

Virtues; and powers the third; the next to whom
 Are princedoms and archangels, with glad round
 To tread their festal ring; and last, the band
 Angelical, disporting in their sphere.
 All, as they circle in their orders, look
 Aloft; and, downward, with such sway prevail,
 That all with mutual impulse tend to God.
 These once a mortal view beheld. Desire,
 In Dionysius,¹ so intensely wrought,
 That he, as I have done, ranged them; and named
 Their orders, marshal'd in his thought. From him,
 Dissentient, one refused his sacred read.
 But soon as in this heaven his doubting eyes
 Were open'd, Gregory² at his error smiled.
 Nor marvel, that a denizen of earth
 Should scan such secret truth; for he had learnt
 Both this and much beside of these our orbs,
 From an eye-witness to heaven's mysteries."

¹ *Dionysius*.—The Areopagite, in his book "De Cœlesti Hierarchiâ."

² *Gregory*.—Gregory the Great. "Novem vero angelorum ordines diximus; quia videlicet esse, tante sacro eloquio, scimus: Angelos, archangelos, virtutes, potestates, principatus, dominationes, thronos, cherubin atque seraphim."—*Divi Gregorii, Hom.* xxxiv., f. 125, ed. Par., 1518, fol.

³ *He had learnt*.—Dionysius, he says, had learnt from St. Paul. It is almost unnecessary to add that the book above referred to which goes under his name, was the production of a later age. In Bishop

Bull's seventh sermon, which treats of the different degrees of beatitude in heaven, there is much that resembles what is said on the same subject by our poet. The learned prelate, however, appears a little inconsistent, when, after having blamed Dionysius the Areopagite, "for reckoning up exactly the several orders of the angelical hierarchy, as if he had seen a muster of the heavenly host before his eyes" (v. i., p. 313), he himself then speaks rather more particularly of the several orders in the celestial hierarchy than he is warranted in doing by Holy Scripture.

CANTO XXIX.

ARGUMENT.

Beatrice beholds in the mirror of divine truth, some doubts which had entered the mind of Dante. These she resolves; and then digresses into a vehement reprehension of certain theologians and preachers in those days, whose ignorance or avarice induced them to substitute their own inventions for the pure word of the Gospel.

NO longer,¹ than what time Latona's twins
 Cover'd of Libra and the fleecy star,
 Together both, girding the horizon hang;
 In even balance, from the zenith poised;
 Till from that verge, each, changing hemisphere,
 Part the nice level; e'en so brief a space
 Did Beatrice's silence hold. A smile
 Sat painted on her cheek; and her fix'd gaze
 Bent on the point, at which my vision fail'd:
 When thus, her words resuming, she began:
 "I speak, nor what thou wouldst inquire, demand;
 For I have mark'd it, where all time and place
 Are present. Not for increase to himself
 Of good, which may not be increased, but forth
 To manifest his glory by its beams;
 Inhabiting his own eternity,
 Beyond time's limit or what bound soe'er
 To circumscribe his being; as he will'd,
 Into new natures, like unto himself,
 Eternal love unfolded: nor before,
 As if in dull inaction, torpid, lay,

¹ *No longer*.—As short a space as the sun and moon are in changing hemispheres, when they are opposite to one another, the one under the sign of

Aries, and the other under that of Libra, and both hang, for a moment, poised as it were in the hand of the zenith.

For, not in process of before or aft,¹
 Upon these waters moved the Spirit of God.
 Simple and mix'd, both form and substance,² forth
 To perfect being started, like three darts
 Shot from a bow three-corded. And as ray
 In crystal, glass, and amber, shines entire,
 E'en at the moment of its issuing; thus
 Did, from the eternal Sovran, beam entire
 His threefold operation,³ at one act
 Produced coeval. Yet, in order, each
 Created his due station knew: those highest,
 Who pure intelligence were made; mere power,
 The lowest; in the midst, bound with strict league,
 Intelligence and power, unsever'd bond.
 Long tract of ages by the angels past,
 Ere the creating of another world,
 Described on Jerome's pages,⁴ thou hast seen.

¹ For, not in process of before or aft.—There was neither "before nor after," no distinction, that is, of time, till the creation of the world.

