluding with Ps. 9.11, *Sperent in te* (25.97–99; in vernacular form at 24.73–74); and on love, concluding with the vernacular *Sanctus* (26.67–70). Emphasized by its isolation in line 2, *Gloria* repeats the first noun in the cantica (1.1) (for Adam's first words, glorifying God, at *DVE* 1.5.2, see note to 26.134–35). See Additional Note 4.

4–6. What I saw ... through hearing and through sight: The joy of the entire heaven recalls Beatrice's comparison of the brightness of the heavenly bodies (2.127–44) to the shining of joy in a human's eyes (2.142–44). Related effects are the "smile" and later "blushing" of the sphere (lines 28–30; cf. 18.64–69 and notes) which intoxicate the pilgrim (cf. Ps. 35.9, cited at note to 30.67; and cf. 1 Cor. 2.9, cited at note to 19.7–12). The joyful opening contrasts sharply with Peter's later attack on the papacy.

7–9. Oh joy ... secure without greed: Peter, who shunned gold and silver (22.88), is keeper of the keys and warden of the "treasure of heaven" (Matt. 6.20; 13.44), which consists of the saved themselves—the spoils of Christ's victory (*Par.* 23.19–21)—and the accumulated merits of Christ and the saints (23.133–35 and note; cf. *Purg.* 9.117–27, 137–38, with notes, and *Inter cantica*). On earthly versus heavenly goods, see *Purg.* 15.49–75, with notes.

10–75. Before my eyes ... deprived it of passing further: Peter, the first vicar of Christ on earth, assails contemporary popes with a level of scorn recalling *Inf.* 19.88–117, and anticipating 30.145–51 (see note there). Completing his invective with a prophecy of correction, Peter and the other souls that descended to meet the pilgrim (see 22.30–32, and note to 23.19–20) withdraw upward and out of sight.

10–39. Before my eyes ... was not more changed: Peter begins his attack on Boniface VIII (implied by lines 22–24) and turns an angry red; the whole heaven blushes (lines 28–30), including Beatrice (31–36), who darkens as in an eclipse. Note words with the prefix *trans-* at lines 19, 21, 34, 38.

10–15. Before my eyes ... choir on every side: The four torches are Peter, James, John, and Adam. Peter reddens as if the planet Jupiter (see 18.64–69, 94–96 and notes)—white or silver in hue and thought of as a bird—had exchanged plumage with the red planet Mars (Buti suggests the “feathers” are the light rays of the planet); see 14.82–87, *Purg.* 2.13–15 and notes. See note to lines 4–6.

16–27. The Providence ... who fell from up here: In tune with the emotional range of the canto (see note to lines 4–6), Peter’s four terzinas begin with the designs of Providence and end with Satan in Hell. Equally drastic is the coarsening of diction, from “blessed choir” to “sewer” [*cloaca*] and “stench” [*puzza*], both unique uses in the poem. See lines 55–60 and notes.

22–24. He who on earth usurps ... the Son of God: “Usurps” alludes to the belief that Boniface VIII had attained the papacy by persuading his predecessor Celestine V to abdicate (see *Inf.* 19.52–57 and note); more generally, it refers to Boniface’s arrogance and simony (*Inf.* 27.85–93 and note; see also note to 30.145–51). Because Peter is Christ’s substitute on earth, Peter’s throne (his “place”) stands vacant when no worthy successor occupies it (cf. 16.112–14 and note).

22–23. He who on earth usurps ... which is vacant: Commentators see a reference here to Jeremiah’s triple repetition of “the temple of the Lord” [*templum Domini*, Jer. 7.4], which is followed by a description of the temple as a den of thieves (Jer. 7.11; see 18.123 and note). Christ’s triple charge to Peter to feed the sheep of the faithful (John 21.15–17) is also relevant in light of Boniface’s failure to fulfill his duties as pope (see Acts 20.28–29 and *Ep.* 11.3).

25–27. has made my burial place ... who fell from up here: Peter was martyred on the Vatican hill and his basilica later built over his grave; despite the burial there of more saints, consecrating the ground, corrupt papal rule has made the area a sewer pleasing to Satan. For the rhyme *-aca* see 16.115–17 and note.

The association of Boniface with Satan reflects the treatment of the damned popes (see *Inf.* 19.1, 22–24 and notes, and *Inferno* Additional Note 7). Is. 14.12–15 (cited in note to 29.55–57) mentions Satan’s fall into Hell, and Is. 14.19 his putrefaction: “But thou art cast out of thy grave ... and art gone down to the bottom of the pit, as a rotten carcass [*quasi cadaver putridum*].” See lines 55–60 and note.

28–30. With that color ... all Heaven suffused: For Heaven’s blush at the “adulteries” of Boniface (see *Inf.* 19.2–4 and note), Dante draws with wry humor on a scene of the goddess Diana surprised while bathing by the Theban hunter Actaeon (Ovid, *Met.* 3.183–85): “And tinted as are clouds struck by the opposing sun [*adversi solis*], or like the crimson dawn, so was the face of Diana seen unclothed.”

31–36. And like a virtuous lady ... the death of the supreme Power: This scene may represent a “passion” of the Church, embodied in Peter (see *Purg.* 20.85–96, 33.1–12 and

notes). Lines 34–36 make Beatrice a mourner at the foot of the Cross (see *Purg.* 33.4–7 and note). When Christ was crucified, “from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land to the ninth hour” (Matt. 27.45); comparing the alteration of the planet to the Crucifixion reflects the view that the whole earth was darkened, not only Jerusalem (see 29.97–102 and note; and cf. note to lines 142–48).

40–60. The bride of Christ ... to what base end must you fall: The early popes who suffered for the Church are a reproach to the current papacy. Peter’s final apostrophes deplore hypocritical pastors, lament the falling off from holy beginnings, and appeal to God for redress (cf. *Purg.* 6.118–23 and note).

40–54. The bride of Christ ... blush and shoot sparks: Dante condemns the worldly entanglements of the Church subsequent to the Donation of Constantine (see 6.1–3, 20.55–60, and *Inf.* 19.115–17 and notes; also *Mon.* 2.11.8, 3.10). In five terzinas, four anaphoric negations voice Peter’s disapproval of the abuse of papal power with respect to the role of the Church in channeling God’s grace and helping mankind to attain salvation (lines 40, 46, 49, 52; see note to lines 22–24): blood is shed to acquire plunder; the Church fosters political factions; Peter’s keys appear as military insignia; and the pope’s effigy, as if coined into money, warrants the sale of privileges (see *Mon.* 3.15.7).

40–45. The bride of Christ ... after much weeping: The Church was bought with Christ’s blood (cf. 11.31–33, *Purg.* 23.73–75 and note), but current popes amass gold rather than treasure in heaven (see note to lines 7–9, and cf. 18.121–23, 23.133–39 and notes). For “happy life” [*viver lieto*] rhyming with “much weeping” [*molto fletō*], cf. 16.138–40.

41–44. by my blood ... Calixtus and Urban: Seven martyred popes who appear in the early Gelasian and Gregorian liturgical calendars are named; Pius and Cletus, or Anacletus, entered Florentine liturgical calendars after Romanizing reforms were instituted in 1310. Linus and Anacletus were martyred under the first-century emperors Vespasian and Domitian, respectively (see *Purg.* 22.82–87 and note); Sixtus and Pius died under Hadrian (second century), and Antoninus Pius, Calixtus, and Urbanus under Alexander Severus (third century). The Church, the bride of Christ, is fed on the blood of martyrs (see 25.113 and *Ep.* 11.3).

46–48. It was not our intention ... on the other side: The favoritism and partisanship of the papacy in its treatment of Christians parody the Last Judgment, rather than preparing souls to meet it; the scene evoked is Matt. 25.31–46; cf. *Purg.* 27.58 (with note), the numerically identical canto, where Matt. 25.34 is quoted (and see 19.110–11 and note).

49–51. nor that the keys ... against the baptized: Papal ambition means that the keys, symbolizing the power that Christ gave Peter when instituting the papacy (Matt. 16.18–19; see *Inf.* 19.101 and note, and *Inferno* Additional Note 7; *Purg.* 9.117–27 with note, and *Purgatorio* 9 *Inter cantica*) have become insignia on battle standards (cf. 6.31–33, 100–102 and notes), rather than opening a heaven of peace. Papal troops sent against Frederick II were *clavisignati*, “marked with the keys” (Grandgent); Dante also recalls the crusade against-

Manfred (*Purg.* 3.103–45 and notes) and that of Boniface against the Colonna (*Inf.* 27.85–93, 87–90 and notes).

52–54. nor that I should be ... blush and shoot sparks: The image of Peter, impressed by papal signet rings on wax or lead used to seal papal documents, was used to authenticate privileges, that is, exemptions from taxes and duties, acquired by purchase (a form of simony; for the abuse of the image of the Baptist in false coinage, see *Inf.* 30.73–74, and see *Par.* 18.133–36; 19.118–20, 140–41 and notes). Christ's use of Caesar's image on a coin to distinguish what was due to Caesar from what is due to God (Matt. 22.19–21) may be in the background; see 24.83–87 and notes, and *Ep.* 5.27.

55–60. In shepherds' clothing ... must you fall: For the commentators these words refer to the corruption of the clergy and the mendicant orders (see 11.118–32, 12.112–20, 22.88–93 and notes), but reiterated mention of a fall (cf. line 27) evokes Satan's plunge from his high rank, which Christians took to be the meaning of Is. 14.12 (see note to lines 25–27; this passage will also be drawn on for 30.145–48). The popes and prelates follow Satan, rather than Christ.

55–56. In shepherds' clothing ... in all the pastures: Peter speaks as if looking down and observing a spreading menace (anticipating lines 77–78). Terminology of this kind, from Jer. 23.1 ("woe to the pastors that destroy and tear the sheep of my pasture") and Matt. 7.15 ("Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"), was commonplace in anticlerical satire (see *RR* 11123–38). The pastoral imagery derives from Peter's duty to feed the sheep, the faithful (John 21.15–17, cited at *Mon.* 3.15.3 and *Ep.* 11.3); see lines 22–23 above.

57. O protection of God, why are you still inert? See *Purg.* 6.118–120 and 20. 94–96, and the common source, the text for Sexagesima Sunday: "Rise up! why do you sleep, Lord?" [*Exsurge! Quare obdormis, domine!*] (Ps. 43.23).

58. Cahorsans and Gascons prepare to drink our blood: Transparent allusions to John XXII, a native of Cahors (see 18.130–36 and *Inf.* 11.46–51 and notes), and Clement V (17.82–84, 30.142–44; *Inf.* 19.82–84 and notes), a native of Gascony who had been Archbishop of Bordeaux. Cahorsans and Gascons were notorious for their avarice.

61–66. But the high Providence ... what I do not hide: The second mention of Providence (see line 16), which will punish corrupt popes. Peter compares this redress to Scipio's defense of the future Roman Empire ("the glory of the world") when his victory against Carthage's Hannibal saved republican Rome (see *Conv.* 4.5.19, *Inf.* 31.115–17 and note; *Mon.* 2.9.18, and *Ep.* 11.25). Lines 64–67, involving the pilgrim in the rescue ordained by Providence, illustrate Dante's view that "excellent men were instruments whereby divine providence favored the growth of the Roman Empire" (*Conv.* 4.5.17; see Additional Notes 2 and 13). See also 17.94–99, 124–42 and notes, and Cicero, *SS* 2.3, 3.5.

64–66. and you, my son ... what I do not hide: The third charge to the pilgrim to retell what he has learned (see 17.127–32; *Purg.* 33.52–57 and note), found here because the stars of Gemini helped shape him as a poet (see 22.112–23 and note). That he will descend because of “mortal weight” means that his “phantastic spirit” (see *Purg.* 9.13–18 and note; Robert Klein 1981) will return to his body when he wakes from his dream-vision, as he is a living man. See Introduction, pp. 14–17.

67–69. As with frozen vapors ... touches the sun: Snow falls in winter, when the sun traverses the zodiacal sign of Capricorn (in Dante’s day, from Dec. 13 to Jan. 13). Note the use of inversion and tmesis (separation of the parts of a word) in “Horn ... of the goat” [*Capricorno* = goat horn].

70–72. so did I see ... sojourned there with us: The commentators note the echo of VN 23.25, the dream of Beatrice’s ascent to Heaven in an upward rain of manna. This too is an ascension, following that of Christ and Mary at 23.118–20, and concludes the pattern of descent and ascent begun with the triumphs in Canto 22.98–99 and 23.1–139 (see notes). “Triumphant vapor” refers to the blessed souls (see *Purg.* 11.6). See Additional Note 4 and Martinez 1997.

73–75. My sight was following ... deprived it of passing further: The ascent of the souls is the midpoint of the canto (lines 74–75), and the last time the pilgrim’s vision is limited by distance. The “intervening medium” is the material of the heavenly sphere of the fixed stars, which, though diaphanous (transparent; see *Conv.* 2.6.9, 3.9.12), is so vast that the pilgrim’s sight cannot attain to faraway objects; see 29.25–27 and note, 30.121–23.

76–96. Therefore my lady ... turned to her smiling eyes: As Peter and the host ascend, Beatrice invites the pilgrim to look down again and consider how far he has moved while orbiting with the stars of Gemini; she then draws back his gaze and propels him to the next sphere (see 22.128–29, 133–53 and notes). The two downward looks frame the pilgrim’s stay in the sphere of fixed stars.

76–87. Therefore my lady ... more than a sign ahead: Looking down, the pilgrim’s view takes in that portion of the “first clime” (a band extending across the habitable world between 16° and 23.5° north) that stretches from the Red Sea to the western verge of North Africa (see the map on p. 379). For the overstated extent in longitude of the Mediterranean, see 9.82–93 and note; see also *Inf.* 34.5 and note, and *Inferno* fig. 8. The pilgrim cannot see further east because the sun, rotating on the cusp of Taurus with Aries, is more than one sign away and west of the pilgrim’s position in Gemini, so that for the inhabitants of the eastern shore of the Mediterranean the sun has set. For Ptolemy’s formula that only one-fourth of the earth is habitable, see *Quaest.* 5, *Comm.* 2.5–6, and *Consol.* 2pr. 7.4.

79–81. Since the hour ... from its middle to its end: The pilgrim first looked down from above the meridian of Jerusalem, and now does so from above the meridian of Cádiz (Gades) in Spain: thus he has turned 90° with Gemini, meaning that he has completed one-

fourth of a full daily revolution of the *primum mobile* and has been in Gemini for six hours; see 26.139–42 and note.

82–84. so that I saw beyond Gades ... made herself a sweet burden: The pilgrim previously saw at a glance much of the small globe of Earth ("all of it from the mountains to the river mouths," 22.153). Now he sees the ocean to the southwest of Spain as the space Ulysses crossed, and the Mediterranean as the sea traversed by Jupiter when abducting Europa, the sister of Cadmus (see *Inf.* 25.97 and note) from the shore of Phoenicia (modern Lebanon).

84. where Europa made herself a sweet burden: See Statius, *Theb.* 1.115–17, where the abduction of Europa leads to the curse on Thebes: "When Cadmus, who had been ordered to seek ... the sweet burden [*blanda iuvenci / pondra*] of the Sidonian bull" (the commentators suggest Ovid, *Met.* 2.869: "Unwitting whom she mounts, she sits upon the bull's back," echoed by Statius, *Theb.* 11.210–12). Statius's etiological fable suggests how Dante's examples might be read: Europa's abduction to Crete gives rise to Minos, Pasiphae and the labyrinth, as well as to sorrowful Thebes (*Inf.* 26.52–54, 32.58; *Purg.* 22.55–63 and notes), while Ulysses' voyage exemplifies transgressive exploration (*Inferno*, Additional Note 11). The pilgrim's downward gaze is thus historically and poetically retrospective and moralizing (cf. "mad / track," lines 82–83) as much as it is geographic.

85. And the site of this little threshing floor: Dante repeats his word for the earth as a place of strife [*aiuola*] (see 22.151 and note), based on the etiologies of Thebes and Crete implicit in the mention of Europa, and on the Troy story in the case of Ulysses.

88–96. My enamored mind ... turned to her smiling eyes: The poet's mind here attends on Beatrice like a planet around the sun; compare Venus, now on one side of the sun, now the other, 8.1–12 and note (see also *Conv.* 2.2.1, 2.13.13–14).

97–148. And the power her glance ... after the flower: The pilgrim and Beatrice enter the last physical sphere, the source of time in the spheres beneath. Beatrice laments the effects of cupidity on earth, but promises amendment.

98. uprooted me from Leda's lovely nest: Raped by Jupiter in the form of a swan, Leda bore two eggs, one of which hatched out the twins Castor and Pollux. This final instance of Beatrice drawing the pilgrim upward with her eyes is abrupt, almost violent (cf. Marsyas at 1.19–21 and note; see Additional Note 1).

100–120. Its closest and highest parts ... manifest to you: Beatrice draws the pilgrim into the first moving sphere, or *primum mobile* ("first movable"). Invisible from earth but philosophically necessary (see note to lines 142–48), this sphere surrounds all the other spheres and the earth, and is contained by the Empyrean, or first heaven. The *primum mobile* transmits with its rapid movement God's influence undifferentiated, which the spheres of the fixed stars and the planets analyze, complicate with their specific influences, and pass on to the spheres below, finally to the earth (*Par.* 2.127–48, 13.61–66 with notes, and Additional Notes

10–13; also *Conv.* 2.3.6–11, 2.14.14–18). Time and change in the natural world are effects of the circling of the *primum mobile*, and in this sense the first sphere is the root or origin of time on earth (see lines 118–20, and Additional Note 3).

100–102. Its closest and its highest parts ... chose to be my place: Dante juxtaposes the specificity of "Leda's nest" in the starry sphere with the impossibility of marking a distinct place in the *primum mobile*, which lacks stars and planets.

106–11. The nature of the world ... begins as from its goal: Because all of Nature depends on the motion that the *primum mobile*, centered on the immobile earth, imparts to the spheres below it (*Conv.* 2.14.14–16; see 2.112–17, 28.70–78 and notes), Nature may be said to begin from the first movable sphere. The goal of Nature (in Dante's metaphor) is also this heaven; see *Conv.* 2.3.8–9, where Dante explains that the *primum mobile* is the fastest sphere, "because of the fervent desire that is in every part of that ninth heaven ... to be joined with every part of that most divine quiet heaven [the Empyrean]." Dante's abstractions (and one simile) are as comprehensive as the principles they describe.

109–14. and this heaven ... he who girds it understands: A uniform sphere that has neither orientation nor parts, the *primum mobile* is contained only by the Empyrean, the sphere of light and love whose "place" is the Mind of God (see 1.4, 22.61–67, 30.38–40 and notes), and only God, who encloses the Empyrean and the whole cosmos, can "understand" (but Dante's word also means "intends, foreordains"), that is to say, encompass with his mind, how he does so. The containment of the *primum mobile* is thus not spatial, but causal and formative; space begins with the *primum mobile* itself.

115–20. Its motion is not marked ... can now be manifest to you: As ten is measured or factored by two, one-fifth of ten, and five, one-half of ten, all the motions of the eight inferior revolving heavens are comprehended and measured by the single motion of the *primum mobile* (cf. 15.55–57). Jumping from an arithmetical to a horticultural metaphor, the first movable sphere is described as a spherical "pot" cradling the roots of the tree of time, whose boughs and leaves—phenomena that come to be in time (see note to lines, 127–35, and cf. 13.61–66 and notes)—spread through the spheres below (examples in lines 82–84). The roots are concealed (the *primum mobile* is invisible from earth) and the plant, time, grows downward from above: it is inverted (cf. 28.46–87, 55–57 and notes).

121–148. O cupidity ... after the flower: The phenomena Beatrice cites in her lament to illustrate the dominance of greed—flooding, rainfall, flowering, growth, fruiting, maturation, darkening, spoilage—are natural processes influenced by the heavens, as are the actions of the spheres in Beatrice's prophecies of rectification (see *Inf.* 24.1–21 and note, and Additional Note 10). Beatrice's attack on cupidity may reflect the fact that in the *Convivio* Dante associates the *primum mobile* with moral philosophy (2.14.14–18).

121–26. O cupidity ... healthy plums into blasted ones: Beatrice's apostrophe echoes previous cries (e.g. *Purg.* 20.10–14 and note); see *Consol.* 1.m.2.1–2: "Ah, in how steep

depths submerged the mind becomes dull ..." See *Mon.* 1.11.11–14 and 3.16.11 ("waves of seductive greed"), and see Additional Note 2.

In the next terzina, waters of cupidity rain down on the ripening plums of human action, which, though beginning as blossoms of good will on the tree, are ruined through being swollen and softened by moisture. Lines 121–23 anticipate 30.82–90, but with opposite meaning.

127–35. Faith and innocence ... desires to see her buried: Flower and fruit allegories give place to three instances of cupidity corrupting children: boys lose their innocence before they grow beards; infants fast, but disregard dietary restrictions when able to enunciate; an infant is obedient, but wishes its mother dead when capable of speech. The examples range over human life from infancy to adolescence, for aging is an effect of the heavens as instruments of time (cf. Dante's account of the soul's journey from birth to death in *Convivio* 4; see Nardi 1966). Also implicitly referred to is the classical narrative of human decline, Ovid's four ages (gold, silver, bronze, and iron; see *Inf.* 14.94–120 and Additional Note 3; *Purg.* 14.37–39, 40–42 and note).

129. both flee before the cheeks are covered: In Ovid's account, the virtues flee as the iron age sets in: "In that age, all crimes of baser vein straight broke out, and modesty, truth, and loyalty fled ..." (*Met.* 1.128–30); last to flee is Justice (*Met.* 1.149–50); and cf. *Purg.* 23.106–11 and note; see also 16.59 and note).

130–33. This one, while still a babbler ... full command of speech: The examples focus on the cheeks (line 129) and tongue (line 131), where appetite is indulged and speech produced (cf. *Purg.* 24.37–39). The sin of Eve required the use of cheek and palate (*Par.* 13.38–39); see note to lines 137–38.

134–35. his mother ... desires to see her buried. Another topic from Ovid's narrative of the iron age, "The son inquires prematurely into his father's years" (*Met.* 1.148). Compare Edmund in *King Lear* 1.2: "Sons, at perfect age, and fathers declined, the father should be as a ward to the son."

136–38. Thus their white skin ... brings morning and leaves evening: Beatrice characterizes the human race as having a white skin that darkens, as most commentators take it, when faced with the sorceress Circe, "daughter of the sun" [*filia solis*] (*Met.* 14.33); and see *Consol.* 4.m.3.3–4 ("where the lovely goddess dwells / born from the seed of the Sun [*solis edita semine*]). See next note.

