

## Paradise

There are many 'specialists' who teach 'techniques to awaken our inner zodiac and become a true human being.'

*"Wherever there is light, there is consciousness." — Samael Aun Weor*

Beatrice, symbolises theology.

She is really Dante's 'angel' or *apsara* in the form of a heavenly human being. If she was an angel, or an Ascended Master, she ought to know the technique of awakening Dante's 'inner zodiac to become a true human being who is a seeker.'

The poem "Divine Comedy" represents the imaginative soul's ascent to God.

Here souls rejoice in the 'intellectual vision' of God who is 'Existence-Knowledge-Happiness' (*sat chit anand.*) They see with their most unlike 'God-like' image they think they are.

There is interdependence between spirituality, consciousness, and sexuality through a sacred intimacy.

Awakening consciousness leads to spiritual elevation, natural wisdom, and a deep and pervasive love for humanity. By awakening consciousness, we will directly experience our inner cosmos, a reflection of the cosmos around us.

Therefore if there is an advice to Dante it should read:

"Be Still and Experience Consciousness:

In Deep Sleep there are no Mind images

If there are images, they are in Wakefulness!

If prancing inside with images, it is all about Dreaming away,

If basking in a loving embrace, it sure is happening in Deep Sleep,

Be awake in Deep sleep, where 'true love' materializes in Consciousness."

### Dante's Paradiso

Dante's Paradiso is the little read and slightest admired or the least understood part of his Divine Comedy. When Dante reaches the third part of his Divine Comedy, he has already met all 'sinners' in Hell. He assigns them their punishment ...but, often he does not see justice being done even in their divinely ordained karmic punishments.

When he reaches Paradiso, his spiritual journey, despite medieval and churchian contradictions, his travels through Purgatory are triumphant and profitable. He is purged of all his sins – at least, that is what the reader is to assume. Dante has done just about everything Virgil suggests he needs doing, if he is to meet Beatrice.

Beatrice, who symbolises theology which is Light – or, to become “aware and knowing.”  
“*Wherever there is light, there is consciousness.*” —*Samael Aun Weor.*

Western civilization has struggled for centuries to define and understand consciousness, primarily because they have lacked access to the authentic ‘science of the consciousness,’ which has long been preserved in secrecy by the esoteric traditions. Strangely, it is these very traditions that have been widely mocked, persecuted and been subject to terrible abuses by Western churchian society. In Eastern civilizations, their esoteric traditions were considered the pinnacle of society, and were therefore they were better able to inform the public and its philosophers about the Consciousness and its functions. Additionally, Eastern traditions never made the fatal mistake of attempting to separate Science from Religion and Myth. This critical divergence of our understanding of Consciousness, reveals a central cause for the failure of Modern Theory to unravel the *suffering of humanity*. Without understanding Consciousness, the problem of suffering cannot be understood, nor changed.

**The Agnya Chakra** is the sixth chakra or plexus; it is the center of consciousness for enlightening and liberation. It is the highest spinal center, Agnya (ajna) chakra and located at the medulla oblongata, where the skull connects with the neck near the brain stem.

Agnya is where cosmic energy from the universe enters the body through the ‘mouth of God’ to feed it with prana or conscious life force.

### **Be Still and Experience Consciousness:**

The nerves off the Agnya chakra sets up the nervous system of the physical body and the seven chakras: Muladhara (Root Coccygeal Chakra) of “root support” is located at the base of the spine; Swadhisthana (Sacral Chakra); Manipura (Navel Chakra); Anahata (Heart Chakra); Vishuddha (Throat Chakra); Agnya or Ajna (Third-Eye Chakra) ...

Sahasrahara (Crown Chakra)

The medulla oblongata, is the negative pole of Agnya chakra and also the seat of human life and ego-consciousness.

The channels of Energy are: Ida (parasympathetic system or Tree of Life) and the Pingala (sympathetic system or Tree of Knowledge,) which flow respectively, downward and upward, from this pole.

