CHAPTER 2

Dante's Political Polemic
Church and Empire

This chapter analyses the political dimension of Dante's ethical thought. In the first part, I present a preliminary outline of Dante's ethical–political theory, as it is articulated in the *Monarchia*. A dominant critical tradition has emphasised 'the fundamental difference' between the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*. I demonstrate, by contrast, the fundamental unity between these two works, and show how Dante's distinctive theory, with its strict division between temporal and spiritual power, underlies some of the key surprises that we find in his depiction of the other-world, in relation to previous traditions both popular and learned about the afterlife.[1] The second part of this chapter analyses Dante's striking presentation of pagans in the afterlife. I argue that, for Dante, the virtuous pagan instantiates secular human flourishing (man's earthly ethical goal) in a poem which literally depicts the afterlife. I also show how Dante's presentation of pagans, and especially Roman pagans, forms a major structural argument for the divinely mandated vocation of the Holy Roman Empire, a key thesis of the *Monarchia* as well. The third part of the chapter examines Dante's treatment of popes and prelates in the afterlife. I argue that, in line with the dualistic theory of the *Monarchia*, this contributes to a highly controversial manifesto for the radical reform of the Roman Church.

Dante's Dualistic Ethical–Political Theory

Towards the end of his life, Dante developed a friendship with the Bolognese professor Giovanni del Virgilio, exchanging poetical epistles

[1] My analysis draws on Morgan's extremely informative study of the topographical motifs and inhabitants found in popular traditions about the afterlife (Morgan, *Dante and the Medieval Other World*). For a selection of texts about the afterlife prior to Dante, see also Eileen Gardiner, *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante* (New York: Italica, 1989).

which have come down to us as his Latin eclogues.[2] After Dante's death, Giovanni composed an epitaph in memory of the theologian-poet, who, he writes, assigned 'to the dead, their places, and to the twin swords, their kingdoms' ('qui loca defunctis, gladiisque regnumque gemellis').[3] In this single line, Giovanni celebrates, and gives equal weight to, Dante's vision of the Christian afterlife in the three canticles of the *Commedia*, and to his argument for the strict division between temporal and spiritual power (the 'twin swords') in the three books of *De Monarchia*.

The relationship between temporal and spiritual power was one of the most contested issues of Dante's period. In the late thirteenth century, a progressive *via media* had been adopted by Christian-Aristotelian scholars (typically accommodating the relative autonomy of these two powers with degrees of indirect subordination). At the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, positions became more polarised.[4] In 1302, the extreme papal claim for the direct subordination of temporal to spiritual power was represented by Giles of Rome's *De ecclesiastica potestate* and Pope Boniface VIII's derivative *Unam Santam*.[5] In the same year, John of Paris's *Tractatus de regia potestate et papali* rebuffed these claims, arguing instead that the strict division between temporal and spiritual power is divinely mandated, and that if the pope abuses the spiritual sword ('gladius spiritualis'), a temporal monarch may legitimately wage war against him, as an enemy of the public good.[6]

Dante's *De Monarchia* takes this division of jurisdictions to its extreme: Dante argues for the complete independence of two hemispheres of

[2] See Philip H. Wicksteed and Edmund G. Gardner, 'Dante's Eclogues and del Virgilio's Poetic Remains', in Philip H. Wicksteed and Edmund G. Gardner, *Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio* (London: Archibald Constable & Company, 1902), pp. 117–75.

[3] Ibid., p. 174.

[4] Thus, in *De regno* (c. 1267), Aquinas clearly distinguishes the role of the monarch, with responsibility for the temporal sphere, from the priest, with responsibility for the spiritual sphere, but he argues for the indirect power ('potestas indirecta') of the pope in temporal matters ('in temporalibus'). For a helpful analysis of the context of this debate, see Matthew S. Kempshall, 'Accidental Perfection: Ecclesiology and Political Thought in *Monarchia*', in *Dante and the Church*, ed. by Paolo Acquaviva and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 127–71.

[5] Giles of Rome may even have been the author of the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302). The views of *Unam Sanctam*, in any case, bear clear resemblance to Giles's *De Regimine Principum* (1277–80) and *De ecclesiastica potestate* (1302). See Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate*, ed. and trans. by Arthur P. Monahan (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) and Giles of Rome, *De renunciatione pape,* ed. and trans. into German by John R. Eastman (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

[6] John of Paris, *Tractatus de regia potestate et papali*, in Johannes Quidort von Paris, *Über königliche und päpstliche Gewalt (De regia potestate et papali)*, ed. and trans. into German by Fritz Bleinstein (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1969), and see especially cap. XXII. l. 9–11, p. 196.

human conduct institutionally governed by the Empire and the Church.[7] Dante's rationale for this theory combines a particular interpretation of Aristotelian anthropology with a novel extension of Aristotle's political theory to apply to universal empire. He starts from the premise that man, uniquely amongst animals, has a hybrid nature: as mortal, man pertains to the world of time and contingency; as immortal, he connects to the sphere of eternity. In virtue of this, man has two ethical goals: human flourishing in this life and the beatific vision in the next. Dante then argues that the means to attain these goals have been revealed by the teachings of philosophy and of Divine revelation, respectively, and that the institutions divinely ordained to facilitate these journeys are the Empire (with temporal power and the responsibility for man's earthly felicity) and the Church (with spiritual power and the responsibility for man's eternal beatitude).[8] For Dante, then, the Church should possess no temporal power or wealth.

Dante's distinction between the *lex naturalis* and the *lex divina*, although not ubiquitous in thirteenth-century thought, is a feature of those scholastic authors committed to the recuperation of neo-Aristotelian philosophy.[9] But whereas St Thomas Aquinas, for example, integrates and subordinates the order of nature to the order of grace, Dante's strategy of two autonomous ethical goals emphasises distinction and separation rather than integration.[10] This leads to three problematic ethical implications: (1) it potentially relegates the function of Christianity solely to man's eternal destiny in the next life; (2) the intrinsic perfectibility of human nature appears to render 'healing grace' (*gratia sanans*) redundant, with the implication that only 'elevating grace' (*gratia elevans*) is

[7] Dante's only concession to papal supremacy, which does not include any compromise of temporal power, is his analogy to the reverence that a son owes his father. See *Mon.* III, xv, 118.

[8] Although Dante develops this theory in *Convivio* III–IV, its most concise statement appears in the final chapter of *De Monarchia* (see *Mon.* III, xv, 1–18).

[9] Kenelm Foster's scholarship, which carefully distinguishes Dante's approach to the relationship between the order of nature and the order of grace from the approaches of his immediate contemporaries and predecessors (and, in particular, from the approach of Aquinas), remains foundational. For two recently published monographs which explicitly build on Foster's seminal work on this subject, see John Took, *Conversations with Kenelm: Essays on the Theology of the 'Commedia'* (London: Ubiquity Press, 2013), and Christopher Ryan, *Dante and Aquinas: A Study of Nature and Grace in the 'Comedy'* (London: University College London Arts & Humanities Publications and Ubiquity Press, 2013).

