

**Dante's *Purgatory*:  
A Discussion Guide**

**David Bruce**



**Dedicated with Respect to Jim Phillips**

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**I recommend that you read the translation by Mark  
Musa.**

**The translation by John Ciardi is also very good.**

**I also recommend the course on Dante's *Divine Comedy*  
by William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman, which is  
available from the Teaching Company.**

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## Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I have read, studied, and taught Dante's *Purgatory*, and I wish to pass on what I have learned to other people who are interested in studying Dante's *Purgatory*. In particular, I think that the readers of this short introduction to Dante's *Purgatory* will be bright high school seniors and college first-year students, as well as intelligent adults who simply wish to study *Purgatory* despite not being literature majors.

This book uses a question-and-answer format. This book goes through the *Purgatory* canto by canto. I recommend that you read the relevant section of the *Purgatory*, then read my comments, then go back and re-read the relevant section of the *Purgatory*. However, do what works for you. Other discussion guides by me do the same thing for the *Inferno* and the *Paradise*.

Teachers may find this discussion guide useful. Teachers can have students read cantos from the epic poem, then teachers can ask students selected questions from this discussion guide.

It helps to know something about Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Greek and Roman mythology, the Bible, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and other works such as Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, but this background reading is not strictly necessary. You have to begin reading great literature somewhere, and Dante's *Purgatory* is a good place to start. (Come on in! The water's great! And later you can go and read the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, etc.)

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## Purgatory

### Canto 1: The Island of Purgatory and Cato the Guard

#### • What does Dante do at the start of Canto 1 of Purgatory?

Dante is starting a new major section of *The Divine Comedy* — *Purgatory* — and he invokes the Muses the way an epic poet should. Previously, in the *Inferno*, he described the place where sins are punished, and now, in *Purgatory*, he describes the place where sins are purged.

Dante invokes the Muses in general, and Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, in particular:

But let dead Poesy here rise again,  
                   O holy Muses, since that I am yours,  
                   And here Calliope somewhat ascend,  
 My song accompanying with that sound,  
                   Of which the miserable magpies felt  
                   The blow so great, that they despaired of  
                   pardon.

(Longfellow 1.7-12)

The reference is to a sin of old. King Pierus had nine daughters, whom he named after the nine Muses. These daughters sinned by being proud, and they challenged the Muses to a contest. Of course, they lost the contest, and as a result they were turned into magpies. This myth is significant because pride is the worst of human sins.

By the way, the time is Easter Sunday, 10 April 1300, just before dawn. Dante went into Hell on Good Friday, and he comes out of Hell on Easter Sunday. Of course, Christ died



on Good Friday, and he was resurrected on Easter Sunday. During the time he was dead, he went into Limbo, and he took out the souls who did not belong there. This, of course, is known as the Harrowing of Hell. Those souls may include the soul of Cato, the guardian on the lower part of the Mountain of Purgatory. Some souls apparently began to climb the Mountain of Purgatory after the Harrowing of Hell. Some souls rescued by Jesus went to Paradise immediately, while some other souls, perhaps, started climbing the Mountain of Purgatory. Cato, of course, was put to work.

• **What is the purpose of Purgatory? Why is it so important?**

In Purgatory, people get ready for Paradise. They need to be purged of sin so that they can be in the presence of God.

Truly, Purgatory is needed. The Inferno is where the sinners who did not repent go. Paradise is where sinners who have repented and have purged their sins — or been specially forgiven by God — go. Purgatory is where sinners who have repented can purge their sins.

The word “purgatory” comes from two Latin words: *purus* and *agere*. Put together, they form “to make pure.” Repented sinners need to be cleansed of their sin.

Here is an example used by Dante scholars William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman to explain why Purgatory is needed: Suppose I steal \$100 from one of my students, and I feel guilty about it. That night, I can’t sleep, and I decide to go to my student the next morning, confess and apologize, give the \$100 back, and then confess to both my priest and the police. However, even though that is my intention, when I get up the next morning and go to the student to make restitution and apologize, I am hit by a truck and killed, with the \$100 in my pocket.

I sinned, but I repented my sin, so I can't go to the Inferno. On the other hand, I did not pay the penalty for my sin and I did not make the necessary restitution of the money I had stolen, although I had intended to do so. Of course, now that I am dead, I can never do the things I intended to do on Earth. Because I am not pure, I cannot go to Heaven. I need a place where I can purge myself of the sin I committed and repented on Earth, but was unable to make atonement for.

Of course, some sins we cannot make restitution for on Earth. If I murder someone, I can repent my sin, but I cannot bring my victim back to life. I need a place in the afterlife where I can purge myself of my sin and make myself pure so that I can enter Paradise.

**• What do people get ready for in Purgatory? How do they get ready for it?**

In Purgatory, people get ready for Paradise. Purgatory gets us ready to see God face to face.

Sinners need to be purged of sin so that they can be in the presence of God. By climbing up the seven terraces of Purgatory, they can get ready for it. In Purgatory, we learn not to regard ourselves as being the center of the universe.

**• Where is the island of Purgatory, according to Dante? How is the island of Purgatory organized?**

The island of Purgatory is located in the Southern Hemisphere. As Dante understood the world, the Southern Hemisphere on the side of the Earth directly opposite from Jerusalem was all ocean — with the exception of the island that is the Mountain of Purgatory.

This Mountain has several parts:

- 1) At the bottom of the mountain is Ante-Purgatory or Pre-Purgatory. This is where souls are kept

waiting before they can begin to climb the Mountain. If a soul kept God waiting by repenting at the very end of life, God will keep that soul waiting in Pre-Purgatory.

2) Purgatory itself consists of seven terraces or stories on which each of the seven deadly sins is purged. When Thomas Merton titled his spiritual autobiography *The Seven-Storey Mountain*, he had Dante's *Purgatory* in mind. ("Storey" is British English for the American English "story.")

3) At the top of the Mountain is the Forest of Eden, aka the Earthly Paradise. Souls there drink from two rivers: One revives the memories of the good deeds one has committed, and the other takes away the sting of the bad deeds one has committed.

**• Is Purgatory a good place to be? Are the souls in Purgatory saved?**

Purgatory is a place where all the souls are saved. No matter how bad the sins the soul committed, if a soul is here, that soul will go to Paradise eventually. One of the good things about Purgatory is that it is impossible to flunk it. Every soul being purged here will make it to Paradise.

We see some souls suffer as a part of the purgation process, but the souls welcome the purgation process. They know that they are getting ready for Paradise, and the suffering is well worth it.

**• Is Purgatory a place of change?**

Purgatory is temporary, while the Inferno and Paradise are eternal. One day no one will be climbing up the Mountain of Purgatory because all the souls there will have been purified, and they will be in Heaven.

In addition, in Purgatory we have day and night. In the Inferno all we had was darkness, and in Paradise, all we have is light. The purging process tends to take place in daylight. An exception is the Slothful, who purge their sin both at night and during the day.

In Purgatory the souls change. They are able to purge themselves of their sins, beginning with the sin of pride. A soul at the top of the Mountain of Purgatory is much different from a soul at the bottom of the Mountain of Purgatory.

In the Inferno the souls suffer forever; in Paradise the souls are blissful forever.

Different people prefer different parts of *The Divine Comedy*:

- 1) Many students prefer the *Inferno*, perhaps because they are busy sinning.
- 2) Many prisoners prefer *Purgatory*, perhaps because they have sinned and are purging their sin in prison. Many middle-aged people prefer *Purgatory*, perhaps because they have sinned and wish to purge their sins.
- 3) Many priests and religious people prefer *Paradise*, perhaps because they have sinned, have repented their sin, and are looking forward to Paradise.

• **How are Dante and the souls in Purgatory similar?**

They are similar in two major ways:

- 1) They are growing, improving, losing their ignorance and soon to be losing their sin. The Dante who is in Purgatory is much different from the Dante who was in the dark wood of error. He has learned much from his trip through the Inferno.

2) They have a communal experience. Dante and Virgil travel together. They are not isolated. The souls in Purgatory will frequently work together. They will talk to each other. They will not be like Farinata and Cavalcante in the Inferno, who ignore each other although they will be in the same tomb forever.

• **How are Dante and the souls in Purgatory different from the souls in the Inferno?**

They are different from the souls in the Inferno in two major ways:

1) They learn, and they grow. The souls in the Inferno do not learn. They do not change. Some souls still rebel against God. Some souls continue to avoid taking responsibility for their actions. Some souls regret having been caught for sinning, but other than that they do not regret the sin.

2) They are communal. In the Inferno, the souls are concerned about themselves only; they are the center of the universe. Francesca and Paolo are together for eternity, but they don't talk to each other. Farinata and Cavalcante are together for eternity, but they don't talk to each other. Ulysses and Diomed are together for eternity, but they don't talk to each other. Ugolino and Ruggieri are together for eternity, but they don't talk to each other.

• **Can you understand Dante after reading only the *Inferno*?**

The answer is a big, fat NO. The rest of *The Divine Comedy* holds a lot of surprises for readers. It is easy to read the *Inferno* and to think that you know who will end up in Hell, but you will be surprised at some of the types of people who end up in Paradise eventually or are already there —

remember, all the souls we meet in Purgatory will eventually be in Paradise.

Here are a couple of examples:

1) We saw virtuous pagans in the Inferno, but we will see virtuous pagans in Paradise, also.

2) We may think that the excommunicated are kept out of Paradise, but we learn very quickly in *Purgatory* that they are not.

Dorothy L. Sayers was a translator of *The Divine Comedy*, and she once said that trying to understand *The Divine Comedy* only by reading the *Inferno* is like trying to understand Paris after visiting only its sewer system.

• **Can every sin be forgiven, as long as a person repents?**

Yes. This is one of the many things we can learn from *Purgatory*. Here in *Purgatory*, especially in the early cantos, we will see many people who we may think should be in the Inferno, based on their biographies. God is omnibenevolent, and God can forgive any sin.

In fact, if you think that God is unable to forgive your sins, you are guilty of the sin of pride. God can forgive any sin. If Adolf Hitler sincerely repented his sins, he would be either in Purgatory or in Paradise. (Of course, Hitler's suicide — and murders! and genocide! — are problematic, as we know from Pier delle Vigne's story. Also, I think that Hitler would spend many tens of thousands of years — or more — on the Mountain of Purgatory.)

In the Inferno, sinners refused to repent their sins. In Purgatory, sinners did repent their sins. Purgatory shows that every sin can be forgiven.

**• Do you know of anyone who is or was so proud that they think God cannot forgive their sins?**

One of the great scoundrels of all times was Wilson Mizner. He really did care for money. Once, he was married to a wealthy woman, whom he was constantly asking for money. One day, at a restaurant, he was begging her for money, and she took an envelope of money from her purse and started hitting him with it. The envelope burst open, the money flew everywhere, and Wilson Mizner and the other customers in the restaurants got down on their hands and knees, grabbing the money. His wife screamed at him, “YOU CAN HAVE THE MONEY SINCE YOU’RE WILLING TO CRAWL FOR IT!” Wilson Mizner said later, “I’d picked up \$4,000 before I realized I’d been insulted.”

On his deathbed, Mr. Mizner was asked to make peace with God, but he knew that he had led an evil life, so he said, “God keeps better books than that,” and died. However, Mr. Mizner may very well be a saved soul. He may not have said the words, but his actions may show that he repented his sins. He was a part-owner of the Brown Derby restaurant and held court there. He would leave home with lots of money in his pocket, and people who were down on their luck would come up to him and ask him for money, and he would give money to them. He gave away thousands of dollars before he died.

And when he died, he left everything to a woman. Everyone thought at first that she must have been his mistress, but she was a woman with whom he had a Platonic relationship — they were friends, not lovers.

**• Where do you suppose a person who is a pagan, a suicide, and an enemy of Julius Caesar would end up: the Inferno, Purgatory, or Paradise?**

Most people would answer that this person would end up in the Inferno. After all, the virtuous pagan Virgil ended up in the Inferno, the suicide Pier delle Vigne ended up in the Inferno, and Brutus and Cassius (both enemies of Julius Caesar) ended up in the Inferno — in fact, Brutus and Cassius are two of the three worst human sinners of all time.

• **Who is Cato the Younger?**

Cato the Younger, aka Cato the Stoic, is a person who is a pagan, a suicide, and an enemy of Julius Caesar. He committed suicide in 46 BCE, thus he was born before the time of Christ. He opposed Julius Caesar, and out of principle, he committed suicide rather than surrender to him. He believed that life would not be free under the rule of Julius Caesar, so he committed suicide.

Here are a few quotations that are attributed to Cato the Younger:

- After I'm dead, I'd rather have people ask why I have no monument than why I have one.
- An angry man opens his mouth and shuts his eyes.
- Old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternatives.
- The best way to keep good acts in memory is to refresh them with new.
- The first virtue is to restrain the tongue; he approaches nearest to the gods who knows how to be silent, even though he is in the right.

— Marcus Porcius Cato, 95-46 BC, Cato the Younger

Source:

<http://www.stevenredhead.com/quotes/ancient>



### • What is Cato's job in Purgatory?

Dante and Virgil see Cato, who challenges them. Cato is a guardian of Purgatory, and he thinks at first that Dante and Virgil have escaped from Hell. However, as soon as Virgil informs him that Dante is still living and that they are on a mission from God, then Cato welcomes them.

Cato is a rather stern guardian whose job is to help rather than hurt. The guards in the Inferno hurt the unrepentant sinners, but Cato's job is to welcome and help repentant sinners. Of course, he can and must be stern. Part of his job is to make sure that the repentant sinners keep their minds focused on their job: purging their sins.

Both Cato and Virgil are determined not to waste time. Virgil wants Dante to keep his eyes on the prize; Cato wants the sinners in Pre-purgatory to also keep their eyes on the prize.

Cato's job is basically to let people climb the Mountain of Purgatory, not to keep people away from the Mountain of Purgatory. No one leaves the Inferno except with the permission of God.

### • Will Cato be saved?

Critics disagree here. Some critics think that Cato will be saved; others think that once his job is finished here, he will return to Limbo.

#### *Cato Will Be Saved*

- 1) Cato's job is not like the job of the guards in the Inferno.
- 2) We see in Ante-Purgatory many people whom we are surprised to see are saved. Cato is another example of these people.

3) Cato is separated from his wife. He loved her, but he does not mourn being separated from her. Perhaps that means in Heaven that we do not mourn the loss of loved ones who are in the Inferno. Such mourning would interfere with the perfect happiness that is Paradise. Cato says,

“Marcia so pleasing was unto mine eyes  
     While I was on the other side,” then said he,  
     “That every grace she wished of me I granted;  
 Now that she dwells beyond the evil river,  
     She can no longer move me, by that law  
     Which, when I issued forth from there, was  
     made.”

(Longfellow 1.85-90)

Cato would have issued forth from Limbo during the Harrowing of Hell. The “law” (Musa or Longfellow, *Purgatory* 1.89) he refers to may state that certain souls will no longer be confined to Limbo.

4) Virgil tells Cato:

“Thou know’st it; since, for her, to thee not bitter  
     Was death in Utica, where thou didst leave  
     The vesture, that will shine so, the great day.”

(Longfellow 1.73-75)

Many critics interpret that as saying that Cato will be reunited — in splendid fashion — with his body on Judgment Day, meaning that he is saved.

5) We will see other pagans in Paradise. Ripheus the Trojan was known for his justness, and he is saved. Cato the Younger was also known for his justness, and he may be saved.

6) True, Cato did commit suicide, but he committed suicide out of a love for freedom, not out of a rejection of life. Cato's suicide is different from Pier della Vigne's suicide.

### *Cato Will Not Be Saved*

Some critics think that once Virgil's job is finished, Virgil will return to the Inferno. Cato is like Virgil.

This is the reason why Cato may not be saved:

Virtuous pagans tend to end up in Limbo.

### *My Opinion*

My opinion is that Cato will be saved. One day he will climb the Mountain of Purgatory, and he will enter Paradise. The point that convinces me is the lines about his wife. Because he is headed toward Paradise, he does not mourn being separated from her. Also, I find convincing the "law" (*Purgatory* 1.90) he refers to — it may state that certain souls will no longer be confined to Limbo.

We can wonder about Paradise. We have loved ones, and some loved ones will not make it to Paradise. Assuming that you make it to Paradise and some of your loved ones do not, can you be perfectly happy? Perhaps. Cato loved his wife, but he does not now mourn being separated from her. Perhaps because Cato is destined for Paradise, he is unable to mourn those who end up in the Inferno, just as those who are in the Inferno are unable to repent their sins.

### *Mystery*

We are incapable of knowing everything. Some things will always remain a mystery to us. One of those things is salvation. Wherever we end up in the Afterlife, we will probably look around and say, “What is he (or she) doing here?”

Also, some people, including some Christian mystics, believe in an “upset verdict.” God is omnibenevolent, and God will not allow souls to suffer eternally in the Inferno. Eventually, there will be a second Harrowing — or better, a Hallowing — of Hell, and Hell will empty. This will be a triumph for God, Who is Omnipotent Love.

• **Why did Cato commit suicide?**

Cato’s reason for suicide is different from Pier delle Vigne’s. Pier delle Vigne thought that by committing suicide, he could get people to sympathize with him.

Cato committed suicide out of his political beliefs. Julius Caesar was engaged in a political struggle — and civil war — to gain control of Rome. When it became clear that Julius Caesar would be victorious, Cato the Younger committed suicide. (He read Plato’s *Phaedo*, which contains arguments that human beings will have an afterlife, before he committed suicide.) He felt that life in the Roman Republic was free, and that life under Julius Caesar would not be free. Instead of living life under elected officials who changed occasionally, he would be living life under a dictator-for-life. Cato’s suicide was an act of defiance, not the rejection of life that Pier delle Vigne’s suicide was. Cato committed suicide because of his love of freedom. In contrast, Pier delle Vigne committed suicide because he rejected life.

Cato’s suicide was gruesome; it is described by Plutarch’s biography of him:

And now the birds were already beginning to sing, when he fell asleep again for a little while. And when

Butas came and told him that harbours were very quiet, he ordered him to close the door, throwing himself down upon his couch as if he were going to rest there for what still remained of the night. But when Butas had gone out, Cato drew his sword from its sheath and stabbed himself below the breast. His thrust, however, was somewhat feeble, owing to the inflammation in his hand, and so he did not at once dispatch himself, but in his death struggle fell from the couch and made a loud noise by overturning a geometrical abacus that stood near. His servants heard the noise and cried out, and his son at once ran in, together with his friends. They saw that he was smeared with blood, and that most of his bowels were protruding, but that he still had his eyes open and was alive; and they were terribly shocked. But the physician went to him and tried to replace his bowels, which remained uninjured, and to sew up the wound. Accordingly, when Cato recovered and became aware of this, he pushed the physician away, tore his bowels with his hands, rent the wound still more, and so died.

Source:

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Cato\\_Minor\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Cato_Minor*.html)

From *The Parallel Lives by Plutarch* published in Vol. VIII of the Loeb Classical Library edition, 1919

Virgil speaks to Cato with much respect, and he has Dante kneel before Cato:

Then did my Leader lay his grasp upon me,

And with his words, and with his hands and signs,

Reverent he made in me my knees and brow;

(Longfellow 1.49-51)

Virgil speaks at length and with respect to Cato. In the *Inferno*, he was often curt and insulting when speaking to the sinners and guards outside of Limbo.

Note that Dante never tells us the name of Cato. Dante is writing for an educated audience, and he expects his audience to know that this is Cato because of the references to Utica and to Marcia. Utica was an ancient city in North Africa where Cato committed suicide, and Marcia was Cato's wife.

• **What happens when Dante plucks a reed?**

We will see many good things in Purgatory. The first miracle we see is that when Dante plucks a reed to use as a belt — he lost his belt when Virgil used it to signal Geryon — another reed immediately grows in its place. Purgatory is a place of fertility — things grow here. Dante's time in Paradise begins with a miracle.

Other good things that we will see in Purgatory are these:

- The souls are very helpful to Virgil and Dante. They willingly give directions.
- The souls are communal. They help each other in their purgation. They are not alone, unless apparently by choice.
- Surprises are good in Purgatory. A couple of souls are surprised — and happy — to meet Virgil.
- Good deeds are done in Purgatory. Saint Lucia will help Dante climb the Mountain of Purgatory.
- The prayers of good people on Earth for the dead in Purgatory are listened to and answered.

• **What are the seven deadly sins?**

Pride, envy, anger, sloth, avariciousness and prodigality, gluttony, and lust. These sins are purged on these stories of the Seven-Storey Mountain:

Level 1: Pride

Level 2: Envy

Level 3: Wrath

Level 4: Sloth

Level 5: Avariciousness and Prodigality

Level 6: Gluttony

Level 7: Lust

We may have here evidence that the Slothful are punished with the Wrathful in the Inferno instead of being punished separately in the Vestibule of Hell. We see that Wrath is purged on Level 3 and Sloth is purged on Level 4. Possibly, a number of levels purge sins in the reverse order in which sins are punished in the Inferno:

## **PURGATORY**

**Purgatory** Level 3: Wrath is Punished

**Purgatory** Level 4: Sloth is Punished

**Purgatory** Level 5: Avariciousness/Prodigality is Punished

**Purgatory** Level 6: Gluttony is Punished

**Purgatory** Level 7: Lust is Punished

## **INFERNO**

**Inferno** Circle 5: Wrath is Punished

**Inferno** Circle 5: Sloth is Punished?

**Inferno** Circle 4: Avariciousness/Prodigality is Punished

**Inferno** Circle 3: Gluttony is Punished

**Inferno** Circle 2: Lust is Punished

Some controversy exists over whether Sloth is punished in Circle 5 of the Inferno. The sin punished there may be Sullenness.

Pride and Envy are purged on the first two levels of the Mountain of Purgatory. They may be regarded as the foundations of sin.

**• Which good things does Dante see at the beginning of this canto?**

After coming out of the Inferno, Dante is able to see the night sky. He notices Venus, the planet of love, which is appropriate. He also notices a southern constellation that consists of four stars seen first and last by Adam and Eve. The four stars are allegorical and represent the four cardinal virtues:

- Prudence
- Temperance
- Justice
- Fortitude

**• Why are they called cardinal virtues?**

Here is an explanation:

They are called cardinal (Latin: *cardo*, hinge) virtues because they are hinges on which all moral virtues depend. These are also called moral (Latin: *mores*, fixed values) because they govern our actions, order



our passions, and guide our conduct according to faith and reason.

Source:

<http://www.secondexodus.com/html/catholicdefinitions/cardinalvirtues.htm>

Date Downloaded: 6 September 2010

**• Which four classes of Late Repentants will Dante see in Purgatory?**

These are the four classes of Late Repentants whom Dante will see in Purgatory:

- The Excommunicated
- The Spiritually Lazy
- Those Who Repented While Meeting Violent, Sudden Deaths
- The Negligent Princes

**• In the next canto, we will see new souls arrive on the island that is the Mountain of Purgatory.**

## Canto 2: New Souls Arrive in Purgatory

### • How do souls arrive in Purgatory?

Souls arriving in Purgatory have quite a captain piloting the boat they ride on. An angel is their captain. The dead saved souls gather at a certain point (the port by Rome), then they are taken to the Mountain of Purgatory.

The angel uses his wings — not sails — to power the boat.

Purgatory has art. The souls here sing often. The dead but saved souls on the boat are singing Psalm 114, whose topic is the escape of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

The dead but saved souls ask Virgil and Dante the way up the mountain, but Virgil tells them that he and Dante are newly arrived pilgrims, also.

### • A man named Casella died several months ago, but he is just arriving in Purgatory. Why did it take so long?

That man is Casella, a deceased friend of Dante. He greets Dante and asks why he is here. Dante replies that he is here now so that he can return here after he dies.

Casella took so long to arrive in Purgatory because on earth he had delayed repentance. We will see God use this principle quite often in the Ante-Purgatory, the lowest part of the Mountain, before Purgatory Proper. We can regard the bottom of the Mountain as being somewhat like the Vestibule of Hell. These people put off repenting, so God is going to make them wait before they can begin to climb the Mountain.

Casella was able to arrive in Purgatory quicker than he otherwise would have because of the first Jubilee year, which was declared by Pope Boniface VIII. So it turns out that Pope Boniface VIII did something good for Casella. Of course, Pope Boniface VIII is still condemned to the Inferno,

but we learn that God can accomplish much even through the deeds of evil men.

Dante tries to embrace Casella three times but fails. This is reminiscent of a scene in Homer's *Odyssey* in which Odysseus visits the Underworld, sees the ghost of his mother, tries three times to embrace her, but fails.

• **Who is Casella?**

Of course, Casella is a recently deceased friend of Dante. He was also a musician who once put a poem by Dante to music so it could be sung. Dante requests a love song, and Casella begins to sing a song which consists of Dante's poem set to music:

*Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona,*

began the words of his sweet melody —

(Musa 2.112-113)

Mark Musa translates "*Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*" as "Love that speaks to me in my mind" (26). Longfellow translates it as "Love, that within my mind discourses with me" (2.112).

• **Why is Cato so stern when Casella sings?**

Part of Cato's job is to make sure that the saved souls stay focused on the job at hand: being purged of their sins. Singing romantic love poetry is not going to help in that quest.

The souls in Purgatory are not perfected. Occasionally, they will be distracted from what ought to be their goal: purging their sins. For example, a few times the souls are astonished that Dante is still living. However, although they are interested in this, they take advantage of the opportunity to

ask Dante to let other people know to pray for them so that they can climb the Mountain of Purgatory faster.

Of course, the souls know that Dante is living for a few reasons:

- He breathes.
- He casts a shadow.
- His body has weight and can move stones when he walks on them.

**• Are Cato and the angels against music?**

Note that Cato and God are not against music in general. We will see music and dance in Paradise. On the Mountain of Purgatory we have much singing and art. The Inferno has no art.

Remember that the saved souls were singing a Psalm on the angel-piloted boat that brought them to the Mountain of Purgatory. The Psalm they were singing was about Israel getting out of slavery in Egypt. That music was appropriate for the purpose of their being here. The Psalm tells a story of going from slavery to freedom. These saved sinners have to go from the slavery of their sins to freedom from their sins.

Can a person be a slave to sin? Yes, a person who is addicted to crack cocaine has to feed the addiction. A person who is addicted to alcohol has to feed the addiction. A person who is addicted to TV will find it very hard to get away from the TV and do something worthwhile — such a person is addicted to sloth.

Canto 2 of Purgatory is bookended by two songs: one appropriate and the other inappropriate for the task at hand. In Purgatory souls need to figure what is appropriate and what is inappropriate for the task at hand.

The newly arrived souls in Purgatory can be distracted from the task at hand. For example, apparently they listen to the song that Casella plays. In addition, they are very interested in Dante's shadow.

• **What is Purgatory?**

It is going to take us a long time to get to Purgatory Proper. Only in Canto 9 does Dante pass through the gate into Purgatory Proper. Before that, we have Purgatory or Antepurgatory, and we will have a lot to learn in these cantos.

In Purgatory, we will see many souls who kept God waiting:

- The Excommunicated
- The Spiritually Lazy
- Those Who Repented While Meeting Violent, Sudden Deaths
- The Negligent Princes

Note: Purgatory or Antepurgatory refer to the same place: the foot of the Mountain of Purgatory. Both names mean Before Purgatory Proper.



Of course, Dante is referring to a section of Italy with steep places.

• **Write a character analysis of Manfred. Who was he, historically?**

Manfred (1232?-1266) is the bastard son of King Frederick II (1194-1250), who is damned in Hell with the other heretics.

Manfred was famous, and he asks if Dante recognizes him, but Dante does not. However, this does not make Manfred angry. Certain sinners in the Inferno want to be remembered on Earth, but the process of purgation is much more important to Manfred than mere Earthly fame.

Some people probably would not think that Manfred belongs in Purgatory. They may think that he belongs in the Inferno. For one thing, he struggled against the Pope, and he was excommunicated. He was killed in the Battle of Benevento in 1266, the battle that led to the return of the Guelfs to Florence — Dante was one year old at the time.

Pope Clement IV hated Manfred. At first, Manfred was buried beneath a pile of stones, but Pope Clement IV ordered that his body be removed and that his bones be scattered outside the territory controlled by the papacy.

Note that Manfred is not angry. Many of the sinners in the Inferno are very angry. In contrast, Manfred is happy that he was saved, and he does not mourn how his corpse was treated on Earth.

Manfred speaks to Dante because he has a message for him to give his daughter. Dante writes:

When with humility I had disclaimed

E'er having seen him, "Now behold!" he said,

And showed me high upon his breast a  
wound.

Then said he with a smile: "I am Manfredi,

The grandson of the Empress Costanza;

Therefore, when thou returnest, I beseech  
thee

Go to my daughter beautiful, the mother

Of Sicily's honour and of Aragon's,

And the truth tell her, if aught else be told."

(Longfellow 3.109-117)

The souls in Purgatory sometimes have requests of Dante, but they are not self-centered. Manfred wants his daughter to know that he is a saved soul; that will give her some comfort.

Why is Manfred smiling as he says that? There are a few possible answers:

- 1) He may simply be amused that Dante does not recognize him.
- 2) It could be because Dante will be able to give the good news of his salvation to his daughter.
- 3) Perhaps because he is aware that Dante is likely to think that he does not belong here in Purgatory, he may be thinking, *I bet you didn't think I was saved, did you?*
- 4) Manfred knows that his daughter will pray for him, this enabling him to climb the mountain faster.



Manfred's soul has the wounds that his body suffered when he died. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the ghosts of the dead also bear those wounds, as we see when Aeneas speaks to Deiphobus.

• **How did Manfred die? Why is he in Purgatory?**

Manfred tells what happened when he lay dying on the field of Benevento:

“After I had my body lacerated  
 By these two mortal stabs, I gave myself  
 Weeping to Him, who willingly doth pardon.  
 Horrible my iniquities had been;  
 But Infinite Goodness hath such ample arms,  
 That it receives whatever turns to it.”