It is the ‘element’ of Light that possesses ‘qualities’ of forgiveness, humility, dissolves ego conditionings, false ideas and misidentifications.

Its physical location is in the pineal and pituitary glands within the thalamus and hypothalamus.

When the Spirit is awakened inside by Kundalini, then we are 'born again,' and can cross this door to enter the realm of divine awareness, by becoming a child in the Kingdom of God.

This site is perceptible as an inner radiation between the eyebrows on the forehead.

The Agnya Chakra is the "Guru Chakra" and therefore the "Seat of the Master".

The shishya or disciple who has the knowledge gained through personal experience and mastery can be initiated into the correct path: for only that one has the knowledge gained through personal experience; the guru has mastery that can then be imparted to the likes of Dante.

**Dante comes face-to-face with Beatrice**, the woman or angel, who oversees his whole Religious journey with the help of Virgil, in the hope that he would arrive at his Spiritual journey. Beatrice is Dante's spiritual beloved. She is seen to discuss religion and theology in an imaginative heaven.

Dante's heaven is radiantly bright and has nine spheres. Dante's journey through Heaven is guided by Beatrice, who discusses heavenly theology.

Metaphorically speaking, Beatrice is a mirror upon which divine love is reflected and, consequently, serves as the pilgrim's bridge to salvation.

She is a powerful character and a woman of action who descends into hell to call upon Virgil for his help and to instruct him to lead the pilgrim on an otherworldly journey. She is a strict guide, and often scolds and admonishes the pilgrim for his less than virtuous behavior.

In one of the most memorable scenes of the Divine Comedy, Beatrice appears to Dante in Terrestrial Paradise. She is dressed in white, green, and red, the colors of the three theological virtues representing faith, hope, and charity respectively, and is seated on a Griffin-driven chariot. The Griffin has the wings and head of an eagle and the body of a lion, and in Dante's world, represents Christ. During this poignant scene in the final cantos of the *Purgatorio*, Virgil disappears and Beatrice becomes the pilgrim's guide, leading him to the Beatific Vision in *Paradiso XXXIII*.

**When the Kundalini passes the Agnya Chakra, our mental activity ceases, silence and Guru is the Divine Principle of the Evolution towards Consciousness:**

Therefore, at the Agnya, the Guru symbolises the universal, divine principle that leads us from Darkness to Light, to mean: from ignorance to knowledge, and from death to immortality.

All Divine Reincarnations have been "Gurus".

Jesus was the Master of his 12 disciples and Krishna was Arjun's Master. When disciple and Master unite, the "Guru Principle" in the disciple awakens in Consciousness and the disciple guides herself or himself, to become his or her own master.

The Guru Principle is distinguishable and detectable within such a person as clarity, wisdom (Gyana) and ability to discriminate between truth and untruth, reality and unreality (Viveka).

Until capable of anchoring our consciousness in the Agnya Chakra our Mind vacillates constantly between Agnya and the human Chakras – the Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata and Vishuddha or "especially pure throat or fifth primary chakra. While we are still lacking in discrimination we should listen to the advice of the Master in order to avoid mistakes. The more our consciousness evolves towards the Agnya Chakra, the freer and more independent we become in choosing correctly and making the right decisions.

**Agnya Centre for Light and Inner Radiation is the Agnya Chakra. It sits behind the forehead, at the base of the brain, which it controls.**

**Viveka (discrimination)** is the moral authority in the Agnya Chakra. It deliberates and evaluates all our intents and objectives in keeping with principled and divine standards. Discernment or *Viveka* filters and controls all our mental state and judgments with restraint and understanding. Devoid of this equipoise we remain trapped in fluctuating undercurrents of our feelings, whose influences carry us between coastlines of contentment and sadness.

Until the Agnya Chakra is awakened, we are every so often, non-appreciative about ourselves. Unable to control the guna-potentials and emotions that rise in the lower centres, we cannot find explanations for mixtures of our emotions, thoughts and dreams, which suddenly surface in our Mind.