137–38. the first sight ... brings morning and leaves evening: Some commentators take the "lovely daughter" (line 137) to be not Circe, but the "black but comely" bride of Canticle of Canticles 1.4, here standing for the human soul (Pertile 1991), or as an allegory of the corrupt Church (Chiavacci Leonardi). Although the Siren, the stuttering "ancient witch" of the pilgrim's second dream, remains unnamed, she is the principle represented by Circe (see *Purg.* 19.7–33 and note). She made Ulysses deviate from his path, just as the human family

deviates at lines 145–47, after which his misdirected voyage began with departure from her (*Inf.* 26.90–93; and cf. *Purg.* 14.37–54, esp. 40–42 and note). "Stuttering" [*balba*] and "babbling" [*balbuziendo*], found nowhere elsewhere in the poem, also link the two episodes, as do the phrases "when his tongue is loosed" [*lingua sciolta*] at line 131, and "her tongue was loosed" [*sciolta / la lingua*] at *Purg.* 19.12–13.

139–48. You, so that it will not amaze ... come after the flower: Lack of good government has led humans astray (cf. *Purg.* 16.85–129 and note; also *Ep.* 11.26), but the heavens will rectify matters. Metaphors of the ship of state and the sequence of flowering and fruiting now recur, the former implicit in the idea of guidance (line 140) and the latter already used *in malo* in Beatrice's tirade against cupidity (lines 124–26, "blooms ... plums").

139–41. You, so that it will not amaze ... goes astray: Neither emperor nor pope rules in Rome, as both offices had been vacant since the removal of the papacy to France in 1305 and the death of Henry VII in 1313 (see *Ep.* 11.5, 12, 21, and *Par.* 19.115–17, 30.133–38 and notes). For "going astray," cf. 9.131 (the florin as deviator of souls), 12.45 ("the straying people" [*popol disviato*]), and esp. *Purg.* 16.82 and *Par.* 18.126 ("all astray [sviat] behind the evil example"). See *Purg.* 29.118, of Phaethon, fulminated for his deviation, and Additional Note 7. For metaphors of guidance in political contexts, see *Purg.* 6.88–99, 14.143–51, and 19.61–63, and *Ep.* 6.3; and see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 4.

142–48. But before January ... come after the flower: Beatrice dates the future correction in terms of the proper movement of the starry sphere (the precession of the equinoxes), which, in the reckoning of Alpetragius, relayed by Albertus Magnus, completes a cycle every thirty-six thousand years (the true figure is 26,500 years, and, as we now know, represents the period of the "wobble" of the earth's axis). Dante had calculated the age of Beatrice when he first saw her (*VN* 2.2) in terms of this same movement; it is invoked here because the *primum mobile* carries the primary or diurnal motion for the eight spheres below it, while the proper motion of the starry sphere is in the opposite direction (see *Conv.* 2.14.11–13). In *Conv.* 2.3.3, 5–6, Dante explains that because of this proper motion, which meant that the sphere of fixed stars had two motions rather than one, Ptolemy corrected Aristotle's system by postulating an invisible ninth sphere, the *primum mobile*, with only a single motion (see 26.37–39 and note).

142. But before January altogether unwinters itself: Because the solar, or tropical, year (the span of time required for the sun to return to the [moving] equinoctial point on the ecliptic) and the sidereal year (the period for the sphere of the fixed stars to return to that same point) differ in length by an amount equivalent to one day every 120 years, the location of the sun at the equinoxes (when day and night are the same length) and that of the stellar sphere, with its constellations, differed by one-hundredth of a degree; as a result, the true date of the equinoxes had slipped forward in the calendar, so that by Dante's day the true spring equinox fell on March 13, not on the conventional date of March 21. Without a correction, the date of the spring equinox would continue to slip forward until, seven thousand years after Dante's day, it would fall in December, leaving January "unwintered." See Kay 2003b.

144. these supernal spheres will radiate in such a way: In medieval astrology, cataclysmic events were thought to result from conjunctions of the superior planets (especially Jupiter and Saturn); such an event was expected in 1325 in the constellation of Gemini (Woody 1977; see also Kay 2003b). The rectification here expected is like the fall of Lucifer (line 27) and the Crucifixion (lines 31–36) in that all three events perturb the cosmos (see *Inf.* 12.41–43 and note; for Lucifer, whose fall “disturbed what bears your foods” (*Par.* 29.51), that is, the earth, see *Inf.* 34.106–26 and note).

145–47. that the tempest ... will sail aright: The parallel with a deviant Ulysses continues, as he turned his ship and crew to a disastrous path (see *Inf.* 26.124 and note) and was finally drowned (cf. *sommersi* in line 121). *Consol.* 4.m.3.2 refers to Ulysses’s “ships wandering on the deep” [*vagas pelago rates*].

147. the fleet will sail aright: Because the Roman fleet [Lat. *classis*] wintered in the harbor of Ravenna, the seat of the Empire in Italy during the early Middle Ages, the port was named after it. That Beatrice intends an allusion to a restored Roman empire (cf. *Purg.* 33.43 and note) is suggested by the parallel with *Conv.* 4.pr.5.8, celebrating the universal peace imposed by Augustus, when “the ship of human society was speeding on an even course directly toward its proper port” (cf. 2.1–18 and notes; also *Conv.* 2.1.1, 4.28.3). See Additional Note 2.



CANTO 28

*Primum mobile, continued: vision of point and circles—love
and motion—the nine orders of angels*

- 1 After the truth about the present life of
wretched mortals had been opened to me by
her who imparadises my mind,
- 4 as in a mirror the flame of a torch is seen
by one who is lit by it from behind, before he
sees it directly or in his thought,
- 7 and he turns to see whether the glass is
telling him the truth, and he sees that it
agrees with it as a note with its meter:
- 10 so my memory recalls that I did, looking
into the beautiful eyes where Love made the
cord to capture me.
- 13 And when I turned back, and my own
eyes were struck by what appears in that
turning, whenever one eyes its circuit carefully,
- 16 I saw a point that was radiating light so
sharp that any eye into which it shines must
close at its piercing intensity,
- 19 and whatever star from here seems
smallest, would seem a moon if placed near

it, as in the sky star is placed next to star.

22 Perhaps as closely as the halo seems to
gird the light that projects it, when the vapor
that carries it is thickest,

25 so around the point a circle of fire was
turning so swiftly that it would have surpassed
the motion that girds the world most swiftly,

28 and this was girt about by another, and that
by a third, and the third then by the fourth, by
the fifth the fourth, and then by the sixth the fifth.

31 Beyond there followed the seventh, already
so expanded in circumference, that the messenger
of Juno would be too narrow to contain it.

34 Thus the eighth and the ninth, and each
moved more slowly as it was numerically
more distant from the one,

37 and that had the purest flame from which
the pure spark was least distant, I believe
because it more fully entruths itself therein.

40 My lady, who saw me entirely suspended
in attention, said: "From that point hang the
heavens and all Nature.

43 Inspect the circle that is most conjoined
with it, and know that its motion is so swift
because of the fiery love that pierces it."

46 And I to her: If the world were arranged
with the order that I see in those wheels,
what is set before me would have satisfied me,

49 but in the visible world we see that the
vaults are more divine the further they are

from the center.

- 52 Therefore, if my desire is to reach its goal
 in this marvelous angelic temple that has
 only love and light as boundaries,
- 55 I must also hear why the pattern and the
 copy do not go by the same measure, for by
 myself in vain I contemplate that."
- 58 "If your fingers are not sufficient for such a
 knot, it is no marvel, so tight has it become
 with not being tried!"
- 61 So my lady; then she said: "Take what I
 shall say, if you wish to be satisfied, and
 make yourself subtle around it.
- 64 The corporeal circles are large or
 constricted according as more and less
 power extends through all their parts.
- 67 Greater goodness wishes to work greater
 happiness; greater happiness is contained
 by a larger body, if all its parts are equally perfected.
- 70 Therefore the circle that whirls the rest of
 the universe along with it, corresponds to the
 circle that loves most and knows most;
- 73 thus if you circumscribe your measure
 with the power, not the apparent size, of the
 circling substances that here appear to you.
- 76 you will see a marvelous correspondence
 of greater to more and of smaller to less,
 between each heaven and its Intelligence."
- 79 As the hemisphere of air is left brilliant
 and clear when Boreas blows from his milder cheek,

- 82 so that he purges and dissolves the dregs
 that previously clouded it, and the sky
 laughs to us with its beauties from its every parish:
- 85 so I became when my lady provided me
 with her clear reply and like a star in the sky
 the truth became visible.
- 88 And when her words ceased, not
 otherwise does boiling iron shoot sparks
 than the circles sparkled.
- 91 Each spark followed its fiery circle, and
 they were so many that their number enthousands
 itself beyond the doubling of the chessboard.
- 94 I heard them hosanna from choir to choir
 the fixed point that holds them, and will
 always hold them, to the various *ubi* where
 they have ever been.
- 97 And she, seeing the doubting thoughts in
 my mind, said: "The first circles have shown
 you Seraphim and Cherubim;
- 100 so rapidly do they follow their bonds, in order to
 resemble the point as much as they can, and they
 can to the degree that they are raised up to see.
- 103 Those other loves circling around them
 are called Thrones of the divine appearance,
 because they close the first triad,
- 106 and you are to know that they all feel delight
 according to the depth their sight reaches in the
 Truth where every intellect finds peace.
- 109 From this you can see how beatitude is
 founded on the act of sight, not on that of

- love, which follows after,
- 112 and the measure of sight is merit, born of
 grace and good will: thus from degree to
 degree we proceed.
- 115 The next triad that sprouts thus in this
 sempiternal springtime that no nocturnal
 Aries despairs
- 118 perpetually sings the spring song of
 '*Hosanna*' with three melodies, sounding in
 three orders of gladness that make it triple.
- 121 In this hierarchy are the next divinities:
 first Dominations and then Virtues; the third
 order is of Powers.
- 124 Then in the two penultimate tripudia,
 Principalities and Archangels whirl; the last
 is all of Angelic play.
- 127 These orders all gaze upward and bind
 what is below, so that all are drawn, and all
 draw, toward God.
- 130 And Dionysius put himself to contemplating
 these orders with so much desire that he named and
 distinguished them as I do,
- 133 but Gregory later departed from him, and
 therefore, as soon as he opened his eyes
 here in this heaven, he laughed at himself.
- 136 And if so secret a truth was set forth on earth
 by a mortal, I would not have you marvel, for one
 who saw it up here revealed it to him,
- 139 with much else of the truth about these circlings."



CANTO 28

Poscia che 'ncontro a la vita presente 1
d'i miseri mortali aperse 'l vero
quella che 'mparadisa la mia mente,
come in lo specchio fiamma di doppiero 4
vede colui che se n'alluma retro
prima che l'abbia in vista o in pensiero,
e sé rivolge per veder se 'l vetro 7
li dice il vero, e vede ch' el s'accorda
con esso come nota con suo metro:
così la mia memoria si ricorda 10
ch'io feci, riguardando ne' belli occhi
onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda.
E com' io mi rivolsi e furon tocchi 13
li miei da ciò che pare in quel volume
quandunque nel suo giro ben s'adocchi,
un punto vidi che raggiava lume 16
acuto sì che 'l viso ch' elli affoca
chiuder conviens per lo forte acume,
e quale stella par quinci più poca 19
parrebbe luna, locata con esso
come stella con stella si collòca.
Forse cotanto quanto pare appresso 22
alo cigner la luce che 'l dipigne,
quando 'l vapor che 'l porta più è spesso,
distante intorno al punto un cerchio d'igne 25
si girava sì ratto ch' avria vinto
quel moto che più tosto il mondo cigne,

e questo era d'un altro circumcinto,
e quel dal terzo, e'l terzo poi dal quarto,
dal quinto il quarto, e poi dal sesto il quinto.

28

Sopra seguiva il settimo, sì parto
già di larghezza che 'l messo di luno
intero a contenerlo sarebbe arto.

31

Così l'ottavo e 'l nono, e ciascheduno
più tardo si movea secondo ch'era
in numero distante più da l'uno,

34

e quello avea la fiamma più sincera
cui men distava la favilla pura,
credo però che più di lei s'invera.

37

La donna mia, che mi vedëa in cura
forte sospeso, disse: "Da quel punto
depende il Cielo e tutta la Natura.

40

Mira quel cerchio che più li è congiunto,
e sappi che 'l suo muovere è sì tosto
per l'affocato amore ond' ellì è punto."

43

E io a lei: "Se 'l mondo fosse posto
con l'ordine ch' io veggio in quelle rote,
sazio m'avrebbe ciò che m'è proposto,
ma nel mondo sensibile si puote
veder le volte tanto più divine
quant' elle son dal centro più remote.

46

Onde, se 'l mio disir dee aver fine
in questo miro e angelico tempio
che solo amore e luce ha per confine,
udir convienmi ancor come l'esemplo
e l'esemplare non vanno d'un modo,
ché io per me indarno a ciò contemplo."

49

52

55

"Se li tuoi diti non sono a tal nodo
sufficienti, non è maraviglia,
tanto per non tentare è fatto sodo!"

58

Così la donna mia; poi disse: "Piglia
quel ch' io ti dicerò, se vuo' saziarti,
e intorno da esso t'assottiglia.

61

Li cerchi corporai sono ampi e arti
secondo il più e 'l men de la virtute
che si distende per tutte lor parti.

64

Maggior bontà vuol far maggior salute,
maggior salute maggior corpo cape,
s'elli ha le parti igualmente compiute.

67

Dunque costui che tutto quanto rape
l'altro universo seco, corrisponde
al cerchio che più ama e che più sape;

70

per che, se tu a la virtù circonde
la tua misura, non a la parvenza
delle sustanze che t'appaion tonde,

73

tu vederai mirabil consequenza
di maggio a più e di minore a meno,
in ciascun cielo, a sua Intelligenza."

76

Come rimane splendido e sereno
l'emisperio de l'aere, quando soffia
Borea da quella guancia ond' è più leno

79

per che si purga e risolve la roffia
che pria turbava, sì che 'l ciel ne ride
con le bellezze d'ogne sua paroffia:

82

così fec' io poi che mi provide
la donna mia del suo risponder chiaro
e come stella in cielo il ver si vide.

85

E poi che le parole sue restaro,
non altrimenti ferro disfavilla
che bolle, come i cerchi sfavillaro.

88

L'incendio suo seguiva ogne scintilla,
ed eran tante che 'l numero loro
più che 'l doppiar de li scacchi s'innilla.

91

Io sentiva osannar di coro in coro
al punto fisso che li tiene a li *ubi*,
e terrà sempre, ne' quai sempre fuoro.

94

E quella, che vedea i pensieri dubi
ne la mia mente, disse: "I cerchi primi
t'hanno mostrato Serafi e Cherubi;
così veloci seguono i suoi vimi
per somigliarsi al punto quanto ponno,
e posson quanto a veder son soblimi.

97

Quelli altri amori che 'ntorno li vonno
si chiaman Troni del divino aspetto
per ché 'l primo ternaro terminonno,
e dei saper che tutti hanno diletto
quanto la sua veduta si profonda
nel Vero in che si queta ogne intelletto.

100

Quinci si può veder come si fonda
l'esser beato ne l'atto che vede,
non in quel ch'ama, che poscia seconda,
e del vedere è misura mercede,
che grazia partorisce e buona voglia:
così di grado in grado si procede.

103

L'altro ternaro che così germoglia
in questa primavera sempiterna
che notturno Arïete non dispoglia,

106

109

112

115

perpetualmente 'Osanna' sberna
con tre melode che suonano in tree
ordini di letizia onde s'interna.

118

In essa gerarchia son l'altre dee:
prima Dominazioni e poi Virtudi;
l'ordine terzo di Podestadi èe.

121

Poscia ne' due penultimi tripudi
Principati e Arcangeli si girano,
l'ultimo è tutto d'Angelici ludi.

124

Questi ordini di sù tutti s'ammirano,
e di giù vincon sì che verso Dio
tutti tirati sono e tutti tirano.

127

E D'ionisio con tanto disio
a contemplar questi ordini si mise
che li nomò e distinse com' io,
ma Gregorio di lui poi si divise,
onde, sì tosto come li occhi aperse
in questo ciel, di sé medesmo rise.

130

E se tanto secreto ver proferse
mortale in terrra, non voglio che t'ammiri,
ché chi 'l vide qua sù gliel discoperse,
con altro assai del ver di questi giri."

133

136

139

NOTES

1–139. After the truth ... truth about these circlings: "Truth" is our translation of Dante's *ver(o)* [true], used as a substantive. Contini's classic discussion of this canto (1968) stresses its articulation around the appearances of this term, several times alliterated with *vetro* [glass] and/or forms of the verb *vedere* [to see], in lines 2, 8, 39, 87, 108, and 139. As Contini points out, nearing the end of the *Paradiso*, Dante intensifies his use of coinages (as in lines 3, 39, and 93), metaphors (lines 9, 56, 63), Latinisms (lines 25, 95, 100, 124), and rare words and forms (lines 27, 28, 68, 70, 81, 82, 84, 103, 105, 117, 118, 119, 126).

1–12. After the truth ... cord to capture me: With a brief reference to 27.121–48 (Beatrice's denunciation of the false values and lack of leadership plaguing life on earth), the canto turns to the vision that will dominate this canto and the next. That it is seen first reflected in Beatrice's eyes (lines 4–12) is an important indication of her continuing role as mediator of the pilgrim's vision. The exact status we are meant to attribute to this symbolic representation, accommodated to the pilgrim's mode of understanding (like the rest of what he sees in the *Paradiso*), is never explicitly stated, but to suppose that the angels are visible to the pilgrim's physical eye would of course be absurd (cf. 4.28–63, with notes).

4–10. as in a mirror ... recalls that I did: Beatrice's eyes are the mirror, and God and the angels are anticipated by the torches in the comparison. The motif of being lit from behind, and having to turn to face the light, is reminiscent of the description of Virgil's relation to his own vision: the light that showed him the divine child was behind his back, but he did not turn to see it directly (*Purg.* 22.64–72, with notes, and *Purgatorio* Additional Note 14). Note the emphasis on the complex relation between reflected versus direct vision and thought in lines 5–7. In the parallel situation in 3.16–24, *pace* Beatrice (3.29–30) and Contini, the souls in the moon are mirrored, although not from behind the pilgrim: they are not "really" in the moon, merely "shown" there—"qui si mostraro" (4.37). As Contini 1968 points out, saint Paul's "We see now through a glass [mirror] in a dark manner [*per speculum in aenigmate*], but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13.12) is operative in all these passages.

4. torch: Dante's term, *doppiero* [torch formed of twisted candles, usually two or four], is obviously related to the theme of *doubling* (of images here, of the chessboard in lines 92–93).

7–10. and he turns to see ... recalls that I did: The "truth" about the earthly situation described is implicitly carried over into the narrative situation (i.e., like the one lit by the torch, the pilgrim "turns to see whether the [mirror] is telling the *truth*," as if what he will see when he looks behind himself will be empirical "truth"; the sleight of hand is very skillful); the point is, of course, that the metaphysical or intellectual truth symbolized in the vision is a *higher truth* than the empirical, and the vision is a kind of projection from Beatrice's eyes (mirrors).

8–9. and he sees that it agrees with it: "He sees that it [the mirror] agrees with it [the truth]." Dante's pronouns ("el" and "esso") are both masculine singular: the reader of the Italian, too, must disentangle the references.

9. as a note with its meter: A performed note will (or should) agree with its metrical notation: the mirror is playing the same tune as "reality" (cf. lines 55–56, with note).

11–12. looking into the beautiful ... cord to capture me: Although the viewer in the simile has already turned away from the mirror, these lines take us back to the (implied) beginning situation, before the pilgrim has looked away from Beatrice. (For the *dolce stil novo* mode of expression, cf. *Purg.* 32.1–16 and the "net" in line 6 there).

13–139. And when I turned back ... truth about these circlings: The presentation of the vision (lines 16–36), followed by two levels of commentary by Beatrice: (1) the general principle of its structure, correlated with that of the visible universe (lines 40–87), followed by the fiery acknowledgement of their joy by the angels (lines 88–96); and (2) the identification of the nine orders of angels (lines 97–139).

13–15. And when I turned ... its circuit carefully: The eyes of the mind are meant here, for the *primum mobile* ("that turning"), like the other heavenly spheres, is invisible. The reference to careless thought alludes to the fact that Aristotle, and Cicero after him, had thought the sphere of fixed stars (the eighth) to be the outermost; Ptolemy added a ninth, on the grounds that since the eighth sphere had a complex motion, an outer one with but a single motion was required, according to the Neoplatonic principle that the simple is always prior to the complex (see the notes on *Conv.* 2.3.5 by Vasoli and De Robertis; in *Conv.* 2.3.6 Dante outlines in more literal terms the procedure of observation and inference that corrected Aristotle's misconception). Dante's *volume* [Lat. from *volvere*, to turn: a thing turned] is a conspicuous Latinism as well as a pun.

16–39. I saw a point ... entruths itself therein: The vision represents the nine orders of angels, the heavenly "Intelligences" that govern the spheres in their relation to the point, which of course represents God; in particularly condensed form, it presupposes and recapitulates the more detailed explanation given by Beatrice in 2.112–48 (see also 29.13–54, with notes). The elaborate care with which the nine circles are introduced one by one is itself an imitation in temporal sequence of the instantaneous but hierarchical radiation of creation (again, see the note to 2.106–48). That the enumeration ends by *returning* to the first circle and its relation to the central point is a little representation of the cosmic/narrative principle of the *epistrophè* [turning back] of all things to God, the basic structural feature of the *Comedy* itself.

16–21. I saw a point ... placed next to star: Dante's astronomical analogy here is erroneous (cf. the note to 2.94–105), for the apparent size of a star is a function of its relative magnitude (the brighter the star appears, the larger it seems to the human eye—as well as to photosensitive film; the unstated standard of comparison is the light of the sun, of course—see

10.40–51, with notes). But his meaning is clear: the point represents infinite *intensity* as opposed to relative *extension* or *distension* (for Augustine's development of these concepts, see especially *Confessions* 11.29–31).

16. point: Dante's term *punto* appears repeatedly in this canto and the next, and frequently in the *Comedy* as a whole, always laden with significance (see especially *Inf.* 1.11, 5.132; *Par.* 33.94); cf. the note on lines 43–45.

22–27. Perhaps as closely ... world most swiftly: The "motion that girds the world most swiftly" (cf. lines 71–72) is itself the *primum mobile*; that the first circle exceeds its rapidity is appropriate to the angelic order that must govern it, and it is directly related to the utter simplicity of this first communication of God's creative power, as yet undifferentiated, though containing all things virtually (see 2.112–17, with notes).

