becomes the cherished ideal of his bosom. He goes astray, but the thought of the loved one reclaims him; another demands his care and attention, but he communes with this one in his dreams and has visions of her in glory. He sings of her in his waking hours. Her image is the talisman whereby to banish all unworthy thoughts and desires. He extols her; he idealizes her; he embalms her forever in his immortal poem. He identifies her with, and makes her the impersonation of Theology; and henceforth the name of Beatrice shall stand before men as the synonym of whatever is inspiring in love and ennobling in womanhood. The passion of boyhood followed her to the heavenly abode in which he fancied her, and waxed with years into a most ideal and spiritual influence, until it finally ripened in the poet's heart, through long and laborious study, into the fulfillment of his early promise "to say of her what was never said of any woman."[1] This spiritualized type of womanhood stands out unique in the whole range of literature. It is Dante's own creation; rather it is the creation of the Christianity that reveres and honors the Virgin Mother. Love was the actuating principle of the poet's life. Not love of woman only, but love of country, love of study, love of religion; and not simply love, but love enlightened and strengthened by a faith that pierces the veil of the visible and transient and beholds the regions of the spiritual and eternal.[2]

3. Dante's love for the religion of his birth

[1] *Vita Nuova*, xliii.

[2] See N. Tommaseo, *L'Inferno*, Int. p. xlvi.

grew into a passion. Neither the Guelf hatred of his youth nor the Ghibelline hatred of his later years against the persons of several popes ever for a moment obscured his mind to the truth of the doctrines of the Church or the sacred office of the papacy. In his view, the greatness of ancient Rome was decreed solely to render it worthy of being the Holy Place in which should sit the successors of the Fisherman.[1] The mystical vine of the Church still grows, and Peter and Paul who died for it still live.[2] He holds by that Church; he begs Christians not to be moved, feather-like, "by every wind of doctrine." "You have," he tells them, "the Old Testament and the New, and the Pastor of the Church who guides you; let this suffice for your salvation."[3]

4. With this profound respect for the Church, he loved her ceremonies, her dogmas, her teachings, her institutions. He to whom the heavens and all that they contain were symbols of the spiritual essences they veil could not fail to grasp the poetry and the meaning of every prayer and ceremony and office of that Church who, through whatever is in

[1] La quale, e il quale, a voler dir lo vero,
Fur stabiliti per lo loco santo,
U' siede il successor del maggior Piero.
Inferno, ii. 22–24.

[2] Pensa che Pietro e Paolo, che moriro
Per la vigna che guasti, *ancor son vivi*.
Paradiso, xviii. 131, 132.

[3] Avete il vecchio e il nuovo Testamento,
E il Pastor della Chiesa che vi guida:
Questo vi basti a vostro salvamento.
Ibid. v. 76–78.

and about her temples, speaks eloquently to men in sign and symbol. There is not a stone in her cathedrals that has not its mystical meaning; there is not a garment with which her priest vests himself that is not emblematic of some spiritual truth; there is not an anthem or antiphon in her offices that does not help to draw out the beauty and significance behind it all. "The elements and fragments of poetry," says the Dean of St. Paul's in his scholarly monograph, "were everywhere in the Church — in her ideas of life, in her rules and institutions for passing through it, in her preparation for death, in her offices, ceremonial, celebrations, usages, her consecration of domestic, literary, commercial, civic, military, political life, the meanings and ends she had given them, the religious seriousness with which the forms of each were dignified — in her doctrine and her dogmatic system, her dependence on the unseen world, her Bible. From each and all of these, and from that public feeling which, if it expressed itself but abruptly and incoherently, was quite alive to the poetry which surrounded it, the poet received an impression of greatness and beauty, of joy and dread."[1] How far the poet made use of the impulses emanating from one and all of these influencing agencies is known only to him who has made a complete and thorough study of the poem embodying their inspirations. For we must not lose sight of the fact that the poem is, in all the grandeur and depth of its mystical meaning, made up of the spirit and

[1] Rev. R. W. Church, *Dante*, p. 111.

doctrine of the Church.[1] The spites and personal animosities are but specks scattered here and there upon the whole surface of crystalline beauty. Shining out in pristine splendor is the Spiritual Sense. Let us now glance at the philosophy and doctrine underlying that Sense.

