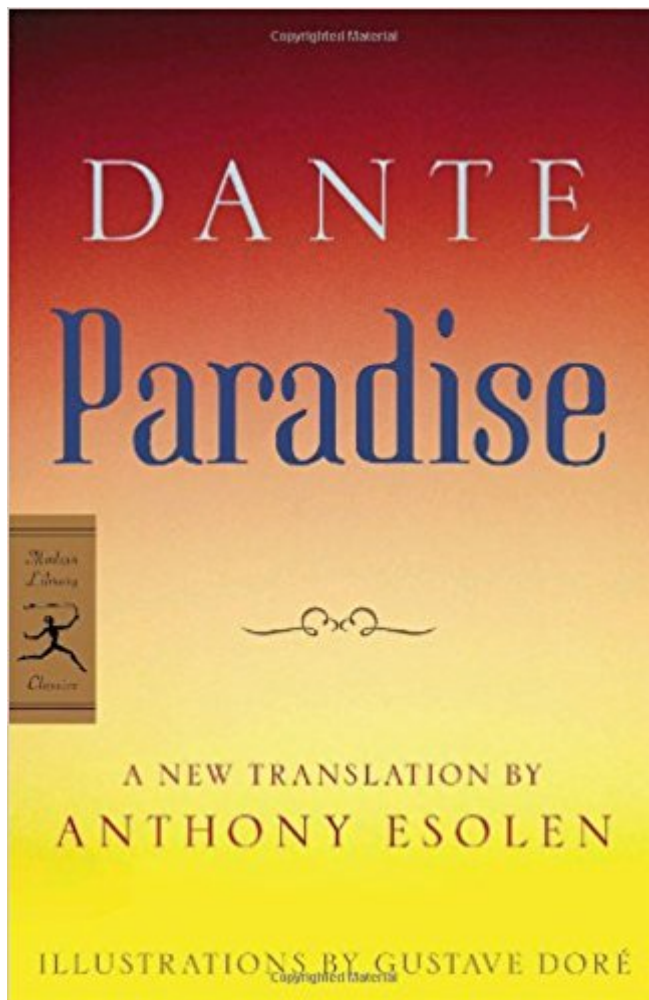


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# Paradise (Modern Library Classics)



## Synopsis

“If there is any justice in the world of books, [Dante’s] will be the standard for some time to come.” —Robert Royal, *Crisis*

In this, the concluding volume of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante ascends from the devastation of the *Inferno* and the trials of Purgatory. Led by his beloved Beatrice, he enters Paradise, to profess his faith, hope, and love before the Heavenly court. Completed shortly before his death, Paradise is the volume that perhaps best expresses Dante’s spiritual philosophy about resurrection, redemption, and the nature of divinity. It also affords modern-day readers a clear window into late medieval perceptions about faith. A bilingual text, classic illustrations by Gustave Doré, an appendix that reproduces Dante’s key sources, and other features make this the definitive edition of Dante’s ultimate masterwork.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The *Divine Comedy* is a complete scale of the depths and heights of human emotion," wrote T.S. Eliot. "The last canto of the *Paradiso* is to my thinking the highest point that poetry has ever reached or ever can reach." The *Divine Comedy* stands as one of the towering creations of world literature, and its climactic section, the *Paradiso*, is perhaps the most ambitious poetic attempt ever made to represent the merging of individual destiny with universal order. Having passed through Hell and Purgatory, Dante is led by his beloved Beatrice to the upper sphere of Paradise, wherein lie the sublime truths of Divine will and eternal salvation, to at last experience a rapturous vision of God. "A

spectacular achievement," said poet and critic Archibald MacLeish of John Ciardi's version of Dante's masterpiece. "A text with the clarity and sobriety of a first-rate prose translation which at the same time suggests in powerful and unmistakable ways the run and rhythm of the great original."