22–24. Perhaps as closely ... is thickest: Whether Dante is referring here to the halo of the sun or the moon (cf. 10.67–69, where the twelve theologians surrounding the travelers are compared to the moon's halo) is unclear; we lean toward the latter because of its greater visibility and closeness to its center, as well as the earlier passage. In either case, it is striking that Dante introduces the idea of atmospheric moisture here, an impurity that obscures and refracts, and the momentary impression of dimming will be corrected in lines 25, 37–39, and especially in lines 79–87.

25–26. a circle of fire ... so swiftly: The brightness and swiftness of the angelic circles represent both the intensity of their vision of God and their love and joy (as in 24.13–21, most recently, and as Beatrice will later explain).

28–36. and this was girt ... more distant from the one: The eight circles following the first receive more summary treatment as their number and "spatial" distension diminishes their intensity. On the ambiguity of the term "the one," see the note to lines 34–36 below.

28–30. and this was girt ... the sixth the fifth: The rhetorical figure so conspicuous in these lines was known in Greek as *klímax* [ladder], in Latin as *gradatio* [gradation, i.e., stepwise structure] (*Ad Herennium* 4.25; for a well-known example in English, see Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 1.1–4), repeating the previous step each time. This again is a condensed rhetorical enactment of one of the fundamental governing principles of the *Comedy* (see our introduction to *Inferno*, pp. 18–20). The abandonment of *gradatio* in lines 31–36 helps convey the sense of lessening intensity.

31–33. already so expanded ... to contain it: The "messenger of Juno" is of course the rainbow, whose maximum extension (a function of the angle of incidence of the sun's rays in relation to the eye) is about 45% of the field of vision; it always seems semicircular, seen from the ground, so Dante's complete circles fill the "sky" of his vision (he did not, of course, know that a rainbow seen from an airplane can in fact describe a complete circle).

34–36. Thus the eighth ... distant from the one: The larger the ordinal number of the circle ("the more distant from [the] one"), the slower the circle moved. Note what one may call the number metaphysics here, inherent in the ambiguity of "the one": the central point is "the One" in strict Neoplatonic terms; circle number one participates in the transcendent principle of oneness more fully than those surrounding it (see Additional Note 10).

37–39. and that had ... itself therein: Not only is the motion of the inner circles swifter as they are closer to the center, so are the purity and brightness of their "flames." The power as well as the beatitude of the angels results directly from the depth of their intellectual vision of God (cf. Additional Note 3), and the preeminence of the first circle (see previous note) is expressed also in the fact that, alone of all the circles it receives a total of three complete terzine (lines 22–27 and 37–39). "Inverarsi" [to entruth oneself, to enter or penetrate the truth] is another daring coinage of Dante's with *in-*; the first was *indiarsi* [to engod oneself] in 4.28 (cf. line 93, with note). The pilgrim's final vision will be a gradual penetration into the light (33.82–120). One notes that there is no reference to the direction(s) of revolution of the angels; see below note to lines 127–29.

40–96. My lady, who saw me ... they have ever been: The first stage of Beatrice's commentary on the pilgrim's vision, followed by the reaction of the angels.

40–42. My lady, who saw me ... Heaven and all Nature: Beatrice's comment makes clear the significance of the central point; as the commentators observe, it adapts one of Aristotle's famous trenchant statements: "A tali principio tum caelum tum natura dependet ... hoc est Deus" [From that principle (or: beginning) depend both the heavens and nature ... it is God] (*Metaphysics* 12.7). Dante's vivid change from "principle" to "point" and his addition of "all" are recognized as vital in producing this formulation, even more powerfully condensed than Aristotle's. (For the heavenly bodies as constituting "Nature," see 8.106–14, with notes.)

43–45. Inspect the circle ... love that pierces it: The pilgrim would seem to have already closely inspected the first circle (lines 37–39). Part of the function of these lines, as of lines 41–42, is once more to act out rhetorically the special status of both the point and the first circle. Note the *annominatio* with *punto* (here, "pierced").

46–87. If the world ... the truth became visible: The pilgrim's puzzlement and Beatrice's explanation serve to make explicit and stress the importance of the turning inside-out constituted by the vision.

46–57. If the world ... contemplate that: "These wheels" are the whirling fiery circles; Dante has frequently used the term of the heavenly spheres themselves. The statement of the pilgrim's puzzlement proceeds by defining the apparent difference between the visible world and this vision: "[T]he vaults [the heavenly spheres] are more divine the further they are from the center" [i.e., the earth].

52–54. Therefore, if my desire ... light as boundaries: The pilgrim notes without

help the peculiarity of the *primum mobile*, his and Beatrice's present "location": it is bounded only by the Empyrean ("love and light"). This awareness, along with his identification of the circles as the angels, makes his incomprehension all the more striking (see next note). The "desire" that is his "goal" [*fine*] is clear intellectual understanding (which is of course itself symbolized in the vision). For the universe as a temple, cf. the passage quoted in the note to 22.133–53.

55–57. I must also hear ... I contemplate that: Note the parallel with lines 4–9: a parallel analogy with music; in lines 8–9 a note agrees with its "meter" [*metro*]; here the copy does not go by the same "measure" or "tune" [*modo*] as the pattern: the analogy is a means to emphasize the *inversion*. The casting of the pilgrim as naively uncomprehending here ("in vain I contemplate that") is ponderous, however.

58–78. If your fingers ... heaven and its Intelligence: Beatrice acknowledges the inherent difficulty of the question ("such a knot"), which she says has been neglected (line 60). Then she identifies extension as the principle expressing celestial power in the visible world (lines 61–69), and identifies the mover of the *primum mobile* (that "whirls the rest of the universe," lines 71–72; cf. line 27) with the smallest circle ("that loves most and knows most," line 72), and instructs the pilgrim how to discover the "marvelous correspondence" between the two structures (lines 73–78).

61–63. Take what I shall ... yourself subtle around it: Beatrice's explanation of the relation between the visible and the spiritual patterns is something the poet's mind must revolve around to achieve sufficiently subtle understanding (cf. Additional Note 13); in so doing he will be imitating the angelic Intelligences revolving around the point. (Axiomatic for Dante is that the deepest knowledge of truth is a form of circularity.)

64–69. The corporeal circles ... are equally perfected: *Extension* of power in the corporeal world: greater power produces "larger [circles, spheres]," lesser power "constricted [ones]" (lines 64–66). The principle is restated in lines 67–69, this time in relation to spiritual states and motives: greater goodness extends happiness spatially.

66, 69. extends through all their parts, if all its parts are equally perfected: Both lines referring to the heavenly bodies are stated axiomatically as facts (cf. 8.114 and 13.66–78). The *primum mobile* is entirely undifferentiated (27.97–102). Dante's *distende* [extends, spreads out] is closely related to his use of the same term in Statius's embryology (*Purg.* 25.58) of the development of the fetus.

70–78. Therefore the circle ... heaven and its Intelligence: The first three lines establish the correspondence of the *primum mobile* and the first angelic circle ("that most loves," etc.; see lines 37–39) and leave the pilgrim to carry out the rest. Note the continuing emphasis on the preeminence of the first circle (and cf. lines 98–114, with notes).

73–78. thus if you circumscribe ... heaven and its Intelligence: If you consider

("circumscribe your measure" with) the power (not the "apparent size") of the angelic circles with the extension of the corporeal ones, the correspondence will be between greater [power] in the angels and larger [size] in the heavens, and between smaller [power] and lesser [extent]. Each heaven, of course, has one [order of] Intelligence[s] as its governor.

79–87. As the hemisphere ... truth became visible: The effect on the pilgrim of Beatrice's explanation: expressed in terms of the clearing of the sky and the brilliant appearance of the stars (all the imagery of the canto has been drawn from meteorology and astronomy). Dante refers to the traditional representations, in maps and elsewhere, of the winds as heads blowing from puffed cheeks. Boreas is the wind from the north, milder when blowing from the northwest (the milder side—cheek—as opposed to due north or northeast); the northwest wind, then, purges and dissolves the impurities and haze that obscure the view of the stars. The "hemisphere of air" refers to all the atmosphere visible above the horizon (the hemisphere below the horizon lies over uninhabited territories). This is the final sweeping away of the haze introduced in lines 22–24.

85–87. so I became ... truth became visible: Note the parallel with the comparison of the divine point with a star (lines 16–21).

88–96. And when her words ... where they have ever been: The angelic circles, imagined to have overheard Beatrice's words (as in lines 94–95, the pilgrim can hear their singing), shoot sparks in a fireworks display of joyous approval.

91. Each spark followed its fiery circle: That is, each spark (an angel) described visibly and more brightly an arc of the circle of its angelic order.

92–93. they were so many ... doubling of the chessboard: Medieval conceptions of the number of the angels rest on biblical passages: "A thousand thousand were ministering to [God], and ten times a hundred thousand stood before him" (Daniel 7.10; cf. Apoc. 5.11). Aquinas, citing the Pseudo-Dionysius, views their number as "transcending any corporeal plurality" (*ST* 1a q. 112 a. 4). In *Conv.* 2.5.5, Dante says that they are "almost numberless." Dante refers to beginning with 1 on the first square of the chessboard and doubling it with each successive double on the rest of the squares; on the last square the sum is 2^{63} (an enormous figure, compact notation for which was long unavailable: 9.22×10^{18}); but the number of grains of wheat said to have been promised to the inventor of chess by the naively confident Persian king was the *sum* of all the doubles, i.e., $2^0 (1) + 2^1 (2) + 2^2 (4) + 2^3 (8) + \dots 2^{63}$; the king, naturally, was bankrupted; in either version, the number of the angels checkmates human calculation. *Inmillarsi* [to enthousand oneself] is another of Dante's coinages with *in-*, parallel in form to *incinquarsi* [to enfive oneself] (9.40; cf. 13. 57, and cf. lines 37–39, with note).

94–96. I heard them hosanna ... they have ever been: Dante has made a verb *osannare* of the acclamation hosanna [Hebrew: rejoice] (cf. *Purg.* 11.11, Par. 7.1–3, with notes),

whose direct object is "the fixed point" (line 95). The idea of the audibility of the angels' singing is in the OT prophets; perhaps most impressive in Is. 6.3, where the seraphim cry to each other: "Holy, holy, holy the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is filled with his glory," from which the Sanctus of the Mass is derived. That the circles, as different choirs, answer each other singing also probably derives from Is. 6.3: "And each [of the Seraphim] called out to each."

95–96. the fixed point ... they have ever been: The infinitely intense point is the origin of all space and time; on its fixity depends that of all else. God's grace holds the angels to their fixed locations, their *ubi* [where] (which Dante treats as a plural), against all possibility of change, as he [God] will always do (cf. 29.58–63).

97–139. And she, seeing ... truth about these circlings: The rest of the canto is devoted to an exposition of the names and grades of the angels, derived from *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, believed written by the Athenian Dionysius the Areopagite, converted by saint Paul (Acts 17.14). He was supposed to have evangelized France (thus saint Denis), and to have been martyred on the Mons Martyrum (Montmartre); it and the other very influential Pseudo-Dionysian works were in fact written in the fifth or sixth century by a Christian follower of Proclus (d. 485), the last major pagan Neoplatonist. In *Convivio* 2, following Gregory the Great on the angels (*Moralia in Hiob* 33), Dante had asserted that "Voi ch'intendendo il terzo ciel movete" (see 8.34–39, with notes), addressed to the movers of the third heaven, referred to the angelic order of the Thrones (see 28.104). The "error" was silently corrected in 8.34–37; now its source is identified. (*Convivio* 2 gives a *terminus post quem* for Dante's reading of the Pseudo-Dionysius; Dante must have read him in northeastern Italy; see Pertusi 1966.)

98–129. The first circles ... draw, toward God: Beatrice's next account of the angelic hierarchy devotes six terzine to the first triad (lines 98–114), three to the second (lines 115–23), one to the third (lines 124–26), and concludes with one terzina stressing the unity among all three triads (lines 127–29); see next note.

98–113. The first circles ... grace and good will: Beatrice's account of the first triad has two parts: (1) identification of its three orders; and (2) commentary on the structure of their beatitude. Like the first angelic circle (cf. the note to lines 37–39), the first triad receives much fuller exposition than the others.

98–105. The first circles ... close the first triad: The preeminence of the Seraphim and Cherubim was established in the OT prophetic texts (especially Isaiah and Ezekiel); in 4.28 "that [Seraph] that most engods itself"—the very highest of the highest order—is a synecdoche for all the angels.

100–102. so rapidly ... raised up to see: "Per somigliare al punto," which we translate "in order to resemble the point," has been taken by some to mean "because they resemble the point," but the dynamic sense of the angels' striving desire seems far preferable (this reading is also supported by line 102; see below).

100. so rapidly do they follow their bonds: Their "bonds" ([*vimi*, from Lat. *vimen*]; cf. 29. 36) are the circles, as close as possible to the point, so called because the angels are held in them by God, as explained in lines 101–2.

102. they can to the degree ... raised up to see: They *can* resemble the point, to the extent that God lifts them up, illuminates them (beyond their inherent ability) to intuit him (this point is further developed in lines 109–13). Throughout this passage "sight" and other terms of seeing refer to intellectual vision.

103–5. Those other loves ... close the first triad: The idea of *three triads* of angels (based on the Pseudo-Dionysius) is of course overtly Trinitarian; earlier, Augustine had shown at great length, in his treatise *De Trinitate* [On the Trinity], how all creation reveals fundamental structures of three, the "mark" of the triune Creator. Proclus argued that the number three was the fundamental principle of the stability of any structure, a view that deeply influenced the Pseudo-Dionysius.

106–14. and you are to know ... degree we proceed: This passage, parallel to Solomon's account of the structure of beatitude (14.37–60) explains the principle of the primacy of intellect in the beatitude of the angels (cf. 29.61–66), which is exactly parallel to that of human beings (except that the angels will not have bodies).

106–8. they all feel delight ... intellect finds peace: The angels' beatitude depends on the depth to which their intellect penetrates into the infinite intellect of God. Note the parallel with line 102 ("quanto" [by how much] occupies the same position in both lines 102 and 107), where the emphasis is upon the grace that lifts them. Compare 4.124–32, especially the analogy with the settling of a wild animal into its lair. The motivation of the human mind is the same as that of the angelic.

109–13. From this you can ... grace and good will: Two terzinas, the first baldly stating the principle of the primacy of the intellect, the second the circular structure of mutual reinforcement of intellect and will.

109–11. From this you can ... follows after: This theme was presupposed in lines 37–39, and it has been a fundamental recurrent theme of the entire poem, beginning with *Inf.* 1.30 (on which see our note). For one to love an object, the intellect must focus on it (cf. *Purg.* 18.19–75, with notes).

112–14. and the measure ... degree we proceed: The *merit* of individual angels, as of human beings, determines, along with their desire and divine grace, the depth of the vision each has of God. Thus, joining with grace, increasing vision begets increasing delight and love in a circling that reaches a degree of maximum intensity in which it perpetually generates itself (this idea will be acted out in the final vision in Canto 33).

114. thus from degree to degree we proceed: This line both refers to what precedes

and serves as a transition to what follows. We proceed stepwise in our analysis of beatitude, mirroring the generation of the angels themselves (there will be more exploration of this theme in Canto 29); the stepwise yet instantaneous procession, or radiation, of the angels, which quickly becomes the turning back (*epistrophè*) of the angels toward God and the permanent stability seen in the pilgrim's vision (lines 95–96).

115–23. The next triad ... is of Powers: The three terzine on the second triad introduce the imagery of the "sempiternal springtime," in which the nine angelic orders perpetually sprout and blossom (a brief anticipation of the celestial rose of Cantos 30–33), and which they celebrate with the "spring song" of "*Hosanna*" (cf. lines 94–96).

117. that no nocturnal Aries despoils: The sun enters Libra at the autumnal equinox, when its diametrical opposite, the sign Aries, is in the sky at night (cf. the similar, though less contorted, turn of expression, also involving Libra [the Scales], in *Purg.* 2.1–6). Dante's "dispoglia" (it means both "despoils" and "undresses") refers to the loss of leaves by trees and other plants that begins in autumn; both senses of the word are operative here, for autumn both "despoils" (robs) and "undresses" them. See the parallel play in *Inf.* 3.112–14: in autumn the tree loses its raiment, which becomes spoils [*spoglie*].

118–20. perpetually sings ... make it triple: This is the only passage in Dante's works that explicitly and unambiguously refers to true musical polyphony, the combining of different, simultaneously moving melodies.

121. the next divinities: Dante's word is *dee* [literally, goddesses]: all the names of the angelic orders in this second triad are feminine (all in the first are masculine; in the third, two are masculine). Compare 5.123, "believe them as if gods [*di*]," of the blessed souls. To call the angels divinities credits their immediate relation to God and their power over the rest of creation, but we are not to forget that they, too, are created beings. Note the precious rhymes on -ee in hiatus (lines 119, 121, 123).

124–26. Then in the two ... Angelic play: One terzina on the lowest triad. *Tripudia* (the plural of Lat. *tripudium* [from *tres*, three + *pedes*, feet]) refers to the energetic cultic dance of the Roman Salic priests (*Ab urbe cond.* 1.20.4), in triple rhythm (again, Trinitarian emphasis).

127–29. These orders ... all draw, toward God: Recapitulating and summing up (note the three verbs *gaze*, *bind*, *draw*), with the fundamental Neoplatonic emphasis on the two principles of procession and return; for similar emphasis, in relation to the angelic governing of the sublunar (i.e., the descent of their power), see 2.121–23: "These organs of the world [the heavenly spheres] thus descend ... by degrees, for they take from above and fashion below" (cf. 2.136).

The angels are the spiritual/intellectual governors of the spheres, radically distinct from the various motions of the spheres: from their vision of the Same all the angels take their government of the Other; it would seem that all follow, in this symbolic motion, that of the highest order (see also Additional Note 3).

130–39. And Dionysius ... about these circlings: On the divergence between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory the Great (cf. the note to lines 97–139). Dante was apparently unaware that Gregory had cited and accepted the Pseudo-Dionysius's account of the angelic orders in his later *Homiliae in Lucam* (15.1–10); see Pertusi 1966.

130–35. And Dionysius ... laughed at himself: Dante's regarding the Pseudo-Dionysius's authority as superior to Pope Gregory's is typical of his period (although Aquinas was able to show that the *Liber de causis* derived from Proclus, he failed to see the Pseudo-Dionysius's derivation from the same source and cites him as an authority more than sixteen hundred times). The beginnings of a skeptical historical view can be seen in Abelard's *Historia calamitatum*, which relates how he earned the enduring hostility of the monks of the royal abbey of saint Denis (Suger's abbey, north of Paris), by showing that it was historically impossible for the saint Denis who evangelized Gaul to have been the Areopagite who had been converted by saint Paul, as they had always believed him to be; it was not until 1476, however, that a serious critique of the attribution was mounted by Lorenzo Valla, followed by Erasmus and Luther. The Catholic Church continued to accept it well into the seventeenth century (O'Daly 1981).

134–35. as soon as he ... laughed at himself: The suggestion that the soul of Gregory the Great passed through the *primum mobile* on its way to Heaven also suggests that there may be a route to Heaven that all souls take, including the pilgrim; Dante may have in mind the pagan Neoplatonic belief that both in descending from and returning to the stars the soul passes through each of the planets, as well as certain stargates (see *Commentarii* 1.12, Rabuse 1958, Rabuse 1970). Now the *epistrophe* is human.

136–39. And if so secret ... about these circlings: Dante supposes that Dionysius the Areopagite learned about the angels directly from saint Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 12.2–4).



CANTO 29

Primum mobile, continued: God's immediate creations: the angels, matter, and the heavens—fall of the rebel angels—denunciation of theological folly

- 1 When both Latona's children, covered by the
 Ram and by the Scales, together make the
 horizon their girdle,
- 4 as long a time as from the point when the
 zenith has them balanced until both slide from
 equilibrium on that belt, changing hemispheres:
- 7 so long, her face covered with a smile, was
 Beatrice silent, gazing fixedly into the point that
 had vanquished me.
- 10 Then she began: "I speak without asking
 what you wish to hear, for I have seen it where
 every *ubi* and every *quando* converge.
- 13 Not to acquire any good for himself, which
 cannot be, but that his splendor, shining back to
 him, might say: '*Subsistō*,'
- 16 in his eternity, outside of time, beyond all
 other containment, as it pleased him, the eternal
 Love opened himself out into other loves.
- 19 Nor previously did he lie as if torpid, for
 neither earlier nor later did God's moving over

- these waters come forth.
- 22 Form and matter, both joined and entirely
pure, came forth into unflawed being, like three
arrows from a bow with three strings.
- 25 And as into glass, amber, or crystal a ray
shines so that between its coming and its full
presence there is no interval:
- 28 so the triform effect of its Sire radiated forth
into its being all at once, without distinction of
beginning.
- 31 Order and structure were created together in
the substances, and those were the summit of
the world in whom pure act was produced;
- 34 pure potentiality held the lowest part; in the
middle, potentiality and act were united by such
a bond that it will never be unstrung.
- 37 Jerome wrote for you of a long tract of
centuries, after the creation of the angels,
before the rest of the world was made,
- 40 but this truth is written on many pages by the
writers of the Holy Spirit, and you will perceive it
if you look carefully,
- 43 and even reason sees something of it, for it
could not grant that the Movers could be so long
without their perfection.
- 46 Now you know where and when these loves
were created, and how, so that three fires have
already been extinguished in your desire.
- 49 Nor would one reach twenty, counting, as
quickly as a part of the angels disturbed what

bears your foods.