(Longfellow 3.118-123)

Manfred waited until the very last moment to give his soul to Christ. His story has a happy ending — it emphasizes that God will forgive anyone who wants forgiveness. God's mercy has no limits. Note that it does not take years of penance to get God's mercy. All it takes is a moment, and Manfred repented his sins in the very last moment of his life.

• **Who make up the first group whom Dante encounters in Antepurgatory?**

The first group is those who were Excommunicated. However, Manfred also fits in well with another group: those who waited until the last moment to repent.

• **What is excommunication? Manfred was excommunicated. Does that keep him out of Purgatory?**

Manfred speaks:

“The church’s curse is not the final word,  
for Everlasting Love may still return,  
if hope reveals the slightest hint of green.”

(Musa 3.133-135)

Excommunication is being expelled formally from a religious body. Excommunication is not the same thing as damnation, as Manfred is well aware. God decides where you will go in the afterlife, not the Church.

Manfred does have to wait a long time until he can begin to climb up the Mountain; however, prayers can shorten the length of time he has to wait.

## **Canto 4: Prepurgatory — The Spiritually Lazy**

### **• Why should we spend time discussing Antepurgatory?**

We should spend time discussing Antepurgatory for these reasons:

- 1) These souls in Antepurgatory are very interesting, and they often have interesting relationships with the sinners whom we saw in the Inferno.
- 2) We learn about Purgatory as a whole from these sinners.

### **• Why is there so much ritual throughout Purgatory, including singing?**

Of course, we will see a lot of singing, and we have already seen singing. Much of the singing is about doing penance. In addition to the singing, we will see a certain amount of ritual in Purgatory.

Here's why: Dante was very aware of monastic life. For one thing, during his travels, he would often stay in monasteries. The monks would perform their monastic offices — the singing of the Psalms — several times each day. Seven times per day and once at night, they would meet in order to sing communally.

We see the same kind of communal singing in Purgatory. One thing that Dante is telling us is that the purging process can begin while we are still alive on Earth. We need not wait until we are dead to begin the purging process.

### **• Which process is Purgatory all about?**

Of course, the process is all about getting rid of sin. To do that, you have to go from focusing on what is material to focusing on what is spiritual, and you have to go from focusing on what is external to focusing on what is internal.

Instead of focusing on acquiring wealth and power so that you can be proud, you have to focus on losing your pride.

Why is pride so bad? If you put yourself above other people, you can treat them as things. For example, if you like to look at pornography, you are saying that your pleasure is more important than the lives of the runaways and drug addicts who are manipulated to perform in pornography. (Of course, some performers in pornography are not manipulated.) This is an example of pride.

**• Why do Dante and Virgil have to rest after climbing up part of the mountain?**

Dante and Virgil find a pathway up the Mountain. It is very steep, and they have to rest after climbing it for a while. However, Virgil explains that the Mountain will become easier to climb the higher one climbs up the Mountain:

And he to me: “This mount is such, that ever

At the beginning down below ’tis tiresome,

And aye the more one climbs, the less it hurts.”

(Longfellow 4.88-90)

Basically, the higher one climbs up the Mountain, the more one purges his or her sin. The more sin one purges, the easier it is to climb up the Mountain.

Of course, we will find out that the Mountain of Purgatory has seven ledges or storeys, each of which is dedicated to purging one of the deadly sins.

**• Which group of repentant sinners does Dante run into in Canto 4?**

The second class of the Late Repentant who are in Antepurgatory is the Indolent or Lazy. We saw the

unrepentant sinners who were guilty of sloth punished in the Inferno in the circle dedicated to punishing the violent. As you may remember, some controversy exists concerning the existence of the sinners whose presence is noticed only because of the bubbles rising up to the surface. Some critics think that those sinners are the Sullen, but Dante translator Mark Musa points out that they are probably the sinners who are guilty of Sloth because Sloth is purged on the Mountain of Purgatory and therefore sinners guilty of Sloth must be found in the Inferno. (Some critics think that the sinners who are guilty of Sloth are those found in the Vestibule.)

• **Write a short character analysis of Belacqua.**

Belacqua is a lazy man who put off repenting. Here in Antepurgatory, he is sitting with his head between his knees. He cannot start the purging of his sins yet. He is well known for his laziness.

Chances are, Belacqua has a lazy, drawly way of speaking. He probably speaks slowly. He definitely speaks sarcastically.

• **What can lessen the waiting period for the repentant sinners in the “waiting room” outside Purgatory Proper?**

Belacqua lets us know that he must wait to begin purging his sins until an amount of time has passed that matches the amount of time he spent putting off his repentance. Prayers from good people will shorten the amount of time he has to wait. Belacqua says,

“Unless, e’er that, some prayer may bring me aid  
     Which rises from a heart that lives in grace;  
 What profit others that in heaven are heard  
 not?”

(Longfellow 4.133-135)

The prayers of an evil person — such as the prayers of a Hypocrite — will do the dead souls no good because such prayers are not heard in Heaven.

### **Canto 5: Purgatory — Those Who Repented While Meeting Violent, Sudden Deaths**

- **Which group of repentant sinners does Dante run into in Canto 5 (the third class of the Late Repentant sinners)?**

The third group of the Late Repentant consists of those who died a violent death but repented at the last minute. Of course, Manfred fits in well with this group, although he is with the excommunicated.

This group must wait to begin purging their sins. How long? As long as the time they lived. Manfred, of course, is with the excommunicated, and apparently he must wait a time at least as long as the time he was excommunicated.

- **Write a short character analysis of Buonconte of Montefeltro.**

Many of the sinners in Antepurgatory have interesting relationships with sinners whom we saw in the Inferno. For example, the father of Buonconte of Montefeltro is Guido da Montefeltro. Their stories are very different.

Guido da Montefeltro thought that he was going to Paradise, and Saint Francis even came for his soul, but a black devil intervened and pointed out that Guido had not truly repented his sins. So at the last moment, his soul was snatched into Hell.

Buonconte of Montefeltro, however, called on Mary's name at the last moment of his life, and so at the last moment he truly repented his sins and therefore he will eventually be in Paradise.

Note that Buonconte of Montefeltro was a Ghibelline, and he will make it into Paradise. Dante is not keeping his enemies out of Paradise.

By the way, “da” means “of.” Guido da Montefeltro means Guido of Montefeltro. In other words, the person meant is a Guido who lived in Montefeltro.

• **Compare the repentance of Buonconte of Montefeltro with the “repentance” of his father Guido in *Inferno* 27.**

Guido attempted to scam God with a fake repentance. Pope Boniface VIII scammed Guido into going back to his evil ways.

Buonconte’s repentance is sincere. He utters one sincere word with his last breath, and that is enough to save him. The devil that comes to collect Buonconte’s soul is angry and abuses his corpse, but the corpse is not important — the soul is.

By comparing and contrasting the “repentance” of Guido and the repentance of Buonconte, we are able to see how repentance works. Repentance must be sincere; no one gets away with trying to scam God.

This shows that you really have to read both *Purgatory* and *Paradise* in addition to *Inferno*. Just reading the *Inferno* will not give you the whole story.

• **Do your family connections determine where you will end up in the afterlife?**

We see Manfred in Purgatory and his father, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, in the *Inferno*.

We see Buonconte in Purgatory and his father, Guido, in the *Inferno*.

Both Manfred and Buonconte will be in Paradise one day.

Family connections do not determine whether you make it to Paradise. What does determine whether you make it to Paradise is whether you sincerely repent your sins.



• **Write a short character analysis of La Pia.**

La Pia makes a big impact in six lines of speech:

“Oh, please, when you are in the world again,  
 and are quite rested from your journey here,”  
 a third soul, following on the second, said,  
 “Oh, please remember me! I am called Pia.  
 Siena gave me life, Maremma death,  
 as he knows who began it when he put  
 his gem upon my finger, pledging faith.”

(Musa 5.130-136)

La Pia is courteous. She wants Dante to remember her *after* he is rested from his journey. La Pia is simply a charming character.

• **Compare and contrast La Pia (*Purgatory* 5) and Francesca (*Inferno* 5).**

Very often Dante will set up comparisons. Here Canto 5 in the *Inferno* and Canto 5 in the *Purgatory* are meant to be compared and contrasted. La Pia and Francesca da Rimini are very different. This kind of linkage is deliberate on Dante’s part.

*Similarities*

- Francesca da Rimini and La Pia are both women in the afterlife.
- Francesca da Rimini and La Pia both appear in the 5th cantos of the canticle each appears in.
- Francesca da Rimini and La Pia both speak elegantly.

- Apparently, both Francesca da Rimini and La Pia were caught in adultery and killed by their husbands. Or in La Pia's case, her husband *thought* she was committing adultery and killed her.

### *Differences*

- A major difference, of course, is that La Pia sincerely repented her sins.
- A major difference, of course, is that Francesca is in the Inferno, while La Pia is in Antepurgatory.
- Francesca speaks about her husband and puts him in Caina — her message is that the SOB is going to get his. La Pia mentions her husband, but does not say what his sin is — apparently he thought that she was committing adultery and so he had her killed.
- Francesca puts herself at the center of the universe, while La Pia is self-effacing. La Pia wants Dante to rest first, and then remember her.
- Francesca uses many, many flowery, elegant words, while La Pia's speech is elegant but very brief.

### *Note*

Very few women speak in the *Inferno* and in the *Purgatory*. Francesca da Rimini spoke in the *Inferno*, and now in the *Purgatory* a second woman speaks in *The Divine Comedy*. Later, of course, Beatrice will speak many lines in the *Purgatory* and the *Paradise*. Women will play a much greater role in the Forest of Eden at the top of the Mountain of Purgatory and in Paradise.

- **Many souls low in the Inferno do not want to reveal their names to Dante the Pilgrim, while many souls in Purgatory want to reveal their names to Dante. Why?**

One reason, of course, is that souls in Purgatory will benefit from prayers that are said for them. We do pray for the souls of deceased loved ones, and if we are pure of heart, our prayers will be heard in Heaven.

Another reason is that the souls in the lowest circles of the Inferno do not want to be remembered for the great sins they have committed. The souls in Purgatory want their loved ones to know that the souls in Purgatory will make it to Paradise.

## Canto 6: Purgatory — Sordello

- Often we will see linkage in *The Divine Comedy*. For example, *Inferno 6* and *Purgatory 6* are both about politics (as is *Paradise 6*).

We will see a broadening of perspective as we go from the *Inferno* to *Purgatory* to *Paradise*, and in *Paradise* we see the big picture:

Canto 6 (the gluttons) in the *Inferno* is about politics in Florence.

Canto 6 in *Purgatory* is about politics in Italy.

Canto 6 in *Paradise* is about politics in the Roman and the Holy Roman Empire.

Dante criticizes corruption. In each of the above cantos, he criticizes corruption in the area under discussion.

Note that we go from the smaller picture to the larger picture as we go from the *Inferno* (Florence) to *Purgatory* (Italy) to *Paradise* (the Roman and the Holy Roman Empire).

### • Does prayer affect the will of Heaven?

We pray for the dead, so we must think it has an effect.

When Dante asks whether prayer affects the will of Heaven, Virgil tells him to ask Beatrice when he sees her later. (When Dante hears the name Beatrice, he is energized and ready to climb higher. He is eager to see Beatrice again.)

Virgil also says that the prayers of the pure of heart are heard in Heaven. The prayers of evil people are not heard in Heaven.

Dante asks about prayer because of a passage in Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.373-376, in which Palinurus wishes to be ferried across the River Styx although his body has not been buried.

Mark Musa translates the Sibyl's response to Palinurus' request (63):

Whence, Palinurus, this wild longing of yours?  
 Shall you, unburied, view the Stygian waters and  
 The Furies' stern river, and unbidden, draw near the  
 bank?  
 Stop dreaming that heaven's decrees may be turned  
 aside by prayer.

The prayers of pagans are unanswered because pagans do not worship God correctly. Therefore, what Virgil wrote in the *Aeneid* is correct, but it does not apply to the prayers of sincere Christians.

Virgil also refers to the omnibenevolence of God — to God's love:

“High justice would in no way be abased  
 if ardent love should cancel instantly  
 the debt these penitents must satisfy,”

(Musa 6.37-39)

On the Day of Judgment, any soul who is climbing the Mountain of Purgatory will instantly go to Paradise, even if under normal circumstances the soul would spend hundreds of years climbing the Seven-Storey Mountain.

This can give hope to the rest of us. God's love may be so great that God saves even the sinners in the Inferno. This would certainly be a triumph for Love. Some people believe in Hell, but because they also believe in God's Love, they believe that Hell is either empty or will be empty one day.

By the way, Father Bob Perella once said, “Since I believe in the Bible, I’m sure there’s a Hell. But I believe in God’s mercy — and therefore I’m sure it’s empty.” (Source: Joey Adams, *The God Bit*, p. 253.)

• **Compare and contrast how Sordello and Virgil, who are from the same city, interact with the way that Dante and Farinata, who are from the same city, interacted in *Inferno* 10.**

Virgil asks a soul for help — he is confident of receiving help. That is one difference between the *Inferno* and *Purgatory*. The souls in *Purgatory* are eager to help. The souls in deep Hell are not eager to help. The souls who are willing to tell their stories to Dante often want to gain something by it — to spin their stories to cast the blame somewhere else (Francesca da Rimini) or to have continued Earthly fame (Brunetto Latini).

Farinata and Dante immediately began to talk about what separated them: family and politics. They began to try to score points off each other. Farinata pointed out that he had scattered Dante’s party twice, and Dante pointed out that his party had returned to Florence but that Farinata’s family had not. Farinata then revealed that the future held troubled times for Dante.

Sordello happens to be from Mantua, which is where Virgil is from. When Sordello learns this, he reacts in an interesting way:

But of our native land and of our life

It questioned us; and the sweet Guide began:

“Mantua,” — and the shade, all in itself  
recluse,

Rose tow’rds him from the place where first it was,

Saying: “O Mantuan, I am Sordello

Of thine own land!” and one embraced the other.

(Longfellow 6.70-75)

Sordello and Virgil have a birthplace in common, and they like each other because of it. (Later, we will see in Heaven that Earthly citizenship is not important. What is important is being in Paradise.) At this point, Sordello does not know that he is embracing a great Roman poet.

Another difference between the Inferno and Purgatory is the lack of factionalism, which we saw a lot of in *Inferno* 6 (Ciaccio talks about factionalism in Florence) and *Inferno* 10 (Farinata). Neither Sordello nor Virgil are trying to one-up each other or trying to score points against each other.

• **How does Dante the Poet criticize the corruption and evil in Italy?**

We see Dante the Poet doing a lot of criticism from this point. He heavily criticizes factionalism, which exists throughout Italy, not just in Florence. Many warriors are in Italy, and they are killing other Italians. Two targets of Dante’s criticism are the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.

Dante points out the importance of Roman law, which is one of the wonders of the world. Unfortunately, the Holy Roman Emperor is in Germany rather than Italy, so no one is around to enforce the Roman law. Why isn’t the Holy Roman Emperor around? In part, because the Pope doesn’t want him around. We read:

What boots it, that for thee Justinian

The bridle mend, if empty be the saddle?

Withouten this the shame would be the less.

(Longfellow 6.88-90)

We will also see a further linkage with Canto 6 of *Paradise*, in which we meet Justinian, who codified the law. The point of the above passage is that Justinian codified the law, but that no one is now in Italy to enforce it.

Here is more criticism of factionalism in Dante the Poet's apostrophe:

Come and behold Montecchi and Cappelletti,

Monaldi and Fillippeschi, careless man!

Those sad already, and these doubt-  
depressed!

(Longfellow 6.106-108)

The Cappelletti and the Montecchi families are better known to modern readers as the Capulets and the Montagues, which is how they appear in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

• **What is the importance of law in a society?**

Law is enormously important in society. It lets people know what they can and cannot do legally. If the laws were not written down, we would find it difficult to know when we were breaking the law. (The Magna Carta is important in part because in it the laws are written down.) In addition, if laws were constantly changing and not stable, we would run into difficulties. Dante writes:

that by the time November is half done

the laws spun in October are in shreds.

How often within memory have you changed



coinage and customs, laws and offices,  
and members of your body politic!

(Musa 6.142-147)

Florence and other places are chaotic because of constantly changing laws. When the Ghibellines kick out the Guelfs, they make new laws. When the Guelfs kick out the Ghibellines, they make new laws. With political power changing hands so quickly and so often, it is very difficult to make plans.

In order for people to respect law, it has to stay law for a while. If it changes frequently, people won't know what is legal and what is illegal.

In the United States, we have *ex post facto* laws. If I do something that is legal today and it becomes illegal tomorrow, I can't be charged with it because it wasn't illegal when I did it. For example, when I was age 18, people could drink legally in Florida at age 18. Later, the law was changed, but I could not be charged with underage consumption because when I drank alcohol in Florida at age 18, it was legal to drink alcohol in Florida at age 18.

In Florence in Dante's day, that wasn't the case. You could be held liable for what you did yesterday, even if it was legal to do that yesterday. In such a society, you can have a lot of stagnation and a lot of chaos.

Dante the Poet says this about extreme factionalism in Florence:

And if thou mind thee well, and see the light,  
Thou shalt behold thyself like a sick woman,  
Who cannot find repose upon her down,  
But by her tossing wardeth off her pain.

(Longfellow 6.148-151)

### Canto 7: Purgatory — The Negligent Princes

- **How does Sordello react when he learns that he has embraced the great Virgil?**

Sordello asks Dante and Virgil more about who they are, and Virgil introduces himself:

“Or ever to this mountain were directed  
     The souls deserving to ascend to God,  
     My bones were buried by Octavian.  
 I am Virgilius; and for no crime else  
     Did I lose heaven, than for not having faith;”  
 (Longfellow 7.4-8)

This is a surprise to Sordello, and surprises in Purgatory are good. Sordello is astonished, and he is very happy because Virgil truly is a great poet. Sordello tells Virgil:

“O glory of the Latians, thou,” he said,  
     “Through whom our language showed what  
     it could do  
     O pride eternal of the place I came from,”  
 (Longfellow 7.16-18)

In Purgatory, souls are very helpful. Virgil and Dante are looking for the gate to Purgatory Proper, and Sordello offers to be their guide. However, he does say that in Purgatory, souls cannot advance up the Mountain during the night. (We will see later that the Slothful run day and night to make up for lost time.)

However, we should note that Sordello pays more attention to Virgil than he does to Dante. Virgil may be in Limbo, but

he is still a rock star to those in Purgatory who love poetry. Also, of course, this shows that Sordello is not a perfected soul yet. He is impressed by celebrity although he should be keeping his mind fixed on purging his sins.

• **What made the Negligent Rulers negligent?**

Most of the Negligent Rulers were negligent in taking care of their own souls. They were so occupied with Earthly matters that they had no time for Heavenly matters. In addition, they sometimes didn't do all that well in taking care of Earthly matters. One ruler — Henry of England (Henry III) — was noted for his piety: His negligence was toward his kingdom.

Kings cannot be negligent if they are to be good. Kings must take care of their spiritual as well as of their secular matters. A good King can do much good for his people. Of course, a good King must also take care of his own soul.

All of the Negligent Rulers — and Sordello the troubadour — died while Dante was alive. Dante describes some of the eight Negligent Rulers in terms of the size of their noses. We should note that on Earth some of these rulers were enemies, but that they get along well here, of course. Ottokar II comforts in Purgatory Rudolf I, who was his enemy in life.

These Negligent Rulers made God wait, and God is going to make these Negligent Rulers wait before they are allowed to climb up the Mountain of Purgatory.

• **Is nobility of character an inherited virtue?**

No, it is not:

Not often does the sap of virtue rise

to all the branches. This is His own gift,

and we can only beg that He bestow it.

(Musa 7.121-123)

Bad sons are born to good fathers, and good sons are born to bad fathers. Nobility of character is acquired, not inherited. You form your own character by your own actions. In William Shakespeare's history play *1 Henry IV*, King Henry IV is afraid that he has a bad son — Prince Hal — who will be a bad King. Fortunately, Prince Hal reforms himself, stops hanging around with lowlifes, and becomes a good King: Henry V.

We find out in this canto that some of these Negligent Rulers have bad sons.

Each of us forms our own character, although we can certainly pray to God to help us become better people. The doing of good deeds is important. As a free person, you can choose to live your life as a good person or as a bad person. To be a good person, do good deeds. To be a bad person, do bad deeds. If you do good deeds, you will become good. If you do bad deeds, you will become bad. To become the person you want to be, act as if you already are that kind of person. Each of us chooses what kind of person we will become. To become a hero, do the things a hero does. To become a coward, do the things a coward does. The opportunity to take action to become the kind of person you want to be is yours.

**• Are the various classes of the Spiritually Negligent treated properly by having to wait to climb the Mountain of Purgatory?**

Yes, they have to wait to climb the Mountain of Purgatory, but waiting is proper for them.

The souls of dead sinners who sincerely repented arrive in Purgatory, where they wait until they are ready to pass through the Gates of Purgatory to Purgatory Proper. Some

souls — the late repentant — must wait longer than others. The late repentant are these:

- 1) those who died while excommunicated.
- 2) the indolent (who kept putting off spiritual matters).
- 3) those who repented only in their final moments of life.
- 4) those who ignored spiritual matters while concentrating on worldly matters (the Negligent Rulers). Also in this group of Negligent Rulers are those who ignored worldly matters while concentrating on spiritual matters. Rulers need to take care of the people in the land they rule.

These souls kept God waiting, and God makes them wait to enter Purgatory Proper. However, these souls can enter Purgatory Proper more quickly if good people pray for them. This is good news.

## Canto 8: Purgatory — The Serpent and the Two Angels

### • Why do two angels dressed in green (the color of hope) and bearing blunted swords appear at the beginning of Canto 8?

As sunset occurs on Easter Sunday, a soul leads the other souls in a Vesper hymn, “*Te lucis ante terminum*” (“Thee, before the end of the light, [we pray ...]”). Night is coming, and the hymn asks for God’s protection during the night, which of course they will get.

The prayer is answered immediately. Two angels in green arrive bearing blunted swords to frighten away a serpent. Of course, God could destroy the serpent, but he does not. He allows this ritual to be repeated each evening. This ritual bears a message: I will protect you, and I will answer your prayers. The saved souls know that they are in no danger from the serpent — the angels are bearing blunted swords because they don’t even need full weaponry here. However, the saved souls watch this ritual because God is showing them that He keeps His promises and that He answers prayers. Of course, each soul wants to climb the Mountain of Purgatory, and God is letting them know that yes, eventually they can climb the Mountain of Purgatory. Also of course, God is a Protector in addition to a Promise-Keeper.

We read:

Upon the side on which the little valley  
                                   No barrier hath, a serpent was; perchance  
                                   The same which gave to Eve the bitter food.  
 ’Twixt grass and flowers came on the evil streak,  
                                   Turning at times its head about, and licking

Its back like to a beast that smoothes itself.

I did not see, and therefore cannot say

How the celestial falcons 'gan to move,

But well I saw that they were both in  
motion.

Hearing the air cleft by their verdant wings,

The serpent fled, and round the Angels  
wheeled,

Up to their stations flying back alike.

(Longfellow 8:97-108)

• **What does Judge Nino Visconti request of Dante?**

Dante talks with a Guelf, Judge Nino Visconti (died 1296), who wants his daughter to pray for him. His widow has remarried.

Judge Nino Visconti says,

“When thou shalt be beyond the waters wide,

Tell my Giovanna that she pray for me,

Where answer to the innocent is made.”

(Longfellow 8.70-72)

• **Which prophecy concerning Dante does Conrad Malaspina make?**

Dante also talks with a Ghibelline, Conrad Malaspina (died c. 1294), who wants news of the coast of Tuscany, where he had been well known. Dante praises the generosity of the Malaspina family, and Conrad makes a prediction: within seven years Dante will have need of that generosity. This is yet another prophecy of Dante's coming exile.



## **Canto 9: Purgatory — First Prophetic Dream and Saint Peter's Gate**

- **Canto 9 is transitional — We go from Purgatory to Purgatory Proper.**

In Canto 9, Dante goes through the gates into Purgatory Proper.

- **What is the good deed that Saint Lucia does for Dante the Pilgrim?**

Dante has a dream. He dreams that a Golden Eagle carries him through the air. When he wakes up on Easter Monday, he is at the top of Purgatory. Sordello, their very kind guide, has been left behind, and Virgil tells Dante that Saint Lucia carried him in the night to the top of Purgatory.

We remember that Saint Lucia was blinded while living, but here she uses “her lovely eyes” (Musa 7.61) to indicate to Virgil where the gate to Purgatory Proper is. Saint Lucia has been rewarded for her martyrdom. In addition to being in Paradise, she has sight again.

- **Write a short description of the steps and gates of Purgatory.**

An angel is present here, and Dante must climb three steps of different colors: white, darker than purple-black, and red. The three colors may represent the three stages of repentance:

- 1) self-examination: white
- 2) sorrow for sin, contrition: darker than purple-black
- 3) penance: red

Note: The red color is compared to that of porphyry, an igneous rock.

To unlock the gate of Purgatory, the angel must use two keys: one is gold and one is silver.

The angel represents ecclesiastical authority, and the keys come from Saint Peter, whom we will see in Paradise.

We read about the keys that Jesus gave to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19 (King James Version):

*18: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*19: And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

**• What do the seven P's written on Dante the Pilgrim's forehead stand for?**

P stands for *Peccatum*, which is Latin for sin. The seven P's stand for each of the seven deadly sins. As Dante climbs up the Seven-Storey Mountain and purges each sin, for each sin that is purged, a P will be erased from his forehead.

As Dante goes through the gate, he hears a hymn, the *Te Deum*, which is the Church's hymn of jubilation: "*Te Deum laudamus*" ("We Praise Thee As God").

We read:

At the first thunder-peal I turned attentive,  
 And "*Te Deum laudamus*" seemed to hear  
 In voices mingled with sweet melody.  
 Exactly such an image rendered me  
 That which I heard, as we are wont to catch,

When people singing with the organ stand;

(Longfellow 9.139-144)

Of course, we see more ritual here. Hearing the sound of the *Te Deum* reminds Dante of the ritual of church service.

## Canto 10: First Ledge — Pride

- **Nearly a third of the way through the *Purgatory*, Dante and Virgil reach Purgatory Proper.**

Obviously, we spent a lot of time in Pre-purgatory because Dante felt that there was much to learn there.

The main point: Dante does not want for us to wait before repenting and before beginning the process of purging our sin.

From this point we enter Purgatory Proper, which has seven storeys or ledges. Each storey or ledge is devoted to purging a particular sin, beginning with pride, the foundation of the other sins.

- **What is pride, and why is it a sin?**

Good factionalism and bad factionalism exist. People of good will can disagree about politics, poetry, music, and other things. Bad factionalism results in such things as warfare and innocent people being hurt.

Good pride and bad pride exist. I want students to work hard on their papers and to take pride in their work. But bad pride can be destructive to oneself — look at everyone in the Inferno — as well as to other people.

Pride is putting yourself at the center of the universe. You regard yourself as being more important than anyone else.

Pride is the foundation of the other deadly sins. We can see how it works with thievery. Say that someone smashes in your car windshield in order to steal a couple of music CDs. Getting the windshield replaced may cost \$500; the CDs may cost \$20. The thief is so proud that he or she values \$20 for him- or herself more than \$520 for you (\$500 for replacing the windshield, and \$20 for replacing the CDs).

Let's look at pride and other sins:

1) *Pride.*

I am the center of the universe, and I am better than other people. Quite simply, I am more important than other people.

2) *Envy.*

I am the center of the universe, so I ought to have it all, and if you have something I want, I envy you.

3) *Wrath.*

Because I am the center of the universe, everything ought to go my way, and when it does not, I get angry.

4) *Sloth.*

I am the center of the universe, so I don't have to work at something. Either other people can do my work for me, or they can give me credit for work I have not done because if I had done the work, I would have done it excellently.

5) *Avariciousness and Prodigality.*

I am the center of the universe, so I deserve to have what I want. If I want money, I get money and never spend it, or if I want the things that money can buy, then I spend every dime I can make or borrow to get what I want. Either way, I deserve to have what I want.

6) *Gluttony.*

I am the center of the universe, so I deserve these two extra pieces of pie every night. This is my reward to myself for being so fabulous.

7) *Lust.*

I am the center of the universe, so my needs take precedence over the needs of everyone else. If I want to get laid, it's OK if I lie to get someone in the sack and never call in the days and weeks afterward. My sexual pleasure is more important than the hurt of someone who realizes that he or she has been used.

**• Dante and Virgil see realistic sculptures carved into the mountain. What kind of stories do the sculptures illustrate, and who is the Sculptor? What is the didactic (educational) purpose of the sculptures?**

Carved in the mountain are exempla (examples) of the virtue that is opposed to pride: humility. As we will see, each ledge of the mountain will be devoted to purging one sin, and each ledge will have positive exempla of a virtue as well as negative exempla of the sin being purged on that ledge:

Level 1: Pride is the sin: Humility is the virtue.

Level 2: Envy is the sin: Generosity is the virtue.

Level 3: Wrath is the sin: Meekness is the virtue.

Level 4: Sloth is the sin: Zeal is the virtue.

Level 5: Avaricious and Wasteful are the sins: Detachment from Riches is the virtue.

Level 6: Gluttony is the sin: Abstinence is the virtue.

Level 7: Lust is the sin: Chastity is the virtue.

Note that we have art — and lots of it — in Purgatory.

Note that lots of education takes place in Purgatory. Someone may want to say that the repentant sinners are being punished for their sins, but it would be better to say that they are being purged of their sins. Although we will see

some souls suffer in Purgatory, the purpose of the suffering is to educate the souls and to purge the souls of sin. The souls benefit from their suffering, and they expect to benefit from their suffering. The souls want to be in Purgatory. They are confident that God will keep His promises and they will reach Paradise.

