

ILLUSTRATIONS OF DANTE'S PARADISE

1. TRANS-HUMANIZATION AND ASCENSION OF DANTE

"La gloria di Colui che tutto muove / per l'universo penetra e risplende / in una parte più e meno altrove." (*The glory of the One Who moves all things / penetrates all the universe, reflecting / in one part more and in another less*). (Mark Musa, *Paradise I*, 1-3). Dante begins this journey with the word Gloria and speaks of God as supreme animator of the universe.

Coming out of the Eunoé, where, by command of Beatrice he had been immersed by Matelda, Dante returns to Beatrice. It is midday. The sun shines all over on the Hemisphere of Purgatory. Turning to the left, Beatrice fixes the eyes on the great star (Corrado Gizzi). Even Dante fixes on the great star and feels in a divine marina tasting the special algae. David depicts Dante and Beatrice in the luminosity of the sun that illuminates the whole scene and almost penetrates the two pictorial figures with the power of its light. (*Paradise I*, 64-72).

2. DANTE AND BEATRICE IN THE HEAVEN OF THE MOON

(*Paradise II*, 19-30). With the guidance of Beatrice, the poet ascends quickly to the Terrestrial Paradise, a place on the peak of the mountain of Purgatory, in the heaven of the Moon, which is the first of nine circles that should be traversed before reaching the Empire, seat of God (Corrado Gizzi). David shows Dante and Beatrice ascending toward the top where they meet the missed votives spirits and among these is Piccarda Donati. Dante in reality, passes from Purgatory to Paradise looking into the eyes of Beatrice.

3. THE HEAVEN OF THE MOON: THE FIRST FORMATION OF BLESSED

"O voi che stete in piccoletta barca, / desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti / dietro al mio legno che cantando varca, / tornate a riveder li vostri lidi" (*Paradise II*, 1-4) (*O you who are in a small boat, / desirous to listen, follow / behind my wood that is sailing and singing, / return to see your shores*). Dante seems to tell his readers to return back and not to adventure into the vast sea of divine knowledge. Kept by the angels, the Heaven of the Moon contains the spirits that have shattered vows (or did not observe them in life); they appear as images reflected in transparent glass and in clear water. Dante takes the opportunity to explain the lunar spots, the influence of the skies, the happiness of the blessed, the return of the souls to the stars. David depicts the two poets admiring the blessed souls reflected in the crystalline of the water.

4. PICCARDA DONATI

Sister of Forese, she was abducted from the monastery and given as wife against her will. The same thing happened to Constance, daughter of Ruggero, King of Sicily. Piccarda is represented by our painter between the lunar clouds without losing the splendor of her virginity by the superimposed white and luminous colors. The divine poet asks Piccarda what was the reason for which she didn't accomplish her vow; and she responds by beginning to praise Saint Clara of Assisi, the founder of the order of the Clarissa, and continues to say that there are humans, accustomed to do more harm than good, that Corso and Forese who raped her and forced her to marry

Rossellino della Tosa. Then Piccarda presents to the Poet the Empress Constance who was also abducted from the cloisters, she went to marry Arrigo VI of Svevia, who made her mother of Frederic II. At the end the soul of Piccarda faints, singing the *Ave Maria*.

5. TWO DOUBTS OF DANTE SENSED BY BEATRICE

According to Plato, souls have been created before bodies, they live in the stars and there they return after the death of the bodies; Beatrice, instead, explains to Dante that the souls are created by God time after time and are almost infused into the bodies at birth. The dwelling of the blessed, in answer to the second doubt of Dante, is the Empire where all the blessed spirits are happy around God and the Holy Virgin.

6. THE HEAVEN OF MERCURY: JUSTINIAN

The Heaven of Mercury is guarded by archangels. There are the operating spirits, that is, active for having honor and fame. They advance full of happiness inside the fulgent splendors. Dante takes the opportunity to talk about the death of Jesus, of the redemption of man and of the incorruptible and immortal creatures. Among these are Justinian and Romeo of Villanova, ministers of Berlinghiero IV of Provence (1209-1245).

In depicting Justinian, Dante refers back to Constantine who, against the will of the Heaven and the course of the sun, transported the Roman eagle to Bizantium where it remained for more than 200 years. It went around the world from nation to nation and finally arrived in the hands of Justinian.

He seemed to say: I was emperor, my name is Justinian, for the will of the Holy Spirit which gave me inspiration, I removed from the law the useless and superfluous. At first I was convinced that Christ had a single nature (the divine one); the intervention of Pope Agapito I was needed to bring me back to the right belief. I had barely found the right way, when God inspired in me with the re-ordination of the laws: whereupon I dedicated myself entirely to that, entrusting the arms to Belisario.

7. CHARLES MARTELL IN THE HEAVEN OF VENUS

The third heaven of Venus is guarded by the principalities and the people with loving souls (their love is strongly kindled by charity). David depicts them as lights that move rapidly around wherein they are in harmony with Dante. Among these are Charles Martell (King of Hungary), Cunizza da Romano (daughter of Ezzelino II), Folco of Marselles (troubadour), and Raab of Jericho. The painter concentrates on the illustration of Charles Martell who appears as a great warrior between the splendor of Venus and luminous clouds, followed by other blessed that fly with him, dressed with cuirass, Roman toga and royal crown. (*Paradise VIII*, 13-39). Charles Martell, son of Charles II of Anjou, during his lifetime was tied to Dante with affectionate friendliness. He denounced the bad behavior of his relatives and explained to Dante how good parents can bear degenerate sons (Corrado Gizzi).