- 52 The other part remained, and they began this
art that you discern, with so much delight that
they never leave off circling.
- 55 The origin of the fall was the cursèd pride of
him whom you saw held down by all the weights
of the world.
- 58 Those you see here were modest in
acknowledging their origin in the Goodness that
had made them capable of seeing so much,
- 61 and therefore their sight was exalted by
illuminating grace and by their merit, so that
their will is fixed and full,
- 64 and I would not have you doubt, but be
certain that to receive grace is meritorious
according as the affect is open to it.
- 67 Now around this consistory there is much for
you to contemplate, if my words have been
gathered up, without other assistance.
- 70 But because on earth in your schools they
teach that the angelic nature is such that it
knows and remembers and wills,
- 73 I will speak further, that you may see the pure
truth that is confused down below, in their
equivocating readings.
- 76 These substances, as soon as they were
made joyous by the face of God, from which
nothing is hidden, have not turned their sight from it;
- 79 therefore their sight is never interrupted by a
new object, and therefore they have no need to

remember through divided concepts:

- 82 so that down there, not asleep, they dream,
 believing and not believing that they speak the truth,
 but in the latter there is more guilt and more shame.
- 85 You do not follow one path in philosophizing
 down there, the love of show so transports you,
 and the thought of it.
- 88 But still, this is endured up here with less
 anger than when Holy Scripture is disregarded
 or when it is distorted.
- 91 They do not consider down there how much
 blood it costs to sow it in the world and how
 pleasing is one who approaches it humbly.
- 94 For show each exerts his wit and makes his
 inventions, and those are spread by the
 preachers, who are silent about the Gospel.
- 97 One says the moon turned back during
 Christ's passion and interposed itself so that the
 light of the sun could not reach the earth,
- 100 and he lies, for the light hid itself of its own accord:
 for this reason the so-called eclipse was seen by the
 Spaniards and the Indians, as well as by the Jews.
- 103 Florence has not so many Lapos and Bindos
 as fables of this kind are cried in a year from the
 pulpit on this side and on that,
- 106 so that the little sheep, who do not know,
 return from pasture fed on wind, but their not
 seeing the damage does not excuse them.
- 109 Christ did not say to his first followers: 'Go
 and preach trifles to the world,' but gave them a

- true foundation,
- 112 and that alone sounded from their cheeks, so
 that, as they fought to kindle the faith, the
 Gospel became their shield and lance.
- 115 Now they go with jests and flourishes to
 preach, and as long as there is much laughter
 the cowl puffs up and no more is asked.
- 118 But such a bird is nesting in the beak of the
 hood, that if the crowd saw it, they would see
 also the pardon they rely on,
- 121 by which so much folly has grown in the world
 that, without proof of any testimony, they would
 run after any promise.
- 124 On this Saint Anthony's pig fattens, and many
 others even more piggish, paying in coin with no
 imprint.
- 127 But because we have digressed far, turn your
 eyes back now to the straight way, so that our
 path may be shortened to fit our time.
- 130 This nature steps so far beyond in number
 that there was never speech or mortal concept
 to go so far,
- 133 and if you look at what Daniel reveals, you
 will see that in his thousands a determinate
 number is hidden.
- 136 The first Light, which irradiates them all, is
 received in as many different modes by them as
 there are splendors to which it appears.
- 139 Thus, since affect follows the act of knowing, the
 sweetness of love in them is more and less fiery.

- 142 Now you see the height and breadth of the
eternal Worth, since it has made so many
mirrors in which it divides itself,
145 remaining One in itself as before."



CANTO 29

Quando ambedue li figli di Latona,
coperti del Montone e de la Libra,
fanno de l'orizzonte insieme zona,
quant' è dal punto che 'l cenìt i 'nlibra
infin che l'uno e l'altro da quel cinto,
cambiando emisperio, si dilibra:
 tanto, col volto di riso dipinto,
si tacque Béatrice, riguardando
fiso nel punto che m'avëa vinto.

Poi cominciò: "Io dico, e non dimando
quel che tu vuoli udir, perch' io l'ho visto
là 've s'appunta ogne *ubi* e ogne *quando*.

Non per aver a sé di bene acquisto,
ch' esser non può, ma perché suo splendore
potesse, risplendendo, dir: '*Subsisto*,'
 in sua eternità di tempo fore,
fuor d'ogne altro comprender, come i piacque
s'aperse in nuovi amori l'eterno Amore.

Né prima quasi torpente si giacque,
ché né prima né poscia procedette
lo discorrer di Dio sovra quest' acque.

Forma e materia congiunte e purette
usciro ad esser che non avia fallo,
come d'arco tricordo tre saette.

E come in vetro, in ambra o in cristallo
raggio resplende sì che dal venire
a l'esser tutto non è intervallo:

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

così 'l triforme effetto del suo Sire
ne l'esser suo raggiò insieme tutto
sanza distinzione in essordire.

28

Concreato fu ordine e costrutto
a le sustanze, e quelle furon cima
nel mondo in che puro atto fu prodotto;

31

pura potenza tenne la parte ima;
nel mezzo strinse potenza con atto
tal vime che già mai non si divima.

34

Ieronimo vi scrisse lungo tratto
di secoli de li angeli creati,
anzi che l'altro mondo fosse fatto,
ma questo vero è scritto in molti lati
da li scrittore de lo Spirito Santo,
e tu te n'avvedrai se bene agguati,
e anche la ragione il vede alquanto,
che non concederebbe che ' motori
sanza sua perfezion fosser cotanto.

40

Or sai tu dove e quando questi amori
furon creati e come, sì che spenti
nel tuo disio già son tre ardori.

43

Né giugneriesi numerando al venti
sì tosto come de li angeli parte
turbò 'l suggetto d'i vostri alimenti.

46

L'altra rimase, e cominciò quest' arte
che tu discerni, con tanto diletto
che mai da circuir non si diparte.

49

Principio del cader fu il maladetto
superbir di colui che tu vedesti
da tutti i pesi del mondo costretto.

52

55

Quelli che vedi qui furon modesti
a riconoscer sé da la Bontate
che li avea fatti a tanto intender presti,
per che le viste lor furo essaltate
con grazia illuminante e con lor merto,
sì c' hanno ferma e piena volontate,
e non voglio che dubbi, ma sia certo
che ricever la grazia è meritorio
secondo che l'affetto l'è aperto.

Omai dintorno a questo consistorio
puoi contemplare assai, se le parole
mie son ricolte, sanz' altro aiutorio.

Ma perché 'n terra per le vostre scole
si legge che l'angelica natura
è tal che 'ntende e si ricorda e vole,
ancor dirò, perché tu veggi pura
la verità che là giù si confonde,
equivocando in sì fatta lettura.

Queste sustanze, poi che fur gioconde
de la faccia di Dio, non volser viso
da essa, da cui nulla si nasconde;
però non hanno vedere interciso
da novo obietto, e però non bisogna
rememorar per concetto diviso:

sì che là giù non dormendo si sogna,
credendo e non credendo dicer vero,
ma ne l'uno è più colpa e più vergogna.

Voi non andate giù per un sentiero
filosofando, tanto vi trasporta
l'amor de l'apparenza e 'l suo pensiero.

58

61

64

67

70

73

76

79

82

85

E ancor questo qua sù si comporta
con men disdegno che quando è posposta
la divina Scrittura o quando è torta.

88

Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa
seminarla nel mondo e quanto piace
chi umilmente con essa s'accosta.

91

Per apparer ciascun s'ingegna e face
sue invenzioni, e quelle son trascorse
da' predicanti, e 'l Vangelo si tace.

94

Un dice che la luna si ritorse
ne la passion di Cristo e s'interpuose,
per che 'l lume del sol giù non si porse,
e mente, ché la luce si nascose
da sé: però a li Spani e a l'Indi,
come a' Giudei, tale eclissi rispuose.

97

Non ha Fiorenza tanti Lapi e Bindi
quante sì fatte favole per anno
in pergam si gridan quinci e quindi,
sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno,
tornan del pasco pasciute di vento,
e non le scusa non veder lo danno.

100

Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento:
'Andate, e predicate al mondo ciance,'
ma diede lor verace fondamento,
e quel tanto sonò ne le sue guance,
sì ch' a pugnar per accender la fede
de l'Evangelio fero scudo e lance.

103

106

Ora si va con motti e con iscede
a predicare, e pur che ben si rida
gonfia il cappuccio e più non si richiede.

112

115

Ma tale uccel nel becchetto s'annida
che, se 'l vulgo il vedesse, vederebbe
la perdonanza di ch' el si confida,
per cui tanta stoltezza in terra crebbe
che, senza prova d'alcun testimonio.
ad ogne promession si correrrebbe.

118

Di questo ingrassa il porco sant' Antonio,
e altri assai che sono ancor più porci,
pagando di moneta senza conio.

121

Ma perché siam digressi assai, ritorci
li occhi oramai verso la diritta strada,
sì che la via col tempo si raccorci.

124

Questa natura sì oltre s'ingrada
in numero che mai non fu loquela
né concetto mortal che tanto vada,
e se tu guardi quel che si revela
per Danièl, vedrai che 'n sue migliaia
determinato numero si cela.

127

La prima Luce, che tutta la raia,
per tanti modi in essa si recepe
quanti son li splendori a chi s'appaia.

130

Onde, però che a l'atto che concepe
segue l'affetto, d'amar la dolcezza
diversamente in essa ferve e tepe.

133

Vedi l'eccelso omai e la larghezza
de l'eterno Valor, poscia che tanti
speculi fatti s'ha in che si spezza,
uno manendo in sé come davanti."

136

142

145

NOTES

1–145. When both Latona's ... in itself as before: After an introductory pause (lines 1–9), the entire canto is occupied by Beatrice's disquisition, in four parts, clearly demarcated from each other by transitional passages: (1) on God's instantaneous creation of the universe, including the angels (lines 10–48); (2) on the fall of the rebel angels and the subsequent status of the loyal angels (lines 49–69); (3) condemnation of the current fashions in theology and preaching (lines 70–126); and (4) return to God and the creation of the angels (lines 127–45).

1–9. When both Latona's ... had vanquished me: After her identification of the nine orders of angels, Beatrice pauses briefly, gazing at the central point of the vision; the length of her pause is expressed by an elaborate simile: when the sun and the moon ("Latona's children"), directly opposite each other in east and west—one in Aries, one in Libra—seem immobile, held in equilibrium in a balance—a *statera*, like the traditional symbol of the sign Libra—imagined as having its fulcrum at the zenith (the point directly over the head of the observer). (Another view—its modern exponent has been Manfred Porena—takes the interval as referring to both luminaries moving entirely clear of the horizon, taking "si *dilibra*" (line 6) as meaning *si libera* [frees itself], which involves ignoring the strongly marked *annominatio* between *i 'nlibra* (line 4) [holds them in balance] and *si dilibra* [thus: leaves equilibrium], and forgetting that the moon would be freed some time before the larger sun; for this and other reasons we reject it.)

Drawing attention away from the vision of the point and the nine circles, this grandiose imagining leaves interpretation entirely to the reader: which luminary is where? Which rising, which setting? Is the season spring (sun in Aries) or autumn (sun in Libra)? Most commentators choose among these possibilities without considering what Dante's reasons may have been for being indeterminate (see Nardi 1956b).

1–3. When both Latona's ... horizon their girdle: Latona was the mother, by Zeus, of Apollo and Diana, sun and moon. The horizon is imagined as bisecting both luminaries. (Lat. *zona* [belt, girdle] is frequently used by the Roman poets to refer to the girl's belt or girdle that is loosed in love.)

2. covered by the Ram and by the Scales: "Covered by" here means "beneath,"¹ the zodiacal signs (in the sphere of fixed stars) being far above the luminaries and other planets.

7–9. so long, her face ... had vanquished me: Beatrice stares at the point, gathering from it both her knowledge of the pilgrim's questions (lines 11–12) and perhaps the plan of her ensuing discourse. Chiavacci Leonardi suggests that the solemn pause helps prepare the greater depth and solemnity of this canto as compared with the previous one.

4, 9, 12. point, point, converge: In line 4 *punto* is used of a moment of time; in line 9 of the brilliant, nondimensional point representing God; in line 12 the term is included in *s'appunta* [converges], said of both space (*ubi* [where], as in line 9 and 28.16) and time (*quando* [when], as in line 4 and in *Inf.* 5.132; cf. the note on 28.95–96).

9. the point that had vanquished me: A conspicuous echo of *Inf.* 5.132: "Solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse" [one point alone was the one that vanquished us], and the even more conspicuous echo in 33.94 (the point being that they chose the wrong "point").

10–48. Then she began ... extinguished in your desire: Part 1 of Beatrice's disquisition: God's instantaneous creation of the universe, preceded by a brief introduction (lines 10–12) concerning her having seen the pilgrim's question in her direct contemplation of God.

10–12. I speak without asking ... every quando converge: This is God, of course, outside of both space and time (lines 16–21; cf. the note to lines 56–57).

13–48. Not to acquire ... extinguished in your desire: The first phase of Beatrice's exposition is the most explicit statement in the poem of Dante's position regarding God's creation of the cosmos, strongly Neoplatonic in its references to "light metaphysics"; it gathers and gives a final summary of the statements scattered through this cantica (2.112–48, 7.124–71, 13.52–87). It has three parts: (1) the final cause of creation—God's desire to share his beatitude (lines 13–21); (2) the order and structure of the instantaneously radiated creation (lines 22–36); and (3) a refutation of saint Jerome's theory of the earlier creation of the angels (lines 37–45); followed by a conclusion (lines 46–48).

The brilliantly concise formulations of this passage represent Dante's effort to reconcile a Neoplatonic conception of the radiation or emanation of the world from God (treated in the Arabic tradition—Avicenna, Averroës—as eternal and essentially automatic) with the Judeo-Christian idea of a willed creation out of nothing (see also Additional Note 11). Dante draws throughout on both the Platonic tradition and the biblical account (Genesis 1, especially verses 1–5):

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth was void and empty; and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was borne over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made. And God saw the light, that it was good, and he divided the light from the darkness. And he called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And there was evening and morning one day.

The interpretation of the biblical account was the subject of endless discussion among both Jews and Christians (see *In principio* 1973). "In the beginning" [*in principio*] was interpreted as meaning both "before time" (from eternity) and "in his beginning," meaning "in his Wisdom" (or "in the Logos" by the Jewish platonist Philo or by the Christians following John 1.3). "Heaven" was often taken to refer to the angels, "earth" to the rest of creation (Augustine; "light" was later taken by Augustine to mean the angels). "Darkness was on the face of the

deep and the Spirit of God was borne over the waters" was often taken to refer to the instant before the illumination of the loyal angels and the fall of the rebels. Eccl. 18.1, "He who lives eternally created all things at once" [*Qui vivit in aeternum creavit omnia simul*] was often cited to settle such issues.

13–15. Not to acquire ... might say "Subsistō" [I exist]: God's motive was to share his beatitude ("his splendor") with beings possessing bright ("shining back to him") self-awareness ("I exist"). Note the parallel with *Par.* 1.1–3 (God's glory "penetrates the universe" precisely because, as set forth in the present passage, the universe is carried or radiated by God (cf. also *Ep.* 13, to Can Grande, 61, 64).

13–14. Not to acquire ... which cannot be: Being infinite and infinitely good, God gains nothing by creating the world. The idea of the Creator as motivated entirely by unselfish love and desire to share his beatitude was explicit in the Platonic tradition from Plato on, and the Platonic formulas entered the Christian tradition early. See *Timaeus* 29D:

Let us, then, state for what reason becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good; and in the good no jealousy in any matter can ever arise. So, being without jealousy, he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself.

Compare 7.64–66, "O qui perpetua," lines 4 and 6 (pp. 686–87). The commentators cite *ST* 1a q. 50 a.1, *CG* 2.46 (these, too, are essentially Platonic formulations).

16–21. in his eternity ... these waters came forth: Time and space did not exist until they were created (see the notes to lines 17 and 31–36). God exists beyond time and space, and, eternity being an unchanging fullness of possession of being, the idea of God "lying torpid" before creating time has no meaning. One of Plato's key ideas was the distinction between time and the unchanging or eternal. In *Timaeus* 37D–E the demiurge

took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and, at the same time that he ordered the heaven, he made, of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number—that to which we have given the name Time.

Compare "O qui perpetua," lines 2–3.

17. beyond all other containment: God is beyond all space, as well as beyond time. Plato had characterized space/matter as the "container" or "receptacle" (*Timaeus* 46—"receptaculum," in Calcidius's translation).

18. the eternal Love ... into other loves: God's "opening himself" and "eternal Love" into "other loves" expresses in very condensed form the Platonic doctrine of participation (given an extremely influential Christian formulation by the Pseudo-Dionysius in his treatise *On the Divine Names* (see the translation by Rorem [1987], and Rorem 1993; Aquinas's commentary [1950]; and Ivánka 1940), according to which such terms as *Being, Love, Light,*

when applied to God, name absolutes and, when used of creatures, identify their participation in and derivation from the absolutes, as Dante uses the terms *Love* and *loves* here (for further discussion of Dante's use of these concepts, see Chapter 4 of Durling/Martinez 1990).

19–21. Nor previously did ... waters come forth: Line 21 is (with the possible exception of "in his eternity"—see the note to lines 13–48 above) the first explicit echo of Genesis 1. A vital point throughout this passage is that the universe is not coeternal with God (as in the Arab philosophers); it begins with time and in time, but there "was" no time before it. The lines are leading up to the emphasis on the idea that the universe was created instantaneously (but cf. the note to lines 22–36).

22–36. Form and matter ... never be unstrung: This highly compressed, even epigrammatic formulation is, as far as we have been able to determine, original with Dante. It was generally agreed among the theologians that the angels/Intelligences were pure form (see *Conv.* 3.7.5, with Vasoli and De Robertis's notes), and that the heavenly bodies were indissoluble unions of form and matter (i.e., of form and potentiality, the capacity to receive form). Most of Dante's commentators (except Nardi) gloss over the interpretation of lines 22 and 34 (some even asserting that "pure potentiality" refers to the four elements).

If we are to take the gnomic concision of the passage at face value, however, Dante cannot be adopting either the (not uncommon) idea that "the earth" refers to the four elements or Augustine's idea of the *rationes seminales*, meaning inchoate "seeds" of form present in created matter. Dante is clearly adopting the Neoplatonic concept of first matter as entirely devoid of forms, and that is coherent with his repeatedly stated view that the heavenly bodies *impose* form on matter (this radically distinguishes Dante's view from Aquinas's; see 13.61–66, with notes). That the four elements were formed from "matter" by the heavenly bodies and their governing Intelligences is explicit in 7.133–39 (on the whole question, see Nardi 1990a).

22–30. Form and matter ... distinction of beginning: The theoretical model for this statement is obviously the nature of light as traditionally conceived, and Dante clearly considers the biblical verse "And God said; Be light made. And light was made" as the core statement of God's act of creation, as lines 25–27 will make explicit (cf. of course Gen. 2.7; see *Purg.* 25.34–75, with notes).

25–27. And as into glass ... there is no interval: The analogy of light is now made explicit (cf. the same analogy in *CG* 2.19). The traditional view of the propagation of light was that it was the instantaneous actualization (bringing into act) of the diaphanous (a medium whose "act" is diffusing light; the term includes aether, air, and water), a quality we now know to result from water vapor, mainly limited to the earth's atmosphere. The traditional theory implied, and Dante takes for granted, the idea that the entire cosmos is ablaze with light; there was no notion of the darkness of outer space, night being simply the shadow of earth. (That light has a finite speed was suspected by Galileo and others in the seventeenth century, but only received an approximate experimental demonstration in 1675–76 and a satisfactorily exact one in 1849.)

25–26. as into glass, amber, or crystal: What determines the choice of these three materials, other than their transparency and their Trinitarian number? *Glass* has featured prominently in Canto 28 (especially in the form of mirrors), but the analogy of light entering glass without damaging it was frequent in discussions of the Virgin's conceiving by the Holy Spirit; *crystal/crystalline* is the epithet of the *primum mobile* (the location of the present scene), because of its total transparency (invisibility—see *Conv.* 2.3.7 and 13—for crystal was thought to be water that had been purified of earthly qualities, so that it closely resembles the heavens. Amber was known to be the hardened sap of a variety of pine tree, but it was not known to be fossilized; according to Albert, it was thought to protect the chastity of those who bore it (on both crystals and amber, see Albertus Magnus 1967, and cf. Durling/Martinez 1990, Introduction)

28–30. so the triform effect ... without distinction of beginning: The “effect” is “triform” because it reflects God’s triune nature; “distinction of beginning” means “beginning at different times” (i.e., times that can be distinguished from each other), reinforcing the theme of simultaneity.

31–36. Order and structure ... never be unstrung: An explanatory amplification of lines 22–30. The “order” is the hierarchy of value and position of the substances: the angels, pure form [act], are the summit in value and dwell in the highest; the perfect, unchanging heavenly spheres are the noblest substances that unite form and matter and occupy hierarchical positions from the *primum mobile* (the purest) on down to the moon; pure potentiality, constantly changing as different forms are imposed on it, occupies the sublunar realm. *Costrutto* [construct], which we take as a noun and render as “structure,” we take to refer to the different relations of form and matter in the substances (it has also been seen as a past participle meaning “constructed,” syntactically parallel with *concreato* [created together], but this seems a weak reading).

35–36. in the middle ... never be unstrung: The heavens are perfect and, though not eternal, will exist perpetually. The permanent “bond” results from their having been directly created by God (cf. 13.58–87, with notes, and 8.97–114—with another instance of arrow imagery, for which see 7.118–20, with notes). Dante’s Latinism *vime* [bond] echoes 28.100, where it is plural: these two are the only instances of Dante’s use of this term.

37–45. Jerome wrote ... without their perfection: Part 3 of Beatrice’s exposition of God’s creative act, refuting saint Jerome’s statement (*In epistolam ad Titum* 1.2) that a “long tract” (series) of centuries intervened between the creation of the angels and that of the universe. This matter was judged important enough to be raised in Peter Lombard’s *Liber sententiarum* (and thus it was discussed by every beginning theologian), but was not thought crucial to faith. The basis of the doctrine of instantaneous creation was Eccl. 18.1 (see the note to lines 13–48).

43–45. and even reason ... without their perfection: Aristotle had taught that there were no more Intelligences than the number of spheres that require being governed

(*Metaphysics* 12.8; cf. Aquinas's *Expositio metaphysicae Aristotelis* 12 lect. 10), a position Dante rejects in *Conv.* 2.4.2–15, on the grounds that the highest function of angels is contemplation, and entertaining the probability that not all are involved in governing the spheres. The argument that the angelic movers' perfection would be postponed if they were created before their spheres is Aristotelian, derived from the passage just cited, but differently applied.

46–48. Now you know ... extinguished in your desire: Conclusion to the exposition of creation, recalling lines 10–13. The "three fires" in the pilgrim's curiosity were "where" (see line 16), "when" (see lines 16 and 37–45), and "how" (see lines 14, 25–36). The important question "why" was also answered (lines 13–15).

49–66. Nor would one reach ... affect is open to it: Part 2 of Beatrice's disquisition, expected because of the formal pause of the previous terzina, but introduced without introduction: the separation of the two groups of angels, the rebels (lines 49–51, 55–57) and the loyal (lines 52–54, 58–66), discussed in parallel, with interlacing, comprising two terzine on the rebels, four on the loyal (cf. 28.16–45, 98–114).

49–51. Nor would one reach ... what bears your foods: The rebellious angels are the lesser number; according to *Inf.* 34.121–26, the earth opened to receive their fall. The earth is identified as the bearer (*soggetto* [subject, underlayer] of foods, emphasizing both God's provision for the nourishment of living things (Gen. 1.11–13) and the fallen angels' degradation to a status inferior to all else. Most interpreters take *alimenti* to be a variant spelling of *elementi* [elements], but this introduces a contradiction with *Inf.* 34.121–26, avoided by our reading; furthermore, "the subject of your elements" is nearly incomprehensible, since the four elements are created out of nothing (7.133–35, 29.23).