VI.

1. There is a common ground on which all supreme intelligences assemble. It is the region of the Ideal. It is ascended only by the long and arduous labor of study and thought. There meet poetry and philosophy in their highest soarings. They meet and converse and stand upon the footing of mutual understanding. Poetry is permeated by the philosophic spirit, and philosophy dons the garb of poetry. Few are the souls assembled upon that supreme height. Plato and Virgil dwell there; so do Shakespeare and Goethe. And, consummate singer, profound philosopher, and skilled theologian, by every right and title, as being each and all of these, Dante there also has his home. Sweetest of singers, he is at the same time profoundly

[1] Dante cristiano, cristianissimo sempre nel Poema e in tutte le opere; Dante cattolico sempre. . . . Balbo, *Vita*, lib. ii. cap. ii. p. 232.

In truth, he anticipated the most pregnant developments of Catholic doctrine, mastered its subtlest distinctions, and treated its hardest problems with almost faultless accuracy. Were all the libraries in the world destroyed, and the Holy Scriptures with them, the whole Catholic system of doctrine and morals might be almost reconstructed out of the *Divina Commedia*. Hettinger, *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 234.

scientific; his mental vision sees the nicest intricacies and the most delicate distinctions; eminently religious, he also gathers up the fragments of ancient mythologies and ancient systems that he finds stranded upon his age, and pieces them together, giving them deeper import in the light of the Christian mysticism in which he is immersed. "He brought back," says Gioberti, "the Gentile mythology and symbolism to their source, rendering them anew esoteric and poetic."[1] He made them wholly subordinate to the Christian spirit, and by means of them conveyed practical lessons that are balm to the weary and drink to the thirsty. In like manner did he treat the science of his day. He made it the handmaid of the great spiritual truths he would impart. For this reason it is of small moment whether his theories be superseded by others apparently more probable; the moral and spiritual lesson still remains, and still speaks to the same human heart and the same human aspirations. So also did he make use of allegory.

2. Allegory there was before the time of Dante. Vision, too, was there. Such were the visions of Alberic;[2] such the vision of Paul,[3] and many others.[4] The language of allegory and vision was the favorite mode of conveying spiritual advice.[5] But

[1] *Del Bello*, cap. x. p. 214.

[2] Tommaseo, *L'Inferno*, p. 416. Discorso: Altre visioni infernali.

[3] Ozanam, *Dante et la Philosophie Catholique au XIIIme. Siècle*, p. 473.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 484–491.

[5] Ozanam calls attention to the general analogy between the passage of the soul through the spheres of the *Paradiso* and the favorite titles of the ascetic treatises of St. Bonaventura: *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum; Formula aurea de gradibus virtutem; De vii itineribus æternitatis.* — *Loc. cit.* p. 335.

all previous visions and allegories are to the great allegorical vision of Dante what the old plays and stories out of which our own Shakespeare constructed his immortal masterpieces are to those masterpieces themselves. In the one case and in the other, we may trace phrases and expressions and conceptions, and even whole trains of thought, to their sources; but to what avail? The mastermind has given to the phrase or sentence a new application and a larger scope, and with grasp of purpose and sureness of aim has reset sentence and phrase in a sense in which through all time they will be recognized as the ideal forms. To achieve this is the exclusive mission of genius. And in a marked degree was this the mission of Dante. Critics find fault with his occasional coarseness of diction. True it is that Dante does not employ words with the view of concealing the image he would portray. His descriptions are always vivid. He "condenses aphorisms into pictures, and sums up chapters of morality in portraits."[1] Whatever there is in his poem that is beautiful or tender — and much there is of beauty and tenderness — he expresses with delicacy and sweetness the most exquisite; but when the poet would describe the loathsome and the horrible, he makes use of language best calculated to leave a

