

Theology, Prophecy and Politics in Dante

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of other

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To my parents for their belief in me and for all their love and encouragement.

And to Anna with love.

### **Abstract**

Principally this thesis will deal with defining, accounting for, and examining, the relationship between the theological and the political in Dante's use of prophecy. It will be demonstrated that it is an over-riding feature of Dante's thought in both the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* that the only remedy against cupidity, and the damage it does to the world, is ecclesiastical poverty combined with imperial power. This thesis will show that much of the urgency and passion with which Dante communicates his political and social message in the *Commedia*, which seems to advocate both ecclesiastical poverty and imperial power as prerequisites for the ideal human society, is through his use of prophecy and of prophetic language. I demonstrate the way in which contemporary responses to the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation seem to have influenced Dante's prophetic manner, but also seeks to highlight the unique nature of Dante's response to the currents of thought he encountered, in particular the adoption of religious prophecy as the means by which some of the most innovative aspects of his political thought are articulated.

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### Abbreviations

<i>Commedia</i>	<i>La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata</i> , ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994)
<i>Conv.</i>	<i>Convivio</i> , ed. by C. Vasoli & D. De Robertis, vol I.ii of Dante Alighieri, <i>Opere minori</i> , 2 vols (Milan & Naples: Ricciardi, 1979)
<i>DDP</i>	Dartmouth Dante Project. <a href="https://dante.dartmouth.edu">https://dante.dartmouth.edu</a>
<i>De Civ. Dei</i>	St. Augustine, <i>De Civitate Dei</i> , ed. by B. Dombart and A. Kalb (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955)
<i>DE</i>	<i>The Dante Encyclopedia</i> , ed. by R. Lansing (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000)
<i>ED</i>	<i>Enciclopedia Dantesca</i> , ed. by U. Bosco, 6 vols. (Rome: Treccani, 1970-76)
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistole</i> , ed. by A. Frugoni and G. Brugnoli, in Dante Alighieri, <i>Opere Minori</i> , 2 vols (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1979)
<i>Inf.</i>	<i>Inferno</i> , in <i>La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Monarchia</i> , ed. by P. Shaw (Florence: Le Lettere, 2009)
<i>Par.</i>	<i>Paradiso</i> , in <i>La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata</i>
<i>Purg.</i>	<i>Purgatorio</i> in <i>La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> <a href="http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html">http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html</a>
<i>VN</i>	Dante Alighieri, <i>Vita nova</i> ed. by D. De Robertis, in Dante Alighieri, <i>Opere minori</i> , 2 vols. (Milan & Naples, Ricciardi, 1979), I, 3-250

## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Aims

This thesis forms part of a wider AHRC-funded project: *Dante and Late Medieval Florence: Theology in Poetry, Practice and Society*. This project explores the multiple experiences of theology in Florence in the period 1280-1300, when Dante tells us that he engaged in theological study, and examines the ways in which Dante, in the *Commedia* and elsewhere, responds to those experiences. The project therefore casts light on the ways in which medieval theology was mediated and experienced within a specific historical and geographical context, paying close attention to its effects upon different publics; in doing so, it seeks to re-evaluate a key dimension of a fundamental work of world literature, a work which is increasingly recognised not only as being foundational within the European literary tradition, but also as a distinctive and unique theological voice in its own right. This thesis aims to place Dante's use of prophetic practice and language within its contemporary context and to demonstrate that Dante's use of prophecy, and the adoption of the role of poet-prophet, are key points at which the theological and the political come together in the *Commedia*.

Principally this thesis will deal with defining, accounting for, and examining, the relationship between the theological and the political in Dante's use of prophecy. It will be demonstrated that it is an over-riding feature of Dante's thought in both the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* that the only remedy against cupidity, and the damage it does to the world, is ecclesiastical poverty combined with imperial power. This thesis will show that much of the urgency and passion with which Dante communicates his political and social message in the *Commedia*, which seems to advocate both ecclesiastical poverty and imperial power as prerequisites for the ideal human society, is through his use of prophecy and of prophetic language. This thesis seeks to demonstrate the way in which contemporary responses to the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation seem to have influenced Dante's prophetic manner, but also seeks to highlight the unique nature of Dante's response to the currents of thought he encountered, in particular the adoption of religious prophecy

as the means by which some of the most innovative aspects of his political thought are articulated.

This chapter will define the wider aims and themes of the thesis. To do so it provides an overview of Dante's use of prophecy with a view to summarising the *status quaestionis* and outlining the contribution that this thesis hopes to make to furthering the debate around these issues. I will consider the issue of the dating of Dante's works and its implications for the interpretation of those passages that might be termed 'prophetic'. This chapter will provide a number of working hypotheses which will serve as starting points for the discussion in the rest of the thesis.

## 1.2 Dante and Prophecy

Dante's adoption of the role of prophet, his use of the language of biblical prophecy, and his assumption of prophetic authority in his works has been the subject of extensive critical attention.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the *Commedia*, Dante makes frequent use of statements which predict the future although as will be made clear this is not necessarily the only, or even principal, characteristic of prophetic speech. The action of the poem is set during Easter 1300, but Dante did not begin writing the poem until several years after this date. Setting the poem in the recent past allows the author to present historical facts as prophecies, the predictions of Dante's exile by Farinata in *Inferno* X, by Brunetto Latini in *Inferno* XV, and by Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* XV all fall into this category. For example Cacciaguida predicts Dante's exile from Florence:

Qual si partio Ipolito d'Atene  
per la spietata e perfida noverca,  
tal di Fiorenza partir ti convene. (*Par.* XVII, 46-48)

In addition to these *post eventum* prophecies there are a smaller number of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, for an overview: B. Nardi, 'Dante Profeta', in *Dante e la cultura medievale*, 2nd edition (Bari: Laterza, 1949) pp. 336-416; N. Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante: Strutture e temi profetico-apocalittici in Dante: dalla Vita nuova alla Divina commedia* (Catania: Università di Catania, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia, 1968); R. Morghen, *Dante profeta tra la storia e l'eterno* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1988); P. Nasti, *Favole d'amore e 'saver profondo': La tradizione salomonica in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2007), in particular, Chapter 4 'Retorica biblica e rinnovamento politico'; A. R. Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); M. Santagata, 'Dante egocentrico e/o profeta', *Forum Italicum*, 47 (2013), 3-14. See also the later notes to this chapter, and for more specifically-focused studies, the notes to the chapters that follow.



‘true’ or *ante eventum* prophecies which deal with predictions or aspirations beyond the date of the poem’s composition.<sup>2</sup> Most famously we have the Veltro (*Inf.* I, 105), the DXV (*Purg.* XXXIII, 43), and the providential reform promised by St Peter in *Paradiso* (*Par.* XXVII, 61-63). My thesis is not does not seek to provide definitive answers to these most heavily debated interpretative cruxes but will seek to contextualise them within the intellectual and political milieu in which they were created. I suggest that the ambiguity of these *ante eventum* prophecies may well be deliberate on Dante’s part and that this ambiguity serves not only to make the prophecies proof against obsolescence but also to better integrate them into a wider prophetic programme of *post* and *ante eventum* prophecies with the demonstrable veracity of the former giving credence to the latter. These prophecies also play an important role in Dante’s own identification of himself as author-prophet and the assertions of authority which this role entails. In this chapter I wish to define the *status quaestionis*, with regard to the likely meanings of these prophecies, as these are related to Dante’s ideas regarding the nature and function of human society and thus to one of the *Commedia*’s main political themes, which will form the basis for my discussion of the relationship between the political and the theological in Dante. I shall consider issues surrounding chronology later in this chapter to highlight how consideration of interpretations of these prophecies also affects the assumptions to be made about the dating of some of Dante’s later works, and especially the *Monarchia*, and vice-versa.

### 1.3 The *Commedia*’s Principal Prophecies

The literature surrounding the interpretation of each these prophecies is vast; and in each case interpretation has been a matter of dispute since the earliest commentators on the subject. The first *ante eventum* prophecy, that of the Veltro, comes in *Inferno* I. Virgil tells Dante that the third of the beasts who block his ascent of the mountain, the She Wolf, will be killed by one whose arrival is imminent and that:

Questi non ciberà terra né peltro,  
ma sapienza, amore e virtute,  
e sua nazion sarà tra feltro e feltro. (*Inf.* I, 103-05)

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the different types of prophecy in the *Commedia* see R. Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante’s Commedia* (Florence: Olschki Editore, 2008).

Early commentators on *Inferno* I place a Christological interpretation on the Veltro,<sup>3</sup> or seek to give an astrological meaning to the terms ‘feltro e feltro’ which serves to emphasise the heaven-sent nature of the reformer and avoids specifics of location or individualisation.<sup>4</sup> The majority of modern scholarship tends to view the Veltro as being a lay political figure; this may refer to a specific individual, most popularly Can Grande della Scala or the Emperor Henry VII, or else to an anonymous political reformer.<sup>5</sup> For Mineo, the ‘veltro’ is an indeterminate but categorically lay figure,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Graziolo de’Bambaglioli (c1324) *Commento all’ Inferno di Dante* ed. by L. C. Rossi (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 1998) Note on *Inferno* I,101, Dartmouth Dante Project, <https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>, (hereafter DDP) accessed 02 October 2014. ‘Primo dico modo iste veltrus dici et exponi potest de illa divina et inephabili sapientia de qua scriptum est: “Ecce agnus Dei qui tollit peccata mundi” {cf. *Ioan.* 1, 29}, de quo etiam scriptum est: “Et iterum venturus est cum gloria iudicare vivos et mortuos” {*Symbolum*}. Nam cum ex procuracione et subgestione continua universalis hostis fragilitatis humane hec mortalia vitia, sed avaritia maxime, inundaverint super terram et se mortalium mentibus alligaverint, cumque tantorum facinorum ponderosa calamitas ex humane imbecillitate nature perfecte non possit per hominem profugari et debite pene suplicio coerceri, necessaria ratione probatur quod ipse verus Deus, qui est lapis ascisus de monte sine manibus, per infinite potentie sue recta iudicia est ille veltrus et ille veritatis et iustitie princeps qui hanc lupam sive avariciam et alia peccata mortalia, animis et corporibus inclusa mortalium, dissipabit. Et hoc est quod probatur per Çachariam prophetam: “Qui venturus est veniet et non tardabit {cf. *Hebr.* 10, 37}; iam non erit timor in finibus nostris, quia ipse est salvator noster, et deponet omnes iniquitates nostras et proiciet in profundum maris” {*Mich.* 7, 19}’.

<sup>4</sup> Jacopo Della Lana (1320s) provides two interpretations of *Inf.* I, 105: ‘Questo si può intendere in due modi: tra feltro e feltro cioè tra cielo e cielo, ciò vuol dire per constellazione. L’altro modo tra feltro e feltro cioè che nascerà di assai vile nazione, chè feltroè vile panno. E questo risponde elli a una tacita questione per una oppinione la quale è che di vile padre e madre non può nascere buono e virtudioso figliuolo’. *Comedia di Dante degli Allaghieri col Commento di Jacopo della Lana bolognese*, ed. by Luciano Scarabelli (Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866-67), DDP, Note on *Inf.* I,105, accessed 03 October 2015.

In a similar vein see Buti’s (1385-95) note on the same verse *Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, ed. by Crescentino Giannini (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62), DDP, Note on *Inf.* I, 105, accessed 08 August 2015.

Benvenuto da Imola (1375-80) is aware of the various lines of thought, but dismisses the idea that ‘tra feltro e feltro might refer to the birthplace of the Veltro and cites internal textual evidence for his preference for an astrological understanding of the prophecy: ‘e sua nazione idest nativitas sarà tra Feltro e Feltro’, ‘idest inter coelum et coelum. Et est pulcra et subtilis similitudo; sicut enim filtrum caret omni textura, ita coelum caret omni mixtura, cum sit corpus simplex, non mixtum; quasi dicat quod a bona constellatione coeli et bona conjunctione stellarum nascetur iste princeps. Si dicas ex quibus parentibus, vel de qua patria, autor non specificat hoc; nec est de more astrologorum ita particulariter exprimere futura cum circumstantiis suis. Et ideo mihi vanum videtur quod aliqui dicunt, quod iste veltrus nascetur intra Feltrum, quod est in Romandiola, et Feltrum, quod est in Marchia Tarvisina. Nec minus ridiculum videtur quod alii dicunt, quod autor hic loquitur de magno anno. Et hic nota toto animo quod haec videtur vera expositio istius literae; haec enim fuit propria intentio autoris sive bona, sive mala, ut potest clare demonstrari in multis locis et capitulis libri, et specialiter et expresse capitulo ultimo Purgatorii, ubi ipse autor dicit: “Ch’io veggio certamente, e però ’l narro, | A darne tempo già stelle propinque.”’, Benevenuti de Rambaldis de Imola, *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, ed. by J. P. Lacaita (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1887), DDP, Note on *Inf.* I, 105, accessed 03 October 2015.

<sup>5</sup> For a critical history of the key lines of interpretations and extensive bibliography see A. Niccoli, ‘feltro’ *ED* II, 833-35 and C. T. Davis, ‘Veltro’, *ED* V, 908-12. For the Veltro as Cangrande della

likewise Hollander who feels that this is the first of three ‘world-historical’ prophecies of the coming of a political figure (in the last two, the DXV and the providential intervention promised in *Paradiso* XXVII almost certainly an Emperor). Hollander also feels that this is one who, in his advent, also looks forward to the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>7</sup> This idea of the potential multi-valence of these prophecies, and particularly the idea of the attendant intimate connection between the political and the eschatological in Dante’s thought is one to which I will return in this thesis in my discussion of the purposes of Dante’s prophetic and apocalyptic language. From a very early point in the critical history of the Veltro prophecy it was recognised that there was a potential for Dante’s words, in their ambiguity, to be multi-valent, recognising that Dante might simultaneously be referring to both a reforming political figure and to the future return of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

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Scala and for further critical history see R. Hollander (ed.) *Inferno* (2000), *Purgatorio* (2003) and *Paradiso* (2007) (New York: Doubleday/Anchor) accessed via DDP, Note on *Inferno* I 100-105, accessed 24 May 2014. See also A.K Cassell, ‘Veltro’ *DE*, pp. 851-54.

For the Veltro as Henry VII see: F. Mazzoni, Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Divina Commedia: Inferno*, Canti I-III, *Quaderni degli ‘Studi Danteschi’* 4 (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), The suggestion of ‘feltro’ as referring to felt material also has a long history of imperial connotation, particularly to do with the crowning of Asiatic emperors in which the felt cover signified the protection of heaven. For a consideration of this suggestion see L. Olschki, *The Myth of Felt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949). For the related idea of ‘khan’ as being rendered in Italian as ‘cane’ and thus informing the veltro ‘greyhound’ prophecy, see A. Basserman, ‘Veltro, gross-Khan und Kaisersage’, *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, X (1900). For ‘feltro’ as referring to the felt linings of a ballot box and thus to an elected, likely imperial, figure see A. Regis, ‘E sua nazione sarà tra feltro e feltro’, *Studi danteschi*, 4 (1921), 85-97.

<sup>6</sup> N. Mineo, ‘Dante: un sogno di armonia terrena’ in *Dante: un sogno di armonia terrena*, 2 vols (Turin: Tirrenia, 2005), I, 15-49 (p. 24). A similar ‘indeterminate lay’ solution was also advanced by B. Nardi, ‘Il Preludio alla *Divina Commedia*’, *Alighieri*, IV, 1 (1963), 3-17.

<sup>7</sup> R. Hollander, DDP, note on *Purgatorio* XXXII, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>8</sup> The Anonimo Fiorentino (c.1400) says ‘Perchè chi si sia questo Veltro non è diffinito, et è pretermesso da molti valenti uomini et eccellentissimi storiografi, è da passare oltre leggermente, et lasciare gli oppinioni comuni che sia uomo, re, o di vile nazione, o tra quelle due città che l’Autore fa menzione. Dice adunque che tale bene complessionato dalle costellazioni superne caccierà questa avarizia del mondo’, *Commento alla Divina Commedia d’Anonimo Fiorentino del secolo XIV*, ed by Pietro Fanfani (Bologna: G. Romagnoli, 1866-74), note on *Inferno* I. 101-105, DDP, accessed 14 December 2014.

See also: Guido Da Pisa (c. 1327-28) *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, ed. by V. Cioffari (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1974), DDP, note on *Inferno* I, 100, accessed 12 December 2014; Benvenuto Da Imola, DDP, note on *Inferno* 1.100-105, accessed 14 December 2014.

The Chiose Vernon (1390) in a similar vein says: ‘In questa quarta e ultima parte di questo capitolo fingie chome Virgilio diede aiuto e consiglio di seghuire tal opera. E per questo veltro che toccha l’altore qui cie n’è assai oppenioni e chi tiene una e chi un’altra. Chi tiene che sarà un imperadore il quale verrà ad abitare a Roma e per costui saranno chacciati i ma’ pastori di santa chiesa. E ch’egli riconcilierà la chiesa di buoni e di santi pastori e per questo Italia se ne rifarà. Altri tenghono oppenione che dicesse di Cristo quando verrà al di del giudicio a ddare l’ultima sentenza. Imperò che allora sarà dischacciata superbia avarizia luxuria e ogni vitio e messi co’

When the pilgrim reaches the Earthly Paradise he is shown a vision of the history of the Church which concludes with apocalyptic images of the whore, the giant and the beast. There is condemnation of current corruption and a promise of imminent reform. Beatrice tells Dante that:

io veggio certamente, e però il narro,  
a darne tempo già stelle propinque,  
secure d'ogn' intoppo e d'ogne sbarro  
nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque  
messo di Dio, anciderà la fuia  
con quel gigante che con lei delinque. (*Purg.* XXXII, 40-45).

The intended meaning of the prophecy of the 'cinquecento dieci e cinque' or, as it is conventionally referred to, in Roman numerals, the 'DXV', has likewise been a subject of sustained scholarly dispute. Seeing Dante's prophecy as a cryptic puzzle has proved enduringly popular.<sup>9</sup> As with the solutions proffered as to the identity of the Veltro, those for the DXV can, somewhat crudely, be broken down into two schools of thought: the political and the Christological: a new Emperor or the Second Coming. For Mineo the DXV has about him the imperial stamp.<sup>10</sup> Likewise for Davis this prophecy is one of imperial renewal and the DXV is intended to indicate a

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pecchatori nello inferno. E chi tiene che sarà un papa che sarà tanto giusto e santo che questi vitij torrà via da santa chiesa e che i suoi pastori terranno buona e santa vita ma io nol credo. E in questo fingie seghuire Virgilio'. Chiose Vernon, *Chiose sopra Dante, testo inedito ora per la prima volta pubblicato*, ed. by G. Lord (Florence: Piatti, 1846). DDP, Note on *Inferno* I, 100-136, accessed 22 November 2012.

<sup>9</sup> For a summary of the various interpretative suggestions see P. Mazzamuto, 'Cinquecento diece e cinque,' *ED* II, 10-14.

Della Lana and the Ottimo Commento both prefer the idea of 515 = DXV which, with a transposition of letters, becomes the Latin 'Dux' or leader and they understand this to mean a leader in a political or military sense. The Ottimo says 'l'Autore vuole dire d'alcuna grande rivoluzione del Cielo significatrice de alcuno giustissimo e santissimo principe, il quale reformerà lo stato della Chiesa, e de' fedeli Cristiani.

In recent times both Sarolli and Kaske have seen the DXV as a Christological symbol the so called *Vere Dignum* monogram wherein the letters DXV are a transposition of VXD used among medieval liturgists as a symbol of the mysterious union of natures in Christ. At the centre there is Christ (X), the V is taken to represent Christ's human nature and the D his divine. See: G. R. Sarolli, '“DXV” e “Veltro”: simboli cristomimetici', in *Prolegomena alla Divina Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1971), pp. 247-73; R. E. Kaske, 'Dante's *Purgatorio* XXXII and XXXIII: A Survey of Christian History' in *Dante: The Critical Complex*, Vol. 5, ed. by R. Lansing (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 309-31.

A Kabbalistic numerological solution which presents Henry VII as the DXV was offered by E. Moore, 'The DXV Prophecy', in *Studies in Dante: Third Series* (New York: Haskeel House, 1968), pp. 253-83.

<sup>10</sup> N. Mineo, 'Dante: un sogno di armonia terrena', p. 24. Mineo feels that the prophecies of *Paradiso* IX, XXII, are also best interpreted in imperial terms.

secular leader powerful enough to imitate the achievement of Augustus.<sup>11</sup> Hollander once more suggests the intentional multi-valence of the prophecy, seeing the DXV as being at once imperial and Christological.<sup>12</sup> This solution begins to fuse the imperial with the apocalyptic, the political with the theological and to bring a prophecy of a political leader within an apocalyptic and even eschatological framework, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The last *ante eventum* prophecy comes in *Paradiso* XXVII. The pilgrim has reached the heaven of the Fixed Stars and now, from St Peter and from Beatrice, he hears a condemnation of Church corruption coupled once more with a promise of imminent reform. Most strikingly we are told by St Peter:

Ma l'alta provedenza, che con Scipio  
difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,  
soccorrà tosto, sì com' io concipio. (*Par.* XXVII, 61-63)

The prophecies in *Paradiso* XXVII have similarly been subject to a range of interpretations, which can once more be broken down into those who prefer a Christological explanation and those who prefer an imperial or more temporal solution.<sup>13</sup> At the very least, as Hollander has pointed out, it is striking that at the end of St Peter's great polemic against papal corruption he evokes the example of a great political figure, and not a religious one, as the means by which God's providence is worked out.<sup>14</sup> I will consider the prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII in more detail in the next chapter as these will mark the point of departure for my discussion of Dante's own prophetic methods and purposes as I seek to contextualise these prophecies

<sup>11</sup> C.T. Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', in C.T. Davis, *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 42-70 (p. 67). Other advocates of this position include: J. A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996), pp. 203-04; Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia*, p. 116. Wilson, in endorsing Scott's position, favours the view that the two parts of the DXV prophecy are syntactically linked by the conjunction 'che' and that it borders on the perverse to try and separate them to strengthen an interpretation of the DXV as Christ.

<sup>12</sup> R. Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 182-83.

<sup>13</sup> C. Kleinhenz, 'Dante and the Bible: Intertextual Approaches to the *Divine Comedy*', *Italica* 63 (1986), 225-36 (pp. 229-30) argues that we are dealing with 'a powerful temporal ruler.'; S. Vazzana, 'Il Canto XXVII', in *Paradiso: Letture degli anni 1979-81*, ed. by S. Zennaro (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), pp.701-730 (p. 726), sees the storm at sea as representing, 'un nuovo Scipione, salvatore armato'. Thus the words of Beatrice and the end of the canto are a confirmation and expansion of those of St Peter at the beginning; J. A. Scott, *Dante magnanimo; studi sulla Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1977), pp. 216-20 and 232-33.

<sup>14</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Par.* XXVII, 61-63, accessed 4 January 2013.

within the wider prophetic strategies of Dante's oeuvre.

Throughout the thesis, my interpretation of the principal *ante eventum* prophetic statements of the *Commedia*: the Veltro, the DXV and the reformer promised by St Peter in *Paradiso* XXVII focuses on the notion that all these contain, at the very least, a political dimension indicative of some kind of aspiration for reform in the institutions of earthly government. I seek to demonstrate, in examining the relationship between the theological and the political in Dante's use of prophecy, how Dante's political and religious thought are inextricably linked, particularly where eschatological and apocalyptic themes are brought to the fore.

#### 1.4 Politics, Prophecy, and Chronology

The chronology of Dante's works has numerous implications for our understanding of their relationship to one another and to external world events and, in a thesis which attempts to bring together real world events with their poetic and prophetic iterations in literature, this relationship is an important one. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the way in which Dante's views on various aspects of the nature and purpose of human life on Earth in the *Monarchia* seem to differ from those proposed in the *Commedia*. This is a hugely complex and much-debated issue, and it is not my aim here to resolve it, but only to suggest a working hypothesis which will form the basis of the deliberations which follow in the rest of the thesis.<sup>15</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis I will follow what appears to be the majority view and work on the basis that the dating of *Inferno* is relatively unproblematic with a general consensus that the work was substantially completed by 1310 and was in circulation in 1314/15.<sup>16</sup> The composition of *Purgatorio*, likewise, can be pinpointed to within a relatively narrow period, perhaps 1309-1314. However, given the fluid political situation, difficulties of interpretation can occur even if we are confidently able to situate the composition of the *Purgatorio* within this five-year period. For instance it is uncertain whether the closing cantos of the *Purgatorio*, which include of course the prophecy of the DXV, were written before, during, or

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<sup>15</sup> For an overview of the debate surrounding the chronology of Dante's works see: G. Indizio, *Problemi di biografia dantesca* (Ravenna: Longo, 2013), pp. 173-247; G. Inglese, *Vita di Dante* (Rome: Carroci, 2015), particularly pp. 114-134.

<sup>16</sup> N. Fosca, DDP, Note on *Inferno*, XIX, 79-84, accessed 24 April 2015.

shortly after the three-year Italian campaign of Henry VII (1310-1313). Likewise in *Purgatorio* VI, there appears to be a lack of optimism regarding the possible establishment of successful imperial rule following the death of Albert of Habsburg, who is condemned as neglectful, limited, and parochial,<sup>17</sup> and even not truly an Emperor: in Dante's eyes 'la sella è vota' (*Purg.* VI, 89). This stands in contrast to the passionate messianic tone adopted in Dante's letters from around the time of Henry VII's Italian campaign. This difference in attitude suggests that *Purgatorio* VI may pre-date the announcement of Henry's descent into Italy (Summer 1310), while the prophecies of *Purgatorio* XXXII may be contemporaneous with (or perhaps later than) Dante's period of great hope for Henry's mission and the political letters of 1310-1311; some letters are dated or through their reference to current affairs can be dated with a high degree of accuracy.<sup>18</sup>

Fosca feels it likely that in the case of *Inferno* 'la cantica sia stata rivista (in vari punti) prima della divulgazione, avvenuta attorno al 1315'.<sup>19</sup> This is a view which is shared by Petrocchi who views the *Inferno* as being open to every possible revision and updating until the second half of 1314 and claims that the *Purgatorio* was not circulated until the Autumn of 1315.<sup>20</sup> As Davis noted, if this view is correct, then at the time of the first circulation of the first two *cantiche* of the *Commedia*, 'neither its author nor its readers could regard Henry as the *veltro* who would save "humble Italy" or as the 515'.<sup>21</sup> While this is a complicating factor, it does not fundamentally change my main point regarding chronology and dating, and, for the purposes of this thesis I shall keep to the majority view as previously expressed. These alternatives are, somewhat speculatively *potential* revisions only and it does not seem to me to be a foregone conclusion that Dante would change a section or

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<sup>17</sup> O Alberto Tedesco, ch'abbandoni  
 costei ch'è fatta indomita e selvaggia,  
 e dovresti inforcar li suoi arcioni,  
 giusto giudizio da le stelle caggia  
 sovra 'l tuo sangue, e sia novo e aperto,  
 tal che 'l tuo successor temenza n'aggia!  
 Ch'avete tu e 'l tuo padre sofferto,  
 per cupidigia di costa' distretti,  
 che 'l giardin de lo 'mperio sia disertò. (*Purg.*, VI. 97–105).

<sup>18</sup> On this see: C. E. Honess, *Dante Alighieri: Four Political Letters* (London: MHRA, 2007), pp. 45-46 ; 57-58: 69-70; p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> N. Fosca, Note on *Inf.* XIX, 79-84. DDP accessed 12 November 2012.

<sup>20</sup> G. Petrocchi, 'La pubblicazione dell' *Inferno* e dell' *Purgatorio* ', *Convivium*, n.s 25 (1957), 652-69, (see in particular p. 658 and p. 667).

<sup>21</sup> C.T. Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*' p. 56.

sections of text that were anyway always intended to be proof against the future, that would articulate the imminence of reform even if the most likely agent of that reform was to prove a failure.

There is a general consensus that *Paradiso* was written in the last six or seven years of Dante's life, that is to say from 1314 onwards. The dating of the *Paradiso* is of importance because, in the words of St Peter in *Paradiso* XXVII and elsewhere, it promises reform, and addresses itself to political matters, yet we are able to say with a high degree of confidence that the prophecies belong to a period of political despair following the abject failure of Henry's campaign in Italy; the death of Henry VII ended any practical hope for the realisation of Dante's political aims which he had articulated with such passion and optimism in the political letters. The prophecies of the *Paradiso* are thus the only ones in the *Commedia* which can be placed definitively beyond the date of Henry's death and thus interpretation is of importance for analysing change and consistency both in Dante's prophetic practices and his socio-political thought more widely.

The *Monarchia* is perhaps the most problematic and contentious of all Dante's works in terms of its date of composition and its relationship to the *Commedia* in particular because it seems counter-intuitive to think of Dante writing a treatise on Empire *after* the failure of Henry, whereas it totally makes sense *before* Henry's campaign. The key piece of evidence for a late dating of the *Monarchia* is a passage, in *Paradiso* V, that a majority of contemporary Dante scholars believe is referred to in the *Monarchia*'s famous tag 'sicut in *Paradiso Comoedie* iam dixi' (*Mon.* I.xii.6).<sup>22</sup> If this line is not a later interpolation,<sup>23</sup> then it seems definitive for the dating of *Monarchia* to after 1314 and the failure of the Henry VII's mission.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza  
esse creando, e a la sua bontate  
più conformato, e quel ch'e' più apprezza  
fu de la volontà la libertate;  
di che le creature intelligenti,  
e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate. (*Par.* V, 19-24)

The significance of this cross reference as coming precisely at the point where the concept of free will is under discussion is a point which I will consider in Chapter 5.

<sup>23</sup> G. Holmes, 'Monarchia and Dante's Attitude to the Popes', in *Dante and Governance*, ed. by J. Woodhouse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 46-57.

<sup>24</sup> Basing her view primarily on manuscript evidence, Shaw favours of a later dating of the *Monarchia*: Dante, *Monarchy*, translated and edited by Prue Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. xxxiii; Dante, *Monarchia*, English translation with an introduction and



Any desire to find a better fit for the work chronologically in the development of Dante's thought should not allow us to overlook the manuscript evidence, which appears compelling. Cassell notes that all the available manuscripts of the *Monarchia* contain this clause,<sup>25</sup> and while this is not conclusive evidence, it seems to me more logical that we should make our analysis of the likely meaning of Dante's words fit with the most likely material evidence rather than vice-versa.

In contrast, A. P. D'Entrèves views the *Monarchia* as having been composed during the period of Henry VII's Italian campaign and completed prior to its failure. D'Entrèves' whole line of thought depends on the *Monarchia* being, if not an aberration, then at least tied very closely to a specific period in Dante's thought and subsequently abandoned and recanted in the composition of the *Commedia* which D'Entrèves feels was not begun until after Henry's death in 1313.<sup>26</sup> D'Entrèves' suggestion is idiosyncratic less for his proposed dating of the *Monarchia* than for his ideas on the dating of the *Commedia* which, as will be discussed, seem to contradict the manuscript evidence. D'Entrèves aside, there are other scholars, such as Nardi and Foster, who prefer an early dating for the *Monarchia* and see the *Commedia* in a palinodic relationship with Dante's earlier works (including the *Monarchia*). Nardi argues that between the composition of the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* there occurred in Dante's mind 'un profondo rivolgimento',<sup>27</sup> while Kenelm Foster, who, unlike Nardi, came to accept a late dating for the *Monarchia*, maintains that there is a fundamental difference between the *Commedia* on the one hand and the *Convivio* and *Monarchia* on the other: 'a new sense of personal insufficiency and unworthiness, a new and continual recourse to supernatural assistance[...] it is this fact which compels one to read the *Comedy* as the effect of a personal crisis, a "Conversion"'.<sup>28</sup> Herzman does not see abandonment and recantation in the relationship, rather revision and realignment. He feels that Dante has come to see everything that went before as wrong, the *Monarchia* still defines the political ideas

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commentary by R. Kay (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), pp. xxii-xxvi; Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 289; A. K. Cassell, 'Monarchia' in *The Dante Encyclopedia* ed. by R. Lansing (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 616-23 (p. 616).

<sup>25</sup> A. K. Cassell, 'Monarchia' p. 616.

<sup>26</sup> A. P. D'Entrèves, *Dante as a Political Thinker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> B. Nardi, *Dal Convivio alla Commedia* (Rome: Istituto storico Italiano per il medio evo, 1960), p. 309.

<sup>28</sup> K. Foster, *The Two Dantes* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), p. 164.

of the *Commedia*, but has been transcended by more universal concerns; it is just the good being superseded by the better to proceed continually, toward the best.<sup>29</sup> Holmes also favours an early dating of the *Monarchia* based on his reading of *Paradiso* as being more balanced and conservative in character and constituting a detailed correction of much of what Dante had written before, such as his courtly poetry, the love of philosophy in the *Convivio*, or the brief religious radicalism which characterises the close of the *Purgatorio*: ‘The *Monarchia* is abandoned in the *Paradiso*, Dante’s mercurial political thought had moved away from it as it was out of date’.<sup>30</sup> It is argued that the period 1310-1314 saw Dante undergo an evangelical religious conversion which was intense but short lived and can account for the differences between on the one hand the *Monarchia*, letters and *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* on the other. This view is of relevance to this thesis as the nature of the religious radicalism of the final cantos of the *Purgatorio* is one to which I return in my consideration of Dante’s sources for his apocalypticism in Chapter 4, and also in my consideration of the way in which the apocalypticism of the Earthly Paradise should be understood in relation to Dante’s politics in Chapter 5.

An earlier dating of the *Monarchia* would resolve numerous difficulties in the analysis of Dante’s political thought, however the manuscript evidence, which Took argues must take precedence above all other forms of evidence, being material rather than speculative, suggests a later date.<sup>31</sup> While Alberto Casadei has recently adduced fresh manuscript evidence in support of an earlier dating of the *Monarchia*,<sup>32</sup> for the purposes of this thesis I will work on the assumption shared by the majority of modern critics that the cross reference between the two works is conclusive and that the *Monarchia* may be dated to 1314 at the very earliest and, more likely, to 1317 or 1318. That is to say that I will work on the assumption that the *Monarchia* was composed after the failure of Henry VII and is contemporaneous with the composition of the *Paradiso*. That is to say that ‘the philological evidence enunciated most forcefully in the *Monarchia* represents Dante’s mature thought and not a

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<sup>29</sup> R. B. Herzman, ‘Dante and the Apocalypse’, in *Dante: The Critical Complex, Vol. 5*, ed. by R. Lansing (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 402-18, (p. 417).

<sup>30</sup> G. Holmes, ‘*Monarchia* and Dante’s Attitude to the Popes’, pp. 46-57.

<sup>31</sup> J. F. Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 151.

<sup>32</sup> A. Casadei, ‘*Sicut in Paradiso “Comedie” iam dixi*’ in *Studi Danteschi*, LXXVI (2011), pp. 179-97.

temporary phase in his intellectual trajectory'.<sup>33</sup> I will however return to the issue of the dating of the treatise where it appears to impinge directly on the interpretation of the *Commedia*'s prophecies. In accepting this chronology for Dante's works, I do not wish to imply an acceptance of any particular interpretation of the *Monarchia*, particularly with regard to whether the work is to be understood in an optimistic and programmatic sense for future reform or whether it is better seen as a despairing analysis of the reasons for the failure of the imperial ideal and for Henry VII's failure in particular, as this is a subject to which I return in Chapter 3.

It will be seen that any position adopted regarding both the chronology of Dante's works and the meaning of the *Commedia*'s prophecies will have implications for our understanding of the relationship between Dante's prophetic language and his political and theological ideas. Even if we accept these prophecies as having a political dimension, their ambiguity remains, as the nature of the political reform being hoped for, or even predicted, remains unclear. Is it the more positive Aristotelian position, a means to actualising and liberating the potential intellect to achieve the greatest possible happiness for man? Or is Dante to be seen as holding to the more negative Augustinian position, which sees human authority as principally restraining and controlling mankind? Or is it potentially both, as seems to be the case in the *Monarchia*, where the Emperor is seen as simultaneously restraining and enabling?

## 1.5 Conclusion

In this thesis a number of key themes will be brought to the fore and considered in relation to Dante's use of prophecy, enabling me, ultimately, to draw a series of conclusions about the poet's political and religious positions in his text.

Chapter 2 is concerned with establishing a clear context for what follows, in line with the aims of the broader AHRC project as a whole, and therefore focuses on key individuals and lines of thought in late Duecento Florence. It aims to provide an introduction to the type of environment in which Dante's prophetic ideas were formed and, without trying to establish direct lines of influence, will seek to

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<sup>33</sup> G. Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (London: MHRA and Maney Publishing, 2013), p.176.

highlight lines of thought to which seem germane to Dante's political and social agenda and which he may well have encountered during the period 1280-1320.

Chapter 3 will consider Dante's use of prophetic language: I will discuss the ways in which Dante constructs his identity as prophet in his exilic works and his purposes in so doing. I suggest that the use of prophecy and the adoption of the prophetic manner is the framework within which much of Dante's political thought is articulated; I examine the ways in which prophetic language is used in *Paradiso* XXVII and the *Monarchia*, before moving on to discuss the relationship between Dante's prophetic practice in the *Monarchia*, the *Commedia* and the political letters

Chapter 4 considers the relationship of Dante's apocalyptic thought to his intellectual sources, and in particular the ways in which apocalyptic prophetic language was utilised by the Spiritual Franciscan movement in Dante's Florence, but suggests that Dante's political interests and beliefs distance him from these sources. This discussion will fall into two principal parts. Part one will consider the influence of Joachim of Fiore before looking at the relationship of Pseudo-Joachite texts to Dante's own methods and ideas. Part Two will consider the relationship between the prophetic apocalyptic discourse in late Duecento Florence and Dante's own apocalyptic ideas.

Chapter 5 will bring together the strands of argument in the preceding chapters to assess how prophecy, theology and political discourse work together in Dante's Earthly Paradise and in Limbo but are also in tension. In what ways do the similarities and differences between Dante and his contemporaries aid our understanding of the relationship between politics and theology in the *Commedia* and how does the centrality of the role of Rome in Dante's view of politics, society and history inform and influence Dante's prophecies and our interpretation of their meanings?

The *Monarchia* may be defined as presenting a dualist view of the purpose of man's existence which stands in contrast to the *Commedia*'s more unitary or monist position. That is to say Dante's idea in the *Monarchia* is that mankind has two purposes or ends: happiness in this life and happiness in the next life. The *Commedia*'s structure seems to imply, in its narrative of the everyman pilgrim, that the purpose of human existence is to return to God, and that any earthly happiness is transient and subordinate to this ultimate aim. I argue that, despite this difficulty, the

Earthly Paradise is, in both works, Dante's symbol or figure for the happiness which might be achieved by man in his life on Earth. In the light of earlier chapters, Chapter 5 will examine two key areas. Firstly, in suggesting the possibility of an edenic or quasi-edenic existence for man on Earth, implicit questions are raised regarding the relationship between nature and grace and the consequences of the Fall as Dante saw them. This in turn raises profound questions regarding the nature of two key areas of the *Commedia*: Limbo and the Earthly Paradise. Is the Earthly Paradise in Dante's works only capable of being understood as a figure whose value and meaning alters depending on the context within which Dante considers it? And what consequences does the potentially problematic relationship between nature and grace in the Earthly Paradise have for our understanding of Dante's Limbo?

Secondly, I consider the ways in which the role assigned by Dante to the Roman Empire has implications for his view of the nature and purposes of human society. I examine the way in which Dante's 'political' prophecies relate to his vision of Roman history, Roman virtues, and to both the Roman republican and imperial ideals and demonstrate how these inform his prophetic practices. In order to provide further context for my discussion in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I will now consider a range of contemporary and near contemporary figures in Dante's Florence to give an overview of the varied modes of socio-political and theological discourses to which Dante would have had access in the late Duecento.

## Chapter 2

### Contexts

#### 2.1 Introduction

In order to begin to consider Dante's intellectual context in a way which serves the purposes of the broader project, I have sought in the first chapter of this thesis to establish the interpretative position from which my analysis of the sources and meanings of Dante's prophetic practices will be considered. It was suggested that Dante's prophecies in the *Commedia* stand to be interpreted, in a very broad sense, in political terms. I believe that the *Commedia*, the *Monarchia*, and the political letters, all may be said to operate in the service of a political ideal which has at its core the concept of social renewal through a restored universal empire and repauperised Church.

In the light of Chapter 1's assertions, and with the broader aims of the project in mind, this chapter will initially seek to provide an overview of key historical developments and currents of thought, setting Dante's contributions in their historical, social, and cultural contexts. It will then move on to discuss a number of Dante's contemporaries and near-contemporaries to highlight some of the key ways in which the language of theology, and of prophecy in particular, was adopted and adapted to contribute to discourses surrounding the nature and function of human society, the imperial ideal, and the ideal of Church reform in late Duecento Italy. This will serve as the background for all that follows in the thesis, and, while the facts presented are largely well known, this chapter aims to provide historical and contextual points of reference to which I shall return frequently in the following chapters. In particular, I will suggest that the Book of Revelation and an apocalyptic reading of the prophecies of the Old Testament were the fundamental texts for the types of discourses analysed in depth in this thesis. Various sources will be considered including political treatises, chronicles, and biblical commentaries. The individuals and ideas discussed in this chapter have been chosen in an attempt to provide a, necessarily representative rather than comprehensive, overview of some of the main currents of intellectual thought in Florence during Dante's formative years; in particular, I consider ways in which the key Dantean concerns of apocalypticism,

the relationship between Papacy and Empire, and Roman exceptionalism, were present and on occasion co-mingled in contemporary discourses.

## 2.2 Florence: Growth and Faction

The hundred years prior to Dante's birth had seen the growth of Florence as a centre of banking and of mercantile activity, driven in particular by the wool trade, which had been accompanied by a rapid growth in the city's population. This was an economic revolution in Florence and across Italy, which saw a growth of notions of civic independence which had enabled towns to resist Frederick II, and which had brought the *popolo* into conflict with the old town oligarchies; it subverted the old order. Most notably 'it had promoted, at least in the great commercial cities, a social mobility, unparalleled outside the peninsula'.<sup>34</sup> For Jones northern and central Italy in this period is to be identified with two key strands of development: republicanism and capitalism characterised by the relationship of financial power to ideas of civic independence.<sup>35</sup>

The chronicler Dino Compagni tells us that, following the murder of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti in 1215, the two factions in Florence took to calling themselves Guelf and Ghibelline.<sup>36</sup> The adoption of these names and the political allegiances to the Papacy and to the Empire which they at least nominally signified meant that internal factionalism in Florence was no longer purely, or principally, a local matter: the Guelf party sided, where it was expedient to do so, with the Pope, and with the French monarchy, which called into question allegiances to the Emperor and his right to sovereignty in Italy which the Ghibellines asserted. These allegiances played out in bitter conflicts with Florence's Tuscan neighbours with cities changing their Guelf/Ghibelline allegiance according to the allegiance of their nearest and most dangerous rivals, so that 'the factional strife of each city became entangled in a network of regional politics and international allegiances'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> J. Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216-1380* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), p. 189.

<sup>35</sup> P. Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 152.

<sup>36</sup> Dino Compagni, *Cronica* I, 2, ed. by D. Cappelletti (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> D. E. Bornstein, 'Introduction' in Dino Compagni, *Chronicle*, trans. by D. E. Bornstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.), p. xv.

Florence's expansion, driven by economic success, brought conflict with its civic rivals and with the Empire. But the demographic changes which the city saw through the thirteenth century also contributed to the internal political disputes of Dante's period. The period of patrician dominance in the twelfth century was characterised by families who were involved at once in the agricultural affairs of the *contado* but also in the commercial and banking activities of the city, and in occupying the key political offices of the city came to form its new governing class: 'The demographic explosion and commercial expansion of the thirteenth century brought new contenders for power',<sup>38</sup> in the form of the wealthy mercantile classes, both from inside and outside the city; some joined the ranks of the nobility, but other remained identified with the *popolo*, which itself came to be split in two – the *grasso* and the *minuto*. Those of the *popolo minuto* could only hope to match the political aspirations of the *grassi* through their participation in corporate groups such as militias and, in particular, the guilds. Cacciaguida in *Paradiso XVI* laments the rise of families such as the Cerchi and the Buondelmonti, and the pernicious influence that new money and immigration from the *contado* has had on Florentine morality. Lerner notes that in a few generations the Cerchi were able to rise from provincial landowners to a position where Vieri Cerchi was a magnate and leader of the White Guelf faction in the 1290s.<sup>39</sup> Dante's *buon tempo antico* was before the murder of Buondelmonte and his good old days were times of smaller population, modesty and a communal life not beset by greed.<sup>40</sup>

These developments, particularly the social stresses which accompanied them, were reflected in the sometimes conflicted responses of Dante's contemporaries to the changes they perceived in their city. Remigio de' Girolami, while loathing usury, viewed the florin and its power as a blessing from God. Brunetto Latini, in the *Tesoretto*, recalls a period in Florentine history before factionalism as a golden era, but was also nostalgic for a period of Florentine dominance of Tuscany.<sup>41</sup> Dante's *buon tempo antico* predates that of many of his

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<sup>38</sup> D. E. Bornstein, 'Introduction, p. xvi. For an overview of Florentine politics in this period see J. M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.63-95; On Dante's relationship to the institutions and procedures of Florence see: C. Keen, *Dante and the City* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003) pp. 21-49.

<sup>39</sup> Lerner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch*, p. 190.

<sup>40</sup> C.T. Davis, 'Il Buon Tempo Antico' in *Dante's Italy, Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp.71-94 (p. 76).

<sup>41</sup> Brunetto Latini, *Il Tesoretto, Il Favolello* ed. by F. Mazzoni (Alpignano: A. Tallone, 1967), ll.115-



contemporaries as he viewed the focus on money, the growth of the city, and its territorial ambitions as being the root of its problems.<sup>42</sup> For Dante the city's own currency, and the power it brings, only contribute to its problems. He has Folquet say in *Paradiso* IX that Florence:

produce e spande il maladetto fiore  
c'ha disviãte le pecore e li agni,  
però che fatto ha lupo del pastore. (*Par.* IX, 130-32)

Dante uses the Florence of his ancestor Cacciaguida (c.1091-c.1148) as an idealised city, just as the Florence of Dante's day is used repeatedly as his model of a corrupt city in *Inferno*.<sup>43</sup> It will be a key theme of this thesis that, for Dante, the Florence of the past and the Rome of the past were intimately connected in terms of their historical roles and the virtues which Dante would like to see embodied by their citizens. These cities were not merely *topoi* but essential parts of a theory of providential history which Dante had developed to encompass the whole of human history, sacred and profane, the conclusion of which seems to be predicted in the prophecies of the *Commedia*.

### 2.3 Papal Politics and French Influence

Following his exile from Florence and his disillusionment with the possibility of attaining peace within the confines of the city state, Dante formulated a political vision wherein a universal monarchy was the sole means by which the besetting cupidity of the world could be controlled. Obstacles to this ideal came in the form of collusion, and later conflict, between the Papacy and the French crown and in the growing independence of the Italian city states. Nowhere was this more evident than in Florence where the refusal of the city in early 1311 to acknowledge Henry of Luxembourg, the newly elected Holy Roman Emperor, as he made his way towards Rome for his coronation, was the occasion of one of Dante's letters condemning the city as a new Babylon, seeking to sow discord when the agent of universal peace was

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<sup>42</sup> Davis, 'Il Buon Tempo Antico', p.75.

<sup>43</sup> On this see: J. Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), in particular pp. 65-75.

at hand.<sup>44</sup>

Dante's political ideal of universal empire can be seen as both reactionary and to some extent outdated; the rise of the sovereign state elsewhere in Europe was serving to render his political dreams obsolete even at the moment of their formulation. The assertion of the independence of the nation state both from Empire and from Papacy was a feature that was most clearly marked in France where the reign of Philip the Fair 'marked the point when the balance of loyalty definitely swung toward the sovereign state'.<sup>45</sup> As Scott has noted, with his medieval vision of the political unity of Christendom, Dante could not but anathematize the Capetian rulers of France and their satellites for their refusal to accede to the divine plan for the governance of the world.<sup>46</sup>

It was Philip's brother, Charles of Valois, in alliance with Boniface VIII whose actions led to Dante's exile from Florence in the autumn of 1301. This collusion is representative of the whole direction of papal policy in the Duecento; a hostility to the Empire underpinned by French support. However, by turning to the French support for their struggles against the Empire the Popes created 'a sorcerer's apprentice they were unable to control'.<sup>47</sup> Following the reestablishment of the Guelf hegemony in central Italy, Boniface rashly embarked upon his struggle with the French king over the issue of taxation of the French clergy. Philip refused to accept papal supremacy in temporal matters, and the bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) has as its central tenet Boniface's assertion that the temporal authority is subject to the spiritual authority. As Larner has noted, Philip knew he could meet this challenge to his Crown with a confidence which Frederick II fifty years earlier never could have.<sup>48</sup> For Philip there was no election, no oath of obeisance to the Pope, no *translatio imperii*; his kingship was based on his own military power and on divine right. The claims of independence of nations, the French-led idea that *rex in regno suo imperator est*, coupled with the assertions of the independence of city states from imperial and papal control in their politics, were serving to render Dante's dreams of universal monarchy obsolete even at the moment of their articulation.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ep.* VI, 2

<sup>45</sup> J. R. Strayer, 'The Reign of Philip the Fair' p. 423, cited in Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 177.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch*, p. 52.

In *Purgatorio* XX, Dante has Hugo Capet narrate the moral decline of France, and its royal family, from the virtues of his own day to the successive collusion and conflict between his descendent Philip and Boniface VIII. Hollander has noted that, for Dante, Hugh's tale is still more important as the record of what went wrong for Italy, drawing her from her Roman-imperial destiny toward her near death because of France's malfeasance.<sup>49</sup> The humiliation of Boniface at Anagni, by Philip's forces and his death shortly afterwards exposed the weakness of the Papal States and paved the way for the election of the Gascon Clement V following the conclave of Perugia. Clement would lead the Papacy to what Dante would refer to as its 'Babylonian captivity' at Avignon in 1309 and betray Dante's great hope for the world, Henry VII, through his collusion with the Florentines in 1310.