49–50. Nor would one reach ... as quickly as: In other words, one could not have counted as far as twenty before the fall took place. Striking and puzzling lines that we are assuredly meant to connect with lines 1–6, with which they share emphasis on the brevity of the intervals and the vagueness of their specification.

55–57. The origin of the fall ... weights of the world: Two biblical passages were drawn on for the rebellion of the angels; *Apoc.* 12.7–9:

And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world, and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels thrown down with him.

and *Is.* 14.12–15:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning! How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations! And thou saidst in thy heart: I will

ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the Covenant, in the sides of the north! I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, into the depth of the pit.

56–57. whom you saw ... weights of the world: There is indeed some degree of inconsistency between lines 49–57 and *Inf. 34.121–26*; for the earth to have already been formed (so as to open to receive the devils, to flee Satan), it would seem that the loyal angels would need to have already begun their work of shaping the sublunar (see the note to lines 22–36). Satan is at the center of the earth, *Inf. 34.110–14*: at “the *point* toward which the weights all move from every direction” (in parody of God’s radiation of “every *ubi* and every *quando*,” line 12); cf. *Inf. 11.64*; 32.3 and 73–74).

58–66. Those you see here ... affect is open to it: The loyal angels *recognize* (for this important word, cf. 22.112–14, with notes) their status as creatures and turn in gratitude and love to God, who *raises* and illuminates them to their present fullness and fixity (lines parallel with 28.97–129; cf. lines 18, 46, 28.43–45).

64–66. and I would not have you ... affect is open to it: Lines closely related to 28.109–14: in angels, as in human beings, the will must cooperate with God’s grace, and this earns merit (lines 62, 65).

67–69. Now around this ... without other assistance: Conclusion to part 2 of Beatrice’s disquisition in this canto. Her remark is interesting, for it conflicts with the dramatic situation, in which the pilgrim must pay close attention to what Beatrice now goes on to say: his contemplation of “this consistory” will take place later, after his awakening. Although the fact is not stated, the reader is the one implicitly addressed here: the reader can lift his or her eyes from the page and meditate on the implications of the poet’s words (cf. 10.22–27).

70–126. But because on earth ... coin with no imprint: Fifty-six lines, all but nineteen of the rest of the canto, are devoted to a denunciation of the frivolous and theologically invalid instruction in the schools and the preaching of the clergy (especially the friars). This denunciation begins (lines 70–84) as a corrective enlargement of the description of the status of the loyal angels in lines 58–66; then it broadens, denouncing useless controversy and irresponsible preaching, especially misinterpretation of the Bible. For the structural place of the “digression,” see the note to lines 127–45.

70–84. But because on earth ... guilt and more shame: As the commentators point out, the nature of the angels was the subject of voluminous discussion in the schools and in theological treatises; Dante singles out a single issue, whether the minds of the angels have memory.

75. equivocating readings: It was generally understood among the Scholastics that most terms used univocally of created things, such as *light*, *love*, *mind*, could only be used

equivocally of God (see the note to line 18). Dante is criticizing the use of the term *memory* of the angels, which the Scholastics (e.g., Aquinas in *ST* 1a q. 54 a. 4, q. 55 a.2, q. 58 a. 1–5) used in a sharply reduced sense (thus equivocally), which Dante regards as misleading.

76–81. These substances ... through divided concepts: Since the angels see all things in God simultaneously, their knowledge of one thing is never replaced ("interrupted") by their knowledge of some other thing, as happens in human beings. They therefore have no need of remembering [*rememorar*] "through [or: because of] divided concepts." The meaning of "divided concepts" has been disputed; the most probable meaning is that it amplifies "interrupted" (i.e., separate, listable, thus recallable, when only one thing can be focused on at a time).

82–84. so that down there ... guilt and more shame: The error identified in the preceding lines is taught by some who believe it, and they are honestly deluded; others teach it knowing it to be false; they are both guilty and more shameful (the first are shameful but not guilty; "not asleep, they dream" applies to both groups).

85–87. You do not follow ... and the thought of it: Vanity and the love of show explain the deplorable lack of theological/philosophical unanimity on earth: Dante is in favor of strict precision and orthodoxy.

88–126. But still, this is endured ... coin with no imprint: What began as a critique of one theoretical error regarding angels now broadens: as bad as mistaken theology is, disregard of the Bible (as when pagan thinkers are taken more seriously) and distortions of it anger God and the saints more.

91–92. They do not consider ... sow it in the world: The neglect and distortion of the Bible are particularly serious because of the cost in blood of its dissemination. Note the present tense of the verb "costs": Dante is not thinking only of the Crucifixion of Christ and the persecutions and martyrdoms of the early spread of Christianity: missionary activity in Asia and in Islamic countries was lively in the thirteenth century and was at times violently opposed.

92–93. and how pleasing ... approaches it humbly: The frivolous teachers forget how much those please God and the saints who approach the Bible humbly (that the Bible, especially the relation between Old and New Testaments, can only be understood by the humble is an important Augustinian theme; see *Confessions* 3.5.9, *Inf.* 10. 63, with note).

94–126. For show each ... coin with no imprint: The theme broadens into an attack on the preachers who repeat the foolishness of the schools and do not preach the Gospel, so that the "sheep" (the unlearned believers who desperately need serious guidance) are fed on "wind" (empty words) from the pulpit; unauthorized offers of indulgences are particularly condemned (lines 115–23).

97–102. One says the moon ... as well as by the Jews: Again, one misinterpretation

is singled out (lines 97–103) to exemplify the prevalent frivolity. One of Dante's targets is Aquinas, who accepted the eclipse theory (see Nardi 1956b).

100–102. and he lies ... as well as by the Jews: Dante accepts the account in the three synoptic Gospels, which agree in stating that from the sixth hour of the day (midday) until the ninth (when Jesus died), darkness covered the entire earth ("universam terram" in Matt. 42.27 and Luke 23.44, "totam terram" in Mark 15.33; Luke 23.45 adds that the sun was darkened [obscuratus est sol]; John does not mention the matter). See next note.

101–2. seen by the Spaniards ... as by the Jews: The lines indicate the extremes of the hemisphere of land (thus of the inhabited portion of the earth): the mouth of the Ebro in Spain and that of the Ganges in India; Jerusalem, of course, is at the center (cf. 22.151–53, with notes, *Inf.* 34.5, with note, and *Inferno* Figure 8). The shadow cast by an eclipse would be in constant motion and would cover only a small portion of the earth at a time.

103–8. Florence has not so many ... does not excuse them: The number of follies preached from Christian pulpits in a year is enormous, so that the unlearned are fed on wind; but their being unaware of the lack of true doctrine does not undo it; their ignorance is still harmful to them.

103. Florence has not so many Lapos and Bindos: This line indicates a very large number. Lapo and Bindo were particularly popular given names in Florence in Dante's time; Bindo has gone out of style, but Lapo was still very frequent as recently as fifty years ago.

109–26. Christ did not say ... coin with no imprint: The contrast between the reliable and solid preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles (lines 109–14) and the frivolous preaching of modern friars (lines 118–26).

109–14. Christ did not say ... their shield and lance: The Apostles were instructed by Christ; the "true foundation" was the Gospel, which was their sole message. The metaphor of armed warfare goes back to saint Paul (Eph. 6.14–17):

Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).

115–26. Now they go with jests ... coin with no imprint: This suggestive passage targets a broad spectrum of abuses, beginning with the vanity of preachers who seek only to be amusing and popular; their irresponsibility is such that they forget their responsibilities toward the faithful; in the pointed hoods of their habits (the Franciscans and Dominicans are meant), compared to the "beak" of a bird of prey, lurks a real bird of prey, the devil, waiting to seize the naive souls who too readily rely on the promises of "pardon" made by such preachers

—in other words, the indulgences they offer.

The popularity of indulgences has become so great that the mob will run after any promise, no matter how baseless (coin without imprint—whose value is not guaranteed by any authority; cf. the notes to 24.83–87). Although Dante may seem to exempt officially promulgated indulgences here, he is actually criticizing indulgence-hunting in general and blaming the popes for fostering a credulous belief in them (especially Boniface VIII and the Jubilee of 1300; see Durling 2010).

124–26. On this saint Anthony's ... coin with no imprint: Many convents of the mendicant order of saint Anthony kept pigs and fed them with the proceeds from begging: here the point is that frivolous preaching and offering of indulgences (not yet their sale) are done primarily out of greed for the money they generate.

127–45. But because we have ... in itself as before: In addition to resituating the reader in the main narrative, the last lines of the canto return to the angels and God, in such a way that an elaborate parallelism is established in the structure of the canto; in its first half, Beatrice first discusses the creation of the world and the angels, then the fall of the rebel angels, and then the turning of the loyal angels to God (an archetypal instance of *epistrophe*, return); in the second half of the canto the misinterpretations and irresponsibility of teachers and preachers provide a parallel to the fall of the rebel angels turning away from the light (the devil himself appears in line 118; cf. next note), once again followed by the *return* to the angels and God.

127–29. But because we have ... to fit our time: Beatrice characterizes lines 70–126 as a “walking away” (“siam digressi” [we have digressed]) from the “straight path” [*diritta strada*] of the argument. Note the recall of *Inf.* 1.3 (“la diritta via” [the straight way], lost, and the echoes of *Par.* 10.7 and 16 in “ritorci li occhi” [turn your eyes back] (lines 127–28; cf. “leva dunque ... la vista” [lift your eyes therefore]) and “la diritta strada” (line 128; cf. “strada torta” [twisted path]). For running out of time, see 32.139–41, with note.

130–41. This nature steps ... more and less fiery: These lines look back to 28.91–93 (on the great number of the angels; our note there cites the passage in Daniel in question here) and 28.106–14 (on the primacy of intellectual sight in the first triad), clarifying two points: (1) though far beyond human grasp (lines 130–32), the number of the angels is finite (“determinate,” lines 133–35); and (2) each individual angel receives a degree of illumination unique to itself and thus feels a unique degree of beatitude.

136–45. The first Light ... in itself as before: From the angels the discourse rises to God and recapitulates first (in lines 136–41) his illumination of the angels of 29.28–33 and 58–66—now applying 28.106–14 explicitly to all the orders of angels—and then (in lines 142–45) the account of his creation of the angels, finally reenacting the dominant, repeated pattern of the canto (as of the poem as a whole): the return to God. Thus Cantos 28–29 provide an analogue of their own place in the *Comedy*.

140–41. the sweetness of love ... more and less fiery: Dante has “ferve” [burns hotly] (cf. Eng. *fervent*) and “tepe” [burns warmly] (cf. Eng. *tepid*).

142–44. Now you see ... it divides itself: The angels are mirrors reflecting God’s light (glory, as in 1.1–3); note the ending of this canto with the mirror metaphor that opened this diptych on the angels (28.4–9).

145. remaining One in itself as before: Cf. 28.22–27 and 34–39, with note. See “O qui perpetua,” whose last two lines recapitulate the poem, reenacting the procession of all things from God and their return to him, and ending with the pronoun “idem” [himself], i.e., in context, the Same (see our notes); and compare 13.52–60.

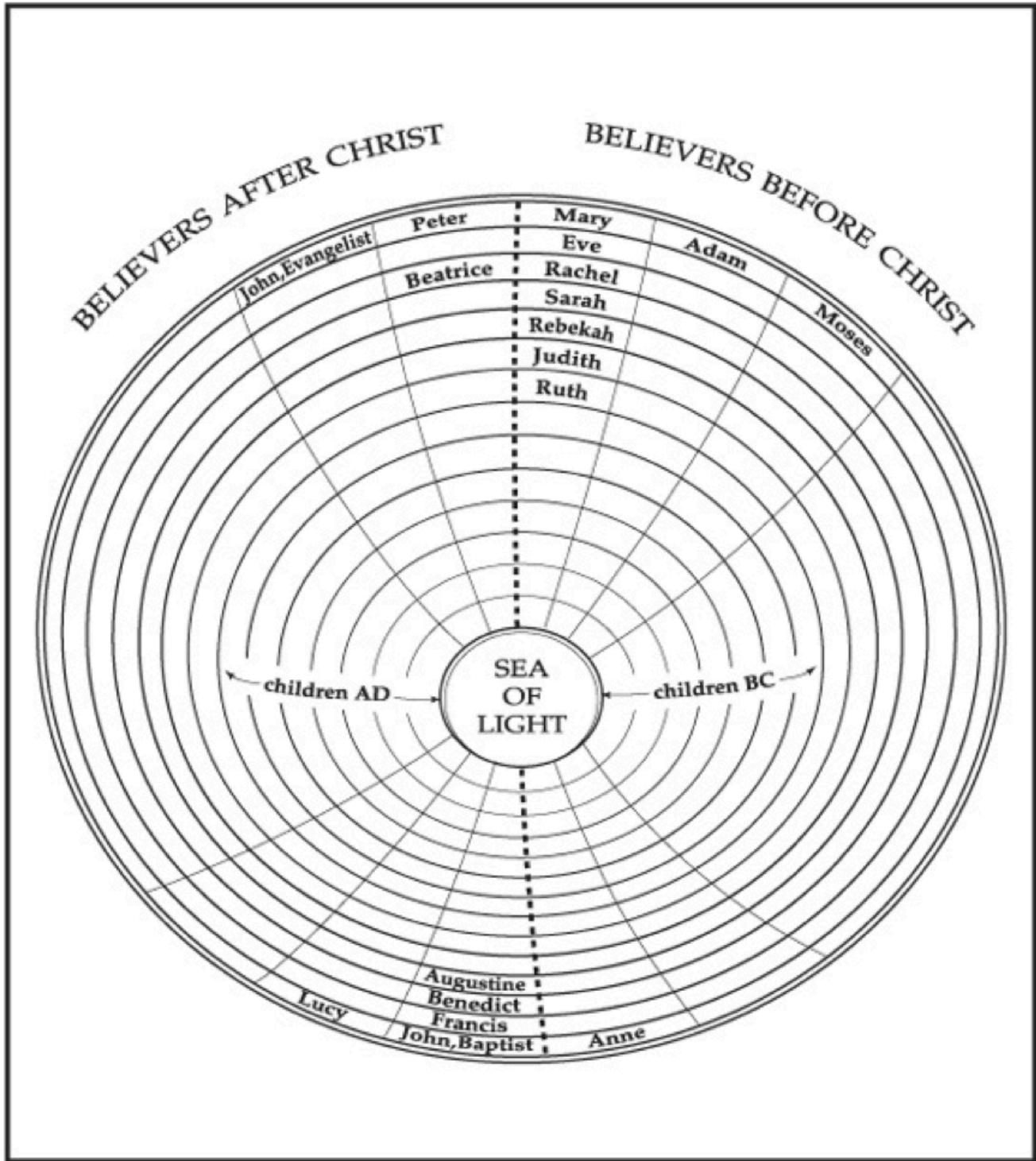


Figure 15. The seating in Dante's Empyrean



CANTO 30

*Primum mobile, continued: the vision fades—the Empyrean: the river
of light—the pilgrim's eyes drink—the heavenly rose*

- 1 Perhaps six thousand miles away the sixth
hour is burning, and our world is lowering its
shadow down almost to the level bed,
- 4 when the transparency of the sky, deep
above us, begins to become such that some
stars no longer appear as far as this floor,
- 7 and as the brilliant handmaid of the sun
comes further up, so the sky closes itself, light
after light, even to the most beautiful:
- 10 not otherwise the triumph that plays ever
around the point that had overcome me,
seeming to be enclosed by that which it encloses,
- 13 little by little faded from my sight; therefore
my seeing nothing and my love constrained me
to return with my eyes to Beatrice.
- 16 If what has been said of her up to now were
concentrated all in one praise, it would be
insufficient to serve this occasion.
- 19 The beauty I saw transcends measure, not
only beyond us, but surely I believe that only its

- Maker enjoys it fully.
- 22 At this pass I concede myself vanquished,
 more than any comic or tragic poet has ever
 been surpassed by a point of his theme,
- 25 for like the sun in the most trembling sight,
 the memory of that sweet smile separates my mind
 from myself.
- 28 From the first day I saw her eyes in this life,
 until this sight, my song has not been cut off
 from following,
- 31 but now my following after her beauty in
 poetry must desist, as must every artist at his
 ultimate limit.
- 34 Such as I leave her to greater proclaiming
 than by my trumpet, whose arduous matter now
 calls it away to conclude,
- 37 she began again, with the act and voice of a
 decisive leader: "We have come forth from the
 largest body into the Heaven that is pure light:
- 40 intellectual light, full of love: love of the true
 Good, full of gladness, gladness that
 transcends every other sweetness.
- 43 Here you will behold both armies of Paradise,
 and one of them with that appearance that you
 will see at the last justice."
- 46 Like a sudden flash of lightning, that scatters
 the spirits of sight, depriving the eye of its
 functioning on stronger objects,
- 49 a living light flashed about me and left me
 swathed in such a veil of its brightness that

- nothing appeared to me.
- 52 "Always the Love that quiets this heaven
gathers into itself with such a greeting, to make
the candle ready for its flame."
- 55 No sooner did these brief words come in to
me, than I understood I was rising above my
own powers,
- 58 and I became rekindled with new sight such
that no light is so pure that my eyes could not
have borne it.
- 61 And I saw light in the form of a river, radiant
as gold, between two banks painted with
wondrous spring blossoming;
- 64 from that flowing issued living sparks, and on
every side they entered into the flowers, like
rubies circumscribed by gold;
- 67 then, as if inebriated by the fragrances, they
plunged again into the wondrous torrent, and if
one entered it, another came forth.
- 70 "The deep desire that now enflames and
drives you to know what it is you see, pleases
me more the more swollen it becomes,
- 73 but of this water you must drink before that thirst
in you may be satisfied." So spoke the sun of my eyes.
- 76 And she added: "The river and the topazes
that enter and come forth and the laughing of
the flowers are shadowy prefaces of their truth.
- 79 Not that these things are unripe in
themselves; rather it is a lack on your part, since
your eyes are not yet strong enough."

- 82 There is no little child that more quickly
rushes with his face toward the milk, if he
awakens much later than his custom,
- 85 than I became, to make better mirrors of my
eyes, bending toward the wave that pours forth
for us to be bettered in it;
- 88 and as soon as the eaves of my eyelids drank
from it, then it seemed to me, instead of being
long, to have become round.
- 91 Then, like people who have been masked,
who look different from before, if they divest
themselves of the alien seeming under which
they had disappeared:
- 94 so the flowers and the sparks changed into
greater festivity, and I saw made manifest both
the courts of Heaven.
- 97 O splendor of God, in which I saw the high
triumph of the true kingdom, give me the power
to say how I saw it!
- 100 There is a light up there that makes the
Creator visible to those creatures that have their
peace only in seeing him,
- 103 and it spreads itself out in circular shape so
great that its circumference would be far too
large a belt for the sun.
- 106 All of its appearance is made of a ray
reflected from the highest part of the first
mobile, which from it takes life and power.
- 109 And as a hillside mirrors itself in the water at
its base, as if to see how it is adorned when it is

- opulent with greenery and flowers:
- 112 so, placed above the light all around, I saw
 mirroring themselves, in more than a thousand
 tiers, as many of us as have returned up there.
- 115 And if the lowest degree gathers so great a
 light into itself, how great is the breadth of this
 rose in its remotest petals!
- 118 My sight was not lost amid the breadth and
 height, but took in all the quantity and quality of
 that happiness.
- 121 Near and far, there, neither adds nor detracts,
 for where God governs without
 intermediary, natural law has no sway.
- 124 Into the yellow of the sempiternal rose, which
 rises by degrees and expands and breathes forth the
 fragrance of praise to the Sun of perpetual spring,
- 127 like one who is silent but wishes to speak,
 Beatrice drew me, and said: "Behold how great
 is the convent of the white stoles!"
- 130 See our city, how much it encircles, see that
 our thrones are so full that few people are still lacking.
- 133 And in that great throne which draws your
 eyes because of the crown already placed
 above it, before you dine at these nuptials
- 136 the noble Harry's soul will be enthroned,
 which will be august down below and will come
 to raise Italy up before she is so disposed.
- 139 The blind greed that bewitches you has made
 you like the little child that is dying of hunger but
 drives away his wet-nurse.

142 And the prefect of God's forum will be such
then that neither openly nor covertly will he
tread the same path with him.

145 But only briefly will he be suffered by God in
the sacred office, for he will be thrust for his
merits down there where Simon Magus is,

148 and he will make the one from Alagna enter
farther into the rock."



CANTO 30

Forse semilia miglia di lontano 1
ci ferve l'ora sesta, e questo mondo
china già l'ombra quasi al letto piano,
quando 'l mezzo del cielo a noi profondo 4
comincia a farsi tal ch' alcuna stella
perde il parere infino a questo fondo,
e come vien la chiarissima ancella 7
del sol più oltre, così 'l ciel si chiude
di vista in vista, infino a la più bella:
non altrimenti il triunfo che lude 10
sempre dintorno al punto che mi vinse,
parendo inchiuso da quel ch' ell'i 'nchiude,
a poco a poco al mio veder s'estinse, 13
per che tornar con li occhi a Béatrice
nulla vedere e amor mi costrinse.
Se quanto infino a qui di lei si dice 16
fosse conchiuso tutto in una loda,
poca sarebbe a fornir questa vice.
La bellezza ch' io vidi si trasmoda 19
non pur di là da noi, ma certo io credo
che solo il suo Fattor tutta la goda.
Da questo passo vinto mi concedo 22
più che già da punto di suo tema
sopratto fosse comico o tragedo,
ché, come sole in viso che più trema, 25
così lo rimembrar del dolce riso
la mente mia da me medesmo scema.

Dal primo giorno ch' i' vidi il suo viso
in questa vita, infino a questa vista,
non m'è il seguire al mio canto preciso,
ma or convien che mio seguir desista
più dietro a sua bellezza poetando,
come a l'ultimo suo ciascuno artista.

28

Cotal qual io la lascio a maggior bando
che quel de la mia tuba, che deduce
l'ardüa sua matera terminando,
con atto e voce di spedito duce
ricominciò: "Noi siamo usciti fore
del maggior corpo, al Ciel ch' è pura luce:

34

luce intellettüal piena d'amore,
amor di vero Ben pien di letizia,
letizia che trascende ogne dolzore.

37

Qui vederai l'una e l'altra milizia
di Paradiso, e l'una in quelli aspetti
che tu vederai a l'ultima giustizia."

