

# PARADISO

## CANTO XXXII

Absorbed in his delight, that man of contemplation took upon himself the teacher's role and spoke these holy words:	3
'The wound that Mary closed up and anointed was opened and inflicted by the lovely woman now at Mary's feet.	6
'Below her, in the order formed by the third tier of the seats, as you can see, Rachel sits with Beatrice.	9
'Sarah and Rebecca, Judith and she -- great-grandmother of that singer who, grieving for his sin, cried: " <i>Miserere mei</i> " --	12
'may be seen there, one beneath the other, in their ordered ranks, while I, pausing for each name, move petal by petal down through the rose.	15
'And downward from the seventh tier, or up, parting all the petals of this flower, are the appointed seats of Hebrew women.	18
'For, according to whether in their faith they looked forward to Christ or back, this is the wall that separates the sacred tiers.	21
'On this side, where the flower is in fullest bloom with all its petals, those are seated who believed in Christ as yet to come.	24
'On the other side, where the semi-circles are interspersed with vacant spaces, are seated those who kept their eyes on Christ already come.	27
'And just as here the glorious seat of heaven's lady and the other seats beneath it form that long dividing line,	30
'so, opposite, does that of the exalted soul of John, who, holy since his birth, endured the wilderness and martyrdom, and then two years of Hell.	33

'Below him, and continuing that line,  
sit Francis, Benedict, Augustine, and others,  
assigned as far as this, down from tier to tier. 36

'Now behold the depth of God's foreseeing,  
for both the ways of showing faith  
shall fill this garden equally. 39

'And know that downward from the row  
that midway cuts the two dividing lines  
the seats are held by those who had no merit of their own, 42

'but through deserving others, under fixed conditions,  
were freed from sin, for all of these are spirits  
released before they exercised free choice. 45

'This, indeed, you may discover for yourself  
from their faces and their childish voices,  
if you look at them with care and if you listen. 48

'Now you are perplexed and silent in perplexity.  
Let me untie the complicated knot  
in which your over-subtle thoughts have bound you. 51

'In all the ample range of this domain  
no trace of chance can find a place --  
no more than sorrow, thirst, or hunger, 54

'for all you see here is ordained by law eternal,  
so that the circling ring here fits  
the finger that was meant for it. 57

'Thus, the company of those who prematurely  
came to this true life are not *sine causa*  
placed more and less exalted here among themselves. 60

'The King, through whom this kingdom rests  
in love so great and in so great delight  
their will would never dare to ask for more, 63

'creating every mind in His own bliss,  
variously bestows His grace and as He pleases --  
and, in this case, let the fact suffice. 66

'This is clearly and expressly noted for you  
by Holy Scripture in the account of twins  
who, still in their mother's womb, were moved to wrath. 69

'Therefore, according to the color of the hair  
bestowed with so much grace, the Sovereign Light  
will crown them with their fitting aureoles. 72

Not for what they've done or have not done  
 they thus are placed in separate ranks, separated  
 only by the keenness of the vision they were born to. 75

'In early times their parents' faith alone,  
 coupled with the innocence that they possessed,  
 gave sufficient proof of their salvation. 78

'Once the first age had run its course,  
 male children had to find the strength  
 for innocent wings in circumcision. 81

'But once the time of grace had come,  
 then, without perfect baptism in Christ,  
 such innocents were cast below. 84

'Look now on the face that most resembles Christ,  
 for nothing but its brightness  
 can make you fit to look on Christ.' 87

I saw such joy rain down on her,  
 conveyed within the minds and borne  
 by holy spirits framed to soar those heights, 90

that, however much I had seen before,  
 nothing had held me in such wonder and suspense,  
 nor shown me so close a likeness to God, 93

and the loving spirit that had first descended,  
 singing '*Ave Maria, gratia plena*'  
 hovered before her with his wings outspread. 96

From every side the blessed court all sang,  
 responding to the solemn sacred chant,  
 so that each face became more luminous with joy. 99

'O holy father, who on my behalf  
 deign to be here below, leaving the sweet place  
 where by eternal lot you have your seat, 102

'who is the angel gazing with such joy  
 upon the eyes of her our Queen,  
 so much in love he seems to be a flame?' 105

Thus I tried once more to gain instruction  
 from him who glowed in Mary's beauty  
 as the morning star reflects the sun. 108

And he: 'All confidence and grace of movement  
 that can be found in angel or in any blessed soul  
 are found in him -- and we would have it so, 111

'for it is he who brought the palm to Mary  
when the Son of God elected to take on  
the burden of our flesh. 114

'But let your eyes follow my words, as I continue,  
noting the eminent patricians  
of this most just and pious empire. 117

'These two who are seated there above us,  
most happy for being so near the Empress,  
are, as it were, the two roots of this rose: 120

'He who sits beside her to her left  
is that father for whose reckless tasting  
mankind still tastes such bitterness. 123

'To her right behold that ancient father  
of Holy Church to whose care Christ entrusted  
the keys to this, the fairest flower. 126

'And he who was doomed to see before he died  
the years of grief of the beautiful bride,  
she who was won with the lance and the nails, 129

'sits next to him and, next to the other, rests  
that leader under whose rule that stiff-necked people,  
fickle and ungrateful, lived on manna. 132

'Look at Anna, where she sits across from Peter,  
so content merely to gaze upon her daughter  
she does not move her eyes as she sings hosanna. 135

'And opposite the greatest father of a family  
sits Lucy, who urged on your lady when,  
with lowered gaze, you headed down your path to ruin. 138

'But since the time runs short that readies you for sleep,  
let us stop here, as a good tailor would,  
who cuts the cloak as he is stocked with cloth. 141

'And let us fix our eyes on Primal Love,  
so that, looking up toward Him, you penetrate,  
as far as may be done, His brilliance. 144

'But, lest by any chance, beating your wings  
and thinking to advance, you should fall back,  
you must gain your grace through prayer, 147

'grace from her who has the power to help you.  
You shall follow me with your devotion  
so your heart does not stray from my words.' 150

He then began this holy supplication:

151