Anthony Esolen is a professor of English at Providence College. He is the author of *Peppers*, a book of poetry, and his translations include Lucretius's *De rerum natura* and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, along with Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatory*, published by the Modern Library. Dante Alighieri was born in Florence in 1256. He entered public life in 1295, later becoming one of the six governing magistrates of Florence. He repeatedly opposed the machinations of Pope Boniface VIII, who was attempting to place all of Tuscany under Papal rule, and in 1301 was banished from Florence. Dante would never again enter his native city, spending his remaining years with a series of patrons in various Italian courts. He completed *The Divine Comedy* shortly before his death in 1321. Gustave Doré (1832-83) was one of the most popular and prolific French illustrators of the mid 19th century.

In *Paradise*, Dante's taken on an impossible task: describing the indescribable. Even St. Paul found it impossible to recount his mystical experience of heaven. The *Inferno* and *Purgatory* read like journeys onto which theological and philosophical points are appended. *Paradise* reads more like a theological treatise onto which a journey is appended. Dante's vision of *Paradise* is deeply poetic, thoughtful, theological, and thought-provoking. Dante's description of the fall of the angels (and Esolen's notes thereon) are particularly insightful. Dante (the poet not the character in the poem) spends much effort on what constitutes a just ruler and on the relationship between Church and state. Never does he discuss the joy in heaven over the repentant sinner. Nor does he present the saints he meets as active intercessors for those on earth, though in canto xviii Dante the character does ask the heavenly army to pray for those led astray by a corrupt pope, and later (xxxii) he asks Beatrice to pray for him. In the final canto St. Bernard intercedes for Dante, begging the intercession of the Blessed Virgin that Dante may behold the beatific vision. But all those folks on earth who beg the saints to pray for them? I didn't notice any saint responding to the entreaties of those on earth, or indeed, even acknowledging that he heard their prayers. I did not find Doré's illustrations of much value in my appreciation of *Paradise*, unlike with the *Inferno* and *Purgatory*. I thought the final cantos of *Paradise* were the volume's strongest. Esolen's Introduction and his notes are very good aids. I've read (and reviewed on ) Esolen's translations of the three books of the *Divine Comedy*. He's to be complimented on these highly readable and reasonably priced books.

The introduction to this book is comprehensive and thoughtful. Anthony Esolen writes beautifully and does a great job of explaining the framework of Dante's Paradise. The notes are extremely helpful, too, though I think I would have preferred footnotes to end notes, as I had to keep flipping to the back. It was a minor distraction, however, and I never would have begun to appreciate Dante's poetry without Esolen's notes. If anybody is interested in more, the author is preparing a series of instructional CD's for the entire Divine Comedy. As of this writing, only the CD's on the Inferno are available, but I'm eagerly awaiting the rest of the series because I think Esolen has a great way of explaining things.

A friend and I read the whole of Dr. Esolen's beautiful translation of Dante's Divine Comedy (I am copying this review to the other two canticles) over a few months, along with the DVD lecture series on it that Dr. Esolen has made, which is available through different vendors. I HIGHLY recommend the project to anyone, particularly Catholics, because while the footnotes and endnotes are outstanding, the lecture series really brings it home to our lives and spirituality. We did this exercise because Bishop Barron had commented how fruitful the Divine Comedy was for his spiritual life and ministry. Having a lecture series and set of matching translations by a consummate scholar and faithful Catholic, who translated Dante's great Catholic opus into a work that can be appreciated by today's students, is a precious pearl beyond price, and I am so grateful I was able to have and use it. (The OCD in me wishes that the books had coordinated covers, but I don't judge a book by its cover!)

Esolen is a genius.. What a terrific translation of an unparalleled classic.

good condition and the best Dante translation for the modern reader

I loved the entire Divine Comedy and Anthony Esolen's translation is a great one to read. I asked for recommendations before deciding on my translation, and was so glad I did. Thank you Mr. Esolen!

Enjoyable rendition.

Ok

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