40

Come sùbito lampo che discetti
li spiriti visivi sì che priva
da l'atto l'occhio di più forti obietti:
così mi circunfulse luce viva,
e lasciommi fasciato di tal velo
del suo fulgor che nulla m'appariva.

43

"Sempre l'amor che queta questo cielo
accoglie in sé con sì fatta salute,
per far disposto a sua fiamma il candelo."

46

Non fur più tosto dentro a me venute
queste parole brieve, ch' io compresi
me sormontar di sopr' a mia virtute,

49

52

55

e di novella vista mi raccesi,
tale che nulla luce è tanto mera
che li occhi miei non si fosser difesi.

58

E vidi lume in forma di rivera
fulvido di fulgore, intra due rive
dipinte di mirabil primavera;

61

di tal fiumana uscian faville vive,
e d'ogne parte si mettien ne' fiori,
quasi rubin che oro circunscreve;

64

poi, come inebriate da li odori,
riprofondavan sé nel miro gurge,
e s'una intrava, un'altra n'uscia fori.

67

"L'alto disio che mo t'infiamma e urge,
d'aver notizia di ciò che tu vei,
tanto mi piace più quanto più turge,

70

ma di quest' acqua convien che tu bei
prima che tanta sete in te si sazi."

73

Così mi disse il sol de li occhi miei.

Anco soggiunse: "Il fiume e li topazi
ch'entrano ed escono e 'l rider de l'erbe
son di lor vero umbriferi prefazi.

76

Non che da sé sian queste cose acerbe,
ma è difetto da la parte tua,
che non hai viste ancor tanto superbe."

79

Non è fantin che sì sùbito rua
col volto verso il latte, se si svegli
molto tardato da l'usanza sua,
come fec' io, per far migliori spegli
ancor de li occhi, chinandomi a l'onda
che si deriva perché vi s'immegli;

82

85

e sì come di lei bevve la gronda
de le palpebre mie, così mi parve
di sua lunghezza divenuta tonda.

88

Poi, come gente stata sotto larve,
che pare altro che prima, se si sveste
la sembianza non sua in che disparve:
così mi si cambiaro in maggior feste
li fiori e le faville, sì ch'io vidi
ambo le corti del Ciel manifeste.

91

O isplendor di Dio, per cu' io vidi
l'alto triunfo del regno verace,
dammi virtute a dir com' io il vidi!

94

Lume è là sù che visibile face
lo Creatore a quella creatura
che solo in lui vedere ha la sua pace,
e si distende in circular figura
in tanto che la sua circunferenza
sarebbe al sol troppo larga cintura.

100

Fassi di raggio tutta sua parvenza
reflesso al sommo del mobile primo,
che prende quindi vivere e potenza.

103

E come clivo in acqua di suo imo
si specchia, quasi per vedersi addorno
quand' è nel verde e ne' fioretti opimo:

106

sì, soprastando al lume intorno intorno,
vidi specchiarsi in più di mille soglie
quanto di noi là sù fatto ha ritorno.

109

E se l'infimo grado in sé raccoglie
sì grande lume, quanta è la larghezza
di questa rosa ne l'estreme foglie!

112

115

La vista mia ne l'ampio e ne l'altezza
non si smarriva, ma tutto prendeva
il quanto e 'l quale di quella allegrezza.

118

Presso e lontano, lì, né pon né leva,
ché dove Dio senza mezzo governa
la legge natural nulla rileva.

121

Nel giallo de la rosa sempiterna,
che si dignada e dilata e redole
odor di lode al Sol che sempre verna,
qual è colui che tace e dicer vole,
mi trasse Béatrice, e disse: "Mira
quanto è 'l convento de le bianche stole!"

124

Vedi nostra città quant' ella gira,
vedi li nostri scanni sì ripieni
che poca gente più vi si disira.

127

E 'n quel gran seggio a che tu li occhi tiene
per la corona che già v'è sù posta,
prima che tu a queste nozze ceni,

130

sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,
de l'alto Arrigo ch' a drizzare Italia
verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta.

133

La cieca cupidigia che v'ammalia
simili fatti v'ha al fantolino
che muor per fame e caccia via la balia.

136

E fia prefetto nel foro divino
allora tal che palese e coverto
non anderà con lui per un cammino.

139

Ma poco poi sarà da Dio sofferto
nel santo officio, ch' el sarà detruso
là dove Simon mago è per suo merto,

142

145

NOTES

1–36. Perhaps six thousand miles ... away to conclude: An astronomical simile (lines 1–12) prefaces the poet's renunciation of further attempts to render Beatrice's beauty (lines 13–36; cf. 14.79–81, 18.7–9, 23.22–24). The two sections are linked by words implying conclusion: we find "as far as" or "until" [*infino*] at lines 6, 9, 16, 29; also "closes" (line 8), "limit" (line 33), and "conclude" (line 36). Poetic valediction echoes the sky that "closes itself," and both the poet's art and the pilgrim's journey will cross a significant boundary in the canto.

1–15. Perhaps six thousand miles ... my eyes to Beatrice: Like stars fading at dawn, the spectacle of circling angelic orders vanishes, and the pilgrim's eyes return to the eyes of Beatrice, where the angels had first appeared (see 28.1–12 and note). The divine point of lines 10–11, enclosing what it seems enclosed by, is itself enclosed by the conceit of the lady's eyes as the beginning and end of the pilgrim's view of the angels (see line 9 and note). By the logic of lines 10–11, a further implication is that the divine encloses the lady, and the poem.

1–9. Perhaps six thousand ... to the most beautiful: This is the first of three sunrise scenes in the Empyrean (see 31.118–20; 32.106–8 and notes). Mention of night, the "shadow" of earth, which never extends beyond the subsolar spheres, heralds a major transition. See Additional Note 6.

1–3. Perhaps six thousand ... the level bed: For Dante, the circumference of the earth was 20,400 miles (*Conv.* 2.13.11); noon is distant from sunrise by a quarter of this, or 5100 miles, so if noon is 6000 miles away, above the river Ganges, sunrise for Italy is 900 miles away, about an hour.

2–3. our world ... level bed: If the axis of the sun and of the earth's conical shadow (9.118–19 and note) is imagined as a straight line with the earth's center as its fulcrum, and if the sun is just below that horizon on one side, then the shadow will be just above that horizon on the other. As the sun rises, the shadow sinks; when the sun touches the horizon, the shadow's apex will be in the same plane on the opposite side. Cf. 29.1–9, 1–3 and notes, and Additional Note 8.

4–6. when the transparency ... as this floor: Rarely for *Paradiso*, the point of view is not the *primum mobile*, but Italy ("this floor"), from which we look up through the medium of the air to the summit of the sky ("deep above us").

7–8. and as the brilliant handmaid of the sun comes further up: Aurora (the dawn), one of the Hours (see *Purg.* 22.118–20 and note), and, more recently, the morning star (Venus), have all been identified by commentators as the "handmaid." Ovid has all three present at the sunrise in *Met.* 2.111–49; indeed, Dante adapts *Met.* 2.112–14:

See, watchful Aurora from the shining east throws wide
her crimson doors and rose-filled halls: the stars flee,
gathered in flocks by the light bearer [*lucifer*],
and he is last to depart his post in the sky.

The passage supports either Aurora or Venus as the sun's handmaid, since Venus gathers the stars, then fades (as in Dante's line 9; see next note), but Aurora is the chief cause of the stars' flight (she appears again, dispelling the darkness, at *Met.* 2.144; see also 31.124–29 and note). The superlative in line 7 [*chiarissima*] favors brilliant Venus, but the syntax of the passage, linking the first brightness in line 5 ("begins to become") to its increase in lines 7–8 ("comes further up") supports the candidacy of Aurora, the more likely cause of the effect described in lines 4–6.

9. light after light, even to the most beautiful: Venus, loveliest and brightest of stars, is the last to disappear in the light of the rising sun. On Dante's famous error, see the note on *Purg.* 1.19–21. However, when in Pisces Venus would indeed rise several hours before the sun in Aries. The rhyme words to lines 5 and 9 echo the first mention of Beatrice's star-bright eyes (*Inf.* 2.53, 55).

10–12. not otherwise the triumph ... which it encloses: A triumph is a procession (see *Purg.* 29.107–8 and note, and *Purgatorio* Additional Note 16), though not normally a circular one; that it "plays" [*lude*] suggests a theatrical performance [*ludo*] (see *Inf.* 22.118 and note), accommodating divine mysteries to the poet's understanding (see note to 4.40–42). Dante seems to echo here the famous second definition of God in the *Liber XXIV philosophorum* as "an intelligible sphere, whose center is everywhere, and circumference nowhere," also echoed by Bonaventura (*Itinerarium* 5.8).

16–21. If what has been said ... enjoys it fully: Line 16 echoes "I say of her," a formula in Dante's praise of Beatrice in the prose division of "Donne ch'avete" ([lines 16–18] VN 19.27–30), as well as the author's promise in concluding his youthful work "to say of her what has not been said of any woman" (VN 42.2). The "style of praise" (*stile della loda*; see VN 18.8–9, *Purg.* 24.49–51 and note) in that work informs the poet's hyperbole here, rolling all praise up into one.

To Dante, Beatrice "seemed not the daughter of a mortal man, but of God" (VN 2.8, adapting Homer's praise of Hector as cited in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* 7.1). Only God can know a creature completely (cf. Ps. 138.1–3, 13–17).

22–24. At this pass ... point of his theme: For the poet's duty to choose a manageable subject, see 23.64–66 and note. For Dante's naming his poem "*Comedy*" and his conception of its genre, see *Inf.* 21.2 with note, closely following on Virgil's calling the *Aeneid* a *tragedy* (*Inf.* 20.113; cf. also *DVE*, 2.4.5, and *Ep.* 13.28–30). Early commentators treated the poem as of mixed genre, at once comedy, tragedy, and satire, the last because of the criticism of the papacy and contemporary institutions, as in lines 139–48.

28–33. From the first day ... his ultimate limit: Dante dates his praise of Beatrice from his first sight of her as a child (*VN* 2.1). All human skill has its limits, and the subject at hand is beyond even a great poet like Dante. For the artisan-poet, see *Purg.* 26.115–17 and note, and *Inter cantica* there.

34–36. Such as I leave her ... away to conclude: Dante does not suppose a future poet would sing of Beatrice; rather, the *tuba* typical of high epic style can be trumped only by the fanfares of the Last Judgment (*Apoc.* 8.2–10.7; see, using the same word [*bando*], *Purg.* 30.13 and note). *Deduce* at line 35 conceals a metaphor for poetic song as drawing and spinning thread, as in Ovid, *Met.* 1.4: “Draw out my song” [*deducite ... carmen*]: this metaphor informs *preciso* [cut off] in line 30.

37–123. she began again ... natural law has no sway: In this major transition, the pilgrim’s crossing from the temporal to the divine occurs in four stages: (1) Beatrice describes the next Heaven and its marvels (lines 37–45); (2) the pilgrim, surrounded by a burst of light (46–54), sees a river of light, its banks tended by angels (55–81), but (3) this image is left behind after he drinks from the river with his eyes (82–87); (4) thereafter he views an assembly of the blessed (88–123). The image of the river, drawing on *Apoc.* 22.1 (see note to 61–63) is the pilgrim’s first glimpse of the realm of pure, intelligible light. See Additional Note 6.

37–45. she began again ... at the last justice: Fulfilling Benedict’s promise (22.58–63), Beatrice tells the pilgrim he will henceforth see souls as if reclothed in bodies, as they will appear at the Last Judgment, (cf. lines 34–35). But the blessed do not really have bodies (cf. 25.122–29 and notes, and 91–96 and note); the pilgrim will see an accommodated display. See Introduction, pp. 14–15.

38–40. We have come forth ... light full of love: From the largest and swiftest of all the physical spheres, the *primum mobile*, the pilgrim and Beatrice enter the Empyrean, described by some Scholastics as *lux pura*, pure intellectual light; it is “placed” only within the mind of God (27.109–14), even as it bounds the *primum mobile* with light and love (see 28.54). For Dante, as for the Neoplatonic tradition, the intellectual sphere contains and governs the world of Nature, as the soul the body. See *Par.* 2.133–48 and note, Additional Notes 10 and 11, and Nardi 1967b.

38–39. We have come forth from the largest body: Compare *Inf.* 1.23, “having come forth [*uscito*] out of the deep onto the shore.” Here too the pilgrim’s motion echoes the Exodus, an archetype for the poem’s action; see our introduction to the *Purgatorio*, pp. 11–15, *Ep.* 13.21, and *Conv.* 2.1.6: “during the exit [*uscita*] of the people of Israel from Egypt.” See also 31.85–87 and note.

39–41. pure light ... gladness: Affect (love) follows upon understanding (sight, enabled by light) to bring about joy (“gladness”; cf. *Purg.* 18.32–33 and note). For the linking of terms [*gradatio*] see also lines 28–33, 95–99, and 28.28–30 and notes.

43–44. Here you will behold both armies of Paradise: Both the legions of angels and the redeemed souls of the Church Triumphant in Heaven. The military emphasis follows from the status of the blessed as trophies of Christ's victory in the Resurrection (see 9.118–25, 14.124–25, 23.19–20 and notes). The angels, too, fought against Satan (cf. *Inf.* 7.12, 34.121 and notes).

45. that you will see at the last justice: Further assurance that the pilgrim will be saved (cf. *Inf.* 3.91–93; *Par.* 15.28–30, 25.52–56 and notes); see also line 135.

46–54. Like a sudden flash ... ready for its flame: Preparation of the pilgrim's sight is detailed with terms signifying light at lines 46, 49, 51, and 54.

46. Like a sudden flash of lightning that scatters: Lightning suggests the direct agency of Heaven (cf. 6.79, and *Purg.* 9.28–30, 12.25–27, 29.16–30 and notes). The interruption of the pilgrim's vision caps a series: the vision of the angels faded (line 14); the poet's mind lapsed (line 25), and the poet's praise was cut off (line 30). Compare the challenge of conceiving and writing the *Paradiso* stated at 1.1–12, and summarized by Shaw 1981: what is seen cannot be fully grasped by the mind; what is grasped memory cannot retain; and what is retained cannot adequately be put into words. Cf. *Purg.* 32.61–90 and note.

49–51. a living light ... appeared to me: Last of the many references to Saul being "caught up to the third Heaven" and converted into Paul the Apostle (Acts 9.3): "And suddenly a light from heaven shone round about him [*circumfulsit eum*]" (cf. *Inf.* 2.28, and *Par.* 1.4–6, 2.37–39, 26.10–12 and notes; also *Ep.* 13.79). "Flashed about me" [*circumfulse*] renders Dante's only use of this term, which joins *fulgere* [shine, glow] with the prefix for encirclement, exactly transposing the Vulgate term. The citation prepares the transcendence of line 57 (see also Matt. 17.1–13, of the transfiguration; cf. *Purg.* 32.73–81 and notes).

Entering the Empyrean (for Aquinas, the "third Heaven" Paul visits; *ST* 2a 2ae q. 175 a. 3) was the pilgrim's goal at the outset (1.4–5).

52–54. Always the love that quiets ... the candle for its flame: Further reference to Augustine's unquiet heart (see 1.112, 2.112, etc.); for the Empyrean "quieted" by Love, see 32.61; also 1.97 and note. "Always" suggests that the pilgrim follows a path taken by all the saved.

53. greeting: Our translation of *salute*, the word Dante had used for both Beatrice's greeting and his salvation; see *VN* 3.10, 11.4, and Additional Note 1.

54. to make the candle ready for its flame: Compare Guinizelli, "Al cor gentil," 21–22:

Amor per tal ragion sta' n cor gentile
per qual lo foco in cima del doplero.
[Love for the same reason stays in the gentle heart
as the flame does atop the torch.]

See 28.1–6, and *Purg.* 26.92, 97–99 and notes.

55–60. No sooner did these brief words ... not have borne it: That the pilgrim exceeds his own powers recalls 1.70 (see note), where his *trasumanar* [self-transcendence] was compared to Glaucus becoming a god in the sea.

61–69. And I saw light ... another came forth: The pilgrim's sight of a river of light, from which angels emerge and reimmerse themselves after entering the flowers on the riverbanks, anticipates what is to follow (76–78). The scene represents divine power, distributed by the angelic intelligences, pouring into the spiritual world, then into the physical (see note to line 61).

61–63. And I saw light ... wondrous spring blossoming: See Apoc. 22.1: "And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb," prefigured by Daniel 7.10: "A swift stream of fire [*fluvius igneus*] issued forth from before him [God]"). Also cited by commentators is a passage of the poem by Alain de Lille, *Anticlaudianus* 6.241–42, where the Trinity is at once fountain [*fons*], stream [*rivus*], and flow [*fluens*].

61. And I saw light in the form of a river: The "flow" of divine power goes back to Plotinus's ideas of creation as the overflowing of the goodness of the One, influenced by Christians who had absorbed Middle Platonism: in Macrobius the sun is the "fount of celestial light" (*Comm.* 1.20.2); while Pseudo-Dionysius imagines God as a sun, "a fontal ray and superemanating effusion of light" (*De nom. div.* 4.5). Commenting on the *Liber de causis* 1.1 (cited at *Ep.* 13.57), Albertus Magnus continues this emphasis: "Actual being ... flows [*fluit*] from the essence that is the form of things, as light flows from its source [*sicut lumen fluit a luce*]; see also Aquinas, *In librum de causis expositio*§363: "All the goodness found in things flows from the first cause ... and this is because although the first cause flows in a single influx over all things, its influx is received by different things in different ways" (see 1.2–3 and note); also *Conv.* 3.2.4 (quoting *Liber de causis* 20) and 3.14.5. See Additional Notes 10 and 11.

62. radiant as gold: In Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudianus* 5.395, the Empyrean is "brighter than gold" [*fulgentior auro*]. A textual variant, *fluvido* [fluid] rather than *fulvido* [tawny, golden] would emphasize the liquidity of the light (see Ariani 1993).

62–63. between two banks ... wondrous spring blossoming: *Primavera* is here a trope for flowers (whole for part, or cause for effect). The flowers, and the use of the word for "spring" (elsewhere only at *Purg.* 28.51 and 143, *Par.* 28.116), distantly echo the valley of Princes (*Purg.* 7.61–136 and note), and the Earthly Paradise (*Purg.* 28.1–36, 49–51 and notes).

64–66: from that flowing ... circumscribed by gold: Ruby and gold, the colors of love and of the Empyrean, pinpoint the sparks of the angels entering the yellow blossoms; they are like gems in a precious setting. The entry and exit of the angels recalls the Jacob's ladder on which they ascend and descend (22.70–75 and note), and recapitulates the rhythm of divine

procession and return.

67. as if inebriated. See Ps. 35.9: "They shall be inebriate with the plenty of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure." The psalm text exemplifies how the joys of Heaven may be spoken of with synesthetic metaphors that employ several senses, especially touch, taste, and smell. The plunge of the angels anticipates lines 85–90. See 27.1–3 and note.

68. plunged again into the wondrous torrent: "Torrent" [*gurge*] transcends its negative precedents: the seas that nearly drown Aeneas's crew at *Aen.* 1.118, the whirlpool of Charybdis (*Aen.* 3.421), Styx and Cocytus, and the waters that purge the sinful (*Aen.* 6.741), are all *gurgites*; but so is the sea where Glaucus dwells as a sea god (see 1.67–69 and note). See Additional Note 2, and Rossi 1985.

70–75. The deep desire ... the sun of my eyes: As in the earthly Paradise, where the pilgrim is drawn upstream by desire for Matelda, Beatrice approves of the pilgrim's desire to know, whetted in suggestively erotic terms ("swollen"; cf. 10.139–48 and note). She is still his sun; the continuity of the poet's desire from his first enamorment to Beatrice's present exaltation, exemplifying the affirmation of love's goodness in *Purg.* 17.91–92 and 18.37–39 (with notes), is one of the poem's significant achievements. This is the center-point of the canto; for the "spiritual senses" suggested, see note to lines 82–90.

76–78. And she added ... shadowy prefaces of their truth: The river, its banks, and the angels anticipate what is to follow. Line 78 reflects Paul's account of how Jewish ceremonial will be superseded by Christian ritual; see Colossians 2.17, and especially Heb. 10.1: "For the Law [has] a shadow [*umbra*] of the good of things to come [*futurorum bonorum*], not the very image of the things."

77. the laughing of the flowers: Dante adopts a poetic metaphor often used in rhetorical treatises to exemplify metaphor itself (cf. *Carmina Burana* 114.1: "Now all the fields laugh"; also Geoffroi de Vinsauf, *Poetria nova* lines 1764–66). Basic poetic technique is again applied to render the highest truths.

79–81. Not that these things ... not yet strong enough: Beatrice means that the things that the pilgrim sees—the angels, the blessed, God's outpouring in the river—are not unripe, they are real and present. But the mode in which they appear will change as the pilgrim's sight becomes stronger.

82–96. There is no little child ... the courts of Heaven: The transition from a linear to a circular image of heavenly light (see first note to canto 28) occupies five terzinas: as in *Purg.* 31.94–105 and 33.136–45 (see notes), where drinking from the two rivers of Eden brings about the restoration of justice, here the draught of light effects a passage into the poem's final vision of Heaven.

The idea of poetic eloquence as a torrent is in the background (cf. the pilgrim's greeting of

Virgil, *Inf.* 1.80). When Dante speaks of "milk" in the poem, he refers either to infants at the breast or to poets nourished by the Muses (e.g., *Purg.* 22.102, of Homer, "to whom the Muses gave more milk than ever to any other"); see also *Purg.* 22.64–66, *Par.* 23.55–60 and notes, and note to lines 82–84.

82–90. There is no little child ... to have become round: The conceit of drinking through the eyes as if through the mouth (see line 74) continues, a case of synesthetic metaphor (cf. Ps. 33.9, "O taste and see," cited at note to 1.68), though the pilgrim makes his eyes into mirrors (line 85), again affirming the primacy of vision.

82–84: There is no little child ... later than his custom: The pilgrim's urgency is that of a just-awakened baby, its hunger sharpened by delay. For the basis of love and desire in infants, see *Purg.* 16.85–90, 91–93; 24.106–12; 27.43–45 (where Beatrice is also the bait) and notes. See also *Par.* 14.64–65, and note to 23.121–26. The light that sustains the universe is, in metaphor, milk from a mother's breast.

85–87. than I became ... to be bettered in it: The rush to drink, and reference to the eyes as mirrors, recalls the actions of the dreamer of the *Roman de la rose*: he sees in the fountain of Narcissus two crystals that reflect an entire garden, including the red rose that draws him on for the length of the poem (see *RR* 1425–1680, and see note to lines 70–75 and 117); see also 3.16–18 and note.