God is the sculptor; God created the art on the Mountain of Purgatory. Previously we saw that God is an architect — when he built the Entrance to the Inferno. Now we see that God is a great sculptor, too.

At the end of the third exemplum (Trajan and the poor widow), we find out definitively who created the sculpture:

He who on no new thing has ever looked  
 Was the creator of this visible language,  
 Novel to us, for here it is not found.

(Longfellow 10.94-96)

We can see two major points:

- 1) Good art can lead to education.
- 2) To understand something, look at examples of it. We may add that one should look also at examples of its opposite. For example, to understand courage, look at examples of courage and at examples of cowardice. This helps to illustrate the need for telling stories to children (and adults, perhaps by way of literature), and the need for good role models, and the need for the ability to identify bad role models.

**• From which three sources do the stories that illustrate humility come from?**

The positive exempla will always consist of an example from Mary, the mother of Christ; other exempla may come

from the Old Testament and from pagan literature and ancient history and mythology.

• **What are the three exempla of humility?**

The three positive exempla of humility — which are carved on the side of the mountain — are the Annunciation to Mary (in which an angel told Mary that she would bear Christ), King David dancing before the ark of the covenant, and the Roman Emperor Trajan. In his *Inferno*, Dante made good use of classical mythology and literature, and he does that here in his *Purgatory*.

*1. Mary and the Annunciation*

When the angel announces to Mary that she will give birth to the Messiah, Mary could have understandably been proud. Instead, she gave all glory to God and called herself a servant (handmaid) of God.

We read about the Annunciation in Luke 1:26-38 (King James Version):

26: And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27: To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28: And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29: And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30: And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.



31: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32: He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34: Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35: And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36: And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37: For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38: And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

## *2. King David Dances as the Ark of the Covenant is Brought to Jerusalem*

King David shows humility by dancing before the ark, in contrast to his first wife, Michal, who dislikes her husband's act of humility and is therefore made infertile by God.

We read in II Samuel 6 (King James Version):

*14: And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.*

15: So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

16: And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

and

20: Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

21: And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

22: And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

23: Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

### *3. The Emperor Trajan Accedes to the Request of a Poor Widow*

On his way to fight a battle, Trajan speaks to a poor widow who wishes him to give her justice for her son who has been killed. Trajan hesitates, but he does as the poor widow wishes.

We will see Trajan again later — he will be a pagan in Paradise.

This is a brief account of the story of Trajan by Alfred J. Church in his *Roman Life and Story*:

“Gregory,” says his biographer, John the Deacon, “walking through the Forum of Trajan, a place which that Prince had adorned with very noble buildings, recollected how this Trajan had, by his just dealing, comforted the soul of a certain widow. As he was hastening with all speed to the war — so the story runs — a widow cried out to him with tears, ‘My innocent son has been murdered, and that since you came to be Emperor. I beseech you, seeing that you cannot bring him to life, to avenge his death.’ ‘I will do so to the utmost,’ said he, ‘if I return safe from the war.’ ‘But,’ said the widow, ‘if you should fall in battle who will do me justice?’ He answered, ‘My successor.’ Said the widow, ‘what will it profit thee if another do this good deed?’ ‘Verily nothing,’ he answered. ‘Then,’ said she, ‘is it not better for thee, thyself, to do me justice and gain thy reward, therefore, than to pass this on to another?’ Thereupon Trajan dismounted; nor did he depart till he had tried the cause of the widow, and done full justice therein. Gregory, therefore, remembering how righteous this said Trajan had been, came to the great Church of St. Peter, and there wept so sore for the errors of this most merciful prince that, on the following night, there came to him this answer: ‘Thou hast been heard for Trajan, but take care that thou pray not for any other pagan soul.’”

The good John is somewhat troubled in mind by this story. Did not Gregory himself say that the children of God may not pray for unbelievers and wicked men

that have departed this life? His doubts drive him into sophistry. Gregory, he says, did not pray but wept only, and we know that God hears the unspoken desire of his servants. Nor is it said that Trajan's soul was removed to Paradise. That, he thinks, would be incredible. It may have remained in hell, but so as not to feel the torments thereof. So far John the Deacon. Dante is not so disturbed by the story. He boldly places the Emperor in the sixth heaven among the spirits of the just made perfect.

Source: <<http://tinyurl.com/ln5sb2e>>

Date Downloaded: 1 August 2013

• **Why is the story of the Annunciation especially important?**

Mary will always be an exemplum of the virtue on each of the seven stories on the Mountain. Here she is an excellent example of humility. It seems to me that if you were told that you would give birth to the Messiah, then you might be very proud of that. Mary responds with humility and gives God all the glory.

• **How realistic is the sculpture?**

We read:

The Angel, who came down to earth with tidings  
 Of peace, that had been wept for many a year,  
 And opened Heaven from its long interdict,  
 In front of us appeared so truthfully  
 There sculptured in a gracious attitude,  
 He did not seem an image that is silent.

One would have sworn that he was saying, “*Ave*;”

(Longfellow 10.34-40)

What does the angel say to Mary? Apparently, the angel says, “Hail, Mary, full of grace.” It is interesting how realistic the sculpture is. Dante thinks that he hears the word “*Ave*” although he knows that the word is merely carved into the rock. God is quite a good sculptor indeed. By the way, the Latin word “*Ave*” means “Hail.”

The next sculpture depicts the ark of the covenant, seven choirs, and some censers filled with incense:

There sculptured in the self-same marble were

The cart and oxen, drawing the holy ark,

Wherefore one dreads an office not  
appointed.

People appeared in front, and all of them

In seven choirs divided, of two senses

Made one say “No,” the other, “Yes, they  
sing.”

(Longfellow 10.54-60)

The sculpture is so realistic that Dante thinks that he may hear singing and that he may smell incense.

In addition, in the story of King Trajan, Dante seems to hear a long conversation between the widow woman and the king.

**• Why is the story of King David especially important for Dante?**

What is King David especially noted for? Probably these things:

- 1) He is a great politician: a King.
- 2) He is a great poet: the author of the Psalms.
- 3) He is a great sinner who was saved by God.
- 4) He is a very talented man, just like Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro. Fortunately, David repented.

Here is some background information on David and Bathsheba. From a rooftop, David saw a woman bathing, and he desired her. Because he was King, he was able to sleep with her, although she was married — her husband (Uriah the Hittite) was away on a military mission. She got pregnant with King David's child. David sent for her husband so that he (her husband) could have sex with Bathsheba and so think the child was his, but her husband did not want to have sex while people were dying in war. (David, by the way, should have been fighting, not committing adultery.) Therefore, King David ordered that Bathsheba's husband be put in the front lines where he would probably be killed, and he was killed. (Other people were killed with Uriah. Apparently, bad battle tactics were needed to get Uriah killed, and other innocent men died with him.) David then made Bathsheba one of his wives. This story does have a happy ending, as David repents his sin, is forgiven, and is now in Paradise.

Dante is very much like David in being a great poet and a politician. Of course, both of them are highly intelligent people. Dante has sinned, although we don't know the exact nature of his sin, and he can learn a lot from David. He needs to learn to be humble: to give credit to God and not to himself.

**• What does King Trajan do in the third exemplum of humility?**

Of course, he accedes to the request of a poor widow. King Trajan's agenda was to ride out with his army, but instead he

helps the poor widow first. At first, King Trajan wanted her to wait for justice in the murder of her son until he came back from a military campaign, but she asked him, “What if you don’t come back?” He agreed to help her find justice for her son’s death.

This story appears in John the Deacon’s *Sancti Gregorii Magni Vitae*, a 9th-century biography of Saint Gregory the Great:

And here we narrate somewhat of the tears of Roman Saint Gregory restoring the soul of the Emperor Trajan and baptizing it, which is marvelous to say and hear. ... Now one day when he was going through Trajan’s Forum ... he thought about the work of mercy the pagan had performed, which seemed to him more Christian than pagan. For as he was leading his army forth to fight against the enemy, he was softened by the voice of a widow pleading for mercy, halting the Emperor of the whole world. For she said, ‘Lord Trajan, here are men who have killed my son, who will not render me justice’. He replied, ‘When I return, speak to me, and I will render justice to you’. And she, ‘Lord, and if you do not return, there is none to help me’. Then he acquiesced to the judgement, and from the midst of the bronze armour put together the money that was owed. Thus, St Gregory concluded, he who had not known the passage, Judge the orphan and defend the widow and come and reason together, said the Lord (Isaiah 1.16-17), had done it. And weeping, he entered St Peter’s ...

Source: <<http://www.umilta.net/gregory.html>>.

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Trajan's good deed is so important that Saint Gregory prayed that Trajan be brought back to life so that he could convert and become a Christian. This happened, and we will see Trajan in Paradise.

• **How is Dante's *Divine Comedy* similar in purpose to the sculpture illustrating humility?**

In the sculpture, we see visible speech:

- 1) the angel seems to speak to Mary,
- 2) the choirs seem to sing before the ark of the covenant, and
- 3) King Trajan and the poor widow seem to have a long conversation.

Another kind of visible speech is poetry. Poetry with its rhyme and meter is often designed to be read or recited aloud. By putting poetry into a book, we are making speech visible.

We also see a didactic purpose in both the sculpture and in *The Divine Comedy*. Dante wants us to learn from reading *The Divine Comedy*. Dante and the maker of the sculpture are trying to bring about moral improvement.

By traveling throughout the afterlife, Dante of course is learning. He knows that he has great talents — the question that he must find the answer to is what purpose should he put his great talents.

• **Which purgation is designed to drive away pride? Why is this fitting?**

Once through the Gates of Purgatory, the souls arrive at the first ledge, which is devoted to purging those who were guilty of pride. In the 21st century, we often think of pride as something positive. Proper pride is, but the sin of pride is



thinking of yourself as the center of the universe and the most important thing in the universe. Being forced to carry huge stones on their back purges the proud here on the first story of Purgatory Proper. This is an appropriate purgation because the heavy stones force the sinners to bow and assume a humble position.

Farinata in the Inferno is of course proud. He stands up straight like a statue; he is not bent over like these saved souls are.

The stones the souls are carrying are huge; however, they will gain from all of their hard effort. They will be purged of their sin.

The stones are not of equal weight. The prouder a sinner was, the heavier the stone is. We read that the souls slowly make their way, “unequally tormented by their loads” (Musa, *Purgatory* 11.28).

**• These souls are compared to art: They resemble a corbel. What is a corbel? What do these souls have in common with art?**

Corbels are little sculptures of little people. They sometimes appear to be holding up a roof or other heavy weight such as a column.

Stone is what much sculpture is made of. Sculptors shape stone works of art. We sinners need to allow God to shape us into works of art.

We read:

Sometimes one sees a corbel, holding the weight  
of roof or ceiling, carved in human shape  
with chest pressed tightly down against its  
knees,

so that this unreality gives real  
 anguish to one who sees it — this is how  
 these souls appeared, and how they made me  
 feel.

(Musa 10.130-135)

Just before this, Dante makes an apostrophe to haughty Christians, warning them not to be proud:

Why floats aloft your spirit high in air?  
 Like are ye unto insects undeveloped,  
 Even as the worm in whom formation fails!

(Longfellow 10.124-126)

#### • **An Example of Pride**

Sometimes people die of hunger; sometimes this happens because of pride. In Vilna in the 19th century, a rich man became poor. Because of his pride he kept up appearances, and he did not ask for help, and so he died because of lack of food. The townspeople were ashamed that anyone could die in their midst in this way, but Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883) told them, “That man did not die of starvation, but of excessive pride. Had he been willing to ask others for help and admit to his situation, he would not have died of hunger.” (Source: Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Wisdom*, p. 13.)

## **Canto 11: First Ledge — Aldobrandesco, Oderisi, Provenzan**

### **• Describe the Prayer of the Proud.**

The Prayer of the Proud is a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. It emphasizes humility. In this canto, we will see sinners who had three types of pride:

- 1) Pride of blood (family).
- 2) Pride of talent.
- 3) Pride of power.

The Proud pray for protection against temptation — not for themselves because as saved souls they do not need it. They pray for protection against temptation for the living on Earth, who do need it.

### **• Canto 11 can be divided into three conversations. What are the subjects of those three conversations?**

The subjects of those three conversations are these:

- 1) Family.

Dante talks about family with Umberto Aldobrandesco.

- 2) Art.

Art here includes both poetry and visual arts such as painting.

- 3) Politics.

The third conversation is once again about politics.

Note that this is the pattern that we saw in the *Inferno*, Canto 10. Dante talked about family with Farinata (Farinata is proud of his family, which was higher socially than was

Dante's family), poetry with Cavalcanti (father of a poet), and then politics with Farinata (who was involved in Florentine politics).

• **Write a short character analysis of Umberto Aldobrandesco.**

While he was alive, Umberto Aldobrandesco, who died in 1259, was very proud of all the accomplishments of his family. Now, however, he is humble and wonders whether anyone has heard of his father. He says:

“A Latian was I, and born of a great Tuscan;  
 Guglielmo Aldobrandeschi was my father;  
 I know not if his name were ever with you.”

(Longfellow 11.58-60)

Umberto started his political life as a Ghibelline, but he became angry with his political party, so he became a Gueff instead. Umberto lived in Siena, a city that was a rival to Florence.

We can see that Umberto was proud of his family — his blood — in what he says next:

“The ancient blood and deeds of gallantry  
 Of my progenitors so arrogant made me  
 That, thinking not upon the common mother,  
 All men I held in scorn [...]”

(Longfellow 11.61-64)

Farinata, of course, focused on the differences between himself and Dante. For example, Farinata's family was of a higher status than Dante's family. Also, of course, Farinata

and Dante belonged to different political factions: Farinata was a Ghibelline, while Dante was a Guelf.

Here in Purgatory, Omberto now focuses on the similarities that he has with all human beings. Omberto regrets his sin of pride, now, and he regrets it in part because it hurt his family. He says that the sin of pride ruined not just himself but all his family.

One thing we can learn here is to not have too much pride in family.

• **Write a short character analysis of Oderisi of Gubbio.**

Oderisi of Gubbio (1240-99) illuminated — or illustrated — medieval manuscripts. He was very proud of his work while he was alive, but here on the Mountain of Purgatory, he praises another artist.

Dante recognizes him:

“O,” asked I him, “art thou not Oderisi,  
                   Agobbio’s honour, and honour of that art  
                   Which is in Paris called illuminating?”

(Longfellow 11.79-81)

Oderisi of Gubbio responds by praising a competitor:

“Brother,” said he, “more laughing are the leaves  
                   Touched by the brush of Franco Bolognese;  
                   All his the honour now, and mine in part.”

(Longfellow 11.82-84)

• **Why does Dante discuss family and art and politics in the part of Purgatory that is devoted to pride?**

Obviously, people can be proud of all three: family, art, and politics.

Also obviously, both poetry and politics are of special interest to Dante, and obviously pride can play a role in both poetry and politics.

Dante does learn much about art here in this conversation with Oderisi of Gubbio.

Oderisi of Gubbio stresses that someone better will come along in art. This is something that we see in many forms of art:

1) In painting, Giotto (GOUGHT-TO) is better than Cimabue (KEE-MA-BOO-AAA).

2) In poetry, Guido Cavalcanti is better than Guido Guinizelli. And another poet — Dante himself? — may soon be better than both of them.

Oderisi of Gubbio says:

“Your earthly fame is but a gust of wind  
     that blows about, shifting this way and that,  
     And as it changes quarter, changes name.  
 Were you to reach the ripe old age of death,  
     Instead of dying prattling in your crib,  
     Would you have more fame in a thousand  
     years?

What are ten centuries to eternity?

    Less than the blinking of an eye compared

to the turning of the slowest of the spheres.”

(Musa 11.100-108)

It is true that almost everybody is forgotten after 1000 years; however, Homer is remembered, and Dante, who has been dead for 700 years, is likely to be remembered, as is Shakespeare, who has been dead for only 400 years. But 1000 years is nothing compared to eternity.

By the way, Virgil’s pagan view of fame is very much different from that of the Christian view of Oderisi of Gubbio. We read in *Inferno* when Virgil is urging Dante to get a move on:

“Now it behoves thee thus to put off sloth,”

My Master said; “for sitting upon down,

Or under quilt, one cometh not to fame,

Withouten which whoso his life consumes

Such vestige leaveth of himself on earth,

As smoke in air or in the water foam.”

(*Inferno*, Longfellow 24.46-51)

In my opinion, fame does not have to be a bad thing, if it is regarded and used correctly. Both Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa were able to use fame correctly.

If someone creates art for the wrong reason, fame will perhaps come — then go quickly. If one writes for the right reason, fame may be longer lasting.

However, I believe that someone can write for money yet tell the truth and achieve lasting art and lasting fame. William Shakespeare wrote plays so that his theatrical troupe would have new plays to perform. Mark Twain was happy to make

lots and lots of money from writing *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Both made money from their writing, but both also told the truth in their writing, or at least part of the truth in part of their writing. The important thing, of course, is to write the truth. If you get money, too, then celebrate.

**• Write a short character analysis of Provenzan Salvani. Which great deed of humility did Provenzan Salvani perform while he was still alive?**

Provenzan Salvani (1220?-69) is Sienese, like Umberto Aldobrandesco. He is also a famous political figure. He and Farinata, who is in the *Inferno*, were the victors at the Battle of Montaperti in 1260.

Provenzan Salvani wanted to destroy Florence following the victory at the battle of Montaperti in 1260. Farinata, of course, did not want Florence destroyed, apparently because he wanted to rule the city. Farinata prevailed in the dispute.

Provenzan Salvani was able to begin climbing the Mountain of Purgatory early because of an act of great humility. Charles of Anjou, who was holding one of Provenzan Salvani's friends in prison, declared that he would kill the friend after a month unless the friend was ransomed for 10,000 gold florins. Provenzan Salvani got the money, although he had to beg in the marketplace of Siena for it.

If anything is a sign of humility, begging is.

**• Which vague prophecy does Oderisi of Gubbio make about Dante at the end of Canto 11?**

Oderisi of Gubbio prophesies that Dante will learn the humiliation of begging.

On the first ledge, Dante is walking stooped over; he is already learning to be humble. However, we will learn in



Canto 13 that Dante is afraid that when he dies, he will have to spend a lot of time on this ledge purging his sin of pride.

## Canto 12: First Ledge — Exempla of Pride

- **Which works of visual art can be found in Canto 12? What is their didactic (educational) purpose?**

The huge stones the prideful sinners carry force them to look at the ground, where they see pavement sculptures. The sculptures give exempla of the sin of pride.

Three of the negative exempla of pride — which are carved on the rock floor of the terrace — include Niobe, Arachne, and the city of Troy.

- **Describing these examples, the next four stanzas begin (in Italian) with the letter V (U), the next four with O, and a final four with M. These letters create an acrostic based on the Italian word for “man.”**

Dante, of course, is making the point that human beings are filled with pride. Pride is a sin that almost all human beings commit.

- **Explain the exempla of pride.**

Three of the negative exempla of pride — which are carved on the rock floor of the terrace — include Niobe, Arachne, and the city of Troy.

*1. Niobe Boasted that She had 14 Children, while Leto had Only Two (Apollo and Artemis/Diana)*

Niobe had seven sons and seven daughters, and so she boasted that she was more worthy of praise than Leto, who had given birth to only one son and only one daughter: the god Apollo and the goddess Artemis/Diana. Because of her pride, Apollo and Artemis/Diana killed all of her children in one day. In Book 24 of Homer’s *Iliad*, Achilles tells the story of Niobe to King Priam of Troy. He makes the point that Niobe ate after all of her children died, and therefore King Priam should also eat, although his son Hector is dead.

## 2. *Arachne — Athena/Minerva Turned Her into a Spider*

Arachne was so proud of her weaving that she challenged Athena/Minerva to a weaving contest. Arachne produced a magnificent cloth without fault, but because of her pride, Athena/Minerva turned her into a spider.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we read:

Bk VI:129-145 Arachne is turned into a spider

Neither Pallas nor Envy itself could fault that work. The golden-haired warrior goddess was grieved by its success, and tore the tapestry, embroidered with the gods' crimes, and as she held her shuttle made of boxwood from Mount Cytorus, she struck Idmonian Arachne, three or four times, on the forehead. The unfortunate girl could not bear it, and courageously slipped a noose around her neck: Pallas, in pity, lifted her, as she hung there, and said these words, 'Live on then, and yet hang, condemned one, but, lest you are careless in future, this same condition is declared, in punishment, against your descendants, to the last generation!' Departing after saying this, she sprinkled her with the juice of Hecate's herb, and immediately at the touch of this dark poison, Arachne's hair fell out. With it went her nose and ears, her head shrank to the smallest size, and her whole body became tiny. Her slender fingers stuck to her sides as legs, the rest is belly, from which she still spins a thread, and, as a spider, weaves her ancient web.

Source:

<http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Metamorph6.htm#480077258>

Translator: A.S. Kline

By the way, after George Bernard Shaw heard a young Jascha Heifetz play the violin, he sent him this note: “Young man — Such perfection annoys the gods. You should play one or two wrong notes after each performance to appease them.”

### 3. *The City of Troy*

Paris, a prince of Troy, stole Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, from Menelaus, her lawful husband, in addition to stealing treasure from him. Because of Paris’s pride, and because the Trojan citizens would not return Helen to Menelaus, Troy fell to an Achaean army led by Agamemnon, Menelaus’ brother.

**• Why does the angel of Humility remove the first P from Dante the Pilgrim’s forehead, and why does Dante the Pilgrim find climbing easier now?**

Dante and Virgil come to a stairway that leads to the next storey of the Mountain of Purgatory — the storey where envy is purged. Because Dante has purged the sin of pride (or at least learned about purging the sin of pride), an angel erases one of the P’s (symbols of sin — *peccatum* is Latin for sin) from his forehead.

Because pride is the source of all sin, when the P of the sin of pride is removed, all the other P’s grow fainter:

He [Virgil] answered: “When the P’s which have remained

Still on thy face almost obliterate

Shall wholly, as the first is, be erased,

Thy feet will be so vanquished by good will,

That not alone they shall not feel fatigue,

But urging up will be to them delight.”

(Longfellow 12.121-126)

The more sins that are purged, the easier climbing the Mountain is, so Dante and Virgil find climbing the Mountain easier now. Dante is less burdened by sin now. (When Dante touches his forehead, Virgil smiles.)

There is much music as well as much visual art in Purgatory. As the P is removed and Dante prepares to go up the Mountain to the next storey, he hears being sung “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) — Christ’s first beatitude.

In Hell are heard the shrieks of the Damned; in Purgatory is heard the sound of music:

Ah me! how different are these entrances  
 From the Infernal! for with anthems here  
 One enters, and below with wild laments.

(Longfellow 12.112-114)

By the way, we learn later that Dante believes that when he dies, he will have to spend a lot of time purging his sin of pride. He believes that he has not sinned especially gravely in other ways; for example, he does not think that he is especially guilty of the sin of envy.

### **Canto 13: Second Ledge — Envy (Sapia)**

**• Which sin is purged on the second storey of the mountain?**

Envy is purged on the second storey of the Mountain of Purgatory.

**• Which are the exempla of generosity?**

When Dante and Virgil go up to the second storey of the seven-storey Mountain, they hear three voices naming the exempla of generosity, which is the virtue opposed to envy.

*1) Mary: “They have no wine”*

Jesus’ first miracle is turning water into wine so that the guests at a wedding can celebrate. This shows generosity on the part of Mary. She wants other people to be able to celebrate a wedding properly.

Clearly, the Bible is against drunkenness; however, it seems to be more accepting of wine drunk in moderation. Wine is used in the Jewish Sabbath, and it used to be used in the Christian Mass. Some medical doctors agree that wine in moderation can be a good thing for most adults. My own doctor advised me to drink a glass of red wine each day as a way to raise my good cholesterol. Of course, people who suffer from alcoholism should avoid drinking alcohol. Also, too much alcohol can raise one’s triglyceride blood levels.

We read this story in John 2:1-10 (King James Version):

*1: And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:*

*2: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*

*3: And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine*

4: Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come

5: His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

6: And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7: Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8: And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9: When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10: And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

## 2) Pylades: “I am Orestes”

This is a myth about the House of Atreus, whose members included both Agamemnon and Menelaus. When Agamemnon returns home to Greece after fighting the Trojan War for 10 years, his wife, Clytemnestra, kills him. She has taken a lover during the years that he has been away from home. Orestes kills her because she killed his father, and Orestes is sentenced to die. His friend Pylades is willing to die in Orestes’ place, although Orestes does not want him to, so both tell the executioners, “I am Orestes.”

We read this story in Cicero’s *De Amicitia* VII:

What cheers there were, for instance, all over the theatre at a passage in the new play of my friend and guest Pacuvius; where the king, not knowing which of the two was Orestes, Pylades declared himself to be Orestes, that he might die in his stead, while the real Orestes kept on asserting that it was he. The audience rose *en masse* and clapped their hands. And this was at an incident in fiction: what would they have done, must we suppose, if it had been in real life? You can easily see what a natural feeling it is, when men who would not have had the resolution to act thus themselves, shewed how right they thought it in another.

Source:

[http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/bl\\_text\\_cicero\\_deamic\\_7.htm#7](http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/bl_text_cicero_deamic_7.htm#7)

Translator: E. S. Shuckburgh

Here is more information:

LUCIAN, *The History of Orestes and Pylades from Amores* (Second Century A.D.)

Translated by W. J. BAYLIS

Phoeis preserves from early times the memory of the union between Orestes and Pylades, who taking a god as witness of the passion between them, sailed through life together as though in one boat. Both together put to death Klytemnestra, as though both were sons of Agamemnon; and Aegisthus was slain by both. Pylades suffered more than his friend by the punishment which pursued Orestes. He stood by him when condemned, nor did they limit their tender friendship by the bounds of Greece, but sailed to the furthest boundaries of the Scythians-the one sick, the other ministering to him. When they had come into



the Tauric land straightway they were met by the matricidal fury; and while the barbarians were standing round in a circle Orestes fell down and lay on the ground, seized by his usual mania, while Pylades 'wiped away the foam, tended his body, and covered him with his well-woven cloak' acting not only like a lover but like a father.

When it was determined that one should remain to be put to death, and the other should go to Mycenae to convey a letter, each wished to remain for the sake of the other, thinking that if he saved the life of his friend he saved his own life. Orestes refused to take the letter, saying that Pylades was more worthy to carry it, acting more like the lover than the beloved. "For," he said, "the slaying of this man would be a great grief to me, as I am the cause of these misfortunes." And he added, "Give the tablet to him for (turning to Pylades) I will send thee to Argos, in order that it may be well with thee; as for me, let any one kill me who desires it".

Such love is always like that; for when from boyhood a serious love has grown up and it becomes adult at the age of reason, the long-loved object returns reciprocal affection, and it is hard to determine which is the lover of which, for-as from a mirror-the affection of the lover is reflected from the beloved.

Source:

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/pwh/lucian-orest.asp>

As always, Dante hears a Beatitude: "Love those who do you harm" (Matthew 5:43).

• **Why have the eyes of the Envious been sewn shut? Why is this fitting?**

The Envious are made sad when they see other people having good fortune, so their eyes are sewn shut with iron wire. That is why they hear voices rather than see art on this storey of the Seven-Storey Mountain.

In Purgatory, people help and support each other, and that is true of those being purged of envy. They lean on each other for support.

The Envious also wear cloaks made of haircloth, which is very uncomfortable.

• **All the penitent sinners here are citizens of which city?**

They are all citizens of the City of the Saved. Being a citizen of Siena or of Florence is not important here. After Dante asks if anyone is an Italian here, we read:

“O brother mine, each one is citizen

Of one true city; but thy meaning is,

Who may have lived in Italy a pilgrim.”

(Longfellow 13.94-86)

We will not see destructive factionalism in Purgatory.

• **Write a short character analysis of Sapia of Siena.**

As we would expect, Sapia of Siena is envious. She envied her nephew, Provençal Salvani, and she rejoiced when he was killed.

She has climbed this far up the Mountain because of the prayers of a seller of combs.

She wants Dante to pray for her — and to let her relatives know where she is.

Dante talks to only two women in Preparatory and Purgatory Proper. They are La Pia (Preparatory) and Sapia of Siena (Purgatory Proper).

One thing that they apparently have in common is that both want Dante to pray for them. La Pia does this implicitly when she asks Dante to remember her after he has rested. Sapia does this explicitly when she says, “Yes, help me with a prayer from time to time” (*Purgatory* 13.147).

• **After he dies, will Dante have to spend much time among the repenting Envious? How about among the repenting Proudful?**

Dante says that he will not have to spend much time among the envious, but that he will have to spend much time among the Proudful:

“Mine eyes,” I said, “will yet be here ta’en from me,  
     But for short space; for small is the offence  
     Committed by their being turned with envy.  
 Far greater is the fear, wherein suspended  
     My soul is, of the torment underneath,  
     For even now the load down there weighs on  
 me.”

(Longfellow 13.133-138)

**Canto 14: Second Ledge — Envy (Guido del Duca,  
Rinier da Calboli)**

• **Why doesn't Dante state his name when asked?**

Two penitents overhear Dante, and they realize that he is alive because he has told Sapia that he is alive.

And so Dante talks with two penitents named Guido del Duca (unknown dates) and Rinier da Calboli (circa 1200-65?): Both are from the Romagna district north of Tuscany, which includes Bologna, Ravenna, and Rimini.

They have overheard him talking with Sapia, and they now ask him who he is.

Dante only vaguely identifies where he is from, and he does not state his name because he is not yet famous:

And I: "Through midst of Tuscany there wanders  
A streamlet that is born in Falterona,  
And not a hundred miles of course suffice it;  
From thereupon do I this body bring.  
To tell you who I am were speech in vain,  
Because my name as yet makes no great  
noise."