**Vedic Paradise is Consciousness defined: it is a state of being conscious; knowledge of one's own existence, condition, sensations, mental operations, and acts, etc.**

It is an effect that gives immediate Knowledge or an alert cognitive state in which one is aware of self and state. It is 'Consciousness' which is the foundation of perception and understanding. Consciousness is the only foundation upon which we evolve or devolve. Our improvement or degeneration is marked by the state or level of our consciousness.

The more elevated or purified our level of consciousness, the more refined and penetrating our perception. That is why the purest individuals in our histories have also been the wisest and most perceptive, capable of seeing not only into the human heart, but into other dimensions.

Conversely, the more degenerated or impure our consciousness, the more limited and confined is our perception. That is why the most impure individuals are also the most short-sighted, foolish, and dangerous.

All religions were founded in order to encode the science of awakening consciousness, a process of purification and improvement. Conversely, there are many traditions that teach how to degenerate the consciousness by infecting it with impure, selfish, and destructive elements.

In the esoteric traditions of the Western world, the range of potential consciousness is allegorized in the Ladder of Jacob, upon which the angels ascend and descend. Thus

there are higher and lower levels of consciousness, from the level of demons at the bottom, to highly realized angels in the heights.

**There are many states and levels of consciousness.** Every religion and mystical tradition has its own ways of symbolizing the degrees of consciousness.

*"In the ancient initiatory rituals of the Persian, Greek, and Egyptian Mysteries the priests disguised themselves as composite creatures, thereby symbolizing different aspects of human consciousness." - Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages*

**In Buddhism, the most important reference to the consciousness is translated to mean "Buddha nature."** In us, it is undeveloped, a mere seed that can be grown into its full potential: a buddha, or "awakened one."

This is accomplished only by knowing precisely how to do it. This process begins and is sustained by a continual effort to utilize it in the moment, by being continually aware of oneself and everything that one does, whether internally or externally.

**Consciousness is not the mind or the senses.** Consciousness utilizes the mind, heart, and senses to perceive, but can perceive levels of existence that are beyond our mind (intellect), heart, and physical senses.

In Kabbalah, consciousness is related to the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge.

This understanding corresponds to Hinduism and Buddhism – Ida and Pingala.

**The Chitta or “personality” has five Skanda:** 1. Corporeality or form (rupa); 2. Sensation (vedana); 3. Perception (samjana); 4. Mental Formations (samskara); 5. Consciousness (vijnana)

**The Skanda relate to five lower bodies:** 1. Physical Body; 2. Ethereal Body four ethers and vibrating energy; 3. Lunar Astral/Emotional Body: the body of desires; 4. Lunar Mental Body; and 5. Essence or Consciousness.

In each of these traditions, these are the lowest achievements and Consciousness is the means to ascend higher by awakening and perceiving more by means of the purification of the individual.

**Vedic Astrology Versus Paradiso’s Astrology:**

Vedic Astrology requires learning the Science for ‘self’ to become Self: To better understand our self; to be directed towards a more spiritual path; to know character blocks and how best to resolve them; to know our life’s purpose and discover the one path to discover it; to know the attitude needed for our chosen decisions; to do ‘love-serve-give’ to society.

Vedic astrology has a predictive value if followed, ensures both success and failure; when shared with near and dear, their collective minds defines the seriousness needed in life to understand true vedic wisdom of astrology.

**In Paradiso the heavenly astrology** is a series of concentric spheres surrounding the Earth, consisting of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars, as the Primum Mobile (outermost moving sphere in the geocentric model of the universe);

and the Empyrean (highest part of the spherical heavens, thought in old times to contain the pure element of Fire).

Allegorically, the spheres represent the soul's ascent to God.

**The Paradiso begins at the top of Mount Purgatory, at noon on the Wednesday after Easter.**

After climbing through the Fire believed to exist in the earth's upper atmosphere. Beatrice guides Dante through the nine heavenly spheres of Heaven, to the Empyrean, which is the home of God.

The nine spheres Dante journeys are concentric, as in the standard medieval geocentric model of cosmology; Dante meets and converses with several blessed souls.