[1] A. J. Symonds, *Introduction to the Study of Dante*, p. 163, 2d ed.

loathsome or horrible impression. Critics should not forget that elegance and prettiness of phrase are not grandeur and strength; that they are wholly incompatible with grandeur and strength; that if Dante were always elegant and pretty in his phrasings Dante would never have been great or sublime, nor would his poem tower through the vista of the ages one of the grandest monuments of human thought and human skill ever conceived and executed. And the secret of it all lies in the poet's intense earnestness.

3. This earnestness asserts itself throughout the poem chiefly in three lines of thought: (1) A devoted patriot, loving his country, suffering for it, and yearning for its welfare with all the energy of his being, he launches notes of warning and denunciation against its vices, its enemies, and its false friends, and with invective the most scathing vilifies all who seemingly stand between it and its well-being. This burning patriotism has made the poem the great national epic.[1] (2) A child of the Church, true and attached, though at times wayward, the poet takes the liberty of a child free-spoken and free to speak, to utter words of censure against what he considers abuses in the external administration of the Church and the policy of her Pontiffs.[2] (3) Finally, Dante's chief mission, the prime motive of his intense earnestness, is the

[1] *Inferno*, xxvi. 1–10; *Purgatorio*, vi. 75–151; *Paradiso*, xv., xvi. To understand the political aspect of the poem it is essential to read the author's work *De Monarchia* and some available history of that period, say Villani or Cæsar Cantù.

[2] *Inferno*, xix. 88–117; *Paradiso*, xviii. 115–136; xxvii. 19–66.

Spiritual Sense underlying his poem. This he has not left to be discovered. He takes pains to inform the reader. He tells him that leaving aside all subtle investigation, the end and aim of his poem briefly put, both as regards the whole and its parts, is to remove therefrom men living in a state of misery in this life, and lead them to one of happiness.[1] This he does upon an ethical basis.

4. The poet recognizes free-will as the basis of all human responsibility, and the consequent amenability of the soul to reward or punishment: "Inborn in you is the virtue that keepeth counsel and that should guard the threshold of assent. Here is the principle whereto occasion of meriting in you is attached, according as it gathers up and winnows out good or guilty loves."[2] The argument of his poem is man receiving at the hands of Divine Justice his deserts according to the motive and nature of the actions he performs.[3] Man passes from the darkness of sin and the wilderness of error into the light of truth and grace. The poem is a song of emancipation. It chants the breaking of the bonds of sin, and the passing into the light and freedom of the children of God. It is a song of hope. Evil is indeed mighty, and great is the havoc it plays among souls; but mightier still is God's grace. It is a

[1] Sed omissa subtili investigatione, dicendum est breviter, quod finis totius et partis est, removere viventes in hac vita de statu miseriæ, et perducere ad statum felicitatis. *Epistola*, xi. Ep. ad Kani Grandi de la Scala, § 15.

[2] *Purgatorio*, xviii. 61–66. See the whole of this important passage. Cf. *Summa*, ii. 1, Quæst. cxiv. art. iv.

[3] Ep. xi. § 11.

song of light and life. Its tendency is upward and onward to the triumph of spirit over matter. It is ever pouring into our souls to the music of

> "one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things." [1]

5. The poem is, therefore, practical. The thought, the energy, and the earnestness of the whole age are concentrated upon it. Speculation abounds in it; but it is in order that knowing all the better one may do all the better. The poet is careful to tell us that if he speaks by way of speculation, it is not for the sake of mere barren words, but rather that such may tend to action.[2] The intellect is made for truth; its ultimate perfection consists in the contemplation of truth.[3] The poet never forgets that true wisdom consists in right-knowing and right-doing.