[10] In Aquinas's synthesis, the moral virtues are endowed with 'an entirely new setting and direction' as they become 'organs of grace': the moral virtues are 'offered to God as a way – as *the* way – of cooperating with his grace' (Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 254). See also Etienne Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, trans. by David Moore (London: Sheed and Ward, 1949; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968). Gilson argues that Dante writes his *Monarchia* as an anti-thesis to Aquinas's *De regimine Principum* (Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, pp. 191–201).

theoretically necessary for man; and (3) it establishes a dichotomy and tension between man's pursuit of an earthly goal and his (apparently competing) pursuit of an eternal goal.[11] The political ramifications are correspondingly problematic. Where other Christian-Aristotelian authors advocated a *via media* mediating between temporal and spiritual power, Dante takes the distinction between *homo naturalis* and *homo Christianus* to an extreme. By doing so, he justifies the autonomy of Empire and Church which, in his view, independently derive their authority directly from God.

Dante's radical dualistic theory, particularly given the extreme theocratic pretensions of the contemporary papacy, could not but suffer rebuke. Only six years after Dante's death, it was lambasted by the Dominican Guido Vernani in *De reprobatione 'Monarchiae' compositae a Dante Alighiero Florentino*. Dante's theory was, moreover, politically explosive.[12] In 1326, when Louis of Bavaria marched into Italy to oppose Pope John XXII and to install the anti-pope Nicholas V, Dante's *Monarchia* was cited by the Imperial side to rally troops to its cause.[13] Meanwhile, Bertrand du Pouget, the papal legate in Italy, accused Dante of heresy, ordered all copies of his *Monarchia* to be publicly burnt, and threatened to disinter and incinerate Dante's bodily remains.[14] Dante's *Monarchia* was subsequently placed on

[11] Foster, *The Two Dantes*, pp. 238–39: 'It was much less easy to find Christianity a place, *consonant with the philosophical model*, within the course of human life on earth; for here philosophy seemed already to provide all the required concepts . . . the influence of divine grace in the human soul and body in the present life – a central issue for Christian ethics – is entirely ignored' [the italics are Foster's]. Dante conceptualises human nature as a limit which 'had to be crossed – transcended and left behind – in the hero's quest for God' (Ibid., p. 157); 'the idea of human perfectibility to be realised before death and within the limits of human nature; this being distinguished with a quite new precision, from the "new man" of Christian teaching, from our nature as transformed by divine grace' (Ibid., p. 220).

[12] *Contro Dante* (*Contra Dantem) Fr. Guidonis Vernani tractatus 'De reprobatione "Monarchiae" compositae a Dante Alighiero Florentino*, ed. and trans. into Italian by Jarro (G. Piccini) (Florence, Rome, and Milan: R. Bemporad & figlio, 1906). For an English translation of Vernani's treatise, as well as of Pope John XXII's Bull *Si fratrum*, and for an introduction to the reception of Dante's *Monarchia*, see Anthony K. Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's 'Monarchia', Guido Vernani's 'Refutation of the "Monarchia" Composed by Dante', and Pope John XXII's Bull 'Si fratrum'* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004).

[13] See Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy*, pp. 34–41: 'Just how deeply Dante's elegant, poetical, and theological *Monarchia*, comandeered by Ludwig's propagandists, influenced these historic charades we can only conjecture, but we do know how it suffered' (p. 37). See also 'L'opera di Dante lodata da Graziolo Bambaglioli', in *Dante e Firenze: Prose antiche*, ed. by Oddone Zenatti (Florence: Sansoni, 1984), pp. 1–3; and 'Preface', in *Vernani*, ed. by Jarro, p. vi.

[14] See Adriano Comollo, 'Accuse, condanne, anatemi di autorità religiose e politiche contro Dante: La censura e Dante', in *Il dissenso religioso in Dante* (Florence: Olschki, 1990), pp. 41–53. See also Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy*, pp. 3–107 (p. 38).

the Vatican index of prohibited books in 1554, only to be removed in 1881.[15]

It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that the early commentators and readers, right up to the twentieth century, showed little regard for the *Monarchia* (with only limited reading of the *Convivio*) – and paid little attention to Dante's dualistic theory – in their interpretation of the poem. Leaving aside the restricted early readership of the *Monarchia* and the *Convivio*, it is understandable that the early Dante enthusiasts who commented on his poem, the first of whom included his sons Pietro and Jacopo d'Alighieri, shied away from reading the *Commedia* in light of this extreme dualism.[16] But even much of twentieth-century Dante scholarship, which scarcely needed to protect Dante's poem in this way, sought to limit this dualism to Dante's Latin and vernacular prose works (marginalised as chronologically earlier 'minor works'). Thus Bruno Nardi, a dominant scholar in this tradition, claimed that 'In the *Commedia* there is no more trace of the "two final ends" of the *Monarchia*.'[17] Kenelm Foster and Etienne Gilson, both acute readers of philosophical heterodoxy in Dante's prose works, were still keen to emphasise that 'the *Comedy* is quite another matter' and that its subject 'is theological – the final aims of man (*ultima regna*)'.[18]

More recently, the compositional chronology underlining this view – that Dante's *Monarchia* represents a dualistic stage in his intellectual trajectory that the poet left behind when he began writing the *Commedia* – has been systematically refuted. Modern philological evidence dates the

[15] For the reception and censorship of the *Monarchia* in the sixteenth century, see Davide Dalmas, *Dante nella crisi religiosa del Cinquecento italiano* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2005): 'Dopo esser stato esaltato nel *Catalogus Testium Veritatis* (1556), perché "probavit Papam non esse supra Imperatorem, nec habere aliquod jus in Imperium", il trattato dantesco è stampato per la prima volta a Basilea nel 1559 presso Oporinus, in una raccolta di scritti politici – aperta dal *De formula Romani Imperij* di Andrea Alciato – concordi nell'elevare l'autorità imperiale rispetto a quella papale' (pp. 12–13).

[16] The most recent treatment of the reception of the *Convivio* is that by Simon A. Gilson, 'Reading the *Convivio* from Trecento Florence to Dante's Cinquecento Commentators', *Italian Studies*, 64: 2 (2009), 266–95. Gilson finds no positive evidence to suggest that Dante circulated the treatise during his lifetime, although he notes Claudia Villa as, most recently, sustaining the minority view (n. 4, p. 268). The three thirteenth-century commentators who do make use of the *Convivio* in their commentaries on the *Commedia* (Dante's son Pietro, Andrea Lancia, and the writer of the *Ottimo Commento*) either knew Dante directly or were active in Florence (p. 269). This suggests a limited dissemination of the text in the immediate period after Dante's death. Indeed, as Gilson shows, the work attained wide circulation beyond Tuscany only with the *editio princeps* in 1490.