Dante is shown various souls in planetary and in stellar spheres based on the **four cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude) and the three theological virtues (Faith, Hope, and Love).**

When the pilgrim meets Piccarda in the **heaven of the moon, the lowest of the nine, he asks why she does not wish to be higher up, to be nearer to God.** Piccarda replies, "Brother, the **power of love** subdues our will/ so we long for only what we have/ and thirst for nothing else."

The Power of Love as Sneha is about Involvement, collusion, conspiracy and intrigues of scheming for "I-Me-Mine." Contradictions in such a "Love" come with unforeseeable prospects, as it has for Piccarda. The Power of Love as Prema is *the* form of the Divine which Dante has for his guru, Beatrice.

Love alone can merge in love. When one is filled with Divine love there is an experience of Oneness with the Divine. Happiness arises and becomes the source of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Forbearance.

Paradiso's culture is tainted by absolution, scandalising other residents of heaven and duplicity. It is about forgetting the glory of pure love.

Dante has been able to create a 'drama out of good' people getting along.

His 'afterlife' is of also of a social structure, patterned like a social arrangements in his 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian Society, that are both emergent from and determinant of the actions of the individuals Dante meets in Heaven.

As on earth, so in heaven, the souls of the blessed show they are a happy society up there in heaven.

"Heaven Is a World of Love" the pastor Jonathan Edwards writes and encourages Christians struggling through the imperfect life here on earth to experience the perfect love of God through an exposition of the biblical foundations for the cause of God's love, the objects of God's love, the enjoyment of God's love, and the fruits of God's love.

Despite the tension between a perfect heaven above and an imperfect world here below, and personal suffering of 10 years in exile, Dante accepts and endures the pain of historical and human fault.

His opinionated hopes are crushed under the circumstances of history.

Dante the idealist wanted an ideal of earthly justice...arguing “the world is ordered in the best possible way when justice is at its most potent.”

In fact these souls of the blessed keep talking about happenings on earth.

It makes the heavenly residents angry, when St. Peter says of Pope Boniface VIII: “He has made my tomb a sewer of blood and filth.”

Dante adds his indignation while looking down from the eighth sphere and states only “the little patch of earth that makes us so fierce.”

In the heaven of the Sun, Dante meets St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, the two medieval theologians, both of whom belonged to mendicant religious orders.

The friars take turns recounting each other’s hagiographies and failures of their founders.

In Dante’s hell it is allowed to stand in judgment. His point of view is a specific attitude through which he thinks about crime and punishment from the perspective of God. In heaven, lack of philosophical information is judged instead.

**Dante invokes Apollo the Greek god of Prophecy, Sunlight and Healing.** He asks the nine Muses, the goddesses of inspiration, to promote his task of writing this present piece of literature.

Beatrice is travelling with him, since Virgil has left.

They move up from Earthly Paradiso through several spheres of Heaven.

They arrive in the First Heaven in the Moon where Beatrice not only interrogates him on his views on the cause of moon spots, but corrects his understanding.

Dante sees blessed souls as points of light.

**About Piccarda, sister of Corso Donati and of Dante's friend Forese Donati,** is the first character Dante encounters in Paradise.

She is on the Sphere of the Moon, the lowest sphere of Heaven.

Piccarda Donati, explains the **souls'** happiness are in their deserved **places** in Heaven. She explains that the Moon houses **souls** who broke their vows.

**She tells Dante that the souls in Mercury were all just, but motivated by fame.**

It is through Piccarda that Dante understands the nature of Heaven which becomes increasingly beautiful in higher spheres.

**In religious or mythological cosmology, the seven heavens refer to seven levels or divisions of Heaven. The concept, derived from ancient Mesopotamian religions. A similar concept is also found in some Indian religions such as Hinduism.**

**The two pilgrims in Paradiso become unrecognizable.** Piccarda is now the only person Dante will recognize, unaided, while in Heaven.

Dante asks her if she wishes to gain higher heavens. Piccarda states blessed souls long only for what they have, and their will agrees with that of God. Though they know there are others in higher spheres of Heaven, they all individually rejoice in their placement.