VII.

1. In the development of this thought we have the mystical meaning and central idea of the "Divina Commedia." It is the drama of human nature sinning, struggling against vice, straining

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, i. 1.

[2] Ep. xi. § 16. "Non ad speculandum, sed ad opus incœptum est totum."

[3] Così della induzione della perfezione seconda le scienze sono cagioni in noi; per l' abito delle quali potemo la verità speculare, ch' è ultimà perfezione nostra, siccome dice il Filosofo nel sesto dell' *Etica*, quando dice che'l vero è 'l bene dello intelletto. *Convito*, ii. 14, p. 153, ed. Fraticelli.

after perfection, and making for the Supreme Good by means of Knowledge and Power: the primary knowledge of one's duties towards one's self, one's neighbor and God, and the larger knowledge of the relation and coördination of those duties in the light of philosophy and theology; the power flowing from this knowledge aided by prayer and grace and the assistance of the unseen, spiritual world.

2. The element that gives life to the knowledge and makes effective the power is Love. Love is the inspiration of all knowledge. Without love there can be no philosophy;[1] it is the form — the soul — of philosophy.[2] Be it remembered that philosophy is not, in the intention of Dante, mere speculation. It is an intimate union of the soul with wisdom in all-absorbing and undivided love.[3] Therefore it is that only those living according to reason can become philosophers. Those leading merely the life of the senses can know or experience naught of the mysteries and consolations of this true philosophy.[4] Nor can intelligences exiled from their supernal home, such as fallen angels and damned souls, philosophize, for the reason that love has become extinguished in them and malice prevails.[5] Love is the soul of philosophy; wisdom is its body; morality its beauty; such is the underlying conception of Dante's doctrine.[6] He recognizes no truth that is

[1] A filosofare è necessario amore. *Convito*, tratto iii. cap. 13, p. 226.

[2] Amore è forma di filosofia. *Ibid.* p. 229.

[3] Filosofia è uno amoroso uso di sapienzia. *Ibid.* cap. 12, p. 225.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 224.

[5] *Ibid.* cap. 13. p. 226.

[6] *Ibid.* cap. 14.

not a ray of the Divine Intelligence; no good that does not flow from the Infinite Love; no beauty that is not clothed in the morality born of the Eternal Law. "The Alpha and Omega of all writing that Love reads me is the Supreme Good that contents this Court."[1] So speaks he in his sublime vision to the Apostle of Love. And he enlarges upon it in this fashion: "By argument of philosophy, and by authority descending hence, such Love must needs on me be stamped; for Good, so far as it is good and comprehended as such, enkindleth Love, and enkindleth it all the greater as more of goodness is therein comprised. Therefore, towards that Essence — so supreme that every good which is found outside of It is but a ray of Its light — more than towards aught else, it behooveth the mind of each one discerning the truth whereon is based this evidence to move in love."[2] From that Divine Essence have come all things; to the same should all things tend. And as regards man, both reason and revelation urge him to keep for God the sovereign use of all his loves.[3]

3. Nor does the poet stop here. With depth and force and admirable grasp of expression, he penetrates to the workings of Love in the Godhead. He determines It to be not only a principle of Light, but also a principle of Life. Here he is mystical, sublime, suggestive. He stands upon the highest plane of Christian philosophy. He contemplates the Trinity in the creative act. He beholds the

[1] *Paradiso*, xxvi. 16–18.
[2] *Ibid.* 25–36.
[3] *Ibid.* 45–47.

