

DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265-1321)

THE DIVINE COMEDY
INFERNO
PURGATORY
PARADISE

TRANSLATED BY
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

(1807-1882)

THE WORLD VIEW LIBRARY

Edited by Ben Quine

THE DIVINE COMEDY
FROM THE WORLD VIEW LIBRARY
Edited by Ben Quine

Published by The World View Library, Dallas, Texas
2008

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study notes based upon Longfellow
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ABOUT THE WORLD VIEW LIBRARY

Thank you for choosing the World View Library. We are proud to present the masterpieces of western literature in this new edition.

A few words about the format of this edition:

The main body of each page presents the translation of **The Divine Comedy** by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in a clear, easy to read format. The Longfellow translation captures as closely as possible the original meaning intended by Dante while maintaining a poetic style. The outside margins contain summary headings, definitions, commentary and other study helps. The study notes are based upon those by Longfellow. Use these notes as a beginning to your own personal study.

Every great work of art will communicate not just beauty but also ideas about the world we live in. And so, we encourage you to think carefully and ask questions while reading. What ideas are presented in this work? What do the characters and situations say about the nature of man and the universe? Is there a God, according to the text? If so, what is He like? And what happens to man after death? These are just a few of the questions we must consider if we are to think 'Worldviewishly'.

It is our desire to help bring this classic literature to life, and we hope that the World View Library will lead you to a deeper understanding of the living God and His creation.

BEN QUINE
AUGUST 2007

KEY TO MARGINAL NOTES

THE DARK FOREST

disconsolate: *deeply dejected and dispirited; hopelessly sad; comfortless; filled with grief*

the portal of Saint Peter:
the gate through which redeemed enter Purgatory

SUBHEADINGS APPEAR IN THE MARGINS IN SMALL CAPS.

Definitions are placed in the margin as closely to the word as possible (with the source in parenthesis when appropriate).

General notes provide additional information that might otherwise be unknown to the modern reader.

THE DIVINE COMEDY
CANTICLE I: INFERNO

*Incipit Comoedia Dantis Alagherii,
Florentini natione, non moribus.*

Canto I

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.

So bitter is it, death is little more;
But of the good to treat, which there I found,
Speak will I of the other things I saw there.

I cannot well repeat how there I entered,
So full was I of slumber at the moment
In which I had abandoned the true way.

But after I had reached a mountain's foot,
At that point where the valley terminated,
Which had with consternation pierced my heart,

Upward I looked, and I beheld its shoulders,
Vested already with that planet's rays
Which leadeth others right by every road.

Then was the fear a little quieted
That in my heart's lake had endured throughout
The night, which I had passed so piteously.

And even as he, who, with distressful breath,
Forth issued from the sea upon the shore,
Turns to the water perilous and gazes;

1 Prologue to The Divine Comedy

2 **THE DARK FOREST**

3 The action of the poem begins
4 on Good Friday of the year
5 1300, at which time Dante, who
6 was born in 1265, had reached
7 the middle of the Scriptural
8 threescore years and ten. It
9 ends on the first Sunday after
10 Easter, making in all ten days.

11 The **dark forest** of human life,
12 with its passions, vices, and
13 perplexities of all kinds; the
14 heart of man filled with sin.

15 **straightforward pathway**

16 **had been lost:** "he that
17 entereth not by the door into
18 the sheepfold, but climbeth
19 up some other way, the same
20 is a thief and a robber."

John 10:1

21 **planet's rays:** The sun -- this
22 is the morning of Good Friday.

23 **heart's lake:** the deep
24 mountain tarn (lake) of his
heart, dark with its own
depth, and the shadows
hanging over it.

25 So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,
 26 Turn itself back to re-behold the pass
 27 Which never yet a living person left.

THE HILL OF DIFFICULTY

28 After my weary body I had rested,
 29 The way resumed I on the desert slope,
 30 So that the firm foot ever was the lower.

THE PANTHER

"Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, a wolf of the evening shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces." Jer. v. 6:

A Panther: Wordly Pleasure; envy; and politically Florence, with its factions of Bianchi and Neri.

The stars of Aries. Some philosophers and fathers think the world was created in Spring.

THE LION

A lion: Ambition; pride; and politically the royal house of France.

THE WOLF

A she-wolf: Avarice; and politically the Court of Rome, or temporal power of the Popes.

31 And lo! almost where the ascent began,
 32 A panther light and swift exceedingly,
 33 Which with a spotted skin was covered o'er!

34 And never moved she from before my face,
 35 Nay, rather did impede so much my way,
 36 That many times I to return had turned.

37 The time was the beginning of the morning,
 38 And up the sun was mounting with those stars
 39 That with him were, what time the Love Divine

40 At first in motion set those beauteous things;
 41 So were to me occasion of good hope,
 42 The variegated skin of that wild beast,

43 The hour of time, and the delicious season;
 44 But not so much, that did not give me fear
 45 A lion's aspect which appeared to me.

46 He seemed as if against me he were coming
 47 With head uplifted, and with ravenous hunger,
 48 So that it seemed the air was afraid of him;

49 And a she-wolf, that with all hungerings
 50 Seemed to be laden in her meagerness,
 51 And many folk has caused to live forlorn!

She brought upon me so much heaviness,
 With the affright that from her aspect came,
 That I the hope relinquished of the height.