## 2.4 The Mendicant Orders

The orders of mendicant friars represented a new and revolutionary version of the religious life in their commitment to poverty and their exporting of asceticism and vernacular preaching to the churches and town squares of Europe. The mendicants were seen by Innocent III as a providential response to a spiritual crisis affecting the Church, a crisis Lawrence defines as, in essence, 'a confrontation between traditional assumptions about Christian life and the religious needs of a newly arisen urban and secular culture'.<sup>50</sup> Both the Franciscans and the Dominicans were orders set to evangelise the ever more urbanised Europe of which they themselves were products and to combat heresy, in particular in France and Northern Italy

The support of wealthy lay benefactors for the new orders enabled numerous building projects at Florence; the preaching of the mendicant friars satisfied a hunger in lay bourgeois society for the spiritual aspirations which were not served by the existing structures of the Church: 'In a sense they pioneered the idea of a devout life for their laity both by their teaching and example'.<sup>51</sup> The hopeful message of a life of prayer and sacrifice lived fully in the world contrasted with the more pessimistic traditional monastic spirituality which regarded the monk as the only complete

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<sup>49</sup> Hollander, Note on *Purg.* VII, 94-96, DDP, accessed 12 March 2015.

<sup>50</sup> C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (Longman: London and New York, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p. 121.

Christian and offered only a tenuous hope of salvation to the married laity'.<sup>52</sup>

The Franciscan order was founded in the early thirteenth century and spread rapidly across Europe during the Duecento establishing itself in Florence at Santa Croce in the 1220s.<sup>53</sup> It was characterised by its founder's imitation of the life of Christ, the renunciation of earthly goods, and its mission to take the monastic ascetic lifestyle into the *piazze* through preaching. Central to Francis's ideal was the rejection of wealth, which all potential recruits to the order were obliged to imitate: 'The community was to live a life of corporate as well as individual poverty'.<sup>54</sup> In Robson's view the Franciscans addressed contemporary aspirations for a clearer expression of Christian values; the literal response of the Franciscans to scripture gave a freshness and vitality to an order which was searching for new ways of giving authentic expression to its Christian vocation.<sup>55</sup>

The striking levels of recruitment between 1212 and 1220 facilitated the spread of the Franciscan order but, as it became increasingly part of the Church hierarchy through the thirteenth century, it became ever more difficult to reconcile Francis's original ideas with the current state of the order. The establishment of Franciscan houses in cities across Europe meant large numbers of well-educated able men were available in the cities and increasingly members of the orders both of friars minor and of preachers came to occupy positions of political and social responsibility: 'What Francis had founded on the rock of poverty and humility was being transmuted into a cohort of highly talented and professional men who exercised wide ranging influence'.<sup>56</sup> Burr has noted that the 'Pope and laymen alike found the Friars useful and drew them into activities which inadvertently undermined the very features which made the order so attractive'.<sup>57</sup> The order's success ultimately led to divisions because the lifestyle of the founder was ill-suited to an army of followers which had established itself in permanent institutions and developed close ties with the social and political apparatus of the cities they

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<sup>52</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> On the history of the Franciscan order see M. Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> D. R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), p. 42.

<sup>55</sup> Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> D. Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty: The Origins of the Usus Pauper Controversy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 16.

inhabited, as confessors, preachers, administrators, and mediators.

Lapses from the high standards of the original order stimulated a clarion call for radical renewal.<sup>58</sup> And while the seventeen years to 1274, during which St Bonaventure was Minister General of the order, are seen as being characterised by Bonaventure's attempts to steer a middle way between the moderate and radical wings of the order, following his death, the rifts in the order became ever more apparent. Most famously, the order was beset by internal disputes around the application of the rule of St Francis, and in particular the definition of the nature of Francis' rule on poverty and the 'use' of wealth. This issue was current as early as 1230, when a bull by Gregory IX (*Quo elongati*) had made the distinction between use and ownership of wealth. The radicals or zealots among the Friars Minor, the forerunners of what became known as the Spiritual Franciscan movement held that the vow of poverty was not simply fulfilled by renunciation of ownership, the vocation also required that possessions should be restricted to the bare minimum, a commitment to cultivating an impoverished lifestyle, not restricted use of goods but *usus pauper*.<sup>59</sup>

Benfell has emphasised that the Spiritual Franciscan movement was very much still in its infancy in Dante's day and that there is little evidence of any coordinated Spiritual movement prior to 1274, although clearly the tensions regarding the definition and use of poverty had been apparent from very early on.<sup>60</sup> The late 1270s saw debates within the order about whether its application of the rule was violating Francis' intent, and the imprisonment of a number of radicals including the chronicler Angelo Clareno. Pier Giovanni Olivi, in his treatise on *usus pauper*, written shortly before his censure in 1283, offered a sustained argument for *usus pauper* as an essential part of the Franciscan vow. He contended that whatever goods the Franciscans seemed to possess actually belonged to others, not themselves and that the Franciscans should use these things only insofar as was absolutely

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<sup>58</sup> Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, p. 95.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p. 60.

<sup>60</sup> S. Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', in *Dante and the Franciscans*, ed. by S. Casciani (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 9-50 (p. 11). Burr notes the slight anachronism of the use of the term 'Spiritual' which was not in general circulation until post -1320 but feels the designation is convenient. (D. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. viii.

necessary.<sup>61</sup> Olivi insisted that this limited use was a matter of precept and thus failing to conform to it entailed mortal sin.<sup>62</sup> This controversy is of relevance to this thesis as Dante makes the need for a return to apostolic poverty in the Church a central strand of his political thought, but it is clear that he is acutely aware of this division within the Franciscan order and in *Paradiso* XX he seems to condemn both wings, the Conventuals of Minister General Matthew of Acquasparta and the Spirituals represented by Ubertino da Casale in their respective attitudes to the Rule of Francis: ‘ch'uno la fugge e altro la coarta’ (*Par.* XII, 124-26).<sup>63</sup>

The election to the Papacy of Celestine V brought hope to the spiritual movement for a brief period. However, their independence as a new spiritual order of Poor Hermits under Celestine was short-lived and Boniface VIII brought them back under Franciscan control. Clareno and his followers found themselves once more exposed to the hostility of their Franciscan superiors.<sup>64</sup> At the Council of Vienne in 1312, Clement V issued *Exivi de Paradiso* as a further attempt at compromise, in essence telling the order to reform and the Spirituals to obey their superiors within the reformed order. This was insufficient for those such as Angelo Clareno who wanted recognition of the order founded under Celestine. Clement’s attempts at reconciliation were unsuccessful and in 1317 John XXII issued an ultimatum to the dissenters, which was rejected and several Spirituals were executed in Southern France.

The Dominican order had been founded in 1216 on the authority of Innocent III, and from the start was a clerical and learned order which spread rapidly across Europe during the Duecento.<sup>65</sup> Like the Franciscans, the Dominicans initially

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<sup>61</sup> Petrus Iohannis Olivi, *Treatise on Usus Pauper* trans. D. Burr, [http://www.history.vt.edu/Burr/heresy/beguins/olivi/Olivi\\_Usus.html](http://www.history.vt.edu/Burr/heresy/beguins/olivi/Olivi_Usus.html), accessed 20 May 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Olivi, *Treatise on Usus Pauper*, accessed 20 May 2015.

<sup>63</sup> For Dante and the Spiritual Franciscan movement see: E. Angiolilo, ‘Dante e Ubertino da Casale’, in *Misure critiche*, 5 (1975), 5-10; R. Manselli, ‘Dante e gli Spirituali francescani’ *Lecture classensi* II (1982), 47-61; E. Pasquini, ‘L’Olivi e Dante. Fra idealità religiose e attese profetiche,’ in *La presenza francescana tra Medioevo e modernità*, ed. by M. Chessa and M. Poli (Florence: Vallecchi, 1996). pp. 233-45; N. Mineo, ‘Gli Spirituali francescani e l’Apocalisse di Dante’, *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 102 (1998), 26-46; N. Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); S. Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, pp. 9-50; D. Bolognesi, ‘Dante and the Friars Minor: Aesthetics of the Apocalypse’, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2012.

<sup>64</sup> The relationship of the Franciscan order to the Papacy has been explored by Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, esp. pp. 69-81; see also Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans*, in particular Ch. 4 for the period 1290-1309.

<sup>65</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p.65.

adopted the ideal of absolute poverty and a dependence on mendicancy but unlike in the case of the Franciscans this aspect of the rule was renounced in 1246.<sup>66</sup> Innocent III was anxious about the dissemination of heresy, especially in southern France and northern Italy, and the pressing need to combat such movements and reconcile Catholics with their Church lay at the heart of St Dominic's order of preachers.<sup>67</sup>

It has been observed that a pastoral mission to a literate and relatively sophisticated urban population, as well as disputations with leaders of heretical sects, demanded both mental agility and theological knowledge and that to answer this need 'the order as a whole was organised as a kind of disseminated university'.<sup>68</sup> The choice of the university cities of Paris and Bologna as early targets for the order highlighted an element in Dominic's strategy that was vigorously pursued by his successors: 'His friars not only sought to provide for the theological education of the preachers, they made it their aim to capture the leading intellectual centres of their time'.<sup>69</sup> In addition to having come to hold a strong presence at the established universities, by Dante's period a network of Dominican *studia* extended across Europe and the Dominicans were at the heart of the most heated intellectual debates of the day, with men like Aquinas condemning the Averroism of Siger of Brabant, yet seemingly driven by an anxiety to save the essentials of Aristotle for Christian orthodoxy.<sup>70</sup>

While the Florentine Franciscans of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries drew the overwhelming majority of their membership from the *popolo*, including recent immigrants from the countryside,<sup>71</sup> the Dominicans were more often from the wealthier classes.<sup>72</sup> The Dominican order contributed considerably to the growing political hegemony of Florence's international merchants and bankers and by the early fourteenth century the Dominicans in Florence already had a long history in the Guelf camp and as ideologues for the merchant banker class.<sup>73</sup> This role is of relevance to this thesis as the Aristotelian ideas of the nature of citizenship

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<sup>66</sup> A. Meekins, 'Reflecting on the Divine: Notes on Dante's Heaven of the Sun', *The Italianist*, 18 (1998), 28-70 (p. 46).

<sup>67</sup> Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, p. 70.

<sup>68</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p. 84.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p.72.

<sup>70</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p.72.

<sup>71</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 65.

<sup>72</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 82.

and the function of society articulated by contemporary Dominican thinkers also feature in Dante's works. However, the Guelf politics and the nuanced but often laudatory views of Florence's power and wealth of Dominicans such as Remigio de' Girolami and Giordano da Pisa, distance them both from Dante's own ideas of universal monarchy and also his near uniformly negative assessment of Florence's social and financial development since the *buon tempo antico* of his own great-grandfather's day.

## 2.5 Le scuole de li religiosi

The arrival of Aristotelian thought in the West, particularly the ideological works – the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *De Anima* – represented a challenge principally because it did not tally with the general tendency to explain the material in terms of the immaterial; for Aristotle the world is not provisional but has a value in and of itself.<sup>74</sup> Took identifies three styles or groups which are apparent in response to this challenge. First there was that of the conservative Augustinians and Franciscans to have nothing to do with it, secondly 'the breath of fresh air' interpretation of the so called Latin Averroists who saw philosophy as the non-revealed pure science of the mind with its notion that it might be possible for truths arrived at philosophically to counter truths received theologically on the basis of revelation and the inspired teachings of the Church; all this was anathema to Augustinians and even to moderates like St Thomas. The third position is the moderate way represented by the Dominicans and particularly by men like Albert the Great and St Thomas. Thomas systematically incorporated Aristotle into the open-endedness of Christian Neoplatonism on the basis of analogy: 'a sense in which, given the universal hierarchy being proposed by the idealists each member of the hierarchy none the less *is* absolutely relative to its own species. This is an admittance of a decisive new element into the traditional idealist way of thinking as the natural world, transience, becomes, in a fundamental sense, comparable with the supernatural, on an equal footing with it as a manifestation of being'.<sup>75</sup>

In Northern Europe, 'Christian theology and philosophy were increasingly

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<sup>74</sup> Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher*, p. 97.

<sup>75</sup> Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher*, p. 98.



dominated by the great movement of Scholasticism springing from the study of Aristotle and the Church fathers at Paris. By 1300 this had created an overwhelming proliferation of Latin treatises which attempted to set out religious beliefs and philosophical explanations of man and nature in terms ultimately derived from Greek and Judaic thought'.<sup>76</sup> Besides extending the curriculum of the Schools it also brought new methods with the application of dialectic or analytic logic, the *quaestio* or disputation took its place alongside the lecture as the favoured instrument of instruction.<sup>77</sup>

Holmes argues that both via Dominicans like Aquinas and also through Franciscans such as St Bonaventure, the first Minister General of the order, the presence and influence of northern Scholasticism in Tuscany grew rapidly through the late Duecento, but its reception was modulated by the strength of independent secular life in the cities.<sup>78</sup> The Aristotelian texts were put to work in the service of law and of theology and utilised by the Dominican order which produced the commentaries of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas as well as the incorporation by Thomas of moral philosophy into the *secunda secundae* of his *Summa theologiae*. Aquinas 'accepted that the pagan thinkers might have useful knowledge in the natural order to bestow upon Christians, and in using Aristotelian philosophic principles to buttress Christian beliefs, he gave a much wider sanction than ever before to men and their concerns'.<sup>79</sup> Larner emphasises that while the Christianisation of Aristotle, the Scholastic method, and the procedure of the *quaestio* were intellectual novelties of the *studia* of northern Europe, the activities of the Dominican order, and Aquinas in particular, saw these ideas introduced and developed in the Italian context in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.<sup>80</sup> Both the Dominican and Franciscan orders had been faced at the outset with the difficulty of how to instruct the brethren on the Bible and to give them instruction in systematic theology; the universities were the obvious answer to this as a place of

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<sup>76</sup> G. Holmes, *Florence, Rome, and the Origins of the Renaissance*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Holmes, *Florence, Rome, and the Origins of the Renaissance*, p. 71.

<sup>79</sup> Larner, *Italy in the age of Dante and Petrarch*, p. 241. The extent to which Dante was a Thomist has been the occasion of extensive debate. For a summary see S. Gilson, 'Dante and Christian Aristotelianism', in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, ed. by C. E. Honess and M. Treherne, 2 vols (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), I, 65-109 (esp. pp. 65-86).

<sup>80</sup> Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch*, p. 239.

instruction and of recruitment and both orders established themselves at all the major centres of learning through the Duecento.

Profound economic changes, characterised by the rapid growth of international trade, were driving a renewal of urban life in Western Europe, and a sustained rise in population.<sup>81</sup> Dante's sensitivity to all of these enabled him to see that a new world was emerging in which capital and credit played an ever increasing role; this was a society more mobile and, at the upper levels, more affluent than before and one in which there was a new civic aristocracy of the mercantile bourgeoisie. The commercial cities of Tuscany contained educated laymen who, unlike their northern brethren, were capable of reading the Latin literary classics themselves; there was a large class of laymen at Florence whose professional work involved them in the study of Latin, the *giudici e notai*. 'The role of the notary at all levels of society, up to the political level with its mass of intricate and elegant correspondence was the main social reason for the intellectual peculiarity of the cities'.<sup>82</sup> Commercial activity on any scale demanded at least a functional literacy among its practitioners and adjunct professions of the law – in particular the notaries responsible for drawing up and witnessing legal contracts – and ceased to be the preserve of the literate clergy. Aspects of this lay culture will be considered later in this chapter in my discussion of perhaps its preeminent Florentine example, Brunetto Latini.

Beyond this native lay culture of the notaries, based on widespread literacy and the ability to read Latin books, Holmes suggests that a principal intellectual strand in Dante's milieu is the Parisian Scholasticism introduced and sometimes translated into the vernacular by clerics. The key line in Dante's own works which refers to his own education comes at *Convivio* II, xii, where he tells us that following the death of Beatrice, 'cominciai ad andare [...] ne le scuole de li religiosi e a le disputazioni de li filosofanti'. There was at the time no university in Florence and the key innovative and progressive elements in Florentine education in the period were the religious schools and in particular those of the mendicant friars, Franciscan and Dominican. The city's only *studium generale* was at the Franciscan Church of Santa Croce. Across Florence at the Dominican School of Santa Maria Novella, the

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<sup>81</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Holmes, *Florence, Rome, and the Origins of the Renaissance*, p. 73.

Thomistic synthesis of Aristotle was taught, Remigio de' Girolami is usually identified as the period's most important teacher here.<sup>83</sup> Santagata feels that when Dante refers to having attended the 'scuole de li religiosi' he can only be referring to one or both of these two *studia* and it is likely that '“disputazioni de li filosofanti” riporti a questo stesso ambiente'.<sup>84</sup>

Santa Maria Novella only assumed the role of *studium generale* in the early Trecento, but nonetheless was important during Dante's Florentine years as a provincial centre. Being a *Studio teologico* it did not hold courses in philosophy in the strict sense, but that does not mean that the language and the categories of Aristotle were not in circulation. The extent to which Dante could have had direct access to the intellectual activities of the Schools is a point of dispute among critics. Panella asserts that when we consider Dante's claim in *Convivio* regarding the 'disputazioni de li filosofanti' as potentially referring to Santa Maria Novella, we have to remember first and foremost that no philosophy *studium* ever operated out of Santa Maria Novella and that only theology lectures were open to the public.<sup>85</sup> If this is the case then the circulation of Aristotelian ideas in preaching and in lay intellectual discourses is particularly significant as it would have provided access for Dante to formally expressed and considered Aristotelian ideas to which he would have been denied access at Santa Maria Novella.

The centrality of preaching in the public sphere to the mendicants' purpose saw the production of preaching manuals, and the new art of preaching, the more structured *sermo modernus* influenced by the precepts of analytic and dialectical logic, was a by-product of the university: its peculiar rhetoric was derived from the Schools. While this new form of sermon was not like an academic disputation, 'its definitions, semantic distinctions, and marshalling of authorities bear all the marks of scholastic discipline inculcated in the university classrooms'.<sup>86</sup> The diffusion and development of vernacular preaching was accelerated by the work of the mendicant orders: 'che mediante la predicazione ai laici attuano un vasto e preciso programma culturale, capace di rintuzzare e annullare l'espansione dei movimenti ereticali, e di

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<sup>83</sup> C. T. Davis, 'Education in Dante's Florence', in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 137-165 (p. 147).

<sup>84</sup> M. Santagata, *Dante*, (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), p. 84.

<sup>85</sup> E. Panella, 'Nuova cronologia remigiana', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 60 (1990), 145-311 (pp. 180-82).

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars*, p. 121.

assicurare alla Chiesa il controllo della popolazione delle città',<sup>87</sup> and it is in Florence at the beginning of the Trecento, with the maturing of a lay vernacular literature through an educated bourgeoisie, that we find the first vernacular collections of preaching: a type of preaching which addressed itself to the particular needs and concerns of Florentine society.<sup>88</sup>

Mulchahey notes the considerable extent to which the Thomist synthesis of Aristotle began to find its way into the everyday materials of preaching and theological disputes in Florence,<sup>89</sup> and observes that the more obvious suggestion that Dante received his Christian Aristotelianism from the pulpit rather than in the school room should not be overlooked; preaching was the principal means by which the friars, Dominican and Franciscan alike, communicated with the laity and Dominican preaching in Florence 'reveals an intimate interplay between secular imperatives and religious sensibilities'.<sup>90</sup>

Like Panella, Mulchahey notes that the teaching at Santa Maria Novella was almost exclusively theology not philosophy.<sup>91</sup> While the philosophy lectures may have been unavailable to the laity, Gilson has noted that the weekly debates on both theology and philosophy were open to the public.<sup>92</sup> Delcorno believes Dante may have attended at Santa Maria Novella and says that 'qui infatti aveva sede uno studio aperto alle esigenze dei laici'.<sup>93</sup> Panella notes that 'l'inibizione verte sulla *lectio*, non necessariamente sulla *disputatio* né tantomeno sulla *praedicatio*, a pari titolo compiti del lettore. Il brano del *Convivio* non parla di lezioni, sebbene non le escluda positivamente, mentre fa esplicita parola di disputazioni'.<sup>94</sup> Mulchahey has demonstrated that the *studia moralia* were not incorporated into the curriculum of the schools until 1314, but it seems that there was official engagement with Aristotelian texts even before they were formally part of the curriculum, and even before 1314 it is reasonable to assume a solid grounding in the texts for all

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<sup>87</sup> C. Delcorno, *La predicazione nel età comunale* (Florence: Sansoni, 1974), p. 38.

<sup>88</sup> Delcorno, *La predicazione nel età comunale*, p. 38.

<sup>89</sup> M. M. Mulchahey, 'First the Bow is Bent in Study...'. *Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), p. 439.

<sup>90</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 93.

<sup>91</sup> M. M. Mulchahey, 'Education in Dante's Florence Revisited: Remigio de' Girolami and the Schools of Santa Maria Novella', in *Medieval Education*, ed. by R. B. Begley and J. W. Koterski, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp.143-81 (p.144).

<sup>92</sup> Gilson, 'Dante and Christian Aristotelianism', p. 84.

<sup>93</sup> Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare* (Florence: Olschki, 1975), p.19.

<sup>94</sup> Panella, 'Nuova cronologia remigiana', pp. 180-82.

Dominican lectors and *magistri studentium*, and that the language and categories of Aristotle were present in a range of the Florence contexts in Dante's time.<sup>95</sup>

## 2.6 Joachim of Fiore

The second part of this chapter will discuss key individuals in Dante's Florence. But before turning to these I wish to highlight the writings of the Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202) and the wealth of Pseudo-Joachite writing which appeared in the century following his death. I do so as Joachim is widely held to be of huge influence on the prophetic manner which characterizes many of the discourses and disputes within the Church during the Duecento and in particular on the relationship of the Franciscan order to the Papacy.<sup>96</sup> In the context of this chapter Joachim forms a bridge between the more general themes I have been discussing in the Florentine context and the 'case studies' that will follow. Joachim and his legacy are also of importance; Pseudo-Joachite works represent the most prominent means by which the language of prophecy, and the language of apocalyptic prophecy in particular, was adapted, often by members of the Franciscan order, to particular political or quasi-political purposes in the Duecento. I will argue that Dante uses prophecy of this kind, albeit to advance a moral, social, and political agenda which is substantially removed from that of the most prominent Joachim-influenced figures of Dante's period.

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<sup>95</sup> C. F. Briggs, 'Moral Philosophy and Dominican Education: Bartolomeo da San Concordio's *Compendium moralis philosophiae*', in *Medieval Education* ed. by Ronald B. Begley and Joseph W. Koterski, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 182-96 (p. 183).

<sup>96</sup> On Joachim see M. W. Bloomfield, 'Joachim of Fiore: A Critical Survey of his Canon Teachings. Sources, Bibliography and Influence', *Traditio*, 13 (1957), pp. 249-311; E. Randolph Daniel, 'Joachim of Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 72-88; M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, (London: SPCK, 1976).

On Dante's Joachism see: S. Cristaldi, *Gioacchino da Fiore nel 'Paradiso' dantesco* (Catania: Università di Catania, facoltà di lettere e filosofia, 1995); R. Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1997).

The relationship of Dante's prophetic manner to that of Joachim of Fiore and Pseudo-Joachite Prophecy has been considered by *inter alia*: E. Buonaiuti, *Dante come profeta* (Modena: Guanda Editore, 1936); M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, pp. 69-92; M. Reeves, 'The Third Age: Dante's debt to Gioacchino da Fiore', in *L'età dello spirito e la fine dei tempi in Gioacchino da Fiore e nel gioachismo medievale*, ed. by A. Crocco (San Giovanni in Fiore: Centro Studi Gioachimiti, 1986), pp. 127-39; S. Cristaldi, *Gioacchino da Fiore nel 'Paradiso' dantesco*; S. Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo* (Rome: Salvato Sciascia Editore, 2000); D. Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', in *Dante and His Literary Precursors*, ed. by J. C. Barnes and J. Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 69-92.

Among the best known works by Joachim himself are *The Liber Concordia* and *Liber Figuram* and a commentary on the book of Revelation the *Expositio super apocalypsim*. As will be discussed, from these works emerge a number of innovative ways of interpreting the Bible and understanding its relationship to history and to the contemporary situation.<sup>97</sup> Critical considerations of Dante's intellectual sources for the prophetic-apocalyptic mode employed in the *Commedia* have focussed in part on Dante's attachment to and differences from Joachim and more particularly the ways in which the works of the Calabrian abbot and writings attributed to him informed the discourses of the Spiritual Franciscans in Dante's period.<sup>98</sup> In the *Commedia*, Dante places Joachim of Fiore in the Heaven of the Sun and describes him as 'di spirito profetico dotato' (*Par. XII*, 141), seeming, at the least, to confirm a knowledge of his reputation as prophet.

Scott feels that whether or not Dante knew Joachite or Pseudo-Joachite texts directly, the presence of such modes of thought in preaching and teaching in Florence, particularly among the Spiritual Franciscans, makes it unlikely that Dante never came into contact with them.<sup>99</sup> Joachite ideas would enjoy a renaissance in Florence in the 1290s, particularly among the Spiritual Franciscans at Santa Croce and I will briefly outline the key concepts here to introduce my account of the Spirituales later in this chapter and my discussion of Dante's use of their ideas which will be the focus for Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Two key novelties in the thought of Joachim of Fiore which were of particular significance in the period were the tendency to read the book of Revelation literally rather than allegorically, and the development of a new method of biblical exegesis, *Concordia*. The concept of *Concordia* was one which Joachim sought to prove by demonstrating established parallels between the Old Testament and the New, thus demonstrating historically the validity of the concept. This then allowed him 'to correlate the events of general history with the Apocalypse and therefore to

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<sup>97</sup> For considerations of the extent of Dante's direct knowledge of the *Liber Figurarum* and the extent to which its imagery present in the *Commedia* see M. Reeves and B. Hirsch-Reich, *The 'Figurae' of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), esp. pp. 317-29; S. Cristaldi, 'Dante e il *Liber figurarum*', in *Letterature e lingue nazionali e regionali. Studi in onore di Nicolò Mineo*, ed. by S. C. Sgroi and S. C. Trovato (Rome: il Calamo, 1996), pp.137-57; E. Fumagalli, 'Gioacchino Da Fiore, Dante e i cerchi trinitari: una questione aperta?', in E. Fumagalli, *Il giusto Enea e il pio Rifeo* (Florence: Olschki Editore, 2012), pp.197-214.

<sup>98</sup> On this see R. Manselli, *La 'Lectura super apocalypsim' di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi* (Rome: Istituto storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1955); Manselli, 'Dante e gli Spirituales francescani' pp. 47-61.

<sup>99</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 206.

interpret the symbols and visions of the Apocalypse as predicting a series of persons and events parallel to those of general history'.<sup>100</sup> These novelties continued to be central to Joachite thought in the century following Joachim's death.<sup>101</sup> A further key element of Joachim's thought was the division of the history of the world into three overlapping ages: the age of the Father, that of the Son, and that of the Holy Spirit. Joachim's writings were the first to give the Pope a special role in the second age, the here-and-now, and the third age, the age of the Spirit which, in a break with tradition, Joachim says, will follow the defeat of the Antichrist. As McGinn has noted, *The Liber Concordia* speaks of a 'novus dux de Babilone, universalis scilicet pontifex nove Ierusalem' as a figure who will appear in forty-two generations from the birth of Christ to renew the Church.<sup>102</sup> This prophecy was responsible for millennial anticipation as 1260 approached and the subsequent disillusionment of believers such as the Franciscan chronicler Salimbene da Adam whose belief in a Joachite future was shattered by the failure of the new age to materialise.<sup>103</sup> However as will be discussed, subsequent generations were able to recast the prophecies of Joachim to reflect their own times, and Franciscans such as Pier Giovanni Olivi and Ubertino da Casale were responsible for a revitalisation of Franciscan Joachism in the 1290s.

Joachim claimed to be a prophet who could interpret the Bible to make infallible prophecies about what would happen in the near future in the transition from the second age to the third age, the age of the Spirit. He saw history as being both tripartite and characterised by a double pattern of sevens where both Testaments could be divided into seven periods 'the seventh period of Church history corresponds with the third age in the threefold pattern although the third age can also be said to begin in the sixth period'.<sup>104</sup> This idea is also key for Pseudo-Joachite texts as it allowed the sixth period, that is to say the present day, to be the time in which the signs of the coming of the new age would be apparent and allowed contemporary

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<sup>100</sup> Randolph Daniel, 'Joachim of Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse', p. 78.

<sup>101</sup> Randolph Daniel, 'Joachim of Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse', p. 89.

<sup>102</sup> B. McGinn, 'Pastor Angelicus'. Apocalyptic Myth and Political Hope in the Fourteenth Century', in *Santi e santità nel secolo XIV. Atti del XV convegno internazionale, Assisi, 15-17 ottobre 1987* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1989), pp. 221-51 (p. 224). The reference is to *Liber Concordia*, Bk1 Pt.1 Ch.45 (Venice, 1519), p. 402.

<sup>103</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica*, ed. by Giuseppe Scalia, 2 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1966), I, 441.

<sup>104</sup> D. Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993), p. 1.

figures to be cast within an immediately relevant apocalyptic framework. This Trinitarian view of history where the Old Testament era is the age of the Father, and the New Testament era the age of the Son will be followed, in Joachim's view, by an age of peace, the age of the Holy Spirit. The nature of Joachim's third age caused grave concern for the Papal commission at Anagni as it seemed to prophesy the end of the Church; to identify the Roman Church with Babylon, and to predict that the Church will pass away as the *ordo clericalis* of the second era is replaced with a new order of monks; moreover, it sees all this occurring imminently. For Joachim, the advent of the Antichrist would begin rather than close the last age of the world and a preliminary separation of the wicked and the elect would render superfluous the hierarchical Church. The division of history into seven ages and the identification of the corrupt Roman Church with Babylon bear an obvious resemblance to the apocalyptic passages in the Earthly Paradise of the *Purgatorio*; the nature of this relationship and the fundamental differences between Dante's position and that of Joachim will be a focus of my discussions in Chapter 4.

## 2.7 Pseudo-Joachim

Pseudo-Joachite works in the form of biblical commentaries, such as the *Super Hieremiam* (c. 1250)<sup>105</sup> and the *Super Esaiam* (c. 1260)<sup>106</sup> used Joachim's ideas to engage in political and theological disputes. The genuine and Pseudo-Joachite works with their more literal approach to the Bible and to the book of Revelation in particular, proved particularly fruitful in allowing the Franciscan movement to develop an apocalyptic eschatology that gave St Francis a crucial role in salvation history, identifying Francis with the angel of the sixth seal of the book of Revelation, whose advent marked the transition to the sixth age characterised by strife between the forces of good and evil.<sup>107</sup>

Pseudo-Joachite works make much of the claim that Joachim's gift was the ability to see mystic concordances between the prophecies of the Bible relevant to the three ages of the Church. Indeed much medieval exegesis saw the Old Testament

<sup>105</sup> Anonymous, *Abbatis Joachim Divina prorsus in Ieremiam Prophetam Interpretatio* (Cologne: Alektorius and Soter, 1577).

<sup>106</sup> Anonymous, *Abbatis Joachim Florentis, Scriptum super Esaiam Prophetam* (Venice: L. De Sordis, 1517).

<sup>107</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 210.



as being fulfilled in the New; David is at once both himself and prefiguration of whom Christ is the fulfilment. Likewise, the love of God for Israel is seen, through the Pauline epistles, as having been fulfilled in the new Israel that is to say the Church.<sup>108</sup> The age of the Father, and the age of the Son prepare and anticipate the age of the Spirit. For Manselli, all this ‘portava come conseguenza inevitabile la necessità del confronto e del rapporto storico’.<sup>109</sup>

Davis has emphasised the importance of marking the difference between this, the Franciscan Joachite view, and the more general medieval concept of history; the Franciscan order sought to relate Joachim’s vision of reform, to the purpose of Francis’ life and the founding of their order. It was the novelty of the Joachite view that it foretold a new era in which the life of the Church would change radically and tried to perceive the advent of this age in contemporary historical events. This is no longer the obscure and uncertain battle of good and evil as it is in Augustine: the enemy is now in plain view, and the term ‘Antichrist’, and thus all St John’s words, take on a concrete historical reality and are seen to mark a necessary preliminary to the new age. As will be discussed, this method of reading was one which persisted into apocalyptic exegesis in late Duecento Florence, most notably in the writings of Spiritual Franciscans such as Olivi’s *Lectura super apocalipsim* and the *Arbor vitae* of his pupil Ubertino da Casale. In this way the book of Revelation became the key book: on the one hand it was the last message of Christianity looking at the past, and on the other it looked towards the future new age of the Spirit as Joachim saw it. This new perspective on the Book of Revelation was the historical and meta-historical premise for a kingdom of God which was already beginning on earth (the duration unclear), a kingdom which also announced the last days and the end of the Cosmos.<sup>110</sup>

Pseudo-Joachite works, as Cristaldi has noted, had the tendency to reduce Joachim to a prophet of the apocalypse rather than of a transition to the age of the Spirit,<sup>111</sup> a prophet of the end of time rather than a transition to a new age. These texts used biblical exegesis to critique contemporary rulers and events and to place them within an apocalyptic context, and Pseudo-Joachite texts use apocalyptic

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<sup>108</sup> Oldroyd, ‘Dante and the Medieval Prophets’, p. 77.

<sup>109</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 534.

<sup>110</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 533.

<sup>111</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachimismo*, p. 50.

imagery to condemn the Emperor. In addition to the reductivist tendencies noted by Cristaldi, Moynihan argues that the Pseudo-Joachite works have the tendency to introduce both an eager expectation of the Antichrist and a simplistic and literalist typological interpretation of scripture as referring directly to mid-thirteenth-century events.<sup>112</sup>

Reeves notes that from the 1250s onward Joachim became par excellence the prophet who foretold the two mendicant orders through his glosses on the book of Revelation and it is in works such as the *Super Hieremiam* that the idea of orders of preachers promised by God is recapitulated and given greater contemporary resonance. But Joachim also ‘serves as a name to cover a very miscellaneous collection of prophecies. Sometimes they would seem to have been invented for the occasion; sometimes a particular political situation suggested some enigmatic passage in a Pseudo-Joachite work which suddenly became appropriate’.<sup>113</sup> Salimbene tells us that Joachite works were known in Pisa (*Cronica* I-II), and Manselli feels that it was here that we see Joachite ideas leaving the ambit of monasticism to be inserted in the discourses of a city at the height of its powers. The perception of Francis as having an apocalyptic role, and the characterization of him as *alter Christus*, stimulated the historical-theological reflection of Franciscans on the meaning of the events described in Revelation and allowed extremists such as Gerardo di Borgo San Donnino to place the friars minor in the context of the Joachite third age.<sup>114</sup> From Joachim, Gerardo deduces the historical and providential nature of the Franciscan order, identifying Joachim as the angel of Revelation 14. 6. For him, Joachim’s works stand as a third testament to complete the works of God, and his life of Joachim, and its introduction, the *Introductorium in Evangelium Aeternum*, which expounded this point of view, was condemned by a commission of cardinals set up by Pope Alexander IV. The insertion of St Francis into a Joachite perspective as one who would begin the renewal of the Church, allowed the Franciscans to see the book of Revelation as having been written especially for them, and as a text in which clues regarding their own role could be found. It was the Joachite language, in particular the apocalyptic expectation, which was to be a key

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<sup>112</sup> R. Moynihan, ‘The development of the “Pseudo-Joachim” commentary “Super Hieremiam” : new manuscript evidence’, *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes*, 98 (1986), 109-42 (p.114).

<sup>113</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore*, p. 74.

<sup>114</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 539.

tool in the order's attacks on both Papacy and empire.

## 2.8 Joachism as political tool

Reading the book of Revelation as history rather than allegory not only rendered the apocalyptic contemporary but also the contemporary apocalyptic; direct linkages between biblical texts and current affairs made for a powerful political weapon. The usefulness and flexibility of Joachite prophecy is seen in the way in which it was utilised by both Frederick II and his political opponents. Frederick was a key figure in adopting and adapting Joachite texts to his own political propaganda purposes and at the same time was one of the first to be criticised by his opponents by being placed in the dramatic context of a Joachite future. Frederick II was Holy Roman Emperor from 1220 to 1250 and following his death the Emperor as Antichrist construction was applied to his illegitimate son, Manfred. Salimbene tells us that Joachites believed that Frederick would continue his persecution of the Church until 1260 when the forces of evil would be overcome by God and the third age ushered in. When Frederick died before 1260, legends grew up of an imminent evil resurrection to complete his role of Antichrist.<sup>115</sup>

McGinn has argued that Frederick's life played a large role in the luxuriant Joachite literature produced between 1250 and 1270 most of it in Franciscan circles such as those of Angelo Clareno and Pier Giovanni Olivi. All these were written after Frederick's death when papal pursuit of the Hohenstaufen was entering its last phase. 'No one would claim that apocalyptic expectations were at the origin of quarrels between Frederick and the Papacy, there are more than enough evident causes. It is a prime example of the peculiar force that apocalypticism could give to current events by placing them within the sphere of history at its most universal and critical moment. Both sides were calling for allegiance in terms designed to stress the ultimacy of the choice in the most effective fashion known to them. Not a little of the intransigency and ferocity which marked the debate came from its apocalyptic tenor'.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica*, trans. S. J. L. Baird (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Text Studies, 1986), p. 201.

<sup>116</sup> B. McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 173.

McGinn distinguishes two principal methods whereby apocalyptic language was put to use as political rhetoric. The first of these is *a priori*, in which the writer makes use of established apocalyptic scenarios to interpret current events, and which is exemplified by the kind of practices I have considered in relation to Frederick II. The second of these, *a posteriori*, is characterised by prophecy which is a reaction to political and social change. In this latter form the apocalyptic scenarios are developed and expanded to include transcendentalised visions of recent events ‘giving final validation to the present by making room for it at The End’.<sup>117</sup> McGinn identifies the two main prophetic lines of thought which were generated by an *a posteriori* apocalypticism in the late Duecento and Trecento period as those of the Angelic Pope and the Last World Emperor. Two reasons are suggested for the popularity of these ideas. The first of these is the development of the idea that the two powers, Church and Empire, were personified by their leaders; the rise of the Papacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to a position of universal religious significance, meant that ‘just as the conversion of the Roman Empire and the creation of a Christian *imperium* had provided the background for the creation of the myth of the Last World Emperor, as an apocalyptic validation of this major change in the Christian view of history, the new position of the Papacy in sacred history called out for similar confirmation’.<sup>118</sup> The legend of the Last World Emperor predicts that in the end times, a last Emperor would appear on earth to re-establish the Holy Roman Empire following a divinely willed invasion from the east. The legend first appears in the 7th-century apocalyptic text known as the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, and developed over the centuries, becoming particularly prominent in the 15th century as a means of articulating concern regarding the fall of Constantinople. According to the Pseudo-Methodius, when the sins of man had reached their peak, God would allow the Arabs to destroy the whole world, which would see the destruction of Christendom. And, amidst this destruction, the Byzantine last world Emperor would restore the Empire.

As Marjorie Reeves has noted, speculation regarding the *dramatis personae* of the last days was of perennial interest in the medieval period,<sup>119</sup> and Manselli has

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<sup>117</sup> McGinn, ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 224.

<sup>118</sup> McGinn, ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 224.

<sup>119</sup> M. Reeves, ‘Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor’ *Traditio*, 17 (1961), 323-70 (p. 323).

noted the prevalence of versions of this legend throughout the Latin west.<sup>120</sup> Thus we have a divinely ordained temporal leader who would restore the Roman Empire in the west who is placed within an apocalyptic context: his works will be required when human corruption is at its greatest. Under Joachite influence these last world Emperors took on the role not only of conquerors of the Antichrist but also of reformers of the *ecclesia carnalis*.<sup>121</sup> Pietro di Dante interpreted Dante's prophecy of the DXV as referring to the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Last World Emperor who is Christ's harbinger, and Davis tends to concur.<sup>122</sup> The ways in which messianic and apocalyptic language was applied by Dante to Henry VII in the political letters and to the DXV in the *Commedia* and the consequences of this application for our understanding of the Earthly Paradise and its prophecies is a subject to which I will return in Chapter 5.

In addition to the myths of an Imperial Antichrist and of a Last World Emperor we also find in the Duecento the related figures of the Angelic Last Pope and an Antichrist Pope whose roles were intimately connected with those of their imperial counterparts. Joachim expected the Roman Church to endure to the end of time and as Reeves has noted, the concept of an angelic Pope does begin to emerge in his writings. As I have noted earlier in this chapter, there is no place, and indeed no necessity, for a Last World Emperor in Joachim's concept of the third age, likewise the great rulers of Jewish history: Joseph, David, Solomon, Zorobabel were interpreted in a priestly rather than an imperial sense and when Joachim prophesied a great future leader, the great *dux* symbolised by Zorobabel, he conceived a religious leader.<sup>123</sup> Joachim did not cast a Roman ruler for the worst role (as the Pseudo-Joachite texts would do for Frederick II in making him the seventh head of the dragon), but neither did he envision a secular leader for the third status. For Joachim the responsibility for converting the Jews and infidels and for bringing the Greek Church back to its true obedience, both precursors to the end of days, lay with the orders of new spiritual men.<sup>124</sup> Reeves notes that even in the Pseudo-Joachite *Super Hieremiam*, the chief character of the third status is then not an Emperor but a *pastor bonus* (*Super Hieremiam* f 53r). The *Super Hieremiam* is clear, in the third age the

<sup>120</sup> Manselli, *La Lectura super apocalipsim di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi*, pp. 21-27.

<sup>121</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 204.

<sup>122</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 67.

<sup>123</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 305.

<sup>124</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 305. *Super Hieremiam*, f. 58v.

only authority remaining will be the *ecclesia contemplantium*.<sup>125</sup>

McGinn has argued that there can be no doubt that growing dissatisfaction with the Papacy played a large role in the emergence of the myth of the *pastor angelicus*, but stresses that, while Papal involvement in internecine politics played a role in hindering reform, it would be a mistake to believe that the *pastor angelicus* myth emerged from a belief that Popes should withdraw from political concerns: ‘In response to unworthy occupants of the Holy See engaged in petty power struggles, the apocalyptic view of the Papacy offered the great hope of a truly holy Pope who would take a decisive role in the greatest and final political events of history’.<sup>126</sup> This was given concrete form in the election of Celestine V and his replacement by Boniface VIII: Celestine’s personal holiness and his favouring of the Spirituals seemed like a prophecy come true. The fact that he was succeeded by Boniface VIII, his opposite in every way, allowed disparate elements of the developing myth to coalesce into a new form.<sup>127</sup> As Bolognesi has noted, for a time hopes of a *pastor angelicus* sympathetic to the Franciscan order were placed in Celestine ‘for he was in fact purely “spiritual” in the sense that he was unfamiliar with the system of power of the papal curia. Once he resigned, or was compelled to do so, it was just a short step to drawing the parallels between his successor [and] the Antichrist’.<sup>128</sup>

The dialectic was of old and new in apocalyptic scenarios: good versus evil in a mythic sense versus good versus evil in the papal succession. Thessalonians 2. 3-4 warned of a ‘filius perditionis’ who would sit enthroned in the temple and there was a long tradition of using this text to attack unpopular Popes. Suspicion of anti-reforming Popes as forerunners of the Antichrist or the Antichrist himself was heightened by Boniface VIII, and ‘thus the apocalyptic myth of the Papacy became a dialectical one which pitted angelic Pope against papal Antichrist either in individual or group fashion’.<sup>129</sup> Where it was explicit in Pseudo-Joachite writings that Frederick II was a clear open precursor of the Antichrist, the Pope was seen as the mystic Antichrist operating covertly within the Church; this idea of a mystical Antichrist who would be a Pope was widely spread. While Dante may not have known him directly, Manselli cites the words of the words of French beguin Guiglielmo Serraller

<sup>125</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 307.

<sup>126</sup> McGinn, ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 229.

<sup>127</sup> McGinn, ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 230.

<sup>128</sup> Bolognesi, ‘Aesthetics of the Apocalypse’, pp. 83-84.

<sup>129</sup> McGinn, ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 230.

as typifying this line of thought: ‘misticus Antechristus est ille qui facit opera apparentia mundo magna spiritualia et bona et tamen realiter facit mala et persequitur vitam et paupers Christi’.<sup>130</sup> In this light, the struggle is not of Church versus Emperor but an internal struggle within the Church. The *Oraculum Cirilli* from the 1290s is much clearer on the eschatological opposition between the two papal figures: ‘Joachite in inspiration and very probably Franciscan in authorship, its depiction of the struggle between ortho- and pseudo-pontifex is a *vaticinium ex eventu* of the relationship between Boniface and Celestine’.<sup>131</sup> The two works which crystallised the figure of the angelic Pope were the *Vaticinia de Summis pontifibus* and the *Liber de Flore*. The *Vaticinia* condemns Nicholas II for nepotism and in dealing with his successors it moves from ‘history disguised as prophecy to true prophecy’.<sup>132</sup> Clearly this is a method which Dante adopts in his own apocalyptic prophecies at the culmination of the *Purgatorio* and in the *Commedia* more generally. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, while there is considerable evidence to suggest that Dante does make use of the idea of a papal Antichrist, there is little in the *Commedia* to suggest an attraction on Dante’s part to the idea of an angelic Pope, and while the ideas of Church poverty articulated by the Spiritual Franciscans seem to tally with those of Dante their ideas of themselves as the principal means by which reform will be brought about do not; it seems that for Dante reform of the Church must come from an external source: an imperial power.

Joachim, and in particular his reception and reinterpretation in late Duecento Florence is of particular relevance to this thesis as the articulating of contemporary concerns, political and theological, by placing them in an apocalyptic context, is a technique to which Dante seems drawn. Historicising the book of Revelation is a powerful force in Dante’s prophetic methodology even where his political and social views serve to distance him from his putative sources and influences.

## 2.9 Brunetto Latini

In the first half of this chapter I have briefly highlighted some of the key social,

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<sup>130</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p.72.

<sup>131</sup> McGinn ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 230. See also B. McGinn, ‘Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist’, in *Church History*, 47 (1978), 155-73.

<sup>132</sup> McGinn ‘Pastor Angelicus’, p. 235.

political, and intellectual trends of the period 1250-1320. In the second half, I wish to consider the ideas of some of Dante's contemporaries in Florence. I do so in part to suggest areas where we may observe direct influence, but principally to emphasise the breadth of philosophical and theological ideas which were current in the Florence of Dante's formative years.

Brunetto Latini was born in Florence around 1210. A Guelf statesman, he served as Chancellor of the *popolo* in 1254. While returning from an embassy to Alfonso the Wise of Spain, Brunetto learned of the defeat of the Guelf forces at the battle of Montaperti which marked the beginning of his six years of political exile in France. Following the Guelf victory the Benevento, Brunetto returned to Florence in 1266, rising to become chancellor of the city in 1274, and holding public office in the city until his death in 1294.<sup>133</sup>

As a writer, Latini is best remembered for his exilic works: the *Rettorica*, the *Tesoretto*, and the *Tresor*. The *Rettorica*, written around 1260, is a translation and exposition of Cicero's *De inventione*, and is the earliest vernacularisation of Ciceronian rhetoric in the Middle Ages, representing the first wave of a 'Ciceronian revival' in thirteenth-century Italian rhetorical culture; Scott sees the reinterpretation of Cicero in Latini as sowing the seeds of Florentine civic humanism.<sup>134</sup> For Latini, Rhetoric is part of the art of government. However, it is also much more than this as it can be applied to all kinds of writing; Brunetto's commentary attempts to link Ciceronian teaching about legal and political speech with the contemporary practice of writing on any topic.<sup>135</sup> For Latini the technical system of Rhetoric is relevant not just to political speech-making but to any material spoken or written, to poetry as much as bureaucracy and politics; the Ciceronian conjunction of wisdom and eloquence 'has a tangible application to communication of all kinds'.<sup>136</sup> Davis notes

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<sup>133</sup> For details of Brunetto's political career and biography see F. Carmody's introduction Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, ed by F. Carmody (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948), XIII-LXII; T. Sundby, *Della vita e delle opera di Brunetto Latini*, trans. by R. Renier (Florence: Le Monnier, 1884). See also: B. Ceva, *Brunetto Latini. L'uomo e l'opera* (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1965); A. D'Addario, 'Brunetto Latini', in *ED*, II, pp. 579-88; J. B. Holloway, *Twice-Told Tales: Brunetto Latini and Dante Alighieri* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); A. De Vincentiis, 'Le parole di ser Brunetto', in *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, ed. by S. Luzzato and G. Pedullà, I: *Dalle origini al Rinascimento*, ed. by A. De Vincentiis (Turin: Einaudi, 2010), pp. 41-47.

<sup>134</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 10.

<sup>135</sup> R. Copeland and I. Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300 -1475* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 57.

<sup>136</sup> Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p.58.



the similarity of rhetorical style of Brunetto's Latin style to that of Dante's political letters as well as the adoption of the *stilus altus* associated with Pier della Vigna, and views his work as a cosmopolitan fusion of the three great centres of rhetoric at the time: France, Bologna and Southern Italy.<sup>137</sup>

The *Tesoretto* is a narrative poem written in the first person, which deals with the circumstances of his exile and Brunetto's meeting with the personifications of Nature and Virtue who instruct him both in the nature of the world and the rules of courtesy. Mazzoni notes that the *Tesoretto* belongs in part to a style of writing which is the continuation of the 'cultura enciclopedic a-didascalica' prevalent in France.<sup>138</sup> In addition Holloway notes that the *Tesoretto* also forms part of another important literary continuum, that of philosophical poetry and of dream vision poetry in particular: Cicero's *Somnium scipionis*, Boethius's *Consolations*, and de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>139</sup>

The *Tresor*, is an encyclopaedia divided into three books. Book I deals with biblical, Roman, and medieval history, Book II is mostly on Ethics and derives from Aristotle, Book III deals with rhetoric and politics; here Cicero and Aristotle are the main intellectual sources. Latini brought the *Tresor* back to Florence in 1266, and it was here that the sections on Frederick II and Manfred were added. The work was almost immediately translated into Italian as *Il Tesoro* by Latini's Ghibelline contemporary Bono Giamboni,<sup>140</sup> and has been described by Quentin Skinner as 'the most unequivocal expression of a preference for Republican liberty over any other form of government'.<sup>141</sup>

In the *Commedia*, Dante places Brunetto in Hell and their meeting is an occasion for a prophecy of Dante's exile, a condemnation of faction, an exploration of the reasons for it, as well as a further prophecy of Dante's future fame. There is little doubt that Dante knew all Brunetto's works well and in a famous and much debated passage of *Inferno* XV, 118-120 the *Tresor* is mentioned by name. For the

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<sup>137</sup> C. T. Davis, 'Brunetto Latini and Dante', in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 166-197 (p. 167).