Triune Godhead in the bosom of the Word. And thus the Word, which is the central fact of all history, the central thought of all philosophy, the central germ of all speech, becomes for Dante the central Idea of the "Divina Commedia." He says: "That which dieth not and that which can die are naught else than the splendor of that Idea[1] which in His love our Lord begetteth. For that living Light[2] — which so goeth forth from Its source[3] that It ceases not to be one therewith,[4] as well as with the Love[5] that maketh Three-in-One — of Its bounty[6] unites Its rays as though mirrored in nine subsistences,[7] Itself remaining eternally One and Undivided. Thence It descends to the ultimate potentialities, passing down from act to act, till It makes no further than brief contingencies;[8] and these contingencies I understand to be things generated, which the moving heavens[9] produce with and without seed."[10] The sum and substance of this sublime doctrine is that Love produces all things, from the heaven of heavens and the celestial spirits down to the least and most evanescent

[1] The Word.
[2] The Word, the Son.
[3] The Father.
[4] Ego et Pater unum sumus, Joan. x. 30.
[5] The Holy Ghost, the Third Divine Person.
[6] That is, of Its goodness, not through necessity.
[7] In the nine heavens, or in the nine motive intelligences. Bianchi.
[8] That is, extending down from the more active to the less active till It comes to the least existence in the chain of created things.
[9] Divine Light moving the heaven, produces things generated. Tommaseo.
[10] *Paradiso*, xiii. 53–66.

creature. With St. Thomas the poet here holds the influence of the heavenly bodies as secondary causes.[1] With the Angelic Doctor also he holds that beings are perfect in proportion as they reflect the Divine attributes:[2] "If burning Love disposes and stamps the clear view of the Prime Virtue, all perfection is there acquired. Thus was the earth once made worthy of all the perfection of living things; thus was the Virgin made a mother."[3] In Dante's philosophy the Ideal becomes the standard of all beauty. Grand vistas of thought here open up to our contemplation; but we must not tarry. One remark, however, may be permitted. It has been well said: "See deep enough and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it."[4] If it has ever been given to human intellect to look back of sign and symbol and behold the essence and relation of things, it has been given to Dante. And this is why he has seen so musically. He sees virtue and justice and suffering all blended in their true relations; he notes the harmony between the natural and the supernatural orders, between faith and reason, grace and free-will, time

[1] Corpora cælestia sunt causa inferiorum effectuum mediantibus causis particularibus inferioribus, quæ deficere possunt in minori parte.

Virtus corporis cælestis non est infinita; unde requirit determinatam dispositionem in materia ad inducendum suum effectum et quantum ad distantiam loci, et quantum ad alias conditiones. *Summa*, I. quæst. cxv. art. vi. ad. 1, 2.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. quæst. iv. art. 5.

[3] *Paradiso*, xiii. 79–84.

[4] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, lect. iii.

and eternity, the divine and the human, and the harmony fills him with wonderment, and its music enters his soul, and he sings it in accents so sweet that he who lets the sweetness enter into his heart, may well say with the poet on hearing Casella sing one of his own hymns: "Still sounds its sweetness within me!"[1]

VIII.

1. That deep insight into the moral and physical world has enabled Dante to see in Love not only the Light and the Life of all things created — and even of the Uncreated One in whom Love, Light, and Life are one infinite identical activity — but also the principle and source of sin and passion: "Neither Creator nor a creature . . . was ever without Love, be it natural or be it spiritual; and well thou knowest. The natural is always free from error; but err the other may by evil objects, or by excess, or by defect of vigor. Whilst well-directed in the first, and in the second it moderates itself, it cannot be cause of evil delight; but when to ill it turns aside, or when with more care than it ought, or with less, it runs after good, then against the Creator works his own creation. Hence it behooves you to understand how Love should be in you the seed of every virtue as well as of every deed deserving punishment."[2] In this strain the poet continues, holding with the Angelic

[1] Che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona. *Purgatorio*, ii. 114.

[2] *Ibid.* xvii. 91–105.

