

A TRANSLATION OF DANTE'S PARADISO

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A Translation of Dante's Paradiso by Dante Alighieri & David Johnston

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DANTE ALIGHIERI & DAVID JOHNSTON

**A TRANSLATION OF
DANTE'S PARADISO**



MONUMENT
TO
D A N T E,
IN THE CHURCH OF THE SANTA CROCE, IN FLORENCE.

Alta mente u' al profondo
Saver fu messo, che se il vero è vero,
A veder tanto non surse il secondo.

PARADISO, Canto x., Line 112.

Io per me direi che nell' Inferno Dante è più
Che uomo, nel Purgatorio mi pare un angelo,
Nel Paradiso, divino.

Leonardo Salvati.

A
TRANSLATION

OF

89601

DANTE'S PARADISO,

BY

DAVID JOHNSTON.

O degli altri poeti onore e lume,
Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore,
Che m'han fatto cercar lo tuo volume;
Tu se' lo mio maestro e il mio autore.

INF., Canto i., 82.

BATH:

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MDCCCLXVIII.

TO MY DEAR WIFE
I DEDICATE MY TRANSLATION
OF THE "PARADISO."



In the last Canto of the *Purgatorio* Dante was left in the other Hemisphere, and on the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, under the Meridian Circle, this being the position of the earthly Paradise. The *Paradiso* opens with the ascent of Beatrice and the Poet towards the starry firmament. They first approach the concavity of the sphere of fire, which is the same as the convexity or superficies of the air through which they had passed. They are then carried upwards into the concavity of the Moon, from whence they pass into that of Mercury, which is the same as the convexity of the Lunar Heaven. In like manner they ascend from planet to planet, until they reach the concavity of the *Primum Mobile*, or Ninth Sphere. Above this is situated the *Empyrean Heaven*, the immediate abode of the Almighty, which, itself immoveable, moves and rules the whole universe. It will be perceived, then, that Dante follows the astronomical system of Ptolemy. He places the earth immoveable in the centre of the universe. Around it he makes the different spheres or heavens to revolve in orbits circular and concentric; the swiftness of their respective movements being in the order of their distance from the centre. These heavens are, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn; the eighth is that of the Fixed Stars; the ninth is the *Primum Mobile*, which impresses its movement on the others. Above, beyond, and around them all is the *Empyrean*.

The Heavenly Paradise is described by the Poet as being in the form of a pure white rose. The leaves are so many rows of seats on which sit the saints clothed in

white robes. On one of the most exalted seats Dante sees the Virgin Mary, under whom, in gradation down to the yellow centre of the rose, which is a mighty blaze of fervent light, are seated the Hebrew women of the Old Testament celebrated for their faith. On the opposite part is seated John the Baptist, and under him, in similar manner by gradation, the spirits contemplative of the New Covenant. These and the Hebrew women divide the rose, as by a partition, into two equal portions, and these are again subdivided towards the centre of the flower. On the right of Mary are the elect of the New Covenant, occupying the half of one of the first divisions. On the right of the Baptist are the saints of the Old Covenant similarly situated.

From the middle of the rose downward on the right of Mary are the Infants of the New Testament saved by baptism. On the right of the Baptist are those Infants who have been saved by the faith of their parents and by circumcision. The above divisions present this difference: that whilst the seats of the Old Testament saints are all occupied, those of the New Testament saints are partially unoccupied, the empty seats being reserved for the souls yet to be saved.

Over the rose in form of a canopy is the Tribunal of God, around which circulate for ever the nine orders of angels, forming three Hierarchies. These are continually descending into and re-ascending from the body of the rose.

The Poet believes Paradise to exist in the Empyrean Heaven alone, yet he places the spirits of the blest in the different lower spheres, in the same manner as he partitions the spirits in Purgatory and in Hell. They are