

Paradiso, Cantos XIII–XXII**Canto 13**, The Sun (continued)

Dante has a vision of heavenly lights, and Aquinas draws the connection to God's love of creation, applying the Neoplatonic idea of God as the Logos.

Cantos 14-18, Mars (The Warriors of the Faith, those who gave their lives for God and displayed the virtue of fortitude)

The Cross (14.103-11)

Dante describes seeing a cross in the stars that “flashed forth Christ” and hearing a song that tells him to “Arise” and “Conquer.” Since this is the sphere of God's warriors (i.e. “Cruaders”) who took up the cross, accepting suffering and death in imitation of Christ, the collective image of all of them creates the collective image of the crucified Christ.

Cacciaguida (15.13-18.51)

Dante's ancestor who fought and was killed in the disastrous Second Crusade (1145–1149). By placing him in the center of this cantica, Dante elects a father-figure as his spokesman, as he did with Brunetto Latini in *Inferno* and Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio*. Documents in Florence confirm the historical existence of Cacciaguida, but his words in the poem are our only source for details of his life. Cacciaguida provides the most detailed prophecy in the poem of Dante's impending exile and the difficult years to follow (17.46-99).

Famous Holy Warriors (18.28-48)

Dante's list here includes Joshua (Deut. 31:23), Judas Maccabeus, Charlemagne, Roland (hero of the medieval *Song of Roland*), William of Orange and Renouard (also heroes of medieval chivalric poetry; William discovered Renouard, a Muslim slave, to be his brother-in-law, and the two men joined and fought on behalf of the Franks), Duke Godfrey (hero of the First Crusade), and Robert Guiscard (who fought for the church in southern Italy)

Cantos 18-20, Jupiter (The Just Rulers, those who displayed the virtue of justice)

Diligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram (18.91-93)

The souls spell out this phrase (“Love justice, [you] who judge the earth”), holding each letter for a moment until the final M becomes, first a lily (symbol of Florence) and an eagle (symbol of the Roman Empire).



Transformation of M into lily and eagle from *Paradiso*, trans. Durling & Martinez (Oxford, 2011).

LUE acrostic (19.115-141)

Dante rebukes European Christian rulers who have acted unjustly. The first three tercets begin “There one shall see” (*Lì si vedrà*), the second three begin “One shall see” (*Vedrassi*),

and the final three begin with “and” (*E*). The initial letters form an acrostic by spelling LVE, Latin for “pestilence,” a commentary on the damaging effects of injustice and misrule. Among the unjust rulers are monarchs from Austria, Castile and León, France, Bohemia, Naples, Aragon, Sicily, Majorca, Portugal, Norway, and Rascia, a Balkan kingdom.

The Eye of the Eagle (20.31-148)

This canto emphasizes the inability of human understanding to grasp God's divine justice and knowledge. The six distinguished souls who form the eye of the eagle include two biblical figures (David and Hezekiah), two Christian rulers (Constantine and William II “the Good” of Sicily (r. 1166-1189)), and two pagans that Dante has decided to “save” (Trajan and Rhiphaeus, a character from the *Aeneid*)

Predestination (20.118-41)

In the salvation of Ripheus, a pre-Christian Trojan, Dante sees the power of predestination, the idea that certain souls are predestined to be saved. Based on the idea of God's foreknowledge, Dante links this with the ideas of grace, mercy, and justice.

Cantos 21-22, Saturn (The Contemplatives, those who embody temperance)

Peter Damian (21.43-135)

A theologian and scholar, Peter Damian (1007-1072) dedicated himself to contemplation by becoming a Benedictine monk. A reformer of the church, Peter became abbot in 1043 and a cardinal in 1057.

Benedict of Nursia (22.28-96)

St. Benedict (ca. 480-ca. 547) is the founder of western monasticism and author of the Benedictine rule.

Ladder of Contemplation (21.25-42, 22.68-72)

Borrowing from the biblical imagery of Jacob's ladder and Peter Damian's own ladder of contemplation, the souls here move up and down a gleaming golden ladder that reaches up to the Empyrean. This is a common metaphor for the contemplative's ascent to God.

Harmony of the Spheres (21-22)

Based on the Pythagorean theory of the harmony of the spheres, Dante features music in nearly all of the spheres of Paradise. When Dante asks Peter Damian why Saturn is silent, Peter replies that if Dante heard their singing he would be overwhelmed. Likewise, Beatrice's beauty has become so great that she refrains from smiling, lest Dante be overwhelmed.

So...

What message is Dante trying to send to us by placing non-Christians in Heaven? What does this tell us about the relationship between reason and faith when it comes to understanding a virtue like justice?