<sup>138</sup> F. Mazzoni, Introduction to *Il Tesoretto, Il Favolello*, p. xvi in Brunetto Latini, *Il Tesoretto, Il Favolello* ed. by F. Mazzoni (Alpignano: A. Tallone, 1967).

<sup>139</sup> J. B. Holloway, 'Introduction', in Brunetto Latini, *Il Tesoretto*, ed. and trans by J. B. Holloway (New York and London: Garland, 1981), p. xxvi.

<sup>140</sup> Carmody, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, p. xxii.

<sup>141</sup> Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), I, 41.

purposes of this chapter I am interested principally in highlighting shared areas of concern regarding civic patriotism, providential history and Roman cultural and political inheritance as these will inform my discussion of Dante's views on Roman citizenship, Roman prophecy, and Roman destiny in Chapter 5 of this thesis.<sup>142</sup> In this respect alone, there are numerous points of similarity; Brunetto equated the Italian communes with the ancient city republics, at the same time spreading in Florence a new, medieval taste for pagan republican Rome, and for Cato against Caesar, and was the first known writer since antiquity to declare republican government the best of constitutions.<sup>143</sup>

In addition to these shared areas of interest, there are clearly numerous parallels between Brunetto's biography and that of Dante; both were Guelfs, both served as Priors in Florence, both were exiled. But while Latini always remained Guelf, believing in the freedom of Florence and the supremacy of republican government, Dante in his exile came to believe that Florentine independence, except in its freedom as a subject state of the Empire, ran against God's plan. Both too were influenced by the fact of exile in their writings and an awareness of the part that faction had played in that exile. If as Scott suggests, 'the example of Latini's life and works taught Dante that he must never divorce his responsibilities as a writer from those he had as a citizen of Florence and the World',<sup>144</sup> then it is instructive to compare the respective attitude of Brunetto in the *Tresor* and Dante in the *Commedia* towards Manfred. Latini accuses Manfred of having poisoned his father reflecting Brunetto's seemingly un-nuanced Guelf hatred of the Hohenstaufen (*Tresor* I. 97, 79).<sup>145</sup> Dante's presentation of Manfred, the illegitimate son of the *stupor mundi*, Frederick II, as a sincere late-repentant sinner, is potentially to see the conscious act of the pupil transcending the master in what may be seen as an inversion of Dante's own relationship with Brunetto. He admires and even loves his former teacher Brunetto but damns him (or, rather, in the fiction of the poem, shows us how God damns him); he acknowledges that Manfred's sins were horrible, but nonetheless shows that God saves him.

Dante sees the evil of factionalism but sees how it can be transcended; in the

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<sup>142</sup> For a full consideration of Dante's borrowings from Brunetto, see Mazzoni's introduction to *Il Tesoretto, Il Favolello*, pp. ix-x.

<sup>143</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*, p. 462.

<sup>144</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 13.

<sup>145</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 86.

*Commedia* the role of citizenship is never diminished but is contextualised in the light of the illumination Dante has received. This distinction seems to me of particular importance given the importance of Frederick II as an apocalyptic hate figure in Franciscan discourses and seems to highlight a key concern of this thesis: the way in which Dante's prophetic vision both encompasses and transcends those of his closest putative sources.

## 2.10 Remigio de' Girolami

Born in Florence into a Guelf family, Remigio de' Girolami (1235-1319) was educated at the University of Paris where he was a pupil of Aquinas. Remigio was lector at the convent school of Santa Maria Novella by 1273 and by 1289 he had been promoted to the lectorate of the provincial *studium theologiae* in Florence, a position which he held until 1303.<sup>146</sup>

Remigio is best remembered for his treatises *De Bono Pacis* (1304) and *De Bono Comuni* (1302). His treatises and also his sermons from the 1290s represent a compound of Aristotelian, Ciceronian and Christian doctrines 'with related instances from pagan and biblical history, all focussed exclusively on city-state society without mentioning *regnum* or *imperium*'.<sup>147</sup> This lacuna notwithstanding, Charles Till Davis has noted the numerous points of contact between the political ideas of Dante and of Remigio, and although it cannot be stated for certain that Dante was a pupil of Remigio, it is unlikely that as one of the most popular preachers in Florence Dante should not have known of him. For Davis, it is almost certain that when Dante refers to having attended the schools of the religious and the disputations of the philosophers, he is referring to having been at Santa Maria Novella at a time when Remigio was the only *lector sacre pagine* and it was from him that Dante would have acquired two key Aristotelian propositions. First that man as a rational creature naturally desired the knowledge which is his perfection and second that man is

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<sup>146</sup> M. M. Mulchahey, 'First the Bow is Bent in Study', p. 390. On Dante and Remigio see: L. Minio-Paluello, 'Remigio Girolami's *De Bono Comuni*: Florence at the Time of Dante's Banishment and the Philosopher's Answer to the Crisis', *Italian Studies*, 11 (1956), pp. 56-71; C.T. Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist: Fra Remigio de' Girolami' in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 198-223; E. Panella, 'Nuova cronologia remigiana', pp. 145-311; E. Panella, *Remigio dei Girolami i trattati politici: Dal bene comune al bene del comune* (Florence: Nerbini, 2014).

<sup>147</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, p. 463.

naturally a citizen, a civil and political animal.<sup>148</sup>

While Mulchahey accepts many of the parallels drawn by Davis it is noted that the case for direct contact between Dante and Remigio has been weakened recently in particular by Emilio Panella's work which, beyond demonstrating the historical unlikelihood of Dante having attended Remigio's lectures, also suggests that the similarities between their writings owe less to a master-pupil relationship than to 'independente rielaborazione da fonti comuni'.<sup>149</sup> Jones suggests that it was Remigio who was above all others responsible for extending Latini's 'republican synthesis of Aristotle'.<sup>150</sup> Aristotle provided a theoretical justification for the existence of the state which came to be regarded as a product of nature. As J. P. Canning has pointed out, 'The chief innovation of late medieval political thought was the development of the idea of the secular state as a product of man's political nature'.<sup>151</sup> This idea of man as a political animal and the state reflecting this nature is one which underpins Remigio's work, indeed the individual needs to be part of a community in order to be fully human as Remigio makes clear in *De Bono Comuni* IX, an idea which Remigio derives explicitly from Aristotle.<sup>152</sup>

More will be said about the relationship between Remigio's and Dante's political thought and methods of argumentation in later chapters and whatever the case may be, I see Remigio as indicative of the general Dominican environment which would have influenced thought in Florence at the time when Dante was growing up and studying there; at this point I wish to briefly highlight some key Remigian ideas which are also of central importance for Dante. Unlike Aquinas, but like Dante, Remigio makes appeal (in *De Bono Comuni*) to history, especially Roman history, as a model of political peace and justice. Here faction is the enemy of *caritas*: Remigio eulogises the Roman past in a way Augustine, with his generally negative view of human society does not but Dante does.<sup>153</sup> Nowhere is this better illustrated than in their common high regard for Cato. Remigio draws on Augustine

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<sup>148</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist,' p. 202.

<sup>149</sup> Panella, 'Nuova cronologia remigiana', pp. 180-82.

<sup>150</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, p. 463.

<sup>151</sup> J. P. Canning, 'Introduction: Politics, Institutions and Ideas', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Thought, c.350-c.1450*, ed. by J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 339-66 (p.360).

<sup>152</sup> *De Bono Comuni* IX. All quotations from *De Bono Comuni* are taken from <http://www.e-theca.net/emiliopanella/remigio2/8540.html>. Panella's source text is Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, *Conv. soppr.* C 4.940.

<sup>153</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 202.

in his discussion of Cato, but not uncritically, and the tensions between the virtues of the man and the sinfulness of his suicide are apparent.

Remigio's ideas like those of Aquinas, strongly reflect Aristotle's glorification of man as a rational animal. Mulchahey has argued that preachers such as Remigio and lesser-known Dominican figures like Aldobrandino da Toscanella (d.1314) mark an important transition in Dominican preaching: they brought to their preaching 'a definite Thomistic flavour': they were introducing Thomas as an authority in their sermons several years before the *scripta* and the *summa* were integrated into Dominican schools, and they quoted Thomas's Aristotelian commentaries and others of his *opuscula* even in the wake of the condemnations at Paris in 1277.<sup>154</sup>

In the light of the brief examples given above it will be seen that Remigio is of importance to this study as he is a political theorist articulating a particular synthesis of Aristotelian political thought whose central concerns for peace and justice were also those of Dante. Like Dante, Remigio eulogised saints and scriptural figures but also Cicero, Cato and other heroes of ancient Rome. Remigio is a significant figure in the history of Italian communes' political thought in the period because he was the first properly educated student of classical philosophy to attempt to apply what he had learnt from Aristotle and Cicero to the problems of Florence seen from the inside.<sup>155</sup> Minio-Paluello has highlighted features of *De Bono Comuni* which differ from Remigio's other works: its combination of philosophical and theological argument; its encyclopaedic choice of examples, and a passionate concern for the contemporary political situation in Florence.<sup>156</sup> It seems to me that each of these bears strong resemblances to Dante's method of argument in the *Monarchia*, the *Commedia* and the political letters even if there are numerous points of difference with regard to the role of the Empire, Florentine wealth and independence, and to the hierocratic question. I will argue in Chapters 4 and 5 that the Aristotelian elements which seem present in Dante's thought, perhaps derived in part from the ideas he would have heard articulated at S. Maria Novella, create tension in the *Commedia* regarding the nature and purpose of human society and of

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<sup>154</sup> Mulchahey, 'First the Bow is Bent in Study...'. p. 435.

<sup>155</sup> Holmes, *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance*, p.84.

<sup>156</sup> Minio-Paluello, 'Remigio Girolami's *De Bono Comuni*, p.59.

this life; particularly given Dante's unwillingness to make any concession on the hierocratic question.

### 2.11 Ptolemy of Lucca

The Dominican, Ptolemy of Lucca, (1236-1326), was briefly at Santa Maria Novella in the early 1290s. Davis has suggested that Ptolemy is a potential influence on Dante's view of Rome, but has stressed there is limited evidence for direct influence and, as with Remigio, there are substantial points of difference.<sup>157</sup> While it is unclear whether Dante knew Ptolemy directly, I wish to briefly summarise some of his key ideas as a strong example of the opportunities that the friars provided for exponents of scholasticism who had an interest in questions then topical in Florence such as the nature of civic authority and the hierarchy of the powers. Ptolemy provides a key example of the ways in which the Roman political legacy, and in particular the perceived nature of imperial power and republican virtues, informed contemporary debates: this is of relevance to this thesis as Chapter 5 will argue that these concerns inform Dante's conception of history and that the Roman imperial ideal becomes more not less important with the imminence of history's conclusion.

Ptolemy wrote a continuation of Aquinas's *De Regimine Principum* around 1300, but where Aquinas was a royalist, Ptolemy was a hierocratic republican, and his principal political interest was the defence of papal supremacy over the claim of the Empire and other lay regimes.<sup>158</sup> Holmes notes that Ptolemy draws a clear distinction between princely and republican governments in *De Regimine Principum* IV, I, but also that he is willing to adopt and adapt his intellectual sources to suit the conditions in which he wrote and the views he wished to articulate: 'Ptolemy of Lucca's reappraisal of [Aristotle's] *Politics* constitutes the most vigorous formulation Italian communal theory had received by the beginning of the fourteenth century'.<sup>159</sup> Using the established stock of Roman, Aristotelian and scriptural

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<sup>157</sup> Davis, 'Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic' in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 254-289; For *Monarchia* III. 4. 17-20 as a direct refutation of Ptolemy's argument in *De Regimine Principum*, III. 10. 7 see M. Maccarrone, 'Il terzo libro della *Monarchia*', *Studi Danteschi*, 33 (1955), 5-142 (pp. 46-48).

<sup>158</sup> Holmes, *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance*, p. 85.

<sup>159</sup> N. Rubinstein, 'Marsilius and Italian Political Thought' in *Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by J. R. Hale, J. R. L. Highfield, and B. Smalley (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 44-75 (p. 54).

materials the work may be read as the first studied defence in Europe of republican government.<sup>160</sup> We can see how, in Ptolemy as in Remigio and others, in terms of defending or defining political theories, Aristotle's *Politics* became the key text. Aristotle became the main authority for authors touching on political matters and was adopted to take in issues of theology; but as with the Bible, the same texts could be co-opted in support of diametrically opposed political views; he is a master for the hierocratic Ptolemy as he is for the dualist Dante.

Particularly striking for the purposes of this thesis is the absence of continuity in Ptolemy's account of the history of Rome: 'he was interested in only the republican and papal stages of her history. Julius Caesar was a usurper; Augustus was Christ's deputy; Christ and his successors the Popes were the true Emperors'.<sup>161</sup> In *De Regimine* III, 1 Ptolemy argues that with the Crucifixion authority had passed from the Romans to Christ and his deputies, that is to say that temporal and spiritual power passed to the Papacy. For Dante, in contrast, the authority of Rome to rule in the temporal sphere predated Christ and continued after his Crucifixion with the same degree of authority as was present before; the Crucifixion for Dante in no way established the validity of the hierocratic argument; Christ's submission to Roman law at the Crucifixion is seen by Dante as proof of his acceptance of Roman legal authority.

This distinction is reflected in the respective views of Dante and Ptolemy on the Donation of Constantine. The Donation, anathema to Remigio, notwithstanding his concession of the hierocratic position, was even more so to Dante. In contrast, for Ptolemy, the Donation was merely a confirmation, an acknowledgement, of the divinely ordained order of things. As will be seen, Dante's providential view of Roman dominion extended across the whole of Roman history from Aeneas' departure from Troy to Henry VII's descent into Italy. In a hierocratic view such as that of Ptolemy, the only way to rescue the myth was to push it backward into republican times and have the republic, in its perceived austerity, serve as a paradigm for the Papacy.<sup>162</sup> Ptolemy removes the Empire from his account of history, 'the line

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<sup>160</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*, p. 463.

<sup>161</sup> *De Regimine* 3.12-13, 141-43, pp. 337-40 cited in Davis, 'Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic', p. 275.

<sup>162</sup> Davis, 'Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic', p. 278.

of history thus ran from Eden through the Roman Republic to Christ'.<sup>163</sup> In sharp contrast Dante makes the Empire central to his own scheme of history in both the *Monarchia* and in the *Commedia*; the Empire is a fulfilment of God's design for the world, not a corruption of it. In Chapter 5 of this thesis I suggest that, in Dante, the potentially problematic Republican figure of Cato is indicative of the moral strengths of the Roman Republic being required to inform the Empire, the nature of citizenship and society here being placed *sub specie aeternitatis* in its true context which is simultaneously Christian and imperial.

## 2.12 John of Paris

Born around 1250, John of Paris (John Quidort) was a Dominican Friar who studied at Paris in the late 1270s. His early works included a commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, dating from the mid-1280s and a defence of Thomas Aquinas in his *Correctorium 'Circa'*. Watt asserts that these two works led to Quidort's reputation by 1300 as 'one of the most prominent of the teachers and preachers of the leading theological school of Christendom'.<sup>164</sup>

John's *De Regia Potestate et Papali* was written around 1302, seemingly in direct response to the Franco-Papal dispute between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII. Although this text post-dates Dante's exile from Florence, and is written in the pro-French rather than pro-imperial vein I am using it as an illustration of the methodology of a text whose central arguments on the relationship between the temporal and secular powers are very close to Dante's own, even if the conclusions he draws are not.

John's *De Regia* is explicitly anti-hierocratic: he argues that the Pope cannot be the supreme temporal ruler because the spiritual and temporal powers should be held by different persons. John gives the traditional reasons emphasizing the

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<sup>163</sup> C. T. Davis, 'Roman Patriotism and Republican Propaganda', in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 224-253, (p. 231); On John of Paris see C. Jones (ed.), *John of Paris: Beyond Royal and Papal Power* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015). In particular in this volume on the limits of ecclesiastical authority in John of Paris see J. Canning, 'Ecclesiastical authority and jurisdiction in the thought of John of Paris' (pp. 35-48); B. Koch, 'Against Empire? John of Paris's Defence of Territorial Secular Power Considered in the Context of Dante's and Marsilius of Padua's Political Theories' (pp.49-76).

<sup>164</sup> John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power* ed. and trans. J. Watt (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971), p.10.



argument that the priest should be exclusively devoted to spiritual affairs.<sup>165</sup> He gives two principal reasons for God's motive in ordaining the separation of the spiritual and temporal powers: the first is that it establishes a relationship of mutual dependence which fosters the kind of love and charity essential to the members of the Church; a situation impossible if one person holds both powers. The second reason is in case temporal ambitions should make the priest or the Pope less solicitous for the direction of the spiritual.<sup>166</sup> Although stated in more gentle terms here, this is clearly a similar concern to that articulated by Dante in the *Commedia*, not least in *Purgatorio* XVI's warning about the consequences for both itself and its flock when the Church takes an interest in temporal affairs.

In John's view the temporal power is not established by, or in any way caused by, the spiritual power. Both come from God, but neither comes through the other. John like Dante in the *Monarchia* makes the concession that the spiritual power is in some respects superior to the temporal but suggests the relationship is less that of Emperor to pro-consul than of military commander and the head of a household: the power of neither of these derives from the other but rather both from some superior power. In temporal matters the temporal power is greater than the spiritual, and in these matters is in no way subject to the spiritual since it is not derived from it. John says that both powers take their origin immediately from one supreme power, namely God. Thomas had inferred from the fact that the Church is concerned with the highest end of man, the eternal, that the Pope ought to direct the secular ruler. John accepts the hierarchy of the two ends but explicitly rejects Thomas's conclusion regarding the power relationship that this should impose.<sup>167</sup>

John rejects his opponents' assertion that the corporeal is ruled by the spiritual and depends upon it causatively, and he does so with reference to the *Ethics*' assertion that the intention of the legislators is to make men good and to lead them to virtue and the assertion in the *Politics* that the legislator is concerned with souls, not merely with corporeal existence.<sup>168</sup> This seems close to an assertion of an earthly end

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<sup>165</sup> John of Paris, *De Potestate Regia et Papali* in J. Leclerc, *Jean de Paris et L'Écclésiologie du XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1942), pp. 171-260, and see in particular Chapter X pp. 194-201.

<sup>166</sup> John of Paris, *De Regia*, Chapter X, p.196.

<sup>167</sup> John of Paris, *De Regia*, Chapter V, p.184; Aquinas, *De regno ad regem Cypri*, Ch. XV.

<sup>168</sup> John of Paris, *De Regia*, Chapter XVII, p.225. The reference is to *Nicomachean Ethics* 2. 1; *Politics*. 7.2

for man which is dialectically separate from his eternal end and similarly close to an endorsement of the enabling (as opposed to merely restraining) role of the Emperor which we find in the *Monarchia*. These considerations lead John to define the relationship between the two powers thus:

Sic papa non instituit regem, sed uterque est a Deo institutus suo modo nec ipsum dirigit per se ut rex est, sed per accidens in quantum convenit regem fidelem esse, in quo a papa instituitur de fide et non de regimine. Unde subicitur pape in his in quibus subicit eum ei potestas suprema, scilicet in spiritualibus tantum.<sup>169</sup>

The king is appointed directly by God and is subject to the Pope only in areas which God has decreed he should be, namely in spiritual matters.

While there are many points of contact in terms of the political views of John and Dante, particularly with regard to the hierocratic question and the derivation of the two powers, the resemblance between the *De Regia* and the *Monarchia*, is at a fundamental level affected by the claims of authority which Dante makes for his text. John of Paris, in demonstrating that ecclesiastical authorities do not have dominion over temporal things, buttresses his arguments using St Paul to demonstrate that the Papacy should derive no temporal power from its power of preaching which is wholly spiritual: he argues that the Pope does not derive power through it, since it is not the power of dominion but the authority of a teacher. ‘non sit potestas domini sed auctoritas magisterii sicut dicit Apostolus I Tim.: In quo positus sum ego Apostolus predicator et doctor gentium’.<sup>170</sup> As with Remigio de’ Giromlami, what is lacking here is the sense of an author writing to the kind of divine mandate or purpose which, I will argue, Dante claims for himself; Paul’s words are John’s source of authority; Dante also takes Paul as an authority but will construct an authority and a role for himself which is akin to that of the apostle. I will seek to demonstrate in Chapter 3 that what is lacking in these texts which is present in Dante, is a belief, or the willingness to feign a belief, in a divinely inspired imperative to undertake the role of prophet-author, a position which provides consonance between the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* but separates Dante from others writing in the genre to which the *Monarchia* ostensibly belongs.

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<sup>169</sup> John of Paris, *De Regia*, Chapter XVII, p. 226.

<sup>170</sup> John of Paris, *De Regia*, Chapter XIII, p.212.

### 2.13 Giordano da Pisa

Giordano (c.1255- c.1311) was born in Pisa and studied at Paris. Although just outside Dante's period in Florence (he was in the city from 1303 to 1306), he is of interest for the insight he provides into the way preaching was performed in public and how his preaching addressed political and social concerns, particularly the ways in which he utilised philosophy in his public preaching and tailored his preaching to reflect the social circumstances of his audience and the political circumstances of the moment.<sup>171</sup> He entered the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina in Pisa around 1280, and Delcorno has noted the particularly rich library at Pisa and that the city was home to a *studio* distinguished by lively and extensive cultural activity.<sup>172</sup> Giordano completed his education in Bologna and in Paris in the late 1280s. Having taught in Rome, he arrived at Santa Maria Novella in 1302. Black Guelf in his sympathies, his sermons show him to be an enthusiastic supporter of that regime; for Lesnick, Giordano typifies the way in which the union of clergy and state authority added up to the defence of the *bene commune* and the Christian republic in the early Trecento.<sup>173</sup>

The first great collections of Dominican preaching in the vernacular were produced in Italy in the opening years of the Trecento when lay listeners transcribed Giordano's sermons.<sup>174</sup> Mulchahey emphasises Giordano's capacity for philosophical expression in his preaching and the vernacular cycle proves that such was actually preached to the people.<sup>175</sup> Giordano da Pisa in his sermons provides examples of the way in which scholastic concepts and terms came to feature in preaching to the laity and perhaps an awareness of how these are common currency among the educated classes in the city.<sup>176</sup>

Giordano's sermons also speak to the 'peculiar moral problems capitalism

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<sup>171</sup> On Giordano see Delcorno, *La predicazione nel età comunale*; C. Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare* (Florence: Olschki Editore, 1975); C. Iannella, *Giordano da Pisa : etica urbana e forme della società* (Pisa: ETS, 1999).

<sup>172</sup> Delcorno, *La predicazione nel età comunale*, p. 9.

<sup>173</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p.103

<sup>174</sup> Mulchahey, *First the Bow is Bent in Study*, p. 441.

<sup>175</sup> Mulchahey, *First the Bow is Bent in Study*, p.443.

<sup>176</sup> Holmes, *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance*, p. 86.

posed for the mercantile classes in Florence'.<sup>177</sup> While Giordano frequently addressed the audience's moral failings, there are also oblique references to the contemporary political scene. Delcorno shows that such references while by no means explicit, are present, such as when Giordano questions, in a sermon of 1303, whether Florence can truly call itself a commune when its citizens care only for themselves 'e non guardano el bene del comune'.<sup>178</sup> Lesnick too has noted how Giordano's sermons explicitly support the newly established Black Guelph regime in Florence encouraging both the laity and the clergy to support the new podestà, Ruggero do Dovadola.<sup>179</sup>

In a city like Florence, the preachers' discourses on commerce and usury are inevitable, but Giordano is a good example because so much of his Florentine preaching survives and we know his target audience was principally the moneyed bourgeoisie. Giordano, like Dante, seems to struggle to separate mercantilism and usury.<sup>180</sup> There are sermons discussing whether 'mercantilism; is a good thing or not and Giordano explains that commerce is good, but can be used badly through greed: for Giordano avarice is the besetting sin of the Florentine bourgeoisie and greed is the cause of corruption.<sup>181</sup> Giordano, like Dante, through the words of Cacciaguida, is capable at times of condemning the entire Florentine capitalist system which he contrasts with the rural economies of other cities where human relations are not yet broken down by greed. Agonised by the moral problems posed by Florentine capitalism, Giordano sometimes seems to wish for a return to a pastoral utopia, but his condemnations of wealth tend to equivocate and avoid the radical pauperist discourses of the Spiritual Franciscans; for Delcorno this moderation is clear proof that the audience is not the proletariat but the bourgeoisie; he problematizes but does not condemn.<sup>182</sup>

As Lesnick has noted, Giordano takes liberties with the traditional sermon themes in addressing himself directly to the experiences of his audience and their present political needs.<sup>183</sup> Nor does he limit himself to purely Florentine political

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<sup>177</sup> Mulchahey, *First the Bow is Bent in Study*, p. 444.

<sup>178</sup> Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare*. p. 48.

<sup>179</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 103.

<sup>180</sup> For example *Convivio* IV, xii, 5-8.

<sup>181</sup> Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare*, p. 55.

<sup>182</sup> Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare*, p. 57.

<sup>183</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 103.

concerns: ‘while debate raged on a theoretical level as to the relation between Church and secular authority, on a more practical level the popular preacher resolved the issues on an *ad hoc* basis. At the moment of political crisis he brought the spiritual into the service of the political’.<sup>184</sup> Chapter 5 of this thesis will argue that Dante, in a manner which draws on the approaches of both the Franciscan and Dominican orders, brings both the spiritual into the service of the political, and the political into the service of the spiritual to articulate a unifying syncretist explanation of the relationship between Church and Empire, between this life and the next, and the reasons, *sub specie aeternitatis*, for the necessity of the solutions he proposes, an explanation which is based in large part on his interpretation of Rome’s providential role in the past, present and future of both the temporal and spiritual spheres.

## 2.14 Bartolomeo di San Concordio

Bartolomeo di San Concordio was born in 1262 and entered the convent of S. Caterina at Pisa in 1277. He studied at Bologna and at Paris and on his return to Tuscany he held several lectorships including elsewhere in Tuscany (Pistoia, Arezzo) and at Santa Maria Novella in Florence in the 1290s.<sup>185</sup>

Bartolomeo has been seen as a precocious humanist and *volgarizzatore*, because of his having written commentaries on Virgil and Seneca, and his classicizing and vernacular preferences are also evidenced by his works such as his *Liber di documentis antiquorum*, a compendium of teaching taken from biblical, patristic and classical works. This work is a listing of quotations from both classical and ecclesiastical authors, intended to serve, like a *florilegia*, as a repository of wisdom on which the priest might draw. This work was translated into Italian by Bartolomeo as the *Libro degli ammaestramenti degli antichi*, presumably for the benefit of the laity.<sup>186</sup> As Mulchahey has noted these texts helped the friars ‘translate the learning of the schools into everyday preaching and into moral instructions for penitents. The work is perhaps a synthesis of his own preaching: the *Ammaestramenti*

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<sup>184</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 103.

<sup>185</sup> Mulchahey, ‘*First the Bow is Bent in Study...*’, p. 454.

<sup>186</sup> The Italian text is available at: <http://www.classicitaliani.it/trecento/ammaestramenti.html>, accessed 02 April 2014.

is part florilegium, part preaching manual, part popular tract'.<sup>187</sup>

It is suggested that the less well known *Compendium moralis philosophiae* may bring us closer to the way in which moral philosophy was taught in the Dominican *studia* of the early fourteenth century.<sup>188</sup> This work is a summary of Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* composed by Giles around 1280 for Philip the Fair. The common practice in the *studia* was to use the *De regimine* as one of the chief ancillary texts of the moral philosophy curriculum. Giles' *De regimine* 'not only counselled the would-be perfect prince, but it also subjected the doctrine of the prince of pagan philosophers to the service of later Christian morality'.<sup>189</sup> This is a practice common to all the Paris-trained Dominicans who followed in the wake of the Paris controversies and Aquinas's Christian synthesis of Aristotle. I will argue in Chapter 5 of this thesis that subjection of the ideas of Aristotle regarding the nature and purpose of human society to the service of a tale of Christian salvation and redemption in the *Commedia* creates tensions with regard to Dante's view of the nature and function of man's purpose on Earth, the fate of the Virtuous pagans, and the Roman Imperial ideal.

## 2.15 Giovanni Villani

Giovanni Villani was born in Florence in 1276 into a mercantile banking family. He was a member of the Peruzzi and latterly the Buonaccorsi banking groups in Florence and was an active figure in the city's politics serving as prior on three occasions: 1316, 1321-22 and 1328.<sup>190</sup> Salvestrini suggests that this background, with its international commercial apprenticeship, is reflected in his *Nuova Cronica*'s 'bourgeois' vision of history.<sup>191</sup> Villani's originality rests in his blending of local tradition with historical narrative, and is coloured both by his Guelphism and his

<sup>187</sup> Mulchahey, 'First the Bow is Bent in Study...', p. 458.

<sup>188</sup> Mulchahey, 'Education in Dante's Florence Revisited', p. 185.

<sup>189</sup> Briggs, 'Moral Philosophy and Dominican Education', p. 187.

<sup>190</sup> On Villani see G. Varani, 'Villani, Giovanni' in *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana* ed by V. Branca et al. 3 vols (Turin: UTET, 1974), III, 633-35. G. Aquilecchia, 'Introduzione', in G. Villani, *Cronica* con la continuazione di Matteo e Filippo (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), pp. VII-XXV. On Dante and Villani see G. Aquilecchia, 'Dante and the Florentine Chroniclers', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 48 (1965-66), pp. 30-55.

<sup>191</sup> F. Salvestrini, 'Giovanni Villani and the Aetiological Myth of Tuscan Cities', *The Medieval Chronicle II* (Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle, (Universiteit Utrecht, Centre for Medieval Studies, Driebergen 16-21 July 1999), ed. by E. Kooper, Amsterdam and New York, 2002, pp. 199-211. (p. 199).

position as an international merchant and an experienced financier.<sup>192</sup> The chronicle, left unfinished at his death in 1348, is a record of the history of the world and Florence's place in it from the Tower of Babel to the events of Villani's own day. As Davis has noted, while Villani is happy to see disasters which befall Florence as God's judgement on the greed and factionalism of the citizenry, his views of her similarity to Rome and his emphasis on her military and political success and economic growth are proof that he took on the whole a positive view of her history and of her current commercial success.<sup>193</sup>

To take one example to illustrate Villani's relevance to this thesis we may consider a paragraph from book IX of the *Nuova Cronica*. It is here that Villani tells us that he was inspired to write while in Rome for the Jubilee of 1300. From the outset Florence is placed in contrast to Rome, but Rome is also its model and inspiration.<sup>194</sup> We know that this was an event at which Dante himself was present (*Inferno* XVIII, 28-33) and of course 1300 is the year in which the fictional journey of the *Commedia* is set. Villani says:

E trovandomi io in quello benedetto pellegrinaggio ne la santa città di Roma, veggendo le grandi e antiche cose di quella, e leggendo le storie e' grandi fatti de' Romani, scritti per Virgilio, e per Salustio, e Lucano, e Paulo Orosio, e Valerio, e Tito Livio, e altri maestri d'istorie, li quali così le piccole cose come le grandi de le geste e fatti de' Romani scrissono, e eziandio degli strani dell'universo mondo, per dare memoria e esemplo a quelli che sono a venire presi lo stile e forma da' loro, tutto sì come piccolo discepolo non fossi degno a tanta opera fare.

The glories of Rome anticipate the glories of her offspring, Florence:

Ma considerando che la nostra città di Firenze, figliuola e fattura di Roma, era nel suo montare e a seguire grandi cose, sì come Roma nel suo calare, mi parve convenevole di recare in questo volume e nuova cronica tutti i fatti e cominciamenti della città di Firenze, in quanto m'è istato possibile a ricogliere, e ritrovare, e seguire per innanzi istesamente in fatti de' Fiorentini e dell'altre notabili cose dell'universo in brieve, infino che fia piacere di Dio, a la cui speranza per la sua grazia feci la detta impresa, più che per la mia povera scienza. E così negli anni MCCC tornato da Roma, cominciai a compilare

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<sup>192</sup> Salvestrini, 'Giovanni Villani and the Aetiological Myth of Tuscan Cities', p. 199.

<sup>193</sup> Davis, 'Il Buon Tempo Antico', p. 72.

<sup>194</sup> G. Villani, *Nuova Cronica* ed. by G. Porta (Parma: Eianudi, 1991), IX, 36.

questo libro a reverenza di Dio e del beato Giovanni, e commendazione della nostra città di Firenze.

It will be seen that in this single paragraph there are numerous ideas that bear comparison to Dante's own: the sense of writing for the benefit of future generations; the idea of Florence as the daughter of Rome; the acknowledgement of stylistic and intellectual debts to classical authors and a wish to emulate them; the potentially false modesty of the assertion of unworthiness of the task. Of principal interest for this thesis is the way in which Villani construes Florence and Rome in positioning his home city as successor to the ancient republic, and by extension himself as a successor to the writers of antiquity who are his models. Villani, seeing Rome's decline and prophesying Florence's future greatness, positions himself as a successor to Virgil in order to write and explain Florence's origins and its consequent exalted role.

Villani also provides a contemporary source for the utility of Florence's own foundation myths in the political propaganda of the city: he like Dante has the idea of Fiesolan influence in the Florentine character following Catiline's conspiracy as a source of Florence's current divisions and its warlike nature.<sup>195</sup> These are topics to which I return in Chapter 5 of this thesis in my consideration of Dante's use of foundation and refoundation myths as part of his prophetic strategy in the *Commedia*. This thesis will demonstrate Dante's use of the type of prophetic recapitulation of Florence's origins and destiny that we find in Villani but will also show how Dante recasts both the foundation myths and his own Virgilian role within a context which encompasses both the universal Empire on Earth and an eschatological dimension.

Villani writes in the Guelf interest, defending explaining and glorifying the mercantile republic and placing his idealised vision of Florence in the period of the Guelf ascendancy, the *primo popolo*, prior to the battle of Montaperti in 1260.<sup>196</sup> Dante, while a Guelf by birth, follows the advice of Cacciaguیدا, embodiment of Dante's own idealised Florence, and writes the *Commedia* in an explicit attempt to demonstrate that his thought has transcended the politics of faction. Villani and Dante share a sense of providential history; like Villani, Dante 'rewrote municipal

<sup>195</sup> Villani, *Nuova Cronica* II, V: 67 -68; IV, I: 143-46; V, VII: 17.

<sup>196</sup> Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, VI, 69.



memory in order to recall a past which was a consequence of the present: a symbolic anticipation of contemporary events'.<sup>197</sup> The present already exists in the past but their ultimate reading of the direction and purpose of providence is different; it is the future greatness of Rome not of Florence which forms the platform on which Dante's political prophecies are based, and it is only in the future glory of Rome that the future happiness, wellbeing and success of Florence, or any city in Christendom, can be assured.

## 2.16 Dino Compagni

Compagni was born around 1260 into a *popolano* family. His chronicle was begun around 1310 when Henry VII was crossing the Alps, and finished in 1312 when the Emperor was about to move against Florence. The majority of the Chronicle, which takes as its main theme the division of the Guelf Party into its Black and White factions, is thus written at a considerable remove from the events it records but on the eve of what Compagni, like Dante a white Guelf, hoped would be the triumph of the imperial mission of Henry VII. The second half of the third and final book of Compagni's chronicle (from Book III, xxiii onwards), serves as an epilogue to the whole and narrates Henry's descent into Italy and thus deals with events that were more recent but more geographically removed. The importance of this event to Compagni is underlined by the fact that now, for the only time in the Chronicle, Compagni moves his narrative outside the Tuscan sphere. It is clear that the intention is to present the advent of Henry, both as Emperor and in his concomitant role as a reformer, as being divinely inspired. If nothing else, Compagni is valuable as a primary source, but it is clear that the construction of Henry as being divinely ordained as a reformer of the world is not unique to Dante.

Both Compagni (*Cronica* III, 24) and Villani (*Nuova Cronica* IX, 19) record the messianic terms in which Henry VII was greeted and, having asserted the divine inspiration of an imperial renewal, designed, it seems, principally for the protection of the Church, Compagni narrates the journey of Henry in Italy. The chronicle breaks off in summer 1312 with Henry preparing to move against Florence, and this is an occasion for invective against the citizens of Florence in which Compagni blames

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<sup>197</sup> Salvestrini 'Giovanni Villani and the Aetiological Myth of Tuscan Cities', p. 199.

the Florentines for corrupting the whole world with their greed and for the changeability of their laws and the absence of civic justice; but Compagni hopes the advent of Henry VII will bring change and retribution ‘O iniqui cittadini, che tutto il mondo avete corrotto e viziato di mali costumi e falsi guadagni! Voi siete quelli che nel mondo avete messo ogni mal uso. Ora vi si ricomincia il mondo a rivolgere addosso: lo imperadore con le sue forze vi farà prendere e rubare per mare e per terra’. (*Cronica*, III, 42). While Compagni’s and Dante’s conceptions of the function of the Emperor in relation to the Church are clearly not identical, the former’s concern for the mutability and injustice of Florence’s laws as well as its corrupt mercantile practices seem to chime with those of Dante in his letter to the iniquitous Florentines within the City and in particular in Dante’s biting sarcastic apostrophe to Florence in *Purgatorio* VI, 127-44.

### 2.17 Angelo Clareno

Clareno was born around 1255 and entered the Franciscan order in c.1270. Following the abdication of Celestine, Angelo and others fled to Greece. Angelo returned to Italy in 1309 during Pope Clement’s attempts to effect reconciliation within the order. Late in life Clareno wrote his *Liber Chronicarum Sive Tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*.<sup>198</sup> Beginning with a life of St Francis, the Chronicle traces the history of the order up to the period of persecution under John XXIII beginning in 1317, which was the background to the Chronicle’s composition.

Clareno is of relevance to this study as he provides an example of the way in which the Spiritual Franciscans perceived themselves and their role. Moreover he provides an example of the way in which Pseudo-Joachite texts, some of which were produced by the Franciscans themselves, were knowingly or unknowingly taken as genuine and as prophecies of contemporary political events. Clareno cites Pseudo-Joachite works as genuine, even those produced within Franciscan circles. For example, he says that the Pseudo-Joachite Erythrean Sybil had predicted the pontificate, abdication, and capture of Celestine V.<sup>199</sup> Clareno’s apocalyptic

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<sup>198</sup> Angelo Clareno, *Liber chronicarum, sive, Tribulationum ordinis minorum*, ed. by G. Boccali (Edizioni Porziuncola: Assisi, 1999).

<sup>199</sup> A. Clareno, *A Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor*, trans. by D. Burr and E. R. Daniel (Franciscan Institute Publications: St. Bonaventure NY, 2005), p.131.

expectation is evidenced by the type of apocalyptic passages which pepper his chronicle and is of interest to this study because of the way in which a ‘history’ text utilises prophecy and places the apocalyptic within its historical context. Principally Clareno is a source for how the persecutions of Francis and his faithful followers were construed within the order as having an apocalyptic dimension because of the role in the last days which is assigned to the order. It is thought that a reformation of the life of Christ and of the religion of Francis will follow the end of these sufferings; Clareno suggests the imminence of the hoped-for reform through obscure symbolic and numerological prophecies.<sup>200</sup> As Reeves has noted, the very structure of the work, in seven parts, embodies the Joachite pattern of history.<sup>201</sup> There is an apocalyptic dimension to these seven tribulations: the sixth age is now and the Franciscans have a vital role to play in it; Clareno reads the history of the order as the history of the world in microcosm.<sup>202</sup>

Clareno is also an important source for our understanding of the cult of Pier Giovanni Olivi and an understanding of the ways in which divine illumination conveyed authority: Clareno emphasises that Olivi spoke as a prophet and I will argue in this thesis that Dante’s own investiture as prophet is contingent on his purification and his having received divine illumination, thus giving him the authority to speak.<sup>203</sup> In both Clareno and in Olivi we have the idea of the persecution of the order as being evidence of its having a key role in the divine plan for the last days; this idea of hardship and suffering as a form of election, is, I will argue, a concept of which Dante makes use in the *Commedia* in the process of his identification as prophet and his attendant claims to authority.<sup>204</sup>

Reeves has noted that Angelo Clareno’s chronicle is key for our understanding of the Franciscans’ literal attitude to history and their exalted view of their own role within it.<sup>205</sup> As was noted earlier, Clareno made use of apocalyptic scenarios to critique Frederick II. Joachim’s commentary on the Book of Revelation, the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, glossed Revelation 11 such that the two witnesses of the Apocalypse are seen as a prophecy of two orders of spiritual men, which was

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<sup>200</sup> D. Burr & E. Randolph-Daniel (trans.), Fra Angelo Clareno, *A Chronicle*, p. 195.

<sup>201</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p.191.

<sup>202</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 206.

<sup>203</sup> D. Burr & E. Randolph-Daniel (trans.) Fra Angelo Clareno, *Chronicle*, p. 135.

<sup>204</sup> Scott, *Dante’s Political Purgatory*, p. 52.

<sup>205</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 191.

interpreted within the mendicant orders as referring to themselves. Clarenò records that the two leaders of the orders issued an encyclical explicitly linking themselves via Joachite imagery to the abbot's prophecies: thus the two orders are presented as two great lights, two olive branches, all images used by Joachim. The last of these 'duae stellae lucidae' is a direct quote from the Pseudo-Joachite oracle of the Erythrean Sybil. However, as Reeves notes, in this context Joachim's original idea of an active and contemplative order is lost and the more useful concept of two active orders substituted.<sup>206</sup>

## 2.18 Salimbene da Adam

Salimbene da Adam (1221-1291) was a chronicler from the Franciscan order. We find in his chronicle an articulation of the political views of an anti-imperial Guelf with Joachite sympathies as he relates events covering the years 1167–1287. It is unlikely that Dante knew Salimbene directly, as the chronicle appears to have had a very limited circulation.<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, Salimbene is an important primary source for the history of the Franciscan order and the internal convulsions and external persecutions to which it was subject. Salimbene is thus of relevance to this thesis because he provides a firsthand, though necessarily partial, account of events which are of immediate importance to Dante's own worldview.

In Salimbene, biography is mixed with a narrative of history giving a prominence to the author's own life story. Severino has noted Salimbene's choice, unusual in the period, of inserting autobiography into the medieval conventions of chronicle writing, and also the central importance he placed upon his own actions and decisions in affecting his own conversion:<sup>208</sup>

It is a peculiar brand of Biography which seeks to heighten the events of his own youth in terms of the understanding he now has and to imbue them with a retrospective importance. His reworking of verbal exchanges into elaborate speeches imbued with biblical references reveals the ambition to mould the

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<sup>206</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 191.

<sup>207</sup> Baird, 'Introduction', in *The Chronicle of Salimbene*: xxvi–xxvii.

<sup>208</sup> G. Severino, 'Storia, genealogia, autobiografia: Il caso di Salimbene da Adam', in *Cultura e società nell'Italia medievale* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1988), II, 775–93) (pp. 787–89).

crucial events of his life into a narrative that would resonate with the religious culture of the time and meet the stylistic expectations of an audience of friars and educated laymen. Tellingly, the autobiographical recollections are often followed by long theological digressions on their meaning and significance.<sup>209</sup>

In addition to its utility as a primary source and the potential stylistic similarities to Dante in blending the autobiographical and the historical, the chronicle is of principal importance for this thesis as it provides evidence of the way in which the Franciscans felt drawn to comment on the apocalypse. As David Burr has noted, Salimbene's remarks on early Spirituals like Hugh of Digne, John of Parma and Gerardo di Borgo San Donnino suggest that early Franciscan apocalyptic thought was heavily indebted to Joachim of Fiore and to Pseudo-Joachite works such as the *Super Hieremiam*.<sup>210</sup> The chronicle, with its admixture of personal and global, holds the origins of the Franciscan order central to history and uses the apocalyptic constructions of the life of St Francis as an occasion and an authorisation for the critique of contemporary institutions which fail to imitate the high standards which the order sets. Like Dante, Salimbene criticises the nepotism of Nicholas III and he is a prominent example of the way in which Guelf politics could be taken up in apocalyptic and/or Joachite discourses to critique the Emperor.

As Reeves notes, Frederick II was the first monarch to be placed in the dramatic context of a Joachite future. He was personified by his enemies as the leviathan, the Aquila, the sixth or seventh head of the dragon allowing the (German) *imperium* to be portrayed as the scourge of the Church.<sup>211</sup> Salimbene, says of Frederick II: 'Erat enim epicureus, et ideo quidquid poterat invenire in divina scriptura per se et per sapientes suos quod faceret ad ostendendum quod non esset alia vita post mortem, totum inveniebat'.<sup>212</sup> Likewise, the reading of scripture for Salimbene was only to find excuses for his own behaviour, and Frederick's attachment to the mortality of the human soul served merely as licence to sensual excess 'qui crediderunt quod non esset alia vita nisi presens, ut liberius carnalitatibus suis et miseris vacare possent',<sup>213</sup> an accusation which is also levelled at Frederick

<sup>209</sup> I. Epurescu-Pascovici, 'Conversion and Autobiography: The Case of Salimbene of Parma', *The Medieval History Journal*, 17.1 (2014), 27–55 (p. 32).

<sup>210</sup> D. Burr, 'Mendicant Readings of the Apocalypse' in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 89-104 (p.102).

<sup>211</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 61.

<sup>212</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica*, I, p.512.

<sup>213</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica*, I, p.513.

by Villani.<sup>214</sup> This is the Epicureanism for which he is condemned in *Inferno*, but it is interesting that Salimbene accuses him of deliberately seeking to misread scripture to produce the intellectual position he already held to be true, as it seems this practice of (mis)interpretation, as well as forming part of Frederick's attempt to defend his Epicureanism, also factored into his own personal messianic propaganda. It is notable too that while Salimbene does condemn Frederick for Epicureanism, it is his political activities and the discord which Salimbene feels Frederick sowed by his Italian wars which attract the greatest criticism: 'Ipse vero Fridericus fuit homo pestifer et maledictus, scismaticus, hereticus et epycurus, corrumpens universam terram, quia in civitatibus Ytalie semen divisionis et discordie seminavit, quod hodie durat'.<sup>215</sup> and 'Igitur omnes supradictas partes et scismata et divisions et maledictiones, tam in Tuscia quam in Lombardia, tam in Romagnola quam in Marchia Anconitana, tam in Marchia Trivisina quam in tota Ytalia, fecit Fridericus'.<sup>216</sup> This stands in contrast to Dante's ambivalent but generally more positive view of Frederick and of the Empire more generally as a force for unity.<sup>217</sup> Dante's construction of the nature of Frederick II's rule and the apocalyptic constructions which were placed upon it is a topic to which I return in Chapter 4.

## 2.19 Pier Giovanni Olivi

Manselli has shown how Joachim's prophetic mode underwent a renaissance in popularity in the late thirteenth century and he sees the Spiritual Franciscans as key to this, being the main source for the dissemination of Joachim's ideas in Florence.<sup>218</sup> It is noted that the library at Santa Croce contained Joachim's works and a contemporary critic of the Papacy such as the Franciscan Ubertino da Casale made use of Joachim's work in his *Arbor vitae*.<sup>219</sup> Likewise documents in the Laurentian library, of which three come from Santa Croce, confirm Joachim's notoriety in Florence at the time.<sup>220</sup> The announcement of the coming of a Third Age (*Arbor*

<sup>214</sup> Villani, *Nuova Cronica*. I, VII. i. 27-31.

<sup>215</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica*, I, p. 43.

<sup>216</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica*, I, p.513.

<sup>217</sup> See for example *Purg.* XVI, 115-17

<sup>218</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 535.

<sup>219</sup> Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*, ed. by C.T Davis (Turin: Bottega di Erasmo, 1961)

<sup>220</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo*, p.58.

*vitae, prol.*, I p.4b) is the hallmark of Joachim's prophecy, and the interpretation of this *status* as 'renovatio della vita di Cristo',<sup>221</sup> provides an example of the Franciscan reinterpretation typical of Olivi and Ubertino.<sup>222</sup> The extent of Olivi's Joachimism is an on-going debate, However, in his most radical work, the *Lectura super apocalypsim*<sup>223</sup> he specifically relates the sixth and seventh status of the Church to the *tertius status generalis* which he explicitly derives from Joachim.<sup>224</sup> Olivi, like Joachim, expected a flowering of history between the defeat of the Antichrist and the consummation of the age and saw St Francis as the initiator of this final epoch; Olivi fused the Joachimist expectation of the age of the Spirit with the Franciscan sense of a prophetic role in the new age of history.

Olivi is of particular relevance to this thesis as it was with Olivi and his *Lectura* that Joachim's works were revived in the city of Florence, and contextualised with the contemporary scene, and Dante's knowledge of and relationship to this recontextualised Joachite mode of prophetic thought will be considered in Chapter 4. Olivi 'viewed himself as standing almost a hundred years into the birth of a new age that would sweep away the old'.<sup>225</sup> Olivi (c.1248–98) was born in Sérignan, in southern France. He entered the Franciscan order and studied under Bonaventure in Paris from 1267 to about 1272, and spent much of the remainder of his life teaching at various Franciscan centres in the south of France. Olivi was in Florence as lector at Santa Croce from 1287–89. He died in 1298 and was buried at Narbonne where his tomb became a site of pilgrimage. Clareno credits Olivi as having been blessed with the gift of prophecy and makes the claim that Joachim of Fiore had foretold the coming of Olivi as well as the coming of Francis, and this kind of veneration led to the posthumous condemnation of the *Lectura super Apocalipsim* in 1326.<sup>226</sup>

Reeves argues for a deep connection, sometimes unconscious, between the passion of the Spirituals for poverty and the Joachimist expectation in history, a

<sup>221</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo*, p.63.