[17] Bruno Nardi, *Dal 'Convivio' alla 'Commedia'*, ed. with a new introduction by Ovidio Capitani (Rome: Muratori, 1992), p. 311: 'Nella *Commedia* non v'è più traccia dei "duo ultima" della *Monarchia*.'

[18] Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 160; Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, pp. 277–78.

Monarchia to the last few years of Dante's life, when the greater part of the *Commedia* was already written.[19] Prue Shaw has argued convincingly that 'there seems no good reason to doubt' the authenticity of 'the cross-reference in Book I to the *Paradiso*' and, therefore, that the *Monarchia* was written 'certainly no earlier than 1314 and possibly [during] the very last years of its author's life'.[20] Further recent historical and contextual arguments have corroborated Shaw's thesis. Specifically, they have narrowed the dating of the *Monarchia* to after 1316 and, most probably, to the years 1317–18.[21]

This might make us reconsider Dante's *Commedia* and *Monarchia* not only as (in Giovanni del Virgilio's estimation) his two most significant works, but also as fundamentally related. Dante's eschatological poem in the vernacular certainly served, like his political thesis in Latin, as imperial propaganda, calling insistently for the restoration of the 'two suns' (Empire and Church) in Rome: 'Soleva Roma, che 'l buon mondo feo, / due soli aver, che l'una e l'altra strada / facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo' [Rome, which made the world good, used to have two suns that made visible the two paths, of the world and of God] (*Purg.* XVI, 106–8). But, as we shall see, Dante's radical theory also profoundly influenced the very structure of his vision of the afterlife, contributing to an innovative, and distinctly politicised, eschatology. We can observe the imperial and papal dimensions of Dante's dualistic ethical–political argument particularly clearly, I believe, in his representation of pagans and popes in the *Commedia*.

Pagans in Dante's Christian Afterlife, and the Ideal of Empire

Alison Morgan's analysis of the demography of Dante's afterlife overturned the generally held critical assumption that his introduction of contemporary

[19] Thus, Nardi, Gilson, and Foster – all of whom highlighted the heterodoxy of Dante's dualism in his prose works – nonetheless regarded this as a phase in Dante's intellectual development which was left behind, or not directly relevant to, the project of the *Commedia*. All three scholars, at least initially, worked on the basis of the incorrect premise that both the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia* preceded the composition of the *Commedia*.

[20] Dante, *Monarchy*, trans. and ed. by Prue Shaw, p. xxxiii.

[21] Dante, *Monarchia*, trans. with commentary by Richard Kay, pp. xx–xxxi; Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy*, pp. 3–49. Charles Till Davis reaffirms the centrality of Dante's distinctive political convictions in the *Commedia*, convincingly overturning the characteristic view of his teacher, Alessandro Passerin d'Entrèves's generation, that the *Monarchia* was an 'aberration'. See, for example, Charles Till Davis, 'Dante and the Empire', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 257–69 (p. 257). However, although highlighting the political content, Davis does not explore the implications for the formal structure of Dante's afterlife.

and obscure figures, and his portrayal of them as 'lifelike individuals', were major, original contributions to Christian eschatology.[22] Although Dante may be the first to combine a classificatory moral scheme with detailed characterisation ('a convincing character who incarnates the sin of which he is suffering the consequence'), Morgan shows how, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many examples of 'obscure individuals' emerged in popular visions of the afterlife, many of whom were portrayed as 'rounded characters'.[23] Dante's originality lies, instead, 'in the inclusion of classical figures, who are totally unrepresented in the earlier medieval texts'.[24] Of the approximately three hundred characters resident in Dante's otherworld, eighty-four are classical figures. Why, then, does Dante not only include classical figures, itself a novelty in prior vision literature, but include them in such great numbers? Morgan's explanation is brief and reductive: the visions are 'popular in nature', whereas Dante, in the *Commedia*, is – by including classical figures – attempting to unite the learned and popular traditions, to aspire to the grandeur of a classical epic.[25]

There is, I think, much more to Dante's innovative inclusion of classical figures in his vision of the afterlife than literary ambition. Indeed, arguably more startling than Dante's inclusion of classical figures is the location in which more than half of them (fifty-one), and more than one sixth of the total characters in the poem, are to be found: Limbo, the first circle of Dante's Hell. The representation of Limbo, of itself, was unproblematic. It was conventionally identified with 'Abraham's bosom', the place inhabited by faithful Jews (the *limbus patronum*) until the harrowing of Hell. That Limbo was still occupied in 1300, the date of the poem, was also unproblematic. Many thirteenth-century theologians supported the hypothesis that unbaptised infants, dying with original but not personal sin, would eternally occupy Limbo (the *limbus infantium*); there they

[22] See Morgan, *Dante*, pp. 72–73: 'Contemporary characters ... make up a greater proportion, numerically, of the inhabitants of the other world in previous representations than in the *Comedy*; in this respect Dante's originality has hitherto been greatly overestimated.'

[23] Ibid., pp. 51–53.

[24] Ibid., p. 54. It is important to register, however, that although pagans may not be present in the hundred or so popular visions of the afterlife that Morgan examines, the issue of pagan salvation or the fate of pagans in the afterlife was taken up in other, more learned texts. For an examination of 'the problem of paganism' up to and beyond the time of Dante, see John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[25] Morgan, *Dante*, p. 58. 'Dante's introduction of classical figures is innovatory, and consonant with the aim of writing a work which would rival the classical epic as well as take account of the classical revival of the twelfth century' (p. 72).

would suffer the lack of the vision of God, but no exterior or interior pain. In contrast, the notion that Limbo would be occupied by grown men and women, and pagans to boot, was – as the reception of Dante's first readers testifies – deeply problematic and troubling.[26] Augustine explicitly ruled out the possibility of a Limbo, equivalent to the *limbus infantium*, for pagans as 'shameless presumption' because all pagan virtue is contaminated.[27] Aquinas was perfectly comfortable with pagan salvation, and had developed a sophisticated theory of implicit faith whereby a pagan, even just by believing in Divine providence, could be seen implicitly to believe in Christ to come.[28] Nevertheless, Aquinas argued that it would be simply impossible for an adult, having reached the age of discretion, to avoid personal sin and die only with original sin.[29] Dante, however, adopts precisely this state as the moral situation of the virtuous pagans in the *Commedia* and, just as importantly, rejects the theory of implicit faith, thereby damning the 'virtuous pagans' to Limbo eternally.[30]

Why does Dante include so many classical figures (itself unprecedented) in the afterlife and, against major theological authorities, locate the majority of these (fifty-one) in, of all places, Limbo? The answer, I believe, lies in his dualistic theory. Dante uses the virtuous pagan – to whom the spiritual goal, Divine revelation, and the institutional Church were of course unavailable – to figuratively represent secular human flourishing (man's earthly goal) in a poem which literally depicts the afterlife.[31]

For the overall topology and structure of Dante's Hell, two occupants of Limbo are particularly significant: Dante's guide, Virgil, and Aristotle. For visionaries of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the choice of guide was typically fulfilled by a guardian angel, a local saint, a church

[26] For example, Guido da Pisa simply states that Dante's Limbo of the virtuous pagans is contrary to 'our faith', according to which no souls except innocent children reside in Limbo ('Sed nostra fides non tenet quod ibi sint nisi parvuli innocentes'; Guido da Pisa, gloss to *Inf.* IV, 82–84).