According to Masters like Chinmayananda: Whatever our position in life, it is we who put ourselves there. The human will, when led by ignorance, causes nothing but confusion and trouble; but if it is tuned in with wisdom, it is guided by the Divine Will. When will power is developed it can and will control destiny. **Meanwhile Beatrice explains why Dante sees the souls in these heavens**, when they are all found in the Empyrean, (the Tenth Heaven).

Then she explains vows made by **absolute and conditional will**.

**They rise to the Second Heaven of Mercury.** Here, Justinian II (685 to 695) explains the history and destiny of Rome. The Romans' ways of life—especially the traditional values of Roman society, the nature of the Roman family, and the religious ideas and practices of Roman public and private life—provided for them the basic interconnectedness of their personal lives with others. They believed strongly that eternal divine values defined proper behavior, and that their society's social and political institutions put these values into action. They observed their ancestral values, family structure, and religion to make sense of the events of their history. Dante knew their ancient history and should have tried to do the same. Had Dante been cognizant of Romans' values and beliefs alone, he would have had the wisdom to look at himself and his place in the world where he played a crucial role in the destinies of so many of his people.

**Roman Emperor Justinian (527 to 565) was Dante ideal** because Romans believed that their ancestors over the generations had handed down the values that should guide their lives. They therefore referred to their system of values as the “way of the elders.” The central values that Romans believed their ancestors had established covered what we might call uprightness, faithfulness, respect, and status. These values had many different effects on Romans' attitudes and behaviors, depending on the social context, and Roman values often interrelated were broken down by the politics and religion of Dante's time.

Piccarda Donati tells Dante the souls in Mercury were all just, but motivated by want of fame.

Beatrice meanwhile explains destroying Jerusalem was an act of vengeance and judgement on Jerusalem, and not Rome's doing. These were times when people were punished by God for their sins (Ezekiel 25:14).

**They climb to the Third Heaven, to Venus. Dante meets Charles Martel**, an early French emperor, who explains why sons can end so different from ways of their fathers. He was who displaced the Merovingian Dynasty who were descendants of the line of Jesus. **Charles Martel** became the **first** king of the Carolingian dynasty who extended the Frankish realms, and became the **first emperor** in the West since the fall of Rome. Dante meets Cunizza da Romano 1198 the Italian noblewoman, the third daughter of Ezzelino II da Romano and Adelaide di Mangona, and sister to Ezzelino III.

Cunizza married Riccardo di San Bonifacio, Lord of Verona, but eloped with the court poet Sordello, who took her to his parents' house.

The great affection displayed between Dante and Charles in the sphere of Venus is striking because they knew one another for such a short time. Consistent with his appearance in Venus, Charles shows generosity as a loving friend and as a young ruler genuinely concerned about societal well-being. Folco of Marseille who points out Rahab to Dante was a Provençal poet who later became a Cistercian monk and finally served as Bishop of Toulouse (France). Dante praises Folco as an accomplished **poet**.

Dante addresses "bella Clemenza", the wife of his friend Carlo Martello exemplifying right and wrong love. *Paradiso* cultivates a theological appetite for a Garden of Eden with worldly appetites.

**Beatrice and Dante go up to the Fourth Heaven, of the Sun for Intellectual Happiness** by speaking with Spirits of Theologians and Philosophers. St. Thomas and eleven other souls form a crown around them. Dante denounces the senseless cares of mortals.

**St. Thomas discusses the life of St. Francis and the Franciscans.** He heard the words of Christ coming from the cross: "Francis, repair my house, which is falling into ruin." Christ was asking him to rebuild.

A second crown forms around the first.

**St. Bonaventure talks about the life of St. Dominic and the Dominicans.** The crowns dance. St. Thomas explains the wisdom of King Solomon and warns Dante not to judge hastily. Solomon explains the source of the blessed souls' light.