88. and as soon as the eaves of my eyelids drank from it: In a remarkable metaphor, the eyelashes (or eyelids) are thought of as the eaves [*gronde*] that channel rain off a roof (gutters are *grondai*; for the metaphor in another context, see *DVE* 1.10.4). Dante's homely word replaces the standard term for eyelids or eyelashes [*ciglio, cigli*]; cf. 23.78, 32.138). See Additional Note 6.

91–96. Then like people ... the courts of Heaven: Disclosure of the "real" image is like the moment of unmasking at a ball; but see note to lines 37–45.

97–123. O splendor of God ... natural law has no sway: The view of the celestial court is provided by the *lumen gloriae* through which God makes himself visible to man, yet still indirectly: reflected from the surface of the *primum mobile*, the divine ray affords the pilgrim a view of the blessed in the Empyrean rose that is a reflection of that light. This is the third of the "three lights" in aid of the pilgrim's journey (see Singleton 1958 and Additional Note 1). Deferral of a direct gaze into the Trinity leaves room for further exaltation ahead.

97–99. O splendor of God ... to say how I saw it: Line 97 closely echoes 1.2 ("penetrates ... and shines forth"), and marks the pilgrim's full passage into the heavenly court; the poet uses triple identical rhyme *vidi* ["I saw"; lines 95, 97, 99], a pattern used in the poem only for the name of Christ and at *Purg.* 20.65–69 (see note); here it furnishes three of the twenty-five instances of "see" [*vedere*] and related terms in the canto. The rhyme is a "signature" of the poet-craftsman, completing the transition begun by the *gradatio* of lines

100–108. There is a light ... takes life and power: Comparing the circumference of the base of the rose to the sun describes both its vast size and its brilliance; in lines 103–5, each line includes a word denoting circularity.

The direct ray descending from God and reflected from the *primum mobile* represents how that sphere is itself driven by its desire for the divine ray; the purely spiritual Heaven and physical world are in vital contact (Nardi 1967b).

109–14. And as a hillside ... have returned up there: The rising rows of the celestial court are compared to a verdant slope reflected in a lake; the rows might suggest terraces, but the image of an amphitheatre with ranks of seats is more immediate (see 32.7–39 and note). The triumph of 23.19–21, which received the pilgrim like one of the blessed arriving in Heaven, anticipated this assembly (see 31.37–39 and note); note the emphasis on going to Heaven as a return.

109. a hillside: Italian *clivo* (cf. "declivity"), based on Lat. *clivus*, was used of the steep roads up the hills of Rome, including the Capitoline (Scott 1977).

110. as if to see how it is adorned: The hillside is personified, as if gazing on itself in a mirror, perhaps alluding to the contemplative role of the blessed who populate it (cf. Rachel, *Purg.* 27.100–108, *Par.* 32.7–9 and note). Compare the despoiled tree, also personified, of Adam's progeny (*Inf.* 3.112–17, with note).

113. I saw mirroring themselves in more than a thousand tiers: That the blessed look down into the central area rather than directly up at the light is a possible reading; one of them gazes at a soul diametrically across the rose (31.133–34), and the pilgrim will look up for the final vision (33.49–51). The "mirroring" might also refer to the formation of the rose itself from the reflected light of God's glory (see note to lines 97–123).

115–23. And if the lowest degree ... natural law has no sway: Given the size of the rose, the outermost petals are in a sense distant; but the pilgrim can see across to them because this distance imposes no reduction of size on what he sees (there is really no "space" between) and no diminution of intensity or clarity because of an intervening medium. Cf. 29.25–27, 31.70–78 and notes.

115–17. And if the lowest degree ... its remotest petals: The outermost petals of the rose will encircle a space far more vast than the enormous circle where the pilgrim stands (lines 104–5). For the rose's shape, see 32.7–39, 25–26 and notes.

117. the breadth of this rose in its remotest petals: Dante introduces a white rose as the image for his celestial court; its "petals" are the white-clad souls of the blessed (line 128; see 25.122–29 and note; see "white robes" [*stolis albis*] at Apoc. 3.5, 7.13). The choice reflects devotion to the Virgin Mary (in the liturgy she is the "rose without thorn," *rosa sine spina*), but

also the *Roman de la rose*, in which the red rose signifies the female sexual object of the dreamer, from his first sight of it in the pool of Narcissus to the satisfaction of his desire (see note to lines 85–87). The alteration of the red rose into the white and yellow rose of the Empyrean is an example of how Dante transformed the literature that preceded him.

124–48. Into the yellow ... enter further into the rock: Beatrice describes Heaven as an ideal imperial city with a throne reserved for Emperor Henry (or Harry) VII, in 1300 not yet elected emperor, and subsequently consigns Harry's chief antagonist, Pope Clement V, to the Malebolge in Hell. Her words reenact the vast reach of the pilgrim's ascent from Hell to the rose; cf. 31.4–24 and note.

124–26. Into the yellow ... the Sun of perpetual spring: The center of the rose casts forth scent (meaning praise) to the divine light, which renews itself like an eternal spring. Italian *vernare* [to become spring] is untranslatable with a single word (cf. *svernare*, 27.142); the consonant and assonant series binding lines 124–25 ("si *digrada e dilata e redole / odor di lod e al Sol*"), suggesting the pulsing life of the rose, can scarcely be rendered at all.

128–32. Beatrice drew me ... few people are still lacking: Garbed in the white stoles of their fictive bodies, the souls in the rose make up a "convent," implying a monastic community (see *Purg.* 26.127–32 and note, and Additional Note 4). There are few empty seats because the Last Judgment, when the tally will be complete, is not far off (see 32.25–27 and note, *Conv.* 2.14.13). Beatrice's pride in her populous city reverses Lam. 1.1 ("How doth the city sit solitary, that was once full of people"), used by Dante to describe Florence bereft of Beatrice (*VN* 30.1), and Rome abandoned by pope and emperor (*Ep.* 11.1, 21). See Carroll, and Martinez 1997.

130. See our city how much it encircles: Only at 25.56 is "Jerusalem" used to denote Heaven; the other use of the city's name in the *cantica* is satirical (19.127–29 and note). Dante's celestial city is reminiscent of Rome (see lines 110, 133–38; 31.34–36, 103–4; 32.116–20 and notes; and *Purg* 32.100–102 with note).

133–38. And in that great throne ... before she is so disposed: Henry (or Harry), count of Luxembourg (b. 1275) was elected emperor in 1308 and crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle on Epiphany, 6 January 1309. His idealism, honesty, and popularity encouraged hopes for renewed imperial authority in Italy, and he initially enjoyed the support of Clement V, who backed his election as a counterweight to the growing power of Philip IV, "the Fair." In the winter of 1310, the Emperor-elect crossed into Italy with a small army, and with the support of the Lombard cities that were his chief vassals, received (to Dante's great satisfaction; see *Ep.* 5) the iron crown of the Lombards in Milan on 6 January 1311. Yet Harry found his coronation at St. Peter's in Rome blocked by Robert of Anjou, allied with Florence and the Guelph league, and doing the bidding of the pope; the coronation took place instead at the Lateran on 29 June 1312. Meanwhile, Harry lost the support of the Lombard cities by attempting to reimpose imperial vicars and taxation. Thereafter he besieged Florence (cf. *Ep.* 6) but, when forced to raise the siege, retired to Pisa. Traveling south the following summer in order to besiege the

Angevin stronghold of Naples, Harry fell sick and died at Buonconvento, near Siena, on 24 August 1313.

137–38. to raise Italy up before she is so disposed: Since Italy is implicitly personified here (as she is explicitly at *Purg.* 6.76–90 and 16.91–96), that she is “not disposed” refers to the refusal of her citizens, especially Florentines (in 1312–13 ruled by the Black Guelphs; see *Inf.* 6.64–72 and note), to accept imperial authority. *Drizzare* has the sense of “raise to erect stature,” continuing the personification (see *Mon.* 1.11.3); for the word used in a moral sense, see *Purg.* 23.125–26 and note. “Disposed” is used in the philosophical sense, referring to suitability or inclination to be moved toward a goal, formed, or perfected; cf. *Mon.* 1.13.6, 3.10.13, and Additional Note 2.

135. before you dine at these nuptials: The pilgrim’s place at the “wedding supper of the Lamb,” the feast prophesied at Apoc. 19.9, is assured; cf. also 24.1–6, *Purg.* 32.73–75 and notes, and Additional Note 4.

136. the noble Harry’s soul will be enthroned: Despite *Purg.* 19.137 (see note there), Harry will retain the trappings of high office even in Paradise, possibly because, since he was an “anointed one” [*christus*], the emperor’s authority flows directly from Christ (see *Mon.* 3.16.15). A throne prepared for Francis expected in Heaven is found in Bonaventure’s *Legenda maior* 6.6; see also Kleinhenz 1995.

134. because of the crown already placed above it: Peters 1972 observes that glory and the imperial crown are mentioned together in the thirteenth-century Roman coronation ceremony: “Accept this sign of glory [*signum glorie*], the diadem of the kingdom, the crown of the empire [*coronam imperii*]” (Elze 1960). Rossi 1989a notes that at *Purg.* 6.89 the emperor’s saddle, from which he might guide Italy, also stood empty in 1300, because no emperor was crowned in Rome between Frederick II and Henry VII. See Additional Note 2.

139–41. The blind greed ... drives away his wet-nurse: For Dante, the great antagonist of human felicity was cupidity; first represented by the she-wolf of *Inf.* 1.49–54 (see note), it recurs throughout the poem (see *Inf.* 12.49–51, *Purg.* 20.10–14, *Par.* 27.121–26 and notes). The chief agents of cupidity on earth are corrupt popes and kings; the she-wolf’s great enemy will be the greyhound prophesied by Virgil (*Inf.* 1.101–5 and notes), probably an emperor, since *Mon.* 1.13.6–7 affirms that the emperor is beyond greed or cupidity by definition. See *Purg.* 33.34–51 and note.

141. is dying of hunger but drives away his wet-nurse: In a letter, Dante chided Florence for resisting Harry, “as if standing on the threshold of your prison repelling those who pity you, imprisoned as you are in handcuffs and leg irons, lest you might be freed” (*Ep.* 6.21). Cf. lines 82–84; also 27.127–35 and note.

142–44. And the prefect of God’s forum ... the same path with him: The pope is the ultimate arbiter of canon law (hence “God’s forum”); many late medieval popes were canon

lawyers. Clement V, residing by 1309 in Avignon and in league with Philip IV, "the Fair" (see *Inf.* 19.82–84, *Purg.* 20.91–93 and notes), fomented resistance to Harry in Italy after initially encouraging his mission (see 17.82, *Inf.* 6.64–72 and note, and *Ep.* 5.30) The passage probably means that the pope opposed Harry both secretly and openly. See Bowsky 1960, Menache 1998.

145–51. But only briefly ... further into the rock: Beatrice's final words in the poem are among its harshest. Clement V reigned from 1305 until April 1314, dying only eight months after Henry VII (August 1313); the close sequence was widely viewed as a sign of divine judgment. According to Dante's Nicholas III (*Inf.* 19.73–84), both Boniface VIII ("he of Alagna") and Clement V are expected in the slot where Nicholas is planted upside down.



CANTO 31

*The Empyrean, continued: Beatrice replaced—the pilgrim's thanks
to Beatrice—saint Bernard of Clairvaux—the blessed*

- 1 In the form, then, of a white rose the holy
army was shown to me that Christ wedded with
his blood,
- 4 but the other, which flying sees and sings the
glory of him who enamors it and the Goodness
that made it so numerous,
- 7 like a swarm of bees that enflower themselves
at one moment and in the next return
where their labor ensavors itself,
- 10 was descending into the great flower that is
adorned with so many petals and was rising thence
back up to where its love always spends its day.
- 13 They all had faces of lively flame, wings of
gold, and the rest so white that no snow
reaches that limit.
- 16 When they came down into the flower, from
tier to tier they extended the peace and love
they acquired, fanning their wings,
- 19 nor did the interposition, between what was
above and the flower, of so great a flying plenitude,

- impede the sight or the brightness,
- 22 for God's light is penetrative through the
universe according as this is worthy, so that
nothing can be an obstacle to it.
- 25 This secure and joyous kingdom, abounding
in people ancient and new, directed all its sight
and love toward one mark.
- 28 O triple Light, that in a single star, flashing in
their sight, fulfill them so, gaze down here at our
tempest!
- 31 If the barbarians, coming from a clime that
Helice covers every day, revolving with the son
for whom she yearns,
- 34 seeing Rome and its lofty works, were
stupified when the Lateran surpassed all human
things:
- 37 I, who had come to the divine from the
human, to the eternal from time, and from
Florence to a people just and whole,
- 40 with what amazement must I be filled?
Certainly my amazement and rejoicing made
me happy to hear nothing and to be mute.
- 43 And like a pilgrim who refreshes himself,
gazing, in the temple of his vow, and hopes,
later, to relate what it is like:
- 46 strolling with my eyes up through the living
light, I directed them along the tiers, now up,
now down, and now circling back.
- 49 I saw faces won to love—adorned with
others' light and their own smiles—and

gestures beautiful with all serenity.

- 52 The general form of Paradise my gaze had
already fully grasped, not yet halting to be fixed
on any part,
- 55 and I was turning with rekindled desire to ask
my lady about things of which my mind was in
suspense.
- 58 I expected one thing, but another answered
me: I thought to see Beatrice, but I saw an old
man clothed like the glorious ones;
- 61 his eyes and cheeks were suffused with
benevolent rejoicing, his compassionate
bearing was such as befits a tender father.
- 64 And "Where is she?" I quickly said.
Wherefore he: "To bring your desire to its last
fulfillment, Beatrice has sent me from my place,
- 67 and if you look up in the third rank, you will
see her again upon the throne her merits have
allotted her."
- 70 Without replying I lifted up my eyes, and I
saw her making herself a crown by reflecting
from herself the eternal rays.
- 73 From the region that thunders highest up, no
mortal eye is so distant, not one that is lost
deepest in the sea,
- 76 as was my gaze from Beatrice there, yet that
deprived me of nothing, for her image was not
descending to me mixed with any medium.
- 79 "O lady in whom my hope has strength and
who deigned for my salvation to leave your

footprints in Hell:

- 82 the grace and efficacy of all the things that I
have seen, I acknowledge to come from your
power and your goodness.
- 85 You have drawn me from slavery to liberty by
all those ways, by all the modes that you had
the power to use.
- 88 Preserve the great things you have done in
me, so that my soul, which you have made
whole, may be still pleasing to you when its knot
with the body is untied."
- 91 Thus I prayed, and she, distant as she
seemed, smiled and gazed at me; then she
turned back to the eternal Fountain.
- 94 And the holy old man: "That you may
perfectly complete your journey," he said, "for
which prayers and holy love have sent me,
- 97 fly with your eyes through this garden, for
seeing it will further strengthen your gaze to rise
into the divine light.
- 100 And the queen of Heaven, for whom I burn all in love,
will do us every grace, for I am her faithful Bernard."
- 103 As one who comes, perhaps from Croatia, to
see our Veronica, who because of his ancient
hunger is not sated
- 106 but says in his thought, as long as it is shown,
"My lord Jesus Christ, true God, now was your
face indeed like that?":
- 109 such was I, gazing at the lively charity of him
who in this world, contemplating, had tasted of

that peace.

- 112 "Son of grace, this joyous life," he began, "will
not be known to you, if you still keep your eyes
down here at the bottom;
- 115 but gaze on the circles, even the most
remote, until you see the throned queen to
whom this kingdom is subject and devoted."
- 118 I raised my eyes, and as in the morning the
eastern part of the horizon surpasses that
where the sun declines,
- 121 so, as if from a valley going up a mountainside
with my eyes, I saw a part in the highest that
surpassed with its light all the rest of that front.
- 124 And as in the place where we expect the
chariot that Phaethon guided ill, the sky is more
aflame and on this side and that the light is less:
- 127 so that peaceful oriflamme in the midst was
brightest, and in every direction the flame
lessened in equal degree.
- 130 And at that center I saw more than a
thousand rejoicing angels with outspread wings,
each one distinct in radiance and art.
- 133 There I saw smiling on their play and their
songs a beauty that gave gladness to the eyes
of all the other saints,
- 136 and had I as much wealth of speech as of
imagining I would not dare attempt the least of
her delightfulness.
- 139 Bernard, when he saw my eyes fixed and
attentive to his burning care, turned his

own toward her with so much love

142 that he made mine more ardent to gaze again.



CANTO 31

In forma dunque di candida rosa 1
mi si mostrava la milizia santa
che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa,
ma l'altra, che volando vede e canta 4
la gloria di colui che la 'nnamora
e la Bontà che la fece cotanta,
sì come schiera d'ape che s'infiora 7
una fiata e una si ritorna
là dove suo labore s'insapora,
nel gran fior discendeva che s'addorna 10
di tante foglie, e quindi risaliva
là dove 'l suo amor sempre soggiorna.
Le facce tutte avean di fiamma viva, 13
e ali d'oro, e l'altro tanto bianco
che nulla neve a quel termine arriva.
Quando scendean nel fior, di banco in banco 16
porgevan de la pace e de l'ardore
ch' elli acquistavan, ventilando il fianco,
né l'interporsi tra 'l disopra e 'l fiore 19
di tanta plenitudine volante
impediva la vista e lo splendore,
ché la luce divina è penetrante 22
per l'universo secondo ch' è degno,
sì che nulla le puote essere ostante.
Questo sicuro e gaudioso regno, 25
frequente in gente antica e in novella,
viso e amore avea tutto ad un segno.

- Oh trina Luce, che 'n unica stella 28
scintillando a lor vista, sì li appaga,
guarda qua giuso a la nostra procella!
- Se i barbari, venendo da tal plaga 31
che ciascun giorno d'Elice si cuopra,
rotante col suo figlio, ond' ella è vaga,
veggendo Roma e l'ardüa sua opra,
stupefaciens quando Laterano 34
a le cose mortali andò di sopra:
 ïo, che al divino da l'umano,
 a l'eterno dal tempo era venuto,
 e di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano,
 di che stupor dovea esser compiuto? 37
- Certo tra esso e 'l gaudio mi facea
libito non udire e starmi muto.
- E quasi peregrin che si ricrea 43
nel tempio del suo voto riguardando,
e spera già ridir com' ello stea:
 su per la viva luce passeggiando,
 menava ïo li occhi per li gradi
 mo sù, mo giù, e mo recirculando. 46
- Vedëa visi a carità süadi— 49
d'altrui lume fregiati e di suo riso—
e atti ornati di tutte onestadi.
- La forma general di Paradiso 52
già tutta mio sguardo avea compresa,
in nulla parte ancor fermato fiso,
 e volgeami con voglia riaccesa
 per domandar la mia donna di cose
 di che la mente mia era sospesa. 55

Uno intendëa, e altro mi rispuose:
credea veder Beatrice, e vidi un sene
vestito con le genti glorïose;
diffuso era per li occhi e per le gene
di benigna letizia, in atto pio
quale a tenero padre si convene.

58

E: "Ov' è ella?" sùbito diss' io.

61

Ond' elli: "A terminar lo tuo disiro
mosse Beatrice me del loco mio,
e se riguardi sù nel terzo giro
dal sommo grado, tu la rivedrai
nel trono che suoi merti le sortiro."

67

Sanza risponder, li occhi sù levai,
e vidi lei che si facea corona
reflettendo da sé li etterni rai.

70

Da quella regïon che più sù tona
occhio mortale alcun tanto non dista,
qualunque in mare più giù s'abbandona,
quanto lì da Beatrice la mia vista,
ma nulla mi facea, ché sua effige
non descendëa a me per mezzo mista.

73

"O donna in cui la mia speranza vige
e che soffristi per la mia salute
in inferno lasciar le tue vestige:

76

di tante cose quant' i' ho vedute
dal tuo podere e da la tua bontate
riconosco la grazia e la virtute.

82

Tu m'hai di servo tratto a libertate
per tutte quelle vie, per tutt' i modi
che di ciò fare avei la potestate.

85

La tua magnificenza in me custodi,
sì che l'anima mia, che fatt' hai sana,
piacente a te dal corpo si disnodi."

88

Così orai, e quella, sì lontana
come parea, sorrise e riguardommi;
poi si tornò a l'eterna fontana.

91

E 'l santo sene: "Acciò che tu assommi
perfettamente," disse, "il tuo cammino,
a che priego e amor santo mandommi,

94

vola con li occhi per questo giardino,
ché veder lui t'accorcerà lo sguardo
più al montar per lo raggio divino.

97

E la regina del Cielo, ond' io ardo
tutto d'amor, ne farà ogne grazia,
però ch' i' sono il suo fedel Bernardo."

100

Qual è colui che forse di Croazia
viene a veder la Veronica nostra,
che per antica fame non sen sazia

103

ma dice nel pensier, fin che si mostra,
""Segnor mio Iesú Cristo, Dio verace,
or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?":
tal era io mirando la vivace
carità di colui che 'n questo mondo
contemplando gustò di quella pace.

106

Figliuol di grazia, quest'esser giocondo,"
cominciò elli, "non ti sarà noto
tendendo li occhi pur qua giù al fondo,
ma guarda i cerchi infino al più remoto,
tanto che veggi seder la regina
cui questo regno è suddito e devoto."

109

112

115

Io levai li occhi, e come da mattina
la parte orïental de l'orizzonte
soverchia quella dove 'l sol declina:
così, quasi di valle andando a monte
con li occhi, vidi parte ne lo stremo
vincer di lume tutta l'altra fronte.

118

E come quivi ove s'aspetta il temo
che mal guidò Fetonte più s'infiamma,
e quinci e quindi il lume si fa scemo:

121

così quella pacifica oriafiamma
nel mezzo s'avvivava, e d'ogne parte
per igual modo allentava la fiamma.

124

E a quel mezzo con le penne sparte
vid' io più di mille angeli festanti,
ciascun distinto di fulgore e d'arte.

127

Vidi a lor giochi quivi e a lor canti
ridere una bellezza che letizia
era ne li occhi a tutti li altri santi,

130

e s' io avessi in dir tanta divizia
quanta ad imaginar, non ardirei
lo minimo tentar di sua delizia.

133

Bernardo, come vide li occhi miei
nel caldo suo caler fissi e attenti,
li suoi con tanto affetto volse a lei
che ' miei di rimirar fé più ardenti.

136

139

142

NOTES

1–30. In the form ... here at our tempest: The pilgrim views the first army of Heaven, human souls arrayed as a white rose (one terzina), tended to by the second army, angels compared to bees settling on flowers (seven terzinias). A return to the collectivity, and a final focus on the Trinity, one terzina apiece, makes ten in all. For the passage as a microcosm, and the simile at lines 4–12, see note below.