[27] Augustine, *Contra Iulianum haeresis Pelagiannae defensorem*, IV, iii, 26.

[28] See Kenelm Foster's seminal analysis of Aquinas's doctrine of implicit faith in relation to Dante's treatment of virtuous pagans, in *The Two Dantes*, pp. 156–89 (especially p. 172).

[29] See, for example, Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 12. Through his free will, man may avoid sin in individual instances but, without grace, he cannot avoid – at some point – falling into mortal sin ('nisi per gratiam a peccato liberetur, in aliquod peccatum mortale quandoque incidet').

[30] For a fuller discussion, see 'The Limbus Gentilium Virtuosum', in Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, pp. 123–29.

[31] This area of Limbo is implicitly compared to Virgil's Elysian fields and contains, alongside illustrious poets, two further groups: noble pagans who exemplify moral virtue and a 'philosophical family' which exemplifies intellectual flourishing.

patron, or the founder of an order.[32] Although Dante absorbs many of the characteristic features of the relationship between visionary and guide, his choice of guide, then, is striking: Virgil is neither an angel nor a saint, but instead a pagan who, as we soon discover, is eternally damned. Why Virgil? Clearly, at a meta-poetic level, Dante borrows extensively from Virgil's depiction of the pagan underworld (Hades) in book six of the *Aeneid* to construct his own vision of Hell; at a narrative level, this relationship is embodied by Dante-character literally following Virgil. But once again, there is more to it. In the *Commedia*, Virgil identifies himself not as the poet of the pagan underworld (important though that is), but rather as the poet of Roman Empire ('cantai di quel giusto / figliuol d'Anchise' [I sang of that just son of Anchises]; *Inf.* I, 73–74). This reflects the fact that Dante treats Virgil's *Aeneid*, in his prose works as in the *Commedia*, as a divinely revealed text in which God authorises and legitimates the Roman Empire as *imperium sine fine*.[33]

Dante's eulogy to the pagan poet Virgil in the opening of the poem as 'lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore' [my master and my author] (*Inf.* I, 67–87) is matched only by his eulogy to the pagan philosopher Aristotle in Limbo itself: ''l maestro di color che sanno' [the master of those that know] (*Inf.* IV, 130–32). This choice reflects another remarkable feature of Dante's vision of Hell in relation to its wider context. As Morgan has demonstrated, most of the sins punished in Dante's Hell are found in popular Christian visions of the other-world, or are listed in twelfth- and thirteenth-century confession manuals.[34] What is innovative in Dante's vision, as we have seen, is the subordination of this Christian material and competing classificatory schemes to a distinctively pagan moral categorisation taken principally from Aristotle. When Dante asks about the moral ordering of evil in Hell in *Inferno* XI, Virgil responds with reference not to Christian Scripture, but rather to natural philosophy, citing Aristotle's

[32] See Morgan, *Dante*, pp. 84–107 (especially pp. 93–94).

[33] In the *Convivio*, Dante defends his argument that the Roman Empire was established by Divine providence rather than by brute force with reference to the authority of Virgil's *Aeneid*: 'A costoro – cioè alli Romani – né termine di cose né di tempo pongo; a loro hoe dato imperio sanza fine' [To them – that is to the Romans – I set neither boundary in space or time: to them I have given power without end] (*Conv.* IV, iv, 11). See also Moore, *Studies in Dante*, p. 167: '[Virgil' *Aeneid* is] like a Scripture text, . . . a direct proof of God's purpose for the universal empire of Rome.'

[34] The sins in Dante's Hell frequently parallel those found in the wider Christian vision literature of his time. See Morgan, *Dante*, 108–43 (p. 131): 'Dante's classification of sin is in some sense the result of a marriage between a large mass of traditional material and the Aristotelian categories' (p. 110; p. 131). Even if the actual influences upon his division of evil in Hell are varied, then, this does not alter the fact that Dante is at pains to represent the moral structure of Hell in terms of natural ethics.

Ethics (80), his *Physics* (101) and, arguably, his *Metaphysics* (97) within just twenty-two lines.[35]

Why Dante's particular eulogy of these two pagans, Virgil and Aristotle? This double emphasis reflects Dante's conviction, born from experience, that ethics without power is weak, while power without ethics is dangerous (*Conv.* IV, vi, 17). Dante believed that the pagan Aristotle had given a comprehensive account of secular ethics: 'qui ab Aristotele felicitatem ostensam reostendere conaretur' (*Mon.* I, i, 4). And, contrary to apologists for papal temporal power, he believed that Imperial power was divinely instituted by God to administer justice and to enforce the moral law. As Davis puts it: 'the emperor therefore presides over the moral world. It is his duty to put the ethical teachings of philosophers, especially Aristotle, into effect.'[36] In *Purgatorio* VI, Dante bemoans the empty seat (the 'saddle') of empire: what use are laws (the 'bridle') if there is no one to enforce them (*Purg.* VI, 88–90)? Arguably, then, one purpose of Dante's *Inferno* is to represent in the afterlife the moral justice which, in the absence of an Emperor, Dante saw unfulfilled on Earth.

Nowhere is this political polemic clearer than in the final climax, or rather anti-climax, of Dante's Hell: the depiction of Satan. With regard to the visionary tradition, that Dante's Satan should digest sinners is unremarkable.[37] His image of Satan's three mouths endlessly chewing three sinners, moreover, seems to derive directly from the vivid mosaics in the baptistery of Florence. What is extraordinary, rather, is the identity of two of the three sinners. At the centre, unsurprisingly, is Judas, who betrayed Christ. On either side, however, are the pagan Roman republicans Brutus and Cassius. Where Shakespeare would allow Brutus to justify his tyrannicide by his love for republican Rome ('Not that I lov'd Caesar less, but that I lov'd Rome more'), Dante considers Brutus and Cassius the very worst sinners precisely because, by betraying Julius Caesar, they sought to frustrate the divinely ordered establishment of a universal Roman ruler.

Julius Caesar himself is amongst the 'virtuous pagans' in Limbo: 'Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni' [Caesar in armour with hawk-like eyes]

[35] *Inf.* XI, 80: 'la tua Etica'; XI, 101: 'la tua Fisica'; XI, 97: 'Filosofia'. Busnelli (p. 128) argues that the reference to philosophy must refer specifically to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and not to Aristotelian philosophy in general.

[36] See Davis, 'Dante and the Empire', p. 259. See also Charles Till Davis, *Dante's Italy, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 38: 'Just as Augustus had prepared the earthly stage for Christ's first coming, the "King of the Romans and the Christians" must make the world ready for his final descent.'