(Longfellow 14.16-21)

Of course, Dante has just come from the storey that is devoted to purging the sin of pride, and so he attempts to be modest here by not saying his name. However, Dante's attempt at humility seems to be only partially successful. Dante says that "I have *not yet* won fame on earth" (Musa 14.21, with emphasis added), so he does seem a little too preoccupied with fame.

**• What do Dante, Guido del Duca, and Rinier del Calboli talk about? How does Rinier criticize the people who live along the Arno River?**

We do not find out the names of the two penitents until later in the canto, but one penitent (Rinier da Calboli) is puzzled by Dante's omission of the name of the river, although Rinier is able to guess that he means the Arno River. So why he did not mention the name of the river? Is the name of the river something bad?

And said the other to him: "Why concealed  
This one the appellation of that river,  
Even as a man doth of things horrible?"

(Longfellow 14.25-27)

This leads Guido Del Duca to severely criticize the region of land that the river runs through. The people who live there are so evil that the name of the river ought to be forgotten forever.

As so often, Dante criticizes what needs to be criticized. He is not afraid to act the part of an Old Testament prophet. Of course, he is criticizing the people of his own city: Florence.

According to Guido Del Duca, people of that region will continue to be evil. He prophesies that Rinier's grandson will be evil. In fact, Rinier's grandson, Fulcieri da Calboli, was podesta of Florence in 1303, and he committed atrocities against Dante's party (the White Guelfs) as well as against the Ghibellines.

**• Why do the two penitents tell Dante their names when Dante would not tell them his name?**

In Purgatory, souls are helpful. When Dante asks them to reveal their names, one of the penitents tells him,

Whereat the spirit which first spake to me

Began again: “Thou wishest I should bring  
me

To do for thee what thou’lt not do for me;

But since God willeth that in thee shine forth

Such grace of his, I’ll not be chary with thee;

Know, then, that I Guido del Duca am.”

(Longfellow 14.76-81)

Guido then tells Dante his story. Of course, he used to be envious, and so he is on this storey to be purged of the sin of envy. He tells Dante,

“My blood was so with envy set on fire,

That if I had beheld a man make merry,

Thou wouldst have seen me sprinkled o’er  
with pallor.”

(Longfellow 14.82-84)

Guido then tells Dante the name of Rinier. Guido then criticizes Romagna, where the two penitents are from.

**• Guido del Duca criticizes the people who live along the Arno River, and then he criticizes the current citizens of Romagna. How does such criticism make him feel?**

The souls in Purgatory are saddened by the evil of living men in Romagna. Such evil does not make them happy. Guido tells Dante,

“But go now, Tuscan, for it now delights me

To weep far better than it does to speak,

So much has our discourse my mind distressed.”

(Longfellow 14.124-126)

Evil makes Guido weep.

Apparently, Guido has come a long way in being purged of the sin of envy. We know this for two reasons:

1) Envious people are saddened when other people have good fortune, and they are made happy when other people have bad fortune. If Guido were still envious, he would be made happy by the bad fortune of living people — being evil is bad fortune because evil people run the risk of eternal damnation unless they repent.

2) Guido is not envious of Dante, to whom God is showing special grace by allowing him to travel through Purgatory although he is still alive.

Again, we see that the souls in Purgatory are helpful to others. Virgil and Dante move away from these two penitents. Because the two penitents don't say anything, Virgil and Dante know that they are moving in the right direction. If they were going in the wrong direction, the penitents would tell them. Of course, Virgil and Dante are looking for the next set of stairs that lead upward to the next storey of the seven-storey mountain.

• **Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of envy that are presented in Canto 14.**

Virgil and Dante hear the disembodied voices of two sinners who were envious.

*1) Cain, the Slayer of Abel*

According to the story of Cain and Abel, both brothers gave offerings to God. Cain was a farmer, and his offering was “the fruit of the ground” (Genesis 4:3). Abel was a shepherd, and his offering was “the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof” (Genesis 4:4). God liked Abel’s offering, but God did not like Cain’s offering. Out of envy, Cain killed Abel.

Of course, God knows that Cain killed Abel, and God punishes Cain by sending him into exile. Cain then says the words that appear here in Purgatory: “I shall be slain by all who find me” (Musa 14.133; see also Genesis 4:14). However, God is merciful, and marks Cain as a sign that no one should kill Cain.

Here is the King James version of the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16):

1: And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

2: And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3: And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4: And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

5: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6: And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?



7: If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8: And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9: And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10: And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11: And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12: When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13: And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14: Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15: And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

16: And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

2) *Aglauros, Who was Envious of Her Sister, Whom Mercury Desired*

The other voice says, “I am Aglauros, who was turned to stone” (Musa 14.139).

Aglauros was envious of her sister, Herse, who was beloved by the god Mercury. Aglauros attempted to keep Mercury from seeing her sister, and as a result Mercury turned her to stone. This myth appears in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* II, lines 737-832.

Here is the Wikipedia summary of the version of the myth that appears in Ovid:

Ovid tells in Book 2 of his *Metamorphoses* that Erichthonius was born without a mother. Pallas Athena (better known as Athena, Minerva is her Roman name) placed him in a willow basket and told the sisters not to look on the mysteries. Two daughters, Herse and Pandrosos obeyed, but Aglauros looked and saw the child lying next to a great snake. Cornix, the crow, told Athena, who turned her feathers from white to black for her pains. Later in Book 2, Hermes (Mercury in Roman mythology) is in Athens and sees a festival to Athena. He falls in love with Herse and goes to her house to ask for her hand. Aglauros agrees to give Herse his message for the price of gold. Athena sees all of this and goes to the house of envy and orders the goddess to poison Aglauros. Aglauros, who begins to waste away with jealousy, blocks the passage to Herse’s room and refuses to move. Hermes, angry at Aglauros for breaking her promise, changes her into a black marble statue.

Source: "Herse." Wikipedia.  
 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herse>>. Accessed 1  
 August 2013.

• **Of what does Virgil complain at the end of Canto 14?**

Virgil is knowledgeable, and he laments Humankind's envy:

And said he to me: "That was the hard curb  
 That ought to hold a man within his bounds;  
 But you take in the bait so that the hook  
 Of the old Adversary draws you to him,  
 And hence availeth little curb or call.  
 The heavens are calling you, and wheel around you,  
 Displaying to you their eternal beauties,  
 And still your eye is looking on the ground;  
 Whence He, who all discerns, chastises you."

(Longfellow 14.143-151)

Virgil is pointing out that we human beings have examples of envy that we should learn from, yet we do not learn from them: "neither rein nor spur avails for you" (Musa 14.147). For this reason, God punishes us.

### Canto 15: Third Ledge: Anger

#### • What is the light that dazzles Dante?

The time is approximately 3 p.m. on Easter Monday.

The sun is shining, but suddenly a “light far brighter” (15.11) appears. The light is so bright that Dante has to use his hands to block the light.

The light is that of an angel, who has appeared to invite Dante and Virgil to climb higher up the mountain.

Virgil lets Dante know that the higher he goes up the mountain, the less the light will dazzle him:

“Soon will it be, that to behold these things  
 Shall not be grievous, but delightful to thee  
 As much as nature fashioned thee to feel.”

(Longfellow 15.31-33)

In addition, these stairs will be less steep than the stairs the two poets have previously climbed. The angel speaks to Dante and Virgil:

When we had reached the Angel benedight,  
 With joyful voice he said: “Here enter in  
 To stairway far less steep than are the others.”

(Longfellow 15.34-36)

By the way, “benedight” means blessed.

The angel is happy with the progress that Dante has made.

As Virgil and Dante begin to climb the stairs, they hear “Blessed are the merciful” — another of Christ’s beatitudes,

and one that blesses those who are good to others and are not envious of them.

• **What are the things that exclude a common sharing?**

In Canto 15, Dante asks Virgil:

“How can one good that’s shared by many souls  
 make all those who possess it wealthier  
 than if it were possessed by just a few?”

(Musa 15.61-63)

In Canto 14, Guido said,

“human race, why do you place your hopes  
 where partnership must always be denied.”

(Musa 14.86-87)

Material possessions are things that human beings can overvalue. When it comes to material possessions, if one person owns something, then other people do not own it.

Dante scholars William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman use this example: If I own a copy of a poem written out in full by Robert Frost, then you do not own that same handwritten copy of the poem. This material possession excludes a common sharing. Other things do not exclude a common sharing. Both you and I can memorize the same poem by Robert Frost. Here the poem is not a material thing, and so both you and I can possess the poem.

Virgil tells Dante,

“Because are thither pointed your desires  
 Where by companionship each share is  
 lessened,

Envy doth ply the bellows to your sighs.  
 But if the love of the supernal sphere  
 Should upwardly direct your aspiration,  
 There would not be that fear within your  
 breast;  
 For there, as much the more as one says 'Our,'  
 So much the more of good each one  
 possesses,  
 And more of charity in that cloister burns."

(Longfellow 15.49-57)

Material possessions often lead to envy. If I have a piece of paper on which Robert Frost handwrote a poem, you and I cannot possess that paper simultaneously and you may envy me because of that possession. But if we both memorize the poem, each of us can possess it completely without taking anything away from the other person.

In Dante's Heaven, everybody shares his or her spiritual gifts, and everybody gains because of the sharing. Sharing love can make people wealthier in a spiritual sense. Virgil tells Dante that Beatrice can provide further insight for him.

**• Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Meekness that are presented in Canto 15.**

Dante and Virgil reach the third ledge, where sinful wrath is purged.

Dante has a series of "ecstatic visions" that dramatize meekness, which is the opposite of sinful wrath. This shows that we can gain wisdom in many ways. On the first storey, people gain wisdom through the use of their sight. On the second storey, people gain wisdom through the use of their

hearing. On this, the third storey, people gain wisdom through ecstatic visions. We can liken them to revelation.

These are the exempla of meekness:

*1) Mother Mary and the Youthful Jesus*

The youthful Jesus teaches in the temple while Mary and Joseph think he is lost. She gently asks him, “My son, / why hast Thou dealt with us this way” (Musa 15.89-90). Obviously, a parent will be anxious when the parent thinks that a child has been lost. Finding the child can be a time of great happiness that the child has been found, followed by anger that the child allowed the parent to feel such anxiety.

This is the story as told in Luke 2:40-52 (King James Version):

*40:* And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

*41:* Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

*42:* And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

*43:* And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

*44:* But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

*45:* And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

*46:* And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the

doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47: And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48: And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49: And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50: And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51: And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

## 2) *The Ruler Of Athens, Pisistratus*

The ruler of Athens, Pisistratus, was known for his ability to deal with angry people. His wife was upset because a young man had publically hugged their daughter, and so she wanted him killed. Pisistratus asked her, "What shall we do to those who want to harm us, if we condemn those who love us?" This anecdote is related in *Facta and Dicta* (Memorable Doings and Sayings) V, i, by Valerius Maximus:

When a young man fired by love for his [Pisistratus'] unmarried daughter had kissed her as she came in his way in public, his wife urged Pisistratus to have him put to death, but he answered: "If we kill those who love us, what shall we do with those who hate us?"



Source: *Facta and Dicta* (Memorable Doings and Sayings)V, i, by Valerius Maximus. Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey.

### 3) *Saint Stephen, The First Christian Martyr*

Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr, died while praying for the forgiveness of his killers.

This is the story as told in the King James translation of Acts 7:54-60:

54: When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55: But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56: And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57: Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58: And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59: And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60: And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

#### • **What happens at the end of Canto 15?**

Dante and Virgil continue walking, and a thick smoke rolls toward them:

And lo! by slow degrees a smoke approached  
In our direction, sombre as the night,  
Nor was there place to hide one's self  
therefrom.

This of our eyes and the pure air bereft us.

(Longfellow 15.142-145)

The smoke envelopes them, and Dante and Virgil can no longer see.

This is a cliffhanger. Dante's audience will continue reading to find out the cause of the smoke.

### Canto 16: Third Ledge — Anger (Marco the Lombard)

#### • What purification is given to the wrathful, and why is it fitting?

Here the wrathful are enveloped with a thick smoke as part of their purification. Mark Musa writes, “The smoke on this terrace, the Terrace of the wrathful, symbolizes the bitter, smoky passion of wrath, which blinds the mind of Reason” (175).

Sinners can be blinded with anger, and so these penitents are being purified of the sin of wrath by being blinded with smoke.

Wrathful people fight each other, but here the penitents being purified of wrath work together. They pray and sing the *Agnus Dei*, the Lamb of God (16.19).

This is a translation of the *Agnus Dei*, which appears in the Catholic Mass:

*Agnus Dei, qui tolis peccata mundi,*

Lamb of God, who take away sins of world,

*miserere nobis.*

have mercy on us.

*Agnus Dei, qui tolis peccata mundi,*

Lamb of God, who take away sins of world,

*dona nobis pacem.*

grant us peace.

Source:

<http://classicalmusic.about.com/od/theordinaryofthemas/f/agnusdei.htm>

Date Downloaded: 2 November 2008

The purgation is working. These penitents are singing together in harmony; they are not angry at each other.

• **Can angry sinners be blinded to reason?**

The wrath of sinners can blind them to reason. Here Virgil — the symbol of human reason — can see through the smoke and guides Dante, who is blinded by the smoke:

For not an eye it suffered to stay open;  
                   Whereat mine escort, faithful and sagacious,  
                   Drew near to me and offered me his shoulder.  
 E'en as a blind man goes behind his guide,  
                   Lest he should wander, or should strike  
                   against  
                   Aught that may harm or peradventure kill  
                   him,  
 So went I through the bitter and foul air,  
                   Listening unto my Leader, who said only,  
                   “Look that from me thou be not separated.”

(Longfellow 16.7-15)

Peter Gallagher, author of *A Modern Reader's Guide to Dante's The Divine Comedy*, writes,

Not even in Hell was Dante's sight ever so impeded as by the harsh and heavy smoke that punishes, on this third ledge, sinners who once fumed in rage on earth. Since the poet must close his eyes, the presumably smokeproof Virgil offers his shoulder as an escort. “See that you are not cut off from me” is

the voice of reason speaking to a man who undoubtedly succumbed at times to irrational wrath.  
(91)

• **Write a short character analysis of Marco the Lombard.**

Here Dante meets and talks with Marco the Lombard. We know little about him, other than he had a quick temper and served at court. Many of the people who appear in *The Divine Comedy* are remembered only because they appeared in *The Divine Comedy*.

• **If you have taken an introductory Philosophy course (or want to do research), explain the concept of Determinism.**

According to Determinism, nothing is free to move in any other way than the way it moves. Everything follows natural laws. For example, planets orbit the Sun because of natural laws. Planets are not free to stop orbiting the Sun. Planets are not free to stop revolving. We will never have a day in which the Earth stops revolving for an entire day, meaning that one side of the planet is light for 24 hours, and the other side is dark for 24 hours, and then starts revolving again. Using the laws of physics, we can accurately predict where a planet will be 100 years from now.

Of course, Determinism as applied to planets is not controversial. However, people who are Hard Determinists say that human beings are also determined. We are alive, however, and therefore it is much more difficult to predict our behavior, but everything we do is caused by our environment and heredity. For example, if you have an IQ of around 100 and no major physical disabilities, and if you grew up in Southeast Ohio, you will probably speak English (or at least American English).

According to the Determinists, Humankind does not have Free Will. Whenever we make a decision, we are making the decision in accordance with the kind of character we have. For example:

Let's say that I have decided to attend class today. (One quarter I did not miss any classes and received straight A's on my report card!) A Determinist would say that my character made me decide not to miss class today. Further, the Determinist would say that my character was created by heredity and environment. I was born with an above-average IQ, and I grew up in a household filled with books. (I recommend that you always tell other people that you have a high IQ — lie if you have to.) Since my heredity and environment are beyond my control (I did not choose to be born, and if I had chosen to be born, I would have picked richer parents — just kidding, Mom and Dad), I am not free. Whatever I choose to do, such as attending my class today, is not the result of a free act — it is the result of conditions beyond my control. Therefore — according to the hard Determinists — I am not free.

I downloaded the below information from <http://www.bartleby.com/65/de/determinism.html> on December 11, 2005:

### **Determinism**

Philosophical thesis that every event is the inevitable result of antecedent causes. Applied to ethics and psychology, Determinism usually involves a denial of Free Will, although many philosophers have attempted to reconcile the two concepts.

*Source: The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. Copyright © 2001-05 Columbia University Press.*

• **If you have taken an introductory philosophy course (or want to do research), explain the concept of Free Will.**

Free Will is what it sounds like. Planets may be determined, but human beings have the ability to make choices. You can choose which university to attend and which career to pursue. This is up to you.

We tend to think of freedom in terms of Free Will and Determinism. According to Determinism, everything we do is caused. If Determinism is correct, we have no Free Will because all of our desires have been determined by our heredity and environment. On the other hand, if we have Free Will, and if some of our actions are not caused by our heredity and environment, then Causal Determinism is incorrect and we have freedom.

I downloaded the below information from <http://www.bartleby.com/65/fr/freewill.html> on December 11, 2005:

**Free Will**

In philosophy, the doctrine that an individual, regardless of forces external to him, can and does choose at least some of his actions. The existence of Free Will is challenged by Determinism. [...] Advocates of Free Will have usually begun with the overwhelming testimony of common practice and common sense: people do believe they in some way determine their actions, and hold each other accountable for them. Therefore advocates of Free Will have argued that the human will, unlike inanimate things, can initiate its own activity.

Source: *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Sixth Edition.  
Copyright © 2001-05 Columbia University Press.

**• Why is the distinction of Determinism and Free Will important in ethics?**

Determinism and Free Will are important in ethics because we punish people who commit crimes. If I rob a liquor store to get money, get caught, and am found guilty in a court of law, I can go to jail. I have Free Will, I used my Free Will to decide to rob a liquor store, and I am responsible for my crime.

However, what if I am not responsible for my actions. What if I am insane and I am unable to tell right from wrong? In that case, I will be found not guilty by reason of insanity, and I will be sent to a mental institution to get the help I desperately need.

Suppose that Determinism is a true theory. Suppose that I really don't make any choices in my life. Suppose that all of what seem to be choices are actually the result of my heredity and my environment. If I don't have Free Will, then I am not responsible for my actions. If I am not responsible for my actions, then how can I be found guilty of robbing a liquor store?

**• Is the world sinful because of the stars? Do we lack Free Will because other things determine what we shall do? Or does the cause lie on the earth?**

Dante has a question to ask Marco Lombardo, one of the sinners being purged of the sin of wrath. Marco Lombard complains about sin on Earth.

Dante observes,

“the world, indeed, as you have just declared,  
is destitute of every virtue known,  
swarming with evils, ever breeding more.



What is the cause of this? Please make it clear  
 that I may teach the truth to other men;  
 some see it in the stars, some on the earth.”

(Musa 16.58-63)

This is a very important question: Why is the world so sinful?

Dante offers two possibilities for why the world is so sinful:

1. One possibility is that that stars determine our actions. Astrologers may agree with this. We act the way we act because the stars determine the way we act.
2. One possibility is that the cause is on earth. We ourselves are responsible for our actions because we have Free Will.

**• What is Marco Lombardo’s reaction to the idea that the stars determine our actions?**

Marco Lombardo makes it clear that he rejects the possibility that the stars determine our actions.

By the way, although Dante is talking about astrology here, I think that it is fair that we also talk about heredity and environment. Dante’s main question is whether human beings are determined or free. In his day, many people believed in astrology and believed that the stars determined the way we act. In our day, many people still believe in astrology, but the Determinists of today believe that heredity and environment determine how we act.

By the way, Dante has not stated that this is his own opinion. He has merely said that this is a possibility that some people believe. If the stars (or our heredity and environment)

determine everything we do, then we have no control over what we do and therefore no freedom and no Free Will.

Exasperated, Marco responds, “The world, brother, is blind, / and obviously the world is where you’re from!” (Musa 16.65-66).

Some people on Earth believe that the stars determine all our actions, but this idea, according to Marco Lombardo, is definitely an insult.

“Ye who are living every cause refer

Still upward to the heavens, as if all things

They of necessity moved with themselves.”

(Longfellow 16.67-69)

Marco points out that this belief means that human beings have no free will:

“If this were so, in you would be destroyed

Free Will, nor any justice would there be

In having joy for good, or grief for evil.”

(Longfellow 16.70-72)

**• If Free Will is just an illusion, are we responsible for our sins and for our good deeds?**

If everything we do is determined, then no one would deserve to be rewarded for good deeds and punished for bad deeds.

According to the Determinists, if Mother Teresa does much good in her life, so what? She was born with a set of genes and lived in an environment that made her do much good in her life. She did not freely choose to do good because no

human being has Free Will and therefore no human being freely chooses to do anything.

If Free Will does not exist, this means, of course, that Dante's — and God's — afterlife does not make sense. Why should there be an Inferno if sinners are not responsible for their sins? Why should there be a Paradise if sinners are not responsible for their good deeds? Why should there be a Purgatory if sinners are not responsible for the sins they have repented — and are not responsible for their repentance, which is also determined?

**• Is it possible that other things influence us, but that we still have Free Will?**

Yes, it is possible. In Dante's day, nearly everyone would have agreed that the stars have an influence on people. An astrologer would tell us that you are born with certain predispositions because of the influence that the stars have on you.

Today, we would say that our heredity and our environment have an influence on people. It matters whether you are born with an ID of 130 or an IQ of 70. It matters whether your parents are employed professionals with a good education and a high income or are unemployed, low-IQ alcoholics.

However, it is possible that we still have Free Will, but we have Free Will in a certain situation. If I am born in the United States, I will most likely grow up speaking English, but I can use my Free Will to also choose to study French. If I am born in France, I will most likely grow up speaking French, but I can use my Free Will to also choose to study English.

**Why did Dante put astrologers in the Inferno?**

Of course, we saw that Dante put astrologers in the Inferno. Why would he do that?

Let's take astrology seriously and to an extreme. Most people nowadays, of course, don't do that. They may read their horoscope in a daily newspaper, but they think of astrology as an entertainment rather than as a way to live their life.

But suppose you did regard astrology as a way to live your life. What then? Then you would regard the stars as exerting control over your life. You would not make an important decision without consulting an astrological chart, and then you would decide in accordance with what the stars told you.

By doing this, of course, you would be denying your Free Will. You would be controlled by what you think the stars are telling you. A strong belief in astrology can lead to a denial of Free Will. A denial of Free Will can lead to an abdication of responsibility. Repenting your sins means acknowledging that you are responsible for committing sins and for regretting your sins. Unless you take responsibility for your sins, you cannot repent your sins. Unless you repent your sins, you cannot achieve Paradise.

The astrologers are in the Inferno because they have kept people from taking responsibility for their actions, including their sins. Sinners can say, "It's no wonder I sinned. It is all predetermined by the stars. It is not up to me whether or not I sin. Therefore, I don't have to take responsibility for my sins."

Of course, we have seen that many of the sinners in the Inferno avoided taking responsibility for their sins. Francesco da Rimini blamed Love and a book for her sins.

Unless you take responsibility for your actions, how can you change your life for the better?

Dante wants us to reject astrology and to affirm Free Will and responsibility.

**• Is freedom simply a given that we all have and can exercise however and whenever we want?**

Is freedom is simply a given that we all have and can exercise however and whenever we want? No.

For example, I am free to devote all my time and effort into becoming the center for the Boston Celtics, but that does not mean that I am free to be the center for the Boston Celtics. Because I am over 60 years old, because I am 5-foot-6, and because my career total number of points in my basketball career is 3, I doubt very much that the Boston Celtics will draft me as their center.

Similarly, you are free to try to become an attorney, but unless you actually pass the bar exam, you will not become an attorney.

Marco Lombardo says,

“The heavens your movements do initiate,  
 I say not all; but granting that I say it,  
 Light has been given you for good and evil,  
 And free volition; which, if some fatigue  
 In the first battles with the heavens it suffers,  
 Afterwards conquers all, if well ’tis  
 nurtured.”

(Longfellow 16.73-78)

According to Marco Lombardo, other things have an influence on us. He would say the stars — we would say heredity and environment. However, it is only an influence; it is not Determinism. We still have Free Will, and we can still choose how we will act.

We also have the ability to tell right from wrong, and we can use that to determine how to act.

For example, you may have a tendency to really, really like pancakes as well as a tendency to gain weight. You may, however, use your Free Will to moderate your intake of pancakes. (To me, pancakes are the food of the gods, but because of my tendency to gain weight quickly, I seldom eat pancakes.)

Of course, I am aware that the gluttons are in the Inferno, and because I have both Free Will and the knowledge that gluttony is a sin, I can choose not to be a glutton even though I really, really like pancakes. (As a young tennis player, Martina Navratilova was skinny, but when she began to go on international tours, she discovered pancakes and acquired a new nickname. Instead of being called “Stick” in her native language, people began to refer to her as the “Pancake Champ.” Later, of course, she lost the weight that she had gained by eating pancakes.)

Free Will can grow weak, or it can grow strong. Free Will must be nourished.

What does this mean? Think of habits, which can be good or bad. If you give in to your desires, your Free Will will grow weak. Let’s say that you like pancakes, and you eat them every time you can, despite your tendency to gain too much weight. You keep ordering them and keep ordering them, and eventually you can lose your Free Will to say no to eating pancakes — or to smoking tobacco, or to drinking alcohol, or to not being a couch potato, or whatever. On the other hand, if you use your Free Will to not eat pancakes, your Free Will can grow stronger. You will find it easier not to eat pancakes if you keep on ordering some other option from the menu. (This doesn’t mean that you never eat pancakes, but that you eat them rarely, as a special treat.)

In order to be free, you have to work at it. Instead of giving in to your desires and saying that what you do is determined by stars (or by heredity and environment), you work at controlling your desires. Instead of taking the easy way out and giving in to every desire, you decide what it is that you ought to do, and you do it.

This is something that all of us ought to be working for. In fact, it is what the souls in Purgatory are working for. Instead of giving in to feelings of anger, or envy, or pride, the souls in Purgatory want to rein in these feelings and to substitute instead feelings of meekness, generosity, and humility.

Let me say that there are things we have to do, things we ought to do, and things we want to do. For example, we have to pay our bills, we ought to take care of our health and act morally, and we want to enjoy entertainment once in a while. If what we want to do does not conflict with what we have to do and what we ought to do, then go ahead and do it. If you are a grown adult who enjoys reading Harry Potter books, then go ahead and read Harry Potter books.

• **Why are things messed up here on Earth?**

So why are things messed up on Earth? Marco Lombardo has the answer:

“You are free subjects of a greater power,  
     a nobler nature that creates your mind,  
     and over this the spheres have no control.

So, if the world today has gone astray,  
     the cause lies in yourself and only there!”

(Musa 16.79-83)

We should blame only ourselves for the way that things are messed up here on Earth.

• **What is the importance of just laws?**

We may be free, but we still have aids to help us do the right things.

Children have teachers to help them, and those teachers include parents. A good teacher and a good parent will help the children to do the right thing.

Another guide is just laws. We need good lawmakers to come up with just laws to be a guide for us. (Here, as so often, we have a discussion of politics, a subject of great importance to Dante.)

We need just laws to help us restrain our excessive desires. For example, I may have a great desire for alcohol, but laws against public drunkenness can help me restrain my excessive desire for alcohol. The same applies to laws against operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol.

The just laws will not annihilate my excessive desire, but just laws can help me restrain my excessive desires.

Marco Lombardo says,

“Men, therefore, needed the restraint of laws,  
needed a ruler able to at least  
discern the towers of the True city.”

(Musa 16.94-96)

The Italy of Dante’s time had Roman law, but nobody was enforcing it. In Dante’s time the Holy Roman Emperor is not in Italy, and the current Pope, Boniface VIII, is more interested in playing power politics than in ruling justly and enforcing just laws, so the Roman law is not doing Italy any good.



The people who should be enforcing just laws are instead more interested in gaining wealth and power. The bad behavior of their leaders has a bad influence on the common people.

Marco says that “the laws there are, but who enforces them?” (Musa 16.97).

He adds,

“And so the flock, that see their shepherd’s greed [the pope’s and the bishops’ greed]

for the same worldly goods that they have  
craved

are quite content to feed on what he feeds.”

(Musa 16.100-102)

The Pope and the bishops are pursuing wealth and power. The common people see that, and they feel free to pursue their own base desires. Just leadership is important if you want a just society.

Of course, pursuing our base desires is not a good idea. The people in the Inferno are in the Inferno because they did exactly that. They had Free Will, and they used their Free Will to do what they wanted to do, and what they wanted to do put them in the Inferno. Truly, the people who ended up in the Inferno chose their own fate.

Note that the laws we follow must be just. Some laws are not just. For example, slavery was once legal, and at one time, blacks and whites could not marry each other, even if they fell in love. Martin Luther King, Jr., argued that we ought not to follow unjust laws; instead, we should break them lovingly, openly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. By doing that, you can draw attention to unjust laws and have them replaced with just laws.

**• What is Marco’s further answer to the question of why things are so messed up on Earth?**

Why are things so messed up on Earth? Marco’s further answer — other than that we should blame only ourselves — is that we have bad leaders.

Certainly, we notice that many of the people we read about in *The Divine Comedy* are very important people. For example, we read about Popes and Holy Roman Emperors and famous generals.

True, once in a while we run across a common person such as Ciacca, the glutton in the *Inferno*. However, most of the people in *The Divine Comedy* — including the *Inferno* — are leaders.

For example, in *Inferno* 19, which is about the sin of Simony, we read about bad Popes, including the then-alive Pope Boniface VIII who will soon be punished in this section of Hell.

There we find out that having bad leaders at the top results in corruption lower on the hierarchy. If the Pope is corrupt, then the Bishops under the Pope can also be infected by the corruption. And then Priests can be corrupted. And then the congregation can be infected.