<sup>222</sup> On Olivi see: R. Manselli, 'Dante e l'ecclesia spiritualis', in *Dante e Roma* (Florence: Le Monnier 1965), pp.115-35; Bolognesi 'Aesthetics of the Apocalypse', pp. 23-24.

<sup>223</sup> Pier Giovanni Olivi, *Lectura super apocalipsim* (LSA) ed. by Alberto Forni, <http://www.danteolivi.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Lectura-super-Apocalipsim.pdf>, accessed 14 August 2014. This text is a transcription from ms. lat. 713 Bibliothèque Nationale de France (1318-1319).

<sup>224</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 41.

<sup>225</sup> Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, cited in Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo*, p.55.

<sup>226</sup> Clareno, *Liber Chronicarum*, V. 36.

connection to be detected in beliefs such as the idea that St Francis's testament had the imprimatur of the Holy Spirit; the heightened significance given to contemporary events; and the exaggerated claims made first for St Francis and later for Olivi himself. 'It is chiefly within the Franciscan Order that we perceive the radical response to Joachimist prophecies which place them within a context of urgent meaning and find in them incitement to radical action'.<sup>227</sup> Reeves suggests that from the Joachimist view of history three key factors filter into Franciscan thought, and are articulated in the works of men such as Olivi and Ubertino: a sense that an extreme crisis of history is imminent; a belief in the supreme mission of the movement to match this moment; an attitude towards the Papacy in which obedience strives with the conviction that the order holds the key to the future.<sup>228</sup> As Manselli has noted the prophecy of a mystic Antichrist in the form of a Pope occupies a position of central importance in Olivi's Apocalypse commentary as part of an apocalyptic sequence of events. The sixth age, following St Francis, and the foundation of his order sees a battle between the true followers of Christ and those who are only apparently faithful; that is to say between the true Church represented by his own order, the *ecclesia spiritualis*, and the false, corrupt church with the Mystic Antichrist at its head, the *ecclesia carnalis*.<sup>229</sup>

## 2.20 Ubertino Da Casale

Ubertino was born in Casale Monferrato, Piedmont, in 1259 and entered the Franciscan Order in 1273 or 1274. Ubertino attended the *studium generale* of the Order in Paris for nine years, and was then appointed as lector in Florence, probably around 1285. Lerner suggests that the strongest evidence for Olivi's concerns being related to contemporary crises is the fact that his pupil Ubertino da Casale articulated similar ideas regarding the Millennium.<sup>230</sup> Dante mentions Ubertino by name in the *Commedia* where he sees the Franciscan's soul in the heaven of the Sun, at a point where St Dominic highlights the tensions between the conventual and the spiritual wings of the Franciscan order and seemingly criticises Ubertino for excessive zeal in

<sup>227</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 175.

<sup>228</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 190.

<sup>229</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 474.

<sup>230</sup> R. E. Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to the Thousand Year Sabbath', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 51-71 (p. 62).



the application of the rule of St Francis:

ma non fia da Casal né d'Acquasparta,  
là onde vegnon tali a la scrittura,  
ch'uno la fugge e altro la coarta. (*Par.* XII, 124-26)

As Pasquini has noted, it is known that, following the departure of Olivi, Ubertino remained a further two years in Florence before being exiled to Mount Verna by Boniface VIII, where the exiled Dante may have met him again.<sup>231</sup> It was here that he composed the *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu*. Bolognesi, in contrast to most modern scholarship, suggests the pre-eminence of Ubertino as an influence on Dante's thought, noting that the time and place of composition of the *Arbor* are closer to the time and place of the making of the *Commedia* than Olivi's *Lectura*; also Ubertino da Casale remained in Florence longer than his mentor (four years), and had been involved in the political and religious life of the Italian peninsula.<sup>232</sup>

For Ubertino, Benedict IX is the Antichrist in the flesh, but Ubertino, like Olivi was also careful to use moderate language as self-protection in not explicitly calling for secession and not explicitly linking Rome and Babylon.<sup>233</sup> Davis feels that Ubertino's moderation was only apparent. The imagery which for Olivi seems to represent a whole history of attacks against the Church, for Ubertino seems to refer to one specific current battle.<sup>234</sup>

In Book Five of the *Arbor Vita*, St Francis, is seen by Ubertino, as he is by Olivi, as part of the initiation of the sixth age of the Church: 'est renovationis exvangelicae vite et expugnationis secte Antichristiane sub pauperibus voluntariis nihil possidentiibus in hac vita' (*Arbor vitae*, V, 409b). The seventh age would then see 'quedam quieta et mire participatio future glorie ac si celestis ierusalem videatur ascendisse in terram [...] ut videatur quoddam novum seculum seu nova ecclesia tuncformari' (*Arbor vitae*, V, 409b). Book 5 is a commentary on Revelation, based on Olivi's work, and centres on a concordance between the saving work of Jesus and the history of the Franciscan Order, a concordance which Leff has termed a complete

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<sup>231</sup> E. Pasquini, 'L'Olivi e Dante', p. 234.

<sup>232</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor,' p. 141.

<sup>233</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 214.

<sup>234</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 225.

Franciscanizing of the Apocalypse.<sup>235</sup> Here Ubertino is more explicit than Olivi in identifying Boniface VIII and Benedict IX in their persecution of the order as two aspects of the mythical Antichrist. St Francis was a figure of Christ, and had prophesied persecution; Ubertino expected the conflict with Babylon based on the logic that there must be an imitation of the life of Christ: the Franciscan must be figuratively killed and buried before he could rise in Glory. ‘The concentration of attack on the Spirituals who guarded the rule and Testament with their lives was nothing less than the final and tremendous conflict with the Antichrist and in so far as the ecclesiastical hierarchy identified itself with this attack, it ceased to be the New Jerusalem and became part of Babylon *‘meretrix and impudica’*.<sup>236</sup> As Reeves notes, the consummation for which the Spirituals wait is expressed by Ubertino in phrases which show how closely the ideal was assimilated to Joachim's third status, for he speaks of a contemplation and evangelical status designated in St John, and of the future perfection of the contemplative Church which is the sum of all things.<sup>237</sup> Although both Olivi and Ubertino maintained their obedience to authority, ‘the logic of their reading of history was steadily driving extremists to the conviction that they alone represented the true Church’.<sup>238</sup> The extent to which Dante makes use of the Franciscan literal attitude to history as articulated in the works of men like Olivi, Clareno and Da Casale as a basis for his own ideas of providential history will be an area of focus for Chapter 4 of this thesis. This chapter will consider in more detail Dante’s apocalyptic ideas, particularly as they appear in the *Purgatorio*, and seek to assess in what ways Dante is indebted to Olivi and Ubertino for his apocalyptic ideas, but also how Dante’s own ideas around Church and societal reform serve to distance him from these sources.

## 2.21 Conclusion

It seems clear by assessing the numerous potential influences in late Duecento Florence for Dante’s ideas about the function of human society and the privileged role given to the Roman Empire, that there was a plethora of influences on which

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<sup>235</sup> G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967). I, 152, cited in McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 206.

<sup>236</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 209.

<sup>237</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 209.

<sup>238</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 211.

Dante could draw, some of whom agreed with him and some of whom did not, or to different extents, but in all of whom there was something on which he could draw. This chapter provides not only suggestions of direct points of influence on Dante but also, more importantly, a more generalised picture of the thought that characterises the society in which Dante grew to maturity, which is not just ‘background’ to the thesis, but the context which feeds and develops Dante’s thinking, to the point where it comes to fruition in the *Commedia*, *Monarchia* and letters.

In particular, condemnation of faction in Aristotelian terms was a manifestation of the ever increasing presence of the Thomistic synthesis of Aristotle which found expression in preaching, in the schools and in the lay culture of the city. However, a key element of Dante’s writing on factionalism is in a prophetic apocalyptic mode which is frequently combined with invective against Church cupidity. The principal exponents of apocalypticism during Dante’s formative years in Florence were to be found among the nascent Spiritual Franciscan movement at Santa Croce. In the Florence of Dante’s formative years, apocalyptic belief and apocalyptic rhetoric stand alongside a developing Aristotelianism in the city’s schools and in its lay culture. Likewise, we find a tendency to eulogise the Roman past and to accept its heroes as embodying the virtues which should inform civic life. These are strands of thought which we will find articulated throughout Dante’s exilic works and nowhere more so than in the prophecies of the *Commedia* where, as later chapters will discuss, they appear to sit in a potentially uneasy synthesis. Chapter 3 of this thesis will examine the language in which Dante performs his own self-identification and investiture as prophet, while Chapter 4 will begin to relate Dante’s prophecies to the apocalyptic language and agenda of the Spiritual Franciscan movement. Chapter 5 will examine how Aristotelian civic humanism and Roman exceptionalism are present in Dante and the way in which Dante’s ‘political’ prophecies relate to his vision of Roman history, Roman virtues and the Roman imperial ideal and in each case the significance of the context outlined here and the role played by certain key influences on the poet will be clear.

## Chapter 3

### Prophets and Prophecy in Dante

#### 3.1 Introduction

I have considered in Chapter 2 of this thesis, some of the ways in which theological language, and the language of prophecy in particular, was used as a means to critique the religious, political and social spheres in Duecento Florence. In the first part of this chapter, through an examination of Dante's adoption of the language, and the role, of apostle and prophet, I suggest that the use of prophecy and the adoption of the prophetic manner is the framework within which much of Dante's political thought is articulated; I examine the ways in which prophetic language is used in *Paradiso* XXVII and the *Monarchia*, before moving on to discuss the relationship between Dante's prophetic practice in the *Monarchia*, the *Commedia* and the political letters.

I highlighted in Chapter 1 the three great *ante eventum* prophecies of the *Commedia*: the Veltro of *Inferno* I, the so-called DXV of *Purgatorio* XXXIII, and the promise of reform delivered by St Peter and Beatrice in *Paradiso* XXVII. I further noted the issues of interpretation which surround these prophecies, particularly how interpretation is rendered more difficult by the uncertainties surrounding the chronology of Dante's works. Only the prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII can be ascribed with certainty to the period following the failure of Henry VII's mission to Italy which occasioned such optimism on Dante's part as witnessed in the letters he wrote at this period. This chapter will begin by examining the language used in the prophetic statements in canto XXVII of *Paradiso* which form the last ante-eventum prophecy of the *Commedia*. It will do so in order to assess how these statements relate to Dante's political thought as it is articulated in the *Commedia* and elsewhere in his oeuvre; if the prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII belong to a period following the defeat of Henry VII, when there was little or no prospect of imminent practical political reform; how are these prophecies to be interpreted and how do they relate to the rest of the *Commedia*?

### 3.2 The Prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII

Canto XXVII of the *Paradiso* contains two prophetic statements; the first of these is delivered by St Peter and the second by Beatrice. St Peter, concluding his invective against the corruption of the papacy, tells the pilgrim:

In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci  
 si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi:  
 o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci?  
 Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi  
 s'apparecchian di bere: o buon principio,  
 a che vil fine convien che tu caschi!  
 Ma l'alta provedenza, che con Scipio  
 difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,  
 soccorrà tosto, sì com' io concipio;  
 e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo  
 ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca,  
 e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo. (*Par.* XXVII, 55-66)

Thus from St Peter, Dante receives, in the space of these four *terzine*: the assurance that providence will provide a solution to the problems of clerical cupidity; the confirmation of the imminence of that solution; and the order to make clear to those on Earth that this is the case. Beatrice's words at the end of the canto seem to act as a gloss and expansion of the words of St Peter:

Tu, perché non ti facci meraviglia,  
 pensa che 'n terra non è chi governi;  
 onde sì svia l'umana famiglia.  
 Ma prima che gennaio tutto si sverni  
 per la centesma ch'è là giù negletta,  
 raggeran sì questi cerchi superni,  
 che la fortuna che tanto s'aspetta,  
 le poppe volgerà u' son le prore,  
 sì che la classe correrà diretta;  
 e vero frutto verrà dopo 'l fiore. (*Par.* XXVII, 139-48)

Beatrice's words seem to reiterate the imminence of the solution and that the solution will be concerned with correct ordering and redirecting of humanity. Henry

VII had died in 1313, the imperial throne was empty, and the papal seat remained in Avignon where Clement V had moved it in the spring of 1309. To the poem's first readers a dual meaning may well have been suggested by these lines; when elsewhere in the canto St Peter says that his seat is vacant he is referring in the fiction of the poem to the corruption of Boniface VIII but it may also have been read as a reference in around 1314 to the death of Clement V and the removal of the papacy to Avignon or even, as Havelly has suggested, to John XXII who became Pope in the summer of 1316.<sup>239</sup> Under the accepted chronology these lines were written in a period where there was no practical hope of imminent political reform. Indeed a new concentration in *Paradiso* may be noted: a shift away from a concern with what might be termed practical politics, which reflects not only the more lofty subject matter, but also Dante's abandonment of hope for imminent political reform which might once more restore the universal peace enjoyed by man under Augustus, towards the view that true peace is only now achievable in heaven.<sup>240</sup> This constitutes what might be termed a more Augustinian view of man's purpose on Earth and function of society where the principal function of humanity's existence is a pilgrimage back to God, and the function of government is to curb man's sinful tendencies rather than to create conditions of peace which allow him to maximise his potential intellect.<sup>241</sup>

This new concentration would seem to raise two questions with regard to interpreting the prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII. Firstly, is it appropriate to assign a 'political' dimension to this last prophecy as has been suggested is the case for the Veltro and the DXV and if so to what purpose? What kind of political reform is now considered feasible? Secondly, does such a new concentration have implications for our understanding of what might be called Dante's Aristotelian view on dualism and what man, as a member of human society, can do for himself in this life? If a certain tendency towards dualism exists elsewhere in Dante and is abandoned in the *Commedia* in general and in the *Paradiso* in particular, is the high, independent function of the Emperor and human society *qua* society outlined in the *Monarchia*

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<sup>239</sup> Havelly, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 168.

<sup>240</sup> C. E. Honess, '“Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile”': Henry VII and Dante's Ideal of Peace', *The Italianist*, 33 (2013), 482-502, (p.500).

<sup>241</sup> *Augustine, De Civitate Dei*, ed. by B. Dombart and A. Kalb (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), IV. 4; XIX, 21

fundamentally different from that which Dante seems to portray in the *Commedia*? If, by the time he came to write the *Paradiso* (and perhaps also the later cantos of the *Purgatorio*), Dante had abandoned the idea that a truly just society could be established on Earth and had decided instead that the only possible locus of true peace was heaven, what function could a great temporal reformer have had? This true peace, it should be remembered, is that which was brought about under Augustus, the *plenitudo temporis* of the perfect Empire disposing the world to be ready for Christ (*Monarchia*. I, xvi, 2). Is the role of the Emperor now redundant other than as a bridle on man's cupidity? That is to say, does the Emperor's role now consist solely in curbing man's tendency to dissatisfaction with his own position and his desire to acquire and exercise earthly power?

With regard to the first of these questions, regarding the appropriateness of a political interpretation of St Peter's words, it is striking that canto XXVII of the *Paradiso*, contains a number of instances where Dante uses language which also appears in the political letters, the *Purgatorio* and the *Monarchia*, suggesting at least a consistency of approach to political matters from the time of the *Purgatorio* onwards. When the prophecy is made in *Paradiso* XXVII, Dante returns to the language of letter VI, written to the Florentines at the time of Henry's Italian campaign, and of *Purgatorio* VI, and uses the same imagery to express the same idea: that where there is no one to govern, man and those entrusted with his spiritual well-being, go astray.

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello,  
nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta,  
non donna di province, ma bordello! (*Purg.* VI, 76-78)

and

Che val perché ti racconciasse il freno  
Iustiniano, se la sella è vòta?  
Sanz' esso fora la vergogna meno  
Ahi gente che dovresti esser devota,  
e lasciar seder Cesare in la sella,  
se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota (*Purg.* VI, 88-93).<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> *Purgatorio* VI, seems to lack the messianic overtones which pertain in the letter and in the prophecy of the DXV in *Purgatorio* XXXII and this may make a dating before Henry's descent more likely.

Here we have the imagery of the rudderless ship as metaphor for humanity, together with the insistence that it is the absence of correct government on Earth that causes man to go astray: ‘che ’n terra non è chi governi | onde sì svia l’umana famiglia’. (*Par.* XXVII, 140-141)

This seems to close Dante’s words to his Florentine enemies, the Black Guelphs, in *letter VI*:

Sacrosancto Romanorum imperio res humanas disposuit gubernandas...non leviter tamen veritati applaudit, quod solio Augustali vacante totus orbis exorbitat, quod nauclerus et remiges in navicula Petri dormitant. (*Ep.* VI, I)

In *Paradiso* XXVII reference is made to Providence and the way it will turn the prows of the fleet of human society through 180 degrees, so, with a change of scale, Italy in *Purgatorio* VI is a constituent member of this fleet: the ‘nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta’ (*Purg.* VI, 77). While the re-use of such imagery is by no means conclusive evidence that the same concerns remain or that the imagined solution to the problem is the same, the language seems significant for the fact that here, in the presence of St Peter, and following the *Commedia*’s most scathing condemnation of papal corruption, Dante’s words seem to recall the language of both the *Commedia*’s most explicitly political statements and Dante’s own political letters written at the high point of his practical hopes for political reform. It is further notable that the same imagery occurs in *Convivio* where Dante discusses the role of providence in a history which ties together the Roman and the Christian; Roman power creates the conditions of universal peace for the Christian world to flourish: ‘E però [che] pace universale era per tutto, che mai, più, non fu né fia, la nave de l’umana compagnia dirittamente per dolce cammino a debito porto correa’ (*Conv.* IV, v).

Dante’s use of words and imagery in *Paradiso* XXVII which appear to recall letter VI may be particularly significant, as it is in this letter that Dante argues that not only are the powers of Empire derived directly from God but that the successful operation of the Church, in terms of both its leadership and its rank and file’s mission is, in some sense, dependent upon the correct functioning of the Emperor. It



should be noted that what is prophesied in *Paradiso* XXVII is not a new Scipio, but a belief that providence will act to reform the world through means as yet unknown; Scipio appears as an agent of providence and we cannot know for certain what tools providence will use in the future. Nonetheless, the naming of such a political figure in this context pushes the political to the forefront, and encourages a reading of this prophecy in a political key. It is asserted that it was Scipio's working together with providence to defend the glory of Rome: 'Ma l'alta provedenza, che *con* Scipio, | difese a Roma la gloria del mondo' (*Par.* XXVII, 61-62; my italics). It is further asserted that providence will soon provide a new solution to combat the current corruption. Although a new Emperor is not specified, the reference to Scipio and the emphasis on working with providence in a cooperative relationship is one which we find in *Convivio* IV, v, 19 and, suggests a temporal power is intended who will restore Rome to its providential glory. Perhaps significantly, we find one of the *Commedia*'s three other references to Scipio in Justinian's sweeping history of the Roman Empire, and the great invective against Italian corruption in *Paradiso* VI:<sup>243</sup>

Sott' esso giovanetti triunfaro  
 Scipione e Pompeo; e a quel colle  
 sotto 'l qual tu nascesti parve amaro. (*Par.* VI, 52-54)

At first glance, it may seem curious that a republican figure is chosen to allude to an imperial renewal but as Dante has made clear in the *Convivio* the Republic is part of the same providential plan which one day would lead to the rule of the Emperor Augustus and the conditions under which God would send Christ to the world.<sup>244</sup> The continuity of Dante's conception of Roman history and the relation of this history to Dante's prophetic methods and ideas is a topic to which I will return in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

A final common element which appears in both *Purgatorio* VI and *Paradiso* XXVII is Dante's use of the questioning apostrophe to God, which queries, surely to rhetorical purpose, his inaction in tackling corruption. In *Purgatorio* VI, Dante asks 'son li giusti occhi tuoi rivolti altrove?' (*Purg.* VI, 120) and does not, for the time

<sup>243</sup> Scipio is also mentioned in *Inferno* XXXI where his victory over Hannibal at the battle of Zama is recalled. In *Purgatorio* XXIX, 115-17, the chariot of the Church in the Earthly Paradise is seen as more splendid than that of Scipio or of Augustus himself.

<sup>244</sup> *Conv.* IV, v.

being, receive an answer. In *Paradiso* XXVII, St Peter restates Dante's question, 'O difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci?' (*Par.* XXVII, 57). But this time the answer comes immediately, and from the same infallible source, emphasising the purely rhetorical nature of the question:

Ma l'alta provedenza, che con Scipio  
difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,  
soccorrà tosto, sì com' io concipio (*Par.* XXVII, 61-63)

If we accept that the linguistic connectedness of *Paradiso* XXVII, *Purgatorio* VI, and letter VI, may be indicative of thematic connectedness we can suggest that while writing the *Paradiso*, Dante retained the notion not only of the Emperor as being required as sole guarantor of justice, but also the notion that prevention of corruption in the Church is dependent on the throne of Augustus being occupied; that is to say that in the *Commedia* and in the letters we find Dante's belief that it is the Emperor's divinely ordained role to restrict mankind's tendency to cupidity and that of the Church in particular; and this is not a role which the papacy could ever fulfil. It seems that to the very end of his life Dante continued to reject the assertions of the bulls *Romani principes* and *Pastoralis cura*, where Clement V insisted that the Emperor is a vassal of the Church (March 1314) and that secular authority reverts *de iure* to the Pope in the interregnum, as was asserted in *Si fratrum* (1317), a document which reinforced Boniface VIII's *Unam sanctam* (1302) with its view that Christ has committed all authority in heaven and on Earth to the Pope. This idea of continued faith in the high functions of the Emperor is given further credence if we accept the interpretation of St Peter's words at *Paradiso* XXVII, 46-48 as being a condemnation of the Guelf-Ghibelline factionalism that was the cause of Dante's exile, and was also symptomatic of the wider corruption of human society which Dante, in writing the poem, is told by Cacciaguida to transcend:

Di sua bestialitate il suo processo  
farà la prova; sì ch'a te fia bello  
averti fatta parte per te stesso. (*Par.* XVII, 67-69)

St Peter tells the pilgrim that:

Non fu nostra intenzion ch'a destra mano  
 d'i nostri successor parte sedesse,  
 parte da l'altra del popol cristiano. (*Par.* XXVII, 46-48)

Early commentators read St Peter's words as condemning division in both the temporal and spiritual spheres; Jacopo della Lana glosses this passage thus:

Cioè essi santi pastori non inteseno che li moderni osservassono parte, nè dividessono lo popolo cristiano. A destra mano, cioè li guelfi. Parte: Che si chiamasse figliuoli della Chiesa. Parte dall'altra: cioè ghibellini che si chiamassono inimici della Chiesa.<sup>245</sup>

Earlier in *Paradiso* XXVII, Beatrice makes clear that the function of the promised reform will be to correct the cupidity which St. Peter has condemned in his prophecy at the beginning of the canto:

Oh cupidigia, che i mortali affonde  
 sì sotto te, che nessuno ha podere  
 di trarre li occhi fuor de le tue onde!  
 Ben fiorisce ne li uomini il volere;  
 ma la pioggia continüa converte  
 in bozzacchioni le sosine vere. (*Par.* XXVII, 121-126)

As well as recalling the other metaphorical waters of the poem including its opening simile in *Inferno* I, this seems to me to echo very closely the sentiments of Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* XVI that the innate free will in all men tends toward the Good but, in the absence of good government, will go astray:

l'anima semplicetta che sa nulla,  
 salvo che, mossa da lieto fattore,  
 volentier torna a ciò che la trastulla.  
 Di picciol bene in pria sente sapore;  
 quivi s'inganna, e dietro ad esso corre,  
 se guida o fren non torce suo amore  
 Onde convenne legge per fren porre;  
 convenne rege aver, che discernesse  
 de la vera cittade almen la torre. (*Purg.* XVI, 88-96)

As has been noted, the poem, through the words of Beatrice, goes on to explicitly

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<sup>245</sup> Jacopo della Lana, note on *Paradiso* XXVII, 46-48, DDP, accessed 14 August 2014.

link this cupidity to the absence of good government on Earth. She tells Dante not to be amazed at such unrestrained cupidity as, given the political situation; this is only to be expected:

Tu, perché non ti facci meraviglia,  
 pensa che 'n terra non è chi governi;  
 onde sì svia l'umana famiglia. (*Par.* XXVII, 139-41)

Once more, as it was at the very start of the poem, the image of the wolf is used to represent cupidity and Church cupidity for money, land and power in particular. The words 'In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci' are related to the chaotic state of life on Earth and it is the absence of strong government which allows this to flourish. It seems to me that in general in Dante there is little evidence to suggest that he ever had any belief in the Church's capacity to reform itself, thus even at this late stage the recollection of the imagery of *Commedia's* opening prophecy may further support the view that Dante maintains in the *Paradiso* that the solution to the Church's lust for temporal power and wealth remains strong temporal government.

When Dante looks downwards from the heaven of the fixed stars he describes the Earth as 'questa aiuola' (*Par.* XXVII, 86). This image of the threshing floor has already been used in *Paradiso* to emphasise the change of scale and perspective characteristic of the transition from *Purgatorio* to *Paradiso*. In *Paradiso* XXII, Dante sees the Earth as 'L'aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci' (*Par.* XXII, 151). Strikingly, this image of the threshing floor also occurs in the *Monarchia* where Dante is speaking of temporal happiness: 'hoc est illud signum ad quod maxime debet intendere curator orbis, qui dicitur romanus Princeps, ut scilicet in areola ista mortalium libere cum pace vivatur' (*Mon.* III, xv). The significance of the re-use of specific imagery is once more debatable, particularly given the issues regarding both the dating and what might be termed the intended function of the *Monarchia* which I highlighted in Chapter 1; it can be argued that the *Monarchia*, a text devoid of reference to contemporary events, may be legitimately regarded as an analysis of failure, an outline of an ideal that cannot now be realised, or as a programme for ideal government in an uncertain future. However we choose to interpret its intended function, it is striking that Dante in the *Commedia* with all the weight of the context of being in the highest heaven, makes use of an image to refer to life on

Earth which he also uses in the abstract political treatise, particularly given the apparent differences between the two works regarding man's purpose and capabilities in this life.

Singleton takes the view that the re-use the threshing floor image in *Paradiso* XXVII is specifically intended to make us recall the change of perspective asserted by Dante's smile at its paltry scale in *Paradiso* XXII, 'e vidi questo globo tal ch'io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante' (*Par.* XXII, 134-35).<sup>246</sup> It is suggested that these passages were written within two or three years of one another, and quite possibly within a few months; while the image as used in the *Paradiso* is doubtless indicative of both a change in scope and scale, an emphasis on the heavenly perspective, the image as used in the *Monarchia* does not seem to me to be any less so. Indeed Prue Shaw annotates her translation of the *Monarchia* to indicate that Dante's use of the word *aiuola/areola* here too 'emphasizes the insignificance of human life seen in the perspective of the cosmic order'.<sup>247</sup> Even in a political tract with its dualistic programme there is no question of approximation or reduction of the space between Heaven and Earth, but it is on this little threshing floor, that man's happiness both in this life and in the next must be achieved, even if the universal peace of the *plenitudo temporis* is no longer a feasible goal. It seems to me that here, as in the parallels already outlined, Dante is reusing the same image to the same purpose. For Dante good government appears to remain related to both man's ends, directly in the case of man's happiness in this life, and indirectly as a curb on Church cupidity with its consequences for man's happiness hereafter; the Church will not reform, nor will it function correctly to guide man to eternal blessedness without the presence of a strong ruler occupying the throne of Augustus. The imagery of the threshing floor, with its suggestion of separation of wheat and chaff, seems to reinforce the paradox of both the insignificance and the fundamental importance of the here-and-now on Earth.<sup>248</sup>

The suggestion that the interconnected nature of *Monarchia* III and the

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<sup>246</sup> C.S. Singleton, *The Divine Comedy, Translated, with a Commentary*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970-75). Note on *Paradiso* XXII, 151 accessed via DDP.

<sup>247</sup> Shaw, *Monarchy*, p. 93.

<sup>248</sup> The very translation of 'aiuola' as 'threshing-floor' is problematic and of course an acceptance of the word to mean simply an area, or small space removes the suggestion of winnowing. Nonetheless, the connection with a number of biblical passages where this meaning is clearly intended – e.g. Matt. 3. 12 – seems to support the notion that Dante did have the more specific meaning in mind. For a full discussion see Hollander, DDP note on *Paradiso* XXII, 151.

prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII amounts to more than coincidence or the reuse of standard tropes, may be given further credence if we consider the wider context in which we find reference to the threshing floor in *Monarchia*. The whole paragraph, in which Dante is speaking of temporal happiness, runs as follows:

Et cum ad hunc portum vel nulli vel pauci et hii cum difficultate nimia,  
pervenire possint, nisi sedatis fluctibus blande cupiditatis genus humanum  
liberum in pacis tranquillitate quiescat, hoc est illud signum ad quod maxime  
debet intendere curator orbis, qui dicitur romanus Princeps, ut scilicet in areola  
ista mortalium libere cum pace vivatur. (*Mon.* III, xi)

As has been noted above, in *Paradiso* XXVII, Beatrice, prior to her prophecy of imminent reform, says ‘Oh cupidigia, che i mortali affonde / si sotto te, che nessuno ha podere / di trarre li occhi fuor de le tue onde.’ (*Par.* XXVII, 121-23). Once more the same image seems to serve the same function: the waves of greed must be calmed by the Emperor and the promised reformer in the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* respectively.

All of the above seeks to draw a potential link between continuity of image in Dante and continuity of thought. Such a link must also of course be examined in the light of its original sources and, given the biblical and classical nature of these sources, we must be careful when assessing their import that we are not simply dealing with well-worn tropes. Did Dante almost instinctively think of humanity as a fleet seeking its true port and of the Earth as a threshing floor? Were these standard epithets whose significance in theological and political terms was not uppermost in Dante’s mind when he employed them in his work? If so, is it problematic to continue to draw such strong interpretative links between such uses of imagery? The threshing floors of the Bible seem to me to serve two principal functions, both of which are well suited to Dante’s purpose in the *Paradiso* and in the *Commedia* more generally; a threshing floor is both a place of blessing, where the harvest is safely gathered in, and a place of judgement, where the wheat is separated from the chaff. The two references to threshing floors in the New Testament both come in the gospels where Matthew and Luke use the phrase in describing John the Baptist’s prophecy of the advent of Christ; in Matthew 3. 12: ‘Cujus ventilabrum in manu sua: et permundabit aream suam: et congregabit triticum suum in horreum, paleas autem

comburet igni inextinguibili'.<sup>249</sup> The threshing floor which makes men so fierce to one another is also the place of judgement where Christ will separate the wheat from the chaff.

Given that the language of the last great prophecy of the *Commedia* recalls (or anticipates) to varying degrees *inter alia*: letter VI; the great invective against corruption of *Purgatorio* VI; the *Monarchia*; and the prophecy of the Veltro, there seems to me to be considerable evidence to suggest that this prophecy is best interpreted as a political one, and with a considerable degree of continuity with regard to the other prophetic statements of the *Commedia*. Dante still appears to believe, however abstractedly, that providence might provide a temporal leader to make the fleet of human communities run straight. I will suggest that an interpretation of the final prophecy of the *Commedia* as being, broadly speaking, one of political reform, is consonant with the other prophecies in the work and the political ideas outlined by Dante elsewhere in the work, in the political letters and in the *Monarchia*. I will further suggest that this implication of consonance is supported by reuse of imagery and language at key moments.

Given that the political message of the *Commedia* is bound closely with the use of prophetic language and, fundamentally for this thesis, that the central political message is presented in theological terms using the language of prophecy, in the following section, I now turn to discuss the applications and functions of prophetic language in the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia*, including Dante's self-identification with figures from scripture, and ask whether the method of using the language of biblical prophecy to articulate an agenda of political reform has wider use in Dante's works outside the *Commedia*.

### 3.3 *Monarchia*

Albert Ascoli has noted how debates surrounding the *Monarchia* have tended to focus on two interrelated questions: what does Dante mean when he uses the term 'possible intellect' in Book I and what exactly is the nature of the separation which Dante installs between the two ends of man, most notably in the famous

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<sup>249</sup> Luke III,12 'cujus ventilabrum in manu ejus, et purgabit aream suam, et congregabit triticum in horreum suum, paleas autem comburet igni inextinguibili.'

‘quoddammodo’ clause at the end of the treatise? These are issues which I intend to address in the final chapter of this thesis in the light of the use of the language of apocalyptic prophecy in both Dante and late Duecento Italy more generally. Ascoli has pointed out that the *Monarchia* has rarely been analysed from a literary-rhetorical perspective, and even less so in terms of Dante’s pursuit of personal authority.<sup>250</sup> With this in mind the current section seeks to analyse Dante’s use of prophetic and Pauline language in the *Monarchia* to illustrate its fundamental importance to the treatise, before moving on to discuss how the linguistic rhetorical strategies employed intimately link the treatise, linguistically and functionally, to both the *Commedia* and the political letters, and most particularly to Dante’s sustained self-identification as one who has a divine message of reform to convey. In discussing the language of the *Monarchia*, I have chosen to address the presence of both St Paul and Old Testament prophets as I believe that practices of imitation of both these models are fundamental to Dante’s communicative method; in the *Commedia* he appears to present himself simultaneously as both prophet and apostle and as has been discussed in the previous chapter, the apocalyptic dimension of Old Testament prophecy was adopted and adapted in late Duecento Italy to engage in current political and theological debates. Paul himself draws on Old Testament prophets in his writing, Isaiah for example, and as will be demonstrated, Dante at key moments in his oeuvre will become the third of this group as he pairs allusions to Paul and Isaiah as part of his practice of adoption of the roles of both men.<sup>251</sup> As Mineo has noted the medieval conception of prophecy has the teaching of Paul as one of its points of departure. According to Paul every Christian receives a certain time of vocation which is given ‘secundum rationem fidei’ (Romans 12. 6). In I, Corinthians 14. 1-4 Paul indicates the value, significance function and essence of prophecy:

Sectamini caritatem, æmulamini spiritualia: magis autem ut prophetetis. Qui enim loquitur lingua, non hominibus loquitur, sed Deo: nemo enim audit. Spiritu autem loquitur mysteria. Nam qui prophetat, hominibus loquitur ad

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<sup>250</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 231.

<sup>251</sup> In addition to these models Dante also appears to engage in self-identification with St John. Dante’s relationship with and use of the book of Revelation and his self-identification with the author will be considered in Chapter 4’s discussion of Dante’s apocalypticism and in Chapter 5’s consideration of the language and imagery of the Earthly Paradise.



ædificationem, et exhortationem, et consolationem. Qui loquitur lingua, semetipsum ædificat: qui autem prophetat, ecclesiam Dei ædificat.

The prophet in these terms is divinely inspired and has a role to fulfil – exhortation, consolation and above all a function which transcends his own being which we might call socio-religious.<sup>252</sup>

When, in book III of the *Monarchia*, Dante turns to present positive proofs regarding the source of the Emperor's power, he argues that the fact of the Empire's authority not being dependent on the Church is confirmed by the fact that the Empire predates the Church and that both Paul and Christ assented to its laws. Dante glosses this as follows 'Quod si Cesar iam tunc iudicandi temporalia non habuisset auctoritatem nec Cristus hoc persuasisset, nec angelus illa verba nuntiasset, nec ille qui dicebat "Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Cristo" incompetentem iudicem appellasset' (*Mon.* III, xii, 5). Paul's and Christ's lives and actions recounted in scripture are interpreted to support the point being made which bears upon the contemporary political scene. As was highlighted in Chapter 2, this is the principal method of use of biblical language in both the *Monarchia* and in works such as John of Paris's *De Potestate*; the Bible, correctly interpreted, acting as a manual for the correct ordering of human society. I wish to highlight however that at a number of key locations in the *Monarchia*, Dante's usage of such texts is radically different from that found in the works of his contemporaries writing in the political field. I will argue that in the *Monarchia*, Dante uses the language of prophecy as part of a process of self-identification as prophet which reflects and enhances the prophetic role he adopts in the political letters and the prophetic role assigned to Dante *personaggio* by Dante *poeta* in the *Commedia*.

This section extends the idea of Dante as prophet to incorporate that of the poet as a messenger of God because it wishes to highlight that in the *Monarchia* as in the *Commedia* Dante is adopting the role, and co-opting the authority, both of Old Testament prophets, of St Paul, and of John of Patmos. It is suggested that the concentration of prophetic and Pauline language at key stages of the treatise is indicative of Dante, as he does in the *Commedia*, taking on the role of both prophet and apostle. This section will discuss the presence and function of prophetic language in Dante taking as its point of departure a consideration of the use of

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<sup>252</sup> Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante*, p. 23.

prophetic language in Book III of the *Monarchia*, as it is at this stage of the treatise that we find the greatest concentration of prophetic language and, more significantly, strong evidence of Dante's own self-identification as prophet.

The *Monarchia* has been noted for its lack of explicit reference to contemporary politics; its abstracted and ratiocinative nature means that it deals with key issues such as the Donation of Constantine and the derivation of the powers of Church and Empire, but does not address itself explicitly to specific contemporary events.<sup>253</sup> The idea that a political treatise is of necessity written in service of practical politics, or even must be principally concerned with the wielding of temporal power, seems to me both reductive, and to run counter to the wider implications of Dante's political world view. As will be discussed in Chapter 5 Dante's politics are a universal syncretic system which includes all of history, sacred and secular in a single providential continuum; an examination of the contemporary scene would add little to a theoretical work of this kind; Dante's arguments in the *Monarchia* are to be seen to stand on their own merits and to be supported by the weight of a history which contains the clues to God's plan for human happiness.

In Book III where Dante discusses the origin and derivation of the powers of the papacy and the Emperor, the first reference to prophetic language is a direct citation: 'Deus meus misit angelum suum, et conclusit ora leonum, et non nocuerunt mihi: quia coram eo justitia inventa est in me: sed et coram te, rex, delictum non feci' (Daniel 6. 22). Here though, Dante is not using an episode from the prophet's life to draw a moral or theological lesson which supports or advances an argument in a current political debate as we see him do elsewhere in the treatise and as we have seen his fellow political treatise writers do. This citation forms part of Dante's statement of authority at the outset of the work. Rather than deriving a moral or practical lesson from the text, Dante appears to be attempting to co-opt the context and moral lesson of the story of Daniel to make Daniel's moral authority analogous to his own. Daniel's words are those of a man condemned to death for having the temerity to worship God rather than the Persian king Darius. Like Daniel, Dante is one who has been found by unjust temporal judgment to be guilty but found by God to be righteous. Dante has God's justice in his heart and, by implication, is motivated

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<sup>253</sup> Shaw, *Monarchy*, p. xi.; Cassell notes that 'The reader approaching this treatise is struck by the poet's tactic of shrouding any reference to immediate contemporary affairs'. (A. K. Cassell, 'Monarchia', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, pp. 616–23 (p. 616).

by such a sense of justice in writing his treatise. This is not merely an allusion which allows the reader to draw out the analogy between Dante and Daniel; the meaning of the epigrammatic opening citation is glossed later in the same chapter where the author claims to write: ‘assumpta fiducia de verbis Danielis premissis, in quibus divina potentia clipeus defensorum veritatis astruitur’ (*Mon.* III, i). Dante may of course be claiming a similar level of divine sanction and protection as a rhetorical stratagem before proceeding to make his well-reasoned point, but the only way in which he can truly be granted the level of insight and of divine protection which he claims in the *Monarchia*, is if his sense of being engaged on a prophetic mission has been vouchsafed by something greater than the results of an extended intellectual endeavour: in short if he feels himself to have been chosen by God to fulfil a role analogous to the biblical examples cited. Ascoli points out that the passage from Daniel which opens Book III of the *Monarchia* continues ‘Sed et coram te rex, delictum non feci’; these are Daniel’s words to Nebuchadnezzar, but their presence here means that the passage ‘alludes to and apotropaically wards off the threat that Dante might be perceived as presuming against the very authorities whose roles he sets out to define through the treatise.’<sup>254</sup>

Contextually, the quotation from Daniel is placed precisely where Dante begins to deal with the most controversial aspect of his thesis: the derivation of the respective powers of the Church and the Empire. The quotation is presented as a single sentence paragraph, serving almost as an epigraph to the concluding book of the *Monarchia*. The choice of text, and its location within the work, serves to reiterate the author’s moral and spiritual authority by an assertion of the exalted provenance and the consequent prophetic validity of his text and its message. The implication is that he too will be defended from a savaging by the lions (his political opponents, the advocates of the hierocratic position, and the corrupt papacy itself) by the same grace that saved Daniel.

The citation of Daniel, as the first in a series of allusions, citations and appropriations of prophetic texts at the beginning of Book III of the *Monarchia*, permits us to view this section of the text as a statement of self-identification as prophet on the part of Dante; his enemies cannot harm him as, not only does he have God on his side, but his purpose in undertaking the work is a divinely-inspired one

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<sup>254</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 271.

analogous to that of the Old Testament prophets. The sense of the writing of the treatise as being related to a mission on which Dante still feels himself to be engaged (with all the attendant issues that this raises, regarding both the correct interpretation of the work and the author's purpose in writing it) is reinforced when we consider the choice of biblical citations with which Book III of the *Monarchia* continues, following the opening citation of Daniel. The references in *Monarchia* III, i, in addition to those to Solomon and to Aristotle, are to Isaiah, to David and, perhaps most prominently, to St Paul. With Dante's putting on Paul's 'breastplate of faith' (*Mon.* III, i) the martial motif, initially deployed with the image of the shield of truth, is maintained. One may perhaps expect that the breastplate and shield as defensive items would have their natural offensive analogue in the sword or lance of justice but the offensive weapons which Dante will use to win his battle are of a different order. Rather than extending the martial metaphor, Dante chooses to focus on the nature of his own words and their provenance; it is the gift of prophecy given to Isaiah which will accompany Dante into the arena 'in calore carbonis illius quem unus de Seraphin accepit de altari celesti et tetigit labia Ysaie' (*Mon.* III, i). It is Isaiah 6. 6-7 which is being referred to here, but it seems to me that the quotation, explicit in the text, takes on even greater resonance if quoted in its wider context:

Et dixi: Væ mihi, quia tacui, quia vir pollutus labiis ego sum, et in medio populi polluta labia habentis ego habito, et regem Dominum exercituum vidi oculis meis. Et volavit ad me unus de seraphim, et in manu ejus calculus, quem forcipe tulerat de altari, et tetigit os meum, et dixit: Ecce tetigit hoc labia tua, et auferetur iniquitas tua, et peccatum tuum mundabitur. Et audivi vocem Domini dicentis: Quem mittam? et quis ibit nobis? Et dixi: Ecce ego, mitte me. (Isaiah 6. 5-8)

The prophet here is one compelled by his sin (which he shares with his community) to remain silent despite his recognition of such sinfulness. The burning coal changes the prophet into one who is called to speak and speaks willingly in the office of messenger of the Lord and at the Lord's express request. There is in Isaiah's investiture a sacramental dimension, the physical contact of a baptism or anointing: the physical contact with fire purifies the recipient, driving out his besetting sin, and not only conveys the gift of prophecy but makes the prophet eager

to volunteer to speak on God's behalf.<sup>255</sup> He is, by virtue of the gift given to him, separated morally and spiritually from the people whose sin he once shared and is now able to speak directly to them.

Also in this opening sequence of prophetic models and prefigurations, Dante quotes David, who, speaking the words of the Holy Spirit, says: 'In memoria eterna erit iustus, ab auditione mala non timebit' (Psalm 111. 7; *Mon.* III, i). This stylistically closes the introduction to *Monarchia* III by recalling the opening citation of Daniel; Dante's words must endure because of their righteousness, the counterarguments of his opponents or even their direct threats on his life ultimately cannot prevail. Dante's point is demonstrated by logic and reasoned argument in the traditional manner of political tracts and scholastic theology but is driven home to the reader through invective and apostrophe. Book I concludes with an apostrophe to the human race:

O genus humanum, quantis procellis atque iacturis quantisque naufragiis  
 agitari te necesse est dum, bellua multorum capitum factum, in diversa conaris!  
 Intellectu egrotas utroque, similiter et affectu: rationibus irrefragabilibus  
 intellectum superiorem non curas, nec experientie vultu inferiorem, sed nec  
 affectum dulcedine divine suasionis, cum per tubam Sancti Spiritus tibi  
 effletur: 'Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum'.  
 (*Mon.* I, xvi)

The citations are both prophetic and apocalyptic here with their allusions to Revelation,<sup>256</sup> and to the words of David in the Psalms<sup>257</sup> and the tone and imagery of this passage also resembles Dante's own political letters, and *Purgatorio* VI, 76-78 discussed in the previous section.

Book II concludes by apostrophising Italy and addressing the trials it has suffered as a result of Constantine's Donation, a well-meaning, but tragically misguided, error on the Emperor's part: 'O felicem populum, o Ausoniam te gloriosam, si vel nunquam infirmator ille Imperii tui natus fuisset, vel nunquam sua pia intentio ipsum fefellisset!' (*Mon.* II, xi). In *Inferno* XIX, the canto of Simony, following what is the most sustained use of apocalyptic and prophetic language yet

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<sup>255</sup> The nature and function of prophetic investiture in the Old Testament and in Dante are themes to which I return later in this chapter.

<sup>256</sup> Revelation. 12. 3.

<sup>257</sup> Psalm, 132, l.

encountered in the *Commedia*, Dante once more makes use of the device of apostrophe, on this occasion to Constantine himself:

Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre,  
non la tua conversion, ma quella dote  
che da te prese il primo ricco patre! (*Inf.* XIX, 115-117)

I have noted the abstracted ratiocinative style of authors of political treatises such as John of Paris. Dante's method of apostrophe and invective against the audience is unusual in political tracts of the period but of course is not unique to him and is one we find in Dante's Florentine contemporary Remigio de'Girolami. *De Bono Comuni* makes use of a similar fusion of Pauline citations which carry apocalyptic resonance and couples this with direct invective against his target audience. Moreover, Remigio does this with the intention of demonstrating an Aristotelian proposition that man is by nature a political animal; and this clearly bears at least a superficial resemblance to Dante's own approach in the *Monarchia*.

In *De Bono Comuni*, Remigio discusses whether the common good is greater than the private good of individuals, and seeks to demonstrate that it is better for man to live collectively. He initially seeks to provide proofs for his thesis through reference to authority and his first port of call before turning to Aristotle, Augustine, Cicero and Boethius, is to scripture: 'Quod bonum comune preferendum sit bono privato proprio, multiplici auctoritate sacre scripture probatur'.<sup>258</sup> Chapter 1 begins with a prophetic quotation from St Paul which carries an apocalyptic theme. Remigio cites St Paul's words in II Timothy 3. 1-2 'Instabunt tempora periculosa et erunt homines se ipsos amantes, cupidi, elati, superbi etc' (*De Bono Comuni*, I)

The full quotation from St Paul runs as follows:

hoc autem scito quod in novissimis diebus instabunt tempora periculosa ,et  
erunt homines se ipsos amantes cupidi elati superbi blasphemi parentibus  
inoboedientes ingrati scelesti.

The words which immediately precede the extract quoted by Remigio are explicitly

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<sup>258</sup> Remigio de'Girolami, *De Bono Comuni*, I

apocalyptic. One interpretation might be that Remigio is saying that dangerous days will soon be coming for mankind as evidenced by the behaviour of Remigio's contemporaries, and that Remigio thus begins his treatise on the nature of the common good by alluding to a Pauline prophecy with an explicitly apocalyptic dimension. Alternatively we may take the view that by not quoting the verses in full Remigio retains the language of apocalypse but uses it to focus on an imminent domestic crisis; the language of the end of days is appropriated to highlight the urgency of the current crisis. In either case, Remigio takes care to signal explicitly the relevance of the prophecy for the current times and for Italians in particular. Thus in Remigio, as in Dante, we have the prophetic apocalyptic mode brought in to buttress a political treatise, together with use of the direct apostrophe to the target audience characteristic of the invectives of Old Testament prophets against Israel.

Remigio frequently cites the words of prophets to support his arguments. For instance Isaiah 32. 17 is cited in Chapter 1 of *De Bono Comuni*: 'Et erit opus justitiæ pax, et cultus justitiæ silentium, et securitas usque in sempiternum' (Isaiah 32. 17). Remigio argues that justice creates and nourishes the common good of society which is peace and quotes Isaiah as his model. Isaiah continues his address to the women of Jerusalem as follows:

Et sedebit populus meus in pulchritudine pacis, et in tabernaculis fiducia, et in requie opulenta. Grando autem in descensione saltus, et humilitate humiliabitur civitas. Beati qui seminatis super omnes aquas, immittentes pedem bovis et asini. (Isaiah 32. 18-20)

It can be argued that the context from which the quotation is extracted implies a physical destruction of the city of Jerusalem/Florence before, or as part of, the reform. Given that these are the words of a major prophet, it is possible that the selective and seemingly unproblematic quotation of such a line, which encourages an aphoristic reading when taken out of its context, would have recalled in those of Remigio de' Girolami's readers steeped in the language of the Bible the wider context of the quotation, where the talk is of the last days, thus reinforcing the apocalyptic note struck by the citation of St Paul at the beginning of the work.

hiis temporibus aperte videtur impleta in modernis hominibus et heu maxime in ytalicis nostris; qui quidem, propter nimium amorem atque inordinatum sui

ipsorum bona comunia negligentes, parum vel nichil de ipsis curando, spiritu diabolico agitati, castra civitates provincias totamque regionem hostilitatibus inordinatis confundunt et destruunt incessanter. (*De Bono Comuni*, I)

As has been noted above, a concern for the political situation is situated within an explicitly apocalyptic and prophetic context at the very outset, the urgency of the message is highlighted by being preceded by a reference to a prophetic text. In Chapters 12, 13 and 14 of *De Bono Comuni*, Remigio moves to establish proofs that the common good is superior to the individual good by reference to nature and to love:

Nunc idem videamus ex parte causarum que movent homines ad amandum alios homines naturaliter, de quibus quatuor inducamus ad presens que sunt: virtus, corporalis delectabilitas, temporalis utilitas et similitudo. (*De Bono Comuni*, XII)

To this end he continues to use both classical and biblical sources to buttress his argument, and he now goes on to explicitly relate these arguments not merely to the Italian but specifically to the Florentine context. This point in the treatise is the occasion for a change of register and Remigio temporarily breaks off from the ratiocinative, evidence-based, scholastic discourse to deliver an invective against Florence and its citizens. Each of Chapters 13 and 14 having proved its point ends with a relating of this ideal state of affairs to Florence for example: ‘Qualem enim delectationem poterit habere civis florentinus videns statum civitatis sue tristabilem et summo plenum merore?’ (*De Bono Comuni*, XIII).