Doctor that there is no passion, not even excepting Hate, that does not presuppose Love.[1] For, as the great Schoolman teaches, there is no passion that is not moved towards, or does not rest in, some object. And it is so because of some kind of harmony or adaptability between the subject moved or resting and the object towards which it moves or in which it rests. But Love consists in the accord of the one loving with the object loved.[2] Now the human heart seeks the good, yearns for the good, loves the good, and is content only in the possession and enjoyment of the good. This is a primary law. No system of philosophy has ever soared higher than that question every Christian child learns from the Little Catechism: "Why did God make you? — God made me to know Him, to love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."[3] It contains the solution of the whole mystery of man. It names the Supreme Good towards which tends all Love.

2. But it frequently happens that the Supreme Good becomes clouded from man's vision and intent, and he seeks bliss in loving the lesser goods that are more palpable to his view. Herein is how Love becomes the source of all that is sinful in thought and word and work on the part of man. (1) Now it is Love excessive. As such it seeks

[1] *Summa*, I. ii. quæst. xxvii. art. 4.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. quæst. xxix. art. 2.

[3] *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, lesson i. "On the End of Man."

happiness in imaginary perfection, or in the praise of men, or in a sense of self-sufficiency that causes one to ignore one's origin, or helplessness, or dependence upon the aid of Grace. This is Pride or Vanity. Again, this worldly love impels one to seek happiness solely in the external sufficiency that wealth can bring. This is Avarice; and it is at the root of treasons, frauds, deceits, prejudices, anxieties, violence, and insensibility to misery.[1] The same Love seeks bodily gratification either in eating or drinking to excess — and this is Gluttony; or in the enjoyment of the carnal and sexual appetites — and this is Lust. (2) Now it is Love defective. As such, it is lax and sad in attending to things spiritual, and is known as Sloth. (3) Finally, it is Love distorted. As such, it grudgingly looks upon a neighbor's prosperity as an obstacle in the way of one's preëminence — when it is called Envy; or it changes into wrathful feelings that seek to be revenged for real or fancied wrong. It is then called Anger. These various forms of misapplied Love are known as the Seven Capital Sins, and are the chief sources of all evil.[2]

3. The poet takes these sins and all the sins that flow from them, and holds them up to our view in all their loathsome nakedness. And he does so, not as a mere matter of sport, but that he and his

[1] *Summa*, II. ii. Quæst. cxviii. art. 8.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. Quæst. lxxxiv. art. 4. See *Inferno*, xi. and Tommaseo's tract appended to this canto, entitled "Dottrina Penale di Dante," p. 120. The poet gives the genesis of the Seven Capital Sins on the same line of reasoning with St. Thomas, whom we have here followed in substance. See *Purgatorio*, xvii. 106–139.

readers may learn to hate them, and from witnessing their torments may get some faint conception of their enormity, and may be led to exclaim: "Wisdom Supreme, how great is the art Thou showest in heaven, on earth, and in the evil world, and how well Thy Goodness dispenseth justice!"[1] The poet transports us to the Hell that he so vividly pictures; we there are told the dire consequences of sin to persons and families and peoples upon earth; we meditate upon the dread lessons embodied in this song of woe and wrath, of wailings and regrets, and our soul learns to recoil from aught that could break the golden chain of Law and Love with which the Creator binds all his creatures to Himself. It is a solemn preparation for the more practical lessons conveyed in the other two parts of the poem. Their Spiritual Sense at once becomes apparent. Indeed, it is the clue to their proper appreciation. For the poem gives us, as no other purely human production gives us, "the solution of the great, eternal, and sole problem of our life, namely, deliverance from evil and final bliss in God as the source of all Truth and all Love."[2] Let us, in a cursory manner, follow the evolution of that Spiritual Sense.

IX.

1. The poet is in the midway of life.[3] He has become entangled in the woods of sin and error.

[1] *Inferno*, xix. 10–12.
[2] Hettinger, *Die Göttliche Komödie*, p. 56.
[3] *Inferno*, i. 1.