Bad leaders result in bad followers.

We do see the interconnection of the political and the personal here. Freedom of the will is a very personal thing, but we are free in a situation. If we live in a corrupt society with corrupt leaders, we are likely to become corrupt, too. When Jesus prayed, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13 King James Version), he knew what he was talking about. Yes, we do have freedom of the will, but it is best not to be tempted to do evil in the first place. Bad leaders can create a society in which temptation reigns.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah realized that his society was corrupt, and so he decided to seek the leaders, but when he saw the leaders, he realized that they were corrupt and so he realized why the society was corrupt.

This is why Dante places emphasis on leaders in *The Divine Comedy*. They are important because they can lead people well or they can lead people astray.

Of course, many people can be leaders, not just politicians. Dante himself became a leader by writing *The Divine Comedy*. He wants to lead people well; he does not want to lead people astray. When Dante talks to people, he has something to learn from them. In the Inferno, when he talked to a sinner, that sinner had something to say that Dante could learn from. Here, Marco Lombardo is teaching Dante that he needs to be a good leader when he writes *The Divine Comedy*.

### **Conclusion of Canto 16**

The gleaming angel of ascent arrives. Marco Lombardo has not yet purged his sin of wrath, and so he is not yet ready to ascent the Mountain of Purgatory. He tells Dante and Virgil, “God be with you!” (Musa 16.141), and then he leaves.

### Canto 17: Fourth Ledge — Sloth

- **Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Wrath that are presented in Canto 17.**

When the smoke thins out, Dante sees a few visions that are exempla (examples) of Wrath (Sinful Rage).

#### *1) Procne, Who Killed Her Son*

Procne was married to Tereus, and she bore him a son named Itys. Tereus then raped Procne's sister, Philomela, and he cut out her tongue so that she could not tell anyone what had happened. Philomela wove a tapestry. The tapestry contained pictures that told the story of the rape. When Procne saw the tapestry and realized that her husband had raped her sister, she was so angry that she killed his and her son, cooked him, and served him to her husband. Ovid tells this story in Book 6 of his book *Metamorphoses*.

#### *2) The Persian Haman, Who Planned to Slaughter Many Jews But was Himself Executed*

The Persian Haman was a high official of the Persian King Ahasuerus, whom we know better as Xerxes. He was famous in ancient Greek history as well as in Old Testament history. In ancient Greek history, his father, Darius, invaded the Greek mainland, but was defeated at Marathon. (We get the name "marathon" for our long-distance race because a runner carried the news of the Greek victory all the way to Athens, dying after he delivered the news.) Xerxes also invaded the Greek mainland. He was delayed at Thermopylae, a pass in the mountains. During the Battle of Thermopylae, 300 Spartans, and 1,000 other Greeks, led by King Leonidas of Sparta, held off the vastly numerically superior Persians for a few days, giving the Greeks time to gather their forces. The Greeks defeated the Persians in such battles as the Battle of Salamis and the Battle of Plataea, thus preventing the Persians from subjugating Greece.

In the Book of Esther, we read about Haman, who decided to have all the Jews killed because Mordecai, the cousin of Esther, would not bow down to him. Haman told Xerxes that a people in his kingdom did not obey his laws, and therefore that people ought to be killed. Xerxes was agreeable.

Esther asked that the Jews, herself included, fast for three days, and then she would see the king. (She was his queen.) Xerxes was unable to sleep one night, and he ordered a book of chronicles to be read to him. The selection read told about the loyalty of Mordecai, who had prevented the assassination of King Xerxes by two eunuchs.

Esther went to King Xerxes, her husband, and asked him not to kill all the Jews. He asked who was planning to kill all the Jews. Hearing from Esther that Haman was planning to kill all the Jews, Xerxes ordered that Haman be hung. In fact, the gallows that Haman had planned to use to hang Mordecai was used to hang Haman.

3) *Amata, Who Committed Suicide When Her Daughter, Lavinia, was About to Marry the Foreigner Aeneas Rather than the Italian Turnus*

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, we read about the death of Amata. Amata wanted her daughter to marry Turnus. However, when she heard a rumor — it turned out to be false — that Turnus had been killed in battle, she committed suicide rather than see Lavinia married to Aeneas. This story is told in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 12:

But fate and envious fortune now prepare  
 To plunge the Latins in the last despair.  
 The queen, who saw the foes invade the town,  
 And brands on tops of burning houses thrown,  
 Cast round her eyes, distracted with her fear —

No troops of Turnus in the field appear.  
 Once more she stares abroad, but still in vain,  
 And then concludes the royal youth is slain.  
 Mad with her anguish, impotent to bear  
 The mighty grief, she loathes the vital air.  
 She calls herself the cause of all this ill,  
 And owns the dire effects of her ungovern'd will;  
 She raves against the gods; she beats her breast;  
 She tears with both her hands her purple vest:  
 Then round a beam a running noose she tied,  
 And, fasten'd by the neck, obscenely died.

Source:

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/v/virgil/v5a/part12.html>

Translator: John Dryden

### • What is Sloth?

After seeing these exempla of Sinful Rage, Dante is blinded by an angel. This angel, who says, "*Beati / pacifici*" (17.68-69), which means "Blessed are the peacemakers," shows Dante and Virgil the way upward even before they ask. Dante and Virgil do go upward, but Dante begins to find it hard to move his feet. Why? For two reasons:

- 1) This is the ledge that is devoted to purging sloth or laziness, and so Dante is experiencing laziness.
- 2) The end of the day has arrived, and on the Mountain of Purgatory, no sinner can ascend at night.

Virgil tells Dante that this is the ledge devoted to purging sloth or laziness, aka lack of vigilance in pursuing those things that ought to be pursued.

• **What is the relationship between love and the seven capital sins, according to Virgil?**

No one is allowed to climb the Mountain of Purgatory at night, and so Virgil takes the time to teach Dante about the relationship between love and the seven capital sins.

The seven capital sins are also known as the seven deadly sins and as the seven cardinal (“cardinal” means “of prime importance”) sins. They are these:

Pride, Envy, and Wrath: Love the Wrong Things

Sloth: Love the Right Things, But Not Enough

Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust: Love the Right Things Too Much

Note: The references to “Love” are explained later.

Similarly, Virgil and Dante rested in the Inferno in Canto 11, and Virgil took the opportunity to tell Dante about the geography of Hell. Here he explains the layout of Purgatory, and he explains the relations of the seven capital sins to love.

Note that Canto 17 is one of the mid-cantos of the *Purgatory* (the other mid-canto is Canto 16), and Virgil and Dante are at the middle terrace or level of the Mountain of Purgatory.

Here again we turn to something personal: love. To Dante, both the personal and the public (as in politics) are important.

Dante the Poet makes a distinction between animal love and rational love in *Purgatory*, Canto 17. Virgil says,

“Neither Creator nor a creature ever,

Son," he began, "was destitute of love  
 Natural or spiritual; and thou knowest it.

The natural was ever without error;  
 But err the other may by evil object,  
 Or by too much, or by too little vigour."

(Longfellow 17.91-96)

Natural love is simply a desire for something. (The terms "natural love" and "rational love" come from the philosopher Aristotle.) Natural love does not involve the use of reason.

Rational love involves choosing what we love. One way to look at it is rational love involves choosing what we pursue. We may choose wisely or foolishly. We may choose to pursue what we love with not enough force or with too much force or with just the right amount of force.

Because we have Free Will, we can choose what we love, and we can choose with how much force we will pursue it. It is important to choose to love the right things and to pursue them with the right amount of force.

What we choose is what we love. We can choose to love the right thing or the wrong thing.

Dante then talks about what we ought to choose to love, and about the way our choices can go wrong. Making the wrong choice or pursuing what you love with the wrong amount of force can put you in the Inferno or make you spend additional years in Purgatory, depending on whether or not you repent your sins before you die.

(If you want, you can say that the *Divine Comedy* is a gigantic 14,000-line love poem.)



Rational love should stay fixed on the Eternal Good:

“While it is fixed on the Eternal Good,  
     and observes temperance loving worldly  
     goods,  
     it cannot be the cause of sinful joys;  
 but when it turns toward evil or pursues  
     some good with not enough or too much zeal  
 —  
     the creature turns on his Creator then.”

(Musa 17.97-102)

We should love the Eternal Good and make that our Ultimate Concern, to use theologian Paul Tillich’s phrase.

However, we can choose to love the wrong thing, such as money, instead. Or we can choose to love something good, but pursue it with either too much zeal or not enough zeal.

• **Briefly describe the three divisions of Purgatory.**

We can divide Purgatory into three divisions:

Pride, Envy, and Wrath: Love the Wrong Things (the first three terraces)

Sloth: Love the Right Things, But Not Enough (the middle terrace, where Dante and Virgil are now)

Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust: Love the Right Things Too Much (the top three terraces)

Purgation and purification are needed when the repentant sinner loved the wrong things or loved the right things too little or loved the right things too much.

**• What does it mean to say that the sins of pride, envy, and wrath involve loving the wrong things?**

Sinners who were guilty of pride, envy, or wrath were guilty of loving the wrong things; they wished some kind of evil upon their neighbors.

If a sinner was proud, the sinner placed the sinner at the center of the universe and therefore wished for the sinner's neighbors to be beneath the sinner.

If a sinner was envious, the sinner did not want the sinner's neighbors to have good fortune.

If a sinner was angry, then the sinner wished to do something like punch the sinner's neighbors in the nose.

**• What does it mean to say that sloth involves loving the right things, but not loving them enough?**

If a sinner is guilty of sloth, then the sinner loves the right things, but does not love them enough. For example, the sinner may be going to Ohio University. This shows that the sinner loves education, which is a good thing. However, instead of going to classes every day, studying every evening, and handing in all papers on time, the student misses lots of classes, goes to the bars in the evening, and either does not hand in papers or hands in papers late. The student loves the right thing, but not enough.

**• What does it mean to say that avarice, gluttony, and lust involve loving the right things, but loving them too much?**

Sinners who were guilty of avarice, gluttony, or lust were guilty of loving the right things too much.

If a sinner was guilty of avarice, the sinner loved money or material things too much. The sinner either hoarded money or spent every dime the sinner could borrow in order to get

more stuff. Nothing is wrong with money or material possessions provided they are used wisely, but a person can love either money or material possessions too much.

If a sinner was guilty of gluttony, then the sinner over-ate and over-drunk. Of course, food and drink are good things if they are used wisely, but the sinner loved food and drink too much.

If a sinner was guilty of lust, then the sinner loved sex too much. God invented sex, and when sex is indulged in wisely and ethically, it is one of the best things on Earth, but it is possible to love sex too much.

Of course, everything that we learn here helps to explain both the Inferno and the Mountain of Purgatory.

• **Give an example of sloth from your own life.**

We must devote a significant effort in pursuit of good things, without going too far in either direction. We must not love good things too much, and we must not be lukewarm in our pursuit of what is good.

Virgil tells Dante,

“If you aspire to it or grasp at it  
with only lukewarm love, then on this ledge  
you will be punished, once you have  
confessed.”

(Musa 17.130-132)

Sloth is loving something good but pursuing it with insufficient zeal.

William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman use this example: A student was in graduate school, and he was supposed to be working on writing his dissertation one day. Of course,

getting a good education is something good, and one ought to pursue it with zeal. However, on a particular day the student just did not feel like writing some pages of his dissertation. Therefore, he cleaned the bathroom of his apartment instead.

It may seem like he was working hard, scrubbing away in the bathroom, but Dante would say that he was guilty of sloth because he should have been working on his dissertation instead of cleaning the bathroom.

This means that a person can be very busy and still be guilty of sloth. You can busily pursue trivialities instead of working hard on the good thing that you ought to be working hard on.

Many, many people who are very busy are guilty of sloth according to Dante's definition of sloth.

## **Canto 18: Fourth Ledge — Sloth (Abbot of San Zeno)**

### **• Do we also need faith in addition to intellect?**

Intellect will not solve all of our problems or tell us everything that we ought to know. We have had an intellectual discussion of the different kinds of love, but we still need to have faith as well as intellect.

Virgil represents human reason, but Beatrice represents faith, and Beatrice will be able to take Dante further than Virgil can.

Quite simply, intellect is not able to understand everything. Some things will remain a mystery and must be accepted on faith.

Virgil himself points this out to Dante. Virgil is aware of his own limits, and he is aware that Beatrice will be able to answer some questions that he is unable to answer. Virgil, of course, will soon turn Dante over to Beatrice. Beatrice will be Dante's next guide.

Virgil tells Dante:

And he to me: "What reason seeth here,  
 Myself can tell thee; beyond that await  
 For Beatrice, since 'tis a work of faith."

(Longfellow 18.46-48)

Of course, I have been saying that Virgil represents Human Reason. This passage supports that. Beatrice, of course, goes beyond Human Reason and represents Faith.

### **• What is the importance of ethics?**

We human beings do have Free Will, and what we choose is important.

Virgil says that “you [Dante and Humankind in general] have the innate faculty of reason, / which should defend the threshold of consent” (Musa 18.62-63).

What we choose is what we love. However, we have reason, and we can use our reason to understand the difference between good loves and bad loves. We also have freedom of the will, and we can use our freedom of the will to choose good loves.

Philosophers write books about morality and ethics. These books help explain what we ought to choose to do in certain situations.

Virgil says,

“Those who, in reasoning, to the bottom went,  
Were of this innate liberty aware,  
Therefore bequeathed they Ethics to the  
world.”

(Longfellow 18.67-69)

Philosophers recognized that we have the power to choose between courses of action, and they wrote books to help us determine which course of action to choose.

**• Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Zeal that are presented in Canto 18.**

Dante lets his thoughts wander late at night, but suddenly a group of spirits runs up to and passes him and Virgil. These are the spirits who are being purged of sloth. They are the only penitents who are busy purging their sin both day and night with no rest.

These are the exempla of zeal:

*1) Christ's Pregnant Mother, Mary, Went in Haste to Visit Her Cousin Elizabeth, Who was Pregnant With John the Baptist*

After the Annunciation, in which an angel told Mary that she would bear Christ, Mary hurried to visit her cousin, Elizabeth (sometimes spelled Elisabeth), who was pregnant with John the Baptist. We read this story in the first chapter of Luke (King James Version):

24: And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25: Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

26: And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27: To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28: And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29: And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30: And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32: He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34: Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35: And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36: And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37: For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38: And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

39: And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

40: And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

41: And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

42: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.



*2) Caesar Sped to Spain for a Showdown with the Spanish Army of Pompey the Great*

Julius Caesar warred against Pompey. Eager to meet Pompey in battle, Caesar left some of his army to besiege Marseilles, and then he took the rest of his soldiers to the showdown with the Spanish army of Pompey. Caesar won the Battle of Ilerda.

**• Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Sloth that are presented in Canto 18.**

These are the exempla of sloth:

*1) The Followers of Moses Who Never Reached the Holy Land*

Many of the followers of Moses never reached the Promised Land because they were slothful after God opened the Red Sea so that they could escape from Egypt. The story of their not reaching the Promised Land is told in Numbers, chapter 14:

*11: And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?*

*12: I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.*

*13: And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)*

*14: And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest*

before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

*15:* Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

*16:* Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

*17:* And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

*18:* The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

*19:* Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

*20:* And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

*21:* But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

*22:* Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

*23:* Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

24: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

[...]

38: But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

39: And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

## 2) *The Followers of Aeneas Who Never Reached Italy*

Many of the followers of Aeneas never reached Italy. When they were on the island of Sicily, some of the women set fire to some ships because they were tired of wandering and wanted to stay on Sicily. Some of the ships burned, and therefore Aeneas did not have enough ships to take all of the Trojan refugees to Italy. As a result, he left nearly all of the women on Sicily (he did take to Italy at least one mother) and all of the men who desired to stay there rather than going to glory in Italy. We read this story in Book 5 of Virgil's *Aeneid*:

Then Nautes, old and wise, to whom alone  
 The will of Heav'n by Pallas was foreshown;  
 Vers'd in portents, experienc'd, and inspir'd  
 To tell events, and what the fates requir'd;  
 Thus while he stood, to neither part inclin'd,  
 With cheerful words reliev'd his lab'ring mind:  
 "O goddess-born, resign'd in ev'ry state,

With patience bear, with prudence push your fate.  
 By suffering well, our Fortune we subdue;  
 Fly when she frowns, and, when she calls, pursue.  
 Your friend Acestes is of Trojan kind;  
 To him disclose the secrets of your mind:  
 Trust in his hands your old and useless train;  
 Too numerous for the ships which yet remain:  
 The feeble, old, indulgent of their ease,  
 The dames who dread the dangers of the seas,  
 With all the dastard crew, who dare not stand  
 The shock of battle with your foes by land.  
 Here you may build a common town for all,  
 And, from Acestes' name, Acesta call."

Source:

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/v/virgil/v5a/part5.html>  
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Translator: John Dryden

**• What information do the two poets get from the former Abbot of San Zeno in Verona?**

Virgil inquires about the passage upward, and the former Abbot of San Zeno in Verona answers that the two poets should follow the footsteps of the rushing shades, and they will find the passage leading upward.

The former Abbot of San Zeno also points out that he and the other shades do not wish to be discourteous, but that their zeal for purging their sin keeps them running day and night.

**• What is the purgation given to the Slothful, and why is it fitting?**

Those who were slothful while they were alive are now purging their sin by staying busy day and night. The other souls we have seen so far purge their sins only during the day, but these spirits purge their sin in a double shift. (Some progress at purging one's sins can occur at night. Later, we will see the Avaricious: By day all the penitents cite examples of generosity, but at night, they cite examples of avarice. The penitents on all levels can think about purgation and the education necessary to purge their sins, but only the Slothful are active — they are running — at purging their sins during the night.)

Because they are so busy running, these souls appear only briefly to the two poets. Apparently, Dante was not guilty of sloth (as *The Divine Comedy*, a long and great poem, demonstrates). Therefore, Dante the Pilgrim does not talk to souls on this terrace.

Dante does not hear praying here, nor does he hear hymns here. Also, he does not receive any requests that he pray for these penitents.

The slothful purge their sin by running and running, both day and night.

Some of the souls cry,

“Quick! quick! so that the time may not be lost

By little love!” forthwith the others cried,

“For ardour in well-doing freshens grace!”

(Longfellow 18.103-105)

After this discussion, Dante continues up the Seven-Storey Mountain. Again, one of the P's on his forehead is removed.





(Longfellow 19.19-24)

Ulysses is the Roman name for Odysseus. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus was able to hear the song of the Sirens and survive. He was tied to the mast so he could not jump overboard and swim to the Island of the Sirens. His crewmen, however, put wax in their ears so that they could perform their duties without hearing the song of the Sirens. In Homer, Odysseus/Ulysses did not "turn away / from his desired course" (Musa 19.22-23).

Fortunately, a heavenly lady appears to tell Virgil to act. Virgil does act, ripping the Siren's clothing and releasing a hideous stench from her body:

He seized the other, ripped her garment off,  
                                   exposing her as far down as the paunch!  
                                   The stench pouring from her awoke me from  
                                   sleep.

(Musa 19.31-33)

In Longfellow's (incorrect) translation, it is the heavenly lady who rescues Dante the pilgrim:

She seized the other and in front laid open,  
                                   Rending her garments, and her belly showed  
                                   me;  
                                   This waked me with the stench that issued  
                                   from it.

(Longfellow 19.31-33)

This dream should be interpreted. Again, Virgil represents reason, and the heavenly lady represents grace. To be protected from some dangers, we need more than reason alone — we also need grace.



This information comes from the Wikipedia entry on “Grace in Christianity”:

In Western Christian theology, grace has been defined, not as a created substance of any kind, but as "the love and mercy given to us by God because God desires us to have it, not necessarily because of anything we have done to earn it", "Grace is favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life." It is understood by Christians to be a spontaneous gift from God to people "generous, free and totally unexpected and undeserved" – that takes the form of divine favor, love, clemency, and a share in the divine life of God.

Waking Dante from the dream was a difficult task. Virgil called him “Three times at least” (Musa 19.35).

One theme we see in the dream about the Siren is appearance versus reality. The Siren can appear to be attractive, but in reality she is repulsive. Similarly, sin can appear to be attractive, but in reality it is repulsive.

In his notes to Canto 19, Mark Musa refers to another critic who cited some lines from Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man* (Musa 208):

Vice is a monster of such hideous mien  
 As to be hated needs but to be seen.  
 Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
 We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Pope is pointing out here that we can become accustomed to sin. An analogy can be made to smoking. Smoking one’s first cigarette is probably a horrible experience for everyone.

It tastes awful, and the smoke makes you cough. However, if you force yourself to smoke a couple of packs of cigarettes over a few days, you can become addicted to nicotine and greatly desire cigarettes.

Of course, Alexander Pope lived centuries after Dante; Pope's dates are 1 May 1688 to 30 May 1744.

The Siren symbolizes the sins on the next three terraces of the Mountain of Purgatory: Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust. Virgil specifically points that out:

“Didst thou behold,” he said, “that old enchantress,  
 Who sole above us henceforth is lamented?  
 Didst thou behold how man is freed from  
 her?”

(Longfellow 19.58-60)

**• What purgation is designed to drive away Avariciousness? (What is Avariciousness?) Why is this purgation fitting?**

Avariciousness is greed. It can be greed for money or greed for material possessions.

The Angel of Zeal guides Dante and Virgil to the stairway up to the fifth level, and the angel refers to Matthew 5:4: “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Here on the fifth ledge Dante and Virgil find souls lying face down on the ground with their hands and feet tied. They are crying, and they are reciting a line from Psalm 118/119:25: ‘My soul cleaveth to the dust.’”

This purgation is just because the Avaricious turned their backs on Heaven, instead choosing to look toward money and material things. Now they are forced to look away from

Heaven. Because they used their hands and feet to pursue money and material things, now their hands and feet are tied.

Pope Adrian V, a penitent here, explains,

“Even as our eye did not uplift itself  
 Aloft, being fastened upon earthly things,  
 So justice here has merged it in the earth.  
 As avarice had extinguished our affection  
 For every good, whereby was action lost,  
 So justice here doth hold us in restraint,  
 Bound and imprisoned by the feet and hands;  
 And so long as it pleases the just Lord  
 Shall we remain immovable and prostrate.”

(Longfellow 19.118-126)

• **Do souls have to spend time on all seven terraces?**

We find out that souls do not have to spend time on all seven terraces. If one’s sin of avariciousness was slight or nonexistent, then that soul can move past that terrace.

Pope Adrian V tells the pilgrims:

“If you have been exempt from lying prone,  
 and wish to find the quickest way to go,  
 be sure to keep your right side to the edge.”

(Musa 19.79-81)

• **Write a short character analysis of Pope Adrian V. Who is he, historically?**

Virgil asks a penitent where the next stairs are located, and the penitent advises him to “be sure to keep your right side to the edge” (Musa 19.81).

The penitent is Pope Adrian V, who was Pope when Dante was 11 years old. Pope Adrian V ruled for only 38 days.

Pope Adrian V “converted very late” (Musa 19.106) — only after he became Pope. Until then he was greedy.

Dante kneels by the Pope’s side, but the Pope requests that he stand up because both he and Dante are servants of God. He then requests that Dante leave so that he can continue the process of purging his sins.

Often, Dante sets up parallels. In Canto 19 of the *Inferno* we saw the Simoniac Popes in flaming holes. Here in Canto 19 of *Purgatory* we see Pope Adrian V being purged of the sin of greed. Of course, the Simoniac Popes were greedy, but they did not repent their sins before dying.



she did not complain about it. The Christmas story is told in Luke, chapter 2:

1: And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2: (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3: And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4: And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6: And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7: And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Note: A manger is a trough that animals eat out of, and so it is thought that Mary gave birth in a stable. Mangers are often found in stables.

## *2) The Roman Fabricius Refused to Betray His Country for Money*

Gaius Fabricius Luscinus was incorruptible, refusing to take bribes, and he died poor. The Romans paid for his burial, and the Romans paid for the dowries of his daughters.

This information comes from *The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*:

**Fabricius Lusci[i]nus, Gaius**, (*'blind in one eye'*) a hero of the Romans' war with Pyrrhus (280–272 BC), a *novus homo* who was twice consul and was admired in later times for his old-style virtues of austerity, high principle, and incorruptibility. He refused bribes from Pyrrhus when he was sent to him by the Romans in 280 to negotiate an exchange of prisoners; and in the campaign of 278 when he was consul and in command of the Roman forces, he sent back to Pyrrhus the latter's treacherous doctor who had offered to poison him. This generous act paved the way for Pyrrhus' withdrawal from Italy. Fabricius was a notably strict censor in 275. At his death he left no money to provide his daughters' dowry, which was given by the senate.

Source: "Gaius Fabricius Luscinus." *The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1993, 2003. *Answers.com* 08 Nov. 2008.

### 3) *Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus) Saved Three Destitute Girls from Prostitution by Providing Them with Dowries*

Saint Nicholas provided dowries for three girls so that they could be married instead of being sold into slavery or forced into prostitution:

One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value — a dowry. The larger the dowry, the better the chance that a young woman would find a good husband. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were

therefore destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home — providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for Saint Nicholas. And so Saint Nicholas is a gift-giver.

Source:

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/Brix?pageID=38>

And yes, Saint Nicholas was a real person, and yes, Saint Nicholas later became better known as Santa Claus.

• **Write a short character analysis of Hugh Capet.**

Dante's second encounter on this terrace is with Hugh Capet, a 10th-century French king who founded a line of descendants who also were French kings. The Capetian kings ruled France from 987 until 1328 — seven years after Dante's death.

Hugh Capet tells Dante the Pilgrim about the Capetian family history. This history does include a number of factual errors, but they do not lessen the value of *The Divine Comedy*. Mark Musa notes that scholars disagree on who the speaker is. Some scholars think that the figure is Hugh Capet, while others think that the figure is Hugh I, aka Hugh the Great, who died in 956, a few years before Hugh Capet assumed the throne. (Hugh Capet was Hugh the Great's son.) Mr. Musa writes, "All are agreed that Dante, like many of his contemporaries, had confused the two figures, and also



that his knowledge of late tenth-century French history was inadequate” (220).

Dante disliked the French kings for several reasons:

- 1) Dante supported the Holy Roman Empire, and he felt that the French kings were weakening that empire.
- 2) Dante also felt that the French kings were a bad influence on the Papacy, especially during the Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy, which lasted from 1309-1377. During this time, seven Popes — all of whom were French — resided in France rather than in Rome.
- 3) Dante was outraged when the bullies of King Phillip IV (the Fair) roughed up Pope Boniface VIII. As we know, Dante detested Pope Boniface VIII, but he still felt that no one should rough up a Pope. Pope Boniface VIII died on 11 October 1303, one month after he was badly beaten.

Hugh Capet is very critical of his own descendants:

- 1) Charles of Valois, Philip the Fair’s brother, played a role in helping the Black Guelfs take control of Florence in 1301, thereby exiling Dante. This happened on All Souls’ Day, which is celebrated on November 1.
- 2) Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, was believed to have poisoned Saint Thomas Aquinas because Saint Thomas was going to give a bad report about him to the 1274 Ecumenical Council of Lyons. Charles asked Saint Thomas what he was going to say about him. Saint Thomas replied, “Only the truth.” Although people of Dante’s day — and Dante

himself — believed this story, it is now known to be false.

• **Why does Dante dislike the physical beating of his enemy, Pope Boniface VIII?**

Hugh Capet says,

“That past and future crimes may seem as naught,  
     I see the *fleur-de-lis* enter Alagna (the Italian  
     city of Alagna)  
     and in His vicar Christ made him prisoner.  
 I see the gall and vinegar renewed;  
     I see Him being mocked a second time,  
     killed once again between the living thieves.”

(Musa 20.85-90)

Of course, Hugh Capet is speaking, and of course, Dante the Poet is putting words in Hugh Capet’s mouth. Pope Boniface VIII was Dante’s enemy, and yet Dante disapproved of the beating that the bullies of the French King Philip the Fair gave to him. Why? Quite simply, Pope Boniface VIII, although he will end up in the Inferno, is the Vicar of Christ, and quite simply, he ought not to endure such treatment.

Often, Dante’s Purgatory and Paradise will hold surprises. This is one of those surprises.

• **Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Avariciousness that are presented in Canto 20.**

Hugh Capet explains that on this level by day all the penitents cite examples of generosity, but at night, they cite examples of avarice.

These are the exempla of avarice:

*1) Pygmalion, Carthaginian Dido's Brother, Who Killed Her Husband for His Wealth*

Dido was the Queen of Carthage. She was married to Sychaeus, but her brother, Pygmalion, killed him out of greed. Because of that, Dido fled. Landing in northern Africa, she founded Carthage. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, she has an affair with Aeneas, and after he leaves her to fulfill his destiny in Italy, she commits suicide. In Dante's *Inferno*, she is in Circle 2, which punishes the lustful.

*2) Midas, Who Wished that Everything He Touch Would Turn to Gold*

The story of Midas is well known. He was so greedy that he wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. The god Bacchus heard and granted his prayer. Unfortunately, whenever Midas wanted to drink something, the liquid would turn to gold. Whenever he tried to eat something, the food turned to gold. And when his young son ran to him for a hug, his son turned into a statue made of gold. Fortunately, Bacchus took back his gift when Midas requested him to.

*3) Achan, Who Stole Items that were Consecrated to the Lord*

Joshua ordered that trumpets be blown, and the walls of the city of Jericho fell down, so the Jews conquered the city. The Spoils of Joshua were supposed to be consecrated to (that is, set aside for) the Lord, but a Jew named Achan stole some of the spoils. He stole "a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" (Joshua 7:21). Because of his transgression, he confessed his sin, and then he and his children were stoned to death — the other Jews threw heavy stones at them and killed them.

