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**HOLY AND UNHOLY VIOLENCE IN DANTE:
FROM HELL TO PURGATORY AND PARADISE¹**

*In ricordo di Edoardo Lèbano e di Albert N. Mancini:
illustri maestri, colleghi fedeli, carissimi amici.*

“*Regnum celorum* violenza pate
da caldo amore e da viva speranza,
che vince la divina volontate [...]”
(*Par.* 20.94-96)

Abstract: Shortly after being created, some angels rebelled against God. As Lucifer fell from heaven down to the earth, the earth opened, forming the abyss into which the rebellious angels plunged. Created after the angels and placed in the Earthly Paradise, the primogenitors too disobeyed their creator and were expelled from Eden. These two rebellions—that of the angels and of man—mark the beginning of the world upside down viewed within an all-encompassing Judeo-Christian perspective. To bring humans not just to their primordial condition but to a much higher state, Christ dies on the cross and sheds his blood, announcing the possibility of an end to the need of all violence, sacred and profane. Dante’s Hell is a testimony to a world gone awry and to humans’ refusal of Christ’s sacrifice. Dante the Pilgrim experiences the consequences of sin, he then atones, and purifies himself. He finally ascends to God, rising from heaven to heaven as he looks in the eyes of Beatrice. As he arrives in the heaven of the martyrs, he offers himself as a “holocaust”: a wholly spiritual self-sacrifice. The language of violence—now totally transformed—accompanies him up to the vision of the Trinity. Using the same terms employed to describe Capaneus’ defeat by Jove, Dante the Pilgrim is metaphorically struck (“percosso”) by a bolt of lightning.

Keywords: Creation, angelic rebellion, Adam and Eve’s fall, the angel with the fall and the fire, Cain’s murder, Abel’s blood, the world upside down, holy and unholy violence, purification and transformation, spiritual holocaust, Dante is struck.

Preamble: Chaos, Creation, Unholy and Holy Violence

Christ suffered the most extreme form of violence, shed his blood, and died on the cross to redeem humankind from the so-called original sin, due to Adam and Eve’s fall, as well as every individual’s personal faults. In shedding his blood on the cross, Christ offered, and still offers, to all humans the grace, not just to acquire once again Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian condition, for a lost innocence

¹ This essay is a shorter version of a much more extensive work, which deals with the same themes outlined here and seeks to offer a unified approach to the *Divine Comedy*. *Annali d’italianistica* 39 (2021). *Unholy & Holy Violence in Dante’s Comedy*