**They climb to the Fifth Heaven, Mars.** The souls form an image of the Cross. Dante meets Cacciaguida the Italian crusader and the great-great-grandfather of Dante Alighieri. who expounds on the virtue of old Florence. Dante indulges in a rare proud moment over the nobility of his birth. Cacciaguida talks about the noble Florentine families. Then, he tells Dante about his destiny of exile, but tempers it with encouragement to Dante to fulfill his poetic mission.

**Dante and Beatrice move on to the Sixth Heaven, Jupiter.** The souls spell out the message *Diligite iustitiam, qui iudicatis terram* ("Love justice, you who judge the earth"),

**Dante** invokes the Muses to help him remember the letters as they come so he can **spell out** their **message** in his mind. His prayer is answered, and he gets this as the final **message**: *diligite iustitiam, qui iudicatis terram*. The Latin translates to, "**Love justice, you who judge the earth.**" and then form the Eagle.

The Eagle explains Divine Justice and the inscrutability of God's Mind. It introduces the six spirits that form its eye and explains why the Emperor Trajan and Ripheus are there. Trajan's rule was a time of **great** prosperity for Rome. **Ripheus** is most notable for his role in Dante's *Paradiso*, where he appears in the sphere of Jupiter among the virtuous rulers of India.

Virtuous rulers abound in history and many lands, like they did in the Dante clan during the Middle Ages. Rock Edict 13, states about Ashoka that he conquered Kalinga 8

years after his ascension to the throne. During his conquest of Kalinga, 100,000 men and animals were **killed** in action and many times that number "perished"; 150,000 men and animals were carried away from Kalinga as captives. Ashoka killed millions for his empire before deciding to take Buddhism seriously. Ashoka pleaded for tolerance of different religious sects in an attempt to create a sense of harmony.

The policy of Dhamma was introduced which laid stress on non-violence, giving up war and conquests and restraint on the killing of animals. However, Ashoka realized that a certain display of his politics always necessary to keep the primitive forest-dwelling tribes in check.

The policy of Dhamma also included other welfare measures, like the planting of trees and digging of wells.

**They continue to the Seventh Heaven, Saturn.** Dante sees the golden ladder from earth to heaven. Here there are no smiles and no symphonies! The golden staircase leading up out is now of his sight. The shape of a ladder is also different. There are circles of the heaven of the sun, the cross of the heaven of Mars, the eagle of the heaven of Jupiter.

The ladder leads somewhere; it goes to beyond the pilgrim's field of vision, indicating a path toward an 'end goal'- the "supreme end of Dante's endeavour. The ladder is the beginning of the end, but he cannot see to where this ladder leads. Up and down this ladder move souls of the contemplatives, who belong to the heaven of Saturn.

One of these souls approaches Dante.

Dante asks the soul two questions. The questions seem straightforward and not at all problematic, but the first, especially, will be cause for alarm.

Why is it that this particular soul out of all the souls in Saturn, has chosen to draw near to Dante?

Second, what has caused the cessation of the music of paradise, given that the music sounds devotedly through the other spheres?

The soul, is as yet unidentified Cacciaguida, explains that it does not draw near to Dante because he feels no greater love for Dante than for any other soul in this heaven where love in heaven as spirit-flames, exceeds his deeply personal heaven of Mars!

Dante acknowledges he belongs to the same bloodline and awakens in Cacciaguida deep affective bonds as his kin and descendant. Dante was hoping to make amends for any unintended effrontery asks; was he the soul specifically predestined to approach him? The pilgrim Dante is on shaky ground because predestination cannot be fathomed by a human intellect.

Dante then reformulates his question making it less personal hoping to make amends for any unintended effrontery. But the reformulation of the question is theologically presumptuous. The soul turns out to be the monastic contemplative Saint Peter Damian.

Dante meets St. Peter Damian, who denounces degenerate prelates. The Benedictine monk was a cardinal in the circle of Pope Leo IX. Dante placed him in one of the highest circles of Paradiso as a great predecessor of Saint Francis of Assisi who was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1828. The Spirits meanwhile cry out in encouragement and Dante faints from the Energy present.