² Simple and mix'd, both form and substance.—Simple and unmixed form answers to "pure intelligence," v. 33 ("puro atto"), the highest of created being; simple and unmixed substance, to "mere power," v. 33 ("pura potenza"), the lowest; and form mixed with substance, to "intelligence and power," v. 35 ("potenza con atto"), that which holds the middle place between the other two. This, which appears sufficiently plain, Lombardi has contrived to perplex; not being aware of the high sense in which our poet here and elsewhere uses the word "forma," as the Greek writers employed the term *μορφή*, and particularly St. Paul, Philipp. ii. 6. The following is a remarkable instance in our language: "A man, though he have one form already, viz., the natural soul; it hinders not but he may have also another, the quickening Spirit of God."—Henry More, *Disc.* xiii.

³ His threefold operation.—He means that spiritual beings, brute matter, and the intermediate part of the creation which participates both of spirit and matter, were produced at once.

"For, as there are three natures, schoolmen call One corporal only, th' other spiritual,

Like single; so there is a third commixt
 Of body and spirit together, placed betwixt
 Those other two." Ben Jonson, *Eupheme*.

⁴ On Jerome's pages.—St. Jerome had described the angels as created long before the rest of the universe: an opinion which Thomas Aquinas controverted; and the latter, as Dante thinks, had Scripture on his side. "Sex millia nondum nostri orbis implentur anni; et quantas prius æternitates, quanta tempora, quantas sæculorum origines fuisse arbitrandum est, in quibus Angeli, Throni, Dominationes, cæteræque Virtutes servierint Deo; et absque temporum vicibus atque mensuris Deo iubente substituerint."—*Hieronym.*, *In Epist. ad Titum*, l. 1, Paris edit., 1706, tom. iv., part i., p. 411. "Dicendum, quod supra hoc invenitur duplex sanctorum doctorum sententia, illa tamen probabilior videtur, quod angeli simul cum creatura corporea sunt creati. Angeli enim sunt quedam pars universi. Non enim constituent per se unum universum, sed tam ipsi quam creatura corporea in constitutionem unius universi conveniunt. Quod apparet ex ordine unius creaturæ ad aliam. Ordo enim rerum adinvicem est bonum universi. Nulla autem pars perfecta est a suo toto separata. Non est igitur probabile, ut Deus cujus perfecta sunt opera, ut dicitur Deuter. 32, creaturam angelicam seorsum ante alias creaturas creaverit. Quamvis contrarium non sit repu-

But that what I disclose to thee is true,
 Those penmen,¹ whom the Holy Spirit moved,
 In many a passage of their sacred book,
 Attest; as thou by diligent search shalt find:
 And reason,² in some sort, discerns the same,
 Who scarce would grant the heavenly ministers,
 Of their perfection void, so long a space.
 Thus when and where these spirits of love were made,
 Thou know'st, and how: and, knowing, hast allay'd
 Thy thirst, which from the triple question³ rose.
 Ere one had reckon'd twenty, e'en so soon,
 Part of the angels fell: and, in their fall,
 Confusion to your elements⁴ ensued.
 The others kept their station: and this task,
 Whereon thou look'st, began, with such delight,
 That they surcease not ever, day nor night,
 Their circling. Of that fatal lapse the cause
 Was the curst pride of him, whom thou hast seen
 Pent⁵ with the world's incumbrance. Those, whom here
 Thou seest, were lowly to confess themselves
 Of his free bounty, who had made them apt
 For ministries so high: therefore their views
 Were, by enlightening grace and their own merit,
 Exalted; so that in their will confirm'd
 They stand, nor fear to fall. For do not doubt,
 But to receive the grace, which Heaven vouchsafes,
 Is meritorious,⁶ even as the soul

tandum erroneum, præcipue propter sententiam Greg. Nazian. cujus tanta est in doctrina Christiana autoritas, ut nullus unquam ejus dictis calumniam inferre præsumpserit sicut nec Athanasii Documentis, ut Hieron. dicit."—*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theolog.*, P. Ima, Quæst. LXL., art. iii.

¹ Those penmen.—As in Gen. i. 1, and Ecclesiasticus xviii. 1.

² Reason.—The heavenly ministers ("motori") would have existed to no purpose if they had been created before the corporeal world, which they were to govern.

³ The triple question.—He had wished to know where, when, and how the angels had been created, and these three questions had been resolved.

⁴ Elements.—"Alimenti" was sometimes put for "elementi" by the old Tuscan writers. See the notes to Redi's "Bacco in Toscana," vol. i., p. 125. Redi, *Opere*, 8vo, Milan, 1809. There is therefore no necessity for the alteration made in some editions.

⁵ Pent.—See "Hell," canto xxxiv. 105.

⁶ Meritorious.—The collator of the Monte Casino MS. boasts of that being the only text which has