Both Dante and Remigio are able to use an apocalyptic prophetic language to buttress arguments regarding the nature of society and even where it is clear that many of the conclusions they draw differ, the urgency and importance of the theme is emphasised in the same way. In *De Bono Comuni* the language of prophecy is both a source of authority which can be used as proof to demonstrate the need for man to live collectively and the prophetic mode is on occasion a rhetorical tool which is employed to highlight this need.

There are occasional apocalyptic references in *De Bono Comuni*, but no programmatic attempt to situate the events described and the present corruption in an explicitly apocalyptic context as seems to be the case with both Dante and the



Spiritual Franciscans. There seems in general in Remigio a noticeable absence of reference to the book of Revelation where in Dante it is strikingly present alongside the Old Testament prophets. Although the end of days comes through in Remigio's use of Isaiah and of St Paul, the imagery is different from that used in, for instance Dante's *Earthly Paradise* where it is the book of Revelation which provides much of the imagery; there seems to be no systematic attempt in Remigio to contextualise his political concerns within an explicitly apocalyptic context.

It is therefore interesting to consider whether there is some reason why the Old Testament prophets and the Gospels suit Remigio's purpose better than the references to Revelation which come in Dante. One possible suggestion may be the intended scope of the two works. An argument for socio-political change in Remigio is buttressed by biblical citations, in Dante an argument for socio-political change is placed *sub specie aeternitatis*; man's life here and now and the institutions which guide it are all key to his salvation. The *Monarchia* is in my view concerned as much with the Church as it is with the Empire, and is deeply concerned with the salvation of humanity and the ease with which the opportunity for salvation is lost when the Church concerns itself in temporal matters. The views of Dante and Remigio are similar in their condemnations of the Donation and its negative effects on the Church. For instance Remigio links it, as Dante does in *Inferno* XIX, to Church poverty, and acknowledges the diminution of the Church's capacities to perform its appointed role when it occupies itself with temporal matters; a view which Dante will articulate via Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* XVI.<sup>259</sup> But Remigio does not articulate concern about the Empire in these circumstances, nor the effect of a lack of Empire on human society perhaps reflecting his White Guelph politics. Nor does Remigio address the issue of whether Florence recognises a temporal superior. For Remigio, the consequences of the Church's temporal activity are articulated as spiritual. This is doubtless the case in Dante too; however, to use Williamson's phrase, we have in Dante the heightened importance of life here and now on Earth: 'temporal life is independent because it is directed to an end which is dialectically as final as the eternal end'.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> 'quia occupatio circa temporalia diminuit devotionem et amorem circa Deum et spiritualia; et ideo prefectus ecclesiasticus non debuit habere principale et directum dominium super temporalia' (*Contra Falsos*, XXVI).

<sup>260</sup> E. Williamson, 'De beatitudine huius vite', in *Dante: The Critical Complex*, Vol. 5, 145-66 (p.

It seems to me that in terms of their methods of argumentation there are numerous parallels between Dante and Remigio here: invective; the apostrophe to the reader, the apocalyptic undertones to address contemporary political issues, all of which Dante employs in the *Monarchia*. I will develop a more extended comparison of their political ideas in Chapter 4 of this thesis. It seems the use of apocalyptic, Pauline and Old Testament allusions in Dante carries a greater import as he is not only utilising the authority of these sources but also transcending authors such as Remigio by systematically constructing himself as a prophetic *auctoritas* whose own mission, role, and authority is akin to that of his biblical and classical precursors. For the moment I wish to note that both the tone and language of biblical prophecy appear to be key features of Dante's political treatise, and it is suggested that we may see in the *Monarchia*, albeit in more limited and less programmatic form than in the *Commedia*, Dante's appropriation and adoption of the role of prophet. How then does the prophetic language of the *Monarchia* relate to that of the *Commedia*?

### 3.4 Consonance between the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*

It has been suggested that, in the *Monarchia*, Dante is to some extent taking on the communicative roles of both Old Testament prophet and St Paul, his authorial role and authority being made akin to theirs. This taking-on of the role of prophet and apostle is a practice which Dante develops in the *Commedia*. This section will discuss whether the language and style of the 'prophetic' sections of the *Monarchia*, are indicative of thematic consonance: do the same concerns manifest themselves and are the solutions the same?

The relationship between the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia* in terms of the solutions that each work seems to propose to the self-evident problems of the world has been the subject of debate. Prue Shaw's view is that there is no discrepancy between what, in terms of practical politics, is being advocated in the two works.<sup>261</sup> And this is consistent with the line of argument I have been pursuing regarding the lines of continuity between Dante's exilic works. In my view what is more in tension is the way in which the two works relate to one another in terms of how they

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<sup>261</sup> Shaw, *Monarchy*, p. xvi.

envision the ‘correct’ relationship between the two ends of man’s existence: earthly happiness and eternal happiness. D’Entrèvres, assisted by his idiosyncratic chronology of Dante’s works, sees a change of focus from the *Monarchia* to the *Commedia* to a more ‘religious orientation’,<sup>262</sup> while Chiavacci-Leonardi believes that the eternal end of man is clearly subordinate to his temporal goal in the *Commedia*, but feels that the theses of the *Commedia* are the same as the *Monarchia*.<sup>263</sup> George Holmes says that ‘The main political conclusions of the *Monarchia*: the necessity for a universal Roman Empire and a Church without money or jurisdiction are entirely in agreement with the views expressed in the *Commedia*’.<sup>264</sup>

In this and the following chapters I work on the assumption that in terms of practical politics the two works are generally consonant. Through a consideration of Dante’s own self presentation as prophet and, in the following chapter, a consideration of the use of the term ‘Earthly Paradise’ in the *Commedia* and *Monarchia*, I consider the difficulties raised by the potential ambiguities and differences between the ‘dualist’ *Monarchia* and the ‘monist’ *Commedia*: if the practical politics they advocate are the same, does Dante really altered his views on the function of man’s existence so radically between the two works and how are we to account for this if a late dating of the *Monarchia* is accepted?

For the moment I would suggest that if we read the final paragraphs of Books I and II of the *Monarchia*, alongside the opening of Book III with respect to their tone and imagery, their paraphrasing and citation of prophets, and Dante’s self-identification as prophet, we are able to see a great deal of resemblance stylistically and thematically between the *Monarchia*, the messianic prophecies of the political letters, and the *Commedia*, and a significant degree of stylistic difference from the writings of Dante’s contemporaries writing in the genre to which the *Monarchia* ostensibly belongs. Such similarities may be given further credence if we relate Dante’s identification with Paul in the *Commedia* to his references to Paul in *Monarchia*. *Paradiso* XXVI portrays Dante/Saul becoming Dante/Paul as a result of

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<sup>262</sup> D’Entrèvres, *Dante as a Political Thinker*, pp. 62-66.

<sup>263</sup> A. M. Chiavacci-Leonardi, ‘La *Monarchia* di Dante alla luce della *Commedia*’, *Studi medievali*, 18 (1977), 147-83 (p.157).

<sup>264</sup> G. Holmes, ‘Dante and the Popes’, in *The World of Dante*, ed. by Cecil Grayson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 6.

the ministrations of Beatrice (Grace/Ananias), who restores his temporarily vanquished sight.<sup>265</sup> Here we have just one example of the numerous Pauline allusions and parallels which occur throughout the *Commedia*:

E come a lume acuto si disonna  
per lo spirto visivo che ricorre  
a lo splendor che va di gonna in gonna,  
e lo svegliato ciò che vede aborre,  
sì nescia è la sùbita vigilia  
fin che la stimativa non soccorre;  
così de li occhi miei ogne quisquilia  
fugò Beatrice col raggio d'i suoi,  
che rifulgea da più di mille milia (*Par.* XXVI, 70-79)

The Pauline parallel here recalls Acts 9. 10-18:

Erat autem quidam discipulus Damasci, nomine Ananias: et dixit ad illum in visu Dominus: Anania. At ille ait: Ecce ego, Domine. Et Dominus ad eum: Surge, et vade in vicum qui vocatur Rectus: et quære in domo Judæ Saulum nomine Tarsensem: ecce enim orat. (Et vidit virum Ananiam nomine, introeuntem, et imponentem sibi manus ut visum recipiat.) Respondit autem Ananias: Domine, audivi a multis de viro hoc, quanta mala fecerit sanctis tuis in Jerusalem: et hic habet potestatem a principibus sacerdotum alligandi omnes qui invocant nomen tuum. Dixit autem ad eum Dominus: Vade, quoniam vas electionis est mihi iste, ut portet nomen meum coram gentibus, et regibus, et filiis Israël. Ego enim ostendam illi quanta oporteat eum pro nomine meo pati. Et abiit Ananias, et introivit in domum: et imponens ei manus, dixit: Saule frater, Dominus misit me Jesus, qui apparuit tibi in via qua veniebas, ut videas, et implearis Spiritu Sancto. Et confestim ceciderunt ab oculis ejus tamquam squamæ, et visum recepit: et surgens baptizatus est.

Such examples illustrate the relationship which Dante establishes between himself and Paul, and all refer the reader back to *Inferno* II and the answers to the pilgrim's questions to Virgil:

Ma io, perché venirvi? o chi 'l concede?  
Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono;  
me degno a ciò né io né altri 'l crede. (*Inf.* II, 31-33)

It is clear that Dante's journey and mission is in fact akin to that of the apostle to the Gentiles just as its parallel to that of Aeneas is made clear in the Pilgrim's likening

<sup>265</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Par.* XXVI, 9-12 accessed 04 April 2014,

of his ancestor Cacciaguida to Aeneas's father Anchises in *Paradiso* XV. In a literal sense the pilgrim is here offering two examples of men who have been permitted to visit the afterlife while still alive: in a literal sense there are precedents. But the parallel works on a broader level; the poem itself is the story of the mind of Dante *personaggio* becoming Dante *poeta* and the preparation for the prophetic communicative role which will be the poem's function on Earth once the journey is completed and recorded.

In addition to drawing parallels between their respective journeys and roles, Dante also seems to use a Pauline example for the function of his memory and the nature of his vision:

Qual è colui che sognando vede,  
che dopo 'l sogno la passione impressa  
rimane, e l'altro a la mente non riede,  
Cotal son io, ché quasi tutta cessa  
mia visione, e ancor mi distilla  
nel core il dolce che nacque da essa. (*Par.* XXXIII, 58-63)

St Thomas describes Paul's vision in these terms:

quod Paulus, postquam cessavit videre Deum per essentiam, memor fuit illorum quae in illa visione cognoverat, per aliquas species intelligibiles habitualiter ex hoc in eius intellectu relictas, sicut etiam, abeunte sensibili, remanent aliquae impressiones in anima, quas postea convertens ad phantasmata, memorabatur. Unde nec totam illam cognitionem aut cogitare poterat, aut verbis exprimere..' (*ST.* 2a2ae 175.4).

For me, such links as are developed in the *Commedia* between Dante and Paul, and the way in which Paul is a model for Dante's otherworldly journey there, become particularly striking in the double citation of St Paul in the opening of Book III of the *Monarchia*. Following on from the reference to the 'breastplate of faith' drawn from I Thessalonians 5. 8 in which the citation is explicit, Dante uses a Pauline paraphrase; 'gignasium presens ingrediar, et in brachio Illius qui nos de potestate tenebrarum liberavit in sanguine suo impium atque mendacem de palestra, spectante mundo, eiciam' (*Mon.* III, i), taking his wording from Colossians I, 13. Dante is thus fighting with the strength of Christ on his side but his language and manner echoes not Christ but his herald Isaiah and his apostle to the Gentiles, Paul,

who speaks of Christ as one: ‘qui eripuit nos de potestate tenebrarum, et transtulit in regnum filii dilectionis suæ’ (Colossians. I, 13).

The idea of Dante writing a text which will drive his opponents from the arena with the whole world as spectators is one which seem to resonate with Dante’s own prophetic mission in the *Commedia*. I have suggested that Dante’s use of the language of prophets and identification with them in the *Monarchia*, together with his use of apostrophe and invective, brings him closer to his own work in the political letters and in parts of the *Commedia*. It is clear that this approach also serves to distance him from the scholastic syllogistic reasoning of men such as John of Paris, Ptolemy of Lucca in their political treatises and of Dante himself elsewhere in the work.

The notion of Dante as prophet in the *Monarchia* raises interesting questions regarding not only the function of the *Monarchia* but also its relationship to the prophetic mission ascribed to Dante *personaggio* by Dante *poeta* in the near contemporary *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. In the Earthly Paradise, Dante receives from Beatrice an assurance of his salvation and his formal investiture in the role of prophet, a role for which his will and his understanding have been prepared throughout the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*.

Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano;  
e sarai meco senza fine cive  
di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano  
Però, in pro del mondo che mal vive,  
al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,  
ritornato di là, fa che tu scrive. (*Purg.* XXXII, 100-105)

The injunction to write here alludes to contemporary events and does so through the recollection of a biblical text; Beatrice’s words here echo those to John in Revelation 1. 11-19 ‘Quod vides, scribe’ and ‘Scribe ergo quae vidisti’ and also anticipates St Peter’s injunction to write which sits alongside the *Commedia*’s final *ante eventum* prophecy in *Paradiso* XXVIII. The carriage represents the history of the Church and, it is generally agreed, the eagle represents the Empire. The Church was meant to operate independently of the Empire (and this is the cornerstone of Book III of the *Monarchia*). By taking possession of the ‘feathers’ that belong to the imperial power alone, the Church is damaged and despoiled; it is polluted by exercising its authority

in the civil realm; naturally so, as such a function is contrary to God's intentions for his Church. Beatrice's words to the pilgrim in the Earthly Paradise express the confusion of the two powers explained to Dante by Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* XVI; this of course is one of the *Monarchia*'s key lines of thought, and is addressed explicitly when Dante seeks to correct his opponents' interpretation of the apostle's words regarding the two swords in Luke 22. 38 as being at odds with Christ's intention (*Mon.* II, ix).

It is surely no coincidence then that in the *Purgatorio*, the injunction to write is coupled with a vision of the Church corrupted by greed just as in *Paradiso* XV it will be coupled by Cacciaguida to a vision of decadent Florence and in *Paradiso* XXVII to a condemnation of the papacy's own avarice; the instruction to speak out is always linked contextually to the vision of the corruption which the poet's words will make manifest to the world. Dante in writing the *Commedia* is fulfilling the instructions he received from Beatrice, Cacciaguida and St Peter not to hide what he has seen, and it is the Church's interest in temporal affairs which is, in Dante's view, the cause of the lamentable state of affairs on Earth. In my view the profusion of prophetic language at key junctures of the *Monarchia*, which appears to transcend genres, taking Dante's work in its purpose and in its universal scope beyond those of his contemporaries writing in the same vein, may well be indicative of the fact that the *Monarchia* and, as will be discussed, the political letters, are as much a response to the instructions of Beatrice to write 'in pro del mondo che mal vive' as the *Commedia* itself.

Such links as I have highlighted between the prophetic practices of Dante's political treatise, his letters and his poem, may permit an interpretation which views the *Commedia*, the political letters and *Monarchia* as being written in response to an injunction from God to act as a prophet. This raises the question of whether, in Dante's adoption of the prophetic manner outside the *Commedia*, we are dealing with an author who believes himself a prophet, or an author who is aware that, in seeking to persuade and convince through the written word, the adoption of a prophetic voice is a practice which will lend credence to what ultimately is not divine inspiration but the use of the writer's intellect to discern the faults readily apparent in the world. This question of whether Dante really considered himself to be a prophet is one which has been addressed by scholars such as Mineo and

Nardi.<sup>266</sup> Likewise the issue of whether we should read the political letters as the words of a man who believes himself a prophet or as rhetorical pieces has also been the focus of debate.<sup>267</sup> Whichever side we choose to take in these debates, it seems to me that this reading of the *Monarchia* as being absolutely in keeping with the *Commedia*, both in terms of its political message and, to a significant extent, the adoption of a prophetic or quasi-prophetic manner in the presentation, is one which is given further credence when we relate the prophetic passages of the *Monarchia* to one of the other key passages in the *Commedia* where Dante-personaggio's prophetic mission to speak out is made clear: the meeting with his ancestor Cacciaguida in the Heaven of Mars.

Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* XVII provides an explicit statement regarding Dante's prophetic role which seems to me to both gloss and support the prophetic role taken on by Dante in the wider fiction of the *Commedia*. Here is the most explicit statement in the poem that the pilgrim has been divinely chosen for this journey in order to fit him to write his poem and that the duty of writing is laid upon him by God. This injunction from his ancestor and fellow Florentine finally provides a clear answer to the pilgrim's anxious question put to Virgil in canto II of the *Inferno* about his suitability for the journey and by whom it is permitted. Cacciaguida confirms to the pilgrim the necessity to speak out and the inevitability of the opposition that he will face:

indi rispuose: 'Coscienza fusca  
o de la propria o de l'altrui vergogna  
pur sentirà la tua parola brusca.  
Ma nondimen, rimossa ogne menzogna,  
tutta tua vision fa manifesta;  
e lascia pur grattar dov' è la rognà.' (*Par.* XVII, 124-29)

Dante's message is inevitably going to be painful and the cause of shame for those who find themselves among the justly accused. It is striking that we find similar concerns articulated at the opening of the third book of the *Monarchia*, where Dante

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<sup>266</sup> Mineo, 'Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante', pp.70-100; Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale*, p.319.

<sup>267</sup> L. Pertile, 'Dante Looks Forward and Back, Political Allegory in the Epistles', in *Dante: The Critical Complex*, Vol. 5, ed. by R. Lansing (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 51-67; F. Mazzoni, 'Le Epistole di Dante', in *Conferenze aretine 1965* (Arezzo: Zelli, 1966), pp. 47-100.



turns his attention to the third of the questions posed at the beginning of the treatise: whether the power of the Roman monarch derives directly from God or from someone else (his minister or vicar):

In principio huius operis propositum fuit de tribus questionibus, prout materia pateretur, inquirere; de quarum duabus primis in superioribus libris, ut credo, sufficienter peractum est Nunc autem de tertia restat agendum: cuius quidem veritas, quia sine rubore aliquorum emergere nequit, forsitan alicuius indignationis in me causa erit. (*Mon.* III, i)

Dante alludes to Proverbs 8. 7: ‘Veritatem meditabitur guttur meum, et labia mea detestabuntur impium’, and in the same vein Dante goes on to quote David in the Psalms: ‘Quid timeam, cum Spiritus Patri et Filio coeternus aiat per os David: “In memoria eterna erit iustus, ab auditione mala non timebit?” ’ (*Mon.* III, i). Thus the inevitable shaming of the audience, which follows their being presented with a divinely mandated truth comes through in both the *Monarchia* and in the *Commedia*. Likewise, in the Old Testament the prophets predict the shaming of those who have rejected the word of God. To take one example from Jeremiah, the prophet says:

Confusi sunt sapientes, perterriti et capti sunt: verbum enim Domini projecerunt, et sapientia nulla est in eis. Propterea dabo mulieres eorum exteris, agros eorum haeredibus, quia a minimo usque ad maximum, omnes avaritiam sequuntur: a propheta usque ad sacerdotem, cuncti faciunt mendacium. Et sanabunt contritionem filiae populi mei ad ignominiam, dicentes: Pax, pax! cum non esset pax. Confusi sunt, quia abominationem fecerunt: quinimmo confusione non sunt confusi, et erubescere nescierunt. Idcirco cadent inter corruentes: in tempore visitationis suae corruent, dicit Dominus. (Jeremiah 8. 9-12)

I do not wish to claim that this particular passage is a specific source for the references to shame and shaming which we find in the *Commedia*, merely that the theme of shame, or lack of it, is a common one here between Dante and Jeremiah, and in this instance the appropriate feelings of shame and their absence and consequent divine wrath are explicitly linked to the corruption of those charged with a pastoral role.

Indeed, this passage from Jeremiah seems to resonate in a number of ways with Dante’s programme of condemnation, punishment and reform both in terms of imagery and thematically. For example, the image of the blush of shame is one

which recurs in the *Commedia*'s climactic prophetic moment in *Paradiso* XXVII discussed earlier in the chapter. The priests who do not feel shame for their behaviour are given their antitype in the paradigmatic cleric St Peter. Here all of heaven blushes with shame at the greed of St Peter's successors; greed which Dante has St Peter himself condemn. Heaven's emotional response is an accommodative metaphor which provides a model of the shame that the targets of Dante's invective should now feel on hearing their actions condemned by their predecessor.<sup>268</sup> St Peter as the first and paradigmatic Pope stands in contrast to those of his successors who in busying themselves with earthly affairs have forgotten their role and allowed their flock to stray. This is a theme to which Jeremiah adverts elsewhere:

*Vae pastoribus qui disperdunt et dilacerant gregem pascuae meae! dicit Dominus. Ideo haec dicit Dominus Deus Israel ad pastores qui pascunt populum meum: Vos dispersistis gregem meum, et eiecistis eos, et non visitastis eos: ecce ego visitabo super vos malitiam studiorum vestrorum, ait Dominus. Et ego congregabo reliquias gregis mei de omnibus terris ad quas eiecero eos illuc: et convertam eos ad rura sua, et crescent et multiplicabuntur. (Jeremiah 23. 1-3)*

The blush elsewhere in the *Commedia* has been used to mark shame at being the target of a justified rebuke. Dante's blush when Virgil rebukes him in *Inferno* XXX is one which reassures Virgil and the reader of the poet-pilgrim's moral development. The pilgrim can now feel appropriate shame for his momentary moral backsliding, which the papacy does not.

The theme of clerical greed, which Jeremiah condemns, is also central to *Paradiso* XXVII. St Peter's fury is ultimately caused by manifestations of human greed; the greed of clerics in general and the greed of the papacy in particular. Greed for temporal power has caused division within Christendom, the papacy wages war against the baptised when they should be engaged in crusading, and the Pope abuses the power of his office for financial gain causing Peter himself to blush with shame:

Non fu nostra intenzion ch'a destra mano  
d'i nostri successor parte sedesse,

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<sup>268</sup> The accommodative metaphor is a characteristic of Old Testament prophecy: Isaiah is seen as the *locus classicus* for the use of the accommodative metaphor eg. Isaiah 51:9 cf. *Paradiso* IV, 43-48).

parte da l'altra del popol cristiano;  
né che le chiavi che mi fuor concesse,  
divenisser signaculo in vessillo  
che contra battezzati combattesse;  
né ch'io fossi figura di sigillo  
a privilegi venduti e mendaci,  
ond' io sovente arrosso e disfavillo.  
In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci  
si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi:  
o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci? (*Par.* XXVII, 46-57)

As was noted earlier, here we have the recurrence of the image of the rapacious wolf of *Inferno* I. The image is one also applied specifically to the Florentines in *Purgatorio* XIV, 49-51 and *Paradiso* XXV, 6. The image is also used against the Papacy in *Paradiso* IX, 127-32 as it is here. Thus, throughout the *Commedia*, we have the theme of *avarizia* foregrounded through a sustained metaphor which St Peter continues in the above extract. *Avarizia* for Augustine was the chief obstacle to *caritas* which is the defining characteristic of the heavenly community and should be the aim of earthly societies too.<sup>269</sup> The strength of the condemnation of *avarizia* here is even greater given that it is coming from a former Pope who now dwells within the ideal, *caritas*-driven, community of heaven.

Dante has St Peter lament the decline of the Church and provide a prophecy of its renewal through a double citation of Jeremiah. We have both the triple repetition of 'Il luogo mio' recalling Jeremiah's triple repetition of 'templum Domini' (Jeremiah 7. 4) and the further allusion to Jeremiah 32. 1 'Vae pastoribus qui disperdunt et dilacerant gregem pascuae meae' in *Paradiso*'s 'In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci' (*Par.* XXVII, 57).

In *Inferno* XIX we have the papal admission of the avarice-driven sin of simony by Nicholas III which, seen retrospectively, supports and illustrates Peter's condemnation:

e veramente fui figliuol de l'orsa,  
cupido sì per avanzar li orsatti,  
che sù l'avere e qui me misi in borsa. (*Inf.* XIX, 70-72)

A condemnation of the cupidity which has driven the Church's abandonment of

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<sup>269</sup> St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octogintatribus XXXVI*, cited in E. Bonora 'Avarizia', *EDI*, 463b.

apostolic poverty is also found for example in *Inferno* XIX with its specific reference to St. Peter's apostolic example

Né Pier né li altri tolsero a Matia  
oro od argento, quando fu sortito  
al loco che perdé l'anima ria (*Inf.* XIX, 94-96)

These then are Dante's condemnations of a hunger for power and an obsession with earthly goods. These are perversions of the will, which defy the natural, divinely ordained order of things through the subordination of the love of ultimate things to love of proximate things.

io userei parole ancor più gravi;  
ché la vostra avarizia il mondo attrista,  
calcando i buoni e sollevando i pravi. (*Inf.* XIX, 103-05)

Papal greed diminishes the world and causes an inversion of natural justice. This concern for the ways in which man's wilfulness perverts and indeed rejects the natural, that is to say the divinely ordained, order is one which finds expression in the same chapter of Jeremiah. God tells the prophet that the birds and the animals know that it is their nature to move and follow the seasons as part of God's plan but man cannot see this:

Et dices ad eos: Haec dicit Dominus: Numquid qui cadit non resurget? et qui aversus est non revertetur? Quare ergo aversus est populus iste in Jerusalem aversione contentiosa? Apprehenderunt mendacium, et noluerunt reverti. Attendi, et auscultavi: nemo quod bonum est loquitur; nullus est qui agat poenitentiam super peccato suo, dicens: Quid feci? Omnes conversi sunt ad cursum suum, quasi equus impetu vadens ad praelium. Milvus in caelo cognovit tempus suum: turtur, et hirundo, et ciconia custodierunt tempus adventus sui: populus autem meus non cognovit iudicium Domini. (Jeremiah 8. 4-7)

For Jeremiah and for Dante conformity to God's will is not burdensome, but a product and reflection of human nature. In the ideal community, submission to God's will is the means by which man finds peace, as Piccarda makes clear: 'E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace' (*Par.* III, 85). Even on Earth there is a God-given light within men to know good from bad, such that heaven cannot be blamed for the faults

of the world, (*Purg.* XVI, 82-84) and there is a strong sense in Dante that the will of God is visible through natural signs; we cannot necessarily understand but we can perceive God's intentions through the faculties he gave us. Such habitual choosing of the good is made extremely difficult, given man's corruption and the fact that there is no one to place a hand to the bridle and control the wills of mankind generally as Dante makes clear both here (*Purg.* XVI, 97) and in *Purgatorio* VI, where it is linked explicitly to the shame which attaches to not following rules which are manifest in history. The laws are there, the institutions need to be restored to those willed by God so that the laws may be effective:

Che val perché ti racconciasse il freno  
Iustiniano, se la sella è vòta?  
Sanz' esso fora la vergogna meno. (*Purg.* VI, 88-90)

Each *ante eventum* prophecy of the *Commedia* not only predicts reform but in the process of doing so also performs the author's own self-investiture as prophet and apostle, as Dante locates himself morally, linguistically, and stylistically as successor to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul. Dante condemns corruption as being against God's will; he is telling us that without the advent of the reformer, as an agent of providence, mankind in general and the papacy in particular will continue to go astray; but he is also telling us that the words we are reading are a divinely inspired promise vouchsafed to the author who now assumes the role of author-prophet, that God will once more intervene in history to move man back to the right path.

### 3.5 Prophecy and Prophetic Investiture

I have discussed in the previous sections the presence of thematic links between Dante's prophetic manner and that of Old Testament prophets. I wish now to consider how the moments of Dante's investiture as prophet derive in part from the Old Testament. Dante is instructed to speak out for the good of the world, and not to hide what he has seen and learned on his journey. These instructions come from Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise, from Cacciaguida in the Heaven of Mars, and from St Peter in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars. It is interesting to consider the stage at which Dante first receives the prophetic investiture for which his journey through

Hell and Purgatory has, in part, been preparation. His ascent has allowed him to be symbolically purged of his sins, and in the Earthly Paradise, he has seen the whole of history laid out before him and the apocalyptic dimension of the evils which now afflict the world; this apocalyptic dimension of Dante's thought will be the focus of my discussions in Chapter 4. Purged, he is now able to speak as one who is both purified and has been educated as to the seriousness of the times and the consequent urgency of the message he is impelled to convey. It is clear that only now is the pilgrim able to be given the role of prophet; Dante's initial question regarding his suitability for the journey is of course to Virgil and features the famous denial/assertion of the twin roles of Aeneas and St Paul. (*Inf.* II, 31-33). Virgil's response indicates that the pilgrim is not yet ready to receive his mission and perhaps shows Virgil's own incomprehension of the fundamental importance for the world of what heaven has asked him to undertake.

It is striking that Dante's investiture as prophet in the Earthly Paradise is preceded by his being freed from the need for further guidance by Virgil who says to him:

Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno;  
libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,  
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:  
per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio (*Purg.* XXVII, 139-42)

In being crowned and mitred, he is not necessarily removing the necessity for the institutions of Church and Empire in his life, but now, cleansed, he has the authority to address them and to highlight the need for their reform and prophesy the advent of reforming figures. The assertion of Dante's *intellectual* sovereignty at this point is important as it marks the completion of his purgatorial journey and precedes his apocalyptic vision and his investiture as prophet. The nature of the investiture or graduation scene between Dante and Virgil has been the subject of considerable critical debate and differing interpretations have far reaching implications for our understanding of the aims of Dante's politico-prophetic strategy and its relationship with, and attitudes towards, institutional power. Dante's investiture is a rhetorical strategy which shows how, when the poet-pilgrim becomes lord over himself, the

poet fuses the authority of transhistorical reason with the personal will.<sup>270</sup> Ascoli places Dante's quest for a new vernacular authority within the crises in political and spiritual authority in the period. While Steinberg agrees with much of Ascoli's reading, he suggests that to view Dante here as circumscribing papal and imperial authority and questioning the requirement that he submit to them is incorrect and mistakes the type of liberty which Dante pilgrim is seeking.<sup>271</sup> Steinberg's criticism is that while Ascoli successfully historicizes the context Dante had to negotiate, he neglects to historicize the concept of liberty itself. Ascoli sees Dante through the liberal lens of negative freedom where a buffered self stakes out a claim against public authority. Steinberg argues that rather this passage caps a longstanding concern in Dante to imagine a regulated space beyond but not in opposition to the law.<sup>272</sup>

I do not feel there is any suggestion in Dante's being crowned and mitred by Virgil that he feels himself to be no longer subject to the powers of Church and Empire, but rather as author he is suggesting that his authority, precisely like that of the Pope and Emperor, is 'from beyond history and beyond reason, a special authority sent down by God'.<sup>273</sup> Ascoli, like Kantorowicz, identifies Virgil's crowning of Dante as an accession to an autonomous and sovereign subjectivity but emphasises that Dante is now free only in terms of his own nature, and citing *Monarchia* III, iv, 14, he emphasizes that it is precisely because man is fallen that the Empire and the Papacy remain necessary.<sup>274</sup> Such an authority of course is that wielded by the Old Testament prophets who would speak against the wickedness of the people and their leaders, the truth vouchsafed by divine sanction; the same authority which Dante claims in the allusions to Isaiah and to Daniel in the opening of the *Monarchia*. Dante's independence from Virgil is thus framed in terms of a ritual of induction into a role of spiritual and temporal authority over self, a role which both confers a limited freedom of movement, in the space between Virgil's departure and the arrival of Beatrice and allows him to speak to the whole world as

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<sup>270</sup> J. Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>271</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 337.

<sup>272</sup> Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law*, p. 58.

<sup>273</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 267.

<sup>274</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, pp. 349-50; E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 491-95.

one afforded a particular insight into the divine plan for the order of the world; a role which is both that of Old Testament prophet and New Testament apostle.

The inverted sacraments parodied in *Inferno* XIX with its profusion of prophetic imagery link into the same process of prophetic self-identification. ‘Ecce nomen Domini venit de longinquo, ardens furor ejus, et gravis ad portandum; labia ejus repleta sunt indignatione, et lingua ejus quasi ignis devorans’. (Isaiah 30. 27): the words apply equally well now to Dante’s mission as they did to Isaiah. The corrupt Popes have abused the gift of the Holy Spirit and their punishment reflects the fact that their sin is the perversion of this gift, in particular in the misuse of their gifts of persuasion and the power of their office when their gift, like that given to the apostles at Pentecost, should have been used to communicate the message of Christ to the World. As Carroll pointed out, theirs ‘is a sin against the Holy Ghost. In true ordination the gift of the Holy Ghost is imparted by the laying on of hands upon the head. Now, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of tongues of fire on the heads of the Apostles; and it is this fire which now burns on the feet of the men who have turned the whole meaning of ordination upside down[...] The Spirit of God, Dante seems to say, must be to us one of two things – a fire upon the head kindling our loftiest faculties with power from on high, or a fire upon the feet, the torment which comes upon the man who sets his lowest faculties uppermost’.<sup>275</sup> As has been noted in my discussion of the prophetic language of the *Monarchia* earlier in this chapter, Dante’s own words therein are like those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. And as with Dante’s process of investiture as prophet, there is in Isaiah’s prophetic investiture a sacramental dimension, the physical contact of a baptism or anointing: the seraphim touching the coal to the lips of the prophet. The physical contact with fire purifies the recipient, driving out his besetting sin, and allows the recipient to speak as a mouthpiece of God. The poem itself is evidence that Dante has used his gift of the Holy Spirit to speak the truth to the errant world as did Isaiah and the apostles.

St Peter’s invective at the state of the Church is located immediately adjacent to a recapitulation of the previous injunctions to Dante to speak out as a prophet:

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<sup>275</sup> J. S. Carroll, *Exiles of Eternity (Inf.); Prisoners of Hope (Purg.); In Patria (Par.)* (London Hodder and Stoughton, 1904-11, DDP, note on *Inf.* XIX, accessed 17 June 2014.



e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo  
 ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca,  
 e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo. (*Par.* XXVII, 64-66)

Also within this same context comes the *Commedia's* last great prophecy of reform in *Paradiso* XXVII which is linked once more to the absence of good government on Earth:

Ma l'alta provedenza, che con Scipio  
 difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,  
 soccorrà tosto, sì com' io concipio (*Par.* XXVII, 61-63)

Dante's investiture as a prophet who speaks 'in pro del mondo che mal vive' by St Peter is thus itself accompanied by prophecy of reform as it is in the other key moment of investiture which I have highlighted in the Earthly Paradise:

nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque,  
 messo di Dio, anciderà la fuia  
 con quel gigante che con lei delinque. (*Purg.* XXX, 43-45)

Promise of a reformer is once more adjacent to where Dante is charged to speak out.

al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,  
 ritornato di là, fa che tu scrivi. (*Purg.* XXXII, 103-05)

In the examples of prophetic language cited from the *Commedia* and from the *Monarchia*, we see the necessity for the author/pilgrim to speak out fearlessly as one afforded a particular insight and, through the allusion to John in Revelation 1. 11-19, one whose words have an apocalyptic dimension. The pill is bitter, but its administration is morally justified because it conveys truths which have been revealed to Dante through divine grace and which Dante has been given a divine mandate to reveal. Dante is God's agent through whom the errant world will be put on the right path, and ultimately his fame as author and prophet derives from such attacks on his enemies; these attacks must ultimately be for their own good:

Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta  
 nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento  
 lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta.  
 Questo tuo grido farà come vento,

che le più alte cime più percuote;  
e ciò non fa d'onor poco argomento. (*Par.* XVII, 130-35)

Nardi feels that Dante came to believe that his own hope in human renewal was predisposed by God's will and that a prophetic voice was inspired in him; the invective of his prophetic speech is indicative of Dante's belief in his own prophetic mission.<sup>276</sup> This, it seems to me, is never clearer than in the language of St Peter and Beatrice in *Paradiso* XXVII.

The voice is inspired in him as it had been in Jeremiah who, like Dante was exhorted to speak out and promised protection from his enemies:

Vade, et clama in auribus Jerusalem, dicens: Haec dicit Dominus: Recordatus sum tui, miserans adolescentiam tuam, et caritatem desponsationis tuae, quando secuta es me in deserto, in terra quae non seminatur. (Jeremiah 2. 2)

And

Tu ergo, accinge lumbos tuos, et surge, et loquere ad eos omnia quae ego praecipio tibi. Ne formides a facie eorum, nec enim timere te faciam vultum eorum. Ego quippe dedi te hodie in civitatem munitam, et in columnam ferream, et in murum aereum, super omnem terram, regibus Juda, principibus ejus, et sacerdotibus, et populo terrae. Et bellabunt adversum te, et non praevalerunt, quia ego tecum sum, ait Dominus, ut liberem te. (*Jeremiah* 1. 17-19).

Likewise in Ezekiel we have the injunction to speak out, the promise of protection and the condemnation of a rebellious people:

Et dixit ad me: Fili hominis, vade ad domum Israel, et loqueris verba mea ad eos. Non enim ad populum profundi sermonis et ignotae linguae tu mitteris ad domum Israel: neque ad populos multos profundi sermonis, et ignotae linguae, quorum non possis audire sermones: et si ad illos mittereris, ipsi audirent te: domus autem Israel nolunt audire te, quia nolunt audire me: omnis quippe domus Israel attrita fronte est et duro corde. Ecce dedi faciem tuam valentiorum faciebus eorum, et frontem tuam duriorum frontibus eorum: ut adamantem et ut silicem dedi faciem tuam: ne timeas eos, neque metuas a facie eorum, quia domus exasperans est. (*Ezekiel* 3. 4-9)

To be aware of the truth is insufficient; the prophet's function, and the honour that

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<sup>276</sup> Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale*, p. 293.

derives from it, is in raising his voice and speaking out in the knowledge that his message, being the word of God, will ultimately be heeded and despite the danger to self or shame caused to his opponents.

Cacciaguida's mention of the honour which derives from such prophetic speech and the way in which such speech will ensure Dante's memory is preserved long after his opponents are dead is a further concern which the very opening of the *Monarchia* shares with the *Commedia*. Where Dante addresses his motives for writing and the fact that no one has previously addressed this topic, he turns once more to a Pauline allusion. He writes so that his words 'tum ut utiliter mundo pervigilem' (*Mon.* I, i), recalling Beatrice's instruction in the Earthly Paradise that the pilgrim should, on his return, write 'in pro del mondo che mal vive', and 'tum etiam ut palmam tanti bravii primus in meam gloriam adipiscar' (*Mon.* I.i). In his first letter to the Corinthians St Paul says: 'Nescitis quod ii qui in stadio currunt, omnes quidem currunt, sed unus accipit bravium?' (I, Corinthians 9. 24). This is clearly a fame or glory which extends beyond recognition as a poet, though for Dante, if he is sincere in his hopes for a return to Florence, this may also encompass his hopes for poetic recognition.<sup>277</sup> The 'amato alloro' of *Paradiso* I, and the honour referred to by Cacciaguida become, in this exalted context, rather than poetic fame, the true immortality of those who are blessed for eternity, another and better kind of immortality: the 'laurel' granted by God to his immortal (i.e., saved) poet, rewarded, among other things, for having written, under His inspiration, of Him'.<sup>278</sup> Florence may not recognise Dante as prophet, and of course his prophetic-political message of universal monarchy may be fiercely resisted by his own countrymen, but in the self-identification with St Paul, Roman citizen and apostle to the Gentiles, the implication is that the temporal injustice perpetuated against Dante by his native city will be corrected in the highest court and his eventual citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem, or that Rome where Christ is a Roman which has been vouchsafed to him, will represent a corrective to the foibles of temporal justice. His citizenship will be restored, but such optimism can now only be maintained, personally and politically, by viewing the world as this little threshing floor. Dante as undeserving exile, and as prophet of political reform and universal citizenship will only find his

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<sup>277</sup> For example Dante's 'Se mai continga' passage (*Par.* XXV, 1-9).

<sup>278</sup> Hollander, note on *Paradiso* I, 15, DDP, accessed 24 March 2014.

rewards in the heavenly city.

Both Dante and Paul are chosen vessels for the divine message. The term is taken from Acts 9. 15: ‘Dixit autem ad eum Dominus: Vade, quoniam vas electionis est mihi iste, ut portet nomen meum coram gentibus, et regibus, et filiis Israël’, and is one which Dante has used of Paul in *Inferno* II:

Andovvi poi lo Vas d’elezione,  
per recarne conforto a quella fede  
ch’è principio a la via di salvazione. (*Inf.* II, 28-30)

Moreover, it is one which Dante turns to again at the beginning of the *Paradiso* where he begs:

O buono Appollo, a l’ultimo lavoro  
fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso,  
come dimandi a dar l’amato alloro. (*Par.* I, 13-15)

God provides the prophet/poet with his mission and the prophetic act is here being fulfilled in the writing of the poem: Dante’s narrative reports what he has seen as instructed by Beatrice, his fame and eternal glory derive from his writing. As a true apostle and prophet, self-positioned as successor to St Paul, to Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, his poem can in turn, if read correctly, be a salvific text. The text is Dante’s evidence of having followed the instructions of Cacciaguida, Beatrice and St Peter: the whole vision is now made manifest for those of his fellow humans who are prepared to accept that ‘vidal nodrimento’ is available to them through the poem. This is the truth claim which seemingly makes Dante’s language in the *Monarchia* unique. Contemporary political theorists read the Bible and seek to interpret it to support their political position. Dante does likewise but goes further – his texts, *Commedia* and *Monarchia* – claim to take on some of the function of scripture; the texts are analogous because of the natural order they advocate, because of the function they serve, and more fundamentally they are analogous because of the shared Grace revelation their authors claim to have received, which has both informed and permitted their writing.

The self-doubt articulated by Dante at the moment of investiture and subsequent divine reassurance is common among those charged with a prophetic role. Dante’s moment of doubt in *Inferno* II of course refers to his ability to

undertake the journey, he knows who his predecessors are and what they represent, but the implicit and later explicit charge to Dante not just to undertake the journey for his own sake but, as prophet, to undertake it, and to describe it for the sake of all humanity has parallels in the Old Testament. The doubt and reassurance is present in Jeremiah's call to be a prophet:

Et dixi: A, a, a, Domine Deus, ecce nescio loqui, quia puer ego sum. Et dixit Dominus ad me: Noli dicere: Puer sum; quoniam ad omnia quae mittam te ibis, et universa quaecumque mandavero tibi loqueris. Ne timeas a facie eorum, quia tecum ego sum ut eruam te, dicit Dominus. Et misit Dominus manum suam, et tetigit os meum, et dixit Dominus ad me: Ecce dedi verba mea in ore tuo: ecce constitui te hodie super gentes et super regna, ut evellas, et destruas, et disperdas, et dissipas, et aedifices, et plantes. (Jeremiah 1. 6-10)

In the light of Beatrice's, Cacciaguida's, and St. Peter's words to the pilgrim, which constitute his investiture in the role of prophet, Mineo's considerations regarding the medieval notions of the nature of prophecy seem particularly apposite. The way in which St. Thomas considered prophecy does not entirely tally with Dante's prophetic method and motivation as it is presented here: 'Prophetia primo et principaliter consistit in cognitione',<sup>279</sup> which is a view tending to reduce the activity to an intellectual and cognitive act. Dante, in letter VI, foresees the downfall of Florence; his prophetic soul is instructed by both infallible signs and incontrovertible arguments. The intellectual and cognitive is here but is seen consisting in an understanding that rational argument and ineffable signs from heaven are both within the scope of the prophet to interpret and announce to the world: 'Et si praesaga mens mea non fallitur, sic signis veridicis, sicut inexpugnabilibus argumentis instructa praenuntians' (*Ep.* VI, 4).

There is also in Thomas, but almost incidentally, and certainly secondarily, the Pauline sense of a practical, moral, practical, political function. Mineo argues that Old Testament Jewish prophecy has certain characteristics beyond the speculative which fit less comfortably within this medieval, principally 'contemplative', definition of prophecy. The prophets, first and foremost, have an educative role, not merely intellectual, but also moral, religious and political. As Paul says in I Corinthians 14. 1-4:

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<sup>279</sup> ST. Q. CLXXIV, a.3 c. <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>, accessed 24 June 2014.

Sectamini caritatem, æmulamini spiritualia: magis autem ut prophetetis. Qui enim loquitur lingua, non hominibus loquitur, sed Deo: nemo enim audit. Spiritu autem loquitur mysteria. Nam qui prophetat, hominibus loquitur ad ædificationem, et exhortationem, et consolationem. Qui loquitur lingua, semetipsum ædificat: qui autem prophetat, ecclesiam Dei ædificat.

Mineo argues that Old Testament prophets cannot be reduced to a soothsaying theologian; we must be aware of their ‘ascendenza storica’ and of the ‘carattere fondamentale estatico della loro esperienze’.<sup>280</sup> These words would seem, in the context of the meeting with Beatrice and Cacciaguida discussed above, to apply to Dante’s own situation and prophetic method not to mention that of St Paul. Old Testament prophets are not permitted to be contemplative or eremitic in their behaviour; their duty to society is unavoidable. At every juncture they are enjoined to speak out to correct aberrant behaviour, to promise punishment or reward. They speak as God’s messenger to the people, as in the example from Ezekiel 3. 4-9 cited above or in Jeremiah where God speaks to the prophet saying: ‘Tu ergo, accinge lumbos tuos, et surge, et loquere ad eos omnia quæ ego præcipio tibi’ (Jeremiah 1. 17).

As I have highlighted above, such injunctions to speak out are also given to Dante, and these, when read along with St Peter’s declamatory and invective-filled condemnation of the Papacy in *Paradiso* XXVII, seem to indicate a desire on Dante’s part to define and highlight what the best practice of a prophet should be: one who sees the truth and fearlessly speaks out, seeing the inevitability of punishment for the wicked and the possibility of salvation for those who heed his words. Celestine V is the quintessential example of one unfit to take on the urgently required reforming role; his refusal to engage and to take on the role in which he found himself makes him the antithesis of the models Dante admires and cites, in particular Isaiah and St Paul. At the other extreme we have the figure of Boniface VIII whose willingness to use the powers of his office to corrupt political ends through his duplicitous speech and actions make him a further negative role model; Dante as prophet fulfils the role entrusted to him by God where Celestine and Boniface in their differing ways both deny and abuse it.

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<sup>280</sup> Mineo, ‘Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante’, p.70.

Beatrice's injunction to Dante to report what he has seen, accompanies the *Commedia's* most sustained and concentrated use of language derived from the Book of Revelation where we are dealing with the history of the Church and its current corrupt state. The reason for, and the functions of, this concentration can be principally explained, I believe by viewing Dante's sense of his own prophetic mission as being informed by two key factors: the sense of history being providential, and, perhaps more speculatively, a sense that this history and that of the world is now drawing to a close. The apocalyptic dimension in Dante's prophecies is a theme which will be developed in the final two chapters of this thesis; for the moment I merely wish to note both that it is striking that Beatrice's exhortation to Dante to write recalls the instruction to John of Patmos in Revelation and also that the instruction to write is on all occasions coupled both with a condemnation of corruption and with a promise of the success of Dante's own prophetic enterprise. Havely has noted that the authority of St John's apocalypse is invoked on several key occasions in the *Commedia*, in the denunciation of papal corruption in *Inferno* XIX, in Beatrice's words in *Purgatorio* XXXII and in the revelation that he has been urged to pass on in *Paradiso* XXVII.<sup>281</sup>

Dante's prophetic practices are also related to and informed by the twin themes of exile and martyrdom which run throughout the *Commedia*; these are key to Dante's own self-identification as prophet and sources of his authority and suitability for the role. Mineo notes that the motif of exile inserts itself in a series of significant allusions in the dialogues with a triumvirate of Florentines, Ciaccio, (*Inf.* VI) Brunetto Latini, (*Inf.* XV) and Cacciaguida.<sup>282</sup> Those who are chosen to deliver the divine message are misunderstood and suffer persecution or martyrdom: Paul, Jeremiah, and Isaiah to take three examples already considered in this chapter.<sup>283</sup>

But as we have seen they are also vouchsafed God's assistance.<sup>284</sup> Jeremiah speaks of the bestial nature of those who oppose the prophet (Jeremiah 12. 9): and this comes through most clearly in Dante in Brunetto Latini's denunciation of the Florentines, the *bestie fiesolane* whose corrupting influence is an historical tragedy for the city which continues to lead it astray against the divine plan which for Dante

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<sup>281</sup> Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 178.

<sup>282</sup> Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante*, p. 211.

<sup>283</sup> Jeremiah 2. 30; Jeremiah 36. 23; I, Thessalonians, 2. 15.