1–3. In the form ... wedded with his blood: The army of the Church, “purchased with his own blood” by Christ (Acts 20.28; and see *Purg.* 27.1–5, 11.32–33 and notes); they form a white rose because their robes (see 30.129) have been made “white in the blood of the Lamb” (*Apoc.* 7.14).

4–24. but the other ... an obstacle to it: The “descending” and “rising” of lines 10–11 reiterates the procession and return that organizes the cosmos; the descent “tier by tier” of lines 16–18 models the universal reach of God’s light (lines 22–24). The angels in the Empyrean enact the bond between the angelic movers and the heavenly spheres (cf. 28.73–78 and note). Their activity resembles the industry of bees as noted by Pseudo-Anselm, who describes them “moving between heaven and earth, like hardworking bees between flowers and the hive” (*PL* 158.774). Vergil emphasizes the division of labor when comparing the building of Carthage to a hive (*Aen.* 1.430–34, 436):

... some bring out
the grown-up young, and others with flowing honey
pack the cells, swelling them with sweet nectar,
or receive the burdens of those returning....
The fragrant honeys are scented with thyme [*redolentque thymo*].

The earlier use of *redole*, uniquely in the poem, at 30.125 (cf. *redolent*, line 436, above) betrays Dante’s awareness of Vergil’s passage.

4–12. but the other ... always spends its day: At *Aen.* 6.706–9 Vergil compares the souls in Elysium, thronging around the river Lethe, to swarming bees in a field; the passage includes terms (*volabant*, *insidunt*), assimilated here (lines 4, 7, 10) and elsewhere (*candida*, 30.1) into Dante’s text:

Unnumbered tribes and peoples were flying [*volabant*] around it,
and just as bees in the meadows during summer’s calm
alight [*insidunt*] on various flowers and throng around white lilies, the
whole plain buzzes with their murmur.

In the simile, the angels (line 4), the tenor of the comparison, are separated from the verbs for their activity (lines 10–11) by the vehicle of the comparison, the work of the bees (lines 7–9); to coordinate tenor with vehicle, the reader must follow the angels' descent and return (Lansing 1977).

4–6. but the other ... that made it so numerous: As the pilgrim had earlier proclaimed his love of the God that made him (26.58–60 and notes), the angels praise the creator whose goodness made them innumerable (see *Aen.* 6.706, cited above); that they fly reflects their "active life" of ministering to the world (see *Conv.* 2.4.9–13), that they see and sing reflects their contemplation and praise of God.

After Beatrice's introduction of the rose as a vast city (30.130–32), references to the building of cities and the division of labor makes of the rose a polity, consonant with the "ordered civility" of the angelic hierarchies (*Conv.* 2.4.13); for the differentiation of human endowments for the sake of civic life on earth, see 8.97–136, 118–20 and notes, *Mon.* 2.6.5–6, and Additional Note 2.

7–9. like a swarm of bees ... their labor ensavors itself: Gathered nectar becomes honey only when returned to the hive, that is, God (see *Aen.* 1.432–33, cited above). Both "enflower" [*infiora*, in this sense] and "ensavors" [*insapora*] follow the pattern of Dante's coinages with *in*- prefixes (see 4.28, 9.73–81 and notes). The Latinism *laboro* [labor] recalls how Aeneas's struggle to establish his people entailed *labores* [hard efforts] (*Aen.* 1.10).

13–15. They all had faces ... reaches that limit: For the angels, Dante follows Ezek. 1.13 and Daniel 7.9 (and see Matt. 28.3). Gold and flame red are the colors of the Empyrean (whose fiery charity was represented in art with gilded mosaics and gold paint); white is the color of unsullied purity (*Mon.* 1.11.3); see note to line 127.

16–18. When they came down ... fanning their wings: The apicultural sense of the angelic ministrations seems inverted: the angels draw from God and distribute to the souls, while bees take nectar from flowers to store in the hive. But see lines 7–9, and cf. 30.64–66 and note.

16–17. When they came down ... the peace and love: Cf. *ST* 1a q. 106 a. 4: "The holy angels, who most fully participate in the divine goodness, impart to those below them whatever they perceive in God."

19–21. nor did the interposition ... the sight or the brightness: Dante writes that angels "since they are without the rudeness of matter, are almost diaphanous because of the purity of their form" (*Conv.* 3.7.5).

22–24. for God's light is penetrative ... an obstacle to it: Line 24, joined to the beginning of line 5, recomposes the first line of the *Paradiso*, another recapitulation in the Empyrean (see lines 1–24, 43–48 and notes).

25–30. This secure and joyous ... down here at our tempest: Two groupings of souls, "ancient" and "new," are distinguished, to be explained in the next canto.

25. This secure and joyous realm: Compare 20.94, and see 32.117 and note. Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes in the *palazzo pubblico* of Siena (1339–40) illustrate security [*securitas*] with an ideal city-state at peace; see Additional Note 2.

27. all its sight and love toward one mark: All focus on their sovereign, like Vergil's bees, "as long as the king is safe they are of one mind" [*rege incolumi mens omnibus una est*] (*Geor.* 4.212). See 32.61.

30. gaze down here at our tempest: Dante uses the same word for tempest [It. *procella*] that describes the storms [Lat. *procellis*] that strike Aeneas and his crew (*Aen.* 1.85, 5.791). For the apostrophe, cf. *Consol.* 1.m.5.42–43: "Look now on this wretched earth [*O iam miseras respice terras*], you who bind the world with laws!" (and see *Mon.* 1.16.4). The petition at line 30, echoing *Purg.* 6.118–20, seems stimulated by the vision of a peaceful polity, as in the earlier instance (cf. 6.76).

31–51. If the barbarians ... with all serenity: The pilgrim is compared at lines 31–36 to Rome's invaders (perhaps Alaric's Goths, who sacked the city in 410 CE) gazing upon ancient Rome, and at lines 43–45 to a pilgrim who has reached the church he had vowed to visit; the two similes are mediated by the journey itself (lines 37–42). See also lines 103–8 and note.

31–36. If the barbarians ... surpassed all human things: Commentators refer to the Trojans admiring "the towers and high-rising roofs of the Latins" in Evander's pre-Roman city (*Aen.* 7.160–61), but Aeneas and his men also admire the building of Carthage (*Aen.* 1.421): "Aeneas marvels at the huge works, once mere huts."

31–32. If the barbarians ... for whom she yearns: Dante alludes to the constellations formed when the nymph Helice (also known as Callisto) and her son by Jupiter, Arcas, who had both been changed into bears by a jealous Juno (see *Purg.* 25.130 and note), were placed by Jupiter in the heavens as Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, the Great and Little Bears. Wrathful Juno insisted the pair be banned from touching the sea, lest they pollute it (Ovid, *Met.* 2.401–507); thus the Great Bear never sets for latitudes above the fifty-fifth parallel. Its visibility at night all year long originally defined "barbarian," that is non-Latin-speaking, northern regions (see *Purg.* 1.23–24, 29–30 and notes).

33. revolving with the son for whom she yearns: That one constellation might "yearn" for another (Ursa Minor includes the pole star, a fixed point in the heavens) is not mere poetic ornament: it tropes in terms of pagan myth how the spheres are moved by the desire of the angels for God (see 1.76–77, 28.100–102 and notes).

34–36. seeing Rome ... surpassed all human things: Dante here alludes to the wonders of ancient pagan and early Christian Rome, in disrepair in his own day. The Lateran

Palace, confiscated by the emperor Nero from the patrician Laterani and acquired by the emperor Constantine in the fourth century, subsequently became a papal palace; it burned in 1308, after the papacy abandoned Rome.

37–39. I, who had come ... just and whole: Three transitions in as many lines show that journey's end is near (cf. 32.139–41 and note). The first two are abstract and given in reverse order (from divine to human, eternal to temporal), while the third is historical and specific to the pilgrim, and in natural narrative order, combining the three results in a series of chiasmus. Greatest emphasis falls on Florence in line 39, so that its name resonates ironically within the Empyrean rose (see lines 10, 16, 19), and becomes synonymous with instability, injustice, and disease; cf. *Purg.* 6.127–51, *Par.* 15.97–99, 16.148–54 and notes.

37. I, who had come to the divine from the human: Dante emphasizes the first-person pronoun by requiring that it be bisyllabic (*io*), and by delaying the predicate of the sentence until line 40; the effect is to compress the whole journey into the clause modifying the subject pronoun, and thus back into the pronoun itself.

43–48. And like a pilgrim ... and now circling back: The pilgrim's ocular tour of the spectacle before him, looking up, down, and around (cf. 21.37–39, and note to 21.40–42) recapitulates his descending, circling, and rising motions over the whole poem (cf. 24.62–63, 33.22–23 and notes). He is like the pilgrim in the simile, for all Christians are pilgrims in this life (cf. 2 Cor. 5.6–7; Heb. 11.13, 1 Peter 2.11; and *Purg.* 13.94–96, 23.16–21; *Par.* 6.127–42 and notes); and he is represented as a pilgrim during the journey (cf. *Purg.* 2.63, 27.110–11; and *Par.* 1.51 and notes). For emphasis on the eye (and head) see Additional Note 14.

45. and hopes, later, to relate what it is like: The pilgrim is a witness who will soon relate his vision to others—that is, write the poem (see also lines 103–11). For "relate," "retell," see *Inf.* 1.10, *Par.* 1.5–6, and *VN* 41.12.

46–48. walking with my eyes ... now circling back: Compare *Aen.* 8.310–11, describing the future site of Rome: "Aeneas, wondering, looked all around with quick eyes [*oculos fert omnia circum*]." See lines 97 and 112–42, especially 121–22.

49–51. I saw faces ... with all serenity: The embodied appearance of the blessed (30.44–45) means the pilgrim can perceive faces, essential to the action of this and the following cantos (cf. lines 59–63, 92, 103–8; and see 32.46–48, 85–87).

52–93. The general form ... the eternal Fountain: The middle part of the canto relates the last change of guides in the poem, left unforeseen in the first canto of the poem (see *Inf.* 1.120–26 and notes). For the fountain, see note to 30.67, John 4.14, and "O qui perpetua," line 23 ("the fountain of the Good [*fons ... boni*]").

55–60. and I was turning ... the glorious ones: At *Purg.* 30.43–54, the pilgrim "turned to the left" to announce to Virgil his rekindled love at the return of Beatrice, only to find him

gone, but Beatrice still present; here he "was turning" to Beatrice, and finds instead an aged man. Though the pilgrim's keen sorrow at Virgil's departure is not repeated here in regard to Beatrice, parallels between the two passages attest to the status of the new guide: only Virgil, Beatrice, and this guide are ever *sole* companions of the pilgrim, and this guide presides over a crucial, final phase of the journey. But see Botterill 1994.

59–63. I saw an old man ... a tender father: "Old man" [*sene*, a Latinism], is used in the poem only in this canto, rhyming with *gene* [cheek, another Latinism], in 61; *sene* is repeated at line 94. Like the other souls in the Empyrean, the old man appears possessed of his glorified body (the "second stole;" see 25.122–29 and note). For the issue raised here, see 32.46–48 and note.

61–63. his eyes and cheeks ... a tender father: The old man's visage recalls Cato, the custodian of Purgatory (*Purg.* 1.31–33 and note, and *Purgatorio* Additional Note 1), while his gestures evoke Cacciaguida, the poet's ancestor (15.25–27 and note); his paternal solicitude recalls Virgil (*Purg.* 30.49–54 and note). As the old man proves to have been an abbot in life, his paternal role was an institutional one ("abbot" is derived from Aramaic *abba* [father]).

64–69. And where is she ... have allotted her: Though unmentioned in Beatrice's exposition to Virgil of the celestial beings who intervene on the pilgrim's behalf (*Inf.* 2.52–117 and note), the old man presents himself as Beatrice's emissary. See also lines 94–96, and Additional Note 1.

64–65. And where is she I quickly said: The pilgrim's bald first question of his new guide is a fine comic touch. The pronouns in lines 64–65 emphasize the gender difference of the guides; in order to fill out the Italian hendecasyllable, the contiguous vowels must be kept distinct (hiatus): "E:|'Ov' è | ella, subito diss' io": the fragmented line expresses the pilgrim's tentativeness.

70–78. Without replying ... mixed with any medium: Beatrice in the rose is undimmed and unblurred by distance, because there is no intervening medium (on earth, the sphere of air) to limit the acuity of his sight; the pilgrim sees her as if she were next to him. Cf. 29.25–27, 30.115–23 and notes.

70–72. Without replying ... the eternal rays: See Psalm 120.1 ("I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains"; cf. 25.34, and *Inf.* 1.16). Beatrice's crown is like a halo; it is the reflection of the light of glory shining on her, recalling that Beatrice, like the angels (29.142–44 and note) is a mirror, reflecting God's light through her eyes (see *Purg.* 31.80–81, 119–21; *Par.* 1.64–66 and note).

73–76. From the region ... from Beatrice there: From the sea bottom to the summit of the sphere of air (the atmosphere). Although it is traversed in three cantos, the Empyrean appears much more vast than the physical world of the elements. For other perspectives from the sea bottom, cf. 1.67–69, 33.94–96.

79–90. O lady in whom my hope ... with the body is untied: For the form of the prayer, see notes to "O qui perpetua," lines 26–28. The prayer recapitulates the poet's career, and the poem's journey; De Robertis 2001 cites as a model Psalm 70, especially lines 8–9, 18, 20–21; see also *Purg.* 30.83–84.

The pilgrim, who has previously used the honorific pronoun *voi* to address Beatrice (see the note to 4.138), adopts the familiar singular form (*tu*), as usual when addressing a saint or deity (see 16.10–12 and note; 33.1–39; also "O qui perpetua," lines 10, 13, 18, 21; and see Additional Note 1). Dante prays to his lady without idolatry (line 91), since she is, though by his authority alone, his saint in Heaven.

79–81. O lady ... footprints in Hell: Beatrice's descent to Hell partly reiterated that of Christ, whose footprints were left on earth when he ascended to Heaven (*Golden Legend*, Chapter 72). See also Ps. 70.20, "Thou hast brought me back again [*iterum reduxisti me*] from the depths of the earth [*de abyssis terrae*]." Cf. *Inf.* 2.82–114, *Purg.* 30.139–41 and notes.

82–84. the grace and efficacy ... your power and your goodness: The poet's gratitude here parallels that directed at his native constellation (see 22.112–23 and note). Beatrice's attributes recall those of the Trinity (see *Inf.* 3.5–6 and note).

85–87. You have drawn me ... the power to use: "Slavery" and "liberty" align Beatrice's rescue of the pilgrim with the terms of Ps. 113, *In exitu Israel de Aegypto*, as interpreted in Ep. 13.21 (see *Purg.* 2.46–48 and note and our introduction to *Purgatorio*, p. 13). Line 86 echoes God's use of all possible means for working the redemption of man (7.109–11; see note). Beatrice's deed is like the victory over death of Christ himself.

88. Preserve the great things you have done in me: See Ps. 70.21: "Thou hast multiplied thy magnificence"; also 17.88–90.

89. so that my soul, which you have made whole: See Ps. 70.23, "My soul which thou hast redeemed." Beatrice extends the redemptive action of Christ, healing the wound inflicted by sin on Adam (see 32.4–6 and note). For "whole" [*sano*] see also line 39 and 33.35–36, and especially Virgil's crowning of the pilgrim once his will is "free, upright, and whole [*sano*]" (*Purg.* 27.140).

92. gazed at me: In the context of the pilgrim's future death (lines 89–90), De Robertis 2001 observes that "gazed at me" [*riguardomi*] echoes Dante's rendering of Pyramus's dying gaze at Thisbe [*riguardolla*], invoked to describe how the pilgrim's fear of passing the fire—likened to the fear of death—is overcome by hearing Beatrice named. See *Purg.* 27.37–42 with note, and 1.

94–142. And the holy old man ... ardent to gaze again: The gradual approach to the final vision will require viewing the ranks of the rose (lines 94–99; see the next canto). Bernard prepares the pilgrim's vision for the deepest mysteries of the faith (lines 103–11); he invites the pilgrim to raise his eyes to Mary, who awaits his petition (lines 112–17); at the crest

of the rose, she receives the homage of the angels (lines 124–35); but her beauty is beyond description (lines 136–38).

94–102. And the holy old man ... I am her faithful Bernard: Only now does Bernard of Clairvaux reveal his name. Born of a noble family at Château Fontaines, in Burgundy, in 1091, Bernard joined the newly founded reformist monastery of Cîteaux in 1113 after studying in Paris. Soon afterward he was chosen by Stephen Harding, the third abbot, to expand the reach of the reformed Benedictines (known, after the name of their abbey, as Cistercians) by founding a new abbey at Clairvaux, in Champagne, the first of some sixty-five that Bernard personally helped establish. Bernard's prestige grew when he settled a disputed papal election; the next pope elected, Eugenius III, was a disciple of his. At the Council of Sens in 1141, the logician and theologian Peter Abelard was condemned at Bernard's instigation for heretical writings regarding the Trinity. In 1144, at Vézelay in Burgundy, Bernard preached the Second Crusade, which was led by Louis VII and Conrad III (1147–49; see 15.139–41 and note). Bernard never recovered from the disastrous failure of the crusade, and he died on 20 August 1153; he was canonized in 1173.

Bernard was celebrated for his eloquence as a preacher and writer; his most famous works are the *Sermons on Canticles* [*Sermones in Cantica canticorum*] and his treatise *On Loving God* [*De diligendo Deo*], which manifests the exclusively mystical, affective focus of Cistercian spirituality. The extent of Dante's direct knowledge of Bernard's works is debated. The only work of Bernard cited by Dante (*Ep. 13.80*) is *De consideratione*, on the contemplative ascent to God; it is Bernard's last work, addressed to Pope Eugenius III. See Botterill 1994.

97–99. fly with your eyes ... into the divine light: Emphasized again is the visual—that is, the intellectual—nature of the pilgrim's journey. Compare 1.49–54 and note. These verses are part of a series (line 46, "walk;" line 97, "fly;" line 121, "ascend") that diagrams the course of the pilgrim's eye around the Empyrean.

100–102. And the queen of heaven ... I am her faithful Bernard: Dante chooses Bernard as the final guide because of Bernard's devotion to the Virgin Mary, evident in the sermons and prayers attributed to him, although, like the Dominicans, he did not accept the claims made for her immaculate conception.

103–11. As one who comes ... had tasted of that peace: The wayfarer's amazement at seeing Bernard is like that of a pilgrim who sees a faithful image of Christ's face. Bernard's experience as a contemplative may have enhanced his resemblance to Christ. This passage again relies on the provision at 30.43–45.

103–4. As one who comes ... to see our Veronica: In Dante's day pilgrims went to Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome to venerate the image of the face of Christ kept there (see VN 40.1: "That blessed image Christ left to us as the exemplar of his beautiful features" [*figura*]). The *Golden Legend* (Chapter 53) relates that to fulfill the request of a woman named Veronica, Christ left his image on a painter's canvas; another tradition explained the image as left on the

cloth [*sudarium*] on which Christ wiped from his face the tears, turned to blood, in Gethsemane (Luke 22.44). Villani (9.36) reports that during the jubilee of 1300, the image was shown on every Friday and every solemn feast day; it was traditionally displayed during Lent, on Ascension and on Sundays after the octave of Epiphany (Lloyd 1994). The name Veronica (a form of the Greek name Berenike, that is, Berenice) was interpreted to mean *vera icona* [true image], thus Dante's *verace* in line 107.

Dante imagines first a barbarian in Rome (lines 31–36), then a pilgrim in the temple of his vow (lines 43–45), and last the relic itself with Christ's image—each stage closer to the ultimate sight “face to face.”

103. As one who comes, perhaps, from Croatia: The commentators agree that “Croatia” names a generically remote location. Thirteenth-century Croatia had a hundred Benedictine monasteries, and was unique in Europe in that its vernacular liturgy (Old Slavonic) was used with papal approval (1248); Dante may have imagined it as a country of intense religiosity, thus a source of pilgrims.

111. contemplating had tasted of that peace: Dante attributes to Bernard while still in this life the vision of the blessed and “the peace which passeth understanding” (cf. 10.129; 15.148). Bernard never claims in his writings to have enjoyed the intellectual vision of God; he describes an exclusively affective experience of union with God.

112–42: Son of grace ... ardent to gaze again: Six of ten uses of “eye” or “eyes” in the canto are in this ten-terzina section, matched by eight verbs of looking or seeing. Dante uses “eyes” [*occhi*] twenty-five times in the Empyrean, and almost one hundred times in *Paradiso*. See notes to lines 43–48, 70–72, 97–99.

118–38. I raised my eyes ... the least of her delightfulness: Climbing from a valley to a mountain recapitulates the journey, here performed with the eyes (see 33.22–24 and note; Ps. 120.1). This second triumph of Mary (cf. 23.88–111 and note, 32.88–114, and note to 32.94–114) is the climax of the canto.

118–20. I raised my eyes ... where the sun declines: The penultimate occasion in the poem when the appearance of a celestial being is compared to a sunrise (see 32.106–8, also of Mary); Mary is described liturgically as *Aurora consurgens* [the morning sun rising] (Canticle of Canticles 6.9); see 30.1–9, and 23.7–9 and notes.

124–29. And as in the place ... in equal degree: The last reference in the poem to Phaethon, adapting Ovid's account there of the rising sun (esp. *Met.* 2.105–18). See 17.1–6, *Inf.* 17.106–11, *Purg.* 4.71–72 and notes, and Additional Note 7.

124–25. the chariot that Phaethon guided ill: Dante has *temo*, which tropes the chariot with the cross-shaped pole or tongue used to pull it (see *Purg.* 32.140, 144); cf. Ovid's *temo aureus* [golden pole] (*Met.* 2.107).

127. so that peaceful oriflamme: This is Charlemagne's battle standard, mentioned in the *Chanson de Roland* (*l'orielflambe*, line 3093) as once belonging to saint Peter (thus possibly the Roman standard that Pope Leo III sent to Charlemagne in 796); or perhaps the later *oriflamme* associated with the Abbey of St. Denis and the Capetian dynasty, which remained the battle standard of the French monarchy until the defeats at Poitiers and Agincourt in the fifteenth century. The exact appearance of the flag is disputed, though the derivation of its name from Lat. *aurea flamma*, "golden fire," suggests a combination of red and gold. Canticle of Canticles 6.9 ("terrible as an army set in array") was applied to Mary; as an *oriflamme*, she is the rallying point of the Christian army (see 6.94–102 and note to 6.100–102).

130–32. And at that center ... in radiance and art: For Gabriel's devotion to Mary, see 23.103–11, 32.109–14 and notes. The angels are distinct in brightness because each is a distinct species; "art" refers to their ministration and praise.