[37] See 'The Presentation of Satan', in Morgan, *Dante*, pp. 21–23.

(*Inf.* IV, 123). Indeed, of the pagans lauded for their moral virtue in Limbo (*Inf.* IV, 121–29), all – with the exception of Saladin who is alone and to one side ('e solo, in parte, vidi 'l Saladino'; 129) – are connected to the history of Troy and Rome. Conversely, of the twenty-nine classical figures condemned to corporeal punishment in Hell, many – like Brutus and Cassius – frustrated or sought to frustrate the providential emergence of the Roman Empire. Their attempts are portrayed by Dante as entirely futile. Thus, in the first circle of lust, we encounter Helen and Paris, whose elopement led to the destruction of Troy; Dido, whose love Aeneas had to overcome to found Rome; and Cleopatra who, with Mark-Anthony, turned against Julius Caesar's nephew Augustus. In the eighth circle of fraud, moreover, Ulysses, Diomedes, and Sinon are punished for their role in the deception of the Trojan Horse. In Dante's providential view of human history, the consequent defeat of Troy would ultimately lead to the emergence of the Roman race which, in turn, would eventually subjugate the Greeks to its imperial rule.[38]

Although the vast majority of Dante's classical figures are found either in Limbo (fifty-one) or in the rest of Hell (twenty-nine), three notable exceptions exist: Cato of Utica, the custodian of Purgatory's shores, and Ripheus and Trajan, who are amongst the just in Paradise. Strikingly, Cato is the next character encountered by Dante-character on his other-worldly journey, after Brutus and Cassius. Like them, Cato was a staunch republican and enemy of Julius Caesar. If not in Satan's jaws (he was, after all, no traitor), he should surely, following Augustine's specific condemnation of him as a famous suicide, be condemned with the violent-against-themselves in circle 7.[39] If not there, he should, at the least, be found with Lucretia (another Roman suicide whom Dante, unlike Augustine, deems virtuous) in the first circle of Limbo. Instead, Dante choreographs an elaborate narrative eulogy to Cato on the shores of Purgatory (*Purg.* I, 13–84), a decision that, for the poem's first readers, carried with it more than a whiff of heresy.[40] Why, then, Cato's startling presence here? The reason, I believe, is that Cato signifies the secular perfection of human nobility which Dante, in his dualistic ethical theory, distinguishes from man's eternal, Christian beatitude. Following Roman

[38] Ulysses and Diomedes are punished amongst the counsellors of fraud (*Inf.* XXVI), whereas Sinon is punished amongst the falsifiers of words, the final of the ten 'evil-pockets' (malebolge) which make up the eighth circle of simple fraud (*Inf.* XXX, 91–148).

[39] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, I, 22–24 (23).

[40] See, for example, Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* I, 28–33: 'quae videtur sapere haeresim'.

authors, and with scant regard to subsequent Christian critique, Dante presents Cato as truly the quintessential model and pattern of pagan virtue.

Critics have failed to observe, however, that Cato in Ante-Purgatory is, with respect to his punishment, arguably no different from the virtuous pagans in Limbo. Souls in Ante-Purgatory, like the Limbo dwellers, experience the lack of the Divine vision (*poena damni*) but do not experience corporeal pain (*poena sensus*). What differentiates the state of the souls in Ante-Purgatory from their counterparts in Limbo is that their lack of the Divine vision and of corporeal pain is temporary (they will experience the *poena sensus* on the terraces of Purgatory so as to attain the vision of God in Paradise), whereas the Limbo dwellers' lack of both Divine vision and corporeal pain is eternal. Dante arguably leaves it as ambiguous, then, whether this temporal distinction applies to Cato himself. Were he to remain permanently in Ante-Purgatory (unlike all the Christian souls who pass temporarily through), he would not, in fact, be saved: Ante-Purgatory would then be equivalent in its state (*poena damni* without *poena sensus*) to Limbo, except that Cato, unlike the Limbo dwellers, would be eternally bereft of human company. This fate would be worse than that experienced by his wife Marcia and a punishment, perhaps, for his suicide (in isolating himself from the human community). Most critics, however, have concluded that Cato is saved and will rise, on the last judgement, to heaven (and this may well be the implication of *Purgatorio* I, 73–75).[41]

If Dante leaves open the possibility of Cato's salvation, he is nevertheless insistent on the eternal damnation of Virgil and the other virtuous pagans. Although two virtuous pagans, Ripheus and Trajan, are amongst the blessed in Dante's Paradise, their presence is due to two exceptional miracles which serve to accentuate, and prove, the general rule (*Par.* XX, 106–29). The fate of the souls in Ante-Purgatory, who live with hope and desire for the beatific vision, only intensifies Virgil's consciousness of his own eternal fate – as one who lives without hope in desire (*Inf.* IV, 42). Whereas the long wait of the former – for the excommunicates, thirty times the period of their contumacy; for the rest, the period equal to the duration of their earthly lives – is bearable, Virgil's wait entails little else but despair, as it represents not waiting at all but rather eternal loss

[41] I give a fuller analysis of Dante's reception and representation of Cato of Utica, in Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, pp. 129–33. I did not consider then, as I do here, the parallel eschatological condition of the Limbo dwellers and Cato in Ante-Purgatory, and the implications of this parallel for Cato's salvation (or damnation). Especially given Dante's condemnation of suicide in *Inferno* XIII, the hypothesis that, at the final judgement, Cato will remain eternally alone in Ante-Purgatory is, I think, not an implausible interpretation.

(*Purg.* VII, 7–8). In this way, Dante makes the eternal damnation of Virgil and the other virtuous pagans a key drama in the poem as a whole. Virgil's fate has also exercised critics, many of whom, even from the early commentators, have tried 'to save Virgil'.[42]

It is crucial to reiterate that the damnation of pagans (whether virtuous or not) was not an inevitable or irresolvable problem for Dante, as he had theological resources at his disposal, such as Aquinas's theory of implicit faith, which he chose not to deploy. Dante's original insistence that pagans could be without personal sin yet damned is, instead, a corollary of his dualistic ethical thought. On the one hand, it upholds pagan standards of virtue and philosophy as flawless and, therefore, legitimate guides to man's temporal felicity. On the other hand, it places an exclusive primacy on Christian faith for man's eternal salvation: a man, no matter how perfect in the moral and intellectual virtues, cannot be saved without faith.[43] In short, Dante sacrifices the destiny of Virgil and of the virtuous pagans in general to the exigencies of his theological–political vision. Dante's representation of pagans in the afterlife is, then, directly related to the theological–political worldview articulated in the *Monarchia*. It supports an ethical theory which Dante put at the service of an imperial political programme. And it is no accident that the pagans exemplary for their moral virtue in Limbo (*Inf.* IV, 121–29) and the four virtuous pagans we encounter outside Limbo – Virgil, Cato, Ripheus, and Trajan – all played a critical role in the development of the Roman and Holy Roman Empires.

