

# PARADISO

## CANTO XXV

Should it ever come to pass that this sacred poem,  
to which both Heaven and earth have set their hand  
so that it has made me lean for many years, 3  
should overcome the cruelty that locks me out  
of the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb,  
foe of the wolves at war with it, 6  
with another voice then, with another fleece,  
shall I return a poet and, at the font  
where I was baptized, take the laurel crown. 9  
For there I came into the faith  
that recommends the soul to God, and now,  
because of it, Peter encircled thus my brow. 12  
At that a light moved toward us from the circle  
out of which had come the first-fruit of the stock  
of vicars Christ did leave for us on earth, 15  
and my lady, brimming with joy, said to me:  
'Look, look, here is the nobleman  
who down below draws pilgrims to Galicia.' 18  
As, when the dove alights beside its mate  
and each displays, circling and cooing,  
its fondness for the other, 21  
so I saw one great and glorious prince  
welcomed by the other, both giving praise  
for the feast that there above they share. 24  
But after they had shown their pleasure in each other,  
they both stopped, silent, *coram me*,  
so brightly flaming that they overcame my sight. 27  
Then, smiling, Beatrice said:  
'Illustrious living soul, you who wrote  
of the abundant gifts of our heavenly court, 30  
'make Hope resound here at this height, since you  
know how, you who were the very figure of it  
when Jesus showed most favor to the three.' 33

'Lift up your head and then take heart,  
for all that comes here from the mortal world  
will here be ripened in our radiance.' 36

The second fire offered this assurance.  
Therefore I raised my eyes up to the hills  
whose blazing light had weighed them down before. 39

'Since our Emperor, of His grace,  
wills that you come, before your death,  
to meet His nobles in His secret chamber, 42

'so that, having known the reality of this court,  
you may then strengthen in yourself and others  
the hope that brings true love to those on earth, 45

'tell what it is and how it blossoms in your mind,  
and tell from where it came to you.'

Thus spoke the second light. 48

And the compassionate soul who guided  
the feathers on my wings to that great height  
answered for me before I could reply: 51

'The Church Militant has no other son  
so filled with hope, as it is written  
in the Sun that shines its rays on all our host. 54

'Therefore is it granted him to come from Egypt  
to Jerusalem that he may see the city  
before his time of warfare has its end. 57

Two other points regarding which you asked --  
not for your enlightenment, but for him to tell  
how much this virtue means to you -- 60

'I leave to him. For they will not be difficult,  
nor offer grounds for boasting of himself.  
Now let him answer, and may God's grace be his aid!' 63

Like the student answering his teacher,  
ready and eager in the subject he prepared,  
intending to display his worth, 66

'Hope,' I said, 'is the certain expectation  
of future glory, springing  
from heavenly grace and merit we have won. 69

'This light comes down to me from many stars,  
but he who first instilled it in my heart  
was that exalted singer of our exalted Lord. 72

"Let them have hope in you," he declares  
 in his god-song, "those who know your name."  
 Among those who share my faith, who does not know it? 75

'After he had imbued me with his song,  
 you poured your epistle down on me so that I,  
 overflowing, now rain your rain on others.' 78

While I spoke, within the living core  
 of fire appeared a flare, quivering  
 like lightning in sudden and repeated flashes. 81

Then it breathed forth: 'The love with which I burn,  
 for the Virtue that was my companion,  
 even to the palm and my departing from the field, 84

'bids me breathe words again to you who take delight  
 in Hope. And I would like to hear you say  
 what promise Hope holds out to you.' 87

And I: 'The new and the ancient Scriptures  
 set forth the goal for souls that God has made his friends  
 and this directs me to that promise. 90

'Isaiah says that each in his own land  
 shall be vested in a double garment,  
 and their own land is this sweet life. 93

'And then your brother, turning his attention  
 to the shining robes, explains to us  
 this revelation with still greater clarity.' 96

At once, as soon as these words ended,  
*Sperent in te* was heard above us,  
 to which all circles of the blessed responded. 99

Then one light, among them all, shone out so bright  
 that, if the Crab held such a gem,  
 to winter would belong a month of endless day. 102

As a happy maiden rises and comes forward,  
 joining the dancers only to show honor  
 to the bride, not prompted by desire for display, 105

so I saw that now brighter splendor gliding  
 toward the two already whirling to the notes  
 most fitted to the ardent burning of their love. 108

He joined them there in singing and in dance,  
 and my lady, her gaze fixed on them, stood  
 as a bride stands, silent and motionless. 111

'This is he who lay upon the breast  
of our Pelican, who from the cross  
elected him to bear the heavy charge.' 114

These were my lady's words, nor did her gaze  
waver after she had spoken, but stayed intent  
and fixed as it had been before. 117

As one who strains his eyes in his attempt to see  
the sun when it is partly in eclipse,  
and, his seeing overwhelmed, has lost his sight, 120  
such did I become before that final flaming  
until I heard these words: 'Why do you blind your eyes  
trying to behold what is not here to see?' 123

'In earth, earth is my body and there shall it lie  
among the others until our number  
shall be equal to the eternal purpose. 126

'With the two robes in the blessèd cloister  
are the two lights alone who have ascended,  
and let this be the news you bring back to your world.' 129

At these words, the fiery dance was ended,  
together with the sweetly mingled notes  
that issued from the blended three-fold breath, 132  
just as, to avoid fatigue or danger,  
oars until that moment driven through the water  
stop all at once when the whistle sounds. 135

Ah, how troubled was my mind  
when I looked back for Beatrice  
and could not see her, even though I was 138  
so near to her and in that happy world! 139