This is part of the story as told in Joshua 6:17-19 (King James Version):

*17:* And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

*18:* And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

*19:* But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

This is the rest of the story as told in the King James Version of Joshua 7:19-26:

*19:* And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

*20:* And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

*21:* When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

*22:* So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

*23:* And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the

children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

24: And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

25: And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

26: And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

#### *4) Sapphira, Who Tried to Cheat the Apostles*

Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, sold some land for the Apostles, but he kept part of the money (with his wife's knowledge) rather than turning over all of the money to the Apostles. Peter rebuked him, and he fell dead. Later, Peter rebuked her, and she fell dead.

This is the story as told in the King James Version of Acts 5:1-11:

1: But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2: And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet

3: But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4: Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5: And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6: And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7: And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8: And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9: Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10: Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11: And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

*5) Heliodorus, Who Wanted to Steal Treasures from a Temple in Jerusalem*

Heliodorus wanted to steal treasures from a temple, but a man in golden armor appeared. The man was riding a horse that kicked Heliodorus.

This is the story as told in the King James Version of 2 Maccabees (Apocrypha), chapter 3, verses 1-27:

1: Now when the holy city was inhabited with all peace, and the laws were kept very well, because of the godliness of Onias the high priest, and his hatred of wickedness,

2: It came to pass that even the kings themselves did honour the place, and magnify the temple with their best gifts;

3: Insomuch that Seleucus of Asia of his own revenues bare all the costs belonging to the service of the sacrifices.

4: But one Simon of the tribe of Benjamin, who was made governor of the temple, fell out with the high priest about disorder in the city.

5: And when he could not overcome Onias, he gat him to Apollonius the son of Thraseas, who then was governor of Celosyria and Phenice

6: And told him that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of infinite sums of money, so that the multitude of their riches, which did not pertain to the account of the sacrifices, was innumerable, and that it was possible to bring all into the king's hand.

7: Now when Apollonius came to the king, and had shewed him of the money whereof he was told, the king chose out Heliodorus his treasurer, and sent him with a commandment to bring him the foresaid money.

8: So forthwith Heliodorus took his journey; under a colour of visiting the cities of Celosyria and Phenice, but indeed to fulfil the king's purpose.

9: And when he was come to Jerusalem, and had been courteously received of the high priest of the city, he told him what intelligence was given of the money, and declared wherefore he came, and asked if these things were so indeed.

10: Then the high priest told him that there was such money laid up for the relief of widows and fatherless children:

11: And that some of it belonged to Hircanus son of Tobias, a man of great dignity, and not as that wicked Simon had misinformed: the sum whereof in all was four hundred talents of silver, and two hundred of gold:

12: And that it was altogether impossible that such wrongs should be done unto them, that had committed it to the holiness of the place, and to the majesty and inviolable sanctity of the temple, honoured over all the world.

13: But Heliodorus, because of the king's commandment given him, said, That in any wise it must be brought into the king's treasury.

14: So at the day which he appointed he entered in to order this matter: wherefore there was no small agony throughout the whole city.

15: But the priests, prostrating themselves before the altar in their priests' vestments, called unto heaven upon him that made a law concerning things given to be kept, that they should safely be preserved for such as had committed them to be kept.



16: Then whoso had looked the high priest in the face, it would have wounded his heart: for his countenance and the changing of his colour declared the inward agony of his mind.

17: For the man was so compassed with fear and horror of the body, that it was manifest to them that looked upon him, what sorrow he had now in his heart.

18: Others ran flocking out of their houses to the general supplication, because the place was like to come into contempt.

19: And the women, girt with sackcloth under their breasts, abounded in the streets, and the virgins that were kept in ran, some to the gates, and some to the walls, and others looked out of the windows.

20: And all, holding their hands toward heaven, made supplication.

21: Then it would have pitied a man to see the falling down of the multitude of all sorts, and the fear of the high priest being in such an agony.

22: They then called upon the Almighty Lord to keep the things committed of trust safe and sure for those that had committed them

23: Nevertheless Heliodorus executed that which was decreed.

24: Now as he was there present himself with his guard about the treasury, the Lord of spirits, and the Prince of all power, caused a great apparition, so that all that presumed to come in with him were astonished at the power of God, and fainted, and were sore afraid.

25: For there appeared unto them an horse with a terrible rider upon him, and adorned with a very fair covering, and he ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his forefeet, and it seemed that he that sat upon the horse had complete harness of gold.

26: Moreover two other young men appeared before him, notable in strength, excellent in beauty, and comely in apparel, who stood by him on either side; and scourged him continually, and gave him many sore stripes.

27: And Heliodorus fell suddenly unto the ground, and was compassed with great darkness: but they that were with him took him up, and put him into a litter.

6) *Polymnestor, Who Killed Polydorus*

Polymnestor was a King of Thrace to whom King Priam of Troy entrusted his son, Polydorus, in an attempt to keep him safe. Unfortunately, King Polymnestor coveted the treasure that the prince had, and out of greed, he killed the prince so that he could steal the treasure.

7) *Money-Loving Crassus, Partner of Caesar and Pompey, the Mouth of Whose Decapitated Head was Mockingly Filled with Molten Gold by an Enemy King*

Crassus is a very wealthy man from Roman history. He, Pompey, and Julius Caesar were triumvirs. He led an army against the Parthians, who in 53 B.C.E. defeated him, cut off his head and right hand, and sent them to King Hyrodes. The king knew of Crassus' great wealth, and to mock the fallen enemy, he poured melted gold into the mouth of Crassus' head.

Interestingly, we find out that the exempla are prayers: Hugh Capet refers to them as “the prayers that we must recite” (20.100).

- **What happens at the end of Canto 20?**

At the end of Canto 20, the mountain shakes, and all the penitents shout, “*Gloria in excelsis Deo*” (“Glory to God in the Highest”). This is the song that an angel sang on the eve of the Nativity of Christ.

In Canto 21, we find out why the mountain shakes.

**Canto 21: Fifth Ledge — Avarice and Wastefulness  
(Statius)**

• **Why does the mountain of Purgatory occasionally tremble?**

The Mountain of Purgatory trembles when a soul is ready to move from Purgatory to the Forest of Eden and then to Heaven.

Virgil asks a soul who turns out to be the Latin poet Statius why the mountain trembled. Statius replies,

“It trembles here, whenever any soul  
Feels itself pure, so that it soars, or moves  
To mount aloft, and such a cry attends it.”

(Longfellow 21.58-60)

Statius himself is pure enough to climb up to the Forest of Eden, so in his case at least the mountain trembles because a soul is almost ready to ascend to Heaven — we will see that a few things must be taken care of in Eden first. It is certain, however, that his soul (and all other souls climbing the Mountain of Purgatory) will enter Paradise.

In Canto 23, Dante says about Statius:

“The other spirit standing over there  
is he for whom this mountain’s terraces  
trembled just now, releasing him to Heaven.”

(Musa 23.131-133)

In other parts of the world, quakes are caused by natural causes, but on the Mountain of Purgatory quakes are caused by the purification of souls.

Note that all the souls are happy when a soul is purified. No envy exists here.

Note also that Dante will be saved. We will hear that in Paradise, and we learn that here. Virgil tells Statius about Dante:

And said my Teacher: "If thou note the marks

Which this one bears, and which the Angel traces

Well shalt thou see he with the good must reign."

(Longfellow 21.22-24)

**• Write a short character analysis of Statius. Who is he, historically?**

Three poets converse in this canto:

Virgil: 70-19 B.C.E.

Statius: c.45-96 C.E.

Dante: 1265-1321

Virgil and Statius wrote in Latin; Dante wrote his *Divine Comedy* in vernacular Italian.

Publius Papinius Statius greatly admired Virgil and his *Aeneid*. Statius was a member poet of Rome's Silver Age; Virgil was a member poet of Rome's Golden Age.

Statius completed one epic, the *Thebaid*, which is an epic poem in 12 books of a myth of Thebes. Oedipus ruled Thebes, but he handed down the kingship of Thebes to his two sons: Eteocles and Polynices. They agreed to alternate the kingship of Thebes, with one brother ruling for one year and then allowing the other brother to rule for a year. At the

end of the first year, Eteocles wanted to continue to be king of Thebes, and he refused to allow Polynices to be king. Therefore, Polynices attacked Thebes. In the battle, Eteocles and Polynices killed each other.

Statius also started an epic poem about Achilles, titled the *Achilleid*. A little over one book of this epic poem remains.

Dante does something that does not appear in history — he makes Statius a Christian. Statius — who is now a purified soul — stays with Dante as Dante climbs up the mountain.

In fact, at the beginning of Canto 21, Statius, a Roman poet, is compared to Christ. Dante and Virgil walk together

And lo! in the same manner as Luke writeth  
                                     That Christ appeared to two upon the way  
                                     From the sepulchral cave already risen,  
 A shade appeared to us, and came behind us,  
 (Longfellow 21.7-10)

Statius is compared to the risen Christ here. In Luke 24:13-16, we read about the risen Christ walking behind and overtaking two men walking to Emmaus:

*13:* And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

*14:* And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

*15:* And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

*16:* But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

Stattius does much the same thing to Virgil and Dante. In a way, of course, Stattius is risen. He is dead, but now he traveling to Heaven.

**• How long has Stattius been on the Mountain of Purgatory? How long has he been on this storey of the Seven-Storey Mountain?**

Stattius has spent over 500 years on this storey of the Seven-Storey Mountain, which is dedicated to purging avariciousness (greed) and wastefulness. He died in 96 C.E., and since this poem is set in the year 1300 C.E., Stattius has been dead for 1204 years. He has waited a long time to get to Heaven.

Stattius says,

“And I, who have been lying in this pain

Five hundred years and more, but just now felt

A free volition for a better seat.”

(Longfellow 21.67-69)

**• Can Stattius be regarded as another guide for Dante?**

We can regard Stattius as being yet another guide for Dante. He is going to climb up the Seven-Storey Mountain with Dante and Virgil until they reach the top: the Forest of Eden. Through his conversations with Stattius and Virgil, Dante will learn much.

Stattius is a pagan who became a Christian. This makes him a good transition guide for Dante. Virgil, who represents Human Reason, is a pagan. Beatrice, who represents Grace and Revelation and Wisdom, is a Christian.

• **What does Statius say when he tells his story?**

Statius says that he lived during the time of the Roman Emperor Titus. In 70 C.E., Titus destroyed Jerusalem. Statius says,

“In days when the good Titus, with the aid  
Of the supremest King, avenged the wounds  
Whence issued forth the blood by Judas  
sold,”

(Longfellow 21.82-84)

Before Titus became emperor, he had sacked Jerusalem. Dante regards this as just revenge for the crucifixion of Christ.

Statius adds,

“Under the name that most endures and honours,  
Was I on earth,” that spirit made reply,  
“Greatly renowned, but not with faith as yet.”

(Longfellow 21.85-87)

The title that “endures the most” (21.85) is that of poet. Statius was a renowned poet, and he enormously respected Virgil, poet of the *Aeneid*.

These days, Statius’ poetry is not held in as high regard as it was in Dante’s time, but he is still regarded as an important Roman poet of the Silver Age.

• **What inspired Statius to write poetry? How much does Statius respect Virgil?**

Statius says that he was inspired to write poetry by Virgil’s *Aeneid*:



“The spark that kindled my poetic ardor  
 came from the sacred flame that set on fire  
 more than a thousand poets: I mean the  
*Aeneid*.”

(Musa 21.94-96)

Statius shows his great respect for Virgil when he says that that he would be willing to spend another year in Purgatory if he could have lived when Virgil was alive:

“And to have lived upon the earth what time  
 Virgilius lived, I would accept one sun  
 More than I must ere issuing from my ban.”

(Longfellow 21.100-102)

When Statius says this, he does not know that Virgil is present. This is totally sincere praise.

• **How does Statius learn that he is in the presence of Virgil?**

Virgil glances at Dante to signal him not to tell Statius who Virgil is:

These words towards me made Virgilius turn  
 With looks that in their silence said, “Be  
 silent!”

(Longfellow 21.103-104)

Virgil’s look tells Dante to keep Virgil’s identity a secret. However, Dante is unable to control his face:

laughter and tears follow so close upon  
 the passions that provoke them that the more

sincere the man, the less they obey his will.

(Musa 21.106-108)

Dante smiles, and then quickly stops smiling, but too late — Statius has noticed the smile.

Statius asks Dante why he smiled, and Dante sighs. Virgil then gives him permission to tell Statius that Virgil is standing before him.

Dante turns to Statius and tells him,

Whence I: “Thou peradventure marvellest,  
 O antique spirit, at the smile I gave;  
 But I will have more wonder seize upon thee.  
 This one, who guides on high these eyes of mine,  
 Is that Virgilius, from whom thou didst learn  
 To sing aloud of men and of the Gods.”

(Longfellow 21.121-126)

Purgatory has surprises, and the surprises are good surprises. Statius would love to meet Virgil, and here Virgil is.

**• How does Statius react when he learns that he is in the presence of the great Virgil?**

Statius wants to embrace the feet of Virgil, but Virgil tells him, “Brother, no!” (Musa 21.131):

Already he was stooping to embrace  
 My Teacher’s feet; but he said to him:  
 “Brother,  
 Do not; for shade thou art, and shade  
 beholdest.”

(Longfellow 21.130-132)

Virgil thinks that it is inappropriate for one shade to embrace the feet of another shade.

Here we see three poets spending together. Virgil influenced Dante, and Virgil influenced Statius. Both Dante and Statius have enormous respect for Virgil.

Dante has much respect for poetry and for poetry. In this canto, Statius says,

“Under the name that most endures and honours,  
 Was I on earth,” that spirit made reply,  
 “Greatly renowned, but not with faith as yet.”

(Longfellow 21.85-87)

And in the 4th canto of the *Inferno*, Virgil tells Dante in Limbo about the poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan,

And he to me: “The honourable name,  
 That sounds of them above there in thy life,  
 Wins grace in Heaven, that so advances  
 them.”

(*Inferno*, Longfellow 4.76-78)

## Canto 22: Sixth Ledge — Gluttony (Stattius)

### • Which sin did Stattius purge most recently?

Dante (with another P erased from his forehead), Virgil, and Stattius climb up to the next terrace, the 6th, which is where gluttony is purged.

We find out that Virgil receives news from new spirits arriving in Limbo. For example, when the poet Juvenal arrived in Limbo, he let Virgil know just how much Stattius loved him and his poetry.

Virgil, of course, knows that the terrace where Stattius spent over 500 years was devoted to purging the sin of avarice, and he asks Stattius how someone as intelligent as Stattius could be guilty of the sin of avarice.

Stattius explains two things:

- 1) He was actually guilty of the opposite extreme of avarice: prodigality or wastefulness.
- 2) The terraces purge both the sin and the opposite extreme of the sin.

Keeping in mind Aristotle's Golden Mean, we can understand that both extremes (too much and too little) are both sins. When it comes to food and drink, it is sinful to eat and drink too much, but it is also sinful to eat and drink too little.

The same is true of handling money. It is wrong to save every penny you make and never spend money on necessities, and it is wrong to spend every dime you make and every dime you can borrow on things that you don't need. Stattius is guilty of overspending.

In the Inferno, the avaricious and the prodigal are in the same place, but they are in conflict, slamming huge boulders

against each other. Here in Purgatory we have cooperation rather than conflict, as both the avaricious and the prodigal work together to purge their sins.

• **Dante adds fictional details to the historical aspects of Statius' life. Which fictional details does he make up?**

Dante is not afraid to add details where he thinks that details will help his poem. In the *Inferno*, we saw that he changed the way that Ulysses (Odysseus) died. In the *Inferno*, Ulysses takes a trip to the Southern Hemisphere, and he drowns when he reaches sight of the Mountain of Purgatory. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus learns that he will live a long life and die at home with an easy death.

Here Dante changes Statius' religious life. According to Dante, Statius became a Christian; however, absolutely no historical evidence exists that that is true. Dante completely made that up.

• **Who influenced Statius to become a Christian?**

Interestingly, Virgil is aware of Statius' poetry, although Statius lived after Virgil did. (Apparently, a library exists in Limbo.) Virgil refers to Statius' *Thebaid* when he remarks that Statius did not appear to be a Christian in what he wrote:

“From that which Clio there with thee preludes,

It does not seem that yet had made thee  
faithful

That faith without which no good works  
suffice.

(Longfellow 22.58-60)

Clio is the pagan Muse of History, and Statius invoked her at the beginning of the *Thebaid*.

In the above passage, Virgil is asking Statius how he happened to be saved.

If we were to guess where Statius would end up in the Afterlife, we would probably guess that he would end up in Limbo, where he would reside with Virgil, Homer, and the other virtuous pagans. Instead, he ends up among the saved.

Statius' being here among the saved seems to be against everything that we saw earlier. Of course, in particular, it is against everything we have seen back in *Inferno* 4, which is, of course, where Virgil himself has his permanent home. Therefore, Virgil asks Statius how he came to be saved:

“If this be so, what candles or what sun  
Scattered thy darkness so that thou didst trim  
Thy sails behind the Fisherman thereafter?”

(Longfellow 22.61-63)

As it happens, Virgil, although he was not a Christian, influenced Statius to become a Christian.

Statius tells Virgil,

And he to him: “Thou first directedst me  
Towards Parnassus, in its grots to drink,  
And first concerning God didst me enlighten.

(Longfellow 22.64-66)

In the first part of the quotation, Statius tells Virgil that Virgil inspired him “to drink Parnassus’ waters” (22.65) — that is, to become a poet.

In the second part of the quotation, Statius tells Virgil that Virgil inspired him to become a Christian. Virgil lived before the time of Christ, and Virgil now resides in

Purgatory. How could Virgil, who was not a Christian, inspire Statius to become a Christian?

Statius uses an important image here. He tells Virgil,

“Thou didst as he who walketh in the night,  
     Who bears his light behind, which helps him  
     not,  
     But wary makes the persons after him,”

(Longfellow 22.67-69)

Virgil inspired Statius to become a Christian although Virgil was not himself a Christian. Virgil is like a traveler who holds a lantern behind himself for other people so that they may see better.

**• How did Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* influence Statius to become a Christian?**

How did Virgil influence Statius to become a Christian? He did that in one of his poems: the *Fourth Eclogue*. (An eclogue is a pastoral poem. Often, it takes the form of two shepherds talking to each other.)

Statius quotes an important passage from the *Fourth Eclogue*:

“When thou didst say: ‘The age renews itself,  
     Justice returns, and man’s primeval time,  
     And a new progeny descends from heaven.’”

(Longfellow 22.70-72)

Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* was taken by many people of the Middle Ages to be a prophecy of the birth of Jesus Christ. This poem was about the birth of a boy who would usher in a golden age. Scholars today do not think that the poem is

about Jesus Christ, but people of the Middle Ages felt that Virgil — whether or not he was aware of it — was prophesying the birth of Jesus Christ in this poem.

Many historians would say that Virgil was writing about a male heir to the Emperor Caesar Augustus, but literate people in the Middle Ages would say that the poem is about the birth of Jesus Christ.

These literate people would say that they can see more in the poem than Virgil himself could. Virgil may not have realized that he was prophesying the birth of Jesus Christ, but with hindsight, the literate people of the Middle Ages would say that they know that Virgil was doing exactly that.

Virgil's poem started the process by which Statius became converted to Christianity. Virgil was able to help Statius become a Christian — something that Virgil himself did not accomplish.

Similarly, I think that we can see that Dante's *Divine Comedy* learns from Virgil's *Aeneid*, but then goes on to accomplish a different purpose.

Eventually, Virgil will cease to be Dante's guide. He will take Dante as far as he can, but then Dante will need another guide to take him higher. Soon, Beatrice will take over from Virgil and become Dante's guide.

• **Why doesn't history know that Statius was a Christian?**

Statius kept his conversion hidden:

“And ere I led the Greeks unto the rivers  
Of Thebes, in poetry, I was baptized,  
But out of fear was covertly a Christian,  
For a long time professing paganism;



And this lukewarmness caused me the fourth circle

To circuit round more than four centuries.”

(Longfellow 22.88-93)

The fourth storey of the seven-storey mountain is dedicated to purging the sin of sloth.

• **Why are so many pagans and pagan ideas present in *The Divine Comedy*?**

Obviously, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is a very Christian poem, and we can ask why so many pagans and pagan ideas appear in it. In the Inferno, we saw many mythological creatures — something that we probably did not expect in a Christian work. We can ask why these mythological creatures appear in the *Divine Comedy*. We can ask why Virgil — a pagan poet — is Dante’s guide through the Inferno and Purgatory. We can ask why Dante based much of his idea of the Inferno on Aeneas’ journey to the Land of the Dead in the *Aeneid*.

The answer is that the classical world can be guides for us, but that we need to be able to go beyond our guides. Statius was able to get more out of Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* than Virgil thought he had put into it. Because we live in a Christian age, we are able to get more of the Classical age than the people who lived in it were able to get out of it.

• **Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Temperance (the virtue that is opposed to Gluttony) that are presented in Canto 22.**

The three poets are on the terrace of the gluttons. They encounter a tree that bears fruit and on which water falls, but a voice says, “This fruit and water is denied to you” (22.141). At this time the three poets hear the exempla of self-control in eating and drinking:

*1) Christ's Mother at the Wedding Feast of Cana; She Wanted the Wedding to be Properly Celebrated*

Mary was worried because the wine ran out at the wedding feast in Cana. Mary did not care about the wine for the alcohol's sake, but she did care about the marriage being celebrated properly. Of course, her son, Jesus, performed his first miracle, turning water into wine.

*2) Ancient Roman Women were Pleased with Water*

The ancient Roman women did not feel the need to drink wine; instead, they drank water. Saint Thomas Aquinas mentions this briefly in his *Summa Theologica*, Part II-II (FOURTH ARTICLE [II-II, Q. 149, Art. 4]):

Hence, according to Valerius Maximus [\*Diet. Fact. Memor. ii, 1] among the ancient Romans women drank no wine.

Source: <http://pge.rastko.net/etext/18755>

Translator: Province, Fathers of the English Dominican

*3) Daniel, Who Could Fast for a Good Reason*

Because Daniel would not eat the food of the king or drink the drink of the king, he was given prophetic powers. This is the story as it appears in the King James Version of Daniel 1:3-20:

3: And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4: Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as

had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5: And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

6: Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

7: Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

8: But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9: Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10: And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11: Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12: Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13: Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14: So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15: And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16: Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17: As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18: Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19: And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20: And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

#### *4) John The Baptist, Who Ate Locusts and Wild Honey*

John the Baptist lived in the desert, where he ate locusts and wild honey, as we find out in Matthew 3:4 (King James Version):

4: And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Mark 1:6 (King James Version) gives us the same information:

6: And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; <sup>[L L L]</sup><sub>[SEP SEP]</sub>

By the way, insects are a good source of protein, as you will learn if you take a wilderness survival course in the United States military. In one version of the course, students graduate by eating a live insect in front of the other students. In a more advanced version of the courses, students parachute into the wilderness with a few tools (but no food) and survive on their own for a few days. One of my students once told me that he and a few other soldiers parachuted into the wilderness, where they made good use of their problem-solving skills. As they parachuted into the wilderness, they looked around and noticed a road in the distance. After they had dropped to the ground, they used their compasses to find the road, and then they walked into a town and ate pizza.

#### • How long has Statius been in Prepurgatory and Purgatory?

In the year 1300, Statius has been dead for 1204 years. We have learned that he spent 400 years on the 4th ledge of Purgatory because of lack of zeal and over 500 years on the 5th ledge of Purgatory not because of avariciousness, but because of its opposite, prodigality. No doubt he also spent time on the 1st ledge purging the sin of pride.

### Canto 23: Sixth Ledge — Gluttony (Forese Donati)

• **How are the gluttonous purged, and why is that purgation appropriate?**

Lots of music — hymns — is heard on the Mountain of Purgatory. On this ledge, penitents chant the hymn *Labia mea Domine*. This hymn, which comes from Psalm 50/51, contains the line, “Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praises” (Musa 253). The penitents need to use their mouths to praise God instead of merely eating and drinking too much.

The penitents on this ledge are emaciated — their eyes are sunk in their heads. The penitents make Dante think of these things:

1) *Erysichthon*

Erysichthon cut down trees that were sacred to the goddess Ceres, who punished him by making him endlessly hungry. He even sold his own daughter for money to buy food and eventually cannibalized his own flesh.

2) *Miriam*

During the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Miriam, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, was so hungry that she cooked and ate her own baby boy.

Dante says that the word *omo* — or *homo*, Latin for man — could be read in the facial bones of these penitents. Of course, the facial bones are clearly visible of these starving penitents, who are always hungry and thirsty, and who see but cannot eat the fruit of the tree and who see but cannot drink the water that falls on the tree but not to the ground. The two O’s are the eye sockets, and the M is the middle of the face (eyebrows and nose).

• **Which languages did Virgil and Dante write in?**

Dante, who is still traveling with both Virgil and Statius, is going to meet some poets who wrote before he did. He will be having conversations with these poets.

The languages that Dante and Virgil wrote in are different. Virgil wrote in Latin, but a little over 1300 years later, Dante wrote in Italian, a language that developed from Latin. Dante consciously made the decision to write in a vernacular language instead of in Latin, the language that the learned wrote in, in his day. Statius, an immediate antecedent to Virgil, also wrote in Latin. Now, Dante is going to meet a number of other poets who also wrote in Italian.

Let's read this section carefully. Statius read Virgil, and he learned something from Virgil that Virgil did not know was in his own work. Statius learned enough from Virgil that he was able to decide to become a Christian. Perhaps Dante will be able to learn something from these vernacular poets who wrote love poetry. Perhaps, like Statius did from Virgil, Dante will be able to learn from these vernacular poets something about Christianity.

• **Write a short character analysis of Forese Donati.**

The first poet we meet was a personal friend of Dante: Forese Donati.

After Dante and Forese Donati were friends, the Donati family was political enemies of Dante. The Donati family was the leaders of the Black Guelfs; Dante, of course, was a White Guelf.

One important point to realize here is that the members of the Donati family appear throughout *The Divine Comedy*. That means that we can compare and contrast the members of the family in the Inferno, in Purgatory, and in Paradise.

Forese Donati is not a great poet. Here is an analogy used by William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman that may be a little far-fetched. One of these teachers has a brother who is a very, very good chess player. He is even ranked. Someone asked the teacher, “You must have a lot of fun playing him.” However, the teacher replied, “That’s ridiculous. I would last four moves, and he would beat me.” Actually, the teacher taught his brother how to play chess — he taught him the basic moves. But within a few months, his brother was beating him every time, and so they haven’t played chess for 20 years. Forese is like the teacher, and Dante is like the teacher’s brother.

Forese Donati wrote a form of poetry that we would probably call doggerel, a kind of poetry with no or little literary value.

**• Which kind of poems did Forese and Dante sometimes write to and exchange with each other?**

Sometimes, friends insult each other as a kind of endearment. This is what Forese and Dante did, but in the form of comic insults in poetry.

In his Rime #72 Dante wrote Forese, who partied often at night, about his wife, Nella:

Her cough, her cold, her other maladies  
Were not incurred because she’s getting grey  
But from a lack she suffers in her nest.

(Gallagher 106)

In other words, Forese’s wife is ill because he is not sleeping with her.

In his Rime #74 Dante wrote, using Forese’s nickname,

Bicci, my boy, you son of God-knows-who



(Though I could ask your mother — if she knows),  
 Your goods diminish as your belly grows  
 And stealing now must keep it full for you.  
 (Gallagher 106)

Forese's belly is enormous in the poem, so it is no wonder that Forese is on the ledge of the Gluttons.

Forese also insulted Dante. How did Dante react in a quarrel? Forese tells him:

Fear has filled your trousers up so well  
 Two pack-mules couldn't carry them away.  
 (Gallagher 107)

Dante was so afraid during the quarrel that he enormously pooped his pants.

Still, the two men are friends, as clearly comes through in the way that Forese greets Dante. Dante also explains to Forese that he wept when Forese died: "When death was on your face, I wept" (23.55).

**• How has Forese Donati been able to travel so far and so fast up the Mountain of Purgatory?**

Forese repented late in his life, so we would expect him to still be in Pre-purgatory like many other souls who repented late, yet here he is, far up the Mountain of Purgatory. How did he climb so far, so fast? According to Mark Musa, he has been dead for only five years and yet he is on the 6th ledge of the Mountain of Purgatory. Remember that Statius spent 400 years on the 4th ledge of Purgatory because of lack of zeal and over 500 years on the 5th ledge of Purgatory because of not avariciousness, but because of its opposite, prodigality.

Forese is fortunate in his choice of wives. His wife, Nella, has been praying for him, and so he has been allowed to quickly climb up the Mountain of Purgatory. One theme of the *Purgatory* is that the prayers of good people are listened to in Heaven.

Many of the vernacular poets whom Dante will speak to will write love poetry. Here, love helps one's spiritual life. Forese and Nella loved each other, and now Nella's prayers are helping Forese to quickly climb up the Mountain of Purgatory.

We also find out that Nella is a very good woman — something rare in Florence. All too many Florentine women show too much of their breasts when they “walk our city streets” (Musa 23.101).

• **What did Dante learn from other poets?**

Dante was able to learn different things from different poets.

Forese Donati and Dante — two friends — traded doggerel poems that were filled with low humor and friendly insults.

Many of the vernacular poets whom Dante will talk with helped teach him how to write love poetry.

Virgil taught Dante about politics.

Statius teaches Dante to go beyond Virgil, as Statius did when he read Virgil's 4th Eclogue.

Different kinds of poetry have different purposes. Dante has to learn how to write the correct kind of poetry for his purpose.

Forese Donati and Dante talk about the degradation of Florentine women. Certainly, the doggerel filled with humorous insults that they wrote is inappropriate to be used to talk seriously about the degradation of Florentine women.

Neither can the love poetry of the vernacular poets be used to talk about the degradation of Florentine women. The epic poetry of the *Aeneid* can be used to talk about the degradation of Florentine women, but Dante needs to go beyond the *Aeneid* and put a Christian interpretation on what is happening to Florence. (Unless the citizens of Florence reform, they can end up in the Inferno.)