Popes in Hell, and a Celestial Manifesto for the Roman Church

Dante's inclusion of contemporary characters, as we have seen, is not original: according to Morgan's analysis, they make up 69 per cent of the identified characters in popular visions and only 36 per cent in Dante's poem.[44] Notably, in her detailed comparison, one striking novelty occurs within this category: no writer before Dante had dared to place contemporary popes in Hell. Dante not only damns Pope Nicholas III (b. 1225; papacy 1277–80) to Hell as a simoniac (one who sells spiritual office for material gain), but also has him prophecy that the current

[42] See, for example, Benvenuto, gloss to *Inf.* IV, 43–45.

[43] Dante insists, in the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia*, that 'no one can be saved without faith (assuming that he has never heard anything of Christ), no matter how perfectly endowed he might be in the moral and intellectual virtues in respect both of his character and his behaviour' (*Mon.* II, vii. 4). See also *Inf.* IV, 31–42 and *Purg.* VII, 22–36.

[44] See Morgan, *Dante*, p. 60.

Pope Boniface VIII (b. 1230: papacy 1294–1303) and the future Pope Clement V (b. 1264; papacy 1305–1314) will join him there.[45] Dante also implies that Pope John XXII (b. 1244; papacy 1316–1334), who was Clement V's successor after a two-year *interregnum*, will also join him amongst the simoniacs: in *Paradiso*, St Peter refers to them both by their place of origin (Cahors and Gascony) and describes them as preparing to drink his blood (*Par.* XXVII, 58–60).[46] Celestine V (b. 1215; papacy 1294), who was canonised by Clement V in 1313, is also condemned by Dante to Hell, residing amongst the pusillanimous 'neutrals', as one 'who in his cowardice made the great refusal' (*Inf.* III, 59–60). In fact, Celestine V's abdication led to the pontificate of Boniface VIII, Dante's *bête noire*.

Only three contemporary popes escape Dante's Hell. Pope Adrian V (b. 1210/1215; papacy 1276) does so, in Dante's account, only by a hair's breadth, and he is presented in humiliating prostration on the terrace of avarice in Purgatory (*Purg.* XIX, 103–14). Pope Martin IV (b. 1210/1220; papacy 1281–85) is presented as the worst of gluttons; in consequence, his face is more pierced than all the others on the terrace ('e quella faccia / di là da lui, più che l'altre trapunta'; *Purg.* XXIV, 20–21).[47] The only contemporary pope whom Dante places in Paradise is Pope John XXI (b. 1210/1220; papacy 1276–77). No reference at all is given to his role as pope or to his papacy; instead, he is referred to as Peter of Spain ('Pietro Spano') and celebrated for his work of logic, the *Summulae logicales* (*Par.* XII, 134–35). Of the fourteen popes in Dante's lifetime, then, eight are apparently allotted a place in Dante's vision of the afterlife: of these, two were already in Hell in 1300 and two or three more are – we are informed – soon to follow. One, despite being a pope, gets into Purgatory through a late conversion; one is presented as the worst glutton on his terrace; and one, with no mention of his tenure as a pope, resides in Paradise as a celebrated logician.[48]

[45] See *Inf.* XIX, 31–87. See also *Par.* XXX, 142–48.

[46] In addition, Dante probably refers to Pope John XXII at *Par.* XVIII, 130–32: 'Ma tu che sol per cancellare scrivi, / pensa che Pietro e Paulo, che moriro / per la vigna che guasti, ancor son vivi' [But you who write only to strike out, remember that Peter and Paul, who died for the vine you are laying waste, are still alive]. Dante is probably alluding here to John XXII's interdicts against the Imperial party. See Peter D. Clarke, *The Interdict in the Thirteenth Century: A Question of Collective Guilt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[47] Dante alludes to the pope's drowning of eels in wine: 'e purga per digiuno / l'anguille di Bolsena e la vernaccia' [and by fasting he purges the eels of Bolsena and the vernaccia]. See also Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XXIV, 21–24 and Jacopo della Lana, gloss to *Purg.* XXIV, 19–24.

[48] The fourteen popes in Dante's lifetime (1265–1321) are as follows: Clement IV (1265–68), Gregory X (1271–76), Innocent V (1276), Adrian V (1276), John XXI (1276–77), Nicholas III (1277–80), Martin IV (1281–85), Honorius IV (1285–87), Nicholas IV (1288–92), Celestine V (1294),

What underlies Dante's polemic against the popes of his day in his vision of the afterlife? His original, and striking presentation reflects more than a powerful sense that individuals are betraying their sacred office. Instead, Dante is arguing that the contemporary papacy is institutionally corrupt, and that it has lost its direction and betrayed its true purpose. Dante's scathing depiction of contemporary popes in the afterlife, like his innovative representation of pagans, forms part of a theological–political argument with direct relevance for his immediate audience. As Nick Havely emphasises, Dante wrote the poem (c. 1307–21) around the same time as controversies surrounding Franciscan poverty reached fever pitch: 'around 1309–12, when Clement V was formally investigating the Franciscan Spirituals; and from 1317 onwards, when John XXII was actively engaged in suppressing them.'[49] Davis adds, 'it is Dante's singling out of particular popes as protagonists of an epiphany of evil that seems to correspond most closely to the Spiritual Franciscan view of ecclesiastical corruption.'[50] There is, then, a pamphlet-like immediacy to Dante's poem, with its theological–political programme for the radical reform of the Roman Church.[51]

Dante's epistle to the Italian cardinals, written after Pope Clement V's death in 1314, reflects his direct engagement with contemporary events. It also provides a revealing commentary on the *Commedia*. In the epistle, Dante chastises the cardinals for despising the heavenly fire (the holy spirit which descended on the apostles at Pentecost), and for selling the doves in the temple, making a market of priceless spiritual goods (*Epist.* XI, 4). In his other-worldly vision, he places their contemporary leaders deep in hell: as counter-punishment (*contrapasso*), the tongues of flame, instead of informing their words, scorch their feet (*Inf.* XIX, 22–30). In the epistle, Dante castigates contemporary prelates for having their backs and not their faces to the chariot of the Church (*Epist.* XI, 4); on the terrace of avarice, he represents Pope Adrian V with his backside grotesquely turned towards

Boniface VIII (1294–1303), Benedict XI (1303–4), Clement V (1305–14), and John XXII (1316–34). Morgan erroneously states, first, that 'in his [Dante's] lifetime there had been six popes' (there were fourteen); second, that 'Giovanni XII, is allocated to Paradise' (it is John XXI); and, third, that 'Celestine V and Nicholas III suffer in Hell for simony' (Celestine V suffers in Hell as a neutral).

[49] Nick Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans: Poverty and the Papacy in the 'Commedia'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 2.

[50] Davis, *Dante's Italy*, p. 63.