Dante next meets Italian St. Benedict of **Norcia**, founder of the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino and father of Western monasticism; the rule that he established became the norm for monastic living throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, Pope Paul VI proclaimed him the patron saint of all Europe.

**Beatrice and Dante move up to the Eighth Heaven, the Fixed Stars.** Dante gazes down on Earth and realizes how small and petty it is. They witness the coronation and re-ascension of Mary and Christ into the Empyrean (dwelling-place of God).

St. Peter (Prince of Apostles and the First Pope) examines Dante on **faith**.

Dante conveys his **hope** of returning to Florence one day to be crowned as a poet.

St. James examines Dante on hope.

As though they were staring at the sun in an eclipse, gazing at Saint John causes **Dante to go blind**. He is like someone who, wishing to see, **becomes** sightless.

**St. John the Apostle**, an apostle of Jesus.

St. John examines Dante on **charity**, as in Love

**Adam answers Dante's four questions.**

The soul of **Adam**, the first man created, joins the three apostles--including the first pope (Peter)--surrounding Dante and Beatrice in the sphere of the fixed stars: specifically, in the constellation of Gemini, Dante's birth stars.

Adam's creation and life in the earthly paradise (Eden) are recounted from Genesis (2:7 to 5:5): he is made of the "slime of the earth" and endowed with a living soul, and then given free reign in the "paradise of pleasure" with the warning not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil; Adam names the creatures of the earth and is given a female companion (fashioned by God from Adam's rib); deceived by the serpent, Eve eats the forbidden fruit, as does Adam, for which they lose their innocence and are cast out of paradise to live out their days.

Adam articulates the four questions on Dante's mind (26.109-14): 1) when Adam was created (and placed in Eden), that is, how old he is; 2) how long he was allowed to enjoy Eden; 3) the reason for God's anger; 4) the specific language Adam made and used.

Adam quickly, and vaguely, dispatches with the third question: in terms similar to those used by **Ulysses in hell**, he says that his fault was not that he ate from the forbidden tree but that he was wrong "only for passing beyond the sign" (26.117; see *Inf.* 26.106-9).

He next provides the numbers required to answer the first question, his current "age": having spent 930 years on earth and 4,302 years in Limbo, Adam has passed another 1266 years in heaven (Christ "freed" him from Limbo in the year 34 and the current year is 1300).

Adam is therefore 6,498 years old. In his long response to the fourth question, Adam emphasizes the mutability and variability of language: his original tongue was already extinct by the time Nimrod attempted the presumptuous task of constructing a tower to heaven (Genesis 11:1-9), a view in direct contradiction with Dante's earlier theory that humankind shared a single, original language until the construction of the tower of Babel. The brevity of Adam's final response, to the question of the length of his stay in Eden: he and Eve lived in paradise for somewhere between six and seven hours. Dante chooses the shortest possible time frame for Adam and Eve's fall from innocence.

St. Peter meanwhile denounces corrupt popes.

**Beatrice and Dante then move on to the Ninth Heaven**, the Primum Mobile. Beatrice prophesies the coming redemption of the world.

Dante sees the model of the nine Angelic Intelligences orbiting a shining Point. Beatrice explains the inconsistency between it and the material universe.

Beatrice tells Dante the Creation story, explains the order of the universe, and clears up the question about the number of existing angels.

**They move up into the Tenth Heaven, the Empyrean.** Dante sees the illusion and then the real Celestial Rose. Beatrice points out the seat reserved for Henry VIII.

Beatrice disappears and is replaced by St. Bernard. Dante prays his thanks to Beatrice. Next, Dante gazes on Mary, mother of Jesus.

St. Bernard explains the placement of the blessed in the Celestial Rose, including that of the innocent infants.

St. Bernard prays to Mary to intercede to God on Dante's behalf so the poet may look on God.

Mary approves. Dante looks into the Eternal Light, and sees within it the image of the Holy Trinity.

He ponders the mystery of the Incarnation. God places the answer on him in a flash of light and Dante's soul is, finally, at one with God's.