And as he is who willingly acquires,
 And the time comes that causes him to lose,
 Who weeps in all his thoughts and is despondent,

E'en such made me that beast without peace,
 Which, coming on against me by degrees
 Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent.

While I was rushing downward to the lowland,
 Before mine eyes did one present himself,
 Who seemed from long-continued silence hoarse.

When I beheld him in the desert vast,
 "Have pity on me," unto him I cried,
 "Whiche'er thou art, or shade or real man!"

He answered me: "Not man; man once I was,
 And both my parents were of Lombardy,
 And Mantuans by country both of them.

'Sub Julio' was I born, though it was late,
 And lived at Rome under the good Augustus,
 During the time of false and lying gods.

A poet was I, and I sang that just
 Son of Anchises, who came forth from Troy,
 After that Ilion the superb was burned.

But thou, why goest thou back to such annoyance?
 Why climb'st thou not the Mount Delectable,
 Which is the source and cause of every joy?"

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Who seemed from long-continued silence hoarse.

The long neglect of classic studies in Italy before Dante's time.

Sub Julio: Virgil (70-19 B.C.), who lived under Julius Caesar and then Augustus during Rome's transition from republic to empire, wrote the Aeneid. This epic poem tells the journey of Aeneas from Troy following its destruction by the Greeks to Italy, where he founds the line of rulers that will lead to Caesar and the Roman empire of Virgil's day.

Anchises:
 the father of Aeneas

VIRGIL

Roman pagan poet who composed the Aeneid, in this passage Dante expresses the universal veneration felt for Virgil during the Renaissance.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer writes, "...in the development of the humanistic elements of the Renaissance, Dante followed the unfortunate side of Thomas Aquinas in mixing the Christian and the classical pagan world in allusions throughout his work.... Dante's guide through hell is the Roman poet Virgil, who was to Dante what Aristotle was to Aquinas."

doth: form of the word 'do'

greyhound: a saviour figure, possibly Can Grande della Scala, Lord of Verona, Imperial Vicar, Ghibelline, and friend of Dante. ... "one of the most notable and magnificent lords that had been known in Italy." To him Dante dedicated the Paradiso.

"Spiritually, the Greyhound, which has the attributes of God ("wisdom, love, and power") is probably the image of the reign of the holy Ghost on earth." Sayers

79 "Now, art thou that Virgil and that fountain
80 Which spreads abroad so wide a river of speech?"
81 I made response to him with bashful forehead.

82 "O, of the other poets honour and light,
83 Avail me the long study and great love
84 That have impelled me to explore thy volume!

85 Thou art my master, and my author thou,
86 Thou art alone the one from whom I took
87 The beautiful style that has done honour to me.

88 Behold the beast, for which I have turned back;
89 Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage,
90 For she doth make my veins and pulses tremble."

91 "Thee it behoves to take another road,"
92 Responded he, when he beheld me weeping,
93 "If from this savage place thou wouldst escape;

94 Because this beast, at which thou criest out,
95 Suffers not any one to pass her way,
96 But so doth harass him, that she destroys him;

97 And has a nature so malign and ruthless,
98 That never doth she glut her greedy will,
99 And after food is hungrier than before.

100 Many the animals with whom she weds,
101 And more they shall be still, until the Greyhound
102 Comes, who shall make her perish in her pain.

103 He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,
104 But upon wisdom, and on love and virtue;
105 'Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be;

Of that low Italy shall he be the saviour,	106
On whose account the maid Camilla died,	107
Euryalus, Turnus, Nisus, of their wounds;	108
Through every city shall he hunt her down,	109
Until he shall have driven her back to Hell,	110
There from whence envy first did let her loose.	111
Therefore I think and judge it for thy best	112
Thou follow me, and I will be thy guide,	113 the eternal place: hell
And lead thee hence through the eternal place,	114
Where thou shalt hear the desperate lamentations,	115 lamentations: expression of
Shalt see the ancient spirits disconsolate,	116 sorrow; cries of grief; the act
Who cry out each one for the second death;	117 of bewailing.
And thou shalt see those who contented are	118 (Webster, 1828)
Within the fire, because they hope to come,	119 disconsolate: hopeless or
Whene'er it may be, to the blessed people;	120 not expecting comfort
To whom, then, if thou wishest to ascend,	121 (Webster, 1828)
A soul shall be for that than I more worthy;	122 And thou shalt see those
With her at my departure I will leave thee;	123 who contented are Within
Because that Emperor, who reigns above,	124 the fire, because... those in
In that I was rebellious to his law,	125 Purgatory
Wills that through me none come into his city.	126 Though Virgil will guide Dante
He governs everywhere, and there he reigns;	127 through hell, another -- with
There is his city and his lofty throne;	128 her at my departure I will
O happy he whom thereto he elects!"	129 leave thee -- will finish the
And I to him: "Poet, I thee entreat,	130 journey.
By that same God whom thou didst never know,	131 entreat: to ask earnestly
So that I may escape this woe and worse,	132

the portal of Saint Peter: the
gate through which redeemed
souls enter Purgatory --
Peter's Gate

133 Thou wouldst conduct me there where thou hast said,
134 That I may see the portal of Saint Peter,
135 And those thou makest so disconsolate.”

136 Then he moved on, and I behind him followed.