[51] Havely associates Dante's particular critique of contemporary popes with 'reformist apocalypticism': 'The idea of "repristination" of the Church was not itself new, but the call for the clergy to revert *ad pristinum statum* was renewed with particular intensity by apocalyptic writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' (Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 185).

Heaven (*Purg.* XIX, 97–99). In the epistle, Dante laments the despicable state of the Roman Church and the transfer of the papacy from Rome to Avignon in 1309 (*Epist.* XI, 1–4); in his poem, he presents an allegorical representation of the Church's moral corruption, and clearly alludes to the Babylonian captivity through the sacred chariot's detachment from the tree (*Purg.* XXXII, 100–60). The final vision of the 'whore' (*puttana*; 149 and 160) almost certainly refers to the papacy of Boniface VIII, while the 'giant' is conventionally interpreted to represent Philip IV, the successor to the French monarchy.[52]

Dante is equally forthright in highlighting the root causes underlying the Church's contemporary degeneracy: sloth and avarice. Where the Church fathers searched for God, the modern prelates, in their spiritual sloth, desire only riches and worldly power: each of them, Dante claims, has taken Cupidity as his wife ('Cupiditatem unusquisque sibi duxit in uxorem'; *Epist.* XI, 7). On both occasions that Dante treats sloth and avarice in the *Commedia* (implicitly in *Inferno* VII and explicitly in *Purgatorio* XIX), then, he splices these capital vices together, structurally dividing a canto in two. In both cases, he polemically associates these vices with clerics: in *Inferno* VII, *all* the avaricious are tonsured clerics, including popes and cardinals ('Questi fuor cherci . . . e papi e cardinali / in cui usa avarizia il suo soperchio'). In *Purgatorio* XVIII and XIX, Dante sandwiches the siren between two clerics: an abbot (the *only* slothful soul identified) and Pope Adrian V (the *first* soul whom Dante encounters in the terrace of avarice). The pope, as *successor Petri*, should be married to his flock (and the Church, as a whole, to Christ as *sponsa Christi*); instead, he is paired to a whore (the siren is, by some early commentators, simplify referred to as *meretrix hominum*). The papacy's avaricious assumption of temporal power was, for Dante, the principal institutional cause of moral evil: 'la vostra avarizia il mondo attrista, / calcando i buoni e sollevando i pravi' [your avarice afflicts the world, trampling the good and raising up the wicked] (*Inf.* XIX, 104). This underpinned his firm conviction that temporal and spiritual power should be divided between Empire and Church. Dante's condemnation of the contemporary papacy arguably reaches its climax in St Peter's denunciation of his current successors: in the eyes of the Son of God, the seat of the papacy is vacant, and his burial place has become a sewer (*Par.* XXVII, 19–63).[53]

[52] See, for example, Davis, *Dante's Italy,* pp. 29–30.

[53] Dante nonetheless held that Boniface VIII's papacy was legitimate, as is evident from *Purg.* XX, 85–90. For this important qualification, see also Davis, *Dante's Italy*, p. 64: 'St. Peter might

Dante's afterlife is not just, however, a polemical vision of the contemporary church's corruption: it also presents a manifesto for reform. Thus, Dante's Paradise arguably presents an other-worldly vision for the material poverty and spiritual evangelism he envisaged for the Church on Earth. The first, fourth, and seventh of the planetary spheres emphasise religious orders: Piccarda and Costanza (in the first heaven of the Moon) were Franciscan nuns, 'Poor Clares', before being violently abducted from their cloister; St Thomas Aquinas and St Bonaventure (in the fourth heaven of the Sun) praise the founders of each other's orders, St Dominic and St Francis, while denouncing the subsequent degeneracy of their own; and St Benedict, the founder of Western monastic orders, and St Peter Damian, a rigorous reformer, extol the ascetic contemplative life in the seventh heaven of Saturn. The second and sixth spheres foreground the Empire and political justice. In the second sphere of Mercury, Dante locates the corruption of the papacy in the donation of Constantine, he upholds Justinian as an ideal emperor who reformed the civil law, and he models, in Pope Agapetus's spiritual counsel of Justinian (in the form of a correction of heresy), the appropriate relationship he envisages between pope and emperor. Moreover, Dante represents the conquests of the Empire (embodied in the Imperial Eagle) as Divinely willed, and he reiterates his strange theory of the Atonement, according to which the universal jurisdiction of the Roman Empire under Augustus was necessary for Christ to have died for all people.[54] In the sixth sphere of Jupiter, the dramatic appearance of Ripheus and Trajan, in the eye of the Eagle, highlights – as we have seen – the providential role of the Roman Empire in administering justice. Finally, the third and fifth spheres of Heaven emphasise the cooperation of the papacy and temporal power in the persecution of heresy (Folco combats the heretic Cathars) and the liberation of the Holy Lands through the crusades (Dante presents his crusading ancestor Cacciaguida as a martyr). Throughout *Paradiso*, Dante counterpoises the worldliness of the contemporary papacy with the asceticism of the early Church and of the monastic and mendicant orders.

complain in Paradise (supposedly in the year, ironically enough, of Boniface's Great Pardon) that his place was vacant in the eyes of the Son of God, but he was speaking only in a moral sense.'

[54] Guido Vernani ridicules Dante's bizarre argument that God's justice would not have been fulfilled were the Romans not the universal governors of the entire human race: 'Quis enim unquam tam turpiter erravit, ut diceret, quod poena debita pro peccato Originali, potestati alicuius terreni Iudicis jubjaceret?' [Whoever made such a disgraceful error as to say that the punishment due for original sin lay in the power of any earthly judge?]. See 'Vernani's *Refutation*', II, 101–2, in Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy,* p. 188.

The origins of the papacy in St Peter, of Western monasticism in St Benedict, and of the mendicant orders in St Francis were all characterised, Dante claims, by material poverty (*Par*. XXII, 88–93).

In *Paradiso*, Dante not only presents St Francis and his order as a model for the contemporary church, but also represents the pristine church in St Francis's image. Certainly, St Francis is given a unique prominence by Dante, named for the third time in the heavenly rose as second only to John the Baptist in the hierarchy of heaven.[55] In Dante's hagiography, St Francis is depicted as an *alter Christus*, and as a 'new sun' ('nacque al mondo un sole'; *Par*. XI, 50), Dante's symbol *par excellence* for God.[56] St Francis's mystic marriage with Lady Poverty juxtaposes Dante's representation of the contemporary prelates as married to Cupidity. Dante's panegyric is particularly striking for emphasising one detail: he claims that '[Lady Poverty], deprived of her first husband, had waited, scorned and obscure, without a suitor eleven hundred years and more until this man appeared' ('Questa, privata del primo marito, / millecent' anni e più dispetta e scura / fino a costui si stette sanza invito'; *Par*. XI, 64–66). In other words, Dante insists that St Francis was only the second (after Christ himself) to embrace poverty. How so? While many saints before St Francis had embraced poverty as a mistress, only Christ and St Francis, according to Dante, made poverty the 'mother' of their spiritual children, their followers or disciples. St Francis's first congregation could not own material wealth (or its buildings) and was granted only the 'use' of it by the Church. This singular regulation was confirmed by Pope Nicholas III's bull *Exiit qui seminat* (1279) but came under threat in the early 1300s and was effectively nullified one year after Dante's death, by Pope John XXII's bull *Ad conditorem canonum* (1322).