<sup>284</sup> Jeremiah 29. 17-18; Ezekiel 2.6.

is manifest in history.<sup>285</sup> The bestial is related to appetite, we recall the *lupo* of *Inferno* I and the *lupi rapaci* of *Paradiso* XXVII; to be bestial is to be always governed by desire for more; constantly subordinating proximate to ultimate goals in a failure to use the God-given human gift to know right from wrong which exists in all men. The human is the only creature which has the vegetative, animal and human faculties, has the ability to reason and thus to control its cupidity in a way which a beast does not: it is ultimately cupidity which causes political instability and consequent injustice; this is the foundation of the central ideas of the *Monarchia* and *Convivio* that only an Emperor possessing everything and wanting nothing can transcend this and control everything.<sup>286</sup>

As Schnapp has noted, Cacciaguida's instruction to Dante in *Paradiso* is to be a prophet, 'but the adverse historical settings in which it is circumscribed, as well as the mortal risk involved, identify it more precisely with the *parrhesia* of Christ's martyrs'.<sup>287</sup> Cacciaguida's prophecy suggests Dante's figurative martyrdom: Dante's role is not only that of Aeneas, and Paul, but of Christ. Like the martyrs in Matthew 19. 29 the idea of leaving behind family comes through in Cacciaguida's prophecy of Dante's fate: 'tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta' (*Par.* XVII, 55-57). But, like these martyrs, Dante shall be rewarded eternally for speaking the truth. The *Commedia* in this light may be seen as a salvific text both for its author in the act of writing and for its audience in the act of reading:

Et omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres, aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros propter nomen meum, centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit. (Matthew 19. 29)

The apparent allusions in *Paradiso* XVII to both to Revelation 6. 13 and Isaiah 40.9 in 'questo tuo grido fara come vento /che le più alte cime piu percuote',<sup>288</sup> seem to link Cacciaguida's injunction to Dante to make his vision manifest, with the

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<sup>285</sup> An idea reiterated in *Ep.* VII, 7 and *Purgatorio* XIV, 37).

<sup>286</sup> *Conv.* IV, iv.

<sup>287</sup> J. T. Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante's Paradise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 235.

<sup>288</sup> Revelation 6. 13 'et stellæ de cælo ceciderunt super terram, sicut ficus emittit grossos suos cum a vento magno movetur'; Isaiah 40. 9 'Super montem excelsum ascende, tu qui evangelizas Sion; exalta in fortitudine vocem tuam, qui evangelizas Jerusalem: exalta, noli timere. Dic civitatibus Juda: Ecce Deus vester.'



conventional image of the prophet filled with the *pneuma* of the Holy Spirit.<sup>289</sup> If the double allusion is intended, then it seems to me to carry both the implications of joyful tidings of reform and of imminent destruction of wrongdoers; a simultaneously optimistic and punitive prophecy. As we have seen, just as Christ tells Peter to feed his sheep, so Dante is told by both St Peter and by Cacciaguida to speak out, and assured by Cacciaguida that his words will provide ‘vidal nodrimento’ to his audience. The author is at once a prophet of divine retribution, a prophet of political reform and one who is prepared through his text to take on duties of pastoral care where those charged with this role fail to do so.

### 3.6 Dante as Prophet in the Political Letters

An acceptance of the view of the *Monarchia* as being closely connected, in terms of the author’s self-identification as prophet to the *Commedia*, would allow us perhaps to make similar claims for the political letters which contain the most sustained and dense use of prophetic language and of the prophetic manner anywhere in Dante’s oeuvre. There are, broadly speaking, two potential modes of interpretation of Dante’s letters: prophetic or non-prophetic.<sup>290</sup> Pertile argues that to contend that the letters are rhetorical pieces, while also being true, is not the whole story: in the letters Dante is actively engaged with political topics which affect him directly, and frequently performs this engagement through the adoption of the role of biblical prophet.<sup>291</sup> The *ars dictaminis*, the medieval art of letter-writing is clearly present in their structure but Pertile has argued convincingly that Dante’s political letters are no mere ‘literary exercises in the marginal tradition of medieval letter-writing’.<sup>292</sup> For if Dante had, in writing them, simply been following a set of rules laid down by clerks and lawyers working for the great political and religious leaders of the time, this would undermine the serious intent of their political message; it would mean, as Pertile notes, that their author did not mean what he wrote, a suggestion which is patently untrue. The letters are clearly heartfelt and their anger appears to be real, as real as Dante’s real desire to see the Empire restored to Rome and Henry accepted as

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<sup>289</sup> Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History*, p. 236.

<sup>290</sup> For a non-prophetic view see: F. Mazzoni, *Le epistole di Dante*, pp. 47-100.

<sup>291</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p.51.

<sup>292</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back:’ p.51.

Emperor by the recalcitrant Italian cities (Florence, of course, first among them); it is as real as the pain which he feels at seeing an Italy whose cities ‘non stanno senza guerra’ and in which ‘l’un l’altro si rode | di quei ch’un muro e una fossa serra’ (*Purg.* VI. 82–84).<sup>293</sup> While not wishing to deny that the political letters are tied to a particular set of circumstances and are of course by their nature occasion pieces, I would argue that in addition to their thematic and linguistic connectedness, the letters also display emotions which Dante will have characters such as Marco Lombardo, and indeed St Peter himself articulate: a blend of anger at the contemporary Church and empire coupled with lamentations at the state to which humanity has been reduced. But the *Commedia*, like the letters, for all its invective and despair, is never without faith and never wholly without the optimism that this faith brings.

Honess has argued that in those letters which date from the period of Henry VII’s descent into Italy, we see a brief period of intense imperial optimism in Dante which would be extinguished by the failure of Henry’s campaign; the Emperor’s death marking the end of Dante’s hopes for a reintroduction of imperial control over Italy and thus also of his hopes for the end to the factional conflicts which Dante saw as tearing Italy apart.<sup>294</sup> In this respect the letter to the Princes and Peoples of Italy is wholly consistent with a political aspiration articulated in the *Convivio*, *Commedia* and the *Monarchia* for universal Empire and supports the suggestion that, there is little inconsistency in Dante’s political thought in terms of the desirability for Universal Empire in any of his post 1310 works; as Ascoli has pointed out, the teleology which Nardi imposes on Dante’s oeuvre is one which modern scholarship now regards as discredited.<sup>295</sup> My reading of the prophecies of *Paradiso* XXVII means I would suggest that it is perhaps Dante’s level of optimism regarding the likelihood of his political ideals being realised rather than the political ideals themselves which undergoes significant change in the period before, during, and after Henry’s Italian campaign. As in the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, so in the letters, Dante’s political aspirations and beliefs are, in practical terms, broadly consistent and are articulated in a similarly prophetic apocalyptic key. In creating a

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<sup>293</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p. 51.

<sup>294</sup> Honess, “Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile” p. 488.

<sup>295</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 230.

myth around the figure of the Emperor Dante uses explicitly Christological, New Testament allusions to acclaim Henry as a second messiah, invested with grace to save mankind in and through the reform of Church and Empire.<sup>296</sup>

In drawing parallels between the language of the *Monarchia* and that of the political letters, one is struck once more by the fusion of Old Testament and Pauline language, as can be seen in the opening of letter V:

‘Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile’, quo signa surgunt consolationis et pacis. Nam dies nova splendescit ab ortu auroram demonstrans, que iam tenebras diurne calamitatis attenuat iamque aure orientales crebrescunt; rutilat celum in labiis suis, et auspitia gentium blanda serenitate confortat. (*Ep.* V, 2)

Dante is here drawing his wording from St Paul, ‘ecce nunc tempus acceptabile ecce nunc dies salutis’ (II Corinthians 6. 2), but as Honess has noted, this passage explicitly presents Christ as having fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah, citing directly a passage where the prophet foresees a coming time of peace, when freedom will be restored to the world:

haec dicit Dominus intempore placito exaudivi te et in die salutis auxiliatus sum tui et servavi te et dedite in foedus populi ut suscitares terram et possideres hereditates dissipatas, ut diceres his qui vincti sunt exite et his qui in tenebris revelamini. (Isaiah 49. 8–9)<sup>297</sup>

All this seems to me to carry the suggestion that the Dante of the political letters regards himself as a prophet, and his letter as the completion of the words of St Paul which in turn fulfilled the words of Isaiah.

At the opening of letter V Dante says: Et nos gaudium expectatum videbimus, qui diu pernoctavimus in deserto, quoniam Titan exorietur pacificus, et iustitia, sine sole quasi eliotropium hebetata, cum primum iubar ille vibraverit, revirescet’ (*Ep.* V, 3).<sup>298</sup> While Pertile notes that ‘Quoniam Titan exorietur’ carries a Virgilian echo,<sup>299</sup> he argues that the true intertext is the Giant of Psalm 18, an

<sup>296</sup> Nasti, ‘*Favole d’amore e “saver profondo”*’, p. 139.

<sup>297</sup> Honess, ‘*Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile*’ p. 489.

<sup>298</sup> The Emperor as Titan, is an allusion to which Dante returns in *Ep.* VII, 1 addressing Henry directly ‘Cumque tu, Cesaris et Augusti successor, Apennini iuga transiliens veneranda signa Tarpeia retulisti, protinus longa substiterunt suspiria lacrimarumque diluvia desierunt; et, ceu Titan preoptatus exoriens, nova spes Latio seculi melioris effulsit.’

<sup>299</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p.57. The reference is to *Aeneid*, IV. 118-119.

apocalyptic figure of both Christ and Antichrist. ‘In sole posuit tabernaculum suum; et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo. Exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam’ (Psalm 18. 6). This is the figure that stands beside the Harlot in Dante’s vision at the end of *Purgatorio*. In both the *Purgatorio* and the letter he is a figure of the new messiah: the world is renewed and made green again like the tree in *Purgatorio*. In this reading a new paradise is being prepared for us on Earth; Moses in his role as liberator is made to prefigure both Christ and Henry and the Italians are the tribe of Israel whom Henry is coming to liberate:

Arrexit namque aures misericordes Leo fortis de tribu Iuda; atque ullulatum universalis captivitatis miserans, Moysen alium suscitavit qui de gravaminibus Egiptiorum populum suum eripiet, ad terram lacte ac melle manantem perducens. (*Ep.* V, 1)

Viewed this way Scripture has a prophetic function revealing the fulfilling of God’s grand design which is being worked out here and now. The conflation of providential history and scriptural authority to inform an argument regarding the acceptance of a temporal ruler brings the suggestion that opposition to Henry can be constructed as a blasphemy, not just a lack of judgment.<sup>300</sup> Hawkins has termed Dante’s language here as an example of Dante ‘speaking scripture’ in a text so dense with citations, allusions and paraphrases from the Bible that, combined with its passionate tone, ‘by piling up biblical phrases [Dante] creates a biblical language that is virtually indistinguishable from his own speech’.<sup>301</sup> Dante tells the Lombards that ‘potestati resistens Dei ordinationi resistit’ (*Ep.* V, 4). As Honess has noted, this injunction is another direct quotation from a Pauline letter, this time the letter to the Romans, and is taken from a passage which is wholly devoted to the relationship between secular and religious authorities. Paul urges the early Church in Rome to respect and obey civil authority: ‘Non est enim potestas nisi a Deo quae autem sunt a Deo ordinatae sunt. Itaque qui resistit potestati Dei ordinationi resistit qui autem resistunt ipsi sibi damnationem adquirunt. [...] Dei enim minister est tibi in bonum’ (Romans 13. 1–4). ‘Dante aims to show not only that he believes Henry’s authority to be willed by God, but also that there is good biblical authority for believing that

<sup>300</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p. 58.

<sup>301</sup> P. S. Hawkins, *Dante’s Testament* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 53.

the state can (even if it does not always) act as an intermediary between the citizen and God'.<sup>302</sup>

In the letter to the Florentines, Dante explicitly describes himself as having a prophetic soul (*Ep.* VI, 47). He foresees the destruction of Florence as Isaiah foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem, but characteristically and, I will argue in Chapter 5, significantly, his status as prophet is asserted through a Virgilian paraphrase of *Aeneid* X, 843, which takes place during a pitched battle on the banks of the Tiber. In addition to the processes of self-identification with biblical prophets that I have noted elsewhere, there is in the letters a self-identification with Solomon as there is in the *Commedia*, and as there was in the *Convivio*. As Paola Nasti has noted, Dante in the *Convivio* cites Proverbs 8. 6-9:

Audite, quoniam de rebus magnis locutura sum, et aperientur labia mea ut recta praedicent. Veritatem meditabitur guttur meum, et labia mea detestabuntur impium. Iusti sunt omnes sermones mei: non est in eis pravum quid, neque perversum; recti sunt intelligentibus, et aequi invenientibus scientiam

But as we have seen in the *Monarchia*, Dante goes beyond this and does not just quote Solomon but adopts his words into his text and speaks in the same manner: 'non si serve solo dell'*ipse dixit* per dare autorevolezza al proprio testo, ma ne imita pure il piglio profetico'.<sup>303</sup> Dante speaks like Solomon because he aspires to equal him in wisdom and the prophetic qualities of those loved by God and 'farsi, come lui, vate di verità supreme e guida intellettuale di quella grande renovatio temporis in cui credette fino alla fine'.<sup>304</sup> But in this context Dante is no longer talking of nobility or philosophy; rather he is at this point discussing the providential nature of the Roman Empire.<sup>305</sup> In this sense we see a prophetic voice and a line of argument *in nuce* which will find fuller and more systematic expression in all of Dante's later works. Solomon was appealing to Dante as an alter ego, and there was a long medieval tradition of reading the books attributed to Solomon in a political way (e.g. Wisdom 6. 2-8) to create around the figure of the King a religious biblical legitimization of the source of his authority; Solomonic wisdom was viewed as the

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<sup>302</sup> Honess, "Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile", p. 490.

<sup>303</sup> Nasti, *Favole d'amore e "saver profondo"*, p. 139.

<sup>304</sup> Nasti, *Favole d'amore e "saver profondo"*, p. 136.

<sup>305</sup> Nasti, *Favole d'amore e "saver profondo"*, p. 133.

most desirable of the gifts that a king should possess.

As Pertile has demonstrated in his analysis of the metaphorical structure of the letters, the Song of Songs is key; it was read not only as a prophecy of the advent of Christ but also as a prophecy and summa of the history of God's people from the Egyptian exile to the Last Judgment, and permitted the supporters of Henry VII to figure him as the spouse of widowed Italy. The descent of Henry VII is characterised by Dante not as birth but as a marriage between the Emperor and his people (*Ep.* V, 2). And as Nasti has noted, the lexical similarities between Dante's letter and the Song of Songs support this reading.<sup>306</sup> Henry liberates Italy as Moses liberated Israel. The centrality of this episode must also be borne in mind when we consider the interpretation of the kiss between the whore and the giant in the Earthly Paradise. Notably Christ is specifically identified as Bridegroom of the Church in the passage of the *Monarchia* where Dante is seeking to demonstrate the divine will which ordained it and the providential scheme in which it has a key role to play: 'Desinant igitur Imperium exprobrare romanum qui se filios Ecclesie fingunt, cum videant sponsum Cristum illud sic in utroque termino sue militie comprobasse.' (*Mon.* II, xi) In submitting to the census and in submitting to Roman law at the crucifixion he acknowledges Roman authority.

In the letter XI to the Italian Cardinals, Dante seeks to defend himself from the charge that in writing thus he is guilty of the same kind of presumption as that shown by Uzzah touching the ark to prevent it falling. Dante is doing the same but his response is humility; he does not seek to control the church but to set it back on the right path. This humility stands alongside a continued self-identification with St Paul by way of a double paraphrase of the first letter to the Corinthians:

Quippe de ovibus inpascuis Iesu Christi minima una sum; quipped nulla pastorali auctoritate abutens, quoniam divitiae mecum non sunt. Non ergo divitiarum, sed gratia Dei sum id quod' (*Ep.* XI, 9).

Paul says:

novissime autem omnium tamquam abortivo, visus est et mihi. Ego enim sum minimus Apostolorum, qui non sum dignus vocari Apostolus, quoniam

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<sup>306</sup> Nasti, *Favole d'amore e "saver profondo"*, p.143.

persecutus sum ecclesiam Dei. Gratia autem Dei sum id quod sum, et gratia ejus in me vacua non fuit, sed abundantius illis omnibus laboravi: non ego autem, sed gratia Dei mecum. (I, Corinthians 15. 10)

Dante's poverty as prophet is more of a guarantee of sanctity than being in holy orders. Being of the clergy is no guarantee of moral behaviour; Dante notes the Pharisees' perversion of the truth while recalling the parable of the blind man who spoke the truth. (*Ep.* XI, 5). The innocent mouthpiece of God versus the duplicitous clergy has clear resonance for Dante's central prophetic mission and its purpose. Here we have the contrast of the poor honest man as prophet speaking in isolation, and the clergy who would pervert the truth to ensure their own position. These are chief priests in name only, in contrast to 'una sola vox, sola pia et haec private in matris Ecclesiae quasi funere audiatur' (*Ep.* XI, 6). The story of Uzzah is thus recast, where Uzzah was punished for presuming to touch the Ark as it fell from the carriage pulled by unruly oxen, Dante says he is unlike Uzzah because he is not seeking to touch the Ark (Church) but rather to redirect or correct the oxen (clergy) who are leading it astray. As Mineo has noted this is not to say that he cannot be interpreted in the letter as expressing the concerns of many, indeed all, people: later in the letter Dante will continue in the prophetic mode by presenting himself as one who through God's Grace speaks out, but who is not unique in his opinions but rather alone articulates what the rest of the world is murmuring (*Ep.* XI, 8).<sup>307</sup> The use of the Pharisees as an example of priestly corruption is one which Dante also uses with specific reference to Boniface VIII as the worst of them all, the prince of the new Pharisees:

Lo principe d'i novi Farisei,  
avendo guerra presso a Laterano,  
e non con Saracin né con Giudei,  
ché ciascun suo nimico era cristiano,  
e nessun era stato a vincer Acri  
né mercatante in terra di Soldano (*Inf.* XXVII, 85-90)

Marjorie Reeves has suggested that Dante's conclusion in the *Monarchia* (that he had previously believed that the Roman people won the world through force, but now believes the Empire to be an instrument of providence) creates a difficulty

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<sup>307</sup> Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante*, p. 147.

which takes him further from Augustine and much orthodox opinion which viewed God's providential purpose in history as already having been worked out by the Incarnation. In this view, the climax of history was past and the post-crucifixion world was meant to wait for Jesus.<sup>308</sup> Clearly if Dante believed that God's providence was still being worked out in history then distinctions between sacred and profane, ecclesiastical and temporal become less significant.<sup>309</sup> In my view this makes Dante's use of the language of biblical prophecy in the letters not only more understandable but even the most logical register for Dante to adopt. Dante's Aristotelian view of man's purpose in the *Monarchia* combined with a renewed belief in the continued working-out of God's will through contemporary events had a transformative effect: 'the marriage of a philosophical ideal to a providential view of history changed a utopia into a prophecy'.<sup>310</sup> Present man-made political events are no less sacred than those in the Bible which were in their time also historical events: in the letter to the Princes and Peoples of Italy, the wedding of Henry and Italy is alluded to via the Song of Songs which itself prefigures the wedding of Christ and the Church: in effect, then, Henry's coming constitutes a new covenant between God and the just rulers of Italy. If history is the working-out of God's plan, then distinctions between sacred and profane become meaningless.<sup>311</sup> Pertile notes that one of Dante's key points in the letter is that the spiritual and temporal powers should be independent (as articulated in the *Monarchia*), but also makes the point, which relates to the above notion of a 'messianic' Henry, that although its function is only indirectly related to man's salvation, the imperial power is no less sacred than the papal power. Pertile feels that the *Commedia* and the letters have the same intended function and we should not let the fact that they belong to different genres obscure this. Of course the words of Beatrice in the *Commedia* are an authorial creation, part of the fiction of the *Commedia*, but in Singleton's famous phrase, the fiction of the *Commedia* is that it is not fiction;<sup>312</sup> the truth claims of the otherworldly vision described in poetry stand to be read as having the same validity

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<sup>308</sup> M. Reeves, 'Dante and the Prophetic View of History' in *Dante: The Critical Complex*, V, 332-48 (p. 348).

<sup>309</sup> Pertile, 'Dante Looks Forward and Back', p. 58.

<sup>310</sup> Reeves, 'Dante and the Prophetic View of History', p. 49.

<sup>311</sup> Pertile, 'Dante Looks Forward and Back', p. 58.

<sup>312</sup> C. S. Singleton, *Dante Studies I: Elements of Structure* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 62.



as those of the ratiocinative, scholastic and prophetic prose of the *Monarchia* and the political letters. The very fact that we, the reader, hold the poem in our hands may be seen as evidence of the truth of the claims for prophecy being made in the poem: the poem is a prophetic instrument produced as the response to the instructions of Beatrice, of Cacciaguیدا and of St Peter, in the same way that the words of Isaiah are his response to the divine command: the first-person narrative of one divinely inspired to write down the divine message. The physical journey in Dante may be fictional, the *itinerarium mentis* is not. The message he feels himself to have received, and now transmits, is both urgent and, Dante claims, divinely mandated in a way which seems analogous to that of the Old Testament prophets and St Paul. This role as prophet is one I have argued that Dante adopts in the *Monarchia*. The same may be said of the *Commedia* and the political letters. As the Old Testament prophets foretold the imminent advent of Christ, so Dante prophesies the liberation of the Church and the restoration of its role through ‘un messo di dio’ (*Purg.* XXXIII, 44). That Henry is just such a divine instrument seems self-evident from the political letters (even if we cannot say categorically that he is the same one or even that in the prophecy of the DXV Dante has any one figure in mind). He is one whom the poet in the political letters does not hesitate to call messiah, Christ, whose advent is announced with the words of John the Baptist: ‘Ecce agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccatum mundi’ (*Ep.* VII, 10), typologically linking the Emperor as an *alter Christus* and the author as a John the Baptist, not the Messiah but one who comes before and announces his advent. Similarly, in letter XI, we see Dante establish an analogue between himself and Jeremiah which is articulated by the relationship between the two cities Rome and Jerusalem. In Jeremiah the lamentation is for Jerusalem in her widowhood, in Dante it is Rome, ‘viduam et desertam’ (*Ep.* XI, 2) which is lamented. This is achieved by the direct citation of ‘quomodo sedet’ (Lamentations 1.1, and *Ep.* XI, 1), but also via the linking of the lamentable situation of both, the difference being that in Jeremiah it is an announcement of future things, in Dante it is a lamentation for the current state of affairs: ‘cum Ieremia, non lugenda prevenientes, sed post ipsa dolentes, viduam et desertam lugere compellimur’ (*Ep.* XI, 3). Mineo has suggested that the Dante of the political letters may be defined as ‘non divinatoria ma ugualmente profetica, anzi più che profetica, (nel senso per cui Giovanni è più che profeta, in quanto massimo tra i profeti) bilanciata figuralmente

tra Geremia da una parte e Paolo e Giovanni dall'altra. But in the letters, as Mineo also notes, there are no 'motivi visionari'<sup>313</sup> and 'la profezia e del tipo intellettuale, cinessa al fine della comprensione del presente.'<sup>314</sup>

In Aquinas's commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, the whole system of reading events in the Bible as figures for contemporary events is rejected. For Thomas, biblical prefigurations had resolved themselves once and for all in the person of Christ and any kind of 'parallelismo storico-teologico', to use Rusconi's phrase,<sup>315</sup> must be strongly rejected.<sup>316</sup> Nonetheless as has been highlighted in my consideration of men such as Olivi and Ubertino and the Spiritual Franciscans more generally, this is precisely the approach taken by a wide range of authors in a number of genres from the late Duecento and early Trecento where Jeremiah and Isaiah are read in an apocalyptic key and the book of Revelation is read as their fulfilment and as a grid which can be laid over contemporary events to understand how history is moving towards its climax. These practices and their implications for our understanding of Dante's prophecies will be a focus for Chapter 4 of this thesis.

### 3.7 Conclusion

I would argue that in stylistic terms, Dante's use of prophetic authority is formulated in two key ways. Firstly, Dante aligns himself with biblical authority through a myriad of allusions and appropriations of biblical prophetic language. Secondly he appropriates the mood and emotions of the biblical figures whom he takes to be his forebears. Thus we have Dante's prophetic statements offered alongside assertions of self-doubt, the duty to speak out, and the divinely assisted investiture providing mastery of self and of language which equips the prophet for the role. There is also the threat of hostility from the audience, the promise of punishment of those who are false prophets or those who abuse the divine gifts given to them, and the promises of both hardship and divine protection for the poet himself. Dante as prophet has been afforded rare insight but he is articulating concerns and frustrations common to the

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<sup>313</sup> Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante*, p. 151

<sup>314</sup> Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante*, p. 151.

<sup>315</sup> R. Rusconi, *Profezia e profeti alla fine del Medioevo* (Rome: Viella, 1999), p. 64.

<sup>316</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum*, vol II, pars altera, pp. 1062-1063. D. XLIII, q.I a. III, quaest., II., <http://www.corpusthomaticum.org/iopera.html> accessed 18 June 2014.

whole world; he speaks on its behalf and for its benefit and is obliged to do so by the gift and the duties given to him by God.

Dante, in the *Commedia*, presents his prophetic mission as an instrument of providence, part of the wider scheme of history which is visible evidence of God's plan. This is made clear from the historical dimension of the procession in the Earthly Paradise and the relating of Dante's prophetic investiture to an urgent need for reform: Beatrice instructs him to bear witness to what he has seen and in particular to the despoiling of the carriage and to the renewal of the tree and she tells him do so specifically 'in pro del mondo che mal vive'. This command is reiterated and coupled with a prophecy of the coming reform of the Church in *Purgatorio* XXXIII; the promise of the advent of the heir of the Eagle, that is to say an Emperor, who will be God's minister on Earth.<sup>317</sup> This commission to Dante as poet and prophet (he *is* Aeneas, he *is* Paul by virtue of the education he is receiving and the journey he has been given the grace to undertake) is reiterated by Cacciaguida.

Dante's exile is presented in Cacciaguida's speech not only as a personal calamity, but also the outcome of a contest in which he was pitted against the chief source of corruption in the world, Boniface VIII; Dante in his life, and, since the two are now to be synonymous, in his prophetic mission, must move beyond factionalism to be a 'parte per [se]stesso' (*Par.* XVII, 69). Exile seems inevitable, an intrinsic experiential element for a prophet such as Dante which provides him with a new perspective on humanity's purposes and the way its problems can be resolved. Dante's life and works are the consequences of his prophetic identity living out the consequences of Christ's words: 'amen dico vobis quia nemo propheta acceptus est in patria sua' (Luke 4. 24); his status as *exul inmeritus*<sup>318</sup> adds force to his political prophecy and serves to condemn those in Florence and elsewhere reluctant to accept the 'vital nodrimento' which Dante's work provides.<sup>319</sup>

Dante's ability to follow Cacciaguida's advice to transcend the conflict

<sup>317</sup> U. Limentani, 'Paradiso XVII', in *Cambridge Readings in Dante's Comedy*, ed. by K. Foster and P. Boyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 155-73 (p. 159).

<sup>318</sup> Honess notes that this formulation is used in the salutations of letters III, V, VI and VII, and is adapted slightly in the famous designation used in the letter to Can Grande: 'Dantes Alagherii florentinus natione non moribus' (*Ep.*, XIII. salutation). C. E. Honess, *Dante Alighieri: Four Political Letters*, p. 27

<sup>319</sup> Similarly Ciaccio's words in *Inferno* VI seem to suggest that the state of being misunderstood or ignored by those they try to address is in itself evidence of the justness of the prophet's words: 'Giusti son due, e non vi sono intesi.' *Inf.* VI, 73.

between Guelph and Ghibelline is indicative of the effects of the education and symbolic purgation he has undergone in the course of his journey to this point and is evidence of the qualitative difference of the speaker's words and consequent quantitative difference in their authority. Dante's formal commission as poet-prophet can only be given in the Earthly Paradise, as it is only here, his will now corrected, that he has overcome the besetting sins which marked him in his lostness in the dark wood and continue to mark his fellow men. Dante at this stage of his journey has been symbolically purged of the vices which are the causes of the factionalism and strife on Earth and with the new understanding which accompanies and enables this purgation, is able now to speak as prophet for the benefit of man, to show how man can be happy on Earth and in heaven. Even in the words of St Peter, the concern for the present state of man is not forgotten, indeed it remains central, but the exile's prophetic voice is now speaking to the sort of universal view of human society *sub specie aeternitatis* which is the keynote of biblical prophecy, of the Earthly Paradise, the *Paradiso* and I suggest of the *Monarchia* too.

In the *Commedia* the poet's first investiture as prophet, which is of course a self-investiture, comes precisely at the moment when Dante, is shown the corruption of the Church and given a promise of its reform. In the *Monarchia*, Dante's self-identification as prophet is most explicit where Dante moves, at the beginning of Book Three, to disprove the Church's claim to earthly power; a claim which ultimately is the source of its corruption. Following such an investiture, to be aware of the truth is insufficient; the honour derives from raising one's voice and speaking out and addressing the truths regarding the corruption of the world which one's prophetic vision have made manifest. This is all to be done despite the inevitable danger to self or the shame caused to one opponents. Such speech is only possible where the grace of God has cleansed the speaker of the sinfulness which besets the whole world. Such a summary of Dante's prophetic language and purpose would seem to apply equally well to his poem, his political treatise, and the political letters. I would argue that Dante's language in the *Commedia*, *Monarchia*, and the political letters bears not only many of the stylistic hallmarks of its Old Testament and Pauline forbears but is also intended to serve the same functions: these models are adopted both for their own authority and the authoritative equivalency Dante wishes to draw between his own work and those in whose footsteps he follows.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Introduction

I have considered in Chapter 3, the various ways in which Dante utilises the language of prophecy and adopts the role of prophet in the *Commedia*, the *Monarchia*, and in the political letters. Mineo has argued that there are aspects of Dante's prophetic manner, in particular the focus on transcendent eschatology, which serve to separate him from Old Testament prophecy but to link him to the related but distinct area of religious literature: the apocalyptic.<sup>320</sup> Within the *Commedia*, Dante incorporates and enriches his prophetic ideas and ambitions by deploying them in contexts which are at once revelatory and apocalyptic. Mineo defines twenty-five characteristics of Christian apocalyptic prophecies and says it is clear that these are all present within the *Commedia*: 'Gli elementi acquisiti ci permettono già di orientarci verso il riconoscimento, nel poema dantesco, di una fusione di profetismo e di apocalittica, una fusione, possiamo ora aggiungere in cui il profetismo appare inserito e sostenuto entro un tessuto generale, strutturale e tematico, di natura più tipicamente apocalittica: alla base si collocano infatti la visione d'oltretomba e la rivelazione nell'oltretomba, la prospettiva della visione escatologico-trascendente insomma'.<sup>321</sup>

This chapter divides into three main parts. Part one of this chapter develops the discussion of Joachim of Fiore's influence on Dante which was outlined in Chapter 2. I will then move on to consider the relationship of Pseudo-Joachite texts to Dante's own methods and ideas via a case study of the ways in which exegetical texts such as the *Super Hieremiam* also served as a means to comment on contemporary political and theological disputes. Part two will discuss the relationship between Dante's own prophetic apocalyptic ideas and those of the Spiritual Franciscans and others in Dante's own period. Part three will consider the relationship of Dante's political ideas to those of the Dominican Remigio de'Girolami. This approach is intended to allow this chapter to locate Mineo's view of Dante as a prophet of the Apocalypse within Dante's intellectual context in

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<sup>320</sup> Mineo, 'Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante', p. 90.

<sup>321</sup> Mineo, 'Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante', p. 96.

Duecento Italy and to draw out points of similarity and difference in the nature and purpose of apocalyptic expectation in Dante and in key contemporary intellectual currents of thought.

#### 4.2 The Influence of Joachim of Fiore

As was seen in Chapter 2, the presence of Joachite modes of thought in preaching and teaching in Florence, particularly among the Spiritual Franciscans, makes it unlikely that Dante never came in to contact with them.<sup>322</sup> Reeves argues that, while it is difficult to pinpoint precise points of contact in terms of Dante making use of Joachim's ideas either directly or through the Spiritual Franciscans, the evidence is almost incontrovertible that Dante knew Joachim's *Liber Figurarum* given that Dante twice makes use of imagery apparently appropriated from this work.<sup>323</sup> If Dante's use of the image of an eagle derives from Joachim's eagle imagery in the *Liber Figurarum* as Reeves suggests, then this would serve to give a double meaning to the imperial eagle of the Justice cantos of the *Paradiso*. It would at once be the explicitly imperial eagle of Justice, but also the Joachite eagle of St John embodying Joachim's ideas of the third age of the spirit. This seems to make perfect sense if we regard Dante's political thought as having a simultaneously apocalyptic and practical human dimension and is an idea which is perhaps given greater credence when we recall the messianic terms in which Dante is able to couch his own hopes for imperial reform. However, there seems to me to be an absence of textual evidence within the Justice cantos themselves to support this view; the eagle is so explicitly an imperial symbol here, this is the heaven of the just rulers, of Trajan and Ripheus, and we will find that the most prominent star in the eagle's eyebrow is that of Constantine himself. If the apocalyptic connotations of the eagle of St John are intended, it seems that the comparison is being introduced in a wholly implicit way and that it is left to the reader to infer this interpretation. Secondly, and perhaps more convincingly, Reeves shows that the language used to describe the geometric intertwining circles and indeed the image of the circles themselves by which Dante attempts to depict the Trinity in *Paradiso XXXIII* bears considerable similarities to

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<sup>322</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachimismo*, p. 58.

<sup>323</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 61.

that used by Joachim to describe the Trinity,<sup>324</sup> though how far this is an appropriation of an image useful to Dante's purpose and how far this is evidence of a Joachite cast of mind on Dante's part is more difficult to say.<sup>325</sup>

Reeves has suggested that the strongest argument for a link between Dante and Joachim is that few shared Joachim and Dante's unorthodox views regarding a second turning-point in history and no one else but Joachim argued for this to be placed so closely ahead in time.<sup>326</sup> For Dante, if the transition to the age of the Son had been marked by the coincidence of Christ's life with the universal peace of the *pax Augusta*,<sup>327</sup> then might not the same conjunction of spiritual renewal and imperial peace accompany the transition to the third age, that of the Holy Spirit, even if Dante at this time felt that such a universal peace could never be recovered?<sup>328</sup>

Against this, Reeves notes the diametrically opposed views of Empire which seem apparent in Joachim's conflation of Babylon and Rome. Further, there is the fact that there is no proof that Dante knew Joachim's works directly nor do we know whether Dante believed the Pseudo-Joachite works to be by Joachim himself. As will be discussed in my consideration of Joachim's reception and legacy, this is potentially a significant factor given the ways in which Joachim's prophecies were recast and reinterpreted in the Duecento.

Joachim's presence in the *Paradiso* would seem to confirm Dante's knowledge of the Calabrian abbot's reputation as having been given the gift of prophecy (*Par.* XII, 141). While Cristaldi is keen to emphasise that a lack of direct contact does not indicate a lack of influence, he is cautious, suggesting that we can simply say that it is likely that, in Santa Croce, Dante encountered Joachite

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<sup>324</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 61.

<sup>325</sup> A similar interpretation has also been applied to the three circles of spirits in *Paradiso* XIV. See Hollander, DDP note on *Par.* XIV, 28-29 for a critical history of this suggestion.

<sup>326</sup> Reeves, 'The Third Age', pp.127-39.

<sup>327</sup> A point made explicitly in *Ep.*V, 9 'Et si haec, quae uti principia sunt, ad probandum quod quaeritur non sufficiunt, quis non ab illata conclusione per talia praecedente mecum opinari cogetur, pace videlicet annorum duodecim orbem totaliter amplexata, quae sui syllogizantis faciem Dei filium, sicuti opere patrato, ostendit? Et Hic, quum ad revelationem Spiritus, Homo factus, evangelizaret in terris, quasi dirimens duo regna, sibi et Cesari universa distribuens, alterutri duxit reddi que sua sunt'.

See also *Mon.* I, xvi,1 'Rationibus omnibus supra positus experientia memorabilis attestatur: status videlicet illius mortalium quem Dei Filius, in salutem hominis hominem assumpturus, vel expectavit vel cum voluit ipse disposuit. Nam si a lapsu primorum parentum, qui diverticulum fuit totius nostre deviationis, dispositiones hominum et tempora recolamus, non inveniemus nisi sub divo Augusto monarcha, existente Monarchia perfecta, mundum undique fuisse quietum'

<sup>328</sup> M. S. Kempshall 'The Utility of Peace in *Monarchia*' p.171; *Convivio*, IV, v.

eschatology and acquired a more than superficial knowledge of it.<sup>329</sup> Reeves feels that ‘a certain ambience of prophetic expectation within history had been created in the thirteenth century by Joachim's disciples and was prevalent in Dante's life time and Dante’s prophetic vision seems to belong to this mode of thought’.<sup>330</sup> An adherence to a mode of thought is clearly less than an adherence to an ideology, indeed this mode of thought is one which, as will be discussed, served the purposes of the Pseudo-Joachites to condemn the Emperor as it served the Emperor's supporters, Pier della Vigna and Dante alike. For Oldroyd, the prophetic aspect of Joachim’s exegesis, ‘offered the possibility of identifying players in the predestined cosmic game with actual political figures’.<sup>331</sup> The prophetic practices of the *Commedia*, suggest that this is a possibility Dante exploits within the fictive realms and time frame of the *Commedia*.

In my discussion of Dante’s political letters in Chapter 3, I considered the messianic and even Christological terms in which Dante greeted Henry VII. It was suggested that this language, together with the conflation of providential history and scriptural authority to inform an argument for the acceptance of a temporal ruler, suggest that for Dante opposition to Henry can be constructed as a blasphemy not just a lack of judgment.<sup>332</sup> With Joachim and Pseudo-Joachite writers, the Emperor is more likely an Antichrist than a Messiah. Nonetheless I would argue that if we accept Pertile's reading of Dante's view of history and the prophetic status of the Epistles, we have a fundamental connection with the Joachite and Pseudo-Joachite way of reading history as the process of the fulfilment of scripture, and of contemporary events as the fulfilment of the prophecies of the book of Revelation even if we have wide divergence and even opposition in terms of the way in which this history should play out.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, in the political letters typological relationships are developed between Dante and Old Testament prophets and between Dante and John the Baptist. In the *Monarchia* Dante draws typological linkages between himself and Isaiah, himself and Daniel, and himself and St Paul. As has been discussed, the language of the opening paragraphs of book III of the *Monarchia*

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<sup>329</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo*, p. 63.

<sup>330</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 57.

<sup>331</sup> Oldroyd, ‘Dante and the Medieval Prophets’, p. 77.

<sup>332</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back: Political Allegory in the Epistles’, p. 58.



suggests something more is at stake than an ambition merely to seek to imitate these models, rather it suggests an author who sees his own insight and authority as being on a par with those he cites; it also suggests an author who is familiar with the apocalyptic historicizing reading of the Bible which is central to Joachite and particularly Spiritual Franciscan modes of biblical exegesis. Dahan's observations regarding biblical exegesis seem to resonate with Dante. In Scripture, realities (*res*) have as much significance as words, and Dahan argues that this is a key characteristic of the medieval mind set. The divine message is written not merely in the letter of revealed texts but also in the universe as a whole: 'an interpenetration working between the Word and the World each clarifying and giving a reading guide for the other'.<sup>333</sup> These categories of things: people/plants etc. could be interpreted allegorically or topologically. When dealing with *personae*, the allegorical seems the most common characteristic: this is 'typological allegory', a means of interpretation, present throughout the history of biblical exegesis, which was particularly widespread in the medieval period. The basic principal is that each person of the Old and New Testament is a figure, a type, a prefiguration of a later person. Here there are two categories: figures of Christ (and of his enemies) and also figures of the Church (and the persons who oppose it). Old Testament persons can prefigure those in the New, but, more peculiarly to this kind of reading, those of the New are equally figures for people and events in the modern world up to and including the end of time. One may ask if 'historical allegory' constitutes a sub-species of this practice whereby Old Testament and New Testament characters prefigure historical personages, contemporaries of the authors, who read them into this (frequently polemical) exegesis.<sup>334</sup> The inspiration of Joachite writings seem clear in this type of exegesis and, as will be discussed this method is one which found its place in the writings of Spiritual Franciscan writers of Dante's period such as Casale and Olivi.

#### 4.3 Dante and Pseudo-Joachite texts

Throughout the Duecento, there was a wealth of Pseudo-Joachite prophecies, which

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<sup>333</sup> G. Dahan, *L'Exégèse chrétienne de la Bible en Occident médiéval, XII-XIVe siècles* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), p. 325.

<sup>334</sup> Dahan, *L'Exégèse chrétienne de la Bible*, p. 345.

performed biblical exegesis to enter into contemporary political and theological disputes such as the Holy Roman Empire's wars in Italy against the Papacy. In the *Super Hieremiam*, (c. 1250) the Emperor is presented as a manifestation of the Antichrist who will persecute the Church before his eventual defeat.<sup>335</sup> At the same time however he is the servant of God sent to act in vengeance against the Church because of its disobedience and corruption; it is for their own good and in order to provoke the spiritual renovation of the Church.<sup>336</sup>

Manselli has argued that there is evidence to suggest direct contact of Dante with Pseudo-Joachite works, as the same concerns, particularly regarding clerical greed and corruption, are articulated in similar language, as are the apocalyptic constructions which these works placed on Frederick II, St Francis and the role of the Franciscan order.<sup>337</sup> The *Super Esaiam* says of the greed of the Curia 'ob novorum phariseorum superbiam et scribarum'<sup>338</sup> and Manselli notes the link to Dante's description of the Pope in *Inferno* XXVII:

Lo principe d'i novi Farisei,  
avendo guerra presso a Laterano,  
e non con Saracin né con Giudei (*Inf.*, XXVII, 85-87)

The phrase 'prince of the new Pharisees' is significant as it does not appear in the New Testament nor in contemporary exegesis but is peculiar to the world of Joachite prophecy and, more precisely to the Spiritual Franciscans.<sup>339</sup>

The theme of the purging of the Church by a Roman Emperor, introduced in the very first chapter of the *Super Hieremiam* with a gloss on Jeremiah 1. 14-15.

Et dixit Dominus ad me: Ab aquilone pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terræ: quia ecce ego convocabo omnes cognationes regnorum aquilonis, ait Dominus: et venient, et ponent unusquisque solium suum in introitu portarum Jerusalem, et super omnes muros ejus in circuitu, et super universas urbes Juda. (Jeremiah 1. 14-15)

The author of the *Super Hieremiam* interprets these verses as referring to the

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<sup>335</sup> *Super Hieremiam*, p. 345

<sup>336</sup> *Super Hieremiam*, p. 335

<sup>337</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioachino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 63.

<sup>338</sup> Abbatis Joachim Florensis, *Scriptum super Esaiam Prophetam*, (Venice: L. De Soardis, 1517) Cap. 22, f. 37b.

<sup>339</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioachino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 63.

Germanic Roman Emperors who will persecute the Church: ‘Ab aquilone pandetur one malum’ and ‘Alemannorum imperium semper extitit nostris durum, dirum et mirum’<sup>340</sup> It is emphasised in the text that it is God who says ‘Ego convocabo’: the German Emperors are thus the instrument with which God will punish the Church.

Primo loco contra ecclesiam et prelatos adducendi sunt reges et principes Alemannorum, et erigent sedes suas, scilicet stationes in portis praelatorum, et ecclesiarum etiam subditarum. Secundo loco, ipsi praelati superbi contra catholicam dignitatem et apostolicam sedem conspirabunt; vt eorum superbia non solum portas clericorum deiiciat, sed etiam ad deum semper ascendat. (*Super Hieremiam*, p. 26)

Here, and in general in the *Super Hieremiam*, all prophecies in Jeremiah regarding the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar and are seen as prefiguring a Germanic Roman Emperor’s attack on the Church which, is used to impose an apocalyptic interpretation of an imperial intervention:

ecce ego mittam et assumam universas cognationes aquilonis, ait Dominus, et Nabuchodonosor regem Babylonis servum meum, et adducam eos super terram istam, et super habitatores ejus, et super omnes nationes quæ in circuitu illius sunt: et interficiam eos, et ponam eos in stuporem et in sibilum, et in solitudines sempiternas.’ (Jeremiah 25. 9)

The *Super Hieremiam* gives itself a fictional date of composition of 1197 and thus critiques Frederick II while purporting to address his predecessor Henry VI. Henry is warned that destruction from the North prophesied in Jeremiah would be fulfilled in his son the future Frederick II. The *Super Hieremiam* thus makes use of the type of pseudo-prophecy in which Dante himself engages through the time frame device of the *Commedia*. Perhaps the most famous example of this comes in *Inferno* XIX’s condemnation of the corrupt papacy. Here Dante audaciously predicts the damnation of the Pope who ruled at the time of the poem’s composition, and of the Pope who ruled at the fictional date of the journey. Burr notes that the Jeremiah commentary is also a genuine jeremiad and that, while attacking Frederick II, its target is very much the Church as well: the conditions of the people of Israel in Jeremiah are made to prefigure the condition of the new Israel, the Church.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>340</sup> *Super Hieremiam*, p. 26.

<sup>341</sup> Burr, *Olivi’s Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 6

The *Super Hieremiam* then contains a fundamental ambiguity in its attitude to the Emperor in that the Empire's victimization of the Church has both a positive and a negative aspect: 'The Empire robs the Church, yet robs it of a wealth that the Church should not love anyway. Desolation of the Church by the Empire and then by the eastern power represents the means by which the Church is purified'.<sup>342</sup> In the light of this it is instructive to note the way in which Dante dramatizes the Donation of Constantine through the actions of the eagle in *Purgatorio* XXXII:

com' io vidi calar l'uccel di Giove  
per l'alber giù, rompendo de la scorza,  
non che d'i fiori e de le foglie nove;  
e ferì 'l carro di tutta sua forza;  
ond' el piegò come nave in fortuna,  
vinta da l'onda, or da poggia, or da orza. (*Purg.* XXXII, 112-117)

Hollander states that 'while the eagle of Jove may signify variously, there is no doubt that here and through the rest of the pageant of the persecution of the Church Militant it represents the Empire'.<sup>343</sup> Generally in medieval symbolism, as Austin notes, 'il vento aquilare si riferisce secondo i testi di Isaia e di Ezechiele alla potestà infernale'.<sup>344</sup>

The *Super Hieremiam* makes allusion under various scriptural figures to those who persecuted Joachim. The self identification of the author with Jeremiah is a feature of the *Super Hieremiam* which glosses Jeremiah 21. 3-5 such that the king of Judah prefigures the Church, the King of Babylon the Roman Emperor, and the Chaldeans, the Germans. Just as God chastised his people in the time of Zedekiah, so now he will chastise the new Israel, the Church, and it is the Empire that will be the agent of vengeance.<sup>345</sup> Caiaphas and the King who cuts and burns Jeremiah's book are seen as figures for those who condemned Joachim. Innocent III is Caiaphas, Zedekiah and Herod, and, perhaps most significantly with regard to Dante, Joachim himself is Jeremiah.

In letter XI to the Italian cardinals, as in *Purgatorio* VI, 76-78, Dante is able

<sup>342</sup> Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, p.6

<sup>343</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Purg.* XXXII, 109-117, accessed 20 August 2014

<sup>344</sup> H.D Austin, *Di alcune metafore controverse nell'opera di Dante* (Florence: n. pub., 1932), cited in G. Fallani, 'Il Canto XXXII del *Purgatorio*', *Lectura Dantis Scaligera* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp.1191-206 (p. 1199).

<sup>345</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 77.

to co-opt Jeremiah's lamentation for Jerusalem in her widowhood to refer to the current state of the city of Rome deprived of her spouse the Emperor: 'Quomodo sola sedet civitas, plena populo! Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium' (*Ep.* XI, 1). This is an identification which is already present in *Vita Nova*, where Dante uses it to describe Florence deprived of Beatrice, and tells us he has already used it in a letter to the leaders of the city to lament its condition: 'Poi che fue partita da questo seculo, rimase tutta la sopradetta cittade quasi vedova dispogliata da ogni dignitade; onde io, ancora lagrimando in questa desolata cittade, scrissi a li prìncipi de la terra alquanto de la sua condizione, pigliando quello cominciamento di Geremia profeta che dice: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas*' (*VN*, XXX)

As Sapegno has noted there is also identification between Dante and Jeremiah throughout the *Commedia*,<sup>346</sup> as one who is persecuted but speaks with God on his side. As was noted in Chapter 3, Jeremiah is present in the *Commedia*'s last great condemnation of corruption and promise of imminent reform in *Paradiso* XXVII. Dante has St Peter lament the decline of the Church and prophesy its renewal through a double citation of Jeremiah.

In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci  
si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi:  
o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci? (*Par.* XXVII, 55-57)

As Sapegno highlights, Buti glosses this to mean 'i paschi, i benefici ecclesiastici, sono affidati a prelati indegni e cupidi; i quali, mentre dovrebbero essere come pastori a difendere dai lupi, cioè dai dimoni, li loro sudditi e li loro popoli, sono come lupi rapaci a divorare le loro facultà e a farli ruinare col loro malo esempio'.<sup>347</sup> Sapegno notes that this verse of Jeremiah (XXIII, 1) 'era largamente usata negli scritti polemici del tempo contro il clero avaro ed ipocrita'.<sup>348</sup> Dante in choosing to have St Peter allude to Jeremiah in making his prophecy is thus appropriating the approach of one of the key texts used to critique papal greed in apocalyptic terms.

This is Old Testament prophecy being read as having a prefigural relationship with an apocalypse which was getting under way. Similarly, in its reading of

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<sup>346</sup> Sapegno, DDP, note on *Paradiso* XXVII, 55 accessed 29 April 2014.

<sup>347</sup> Da Buti, DDP, Note on *Par.* XXVII, 55-66 accessed 02 December 2014.

<sup>348</sup> Sapegno, DDP, Note on *Par.* XXVII, 55-56 accessed 23 May 2014.

Jeremiah 24. 5-8, the imagery of prophecy is imposed onto the contemporary political landscape.