## **Canto 24: Sixth Ledge — Gluttony (Bonagiunta da Lucca)**

### **• Where are Forese Donati's brother and sister?**

The Donati family is an important family in *The Divine Comedy* because it has members in the three parts of the afterlife: the Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise. This shows that family connections do not determine where you end up in the afterlife. Instead, what you do with your life does.

Forese Donati has a sister, Piccarda, in Paradise, with whom Dante will speak in the *Paradise*.

Forese Donati also says when that Corso, his brother, dies (in 1308), he will end up in the Inferno.

### **• Which prophecy of Dante's upcoming exile do we see in this canto?**

The poet Bonagiunta Da Lucca prophesies that a woman from his city, which is reviled, will make Dante praise his city.

### **• What main topic do Dante and the other poets talk about?**

At Dante's request, Forese Donati tells Dante the names of several poets on this ledge. None of the souls mind having Dante know their names, in contrast to the sinners in the lower circles of the Inferno, who do not want anyone to know their names.

Dante and the other poets — who are near-contemporaries of Dante — on this ledge talk quite a bit about style because innovations in style occurred when these poets and Dante were alive.

• **What does Bonagiunta Da Lucca say about Dante and Dante's poetry?**

A Florentine poet, Bonagiunta Da Lucca, had died three years earlier. Apparently, he was good at poetry and finding rhymes, but he was better at finding wine. He now speaks to Dante, complimenting him on writing better poetry than he (Bonagiunta) had written. Obviously, since Bonagiunta is on the 6th ledge, he has purged himself of pride, which is purged on the 1st ledge.

Dante himself was an innovator of poetry, and Bonagiunta asks him if he is the poet who started a new style of poetry:

“But say if him I here behold, who forth  
 Evoked the new-invented rhymes, beginning,  
 ‘Ladies, that have intelligence of love?’”

(Longfellow 24.49-51)

“Ladies, that have intelligence of love” (Musa translates the line as “*Ladies who have intelligence of love*” in line 51 of Canto 4) is a more recent, better, more spiritual poem than the song that Casella started to sing in Purgatory, when Cato the guardian admonished him to keep his eyes on the prize of reaching Heaven after purging his sins.

Dante takes credit for the poem, but he attempts to be modest:

And I to him: “One am I, who, whenever  
 Love doth inspire me, note, and in that  
 measure

Which he within me dictates, singing go.”

(Longfellow 24.52-54)

Dante gives credit to Inspiration for helping him to write his love poetry.

Bonagiunta says,

“O brother, now I see,” he said, “the knot  
Which me, the Notary, and Guittone held  
Short of the sweet new style that now I hear.”

(Longfellow 24.55-57)

Bonagiunta praises Dante’s “sweet new style” (Musa 24.57), and he says that he was incapable of writing in that style.

• **Are love and writing about love good things?**

It depends. Some kinds of love and some kinds of writing about love can be bad.

Remember Francesca da Rimini in Canto 5 of the *Inferno*? Passionate and adulterous love got her an eternal residence in the Inferno. She blamed her problems on lots of things, including a romance about an adulterous love affair between Queen Guinever and Sir Lancelot.

Dante must be careful to write about love carefully and accurately in *The Divine Comedy*.

Perhaps Dante needs to Christianize the love he writes about in *The Divine Comedy*. Statius was able to read Virgil and Christianize the 4th Eclogue. Perhaps Dante needs to Christianize his love poetry when he writes *The Divine Comedy*.

And yes, we can look at *The Divine Comedy* as being a huge love poem. Dante expresses his love for Beatrice and for God.

• **Bonagiunta mentions the poet Guittoni. What did he write?**

Guittoni wrote a famous poem that was a lament for Florence after the Battle of Montaperti.

Once again, we have a connection of poetry and politics.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante writes much about poetry and especially politics.

• **Does Bonagiunta Da Lucca waste time?**

No, Bonagiunta Da Lucca does not waste time. He has spent time talking to Dante, but that is a courtesy that the souls in Purgatory give to Dante. Like the other souls this high up the Mountain of Purgatory, Bonagiunta Da Lucca keeps his eyes on the prize. He tells Dante,

“Now I must leave you. I have lost much time,  
walking along with you at your own pace,  
and time is precious to us in this realm.”

(Musa 24.91-93)

• **Compare and contrast the tree that appears in Canto 23 with the tree that appears in Canto 24.**

The tree in Canto 23 cited examples of self-control, but the tree in Canto 24 cites examples of gluttony.

• **Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of gluttony that are presented in Canto 24.**

Dante is finished talking with Forese Donati and with Bonagiunta Da Lucca. Now he, Virgil, and Statius continue walking until they reach a second tree, from which comes a voice citing examples of gluttony:

*1) The Drunken Centaurs at the Wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia*

At the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia, the Centaurs got drunk and tried to rape the bride and other women at the wedding. Theseus and the Lapidae defended the women and killed many Centaurs.

*2) Gideon's Impatient Soldiers*

Gideon had many soldiers. When they arrived at a river, they were very thirsty. Gideon, following the advice of God, watched his soldiers. Some put their faces in the water and drank greedily. This was a mistake because they were not on the lookout for danger. Other, more cautious, soldiers cupped the water in their hands and brought the water up to their faces, thus remaining vigilant. Gideon led these vigilant soldiers to victory. This story is told in Judges, chapter 7 (King James Version):

4: And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5: So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink

6: And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.



7: And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

At this point Dante is ready to ascend to the next ledge, which is where the lustful are punished. An angel appears and points the way leading to the next ledge. Dante hears the words of the angels, which are a paraphrase of one of the Beatitudes:

I heard the words: “Blessed are those in whom  
    grace shines so copiously that love of food  
    does not arouse excessive appetite,  
but lets them hunger after righteousness.”  
(Musa 24.151-154)

## **Canto 25: Seventh Ledge — Lust (Body-Soul Relationship)**

### **• How does Statius explain the relationship of the body and the soul?**

The penitents whom Dante sees are emaciated, which surprises him because the souls have no body. Statius explains the relationship between the body and the soul to him.

In brief, Statius asserts three basic Christian beliefs:

1. God directly creates the human soul.
2. Body and soul, when joined, become one unified person.
3. Even after death, the soul continues to exist and be matter-oriented. (Gallagher 109)

These beliefs are Christian, and they are based on the thought of such Christian theologians as Thomas Aquinas. Because these beliefs are Christian, the pagan Virgil has Statius explain these beliefs to Dante.

Statius believes that at the point of quickening — when the baby can be felt moving in the womb — that God gives the baby a soul. If we were to accept Statius' reasoning, we would agree, I think, that no abortions would be performed after quickening because at that time the baby would have a soul. Before quickening, we would probably refer to embryos and fetuses rather than babies.

Statius believes that each human being is given an individual soul. The Muslim philosopher Averroes taught differently; he believed that each human being borrows from some supersoul.

The individual soul of each human being continues to exist after death. It is matter-oriented, and thus the souls take on the appearance of starving, emaciated bodies on the ledge of the Mountain of Purgatory that is devoted to purging Gluttony.

**• Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of Chastity and Faithfulness that are presented in Canto 25.**

Near the end of Canto 25, Dante and his two guides have mounted to the 7th and final ledge of the Mountain of Purgatory. Here they see the souls of the lustful engulfed in flames. Only a narrow area of the ledge is free of flames. These souls call out the exempla of chastity and faithfulness:

*1) The Virgin Mary Declared, "I Know Not Man"*

In Luke, chapter 1, we read the Annunciation to Mary (King James Version):

26: And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27: To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>28: And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29: And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30: And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32: He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34: Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

2) *The Chaste Moon-Goddess, Diana/Artemis, Dismissed Her Seduced Attendant, the Nymph Helice*

Diana is the Roman name of the Greek goddess Artemis, who was one of the three virgin Greek goddesses. The other virgin goddesses are Minerva (Greek name Athena) and Vesta (Greek name Hestia). Diana was particularly a militant virgin. When Jupiter (Greek name Zeus) seduced one of her attendants, the nymph Helice, Diana dismissed her. Helice gave birth to Arcas. Juno (Greek name Hera) was Jupiter's jealous wife. She turned Helice into a she-bear, and Jupiter placed her into a constellation: Ursa Major. "Ursa Major" means "Big Bear" or "Great Bear."

Diana/Artemis is a militant virgin, as shown by the story of Actaeon. She gets very angry whenever a mortal man seems to threaten her virginity. One story about Diana/Artemis involves the hunter Actaeon, who goes hunting with his dogs one day. Actaeon comes to a place where a pool of water is, and unfortunately for him Diana/Artemis is bathing naked in the pool of water. Even more unfortunately for him, Diana/Artemis notices that Actaeon is present and has seen her naked. Therefore, she turns Actaeon into a stag — a male deer. His dogs are trained to hunt, and the dogs hunt the stag, and the dogs tear to pieces Actaeon, who still has a human mind and knows what is happening.

In this story, Diana/Artemis acts immediately. Actaeon has seen her naked, and therefore he must pay with his life. Diana/Artemis does not care that Actaeon saw her naked by accident — he did not know that she was bathing naked in the stream. Actaeon saw her naked, and therefore Actaeon must pay for that with his life.

### *3) Husbands and Wives Who Practiced Chastity*

Chastity can mean refraining from sex, but another definition of chastity is refraining from immoral sex.

Not all husbands and wives have sex. Some voluntarily refrain from having sex. A modern example of this is Mahatma Gandhi and his wife late in their marriage. By the way, it is a heresy to believe that sex is sinful. Used properly, sex is far from sinful and is one of the great pleasures of life.

Another way to interpret these lines is that they are referring to being chaste before marriage. In other words, these couples refrain from having premarital sex. In addition, they have refrained from having affairs. This interpretation is most likely best because of the reference to the vow of marriage. Certainly, married couples are allowed to have sex with each other.

The lines in question are these:

Then to their song returned they; then the wives

They shouted, and the husbands who were  
chaste.

As virtue and the marriage vow imposes.

(Longfellow 25.133-135)

Then came the hymn again; then came their shout

Praising those married pairs who had been  
chaste,

As virtue and the marriage laws require.

(Musa 25.133-135)

## **Canto 26: Seventh Ledge — Lust (Guido Guinizelli and Arnaut Daniel)**

### **• What does Dante see on the 7th ledge?**

Dante must walk a narrow path here. On one side of him are flames, and on the other side of him is air. He must watch his step so that he does not fall off the side of the mountain or be burned by the flames.

On the ledge, Dante sees penitents walking around the mountain in two different directions. Some penitents walk clockwise, while other penitents walk counterclockwise. In this canto, he notices that when the penitents meet, they exchange a brief and chaste kiss.

Note that in Romans 16:16, St. Paul writes, “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” (King James Version).

The shades keep moving — the lustful are restless.

### **• Does Dante know why he is climbing the Mountain of Purgatory?**

Dante has steadily been learning as he goes through the afterlife. Early in the Inferno he seemed to think that he was there because of his merit, but now he realizes that he is making this journey to save his soul:

“I climb to cure my blindness, for above  
                                   a lady has won grace for me, that I  
                                   may bear my mortal burden through your  
                                   world.”

(Musa 26.58-60)

• **Briefly describe the exempla (examples) of lust that are presented in Canto 26.**

The two groups call out different names. One group, composed of the homosexuals, calls out the names of Sodom and Gomorrah. The other group, composed of heterosexuals, calls out the name of Pasiphae, who misused sex.

*Sodom and Gomorrah*

The cities Sodom and Gomorrah are associated with homosexual rape, which is a clear misuse of sex. For example, in Genesis 19:1-5, we read (King James Version):

1: And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

2: And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

3: And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

4: But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

5: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.



Note: “Know” is used here in the Biblical sense: “to have sex with.” In addition, the men of Sodom don’t care about getting consent before having sexual intercourse. In other words, when the Sodomites say, “bring them out unto us, that we may know them,” they are really saying, “bring them out unto us, that we may homosexually rape them.” By the way, the angels are not raped. When the men of Sodom attempt to rape the angels, the angels blind them. This story concerns attempted homosexual rape.

### *Pasiphae*

Pasiphae is guilty of misusing sex. In particular, she is guilty of bestiality: having sex with an animal. She was a Queen of Crete who fell in love with a bull, so she commissioned Daedalus to create an artificial cow for her to creep into. The bull had sex with the artificial cow (and with Pasiphae), and Pasiphae conceived and gave birth to the Minotaur, a mythical half-human, half-bull creature that feasted on human flesh. This story concerns an abuse of heterosexual sex, although it also concerns a form of sodomy, which includes sex between human beings and animals. This is called bestiality. The reasoning appears to be that the heterosexual sinners acted like animals, and the Pasiphae myth is an extreme form of acting like an animal:

Guido Guinizelli, a heterosexual says that “we did not act like human beings, / yielding instead, like animals, to lust” (Musa 26.83-84). For that reason, the souls in his group call out the name of Pasiphae.

Human beings need not act like animals, which breed when a female is in heat. Human beings can use reason to determine when sex is ethical and when sex is unethical. Animals do not use reason. Human beings can use reason to restrain lust; animals cannot.

- **Write a short character analysis of Guido Guinizelli.**

Guido Guinizelli (Longfellow spells the name “Guinicelli”) is a poet who tells Dante the names of the other poets in the fire that purges the Lustful. (Because of the fire, they are difficult to recognize.) Like the other souls in Purgatory, Guido Guinizelli is helpful. He says to Dante,

“Thy wish to know me shall in sooth be granted;  
 I’m Guido Guinicelli, and now purge me,  
 Having repented ere the hour extreme.”

(Longfellow 26.91-93)

Here we see that repenting early is a very good idea. If you keep God waiting, God will keep you waiting. If you do not keep God waiting, God will not keep you waiting.

Before telling Dante his name, Guido Guinizelli explains the kinds of lust that are purged here. One is the kind that Julius Caesar was supposed to be guilty of: homosexuality, or in Julius Caesar’s case, bisexuality:

“The folk that comes not with us have offended  
 In that for which once Caesar, triumphing,  
 Heard himself called in contumely, ‘Queen.’”

(Longfellow 26.76-78)

Supposedly, when Julius Caesar was young and an ambassador to Bithynia, he had a homosexual relationship with King Nicodemus of Bithynia. This led to Julius Caesar later being called the Queen of Bithynia. Suetonius writes in his biography of Julius Caesar in his *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

The only stain upon his chastity was his having cohabited with Nicomedes; and that indeed stuck to him all the days of his life, and exposed him to much

bitter raillery. I will not dwell upon those well-known verses of Calvus Licinius:

Whate'er Bithynia and her lord possess'd,  
Her lord who Caesar in his lust caress'd. [73]

Source:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6400/6400.txt>

Translators: The Translation of Alexander Thomson, M.D.; Revised and corrected by T. Forester, Esq., A.M.

Guido Guinizelli, however, is a heterosexual. He says that “we did not act like human beings, / yielding instead, like animals, to lust” (Musa 26.83-84). For that reason, the souls in his group call out the name of Pasiphae.

Interestingly, Guido Guinizelli refers to heterosexual sin as “hermaphroditic sin” (Musa 26.82). The word “hermaphrodite” means “having both male and female sex organs.” In Greek mythology, Hermaphroditus was the two-sexed child of the union of Hermes and Aphrodite. His name combines the names of his parents.

We notice that a lot of love poets are on the ledge that is devoted to purging lust. The kind of poetry that Dante writes may promote love, but it ought not to promote lust.

Guido Guinizelli points out to Dante some other poets who were early masters of the vernacular poetry and who wrote about love.

• **Write a short character analysis of Arnaut Daniel.**

Guido Guinizelli then points out the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel. Like other souls in Purgatory, Guido readily acknowledges when someone else is better than he. Guido

calls Arnaut Daniel “a better craftsman of his native tongue” (Musa 26.117).

Arnaut Daniel speaks to Dante, but Arnaut uses his own language. Because Arnaut Daniel is a vernacular poet, this is appropriate. Most of the speakers in the *Divine Comedy* speak their own language, which is Italian. Arnaut Daniel is the only non-Italian to speak his own language in the *Divine Comedy*.

Mark Musa leaves Arnaut Daniel’s words untranslated in the body of his translation, but he translated those words in his notes on Canto 26:

“Your elegant request so pleases me,  
 I could not possibly conceal my name.  
 I am Arnaut, singing now through my tears,  
 Regretfully recalling my past follies,  
 And joyfully anticipating joy.  
 I beg you, in the name of that great power  
 Guiding you now to the summit of the stairs:  
 Remember, in good time, my suffering here.”

(Musa 289)

### **Canto 27: Seventh Ledge — Lust (Third Prophetic Dream)**

- **How are the Lustful purged on the last of the seven terraces of the seven-storey mountain, and why is that purgation fitting?**

The sin of lust is a burning sin — one can burn with lust — and therefore the sin of lust is purged with fire.

The souls who need to be purged of lust do so by staying in a fire until the sin is purged.

Dante will have to pass through fire in order to climb higher. When he does that, the 7th and final P will be erased from his forehead. He will have purged his sins, but he will have to again purge his sins after he dies. (Apparently, he will sin — as all of us do — when he returns to Earth.)

Everyone will have to pass through the fire when they climb this high up the Mountain of Purgatory, whether or not they are guilty of the sin of lust. Going through the fire is the only way to reach the Earthly Paradise.

- **What must Dante do to reach the Earthly Paradise and to see Beatrice?**

Dante, Virgil, and Statius now see the Angel of Chastity, who tells them, “*Beati mundo corde!*” (Musa 27.8), the beginning of the beatitude “Blessed are the Pure of Heart.”

Dante now learns that he must pass through the fire in order to reach the Earthly Paradise and to see Beatrice. Dante would be burned alive in Florence if he were to return from exile, so he is afraid of the fire. Dante also tells us that he has seen burned corpses.

The angel tells them, “Holy souls, no farther can you go / without first suffering fire” (Musa 27.10-11). The angel also tells them to listen to the song as they pass through the fire.

Dante is afraid, so Virgil tells him, “O my dear son, / there may be pain here, but there is no death” (Musa 27.20-21). Virgil reminds him that he has always been safe, even when doing frightening things such as riding on the back of Geryon in the Inferno. Virgil also tells him to test the fire with the hem of his robe. Apparently, the robe will not catch on fire.

Dante continues to hesitate, so Virgil reminds him that in order to see Beatrice, he must pass through the fire. This convinces Dante to pass through the fire.

Virgil knows exactly what to say to encourage Dante to walk through the fire. He tells Dante, “Already I can see her eyes, it seems!” (Musa 27.54). “[H]er eyes” are Beatrice’s eyes. This is excellent rhetoric. Virgil knows how to motivate Dante.

Virgil, ever the protective guide, walks into the fire first. He also asks Statius to enter the fire last. Dante follows next, with Statius bringing up the rear.

The fire is hot. Dante says,

“When I was in it, into molten glass  
I would have cast me to refresh myself,  
So without measure was the burning there!”

(Longfellow 27.49-51)

The words that they hear sung are these: “*Venite, benedicti Patris mei*” (Musa 27.58). The words mean, “Come, ye blessed of my father.” Jesus said them to the elect; they are words spoken to those who are entering the kingdom of Heaven.

This is the passage from Matthew 25:31-46 (King James Version):

31: When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34: Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me

37: Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink

38: When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39: Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40: And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41: Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand,  
Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,  
prepared for the devil and his angels:

42: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I  
was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked,  
and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye  
visited me not.

44: Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord,  
when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a  
stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not  
minister unto thee?

45: Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say  
unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least  
of these, ye did it not to me.

46: And these shall go away into everlasting  
punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

• **Explain Dante's third prophetic dream (about Leah and Rachel).**

The three poets emerge from the fire, and they climb upward on a staircase.

Night arrives, and the stars look bigger to the three poets than they do to us.

Dante knows that dreams can be prophetic:

Thus ruminating, and beholding these [stars],

Sleep seized upon me, — sleep, that  
oftentimes

Before a deed is done has tidings of it.



(Longfellow 27.91-93)

Tired, Dante falls asleep, and he has his third prophetic dream:

- Canto 9: In the first dream, he dreamed that an eagle carried him higher up the mountain. While he was asleep, Saint Lucia did exactly that.
- Canto 19: In the second dream, he dreamed about being rescued from a Siren by a heavenly lady, who tells Virgil to protect Dante.
- Canto 27: In the third dream, Dante dreams about Rachel and Leah.

In this third prophetic dream, Rachel and Leah are symbolic.

Leah symbolizes the active life and Rachel symbolizes the contemplative life.

In the dream, Leah is active. Leah walks through a meadow, gathering flowers to make a garland for herself. Rachel, on the other hand, looks in a mirror all day, contemplating her eyes.

Leah sings, “her joy is in reflection, mine in act” (Musa 27.108).

Dante wakes up early, and Virgil tells him,

“That apple sweet, which through so many branches

The care of mortals goeth in pursuit of,

To-day shall put in peace thy hungerings.”

(Longfellow 27.115-117)

The three poets then climb. Today they will leave Purgatory Proper and will reach the Earthly Paradise.

• Explain the last words that Virgil speaks in *Purgatory*: “I crown and miter you lord of yourself” (*Purgatory* 27.142). What is a miter?

Virgil’s job is now done. He has done it well. He will be around for a while, but not for much longer. His last words to Dante are these:

“Until those lovely eyes rejoicing come,  
   which, tearful, once urged me to come to you,  
   you may sit here, or wander, as you please.  
 Expect no longer words or signs from me.  
   Now is your will upright, wholesome and  
   free,  
   and not to heed its pleasure would be wrong:  
 I crown and miter you lord of yourself!”

(Musa 27.136-142)

Dante still needs a guide, but that guide will be Beatrice. Virgil has taken Dante the Pilgrim as far as he can. Virgil will say no more words to Dante after these because his job is done. All he will do now is accompany Dante until Beatrice arrives.

Now that Dante has passed through Purgatory Proper, his will is free. He is no longer shackled by sin. He controls his desires; they do not control him. This does not mean that Dante is a robot without Free Will. Instead, it means that his Free Will is perfect and is unrestrained.

Virgil’s last words to Dante are “I crown and miter you lord of yourself!” (Musa 27.142).

A crown is what a king wears. A miter is what a bishop wears; it is a headdress. Because Dante has perfected his Free Will, been restored to innocence, and is purged of sin, he no longer needs a king or a bishop to guide him. Instead, Dante is now his own king and his own bishop.

Restored to innocence, Dante no longer needs the guidance and restraint of Church or state. He has become his own king and bishop, indeed his own emperor and pope.

**• Once Dante and Virgil pass through the last of these seven terraces up the mountain, where do they find themselves?**

Once Dante and Virgil pass through the last of these seven terraces up the mountain, they enter the Earthly Paradise, aka the Garden of Eden, although here Dante calls it the Forest of Eden. Italy is hot in the summer, and a forest is cool, so perhaps that is why Dante calls the Earthly Paradise a forest.

The Garden of Eden is a place of innocence. It is an earthly taste of the Heavenly Paradise. Souls who have been purged of sin come here in order to do the final few things that are necessary before they go to the Heavenly Paradise.

## Canto 28: Forest of Eden — Matelda

• **Dante is now getting ready for his visit to Paradise, so we should expect a lot of changes.**

Dante has now spent three days in Purgatory and is now beginning his fourth day. Most critics believe that the rest of Dante's journey, including his visit to Paradise, takes place on this day.

The 33 cantos of *Purgatory* can be broken down in this way:

9 cantos (Cantos 1-9): Prepurgatory

18 cantos (Cantos 10-27): Purgatory Proper

6 cantos (Cantos 28-33): The Earthly Paradise

These things will happen in the Earthly Paradise:

1) Virgil will leave Dante and return to Limbo. Virgil has guided Dante well through the Inferno and up the Mountain of Purgatory, but his job is over, although he will stay with Dante a while longer.

2) Beatrice will take over as Dante's guide. Beatrice will help guide him through the Earthly Paradise and will be his guide for most of his journey in the Heavenly Paradise.

3) Dante will confess his sins.

4) Dante will drink from the river of Lethe, which will take away the sting of his sins.

5) Dante will drink from the river of Eunoë, which will revive the memory of his good deeds.

6) Dante will embark on his journey to Paradise. This journey, of course, Dante will describe in the *Paradise*.

• **Describe the Earthly Paradise (the Garden of Eden) as it appears in Canto 28. (It is not called a garden; what is it?)**

Dante calls the Garden of Eden the Forest of Eden. Italy is by the Mediterranean Sea, and it can grow hot there, so a forest is invitingly cool.

Dante comes to an incredibly clear stream and stops, and he sees a woman on the other side of the stream.

• **Write a character analysis of Matelda. (She is the young woman in Canto 28; we do not discover her name until Canto 33, line 118.)**

The woman on the other side of the incredibly clear stream is Matelda, who smiles and sings. She is the caretaker of the Forest of Eden.

Matelda is beautiful, and Dante compares her to two goddesses:

*1) Proserpina*

Proserpina was kidnapped by Hades, god of the Underworld, who wanted her to be his wife.

*2) Venus (Aphrodite)*

Venus' son is Cupid, whose arrows make people (and gods/goddesses) fall in love. Venus bent over to kiss Cupid one day, accidentally scratching herself with one of his arrows, which were in a quiver. Thereupon, she fell in love with Adonis.

The stream between him and Matelda also reminds him of the Hellespont, and of the myth of the priestess Hero and Leander, who loved her. Leander used to swim across the Hellespont to be with Hero.



(Longfellow 28.121-126)

These are the two streams:

1) *The Lethe*

“Lethe” means oblivion. Drinking from this stream will remove the sting of sin. We read here that drinking from this stream will “erase sin’s memory” (Musa 28.128); however, in Paradise, the souls realize that they have been forgiven although they have sinned. Also, some of the souls whom Dante speaks to in Paradise remain aware of their sins. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that this stream erases the sting of our sins. Souls in Paradise are aware that they have sinned, and they are grateful to have been forgiven for their sins.

2) *The Eunoe*

“Eunoe” means well-minded. Drinking from this stream revives the memory of all good deeds that one has performed in one’s life.

Matelda tells Dante,

“The water here on this side flows with power  
to erase sin’s memory; and on that side  
the memory of good deeds is restored;  
it is called Lethe here, Eunoe there  
beyond, and if one does not first drink here,  
he will not come to know its powers there —  
”

(Musa 28.127-132)

Matelda adds,

“Those who in ancient times have feigned in song  
The Age of Gold and its felicity,  
Dreamed of this place perhaps upon  
Parnassus.

Here was the human race in innocence;  
Here evermore was Spring, and every fruit;  
This is the nectar of which each one speaks.”

(Longfellow 28.139-144)

Hearing this, Dante turns around and looks at two “poets of long ago” (Musa 28.139) — Virgil and Statius — and he sees that they are smiling.



### **Canto 29: Forest of Eden — Pageant of Revelation**

• **What Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29 is a spectacular pageant. Describe briefly what he sees.**

In Canto 29, Dante sees a spectacular pageant.

Later, he will see another spectacular pageant.

Both pageants are allegorical.

The first spectacular pageant has figures that symbolize the books of the Bible.

Dante sees this spectacular pageant before Beatrice arrives.

The first spectacular pageant is like a parade. Dante sees these things:

7 golden candlesticks

24 elders

4 creatures (behind the elders)

A chariot led by a Griffin (this appears in a square formed by the 4 creatures)

3 ladies to the right of the chariot (1 red lady, 1 white lady, and 1 green lady)

4 ladies to the left of the chariot (all of the ladies are wearing purple)

2 aged men

4 humble men

1 old man by himself

A thunderclap sounds, and the procession stops in front of Dante the Pilgrim.

• **The spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29 is allegorical. Define “allegory.”**

Here is a definition of “allegory”:

Typically a narrative in prose, verse, or drama that self-consciously presents its meaning through concrete symbols. The significance of a given symbol, however, is determined [by] the conventions of the allegory as a whole. An allegory has at least two levels of meaning: the literal level of the immediate narrative and the political, historical, philosophical or moral commentary the author intends to be recognized. Thus allegories are generally didactic in focus.

Source:

[www2.cumberlandcollege.edu/acad/english/litcritweb/glossary.ht](http://www2.cumberlandcollege.edu/acad/english/litcritweb/glossary.htm)

For example, Dante the Pilgrim sees seven candlesticks (an image from the Book of Revelation) that have symbolic values of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

• **What allegorical interpretation can be made of the seven candlesticks in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

The seven candlesticks are an image from the Book of Revelation.

The seven candlesticks can be interpreted as representing the gifts of God’s spirit:

Wisdom

Understanding

Counsel

Might

Knowledge

Piety

Fear of (aka Reverence for) The Lord

**• What allegorical interpretation can be made of the 24 Elders in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

The 24 elders can be interpreted as representing the books of the Old Testament, assuming that we count the books of the 12 minor prophets as 1 book. Of course, the Old Testament can have a varying number of books, depending on your religion. The Catholic Old Testament contains more books than the Protestant Old Testament. The count used here is the count of Saint Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin in what is known as the Vulgate Bible. The word “Vulgate” is Latin, and it can be translated as “widespread.” Of course, the purpose of translating the Bible into Latin was the same as that of other translations: to make it more available to more people.

Dante believed that God revealed himself in three stages during Biblical times:

- 1) The Hebrew Testament, aka Old Testament
- 2) The 4 Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
- 3) The later books of the New Testament

In the pageant, we will see figures representing all of the books.

The 24 elders are dressed in white, a color that is symbolic of illuminating faith.

In Revelation 4:4 (King James Version), we read: “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon

the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”

These are the 12 minor prophets:

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Michah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

**• What allegorical interpretation can be made of the Griffin drawing a great chariot in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

A Griffin is a figure from mythology; it has two natures because it is half-lion and half-eagle.