But it is precisely this model of Franciscan corporate poverty that Dante seems to envisage for the Church as a whole in *De Monarchia*. In that treatise, he argues that the Holy Roman Emperor (holding all temporal land and power) would cede the use, but not the possession, of wealth and buildings to the Church. By linking Christ and St Francis as the two husbands of poverty, he emphasises, once again in his *Commedia*, that Christ's followers, the Church, should follow him in institutional

[55] See *Par*. XXXII, 34–36: 'e sotto lui [Giovanni] così cerner sortiro / Francesco, Benedetto e Agostino, / e altri fin qua giù di giro in giro' [and below him in the same way Francis, Benedict, and Augustine have been assigned to divide, and others down to here from circle to circle].

[56] See also Davis, *Dante's Italy*, p. 49: 'St. Francis occupies a position just under St. John the Baptist. He could not be Christ's prophet, like John, but he was apparently, in Dante's opinion, Christ's most faithful imitator.'

poverty.[57] This messianic theological–political programme, then, underpins Dante's depiction of the Christian afterlife from Virgil's prophecy of the 'veltro', who will chase the she-wolf of cupidity back down to Hell, through the apocalyptic prophecies in the Earthly Paradise, to his final representation of the blessed in the Empyrean.

The canonical and, even, 'timeless' status of Dante's *Commedia* in Western European literature may distract us from the historical immediacy of its theological–political polemic. But, as I have argued, Dante's otherworldly vision is best understood precisely in the context of the reforming, and sometimes radical, currents of his time. Dante seems to have believed that a final, definitive eschatology through the culmination of human history in the Second Coming was near.[58] Building on Morgan's seminal study, this chapter has shown that major innovations in Dante's otherworldly vision are direct consequences of his theological–political programme for this-worldly renewal and reform. Moreover, in line with those scholars who have emphasised a continuity between Dante's dualistic political thought in the *Monarchia* and in the *Commedia*, I have shown how this continuity is evident not only in terms of the doctrinal content but in the very structural organisation of Dante's afterlife.

In particular, this chapter has focused on two novel, and surprising, aspects of Dante's afterlife in relation to previous traditions about the other-world, both popular and learned: Dante's treatment of pagans and of contemporary popes. By simultaneously emphasising the exemplary moral virtue of certain pagans *and* insisting on their eternal damnation, Dante is arguing that man can attain a secular happiness through philosophical guidance alone. By making Virgil his guide, by carefully constructing Roman history as Divinely ordained, and by organising the sins of Hell according to rational principles ostensibly taken from Aristotle, Dante is insisting that only a restoration of the Holy Roman Empire may bring peace and justice. Dante's vision of the Christian afterlife is, as his scathing treatment of contemporary popes and prelates highlights, also a manifesto for radical reform of the Church. The structure of Purgatory and of

[57] Although Dante distances himself from schismatic Franciscan factions (*Par.* XII, 121–26), he is 'in one important way . . . more radical even than the Spiritual Franciscans. He thought that the clergy as a whole should have remained poor, and should have shunned all temporal jurisdiction, from the time of Christ to the end of history' (Davis, *Dante's Italy*, p. 52). Davis also notes the irony of Dante making Aquinas the spokesman for this view of St Francis and apostolic poverty, a view Aquinas had himself opposed in the *Summa theologiae* (Ibid., p. 50).

[58] Dante probably did not envisage the longevity of his poem's reception because he insists, in *Paradiso*, that the seats of the blessed are almost full with only a few souls still awaited in heaven ('vedi li nostri scanni sì ripieni, / che poca gente più ci si disira'; *Par.* XXX, 131–32).

Paradise, as I have shown, reflects the kind of ecclesial reform he envisaged. Most strikingly, Dante not only appears to adopt Franciscan communal poverty as a model for the Church as a whole, but seems to believe that only a restoration of the Holy Roman Empire may bring about this reform by forcibly stripping the Church of its temporal power and material wealth. Even setbacks from the perspective of 1300, such as Pope Boniface VIII's worldly success and Henry VII's future imperial failure, are viewed as temporary, with Dante having us focus on the pope's and his successor's future damnation (*Inf.* XIX, 31–87; and *Par.* XXX, 139–48) and the emperor's eternal crown awaiting him in heaven (*Par.* XXX, 133–38)

In Morgan's taxonomy of the different kinds of other-worldly visions associated with different historical eras, she associates the Carolingian era with written representations of the other-world that are 'political and satirical in nature'.[59] Although Dante's poem shares other characteristics with many kinds of vision, it is worth stressing its political–satirical vein, which, I think, has been insufficiently examined in the critical tradition.[60] However, one decisive difference separates Dante's political satire from that of the Carolingian visions. Rather than the 'vision of the other world [becoming] a political weapon at the hands of the Church', Dante's other-worldly vision is decisively a political weapon for the Empire and, indeed, for his patron and the dedicatee of *Paradiso*, Cangrande della Scala, the leader of the Imperial faction in Italy. Whether Dante would have followed his patron in support of Louis of Bavaria's march into Italy in 1326, and his installation of the Spiritual Franciscan Pietro Rainalducci as Anti-pope Nicholas, is a matter of conjecture, as Dante died five years earlier.[61] What is beyond conjecture, in my view, is that his *Monarchia* and his *Commedia* were potent ammunition for that cause.

[59] See Morgan, *Dante*, pp. 1–4 (p. 3).

[60] For an interest in genre, and satire in particular, in relation to Dante, see, for example, the contributions in *Libri poetarum in quattuor species dividuntur: Essays on Dante and 'Genre'*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański, Supplement to *The Italianist* 15, 2 (1995). See especially Zygmunt G. Barański: '"*Tres enim sunt manerie dicendi* . . .": Some Observations on Medieval Literature, "Genre" and Dante', in Barański, Supplement to *The Italianist*, pp. 1–60; and Suzanne Reynolds, 'Dante and the Medieval Theory of Satire: A Collection of Texts', in Barański, Supplement to *The Italianist,* pp. 145–57. More recently, this line of enquiry has been taken up convincingly by Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja. See, for example, Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja, 'Profeta e satiro: A proposito di *Inferno* 19', *Dante Studies* 134 (2015), 27–45 and Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja, '19. Inside Out', in Corbett and Webb (eds.),*Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, II, pp. 173–91.

[61] Cangrande declared his allegiance to Henry VII in December 1310 and was made an imperial vicar the following year; he was excommunicated by Pope John XXII on 6 April, 1318; and supported Louis of Bavaria in 1326. See Nick Havely, *Dante* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 43–47.