

CANTO XXVI.

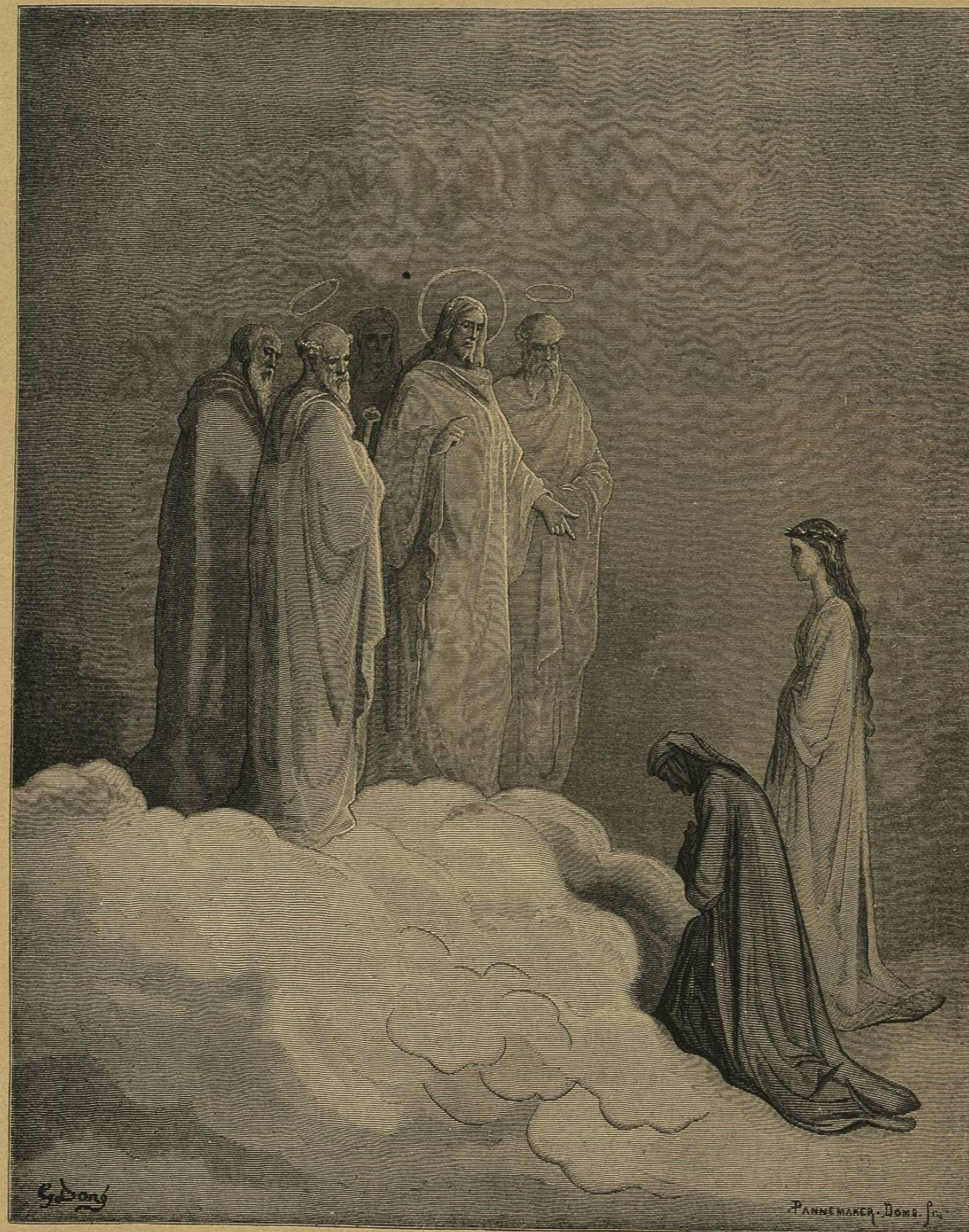
ARGUMENT.

St. John examines our Poet touching Charity. Afterwards Adam tells when he was created, and placed in the terrestrial Paradise; how long he remained in that state; what was the occasion of his fall; when he was admitted into heaven; and what language he spake.

WITH dazzled eyes, whilst wondering I remain'd;
Forth of the beamy flame,¹ which dazzled me.
Issued a breath, that in attention mute
Detain'd me; and these words it spake: "'Twere well,
That, long as till thy vision, on my form
O'erspent, regain its virtue, with discourse
Thou compensate the brief delay. Say then,
Beginning, to what point thy soul aspires:
And meanwhile rest assured, that sight in thee
Is but o'erpower'd a space, not wholly quench'd;
Since thy fair guide and lovely, in her look
Hath potency, the like to that, which dwelt
In Ananias' hand."²—I answering thus:
"Be to mine eyes the remedy, or late
Or early, at her pleasure; for they were
The gates, at which she enter'd, and did light
Her never-dying fire. My wishes here
Are centred: in this palace is the weal,
That Alpha and Omega is, to all
The lessons love can read me." Yet again
The voice, which had dispersed my fear when dazed
With that excess, to converse urged, and spake:

¹ *Whilst wondering I remain'd; forth of the beamy flame.*—St. John.

² *Ananias' hand.*—Who, by putting his hand on St. Paul, restored his sight.—Acts ix. 17.



Say then,
Beginning, to what point thy soul aspires:
And meanwhile rest assured, that sight in thee
Is but o'erpower'd a space, not wholly quench'd.

Canto XXVI., lines 7-10.

"Behoves thee sift more narrowly thy terms;
And say, who levell'd at this scope thy bow."

"Philosophy," said I, "hath arguments
And this place hath authority enough,
To imprint in me such love: for, of constraint,
Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,
Kindles our love; and, in degree the more,
As it comprises more of goodness in 't.
The essence then, where such advantage is,
That each good, found without it, is nought else
But of his light the beam, must needs attract
The soul of each one, loving, who the truth
Discerns, on which this proof is built. Such truth
Learn I from him,¹ who shows me the first love
Of all intelligential substances
Eternal: from his voice I learn, whose word
Is truth; that of himself to Moses saith,
'I will make² all my good before thee pass:.'
Lastly, from thee I learn, who chief proclaim'st
E'en at the outset³ of thy heralding,
In mortal ears the mystery of heaven."

"Through human wisdom, and the authority
Therewith agreeing," heard I answer'd, "keep
The choicest of thy love for God. But say,
If thou yet other cords within thee feel'st,
That draw thee towards him; so that thou report
How many are the fangs, with which this love
Is grappled to thy soul." I did not miss,
To what intent the eagle of our Lord⁴
Had pointed his demand; yea, noted well

¹ *From him.*—Some suppose that Plato is here meant, who, in his "Banquet," makes Phædrus say: ὁμολογεῖται ὁ ἔρως ἐν τοῖς πρεσβυτάτοις εἶναι, πρεσβυτάτος δὲ ὧν, μεγίστων ἀγαθῶν ἡμῖν αἰτία ἐστίν. "Love is confessedly amongst the eldest of beings; and being the eldest, is the cause to us of the greatest goods."
—*Plat., Op.*, tom. x., p. 177, Bip. ed. Others have

understood it of Aristotle; and others, of the writer who goes by the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, referred to in the twenty-eighth canto.

² *I will make.*—Exod. xxxiii. 19.

³ *At the outset.*—John i. 1, &c.

⁴ *The eagle of our Lord.*—St. John.