The Griffin is a symbol of Jesus, who also has two natures: Jesus is fully human, yet fully divine.

The chariot drawn by the Griffin is a symbol that represents the Church.

**• What allegorical interpretation can be made of the women at either wheel of the chariot in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

These three women at the sides of the wheels of the chariot represent the three Christian virtues.

*3 ladies to the right of the chariot (1 red lady, 1 white lady, and 1 green lady)*

These ladies are symbolic of three Christian virtues:

Faith (White)

Hope (Green)

Charity/Love (Red)

These are known as the theological virtues.

*4 ladies to the left of the chariot (all of the ladies are wearing purple)*

These four ladies are symbolic of four virtues from classical antiquity:

Prudence

Justice

Temperance

Fortitude

These are known as the cardinal virtues.

One of these ladies has three eyes; this lady symbolizes Prudence. Why? Prudence can see the past, the present, and the future.

Joseph Gallagher, author of *A Modern Reader's Guide to Dante's Divine Comedy*, writes this:

For her triple vision, Dante gives prudence a third eye. Some find this feature “grotesque,” or ‘a lapse of taste,” but many depictions of the Buddha give him some sort of third eye symbolizing inward vision. In yoga tradition, the sixth chakra (center of psychic energy) radiates through the imagined third eye, located in the center of the forehead. (119)

**• What allegorical interpretation can be made of the two living beasts in front of the chariot and the two living beasts in back of the chariot in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

Two living beasts are in front of the chariot, and two living beasts are in back of the chariot.

These beasts represent the four authors of the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Why are these four authors represented as beasts? The image comes from Revelation 4:6-8 and from Ezekiel 1:4-14.

Revelation 4:6-8 (King James Version):

6: And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7: And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8: And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Ezekiel 1:4-14 (King James Version):

4: And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

5: Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6: And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

7: And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8: And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9: Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10: As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

11: Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

12: And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

13: As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like

the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

*14:* And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The two accounts differ in the number of wings the creatures have. Dante gives each creature six wings — the same number that Saint John, the author of the Book of Revelation, gives them.

**• What allegorical interpretation can be made of the remaining figures in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

The allegorical interpretation that we can make of the remaining figures in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29 is that they represent all of the remaining books of the New Testament.

Then we have figures that represent as well all the other books of the New Testament.

Joseph Gallagher, author of *A Modern Reader's Guide to Dante's Divine Comedy*, writes this:

Third, seven white-robed men, balancing the seven candles in front and the seven ladies around the chariot, represent the follow-up books of the New Testament: side by side, the healing physician Luke (author of the Acts of the Apostles) and Paul (author of the major epistles) with his frightening, sin-wounding sword; then two more sets of men representing other epistle writers: Peter, James, John, and Jude. Last of all is an old man who sleeps but sees keenly as he walks — John the Divine (supposed author of the Book of Revelation). Though dressed in the same white robes of faith as



the 24 elders, these final seven are crowned with roses and other red flowers emblematic of the charity emblematic of the charity energized into the world by Christ's coming. (119)

• **How many times does John appear in the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

John appears three times:

- 1) one time as the fourth Gospel
- 2) one time as the author of Letters (1 John, 2 John, 3 John)
- 3) one time as the author of the Book of Revelation.

John is the old man who appears at the end of the procession because he is the author of the last book that appears in the New Testament: the Book of Revelation.

Thunder sounds, and the procession stops in front of Dante.

• **What does Virgil think of the spectacular pageant?**

Virgil is just as amazed by the spectacular pageant as Dante the Pilgrim is:

I turned me round, with admiration filled,  
To good Virgilius, and he answered me  
With visage no less full of wonderment.

(Longfellow 29.55-57)

Virgil is amazed by the pageant. As a pagan, he cannot understand it. At this point, Virgil has gone beyond his competence. All that is left for Virgil to do is to wait until Beatrice's arrival is imminent, and then return to Limbo.

We will find out later that this is the last time Dante sees Virgil.

### **Canto 30: Forest of Eden — Entrance of Beatrice and Exit of Virgil)**

**• What is the purpose of the spectacular pageant that Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 29?**

In Canto 30, we find out the purpose of the spectacular pageant in Canto 29. Its purpose is preparation for the arrival of Beatrice, who makes a spectacular entrance.

Canto 29 can be regarded as public and impersonal. In contrast, Canto 30 can be regarded as private and personal.

Canto 29 used symbols that are well known in the history of the church. In contrast, Canto 30 has the arrival of Beatrice, with whom Dante has a personal relationship.

We know very little about Beatrice, other than that Dante saw her when they were young and that he loved her and wrote poetry for her. We know that Beatrice died when she was young. Of course, she also arrives now to be Dante's guide.

**• What is the importance of Beatrice to Dante?**

The Church is a means of salvation for many people. For Dante, individually, Beatrice is a means of salvation.

Beatrice is now Dante's guide. She has been involved in his trip through the Afterlife; after all, she is the one who asked Virgil to be Dante's guide through the Inferno and the Mountain of Purgatory. Now she will help Dante prepare for his trip to Paradise and she will take him upwards to Paradise, where he will meet his final guide.

*The Divine Comedy* is both personal and universal. It is personal in that it is about Dante's salvation. It is universal in that many people can learn about salvation.

Christians believe that anyone can be saved — God offers salvation to all, not just to a few. However, the way that people can be saved can vary, although it will always involve confessing and repenting our sins.

God reaches people in many ways. In Dante's case, God reaches him through Beatrice. Beatrice is able to show Dante the way to Paradise.

God can reach other people in different ways. For example, a number of people have had near-death experiences in which beings of light and kindness have come to them. Believe it or not, many people have seen Elvis Presley at such times. Apparently, Elvis has been important to them, and so God uses Elvis to reach these people and bring them to Paradise. For more information, see this book:

Moody, Jr., Raymond A. *Elvis after Life: Unusual Psychic Experiences Surrounding the Death of a Superstar*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 1987.

**• What kind of language is used to describe the coming of Beatrice?**

Dante uses much Latin, especially Latin from a translation of the Bible, and some from the *Aeneid*, to describe the coming of Beatrice:

Even as the Blessed at the final summons  
 Shall rise up quickened each one from his  
 cavern,  
 Uplifting light the reinvested flesh,  
 So upon that celestial chariot  
 A hundred rose '*ad vocem tanti senis*,'  
 Ministers and messengers of life eternal.

They all were saying, “*Benedictus qui venis,*”

And, scattering flowers above and round  
about,

“*Manibus o date lilia plenis.*”

(Longfellow 30.13-21)

*Benedictus qui venis*, in English, means “blessed are you who come.” The Mass uses a very similar line from Matthew 21:9: *Benedictus qui venit*. This line means “Blessed is he who comes.” In Latin, *Benedictus* has a masculine ending, so it still refers to Christ, as well as to Beatrice.

Beatrice is being compared to Christ here. Christ saved people’s souls, and here Beatrice is on a mission to save Dante’s soul. Beatrice is here a Christ-figure.

Another Latin line comes from Virgil’s *Aeneid*: *Manebis, O, date lilia plenis*. In English, this line means, “Oh, give lilies with full hands.” This line appears in the section of the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas visits the Land of the Dead and sees his future descendants. One of them is Marcellus, who was a nephew of Caesar Augustus, and of whom great things were expected, but he died young and so was not able to fulfill his potential. Of course, Beatrice also died young. This line can be interpreted as saying to scatter lilies with both hands before Beatrice. The angels in fact are scattering flowers in the air in preparation for the arrival of Beatrice.

Note that the 100 angels sing this line from the *Aeneid*. This is high tribute to Virgil. We can hope that he is present to hear the angels and has not yet disappeared.

Here we have Latin from a translation of the Bible and Latin from the *Aeneid* appearing very close together. Dante is paying a major compliment to Virgil in these three lines (Musa 30.19-21).

Beatrice certainly knows how to make an appearance. One hundred angels sing and toss flowers into the air to announce her coming.

• **What is the allegorical meaning of the three colors that Beatrice is wearing when she arrives?**

Beatrice is wearing three colors here, colors that have religious significance. The three colors represent the theological virtues:

Faith (white)

Hope (green)

Charity/Love (red)

Note that these three colors are the colors of the three women who represent the theological virtues in the Pageant of Revelation.

Beatrice wears a red gown with a green cloak and a white veil, and a crown with olive leaves — which symbolize wisdom.

• **Why does Virgil disappear?**

Dante sees Beatrice, and he turns around because he wishes to say to Virgil: “Not one drop of blood

is left inside my veins that does not throb:

I recognize signs of the ancient flame.”

(Musa 30.46-48)

The words “I recognize signs of the ancient flame” (Musa 30.48) is a quotation from the *Aeneid* 4:23. Dido says these words when she realizes that she is falling in love with Aeneas. In the *Aeneid*, this is not a good thing because of two reasons:

- 1) After the death of her husband, Sichaesus, Dido vowed to remain true to his memory and not be remarried, and
- 2) Dido's love affair with Aeneas ends unhappily, and she commits suicide.

Virgil wrote about the love between Aeneas and Dido in the *Aeneid*, a love that ended unhappily, with Dido's suicide. Here, the love of Dante and Beatrice ends happily. In a way, Dante is rewriting the story of Aeneas and Dido, with himself and Beatrice playing the star roles.

Here again Dante pays tribute to Virgil. He says goodbye to Virgil by using a line from Virgil's *Aeneid*.

However, Dante says, "But Virgil was not there" (Musa 30.49).

Virgil's job is done, so he leaves, and he leaves without saying goodbye. Virgil's job was to take Dante through the Inferno and up the Mountain of Purgatory to the Earthly Paradise and to deliver Dante into the hands of Beatrice, his next important guide. Virgil has done that, so he now returns to Limbo.

Dante cries, but Beatrice tells him not to weep yet because he will soon have to weep for another reason. He will have to weep for his sins.

**• Why does Beatrice speak so harshly to Dante the Pilgrim?**

Beatrice is a harsh judge for Dante at this point. To be ready for his journey to and through Paradise, Dante must confess and repent his sins. Beatrice is stern as she talks about the bad things that Dante has done and about the good things that he has failed to do. Beatrice is taking her job as guide

seriously, as she should. Beatrice wants Dante to end up in Paradise rather than in the Inferno.

Beatrice says to Dante,

“Dante, because Virgilius has departed

Do not weep yet, do not weep yet awhile;

For by another sword thou need’st must weep.”

(Longfellow 30.55-57)

Interestingly, the name “Dante” does not appear in *The Divine Comedy* except in this section. Also, interestingly, “Dante” is the first word that Beatrice says to Dante.

Beatrice says to Dante,

“Yes, look at me! Yes, I am Beatrice!

So, you at last have deigned to climb the mount?

You learned at last that here lies human bliss?”

(Musa 30.73-75)

Dante has not been paying attention to spiritual things until recently, at the intervention of the three heavenly ladies. Beatrice criticizes him harshly for his inattention.

We think of God as being omnibenevolent, but apparently God can be critical as well. Sometimes God is like a strict schoolmaster, as we see on the Mountain of Purgatory, where the focus is on education.

Dante is ashamed; he knows that he has not acted correctly:

Mine eyes fell downward into the clear fountain,



But, seeing myself therein, I sought the grass,  
 So great a shame did weigh my forehead  
 down.

As to the son the mother seems superb,  
 So she appeared to me; for somewhat bitter  
 Tasteth the savour of severe compassion.

(Longfellow 30.76-81)

Beatrice turns to speak to the beings in the spectacular pageant, and she explains why she is so harsh to Dante:

“Ye keep your watch in the eternal day,  
 So that nor night nor sleep can steal from you  
 One step the ages make upon their path;  
 Therefore my answer is with greater care,  
 That he may hear me who is weeping yonder,  
 So that the sin and dole be of one measure.”

(Longfellow 30.103-108)

Dante must recognize that he has sinned, and he must repent his sins and grieve over them.

**• What does Beatrice think about the way that Dante has been leading his life?**

Beatrice explains what she thinks of Dante’s life. She is not pleased.

Basically, Beatrice knows that Dante has been leading his life the wrong way.

In fact, Dante's life has been so messed up that to save him the three heavenly ladies had to make sure that Dante took this journey through the three parts of the afterlife.

Beatrice says,

“Not only by the work of those great wheels,  
That destine every seed unto some end,  
According as the stars are in conjunction,”

(Longfellow 30.109-111)

The stars (today we would say heredity and environment) may influence us, but other things are important in determining who we are. God can endow us with gifts, and we have Free Will and knowledge of what is right and wrong.

Beatrice continues,

“But by the largess of celestial graces,  
Which have such lofty vapours for their rain  
That near to them our sight approaches not,  
Such had this man become in his new life  
Potentially, that every righteous habit<sup>[11]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>  
Would have made admirable proof in him;”

(Longfellow 30.112-117)

Beatrice points out that Dante is gifted by God; unfortunately, Dante did not allow “his gifts / to bloom” (Musa 30.116-117). Instead, Dante messed up his life. Dante had potential, but he messed up.

Beatrice says,

“As soon as ever of my second age  
     I was upon the threshold and changed life,  
     Himself from me he took and gave to others.”

(Longfellow 30.124-126)

In other words, Dante deserted her after she died. The “others” (Musa and Longfellow 30.126) mentioned here need not be women; after all, Beatrice is a spiritual figure here and may be understood to be a symbol of Revelation. Beatrice is saying that Dante ignored spiritual matters after she died. Instead, Dante pursued lesser things:

“When from the flesh to spirit I ascended,  
     And beauty and virtue were in me increased,  
     I was to him less dear and less delightful;  
 And into ways untrue he turned his steps,  
     Pursuing the false images of good,  
     That never any promises fulfil;”

(Longfellow 30.127-132)

Instead of pursuing what is truly good, Dante pursued things that only seemed to be good. In Canto 1 of the *Inferno*, Dante is lost in the Dark Wood. He is lost because he has “wandered from the path that leads to truth” (Musa 30.130).

Beatrice continues to speak, saying that Dante had messed up so badly that he had to visit the *Inferno*:

“To such depths did he sink that, finally,  
     there was no other way to save his soul  
     except to have him see the Damned in Hell.”

(Musa 30.136-138)

Beatrice, therefore, took steps to make that happen. However, Dante must do more than simply journey through the Inferno. Like other souls, he must purge and repent his sins. He will have to repent his sins by confessing them and by mourning that he committed them. In order for this happen, Beatrice visited Virgil in Limbo:

“For this I visited the gates of death,  
 And unto him, who so far up has led him,  
 My intercessions were with weeping borne.  
 God’s lofty fiat would be violated,  
 If Lethe should be passed, and if such viands  
 Should tasted be, withouten any scot  
 Of penitence, that gushes forth in tears.”

(Longfellow 30.139-145)

By the way, a scot is a tax.

### Canto 31: Forest of Eden — Lethe

#### • How does Dante react to the harsh accusations Beatrice made in Canto 30?

Beatrice wants something from Dante. He must confess that he has erred:

“O thou who art beyond the sacred river,”

Turning to me the point of her discourse,

That edgewise even had seemed to me so keen,

She recommenced, continuing without pause,

“Say, say if this be true; to such a charge,

Thy own confession needs must be conjoined.”

(Longfellow 31.1-6)

Dante still has the memories of the sins he has committed because he has not yet drunk from the stream Lethe. Beatrice calls those memories of sin “bitter memories” (31.11). This is a good description. Many people — those who are not pathological — remember with bitterness things that they have done in the past but should NOT have done. Sometimes, these bitter memories keep us awake at night.

Dante gives Beatrice the answer she wants. To her question of whether he is guilty of the “grave charge” (Musa 31.6) she has made against him, he answers with “a miserable ‘yes’” (Musa 31.14).

From this we can see that Dante has learned from the trip that he has taken through the Afterlife:

1) One thing that Dante has learned is to take responsibility for his sins. This is something that the sinners in the Inferno did not do.

2) Dante has also learned to repent his sins. This is also something that the sinners in the Inferno did not do.

Many people may become defensive when they are charged with something serious. Instead of admitting their guilt, they blame someone or something else: Love made me do it, or A book made me do it, or The Devil made me do it. Instead of blaming someone or something else, Dante simply admits that he is guilty — he made himself do it.

We read about Dante,

Confusion and dismay together mingled

Forced such a Yes! from out my mouth, that  
sight

Was needful to the understanding of it.

(Longfellow 31.13-15)

My fear and deep chagrin, between them, forced

Out of my mouth a miserable “yes” —

Only by eyes with ears could it be heard.

(Musa 31.13-15)

Dante recognizes that confession of his sins is important, and in fact he does confess his sins:

Weeping I said: “The things that present were

With their false pleasure turned aside my  
steps,

Soon as your countenance concealed itself.”

(Longfellow 31.34-36)

**• Dante was impressed by Beatrice’s physical beauty. Where is that beauty now? What should he have learned from this?**

Beatrice was beautiful while she was alive, but now all of that beauty is in a tomb:

“You never saw in Nature or in Art  
     a beauty like the beauty of my form,  
     which clothed me once and is now turned to  
     dust;”

(Musa 31.49-51)

From Beatrice’s death, Dante should have learned a lesson:

“and if that perfect beauty disappeared  
     when I departed from the world, how could  
     another mortal object lure your love?”

(Musa 31.52-54)

Beatrice was physically beautiful, but that physical beauty did not last. When she died, her physical beauty turned to dust. Dante should have learned from Beatrice’s death to turn his attention to the things that last. Instead of physical beauty, Dante should have pursued spiritual beauty.

**• We can ask what are the eternal things — what are the good things that last? What are some possible answers?**

Here are some possible answers:

• Family can last. Families can have children, who then have children, who then have children, and so

on. The propagation of the species is important. Some human beings will go to Paradise, and so the human species will last.

- Love can last. Beatrice died, but Dante continued to love her. Presumably, that kind of love is highly regarded by God.
- Art can last. *The Divine Comedy* has lasted for 700 years, and it will likely last for 700 more years. Limbo has a library; a copy of it is there.
- Spiritual things last. What are spiritual things? They are such things as love, truth, and beauty. These things appear in the love we experience on Earth, and these things are part of great works of art. These things are also important in Paradise.

The big lesson that Dante must learn here is to turn his attention to the important things. Because he wrote *The Divine Comedy* after learning this lesson, writing *The Divine Comedy* is one of the important things.

Other things are not eternal. All of Dante's material possessions are gone now. Dante's friendship lives on in his *Divine Comedy*, as we see when he writes about Forese Donati and other of his friends.

Dante recognizes his guilt, and his sense of remorse is so strong that he faints.

**• What is the stream Lethe, and why must Dante the Pilgrim drink of it?**

When Dante revives, Matelda pulls him across the stream Lethe. She allows him to drink its waters. Matelda's job is to ensure that the purged souls drink from the two streams at the proper time. In Canto 33, she will ask Statius to drink from the stream Eunoë. By the way, Matelda can walk on



water. She pulls Dante's body across the stream named Lethe, walking on water as she does so: "now drawing me along she glided light, / and with a shuttle's ease, across the stream" (Musa 31.95-96).

The stream named Lethe washes away the memory of one's sins. In Paradise, we will see souls who remember their sins, but the sting of the memory of their sins is gone. These souls are grateful to God for forgiving their sins.

**• What happens after Dante drinks from the stream Lethe?**

The ladies who are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance raise their hands over Dante. They take Dante to the Griffin, and they then tell him to look into Beatrice's eyes. He does, and he sees the twofold nature of the Griffin, Who is Christ, Who is fully divine and fully human. Dante does not see both natures at the same time, but he does see separately both natures. (At the end of Paradise, Dante will see the triune God.)

Dante looks into Beatrice's eyes, which are looking at the Griffin:

Like sunlight in a mirror, shining back,  
I saw the twofold creature in her eyes,  
reflecting its two natures separately.

(Musa 31.121-123)

The ladies who are Faith, Hope, and Charity/Love ask Beatrice to look at and smile at Dante. She obliges, and Dante is unable to describe her beauty.

## Canto 32: Forest of Eden — Pageant of Church History

### • What is going to happen to Dante in the future?

Dante is being shown sights as a living man that few living men ever see. In fact, he is blinded for a while after looking too hard at Beatrice.

One of the sights he sees is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but here in the Earthly Paradise the tree is bare of leaves and fruit.

Dante has confessed his sins, and he is ready to ascend to Paradise, and yet he is still living. This kind of experience should change his life. How will his life change?

We will discover in *Paradise* that Dante will be given a mission for the rest of his life. He must write *The Divine Comedy*. Here we have preparation for what we will learn in *Paradise*. A second spectacular pageant is performed for Dante, and Beatrice tells him to watch it closely so that he can write about it later:

Encircling her, a cloister made themselves

The seven Nymphs, with those lights in their  
hands

Which are secure from Aquilon and Auster.

“Short while shalt thou be here a forester,

And thou shalt be with me for evermore

A citizen of that Rome where Christ is  
Roman.

Therefore, for that world’s good which liveth ill,

Fix on the car thine eyes, and what thou seest,

Having returned to earth, take heed thou write.”

(Longfellow 32.97-105)

Beatrice says that when Dante dies he will go to Paradise.

We also learn that Beatrice expects Dante to write about this spectacular pageant when he returns to his mortal life on Earth.

When Dante writes *The Divine Comedy*, he will be writing about eternal things — such as eternal damnation and eternal salvation. One purpose of this journey through the afterlife is to save Dante’s soul; another purpose is so that Dante can save other souls by writing *The Divine Comedy*.

**• Briefly describe the pageant that Dante sees in Canto 32. What allegorical interpretations can be made of what Dante the Pilgrim sees in Canto 32?**

This pageant is about the history of the Church. People often see the history of the church as being divided into seven different ages. The first age is the incarnation of Christ (Christ takes bodily form), and the last age is the Last Judgment. However, this pageant has a narrower focus.

Mark Musa refers to this pageant as that “of the Church Militant — the church struggling with the forces of evil in history” (349). The pageant is about the challenges that the Church has faced since Jesus ascended to Heaven a few days after his resurrection up until 1300. These challenges are often difficult to interpret, but the below interpretations of some of the parts of the pageant are probably accurate.

*The Roman Persecution of Christians*

One such crisis is seen when an eagle attacks the chariot. The chariot is a symbol of the Church. The eagle is a symbol of Rome. The Roman legions carried standards into battle. The

standards were poles with insignia or symbols at the top. The Roman standards often had the figure of an eagle at the top. When the eagle attacks the chariots, it symbolizes the persecution of Roman emperors such as Nero against the Church.

*The Early Heresies of the Church*

Another attack symbolizes another challenge. We read about a fox that symbolizes the early heresies of the Church. A heresy is an opinion that differs from orthodox doctrine. For example, to the Christians a disbelief in immortality is a heresy. We read:

Thereafter saw I leap into the body  
                                     Of the triumphal vehicle a Fox,  
                                     That seemed unfed with any wholesome  
                                     food.

(Longfellow 32.118-120)

*The Donation of Constantine*

Here we see yet another attack:

Once more the eagle swooped down through the tree:  
                                     this time into the framework of the car,  
                                     to shed some of its golden feathers there;

(Musa 32.124-126)

This attack is of a different kind. Instead of tearing at the chariot, the eagle sheds “golden feathers” (32.126) on it. This is a reference to what was known as the Donation of Constantine.

Way back in *Inferno* 19, Dante the Pilgrim addresses Constantine, who is not in the *Inferno* but is instead in *Paradise*, in an apostrophe:

“O Constantine, what did you sire,  
not by your conversion, but by the dower  
that the first wealthy father got from you.”

(Musa *Inferno* 19.115-117)

Constantine was the first Christian Roman emperor. When he moved from Rome to the city of Constantinople, he supposedly gave much power and many material possessions to the Pope. The medieval belief was that Constantine deliberately moved East in order to reward Pope Sylvester with power and possessions because Pope Sylvester had cured him of leprosy. Dante believes that this Donation of Constantinople corrupted many Popes and the Church.

Actually, the so-called Donation of Constantine turned to be a forgery, but this was proved long after Dante's day; in the 15th century, the so-called Donation of Constantine was proved to be a forgery.

This Donation of Constantine turned out to have bad consequences, according to Dante, who believed that it caused a crisis in the Church because suddenly the Popes became more concerned about money and power than they were concerned about God. In fact, Dante believed that the Donation of Constantine was having bad effects in Florence and Rome 1,000 years after Constantine gave his Donation to the Church. Constantine lived from 288? to 337, and Constantinople is named after him. He is known as the first Christian Roman Emperor.

*Philip the Fair and the Corrupt Papacy*

Another sight Dante witnesses is the harlot and the giant. Probably, the giant is King Philip IV (the Fair) of France. Probably, the harlot is the corrupt papacy. This scene refers to the present crisis of the Church. King Philip IV of France has the power, not the Popes. In Dante's perfect system, the Holy Roman Emperor would have power over secular matters and the Pope would have power over spiritual matters. Both men would be good men, and they would not engage in a power struggle.

*The Attack Against Pope Boniface VIII*

In this scene, however, the giant beats the harlot and drags both the harlot and the chariot away. The beating of the harlot refers to an event that occurred in 1303, when the bullyboys of King Philip IV (the Fair) attacked Pope Boniface VIII.

*The Avignon Papacy*

The dragging away of the harlot and of the chariot (which has turned into a monster) refers to an event that occurred in 1305, when Clement V was elected Pope; he moved the papacy in 1309 to Avignon, France, instead of Rome, where Dante thought that it should be. In all, seven popes, all of whom were French, stayed in Avignon, France, from 1309 to 1377, when Pope Gregory XI moved the Papacy back to Rome.

Of course, Dante died in 1321, so he knew of only a couple of the Avignon Popes:

Pope Clement V: 1305–1314

Pope John XXII: 1316–1334

Pope Benedict XII: 1334–1342

Pope Clement VI: 1342–1352

Pope Innocent VI: 1352–1362

Pope Urban V: 1362–1370

Pope Gregory XI: 1370–1378

This spectacular pageant gives Dante an outline of some of the major challenges that the Church has faced.

### **Canto 33: Forest of Eden — Purgation Completed**

- **What does Dante learn from the two spectacular pageants that he has just seen?**

One of the important things that occur with Dante's viewing of the two spectacular pageants is that his own history is tied in with a much larger history. Dante lives his own personal life, and he is living in a time in which important events are taking place. Like us, Dante is a part of history. Dante sees how the time that he is living in fits in with Church history. Our own individual lives are a part of something much larger than we are.

However, our personal lives are still important. Beatrice and Dante's love for her are still important. Beatrice helps Dante to become saved. The personal and the universal are interwoven.

- **Explain the prophecy that Beatrice makes in Canto 33.**

Beatrice talks about the vision that Dante has just seen, and she makes a prophecy as the group walks toward the Eunoë stream.

Beatrice says that the chariot is a symbol of the Church:

“Know that the vessel which the serpent broke  
Was, and is not; but let him who is guilty  
Think that God's vengeance does not fear a  
sop.”

(Longfellow 33.34-36)

In Canto 32, a “dragon” (line 131) broke the chariot. The Church “was,” Beatrice says, and the Church “is not” (Musa 33.35). At the present time (1300), the Church is not what God wants it to be.



However, Beatrice says that a hero will slay the harlot and the giant. In an obscure prophecy, she says,

“For verily I see, and hence narrate it,  
                   The stars already near to bring the time,  
                   From every hindrance safe, and every bar,  
 Within which a Five-hundred, Ten, and Five,  
                   One sent from God, shall slay the thievish  
                   woman  
                   And that same giant who is sinning with her.”

(Longfellow 33.40-45)

The shattered chariot stands for the Church, “which [...] was, and is not” (Musa 33.34-35) — at least not as God meant it to be.

**• What is the stream Eunoë, and why must Dante the Pilgrim drink of it?**

When Dante appears before the second stream, he sees that both streams in the Earthly Paradise come from the same source.

Dante asks what the second stream is, and Beatrice replies, “Ask Matelda to explain” (Musa 33.118), and so we find out the name of the lady whom Dante first met in the Earthly Paradise.

The stream Eunoë revives the memory of the good deeds that one has done during life. If you were in kindergarten and you held the hand of another child who was frightened by his or her first day of kindergarten, you will remember that good deed no matter how many years have passed since you did it.

Here we see that Matelda's job is to lead saved souls to drink from the streams of Lethe and Eunoë when they are ready. Beatrice tells Matelda:

“But Eunoë behold, that yonder rises;  
 Lead him to it, and, as thou art accustomed,  
 Revive again the half-dead virtue in him.”

(Longfellow 33.127-129)

Matelda then tells Statius to drink from the stream. We do not hear of Statius again in *The Divine Comedy*. Apparently, after he drinks from the stream, he rises to his appointed spot in the Mystic Empyrean. Dante will eventually get there, but he has much to learn from the saved souls in Paradise, and it will take him time to reach the dwelling place of God.

**• Why is Dante now ready for the stars at the end of Canto 33?**

*Purgatory* ends:

From the most holy water I returned  
 Regenerate, in the manner of new trees  
 That are renewed with a new foliage,  
 Pure and disposed to mount unto the stars.

(Longfellow 33.142-145)

As with *Inferno* and *Paradise*, *Purgatory* ends with the word “stars.”

Dante has been reborn, or born again. His sins have been purged, confessed, repented, and forgiven. Now he is ready to journey to Paradise.

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## Appendix B: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

## Appendix C: Some Books by David Bruce

### Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

*Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The New Inn: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings*

*Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

*Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings*

*Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose*

*The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling*

*From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*

*George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English*

*George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling*

*George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling*

*George Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling*

*George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling*

*George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling*

*George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling*

*The History of King Leir: A Retelling*

*Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*

*Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*

*Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica*

*The Jests of George Peele: A Retelling*

*John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*

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*John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*

- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
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- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*
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- William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*
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- William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*
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- William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*
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- William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose*

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