He is beset by three predominant passions that are about to devour him. These are the lion of pride and over-vaulting ambition, the leopard of concupiscence, and the she-wolf of avarice. Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, sees his plight, and forasmuch as he has venerated her, she does not abandon him in his peril. She sends Lucy, or Illuminative Grace, to his assistance. Lucy commands Virgil — that is, Reason, enlightened by her directions — to save him. As he is about returning upon his evil course,[1] Reason tells him that he must take another road if he would escape the beasts and be rid of the errors of his ways.[2] He obeys. The journey is long and dismal and dreary. Sometimes the poet is discouraged and desires to return.[3] Sometimes he requires, in an especial manner, the assistance of Virgil: as when the Roman poet turns him around and with his own hands closes his eyes that he may not behold the Gorgon; all of which means that there are certain sins and temptations in life that cannot be overcome by human nature unaided by reason and God's redeeming grace. Such is sensuality, which hardens the heart, even as the head of the Gorgon was fabled to turn to stone those looking thereon. In giving the figure the poet would have us look to the spiritual sense: "O you who have sane intellects, note the doctrine veiled beneath those strange verses."[4] At

[1] *Inferno*, xv. 50–52.
[2] E non c' era altra via
Che questa per la quale io mi son messo.
Purgatorio, i. 62, 63.
[3] *Inferno*, viii. 100–103.
[4] *Ibid.* ix. 50–63.

times Virgil himself is unable to make headway against the powers of darkness. But a heavenly messenger comes and dispels all dread, and opens the entrance, and forthwith Dante and his guide walk securely and without molestation.[1] They find no further opposition. Indeed, it is only by reason of heavenly grace that Virgil is able to lead Dante through the dread region: "From on high descends virtue, which enables me to lead him."[2] Whereby the poet would teach that human reason, good and admirable as it may be in itself, is not sufficient to contend against the world of passion and the evil spirits that inspire wrong-doing. Again, at times the poet would rest. But there is no resting-place for the soul struggling with evil till it frees itself therefrom. We thus have the grand lesson of work and energy in overcoming indolence and sloth and evil habit: "It now behooveth thee to shake off all slothfulness, said the Master, for fame comes not to him who sits on down or lies abed; without which whoso consumes his life, leaves on earth such trace of himself as smoke in air or foam on water. Arise, therefore! Conquer thy panting with the soul that conquers every battle, so be it that it sinks not down with its heavy body."[3] And we have the further lesson that mere sorrow of the lips and outward observance of the law, or reception of the Sacraments, will avail little unless accompanied by change of heart

[1] *Inferno*, ix. 100–105.
[2] *Purgatorio*, i. 68, 69.
[3] *Inferno*, xxiv. 46–54; cf. Wisdom ix. 15.

and sincere detestation of sin: "He cannot be absolved who doth not first repent; nor can he repent the sin and will it at the same time, for this were contradiction to which reason cannot consent."[1] Thus, in picturing sin and its punishment in such colors as human conception has never approached, the poet is teaching us the lesson of struggle with self, of abhorrence of wrong-doing, and of striving towards personal holiness.

2. This is especially the lesson of the "Purgatorio." Before entering these realms of hope and sweet contentment amid great suffering — hope and contentment because accompanied by Love — the poet must first be washed of the grime and filth that have clung to him in the evil world, the contemplation of which so saddened his eyes and weighed down his heart. He is, furthermore, to be girt with a lowly and pliant rush. "Go then," says Cato, "and gird this man with a smooth rush; then wash his face so that therefrom thou mayst put away all filthiness; for it were unseemly, with eye obscured by any cloud, to go before the first Minister who is of them of Paradise."[2] In which words is conveyed the wholesome lesson that after one has been cleansed from the grime of sin, one must gird on the plain rush of humility; for as pride is the chief of all capital sins, so is humility the foundation of all virtue; and with meek and lowly heart must one walk in the narrow way, fearing lest one fall, and remembering that one carries heavenly treasures in a frail vessel. And once the

[1] *Inferno*, xxvii. 118–120.
[2] *Purgatorio*, i. 94–99.