Hæc dicit Dominus Deus Israël: Sicut ficus hæ bonæ, sic cognoscam transmirationem Juda, quam emisi de loco isto in terram Chaldæorum, in bonum. Et ponam oculos meos super eos ad placandum, et reducam eos in terram hanc: et ædificabo eos, et non destruam: et plantabo eos, et non evellam. Et dabo eis cor ut sciant me, quia ego sum Dominus: et erunt mihi in populum, et ego ero eis in Deum, quia revertentur ad me in toto corde suo. Et sicut ficus pessimæ quæ comedi non possunt eo quod sint malæ, hæc dicit Dominus: Sic dabo Sedeciam regem Juda, et principes ejus, et reliquos de Jerusalem, qui remanserunt in urbe hac, met qui habitant in terra Ægypti. (Jeremiah 24. 5-8)

The imagery of two figs is interpreted such that the bad figs are equated with bad Popes who resist the authority of the Empire and try to grasp temporal power for themselves.<sup>349</sup> The good figs are those prelates who have recognised that temporal goods are under the authority of the Roman Empire.<sup>350</sup>

In this respect at least the Pseudo-Joachite text is quite close to Dante's especially in terms of the insistence on an acknowledgement that temporal goods cannot belong to the Church because they should belong to the Empire.<sup>351</sup> That is not to say that the author of the *Super Hieremiam* shows any interest in assigning any role beyond the constraining or chastising one to the Empire; the focus is the need for an absence of wealth in the Church. Dante's focus seems more two-pronged: the role of ensuring Church poverty is given to the Empire as this in turn prevents cupidity in the Church and in society in general. In Dante the Empire seems to have a value in its own right; it is of an intrinsic benefit to man that the Empire exists *per se*, not that it merely exists as a restraining influence on Church cupidity and on that of mankind more generally. It is perhaps noteworthy that in the *Commedia* the image of sweet fruit is used in *Inferno XV* to refer to those Florentines who are of true Roman stock (though the reference here to thorns and figs derives from Luke 6. 43-44). Given the presence of allusions to Jeremiah in St Peter's speech in *Paradiso XXVII*, it is also striking that the image of rotten fruit as a sign of the corruption which stems from sin (in this case cupidity) is also one which recurs in *Paradiso*

<sup>349</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 80.

<sup>350</sup> *Super Hieremiam*, p. 330.

<sup>351</sup> *Convivio IV*, iv 'tutto possedendo e più desiderare non possendo'.

XXVII:

Ben fiorisce ne li uomini il volere;  
 ma la pioggia continüa converte  
 in bozzacchioni le sosine vere. (*Par.* XXVII, 124-126)

Oldroyd has examined the prophecies of Dante's Earthly Paradise in the light of the *Super Hieremiam* and here too it is noted that while Pseudo-Joachite prophecy is generally seen as hostile to Dante's imperial dream, such prophecies were used throughout the thirteenth century by both papalists and imperialists.<sup>352</sup> When Dante awakes in the Earthly Paradise, Beatrice tells him he is to be a witness to what is about to happen to the Church; these are prophecies with apocalyptic dimensions as evidenced by both the profusion of imagery derived from the book of Revelation, and the fact that these final cantos of *Purgatorio* follow a model prevalent in apocalyptic writing; a chosen person who is shown a vision without understanding and then has it explained to them by an angel or some other guiding figure.<sup>353</sup>

Oldroyd gives three suggestions regarding Dante's motives in employing *Purgatorio* XXXII's prophecy of the heir of the eagle killing the harlot and the giant: First, if we read the *Commedia* as literary, Dante is merely casting the imperialist politics of *Convivio* IV, the political letters, and the *Monarchia* in poetic imaginative form; second, we may feel that Dante believed himself to be the recipient of a divine revelation of the 'truths' that he now makes the subject of his poem; and third, he had heard elsewhere prophecies of the type presented via Beatrice and St Peter and believed them to be genuine and presented them as genuine within the *Commedia*. It is not clear in Oldroyd's analysis whether she regards these alternatives as being mutually exclusive. However, from the wider context of the chapter, it is apparent that she views the third option as being the most influential. It seems to me that all three suggestions being simultaneously true would not diminish the claim for primacy of the third. Dante, like Joachim, is one who is 'con il spirito profetico dotato' (*Par.* XII, 141) who also has knowledge of works such as Olivi's Apocalypse commentary or the Pseudo-Joachite *Super Hieremiam* and appropriates the language or manner of these works, even where he is not in sympathy with their broader predictions in terms of the nature and function of the reform being predicted.

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<sup>352</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 72.

<sup>353</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 73.

While there was no future political order in Joachim's Sabbath Age, and no prospect of salvation through political agencies,<sup>354</sup> the older legend of a last golden age under a world Emperor may pertain here. The idea of Dante's ideal Emperor being related to the Byzantine legend which proclaimed the coming of a king to rescue Christendom at the height of its troubles is one advanced by Pietro di Dante who suggests that the prophecy of the Veltro may be based on the Pseudo-Methodius' prophecy of the Last World Emperor:

Item alia ipse Methodius prenuntiat in Novissimo: Sexto milliaria seculia exhibunt filii Israel vel Ismael de heremo, et erit adventus eorum sine mensura castigatio propter peccata gentium. Tunc surget rex Christianorum virtuosissimus qui, cum auxilio regis Grecorum, preliabitur cum eis et interficiet eos gladio et dominabitur orbi, et omnes gentes ponet in pace, et dividet mundum per X regna. Postea apparebit filium preditionis, Antichristus, de Corrizon nutritus in Bethsaydan, habens regnum in Chafarnaum, accipiens per vim tria de dictis X regnis, et reliqua septem non vi sed metu apparebunt ei.<sup>355</sup>

In the West, these expectations became linked to the great monarch who awaits resurrection (Arthur, Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa), but lacked the Trinitarian implication of a final age of the Spirit. This line of influence is one which Scott regards as tenable.<sup>356</sup> Under Joachite influence these Last World Emperors took on the role not only of conquerors of the Antichrist but also of reformers of the *ecclesia carnalis*.<sup>357</sup> This facet of the Last World Emperor as a reformer of the corrupt Church is precisely the role Dante gives to his reformers in the *Commedia*. In relating this to Dante's prophecy of the DXV, Scott notes that while it seems unwarranted to alter what Dante wrote, it must be remembered that DUX was a term commonly used in Joachite prophecies, where the Last Emperor, whose task it is to chastise the corrupt Church is specifically designated by the formula 'novus dux'.<sup>358</sup> Thus although there is no prospect of, or need for, a future political order in Joachim's conception of the reformed world, in works such as the *Super Hieremiam*, the first of such works in Italy, the Joachist innovation of the Antichrist being defeated before the apotheosis

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<sup>354</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 59.

<sup>355</sup> Pietro Alighieri, note on *Inferno* I, 100-105, DDP, accessed 6 November 2014.

<sup>356</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 64.

<sup>357</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 204.

<sup>358</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 205.



of history, was conflated with the older Byzantine prophecy of the Last World Emperor: ‘it needed the combination of this political dream with the Joachimist spiritual illumination of the third status to create a powerful form of political prophecy’.<sup>359</sup>

In this light it is perhaps also useful to recall the language employed in the political letters, which seem to be as strong a statement of Dante’s imperial messianism as we can find anywhere in his oeuvre. Certain passages of the letter to Henry VII make Dante, figurally, John the Baptist and Henry the figure of Christ. As I have highlighted earlier in this thesis, in both the letter to Henry and that to the Princes and Peoples of Italy, the Emperor is presented through a series of Christological analogues which serve to define the messianic nature of his role: ‘la natura di inviato provvidenziale, la sacralità del compito e della funzione’.<sup>360</sup>

Mineo has suggested that Dante was convinced that individual destiny was determined not just by subjective choices but also by the prevailing historical situation which, at that time, threatened the ultimate salvation of every Christian. In linking this state of affairs with the thoughts of Joachim, Dante found and was able to construct the idea of an eschatological-apocalyptic historical transition.<sup>361</sup> It should be remembered that if Dante is drawing on, or is influenced by aspects of these two types of prophecy, he is not drawing on obscure texts or adopting an esoteric manner of reading history which was peripheral to the mainstream of contemporary discourse. If Dante is drawing on Joachite and Pseudo-Joachite prophecies, or is influenced by the Pseudo-Methodius’s prophecy of the Last World Emperor or is perhaps, as Reeves has suggested seeking to fuse the two into a political imperial ideal which is uniquely his, then he is picking up on strands of thought which are fundamental to the practices of political and social commentary in the period. With regard to the eastern prophecies of the Last World Emperor, McGinn, has spoken of the immense influence of Pseudo-Methodius and notes that the text had been translated into a number of vernaculars.<sup>362</sup> P. J Alexander in a similar vein has noted how ‘the ideas expressed by the [Pseudo-Methodius treatise]

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<sup>359</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 61.

<sup>360</sup> Mineo, ‘Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante’, p. 152. The messianic view of Henry is one which is recorded by both Compagni, *Cronica* III, 24 and Villani *Nuova Cronica* IX, 19,

<sup>361</sup> Mineo, ‘Dante: un sogno di armonia terrena’, p. 19.

<sup>362</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, p. 71.

dominated eschatological thinking in the Byzantine Empire, in the Slavic Countries and in the Medieval West'.<sup>363</sup> Likewise when we turn from the Pseudo-Methodius to Joachim and Pseudo-Joachite prophecies, we find critics such as Cohn, on whose arguments John Scott bases his own conclusions, stressing the all-pervading influence of a new prophetic system which 'was to be the most influential one known to Europe until the appearance of Marxism'.<sup>364</sup> In the light of the omnipresence of these two strands of thought it is perhaps the apparent lack of explicit statement in the *Commedia* which may be the most surprising aspect. Their total absence from an imaginative work of this nature, dealing with this subject matter and created in that political climate is almost unthinkable. Cristaldi argues that in naming Joachim among the blessed, in the heaven of the Sun, Dante is not merely recognising the goodness of his life, but also the legitimacy of a cultural position which is given space next to the most conspicuous expressions of medieval Christian thought.<sup>365</sup> While I would agree with Cristaldi in this respect, I feel that the key differences of opinion on the nature and function of the imperial power both historically and in its application to the present crises in society mean that there is no way in which this endorsement in the Heaven of the Sun of the authenticity of Joachim's prophetic voice can be taken as evidence of Dante's wholesale acceptance of Joachim's views or those of his followers and imitators. Given the presentation of Manfred in *Purgatorio* III, both as a saved excommunicate and as Dante's example of the limits of papal authority, particularly a papal authority which is put to political purposes, it seems unlikely that Dante would have had no knowledge of both the apocalyptic constructions placed on the nature of the rule of Frederick and Manfred by their political supporters and opponents and of the fierceness of the contest for his symbolic legacy as either a Ghibelline hero or a Guelph hate-figure. Nor, given the apparent ubiquity of Pseudo-Joachite texts in Florence, does it seem too extravagant to claim that Dante may well have been aware of the ultimate intellectual source for such apocalyptic interpretations of the rule of a temporal monarch.

While 'most Dantists agree that Dante shows a great adherence to the ideal of

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<sup>363</sup> P. J. Alexander, 'The Diffusion of Byzantine Apocalypses in the Medieval West and the Beginnings of Joachimism', in *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. by Ann Williams (Essex: Longman, 1980), p. 72.

<sup>364</sup> N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Antichrists of the Middle Ages* (London: Temple Smithe, 1970), p. 418.

<sup>365</sup> Cristaldi, *Gioacchino da Fiore nel 'Paradiso' dantesco*, p. 120.

the radical pauperist reformers of the Church, for whom Joachim was the prophet of an imminent reform, the dream of a restoration of imperial power is at total variance to Joachim's third age'.<sup>366</sup> Joachim predicts a lack of need for earthly institutions in the third age, be it by Church or state.<sup>367</sup> Accepting this fundamental difference, Oldroyd argues that nonetheless not enough attention has been paid to the role of the Roman Emperor as reformer in Pseudo-Joachite texts. It is quite possible that when Dante hails Joachim as being a prophet he refers not to the teachings of the third age of the Spirit but more to the Pseudo-Joachite prophecies on Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Erythraean Sibyl and the Oracle of Cyril, which engage directly with contemporary political issues, in particular by drawing direct correspondence between Old Testament texts, apocalyptic texts, and current events. Such an interpretation would perhaps begin to ease some of the difficulties which Davis notes regarding the difference in attitude to imperial power which we find between Dante and those of his contemporaries, not least those in the Spiritual Franciscan movement, who show an adherence to Joachite ideas.<sup>368</sup>

In Pseudo-Joachite works, there is what Rusconi has described as a reductive tendency to present Joachim's role as that of prophet of the coming Antichrist.<sup>369</sup> Cristaldi too notes a lack of understanding in Joachim's contemporaries; he was seen in his own time as a prophet of the end of the world when in fact he was predicting the end of this world and the beginning of a new one.<sup>370</sup> If Dante regarded Pseudo-Joachite works as being authentic, we need to be aware of the particular constructions and interpretations to which the works were subject in Duecento Italy. Dante in adopting an apocalyptic manner appears to be more using the language of this type of prophecy rather than its whole agenda or at most he is picking selectively from the works. The Emperor will come but there does not seem to be any suggestion in Dante that the need for the Empire will disappear as a result; he may be a scourge of the Church, but will also be a direct positive force in temporal society ensuring the conditions of peace in which man lives best and can be most fully himself; Church and Empire will work together and maintain their own roles in the

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<sup>366</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 76.

<sup>367</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 76.

<sup>368</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 65.

<sup>369</sup> Rusconi, *Profeti e profezia nel medioevo*, p. 63.

<sup>370</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo*, p. 50.

future. While Dante's view may well be that the end of time is near and that reform is essential, there does not seem to be any implication anywhere in Dante of the kind of line of thought which predicts a Joachite withering away of both Church and Empire in the age of the spirit. Indeed Pseudo-Joachim is explicit on this point, in the third age only the contemplative church will remain:

Videsne lector quod sicut Romanum imperium fuit erectio ecclesie, sic et modo diebus istis novissimis sit iactura. Unde Ezechiel: Finis venit: venit finis. Finis utique senescentis ecclesie clericorum et finis superbientis similiter novorum imperii caldeorum. Neque proinde finis mundi: quia relinquetur adhuc sabbatismus populo Dei: ut ecclesia contemplantium habitet in fiducie tabernaculis et requie opulenta. (*Super Hieremiam*, p. 53)

Once more, this is Old Testament prophecy being read as having a prefigural relationship with an apocalypse which was getting under way. But Dante's Emperor is not merely a scourge of the corrupt Church nor is his function one which will fade away when the necessary scourging has occurred; there remains the positive enabling role assigned to the Emperor, and to the civic society whose peace and justice he ensures, in the *Monarchia*, the political letters, and, I argue, in the *Commedia*. If Dante's prophecies of political reform were derived directly from Joachim or Pseudo-Joachim we would be faced with the political letters welcoming an aspect of the Antichrist with language derived explicitly from St Paul via Isaiah, and from the Song of Songs. Dante says of Henry's descent into Italy ' "Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile", quo signa surgunt consolationis et pacis' (*Ep.* V, 1) and 'clementissimus Henricus, divus et Augustus et Cesar, ad nuptias properat' (*Ep.* V, 2). The positive, indeed messianic and Christological language attached to Henry in the political letters seems to me to rule out this possibility at least at this stage of Dante's life.

As Oldroyd has noted, for Pseudo-Joachim, the avenging Emperor is a figure for a German Emperor who is simultaneously Antichrist and a scourge of the Church: God's servant in carrying out God's will to chastise the Church.<sup>371</sup> In both Dante and Pseudo-Joachite texts, the Emperor is 'un messo di dio' and in both he is carrying out God's will to punish and reform the corrupt Church but only in Dante is

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<sup>371</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 85.

he a new Messiah and not an Antichrist. For Dante he is a Messiah who through his rule will assure the happiness of mankind. Indeed I would argue that the specifically political and earthly aspects of the Emperor's role never cease to be at the forefront of Dante's mind even in the highest circles of Paradise. When we see the throne reserved for Henry in the celestial rose, Beatrice tells Dante that here:

sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,  
de l'alto Arrigo, ch'a drizzare Italia  
verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta. (*Par.* XXX, 136-138)

The reform of the Church, whose corruption is so key to man's waywardness is clearly a part of the reformer's task, but, as in St Peter's speech in *Paradiso* XXVII, the wider function of justice in the temporal sphere is also to the fore; it is Italy not just the Church that Henry came to reform. Imperial control and just rule in both the temporal and spiritual spheres is essential: it is the whole fleet of human communities whose prows will shortly be turned to the right course:

Ma prima che gennaio tutto si sverni  
per la centesma ch'è là giù negletta,  
raggeran sì questi cerchi superni,  
che la fortuna che tanto s'aspetta,  
le poppe volgerà u' son le prore,  
sì che la classe correrà diretta;  
e vero frutto verrà dopo 'l fiore.' (*Par.* XXVII, 142-148)

It has been seen that many of Dante's most dramatically prophetic statements occur in the context of his criticising the Church or articulating his aspirations for, and advocacy of, the role of a single Emperor who will rule the whole world.<sup>372</sup> This Emperor's role will be to assure the peace on Earth under which humans can live most fully to their potential, and, as part of this role, he will combat what for Dante is the greatest enemy of peace: *cupiditas* and in particular the 'gloria d'acquistare' (*Conv.* IV, iv, 3) which manifests itself in the papacy's attempts to acquire and exercise the temporal power which belongs properly to the Emperor. Where the Joachite avenging Emperor is a warrior king, cruel and threatening, defiant towards God and the Church and yet the servant of God who, through him, will purge the

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<sup>372</sup> *Inf.* XIX, *Purg.* XXXII, *Par.* XXVII

Church of its corruption, the Pseudo-Methodius's last Emperor is by contrast a noble, good, God-fearing figure who rescues the Church in its hour of need.<sup>373</sup> Dante seems to appropriate elements of both prophetic traditions in his own predictions using the language, imagery and rhetoric of Joachim perhaps, but the Emperor for whose advent he hopes and the terms in which the Dante of the political letters welcomes Henry imply an attachment to the latter Pseudo-Methodius' type of Emperor: Henry is 'un messo di dio', but he is considered simultaneously as a positive force in the world, part of whose role will be to impose the necessary reforms on the Church for its corruption; as much a saviour than an agent of vengeance, though of course the two are not mutually exclusive, both elements are present in Dante's letters; vengeance will soon be taken against those who have gone against God's will in opposing Henry. In letter VI, to the Florentines, Dante prophesies that

Non equidem spes, quam frustra sine more fovetis, reluctantia ista iuvabitur, sed hac obice iusti regis adventus inflammabitur amplius, ac, indignata, misericordia semper concomitans eius exercitum avolabit; et quo false libertatis trabeam tueri existimatis, eo vere servitutis in ergastula conciditis (*Ep.* VI, 3).

This is wrathful vengeance but it is also the exercise of justice; the suppression of the false liberty which the Florentines have constructed in opposition to the true liberty which lies under a universal monarchy.

As Reeves has noted, in dealing with either Dante's putative Joachimism or the influence upon him of the older, Byzantine, Last World Emperor legend of the Pseudo-Methodius, it is difficult to pinpoint any direct connection between these and Dante's political messianism given the unique nature of Dante's own political thought and conclusions.<sup>374</sup> Likewise, in the light of the idea that the Franciscan Order was one of the main conduits for Joachite thought into Florence, Davis has discussed how far Franciscan ideas shaped Dante's hopes for reform and renewal and it is suggested that this too is problematic in two key respects. Firstly, Dante's confidence in imperial power and reform was not articulated by the Franciscans, and secondly Dante does not appear to share the Franciscans' belief that reform of the

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<sup>373</sup> Oldroyd 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 86.

<sup>374</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, p. 64.

Church could come from within. These are key differences, particularly so as it seems that for Dante the one is the direct consequence of the other, with correctly exercised imperial power being a prerequisite for a well-functioning Church. In general, in Dante poverty would have to be imposed on the Church by a strong temporal leader; there is little indication in *Paradiso* XI and XII of any confidence in the Church's capacity for self-reform.<sup>375</sup> The suggestion here seems to be that the mendicant orders' own corruption, in particular the abandonment of poverty, means that while their ideals are laudable, their current state prevents them from assisting in reform. We may then be dealing in Dante's own imperial political agenda with prophecies which are articulated through a fusion of Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Joachite prophecies to serve his predictions of a political order which is unique to him and often quite alien to the sources he is appropriating as they are deployed in the service of a political ideal which is wholly his own.

The seeming uniqueness of Dante's reasons for the necessity of Empire means he cannot be shown in either the *Monarchia* or the *Commedia* to be dependent on any one figure or school for his political views. For instance, in *De bono communi*, Remigio de' Girolami follows Aquinas, and anticipates Dante, in his views on the relationship between justice and peace and, like Dante, he makes appeal to history, especially Roman history, as a model of political peace and justice. But, as will be discussed in more depth in the second part of this chapter, in Remigio there is what Davis terms the momentous concession that the secular power is derived from the ecclesiastical and that the absence of an Emperor or strong temporal ruler legitimises the papacy's interference; a view which Dante vehemently rejects.<sup>376</sup> Indeed, he argues the converse, that it is excessive meddling in temporal affairs on the part of the Papacy which contributes to the weakness of the Empire. Marco Lombardo demonstrates how the transgression of the Church into the Empire's sphere of authority necessarily has a detrimental effect on both institutions:

L'un l'altro ha spento; ed è giunta la spada  
col pastorale, e l'un con l'altro insieme  
per viva forza mal convien che vada; (*Purg.* XVI, 109-11)

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<sup>375</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 202.

<sup>376</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 202.

Oldroyd has defined the distinctions and connections characteristic of Dante's Emperor in relation to the two key strands of contemporary prophetic expectation under discussion: Joachim and Pseudo-Joachim on the one hand, and the Last World Emperor prophecies on the other:

The Emperor will forcibly strip the Popes of their temporal goods, which is the central point of Joachim's prophecy but has no place in the Last Emperor tradition; he will then establish a reign of peace throughout the world which is the central point of the Last Emperor tradition and in line with imperialist expectations regarding the re-establishment of imperial authority but it is not part of the Joachite tradition.<sup>377</sup>

A selective approach to his intellectual sources allows Dante to articulate, through prophecy, a single programme of Church poverty and imperial renewal which appears to be uniquely his. The opposite of cupidity is charity, and this state of *caritas* is the one that will pertain when the reforming Emperor has done his work, but for Davis the *Veltro's* task (it could not be otherwise) is political as well as theological. Davis feels that it is an over-riding feature of Dante's thought in the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* that the only remedy against cupidity and the damage it does to the world is ecclesiastical poverty combined with imperial power. This is a view of Empire which may also extend to the *Convivio* where Dante defines the Empire as 'uno solo principato', with 'uno prencipe [...]; lo quale, tutto possedendo e più desiderare non possendo, li regi tegna contenti ne li termini de li regni, sì che pace intra loro sia, ne la quale si posino le cittadi, e in questa posa le vicinanze s'amino, in questo amore le case prendano ogni loro bisogno, lo qual preso, l'uomo viva felicemente; che è quello per che esso è nato' (*Conv.* IV, iv, 4). It is greed and lust for power which is the cause of the Earth's trouble, a point which Dante will reiterate in the letter to the Princes and Peoples of Italy where he says: 'Nec seducat alludens cupiditas, more Sirenum nescio qua dulcedine vigiliam rationis mortificans' (*Ep.* V, iv).

But of course the lack of an explicit statement on Dante's part and the unprogrammable nature of Dante's prophecies in the *Commedia* appear to lend credence to Scott's conclusion that although there is a strong possibility of Pseudo-Joachite influence on Dante's work, it is impossible to be certain whether the poet's

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<sup>377</sup> Oldroyd, 'Dante and the Medieval Prophets', p. 87.



prophecy of a reformer is intended to refer to the last temporal ruler of history or whether ‘Dante, as so often, adopted the various millenarian myths to suit his own purpose which was to act as the prophet of the new Augustus (*Mon.* I, xi, 12) who immune from greed would usher in a Golden Age of peace and unity’.<sup>378</sup> It seems that while Dante’s Emperor may perform a number of the functions assigned to the Antichrist in works such as the *Super Hieremiam*, in particular the reform of the Church, and is also presented in an apocalyptic context in the *Commedia*, the political letters suggest that it is the role of Messiah rather than the Antichrist which is at the forefront of Dante’s mind when he thinks of the Emperor.

#### 4.4 Dante and Frederick II

It seems to me that in Dante, in contrast to the *Super Hieremiam*, the Emperor arriving from the North was a cause of joy for the world, not a necessary evil. This was certainly the case in Dante’s view of Henry VII who, as we have seen, is greeted in explicitly messianic terms in the political letters. When we consider Dante’s references to Frederick II, we seem to be presented with a view of Frederick which has strong positive elements and is more nuanced than is the case in the condemnation of Frederick in Pseudo- Joachite texts, or in his court’s messianic adulation of his rule. In terms of the role which Dante author ascribes to Dante pilgrim this is perhaps not surprising; Dante’s work undoubtedly has propagandist elements and certainly a political dimension which is fundamental to the overall meaning of the work. However, Dante in his role as author and prophet, roles which are coterminous, is following Cacciaguida’s instruction to transcend factionalism and is writing of man’s existence *sub specie aeternitatis*, and from the position of one afforded a divine revelation.

Condemned for his heresy as an Epicurean (*Inf.* X, 119), Frederick II was, for Dante, nonetheless the last Emperor to take his role as Emperor of all Europe seriously; in *Convivio* IV, iii, 6, he is described as ‘ultimo imperadore de li Romani’. It may seem strange that Dante should here support the kingship of the Epicurean Frederick II. The issue, however, is not Frederick’s personal worth, but his rights and privileges as Emperor which were grounds for contention between Frederick and the

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<sup>378</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 207.

Church throughout his reign. ‘The imperial propaganda and cultural renaissance of Frederick II’s court promulgated the ideal of the independent Empire as a mediator of justice. This is precisely the role which Dante ascribes to the Holy Roman Emperor (and specifically to the imperial programme of Henry VII) in his prose works, his epistles and the *Commedia*’.<sup>379</sup> Frederick, whose ‘dream of universal power made him regard himself as an Emperor of classical times and a direct successor to Augustus’,<sup>380</sup> seems to have thought of himself, and his role, in terms of which the author of the *Monarchia* would surely have approved. For Dante, it is the Emperor's God-given role and duty to rule over all of humanity: as is demonstrated by the Roman Empire being at its greatest extent at the time of Augustus and the birth of Christ.<sup>381</sup>

While there are differences in Dante’s views on Epicureanism between *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and the *Commedia*, not least the generally positive view of Frederick II at *DVE* I, xii, 4, versus the more negative portrayal which we find in *Inferno* X, 119-20, Corbett has made the case that differences here do not require us to read the *Commedia*’s condemnation of Frederick as a retraction of his earlier view: ‘First, praise from the perspective of man’s judgement is shown to be compatible with damnation from the perspective of God’s judgement, and second, a man may be commended as an exemplar of a particular aspect of virtue and yet be considered despicable on account of one specific vice’.<sup>382</sup> As Corbett goes on to point out, this way of considering the merits and demerits of Frederick II is one which would serve equally well for Brunetto Latini or Bertran de Born,<sup>383</sup> and would also serve as an assessment of Farinata.

As Emperor, Frederick II inherited ‘a structure of grandiose early-medieval theoretical formulations which asserted the sacred, religious and divinely ordained character of his rule and his right and duty to exercise secular lordship over all men’.<sup>384</sup> Such claims regarding the nature of imperial power allowed apocalyptic and Joachite-influenced prophecy to be an effective imperial tool as well as a tool with which the Church could be critiqued by dis-satisfied elements within it. It is

<sup>379</sup> G. Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 46.

<sup>380</sup> R. Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 12.

<sup>381</sup> *Monarchia*, I, xvi.

<sup>382</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p.19.

<sup>383</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 20.

<sup>384</sup> Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch*, p. 25.

indicative of the centrality of apocalyptic prophecy to political disputes and propaganda that the same prophecies and prophetic practices which were used by Frederick's enemies to condemn him, were also used as pro-imperial propaganda by Frederick II and his court where 'Frederick deliberately encouraged a form of messianic adulation towards his person that went beyond the usual patterns of sacral kingship'.<sup>385</sup> Marjorie Reeves argues that the language surrounding Frederick constitutes an 'Imperial Joachism',<sup>386</sup> and notes that Frederick had hailed his own birth place, Jesi, as a second Bethlehem adapting the words of the prophet Micah: 'Et tu, Bethlehem Ephrata, parvulus es in millibus Juda; ex te mihi egredietur qui sit dominator in Israël, et egressus ejus ab initio, a diebus æternitatis!' (Micah 5. 1). Frederick also equated himself with the prophet Elijah, a key symbol of 'renovatio' in Joachite texts.<sup>387</sup> In this context, the attitude of the Spiritual Franciscan chronicler, Angelo Clareno is striking. Clareno too places an apocalyptic construction of Frederick's reign and the events of the day.

Ecclesia infra tempus idem serpent insultus et varia bella et gravia sustinet ab his qui se domesticos dicuntum et carnaliter et superbe adversus eam et un ipsam regnare voluntum sive seculares christiani sint sive clerici et hi signati sunt in reprobis imperatoribus, et specialiter in Frederico imperatore, qui imperavit sancti Francisci tempore.<sup>388</sup>

Clareno places Frederick, the Franciscan order and the return of Elijah within the same historical apocalyptic context. But here, rather than being a figure of Frederick as he is in imperial propaganda, for Clareno, Elijah is part of the solution to the apocalyptic crisis of which Frederick is a manifestation. The division caused by lay and clerical malfeasance will not last long 'et per Eliam omnium restitutio'.<sup>389</sup>

Joachim of Fiore had predicted an imperial power that would persecute the Church as part of the process of transition to the third age, the age of the Spirit. The use of apocalyptic language to attack Frederick II in this light serves to place him in an apocalyptic context which is more literal-historical than it is allegorical. Frederick was criticised by his opponents using the language of Revelation, and was described

<sup>385</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, p.168.

<sup>386</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 309.

<sup>387</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore*, p. 62.

<sup>388</sup> Clareno, *Liber Chronicarum* VI, 221-223.

<sup>389</sup> Clareno, *Liber Chronicarum* VI, 239.

as the leviathan, the *aquila*, the sixth or seventh head of the dragon, and the (German) *imperium* portrayed as the scourge of the Church. For example, in the *Super Esaiam*, Frederick, already 10 years dead, is identified as the seventh head of the dragon of Revelation 12. 1-18.<sup>390</sup> The *Liber Figurarum* by Joachim himself had equated the first six heads of the dragon of Revelation 12 with previous persecutors of the Church, Herod, Nero and so on. The seventh head of the serpent, an anonymous king, is the last in this sequence of temporal persecutors and is also the First Antichrist.<sup>391</sup> In the *Super Hieremiam*, the seventh head is explicitly linked to Frederick, seemingly indicative of a wish to conflate imperial power and its current ambitions with an apocalyptic Emperor whose role will be as scourge of the Church. This, among the *frati minori*, is indicative of a wish to critique the Church not the Empire; the scourge is God's punishment for the Church in its corruption as the Franciscan Salimbene's chronicle makes clear in depicting Frederick as the Great Persecutor of the Church.<sup>392</sup>

However, where Frederick's enemies use their commentaries on the Old Testament prophets to condemn the Emperor, Frederick was hailed by his minister Pier della Vigna as the *aquila grandis* of Ezekiel 17. 3; Reeves notes this as another key Joachite text.<sup>393</sup> While the Pseudo-Joachite commentary on Jeremiah, like that on Isaiah condemns Frederick's rule in apocalyptic terms, Pier relates Frederick's mission to the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in a positive sense. Here Frederick is the bearer of righteous truth and it is he who is beset by enemies:

Hunc si quidem terra et pontus adorant, et aethera satis applaudunt, ut pote qui mundo verus Imperator a divino provisus culmie, pacis amicus, caritatis patronus, juris conditor, justitiae conservator, potentiae filius mundum perpetua relatione gubernat. Hic est de quo Ezechielis verba proclamant. 'Aquila grandis magnarum alarum, longo memborum ductu, plena plumis et varietate multiplici'. Hic est de quo loquitur Jeremias 'replebo te hominibus quasi brucho, et super te celeuma cantabitur' Talis ergo praesidio principis protectus mundus exultet.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> *Super Esaiam* f. 59 r-v.

<sup>391</sup> Joachim of Fiore, *Liber Figurarum* (Venice: Bindoni and Pasini, 1527), fol. 197 r. col 1.

<sup>392</sup> Salimbene da Adam, *Cronica* ed. by Giuseppe Scalia, 2 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1966), II 303.

<sup>393</sup> Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore*, p. 60.

<sup>394</sup> J. L. A., Huillard-Bréholles, *Vie et Correspondance de Pierre de la Vigne* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966), p. 425.

Pier is here choosing to deploy an apocalyptic prophecy of the destruction of Babylon in Frederick's support; it is the Emperor who is the one sent by God, and by extension those who oppose him are Babylonians destined to be destroyed.

Reeves suggests that, whatever Frederick's own views, there were those around him who found this messianic language really expressed their expectation, and argues that this bold adaptation of biblical prophecy and symbol betrays a Joachimist current of influence (as it also does in the Franciscan circles of Ubertino and Pier Giovanni Olivi of a generation later). While the Joachite basis of this mode of thinking may well not have been realised even by those in the Imperial court who deployed it: 'the emotional overtones of these writings, propagandist though they may be, were eschatological. To his supporters Frederick was the ultimate *renovator mundi* and in him the biblical promises were finally fulfilled'.<sup>395</sup>

Frederick's court was able to picture the relationship of his chancellor Pier della Vigne to Frederick II as that of Peter to Christ using the same kind of parallelism that Dante uses in the political letters to establish his own role as akin to that of John the Baptist to Henry VII's Christ.<sup>396</sup> Through Pier's condemnation in *Inferno* we see a parodic expression of Petrine power in Pier's allusion to his holding the keys to the Emperor's heart; an image which derives ultimately from Isaiah, 22 and is also present in Revelation 3. 10.

Dante writes to Henry 'Tu es qui venturus es, an alium expectamus?', (*Ep.* VII, 2) the question which John the Baptist's followers put to Christ<sup>397</sup> and which was answered with a clear assertion of Christ's own messianic status:

Alter die vidit Joannes Jesum venientem ad se, et ait: Ecce agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccatum mundi. Hic est de quo dixi: Post me venit vir qui ante me factus est: quia prior me erat. (John 1. 29-30)

These are verses which Dante quotes later in the same paragraph to hail Henry's advent in explicitly messianic terms: 'Tunc exultavit in me spiritus meus, quum tacitus dixi mecum: "Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi!"' (*Ep.* VII, 2)

Of course, there is a fundamental difference between appropriating the

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<sup>395</sup> Reeves., *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 310.

<sup>396</sup> Huillard-Bréholles, *Vie et Correspondance de Pierre de la Vigne*, p. 426.

<sup>397</sup> John 1. 19-25.

language of prophecy and apocalypse to create and maintain power networks within an imperial court and, if we accept it as such, Dante's belief in himself as prophet and in Henry VII as a genuine messiah, but it is clear that Dante's letters, interpreted as genuinely prophetic or as purely rhetorical do have a similarly 'practical' political purpose to persuade and to convince. As was noted in Chapter 2, in the *Super Hieremiam*, the seventh head of the beast of Revelation is explicitly linked in an illustration of the dragon to Frederick, While Dante does not make quite such explicit parallels in his own imperial-apocalyptic prophecies the historical sweep of the pageant in the Earthly Paradise strongly suggests that the whore and the giant are intended to refer to individuals or institutions at work here and now. Dante condemns Frederick but eulogises the Frederican court (*Inf.* XII, 75; *Conv.* IV, iv-v) which serves to identify him politically, ethically and artistically with the imperial cause he was to champion.<sup>398</sup> In *Purgatorio* XVI the period of Frederick II's rule is defined by Marco Lombardo as having been marked by human worth and courtesy, in marked contrast to the present. Indeed he appears to view the opposition to Frederick II as the turning point between the former age and the present:

In sul paese ch'Adice e Po riga,  
solea valore e cortesia trovarsi,  
prima che Federigo avesse briga. (*Purg.* XVI, 115-17)

It seems to me that this is a worked, historically verifiable, example of the disastrous consequences of Church involvement in temporal affairs, which Marco condemns in general terms elsewhere in this, the *Commedia's* central canto; the reason there are so few good men left in the lands bordered by Adige and Po is that the Church, in opposing Frederick, has not allowed the Empire to carry out its divinely appointed function to lead man towards the happiness of this life. Without a strong Emperor in the saddle to put his hand to the bridle mankind will tend to go astray. Reading the *Commedia* vertically, this episode with its memories of a former valour and courtesy now eclipsed by greed seems to me to anticipate the lament of Cacciaguida for the current corruption of Florence and his nostalgia for the 'buon tempo antico' seemingly rooted in the admixture of Roman and non-Roman peoples in Florence.

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<sup>398</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 46.

Continuing to read vertically when we turn to *Inferno XVI*, the same concerns and indeed the same terms can also be found in Dante's encounter with the three good Guelphs, Florentines in the same circle as Brunetto Latini, who ask the pilgrim if the virtues of valour and courtesy still survive in the city or whether they have been driven out by self-interest:

cortesia e valor di se dimora  
ne la nostra città sì come suole,  
o se del tutto se n'è gita fora; (*Inf. XVI, 67-69*)

The Florentine Guelphs whom Dante treats so sympathetically in *Inferno XVI*, are aware that these two virtues are what underpin a peaceful society and it is these that are threatened by faction and greed. It is clear that for Dante, the failure of Frederick II, like the influx of new money into Florence, marked a turning point in history which had as its consequence the decline in the behaviour of the populace.

In Dante's presentation of Frederick II the efficacy of a 'good' Emperor in the field of temporal matters is not compromised by the Christian sin which will condemn him. Dante's representation of Epicureanism personified in the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II engages directly with contemporary Guelf-Ghibelline polemics and propaganda such as the *Super Hieremiam*, and 'Dante's partial approbation of the Epicurean supports his imperial political programme'.<sup>399</sup> The presentation of Frederick in a work of literature with a didactic function and a prominent apocalyptic dimension could not but be a political act. As McGinn observes: 'Any apocalyptic belief in a divinely determined structure of history must be both religious and profoundly political, such strong conviction about the relationship of current events to the end of time which gives all history its meaning, must entail political positions on the part of its adherents'.<sup>400</sup>

As Davis has noted, Dante's central idea of clerical poverty combined with universal imperial power is one which bears a resemblance to that articulated by Frederick in his manifesto *Illos Felices*, delivered to the Council of Lyons in 1245 shortly after his deposition. Moreover Dante's knowledge of the works and style of Frederick's imperial chancellor, Pier della Vigna, meant he had direct access to ideas

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<sup>399</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 48.

<sup>400</sup> McGinn, 'Pastor Angelicus', p. 224.

of the sacredness and universality of Empire, its direct derivation from God, and of the Empire's role as protector and chastiser of the clerical portion of the Church.<sup>401</sup> Kantorowicz emphasises the way in which Frederick's vision of the power relationship and purposes of the two powers anticipates that of Dante: 'a penniless Peter as Pope, side by side with him an Emperor of boundless possessions both immediately appointed of God'.<sup>402</sup>

In concluding this first part of Chapter Four, we may say that, for Dante, one function of the Emperor is to act as the kind of scourge of the Church envisioned in Pseudo-Joachite texts, but that it is less clear whether the Emperor does so as part of a transition to a Joachite new age. Further, it would seem that it cannot be the case that Dante casts the Emperor as an aspect of the Antichrist as is the case in works such as the *Super Hieremiam*. Dante's is a more reactionary position; his new dawn is modelled not on a removal of institutions but on their restoration. He seeks the renewal, or imitation, of an historical set of circumstances, and hopes for a return to a *status quo* based on the Roman paradigm of Universal Empire, the *plenitudo temporis*, and apostolic poverty, where the Church and the Empire will fulfil their mutually supportive but separate roles.

While it is difficult to develop precise correlations, this is not to say that Dante was not inspired and influenced by Pseudo-Joachite thought. However, while the need for a radically repauperised Church is central to both, Dante's central and abiding concern with the supreme, God-ordained, role of the Emperor may make us question the ultimate function of apocalyptic language in Dante; is it a rhetorical tool in the manner of Frederick II's propaganda, or is it a sincerely held belief that the last days are at hand? I would argue that it is never explicit in Dante whether his apocalyptic language is a tool to articulate ideas about society or whether the apocalyptic language seeks to place contemporary society in a genuinely apocalyptic context. An acceptance of either interpretation creates profound questions regarding Dante's conception of the nature and function of imperial power and society in general, and these are issues to which I return in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

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<sup>401</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 54.

<sup>402</sup> E. H. Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second 1194-1250*, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London: Constable and Co., 1931), pp. 616-17.



#### 4.5 Apocalyptic Expectation in Late Duecento Italy

By the mid-thirteenth century Joachim's interpretation of the two witnesses of the apocalypse of Revelation 11 as being prophecies of two orders of spiritual men sent to save the world, was being appropriated by the two mendicant orders to refer to themselves. In 1255 the two generals of the Dominicans and Franciscans issued a joint encyclical expressing this idea; the two orders are presented as two great lights, two olive branches, all images used by Joachim.<sup>403</sup> These are the two witnesses to the apocalypse who are given the gift of prophecy, will live in poverty, will be martyred and rise again.

et dabo duobus testibus meis, et prophetabunt diebus mille ducentis sexaginta, amicti saccis. Hi sunt duæ olivæ et duo candelabra in conspectu Domini terræ stantes. Et si quis voluerit eos nocere, ignis exiet de ore eorum, et devorabit inimicos eorum: et si quis voluerit eos lædere, sic oportet eum occidi. Hi habent potestatem claudendi cælum, ne pluat diebus prophetiæ ipsorum: et potestatem habent super aquas convertendi eas in sanguinem, et percutere terram omni plaga quotiescumque voluerint (Revelation 11. 3-4)

Benfell notes that the apocalyptic hermeneutic proves to be characteristic both of Dante's poem and of the writing of the Spiritual Franciscans who were convinced that the mainstream of their order had betrayed the intentions of its founder: 'The Spiritual Franciscans turned to the book of apocalypse as a way of understanding the growing laxity of other Franciscans'.<sup>404</sup> I will suggest that Dante, under the influence of these kinds of writings, turned to the book of Revelation as a way of understanding, and articulating God's intentions for man both here and now and hereafter; I will argue for a breadth of scope and a centrality of political concerns which are largely absent from these putative 'source' writings.

Havely believes Dante became aware of the teaching and ideology of Santa Croce's Spiritual Franciscan lecturers, Pier Giovanni Olivi and Ubertino da Casale in the 1290s, a period when, in France and Central Italy, their rigorist ideals were in the ascendancy. This is a belief which informs his assertion that Olivi and Ubertino were the two key figures at Santa Croce for the *Commedia's* view on evangelical poverty. Both men were in Florence in the late 1280s and although *Convivio* II, xii, 7 implies

<sup>403</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 146. Reeves also notes that this identification is a feature of numerous Pseudo-Joachite prophecies in the second half of the Duecento.

<sup>404</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', p. 10.

Dante only began to frequent the *scuole* after 1290, it is possible he may have done so earlier and almost certain that he heard, or at the very least heard of, Olivi and Ubertino's ideas at 'a time when the division between the Spirituals and the Conventuals was deepening and the Spirituals looked set to gain some degree of support and recognition'.<sup>405</sup> Olivi's Apocalypse commentary was in widespread circulation in Italy and Southern France prior to its condemnation in 1326.<sup>406</sup> The question of Dante's knowledge of the work is debated, since Dante never mentions Olivi by name. Davis argues that Dante's use of apocalyptic imagery and ideas is similar to that of Olivi and that knowledge of his ideas is very likely since Olivi taught as lector in S. Croce from 1287-89 and Dante may have met him. Likewise Pasquini asserts that 'pare quasi impossibile che il Dante ventiquattrenne ormai inserito a pieno titolo nell'intelligenza fiorentina, non lo avvicinasse o non ne sentisse parlare'.<sup>407</sup> Ubertino was Olivi's pupil and his presence is attested in Florence as lector at Santa Croce; it is generally accepted that Dante knew his work first hand.<sup>408</sup>

#### 4.6 Ubertino da Casale

Chapter 2 of this thesis noted how the controversies surrounding clerical poverty and the relationship between Church and state were very much alive in Florence in the 1290s and presented some of the key methods by which these debates were conducted. As will be discussed, perhaps the best evidence for sympathy on Dante's part towards the Spirituals comes in the Heaven of the Sun and Aquinas's account of Francis's marriage to Lady Poverty which accords with the Spirituals' insistence on *usus pauper* as a literal interpretation of the rule. Dante's support is complicated, however, by the description of the current state of the Franciscan order (*Par.* XII, 124-26). Where Aquasparta, as Minister General of the order is seen as having been

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<sup>405</sup> Havelly *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 35; Nicolò Maldina has highlighted the close relationship between the rhetorical techniques used by Franciscan preachers in Florence and Dante's poetry. See for example: N. Maldina 'Dante e l'immagine del buon predicatore nel Paradiso', *L'Alighieri*, 43 (2014), 41-63.

<sup>406</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 6.

<sup>407</sup> Pasquini, 'L'Olivi e Dante.', p. 233.

<sup>408</sup> See for example Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', pp. 31-38; C. T. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, pp. 226-28.

too lax in the application of the rule, Ubertino is seen to have been over strict:

ma non fia da Casal né d'Acquasparta,  
là onde vegnon tali a la scrittura,  
ch'uno la fugge e altro la coarta. (*Par.* XII, 124-126)

As Benfell notes, the tendency prior to 1320 to refer to the Spirituals as ‘Ubertino and his associates’ suggests the entire Spiritual movement is intended here; Dante’s choice of Bonaventure as a spokesman for the Franciscans, suggests that while Dante condemned the corruption, he was not willing to go as far as the other more radical spirituals in his claims.<sup>409</sup> As Bolognesi has noted, for Dante only a few friars are following the Franciscan ideal appropriately, and neither Casale nor Acquasparta is among them.<sup>410</sup> While there is clearly sympathy for the Spiritual position in Dante, nowhere more so than in the shared desire for a church returned to a state of apostolic poverty, Barański considers Dante’s words here to be a careful strategy to distance himself from the more radical areas of Franciscan thought and to align himself more carefully with Bonaventure’s moderate Franciscanism.<sup>411</sup>

In terms of the key Florentine influences on Dante’s apocalyptic manner, I will focus to some extent on Olivi because he is widely seen as being the most important exegete of the book of Revelation at this period,<sup>412</sup> as well as a key influence which saw Joachim's works revived in the city and contextualised with the contemporary scene.<sup>413</sup> However, Davide Bolognesi has recently proposed that in terms of influence on Dante, Ubertino da Casale should occupy a more central position.<sup>414</sup> Davis has noted Dante’s indebtedness to the Spiritual Franciscans for many aspects of his apocalyptic ideas; in particular, it is noted that Dante is indebted to Ubertino for his conception of Francis and Dominic and the historical mission of the orders they instituted.<sup>415</sup> The heaven of the Sun does provide some evidence that Dante seems to support the Franciscan reading of history, in his insistence that

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<sup>409</sup> Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, p. 16.

<sup>410</sup> Bolognesi ‘Dante and the Friars Minor’, p. 7.

<sup>411</sup> Z. G. Barański, ‘(Un)orthodox Dante’ in *Reviewing Dante’s Theology*, II, 253-330, p. 321.

<sup>412</sup> See for example Manselli, *La ‘Lectura super apocalipsim’*; Manselli ‘Dante e gli Spirituali francescani’ pp. 47-61; Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, pp. 9-50.

<sup>413</sup> Burr, *Olivi’s Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 55.

<sup>414</sup> Bolognesi ‘Dante and the Friars Minor’, p. vi.

<sup>415</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 226.

Francis, uniquely, renewed the ideas of an evangelical life through a re-enactment of the life of Christ. Poverty had been deprived of her husband, Christ, for 1100 years (*Par.*, XI, 64-66) and Francis's reception of the stigmata is described as his receiving the final seal from Christ (*Par.*, XI, 107). In *Paradiso* XI Dante identifies the two founders of the orders with two orders of angels, as does Ubertino in the *Arbor vitae*.<sup>416</sup>

Inter quos in typo Helie et Enoch Franciscus et Dominicus singulariter claruerunt, quorum primus seraphico calculo purgatus et ardore celico inflammatus totum mundum incedere videbatur. Secundus vero ut cherub extentus et protegens lumine sapientie clarus et verbo predicationis fecundus super mundi tenebras clarius radiavit. (*Arbor vitae*, V, III, 421b)

Dante condenses the passage into one effective tercet which may lend credence to Bolognesi's assertion that Dante had the *Arbor vitae* open on his desk as he was writing the cantos of the Heaven of the Sun:<sup>417</sup>

L'un fu tutto serafico in ardore;  
l'altro per sapienza in terra fue  
di cherubica luce uno splendore. (*Par.* XI, 37-39)

Ubertino's 'Seraphico calculo purgatus et ardore celico inflammatus totum mundum incedere videbatur', recalls *inter alia* Isaiah's investiture as prophet:

Et volavit ad me unus de seraphim, et in manu ejus calculus, quem forcipe tulerat de altari, et tetigit os meum, et dixit: Ecce tetigit hoc labia tua, et auferetur iniquitas tua, et peccatum tuum mundabitur. Et audivi vocem Domini dicentis: Quem mittam? et quis ibit nobis? Et dixi: Ecce ego, mitte me. (Isaiah 6. 6-8)

This resembles Dante's own appropriation of this imagery at the opening of Book III of the *Monarchia* where he describes himself as being inspired by the 'calore carbonis illius quem unus de Seraphin accepit de altari celesti et tetigit labia Ysaie' (*Mon.*, III, i).

In this respect I would also note Olivi's identification with the prophet Isaiah

<sup>416</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 226.