8. CUNIZZA DA ROMANO

(*Paradise IX*, 64-66). Dante and Beatrice are seduced by the story of Cunizza. Her brother Ezzelino, the notorious tyrant of

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the Marca Trevigiana, speaks of his land that will be watered by the blood of the people of Padova in the marshes near Vicenza. David's Fusionism is revealed here with all its expressive and chromatic vigor in the synthesis of beatitude and of violence.

9. ASCENSION TO THE HEAVEN OF THE SUN

(*Paradise X*, 40-54). This fourth heaven contains a garland of twelve lights surrounding Dante and Beatrice as a laurel crown. Saint Thomas of Aquinas speaks for all. This heaven contains the theologians knowledgeable in divinity. Three concentric crowns of live radiance sing and dance turning around. Among them are Saint Thomas, Saint Francis, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Dominic. (*Paradise XI*, 28-38). The crown of luminous spirits makes a complete turn around themselves and each one finds himself at the same point of departure.

10. THE HEAVEN OF MARS

The fifth Heaven of Mars is guarded by Virtue and contains the militant spirits, that is, those who combat for faith and have become martyrs of religion. Among these are Cacciaguida, Joshua, Charlemagne, Roland, Godfrey of Buglione, Roberto Guiscardo. David, always in harmony with Dante, depicts them with red scintillating splendors that are moving while singing forming a cross (the cross of Mars). (*Paradise XIV*, 97-108).

11. CACCIAGUIDA

(*Paradise XV*, 130-135) (The Virgin invoked by the mother of Cacciaguida); (*Paradise XVI*, 34-39) (The birth year of Cacciaguida); (*Paradise XVII*, 105-132) (Dante asks Cacciaguida an advice).

Dante's great-great-grandfather evocation is contained in three cantos of *Paradise*: XV, XVI, XVII. Dante succeeded in talking to him in order to obtain some information. Cacciaguida tells him that the poet's great-grandfather is on the terrace of the mountain of Purgatory. He exhorts Dante to pray for him who died during the crusade led by Conrad. Cacciaguida gives also an account of the family history and goes on to describe his Florence, in contrast to the corrupt Florence of Dante's time, lamenting the loss of peace. Cacciaguida also predicts Dante's exile from Florence and his place of refuge. Dante's fate will be bitter, and Cacciaguida urges him to tell the truth to the world... "because the listener's mind will never trust / or have faith in the kind of illustration / based on the unfamiliar and obscure / or demonstration that is not outstanding". (Mark Musa, page 496).

12. THE CREATION OF THE ANGELS

We are in the sixth Heaven of Jupiter guarded by the Dominations; these are judged spirits that love justice. They appear as splendors that sing forming the words of the verse "Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram..." (*Love justice you who judge on this earth*) The final "M" (of *terram*) becomes a lily then changes into an eagle. The discourse of the eagle who speaks with a strange beak but with a voice of all the souls. Among these Dante meets Davide, Traiano, Ezechia, William II the Good, King of Sicily, and Rifeo Traiano (*Paradise XXIX*, 31-45).

13. THE SEVENTH HEAVEN OF SATURN

Guarded by the Thrones, this Heaven contains the contemplating spirits (they had lived a contemplative life). A stairway of brilliant gold color where the peak cannot be seen, descend and ascend innumerable splendors. These are Dante's visions and are beautifully illustrated by Ivo David who, notwithstanding his justified Pindaric flights, maintains close to the text of the Divine Comedy. Among the souls that Dante meets are Saint Peter Damian, Saint Benedict, Saint Macario and Saint Romualdo (*Paradise XIX*, and *XX*).

14. THE EIGHT HEAVEN OF THE FIXED STARS

This starry Heaven is guarded by the Cherubs: the triumphant spirits sing the triumph of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Christ himself illuminates the Blessed from whom a great light resplends, which is the Most Holy Mary; the light of the Archangel Gabriel turns around her. Among the blessed souls are: Saint Peter who tests Dante on Faith, Saint James who tests the Poet on Hope, Saint John who tests him on Charity, and Adam who responds to four questions asked by Dante (*Paradise*, *XXII-XXVI*).

15. THE NINTH HEAVEN OF THE FIRST MOBILE

This crystalline Heaven is guarded by the Seraphins; herein are the angelic hierarchy who, in a clear and paradisiacal vision, celebrate their triumph on the evil angels. Around a smallest and brightest point which is the divine essence, turn nine circles of fire which are the nine angelic choirs. Beatrice takes the opportunity to explain to Dante the celestial harmony which is a truly divine astronomical order. (*Paradise XXVII*, *XXVIII*, *XXIX*).

16. SAINT BERNARD AND THE CANDID ROSE

Upon the disappearance of the Angels, Dante again looks at Beatrice and in this way comes out to the Empire, which is a quiet immobil Heaven where Dante's vision ends. It is midnight of the 14th of April 1300, Thursday after Easter (hour of Jerusalem). Among the other Blessed that Dante meets are Saint Bernard de Chiaravalle, Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Augustine (*Paradise XXXI*, 112-117). To the left of Mary are the believers in the coming of Jesus Christ: Eve, Rachel, Sara, Rebecca, Judith, Ruth, Moses, Adam... To the right of Mary are the believers of Jesus Christ having already come: Saint Peter, Saint John Evangelist, Saint Anne, Saint Lucy, the Children... The shape of Dante's vision depicted by Ivo David consists in a river of light from which sparks (the angels) that enter the flowers (the blessed) of the two shores and deepen into the river.

17. PRAYER TO THE VIRGIN

The Mother Virgin... appears in her clemence and in her compassion toward humanity; but appears also in her luminosity as mother of God and pure Virgin, mother of all the creatures present, past and future. The painting of David reveals all her spirituality and all her motherly devotion that is inherent in every Christian soul. Saint Bernard is represented by Ivo David as an old man praying the Holy Virgin for the sins of all mankind.

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