<sup>417</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p.7.

in construction of his own defence. As was noted earlier, Joachim of Fiore is described by Dante as being ‘Con il spirito profetico dotato’ (*Par.* XII, 141), and it appears that Dante systematically identifies with Old Testament prophets and constructs himself as being their successor. The Franciscan chronicler Angelo Clareno tells us that when Olivi faced the Minister General of the Franciscan order for having come to Avignon without permission, he chose to defend himself using the words of Isaiah 11. 4: ‘Spiritu oris sui interficiet impium’, and that he spoke with such fervour of spirit and so effectively that ‘cognoverunt omnes quod prophetico spiritu illustrates a tali auctoritate denuntiandi sermonis maglinantibus et inique agentibus intium fecit’.<sup>418</sup> If the Franciscan order saw itself as the fulfilment of the book of Revelation this logically also made them the fulfilment of the words of the Old Testament prophets. Clareno thus relates the right to denounce iniquity to a divine gift of prophecy in Olivi and relates his eloquence to the same gift: I have suggested earlier in this thesis that this is precisely the type of authority which Dante, as author, provides to himself where citation and appropriation of Old Testament authority go side by side and are placed within an apocalyptic context. Taking Matthew as his text,<sup>419</sup> Salimbene says that nowadays priests and prelates seek to prevent the ‘little ones’, that is to say the Friars Minor, from coming to Jesus and from preaching: ‘Isti parvuli sunt fratres Minores, sicut abbas Ioachym exponit [...] sed clerici nostri temporis et sacerdotes et prelate volunt prohibere ne accedant ad Iesum et ne etiam predicent, cum tamen de fratribus Minoribus et Predicantibus specialiter sit a Domino promissum.’<sup>420</sup> Salimbene’s authority for the divinely mandated mission of the mendicant orders is the book of Jeremiah and Joachim’s gloss on it,<sup>421</sup> He says: ‘Ista verba exponit abbas Ioachym de duobus Ordinibus, scilicet de fratribus Minoribus et Predicantibus. Item isti sunt illi de quibus Dominus dixit Iere. III: Et dabo vobis pastores juxta cor meum, et pascent vos scientia et doctrina’.<sup>422</sup> For Salimbene, It is the Friars who are to be responsible for

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<sup>418</sup> Clareno, *Liber Chronicarum*, V, 84.

<sup>419</sup> ‘In illo tempore respondens Jesus dixit: Confiteor tibi, Pater, Domine cæli et terræ, quia abscondisti hæc a sapientibus, et prudentibus, et revelasti ea parvulis’ (Matthew 11. 25)

<sup>420</sup> Salimbene, *Chronica*, II, 601

<sup>421</sup> ‘Ecce ego mittam piscatores multos, dicit Dominus, et piscabuntur eos: et post hæc mittam eis multos venatores, et venabuntur eos de omni monte, et de omni colle, et de cavernis petrarum. Quia oculi mei super omnes vias eorum.’ (Jeremiah 16. 17).

<sup>422</sup> Salimbene, *Chronica*, II, 601; Jeremiah. 3. 15

reforming the Church to allow the divinely willed homecoming of God's people, as the context from which his citation of Jeremiah is extracted makes clear:

'Convertimini, filii revertentes, dicit Dominus, quia ego vir vester: et assumam vos unum de civitate, et duos de cognatione, et introducam vos in Sion' (Jeremiah 3. 14).

In relating Olivi and Ubertino to the context in which they worked, Havelly has argued that the two may be seen as being both narrower and broader than other Franciscan preachers like Servasanto da Faenza. Narrower in the sense that they are concerned politically with *usus pauper*, 'restricted use' of temporal goods as an essential feature of the evangelical perfection of the order, but broader in the sense that they saw this perfection as necessary to the spiritual leadership that would be found during the last days. Havelly endorses Leff's suggestion that the conflict between the mendicants and the seculars at the University of Paris meant that poverty was no longer merely a way of life, but the doctrine of spiritual regeneration'.<sup>423</sup> It is noted how men such as Ubertino related a Joachite doctrine of regeneration in an apocalyptic context to notions of voluntary poverty placing the Spirituals at the heart of the process, he speaks of: 'quendam populum novum et humilem in hac novissima hora, qui esset dissimilis in humilitate et paupere ab omnibus aliis'.<sup>424</sup>

Ubertino saw the beginnings of degeneration in the dispensations of Nicholas III, and identified Revelation's beasts coming out of the sea and the land as Boniface VIII and Benedict XI. Ubertino is thus more extreme than Olivi in his willingness to explicitly identify the current Church hierarchy with figures from the book of Revelation. Indeed Ubertino in *Arbor vitae* V, tells us that the Antichrist is already here in the person of Boniface VIII 'Singulariter contra viros perfectos sua iracundia exardebat, quia istis, Spiritus Iesu suggerebat ipsum esse predicatam bestiam et non papam' (V, 465b). It is Boniface's persecution of the Spirituals which marks him as the beast of Revelation. When we turn to the apocalyptic prophecies in Dante, these condemn the Papacy not for the persecution of Ubertino's order but for the transgressive relationship of the papacy with temporal power. Where 'Ubertino

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<sup>423</sup> G. Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Institutional and Intellectual History* (New York, London, Sydney: John Wiley and Sons, 1968), p.256; cited in Havelly, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 27.

<sup>424</sup> Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* (V, 209b); cited in Havelly, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 28.

called Boniface VIII and Benedict XI the beast coming out of the sea and arising from the land, Dante connected Nicholas III, Boniface VIII and Clement V with the more famous and poetically more effective image of the *meretrix* dallying with the kings'.<sup>425</sup> I feel that there are two clear distinctions here, the first is the flexibility and generality of Dante's account compared the specificity of Ubertino's; while Dante links discussion of the contemporary papacy in general with these episodes of Revelation, he never makes explicit links with Boniface as the beast or the Curia as the whore. I argue that Dante's use of these characters in the Earthly Paradise is deliberately allusive rather than explicit and that this serves his purpose to allow him to make a point regarding the recent history of Boniface and Philip IV but also allows flexibility; not referring explicitly to particular circumstances gives the imagery, like the ambiguity of the prophecies that accompany it, the capacity to fight another day. Dante's choice of imagery is also more politically effective as it allows his apocalyptic scenarios to visually represent the confusion of the two powers more generally, temporal and spiritual, which forms the cornerstone of his conception of the correct, that is to say the divinely ordained, relationship between the Church and the Empire and is the cornerstone of the *Monarchia*'s arguments and of Marco Lombardo's discourse in *Purgatorio* XVI.

Davis believes Dante borrowed from the *Arbor vitae* but has emphasised that it is less easy to say that Dante is with Ubertino in the criticism of the *ecclesia carnalis*, as only Olivi connected the words of the apocalypse unmistakably with Christian Rome.<sup>426</sup> However one key factor which seems to link Ubertino and Dante is their belief, absent in Olivi, in the idea that a temporal ruler may have a role to play in the working out of history in eschatological terms. As Bolognesi has pointed out, the idea that none of the so-called Spirituals would ever place their hopes in the good deeds of a lay leader, while it certainly applies to Olivi, is not completely correct: 'Ubertino displays a pragmatic optimism in the intervention of a lay king. In the fifth book of the *Arbor vitae* he resolutely praises Philip IV's initiative to start a trial for heresy, and other assorted crimes, against Boniface VIII'.<sup>427</sup> Given that elsewhere Ubertino identifies Boniface explicitly with the Antichrist, it seems clear

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<sup>425</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 63.

<sup>426</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 67.

<sup>427</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 46.

that some eschatological role is also being assigned to the King of France. Bolognesi notes that Dante seems to borrow an image from Ubertino to articulate a similar point: the chastisement of a corrupt Pope by a secular power. In *Purgatorio* XXXII, the Giant on the chariot strikes the ‘puttana sciolta’ who stands next to him before dragging her into the wood:

Ma perché l'occhio cupido e vagante  
a me rivolse, quel feroce drudo  
la flagellò dal capo infin le piante;  
poi, di sospetto pieno e d'ira crudo,  
disciolse il mostro, e trassel per la selva,  
tanto che sol di lei mi fece scudo  
a la puttana e a la nova belva. (*Purg.* XXXII, 154-160)

This is generally interpreted to refer to the assault by Philip’s men on Boniface at Anagni in 1305 and the subsequent departure of the papacy for Avignon in 1309 and Ubertino says:

Solennis percussio auctoritatis eius superbie [...] facta per inclytum phylippum regem francorum in consilio congregato parisiis [...] in quo solenniter statuit esaminare facta predictae bestie, prepositis horribilis que de ea ad eius aures pervenerant, ex quibus non Christi vicarius sed vere Antichristi magni precursor, se probata fuerint, clarissime apparebit, non solum ex predictam quare usurpavit sibi fedem ecclesie, sed quare vita eius scelleratissima esset et eretica (si prefatus rex probaret preposita). (*Arbor vitae*, V, 8, 466a)

The apocalyptic role ascribed to a temporal monarch as a chastiser of the Church seems to me an important linkage between the two, notwithstanding the differences in their respective views on the roles of both the French monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire. There are however considerable difficulties of interpretation here, as there is a lack of consensus among Dante critics on what the ‘correct’ interpretation of the whore and the giant are in the context of *Purgatorio* XXXII and XXXIII.<sup>428</sup>

It is clearly not Ubertino’s purpose to present a programmatic political system of the kind outlined in the *Monarchia* or suggested by the *Commedia*, nor is there any indication of common ground politically even if we follow Pietro di

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<sup>428</sup> For a range of critical opinions on the meaning of these figures see: L. Pertile, *La puttana e il gigante* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998), pp. 205-225 and notes.



Dante's identification of Philip the Fair as the Giant of *Purgatorio* XXXIII.<sup>429</sup> Nonetheless, if this identification is correct, we have the common element of the Church being chastised by the French King. What seems more difficult is to establish the two men's views on both the purpose and efficacy of this assault. Where Dante sees the King of France and the Papacy as locked in a mutually corruptive relationship consisting of both fornication and antagonism, which it will be the role of the DXV to resolve, Ubertino seems to suggest that French king's actions are a legitimate act against a Pope who has no authority. Dante despite his loathing of Boniface still seems appalled at his treatment; he conserves his respect for the *office* of the Pope, despite his criticism of individuals:

Perché men paia il mal futuro e 'l fatto,  
veggio in Alagna intrar lo fiordaliso,  
e nel vicario suo Cristo esser catto.  
Veggiolo un'altra volta esser deriso;  
veggio rinovellar l'aceto e 'l fiele,  
e tra vivi ladroni esser anciso. (*Purg.* XX, 88-90)

‘[T]hus Boniface is compared to Christ betrayed by Pontius Pilate and crucified, while the agents of Philip (the Fair) become the two thieves present at that event, but now represented as part of the torture administered to their victim’.<sup>430</sup> Davis has suggested that this means St Peter's words in *Paradiso* XXVII where he complains that in the eyes of the Son of God his throne (in 1300) is empty are indicative of him speaking in the moral sense;<sup>431</sup> the authority of the papacy seems to continue to exist for Dante even where the occupant of the throne is wholly morally corrupt.

Where Ubertino uses the image of the two beasts deriving from Revelation 13, Revelation 17 seems to be at the forefront of Dante's mind: the great whore is one ‘cum qua fornicati sunt reges terræ, et inebriati sunt qui inhabitant terram de vino prostitutionis ejus’ (Revelation 17. 2), whereas for Ubertino, perhaps thinking, more narrowly, of an end to the persecution of his own order, the quarrel between Boniface and Philip seems to be a moment of hope: the mystic Antichrist Boniface being scourged by Philip who seems to be a ‘messo di dio’, but he is not an aspect of

<sup>429</sup> Pietro di Dante (3), *DDP*, Note on *Purg* XXXII, 130-160, accessed 04 December 2012.

<sup>430</sup> Hollander, *DDP*, note on *Purgatorio* 20, 85-90, accessed 04 December 2014.

<sup>431</sup> Davis, ‘Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*’, p. 64.

the Antichrist as we saw was the case in the *Super Hiermiam*'s depiction the rule of Frederick II. Contextually in Dante, the previous fornication between the giant and the whore and the subsequent advent of the DXV to kill both parties make the chastisement of the whore by the giant a more morally ambiguous act than the chastisement of the beast by Philip the Fair in Ubertino's work. For Ubertino there is a just chastisement, but in Dante the wider context suggests that 'i baci che la meretrice e il gigante si scambiano simboleggiano gli ambigui rapporti che, negli ultimi anni del Duecento, intercorsero tra la Chiesa e i potenti re di Francia'.<sup>432</sup> This is a relationship which is of central and abiding concern in Dante; he needs the Church to be strong and enduring (alongside the Empire) in order for his ideal political vision to be realised.

We also should allow the possibility of duality of meaning. While it seems we can say with some degree of security that at some level the whore is the curia and the giant is Philip IV they may be more than this: 'Their dalliance has a more general meaning and can be referred to the whole wicked partnership between prelates and secular princes.'<sup>433</sup> Dante may well intend us to understand the Antichrist as figured in the giant as well as the whore, an interpretation which certainly takes Dante's Philip the Fair away from that of Ubertino. Ubertino connects the mystical Antichrist not just with Christian Rome, but with the Pope himself, and the battle of the Antichrist and the image of the *meretrix magna* appear to be strictly connected. The *meretrix magna* represents the carnal Church, and the carnal Church includes the followers of the Antichrist: 'Tota multitudo ecclesie carnalis, vidimus quasi omnes prelatos curie caracterizatos signo bestie' (*Arbor vitae*, V, 464 b).<sup>434</sup> The interpretation of the giant as an aspect of the Antichrist would make Philip, in Dante at least, a *typus Antichristi* rather than a scourge of the Antichrist; as Scott has noted, in almost all medieval commentaries on Revelation 13 the Antichrist features prominently as a giant.<sup>435</sup> As has been seen in my discussion of the *Super Hieremiam*, the role of the Antichrist as scourge of the Church is one more generally assigned to the German Emperor. For Davis, Dante's 'puttana sciolta' may additionally be intended to represent the 'mystical Antichrist of Spiritual Franciscans

<sup>432</sup> Fosca, DDP, Note on *Purgatorio* XXXII, 148-153, accessed 8 December 2010.

<sup>433</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 62.

<sup>434</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 154.

<sup>435</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 201.

like Olivi [and] Ubertino, just as his giant suggests their open Antichrist.<sup>436</sup> But as we have seen, for the Franciscans, the open Antichrist was more often than not an imperial figure most notably Frederick II or his illegitimate son Manfred, and not the king of France. Indeed Ubertino himself speaks of an ‘Apertus Antichristus faciet iudicium de Babilone’ (*Arbor Vitae*, V, 461b), who will attack the Church and himself be destroyed as part of the apocalyptic chain of events.

In Dante’s poem the function of the giant, may at once derive from Ubertino and depart from him; it may be an appropriation of imagery and indeed a partial approbation of Ubertino’s desire for a correction to Church cupidity. But in Dante all this is placed within the context of a wider imperial political programme which was fundamentally Dante’s own and far removed from the aspirations and ideas of Ubertino himself. I suggest that the wider context of the events in the Earthly Paradise would seem to suggest that Dante sees the assault more as part of a chain of events of fornication and fighting which occur in the absence of a universal imperial power. Dante may well have seen Boniface in the same terms as Ubertino, ‘non Cristi vicarius sed vere Antichristi magni precursor’, but there is no suggestion, indeed just the opposite, that he believed that the French monarchy would provide the solution; throughout Dante’s exilic works the French influence in both the political and the ecclesiastical fields is almost universally a negative one. It would seem most logical that Dante’s giant is principally intended to be a figure of Philip IV but it may be that it is the whole drift of pro-French, anti-imperial, papal policy throughout the thirteenth century that is incriminated.<sup>437</sup>

It seems to me that the relative dating of the two works, *Commedia* and *Arbor Vitae*, may play a role in the views they articulate; the *Commedia* was begun round the time the *Arbor Vitae* was completed. Dante, in the Earthly Paradise makes a series of statements which transition from *post eventum* to *ante eventum* prophecies and seem to bring us up to the present day (around 1314) and beyond; Dante is writing in the knowledge of how the relationship of the papacy and France will play out over the period between the fictive date of the *Commedia* and the date of composition. Ubertino, by giving a positive role to Philip when writing in 1305, constructs Philip’s campaign against Boniface, and perhaps the events at Anagni, as

<sup>436</sup> Davis, ‘Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*’, p. 62.

<sup>437</sup> Scott, *Dante’s Political Purgatory*, p. 201.

a positive sign. Dante is writing both with an imperial agenda which Ubertino lacks and in the knowledge that following their quarrel, Philip and the papacy will continue to make common cause against the Empire and that within four years the papacy will be removed to Avignon. The suggestion in Ubertino is that the chastisement will lead to reform, although Ubertino's rejection of the legitimacy of the election of Boniface's successor, Benedict XI implies this is not yet occurring (*Arbor Vitae*, V, 467b). In Dante the giant and the whore kiss and, following the whore's glance towards Dante, the giant strikes her and drags her and the carriage to the wood. Dante knows the consequences of the chastisement in a way which Ubertino could not have in 1305. Ideally following a chastisement by a temporal power; the whore should once more be capable of being a figure for the primitive Church, chaste and tied to poverty. We see in Dante that what follows is not a reformed papacy, but the giant dragging the whore and the beast on which she sits in to the wood. In Dante, the disappearance into the wood, usually seen as the departure of the papacy to Avignon, is an event which is immediately followed by a promise of the destruction of both figures, whore and giant. In sum, Dante knows that the death of Boniface VIII is not going to see an end to the problems of the Church. The role which Ubertino assigns to Philip as the hammer of Christ, a scourge of the Antichrist or his precursor, is ultimately the role which Dante grants to the DXV in the following Canto. For Dante the DXV, the heir of the eagle, will ultimately destroy both the giant and the whore: 'anciderà la fuia | con quel gigante che con lei delinque.' (*Purg.* XXXIII, 44-45). Ubertino is the only Spiritual to directly identify the Antichrist with a Pope and indirectly to bestow an apocalyptic role on a lay leader. In this respect he does resemble what Dante does in *Purgatorio*.<sup>438</sup> This resemblance of course makes Ubertino closer to the poet than Olivi. What the points of contact highlighted by Bolognesi seem to me to show most clearly is that Ubertino and Dante are both willing to envisage that a temporal power, a scourge of the Church, may have a role to play in overcoming the Antichrist; once again we have the Joachite historicising of the apocalypse potentially linked to a temporal power having a role to play in chastising the corrupt Church as part of an apocalyptic sequence of events. Unlike in the case of Frederick II, whom the Franciscans had vilified as the Antichrist, Ubertino is able to ascribe a positive role to a temporal

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<sup>438</sup> Bolognesi 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 46.

power in an eschatological context where the Pope himself is the Antichrist.

But there is no DXV in Ubertino nor is there in Olivi. Ubertino ‘displays a pragmatic optimism in the intervention of a lay king’,<sup>439</sup> whom Dante’s imperial politics lead him to despise; Dante seems to use Ubertino’s language to articulate a more elaborate scenario based on a pragmatic optimism in the intervention of an Emperor placing Ubertino’s ‘positive’ Philip IV into his correct eschatological context. This contextualisation of Philip makes his actions morally ambiguous, at best, and locates him within the wider sweep of Dante’s imperial politics and prophetic vision where the kings of France may well be the open Antichrist outside the Church whose fornication with the mystic Antichrist inside can only be resolved by imperial means. I would suggest that Bolognesi’s ‘pragmatic optimism’ to describe Ubertino’s views of the actions of Philip IV is indicative of a difference of both focus and scope in the two men’s works. If we define pragmatic as meaning essentially ‘limited’, we can understand Ubertino to mean that the lay leader has a role to play, but it is a minor one performed in the service of removing a barrier to the pre-eminence of the Spiritual Franciscan movement in reforming the Church. Whereas for Dante, at least ideally, Emperor and Pope are operating at the same level: the ‘due soli’ of which Rome is now deprived. Pragmatism in Ubertino’s politics is indicative of both the way in which politics is an adjunct to his agenda in the *Arbor vitae* and the way in which on some level the *Arbor vitae* is an occasion piece written in response to and addressing itself to a particular set of circumstances. Even after the defeat of Henry VII where it may well be argued that Dante’s politics become more pragmatic or at least less optimistic, the indications to me, in *Paradiso* VI and *Paradiso* XXVII, to take just two examples, are that Dante still conceives of politics as operating on a universal scale and for a divinely instituted purpose. While the optimism in the ideal being realisable may diminish, the fact that this is the ideal and that God designated it as such remains, and leaves Dante’s DXV at some remove from any pragmatic politics which Ubertino may have conceived as working in his own order’s interests particularly when the agent of reform is the French monarchy.

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<sup>439</sup> Bolognesi ‘Dante and the Friars Minor’, p. 46.

#### 4.8 Dante, Olivi, and the Language of Apocalypse

Benfell suggests that Dante would have found Olivi's apocalypse commentary sympathetic in its views of the corrupt Church and that he too saw in history a providential pattern that promised divine intervention in the near future.<sup>440</sup> In comparing Dante with Olivi there are points of contact with regard to views on the necessity of Church poverty and even the possibility of the advent of a reforming Emperor, but in each of these cases it is possible to demonstrate points at which Dante either diverges from or goes beyond Olivi particularly with regard to the Church's capacity for self-reform and the nature and purpose of the Emperor's role.

A Joachist view of history produced a mood of certainty: 'the Franciscan knew he was right because he had the clue to history which was on his side'.<sup>441</sup> As McGinn notes, Olivi links Joachim and St Francis stating that both saw in Frederick and his descendants an evil associated with a mystic Antichrist who will set up a false Pope and will both persecute all those who wish to observe and defend the Rule of St Francis. Clarenò, in his *Chronicle*, is keen to set Frederick's reign within a Franciscan Apocalyptic context, noting that the evil of Frederick coincided with the life of Francis,<sup>442</sup> and presents Frederick's persecution of the Church as a manifestation of the Apocalyptic persecution of the Church by the devil which is characteristic of the transition from the Fifth to Sixth Age in Olivi's apocalypse commentary. Olivi, in his sevenfold view of history, saw himself as living on the cusp of the fifth and sixth ages and viewed the events of the day as being indicative of the transition between the two. Olivi says:

Sextus vero aliquantulum cepit a tempore seraphici viri patris nostri Francisci, plenius tamen debet incipere a dampnatione Babilonis meretricis magne, quando prefatus angelus Christi signo signatus per suos significabit futuram militiam Christi. Septimus autem uno modo inchoat ab interfectione illius Antichristi qui dicet se Deum et messiam Iudeorum, alio vero modo inchoat in initio extremi et generalis iudicii omnium reproborum et electorum. (*LSA*, Prologue, Notabile I, p. 241)<sup>443</sup>

<sup>440</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', p. 27.

<sup>441</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 190.

<sup>442</sup> Clarenò, *Liber Chronicarum*, VI, 221-23.

<sup>443</sup> All references to Olivi's *Lectura super apocalipsim* (*LSA*) are taken from Alberto Forni's edition. The heading under which Olivi writes is given first followed by the page reference in Forni's edition.

The advent of the sixth age is then part of an apocalyptic process being placed by Olivi within a specific historical moment. Likewise, the distinction between the fifth and sixth ages, which overlap is made clear:

circa finem quinti temporis a planta pedis usque ad verticem est fere tota ecclesia infecta et confusa et quasi nova Babilon effecta (*LSA*, Prologue, Notabile VII, p.262)

For Burr, Olivi is also unique in placing himself at the dawn of the sixth period and in seeing the sixth period as both a period of the Antichrist and a period of renewal which will follow the destruction of Babylon. This reform has already begun but is being opposed by the carnal Church: ‘For Olivi the contemporary reform will eventually emerge triumphant and blossom into the seventh period’.<sup>444</sup> This seventh period ‘contains a progression within itself since it pertains both to the final stage of history and to eternal bliss’.<sup>445</sup> However, there are no clear breaks and Olivi is aware that periods merge together, each period nurtured in the womb of the preceding one. The extent to which Dante accepts this sevenfold division of history in the Earthly Paradise has been the subject of critical debate, as has the structure of and divisions between the ages which we find in the Earthly Paradise.<sup>446</sup> What is perhaps most striking is once more the way in which Dante places the Donation of Constantine positively within his structure of history appropriating, or at least reflecting, Olivi’s method whilst simultaneously striking at the roots of the central aspirations of the *Lectura*, a reform driven by the two orders of spiritual men. This is an approach which is potentially indicative both of Olivi’s influence and of a willingness on Dante’s part to appropriate and adapt to purposes that lay beyond the scope and aspirations of his source texts. In the Earthly Paradise, Dante connects the fifth status with the Donation of Constantine (*Purg.* XXXII, 124-12). As Bolognesi has pointed out this is ‘something unheard of in any commentary on the Apocalypse, and links this section to that of the eagle descending into the chariot. Even if Dante

<sup>444</sup> Burr, *Olivi’s Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 76.

<sup>445</sup> Burr, *Olivi’s Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 77.

<sup>446</sup> See for example R.E. Kaske, ‘The Seven Status Ecclesiae in *Purgatorio* XXXII and XXXIII’, in *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in Honor of Charles S. Singleton* (New York: Binghamton, 1983), pp. 89-113; Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, p. 50.

ever followed Olivi, he interpolated and accrued the density of the symbols by making them overlap'.<sup>447</sup> Hollander notes that in this formulation Dante reverses his usual view, which involves seeing the empire's rights and privileges as being curtailed by the Church. In a sense the point is even stronger expressed this way: the Church is harmed by exercising its authority in the civil realm.<sup>448</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, Dante's allusion to the legend of the voice issuing from heaven to condemn Constantine's well-intentioned but misguided gift is one which we find in Remigio de' Girolami, but it serves to distance Dante from Olivi. By foregrounding the corruption of the Church in terms of its relationship with the imperial power, and choosing this as the moment for what (we suppose) is an intervention by St Peter himself, Dante asserts the imperial element of his politics in an apocalyptic context and framework and emphasises an imperial concern remote from his putative source.

When Olivi addresses the fifth status, he identifies three causes of the Church's corruption: he cites firstly the laxity of the clergy occasioned by the bad example of bishops and abbots: simony, fraud, rapine, etc. (*LSA* 29, 52), secondly Catharism, and the third evil besetting the Church comprises what Olivi sees as the potent double temptation facing his own day: on the one hand an Islamicised Aristotelianism striking at the roots of Christian doctrine; on the other an attack on Franciscan poverty. This latter attack is twofold: 'Carnal elements outside the order insist that evangelical perfection is achieved not by renouncing earthly goods but by having them in common, while carnal elements within it argue that *usus pauper* is not an essential element in the highest poverty'.<sup>449</sup> Olivi's views on these are not always articulated in apocalyptic terms he is able to discuss both independently of his apocalyptic concerns, but the bringing of these concerns within an apocalyptic context represents a unity of thought on the matter: 'His apocalyptic preoccupations were not a sideshow developed apart from his philosophical and theological concerns. They represented his effort to see the historical significance of those concerns'.<sup>450</sup>

Olivi expected a flowering of history between the triumph of the Antichrist

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<sup>447</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 143.

<sup>448</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Purg.* XXXII, accessed 05 February 2015.

<sup>449</sup> Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 87.

<sup>450</sup> Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 87.



and the end of times and St Francis holds the key position as initiator of this epoch. 'It was in St Francis that the final eschatological task of converting the whole world was given'.<sup>451</sup> In the context of History, St Francis assumed the role of Christ. Olivi, like Joachim, drew back from logical extremes when dealing with issues of authority, but his views pushed him towards such extremes: he looked for a mystic Antichrist – a false Pope – but he does not state anywhere that he repudiates the existing hierarchy. Nonetheless, for Olivi, the elect of the sixth age were supposed to be superior; it was they who would form the holy Jerusalem of the seventh age and third status. Further, like Joachim, his view of this blessed state was mystical rather than institutional leaving an ambiguous, at best, role for the institutional Church. For Reeves, 'whether he knew it or not, it was his Joachimist expectation that was Olivi's chief legacy to his followers'.<sup>452</sup>

Using the concept of *Concordia*, Olivi also finds apocalyptic significance in the words of Old Testament prophets and relates these to current events. The prologue of Olivi's apocalypse commentary takes Isaiah as its point of departure:

et erit lux lunæ sicut lux solis, et lux solis erit septempliciter sicut lux septem dierum, in die qua alligaverit Dominus vulnus populi sui, et percussuram plagæ ejus sanaverit. (Isaiah 30. 26)

Olivi begins his exposition by arguing that this Old Testament prophecy prophesies the powerful splendour of celestial lights at the end of the world and, allegorically, exalts the glory of Christ and the New Testament, that is to say the two fundamental points of the whole tract: eschatology on the one hand, Christ on the other. Olivi says following his citation of Isaiah:

In hoc verbo, ex XXX<sup>o</sup> capitulo Isaie (Is 30. 26) assumpto, litteraliter prophetatur precellentia fulgoris celestium luminarium, quam in fine mundi ad pleniorum universi ornatum Dei dono habebunt. Allegorice vero extollitur gloria Christi et novi testamenti. (*LSA*, Prologus, Generale Principium, par. 1, p. 236)

This is considered within the context of the sevenfold state of the Church and the seven visions of the apocalypse. The significance of this reading is that it maintains that the events leading to the final fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies were underway here and now even as Olivi was writing his treatise.

Where Olivi sees it as the Church's responsibility to reform itself via the mendicant

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<sup>451</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 199.

<sup>452</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 201.

orders as part of this explicitly apocalyptic context, Dante sees the restriction of the Church's greed as being something to be effected primarily by the restored Empire.<sup>453</sup> Olivi glosses Revelation 11 in the Franciscan Joachite manner mentioned above where the two witnesses represent the two orders of preachers: “Et dabo duobus testibus meis”, scilicet officium predicationis, “et prophetabunt”, id est predicabunt’ (*LSA*, Commentary on Revelation 11. 8, p.484). It is the breadth of Dante’s influences and the unique conclusion he draws from them that appear key, and in particular the unique and exalted role he gives to the Roman Empire and the function it should have in the here and now. Joachim had no place for imperial myths in his theology of history except as a persecutor of the Church, nor do Pseudo-Joachite texts ever approach the kind of positive enabling role which Dante gives to the Empire; the Emperor may be sent by God but only in a punitive or restraining role and in Olivi the Holy Roman Emperor in the guise of Frederick and his successors is an aspect of the mystic Antichrist whose advent will lead to persecution of the Spirituals.<sup>454</sup>

With regard to secular authority Joachim shared the common view that the Roman Empire had been ordained to keep the peoples of the world within their prescribed limits. Rome's lust for power saw it become the Babylon to be destroyed in the apocalypse. Joachim had taught that the second state would end with a tribulation of the Church brought about by the mystic Antichrist. In the third state, the Empire (which Joachim believes was ordained by God to maintain order through force of arms) was going to be irrelevant as people would not need to be ruled in the third state; the institutional Church likewise would fade away as superfluous. In the genuine Joachim’s Apocalypse commentary, he interprets the Euphrates of Revelation 16. 12 as prophesying the end of Empire which may have already begun with the defeat of Frederick Barbarossa. This would happen in the sixth age of the Church: the angel of the sixth seal pours his phial upon the Euphrates, and the Empire would be overrun from the East (*Expos.* Ff 190(r)-192(r): ‘Et sextus angelus effudit phialam suam in flumen illud magnum Euphraten: et siccavit aquam ejus, ut præpararetur via regibus ab ortu solis’ (Revelation 16. 12). This is a line of thought which was taken up by the Franciscan order as a prophecy of Francis as the angel of

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<sup>453</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al Gioachinismo*, p. 391.

<sup>454</sup> McGinn, *Vision of the End*, p. 211.

sixth seal, contextualising his life and the order he founded in an apocalyptic context. St Bonaventure and Olivi both read these lines from Revelation in Joachite terms as already having been fulfilled in the advent of St Francis as the apocalyptic angel.

Olivi says:

Ex quo igitur, per romane ecclesie autenticam testificationem et confirmationem, constat regulam Minorum, per beatum Franciscum editam, esse vere et proprie illam evangelicam quam Christus in se ipso servavit et apostolis imposuit et in evangeliiis suis conscribi fecit, et nichilominus constat hoc per irrefragabilia testimonia librorum evangelicorum et ceterarum scripturarum sanctarum et per sanctos expositores earum, prout alibi est superhabunde monstratum, constat etiam hoc per indubitabile testimonium sanctissimi Francisci ineffabili sanctitate et innumeris Dei miraculis confirmatum. Et precipue gloriosissimis stigmatibus sibi a Christo impressis patet ipsum fore angelum apertionis sexti signaculi “habentem signum Dei vivi, signum scilicet plagarum Christi crucifixi, et etiam signum totalis transformationis et configurationis ipsius ad Christum et in Christum. Et hoc ipsum per claram et fide dignam revelationem est habitum, prout a fratre Bonaventura, sollempnissimo sacre theologie magistro ac nostri ordinis quondam generali ministro, fuit Parisius in fratrum minorum capitulo me audiente sollempniter predicatum. (*LSA*, Revelation 6. 12, p. 406)

Olivi believes that the closing of the fifth age will witness an uneven battle within the Latin Church which will culminate in the destruction of Rome/Babylon, this signals the end of the fifth period but also the end of the Church as he knows it. This in turn signals the advent of the sixth period, already tentatively underway with the birth of Francis. As Burr has noted,<sup>455</sup> Revelation 7. 2 was also read by Olivi as a literal reference to Francis: ‘Et vidi alterum angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, habentem signum Dei vivi: et clamavit voce magna quatuor angelis, quibus datum est nocere terræ et mari’ (Revelation 7. 2). Olivi in his *Lectura super apocalypsim* glossed this verse:

Hic ergo angelus est Franciscus, evangelice vite et regule sexto et septimo tempore propagande et magnificande renovator et summus post Christum et eius matrem observator, ‘ascendens ab ortu solis’, id est ab illa vita quam Christus sol mundi in suo ‘ortu’, id est in primo suo adventu, attulit nobis. (*LSA*, Revelation 7. 3, p. 416)

In *Paradiso* XI, 49-54, Dante describes Francis as the Sun, which as

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<sup>455</sup> Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 92.

Hollander noted may well derive from the prologue to St Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*.<sup>456</sup> Bonaventure's identification of Francis as the angel of Apocalypse (Revelation 7. 2) 'ascendentem ab ortu soli' has important consequences, as it is essentially an assertion of world-historical significance for the saint. However, while Bonaventure saw Francis in this way, it was the Spirituals who made the most extensive use of this image and began to draw on the apocalypse as a way of understanding not only Francis but also the history of their order and what they saw as its present decline and corruption'.<sup>457</sup>

Olivi sees history as a progressive unfolding which allows for increased knowledge along the way. Forni has observed that for Olivi, 'La storia sacra, è una crescita evolutiva. La Rivelazione non si è esaurita con la prima venuta di Cristo. Continua e cresce, come un individuo che si sviluppa e perviene a maturità. Il mondo non sta invecchiando, secondo la visione che Agostino, i Padri e la Chiesa gregoriana avevano avuto della storia umana, ma sta partorendo con dolore una nuova età'.<sup>458</sup> While Dante does not make clear whether for him the world is ending or a new age is dawning, in linking the critique of corruption to the Apocalypse and a vision of providential history, and in identifying the corruption with Papal leaders, Dante comes close to the views of Olivi or at least the ways in which their divergent views are presented bear some similarities

Olivi's attachment to a Joachite third age and a literal/historical reading of the book of Revelation sit easily with his tendency to speculate about the length of a coming Sabbath age, to suggest it would be of considerable length and even, tentatively to suggest a thousand years. Franciscan Spirituals such as Olivi whose apocalypse commentary laid out what David Burr has termed an apocalyptic timetable,<sup>459</sup> went further than ever before in making definite predictions regarding the likely duration of a future Sabbath age following the defeat of the Antichrist. Lerner has suggested that this is a development driven in part by the crises of the 1290s and the fear of persecution among the Spirituals: 'Olivi's greater radicalism in comparison to Joachim was probably the product of his sense of crisis: Antichrist

<sup>456</sup> Hollander, DDP, Note on *Paradiso* XI, 49-51, accessed 20 July 2015

<sup>457</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse,' p. 16.

<sup>458</sup> A. Forni, 'Pietro di Giovanni Olivi e Dante: un progetto di ricerca', *Collectanea Franciscana*, 82 (2012), 87-156 (p. 95).

<sup>459</sup> D. Burr, 'Olivi's Apocalyptic Timetable', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 11 (1981), 237-60.

was at the door, and a deadly struggle was in progress between his minions and the brave few who stood as witnesses for the truth; yet the few would triumph and gain recompense in an earthly Sabbath of some considerable length'.<sup>460</sup> The Franciscan sense of their having a God-given role to play in the events of the last days is one, evidenced by the persecution and exile they were forced to undergo; as Manselli has noted we find in both Olivi and Clareno the idea of persecution as a form of election,<sup>461</sup> the very fact of their being persecuted was evidence for the Spirituals of the rightness and urgency of their cause.

Olivi, seemingly with an eye to avoiding further accusations of 'temerarily predicting future events', considers various alternative interpretations. Casting his opinions as the views of others, he says, for example: 'An autem septimus status a morte huius Antichristi usque ad Gog novissimum habeat ad litteram mille annos, multo minus sciunt' (*LSA*, Revelation 20. 4, p. 611). While Olivi is drawn to the idea that the Sabbath would begin in the fourteenth century and last for one hundred years,<sup>462</sup> such is the attention that Olivi lavishes on the idea of a millennium lasting several hundred years Lerner and Burr both conclude, that his preference for this scheme is clear.<sup>463</sup> Olivi's Apocalypticism in this light is far more indicative of expectation of a transition to a third and final age of peace than a suggestion that the end of the world is at hand. Revelation tells us that it is specifically those who died for Christ who will, following a preliminary resurrection, rule with him in the Sabbath age:

Et vidi sedes, et sederunt super eas, et iudicium datum est illis: et animas decollatorum propter testimonium Jesu, et propter verbum Dei, et qui non adoraverunt bestiam, neque imaginem ejus, nec acceperunt characterem ejus in frontibus, aut in manibus suis, et vixerunt, et regnaverunt cum Christo mille annis. Ceteri mortuorum non vixerunt, donec consummentur mille anni. Hæc est resurrectio prima. Beatus, et sanctus, qui habet partem in resurrectione prima: in his secunda mors non habet potestatem: sed erunt sacerdotes Dei et Christi, et regnabunt cum illo mille annis. Et cum consummati fuerint mille anni, solvetur Satanæ de carcere suo, et exhibit, et seducet gentes, quæ sunt super quatuor angulos terræ, Gog, et Magog, et congregabit eos in prælium,

<sup>460</sup> Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to the Thousand Year Sabbath', p. 61.

<sup>461</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 52.

<sup>462</sup> Burr, 'Olivi's Apocalyptic Timetable', pp. 257-58.

<sup>463</sup> Burr, 'Olivi's Apocalyptic Timetable' pp. 258-59; Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to the Thousand year Sabbath', p. 62.

quorum numerus est sicut arena maris. (Revelation 20. 4-7)

Clearly it is the early Christian martyrs who are referred to, however it is tempting to imagine/suppose, given the exalted role that the Franciscans and Dominicans saw themselves as having as reformers and cleansers of the Church, that they saw the likelihood of martyrdom in their futures and envisioned themselves as numbering among those who would rule with Christ in fulfilment of the prophecies of Revelation. Significantly this idea of reward for the elect is one which also occurs in Revelation 11, which, as was discussed above, was a key text in the Franciscans' establishment of their own role in the last days.

Et post dies tres et dimidium, spiritus vitæ a Deo intravit in eos. Et steterunt super pedes suos, et timor magnus cecidit super eos qui viderunt eos. Et audierunt vocem magnam de cælo, dicentem eis: Ascendite huc. Et ascenderunt in cælum in nube: et viderunt illos inimici eorum. (Revelation 11. 11-12)

Olivi's *Lectura* also carries through Joachim's ideas regarding the manner in which the book of Revelation should be interpreted: not just as a series of separate visions, as was traditionally the case, but rather a complete model of the development of the history of the Church from its origins to the end of the world. Onto such a scheme of the theology of history, made to coincide with his apocalyptic eschatology, Olivi grafted the providential role assigned in the last days (by him) to the mendicant orders and especially to the Franciscans.<sup>464</sup>

Joachim's vision came to be regarded as a new Church: the *ecclesia spiritualis* rather than an *ordo spiritualis* and it was easy for the Spirituals to see those who opposed this interpretation as members of the *ecclesia carnalis*.<sup>465</sup> The most extreme element in the Franciscan adoption and adaptation of Joachite thought came through the wish to take the *concordia* between Old and New and establish a similar *concordia* with the works of Joachim, effectively, and heretically, making a third testament of the Calabrian Abbot's works. In this respect the key text is Gerardo di Borgo San Donnino's *Evangelium aeternum*. In common with Olivi, Gerardo sees the Angel of Revelation 7. 2 as being fulfilled in Francis of Assisi but

<sup>464</sup> Rusconi, *Profezia e profeti alla fine del Medioevo*, p. 76.

<sup>465</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 221.

also saw the Bible as having been expanded to three testaments in the form of the writings of Joachim; a new era required a new Testament. Manselli, like Rusconi, sees Gerardo di Borgo San Donnino as the key figure for the Mendicants' use of Joachim.<sup>466</sup> Gerardo held that the New Testament had been supplanted by the three major works of Joachim whose works thus constituted a new Testament, 'the scriptures of the third age',<sup>467</sup> a doctrine which was condemned by the papal commission of Anagni in 1255. Olivi presents the threat to evangelical poverty as an intrinsic part of apocalyptic scenarios and as coming from within the very heart of the Church. If the end was at hand and the Franciscans were its prophets, then it would be more necessary than ever for them to maintain the rigour of their Rule. In the *Lectura Super Apocalypsim*, he sees the fifth period of the Church as one of peace but also one which sees the relaxing of the rule and the transformation of the Church into a new Babylon. This process is presented with particular reference to clerical cupidity, in particular simony, and since the problem goes all the way to the top, those spiritual men who seek to defend the idea of evangelical poverty may well have not only to question but even to disobey ecclesiastical authority.<sup>468</sup>

Dante's own views on this, particularly on the relationship between justice and ecclesiastical authority are by no means easy to define. For example, where Ubertino rejects the authority of Boniface's papacy, Dante's accepts the validity of Boniface's plenary indulgence for the Jubilee of 1300. Dante's St Peter describes his papal throne as being empty in the sight of God, 'ne la presenza del Figliuol di Dio', yet as we have seen earlier in this chapter, Boniface is also described as the true Vicar of Christ. (*Purg.* XX, 85-90) shockingly subjected to the indignities of assault by the French king's agents.

It seems to me that there is a fine line in Dante between assertions of the unknowability of Divine Judgment, such as that found adjacent to the salvation of Trajan and Ripheus in *Paradiso* XIX, and a direct contradiction and even explicit refusal of ecclesiastical authority such as that which we seem to find both in Dante's salvation of excommunicate souls and in the placing of the virtuous pagans in Limbo, which Catholic doctrine reserved exclusively for the souls of babies who

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<sup>466</sup> Manselli, *La lectura super apocalypsim di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi*, p. 106.

<sup>467</sup> Rusconi, *Profezia e profeti alla fine del Medioevo*, p. 63.

<sup>468</sup> Havelly, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 115.

died before baptism. The significance of the radical nature of Dante's Limbo for our understanding of Dante's view of the nature, purpose, and potential of man's life on Earth is a subject to which I will return in Chapter 5 of this thesis. In terms of the excommunicate it is striking that the key figure whom we see saved in *Purgatorio* is not merely a sinner but one whose 'sins' are intimately connected to his pro-imperial and anti-papal military activities in life. Manfred was a Ghibelline commander at the Battle of Benevento (1266) against the forces of Charles of Anjou who enjoyed papal support in his war against the Hohenstaufen. The salvation of the excommunicate Manfred is for me a subversion of the readers' expectations at least the equal of those of Ripheus and Cato. While it was not impossible that an excommunicate soul might be saved,<sup>469</sup> in deploying Manfred as a prominent example of such a possibility being realised, Dante is entering into a political storm fresh in people's memories and potentially seeking to rehabilitate the reputation of the excommunicate Manfred. I would suggest that here it is not so much a rejection of doctrine or the power of the papacy to excommunicate souls, it is more a suggestion that God will reject an ecclesiastical authority which is abused by being put to use for political purposes. Manfred is a near contemporary figure and cannot be reduced as easily as Ripheus to being viewed as a worked example of the unknowability of Divine Judgement, although he cannot but fulfil this role too. Manfred's salvation cannot but be intimately connected to the contemporary political scene, just as his excommunication was, thus giving his presence contemporary resonance which the depiction of Ripheus lacks.

As we have seen in Olivi, Ubertino, and in Pseudo-Joachite texts, the Hohenstaufen dynasty was placed in eschatological contexts as fulfilment of the book of Revelation, often as an aspect of the Antichrist and it was observed that it seems unlikely that Dante would have had no knowledge of the both the apocalyptic constructions placed on the nature of the rule of both Frederick and Manfred. But Dante does not merely choose to save Manfred who died excommunicate, he chooses to present him in terms which are Christological. As Freccero suggests, Manfred in showing his wounds to Dante, as Christ did to Thomas, bearing witness to the resurrection, lends Dante's presentation of Manfred 'a theological force which

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<sup>469</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Purgatorio* XX, 85-90, accessed 04 December 2014.



serves to underscore the strength of Dante's imperial faith'.<sup>470</sup> Lansing notes that 'if there is one element which reinforces the Christological associations it is that Manfredi's death like that of Christ was brought about by a betrayal'.<sup>471</sup> Dante's presentation introduces the notion both of sanctity and of martyrdom to the figure of Manfred betrayed by the papacy and excommunicated for political reasons.

Much of this clearly stands comparison with the messianic language of the letters about Henry VII, an imperial figure, hailed in Christological terms whose mission is being frustrated by politically motivated collusion between French, Papal and Florentine forces and is one which ultimately fails due to betrayal by Pope Clement V. As Lansing goes on to point out there is a striking relationship between the fate of Manfred's remains and those of Virgil, the former sacrilegiously disinterred and his remains scattered at the behest of the Pope who is abandoning his religious role in favour of politically motivated wars and in the case of Manfred's disinterment, politically motivated, sacrilegious acts, the latter transported by imperial command to Naples to be entombed with due reverence.<sup>472</sup> As Scott notes, 'The great Pagan Emperor displayed a sense of *pietas* rejected by a politically motivated Pope'.<sup>473</sup>

It is the inability of the clergy, and the papacy in particular, both to refrain from temporal ambition and to understand God's infinite mercy that led to the desecration of Manfred's tomb on the battlefield of Benevento. Dante understands the possibility of Manfred's salvation but the papacy, blinded by political ambition and distracted from its pastoral role cannot. The very institution, to which the possibility of salvation for Manfred should be manifest, and which should in Dante's conception act as a conduit to God for all mankind, is the one which desecrates his grave. Manfred too understands: his sins were awful as he now admits but God will accept anyone he turns to him:

Orribil furon li peccati miei;  
ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,

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<sup>470</sup> J. Freccero, 'Manfred's Wounds and the Poetics of the *Purgatorio*', in *Dante the Poetics of Conversion*, ed. by R. Jacoff (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp.195-208 (p. 200).

<sup>471</sup> R. Lansing, 'Purgatorio III', *Lectura Dantis*, IX (1991), 54-71 (p. 64).

<sup>472</sup> Lansing, 'Purgatorio III', p. 66.

<sup>473</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 235.

che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.  
 Se 'l pastor di Cosenza, che a la caccia  
 di me fu messo per Clemente allora,  
 avesse in Dio ben letta questa faccia, (*Purg.* III, 121-26)

As so often in the *Commedia*, we here have a practical example of the consequences for the world when *Purgatorio* XVI's theoretical discourse on human cupidity and the necessary separation of the two powers are not put into practice.<sup>474</sup> Here the political is placed beneath a theological veil; by placing the Guelf, Buonconte di Montefeltro in the same group Dante simultaneously avoids an undue political focus by emphasising that the mercy of God transcends factionalism in any and all who are genuinely repentant, in a way which Papal authority signally fails to do. Nonetheless, the salvation of Manfred, while not presented in political terms, cannot but be a powerful political statement, constituting as it does a rejection of the key hierocratic argument that since the Pope possesses the two keys, God will inevitably ratify ecclesiastical judgements',<sup>475</sup> At the risk of oversimplifying, it is tempting, given Dante's political outlook, to define his position on ecclesiastical authority as being that it is only binding and only effective where it is just and that where the Church is corrupted by greed its actions are even less likely to be just.

#### 4.9 The Language of Corruption: Dante, Olivi and the Meretrix Magna

The culmination of the process of earthly corruption for Olivi is represented by the *meretrix magna* of Revelation 17 whom Olivi seems to identify with the institutional Church. As Olivi's exegesis progresses we can see, despite his own denials, material which reads easily into such an identification, such as his conflation of the 'meretrix' with Rome: 'just as this beast in pagan heretical times was surely stained with the blood of martyrs, now on the other hand she is stained with the blood of the slaughter and impious persecutions of the spirit and spiritual persons'.<sup>476</sup> Olivi seems to be unique in extending the meaning of *meretrix magna* of Revelation to

<sup>474</sup> Durling points out a number of Clement's actions which receive criticism in Dante, including his role in Philip's destruction of the Templars (*Purg.* XX. 91-93); the removal of the papal see to Avignon (*Purg.* XXXII, 157-160); his simony (*Par.* XVII. 82), and his betrayal of Henry VII (*Par.* XXX. 142-148)'. *The "Divine Comedy" of Dante Alighieri*, Notes by R. M. Durling and Ronald Martinez (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 300.

<sup>475</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 95.

<sup>476</sup> Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 116.

encompass not only Pagan but also Christian Rome.<sup>477</sup>

Both Olivi and Dante link ‘the image of sexual immorality with simony and both link sexual immorality with idolatry’,<sup>478</sup> while Revelation 17. 2 gives a relatively minor role to the *reges terrae* compared to the *meretrix magna*:

Et venit unus de septem angelis, qui habebant septem phialas, et locutus est mecum, dicens: Veni, ostendam tibi damnationem meretricis magnæ, quæ sedet super aquas multas, cum qua fornicati sunt reges terræ, et inebriati sunt qui inhabitant terram de vino prostitutionis ejus.

Both men use similar language to describe the disfigurement of that authority by an evil depicted under the image of the *magna meretrix*.<sup>479</sup> Olivi says

Vocatur ergo ‘meretrix magna’, quia a fideli cultu et sincero amore et deliciis Christi sponsi sui recedens adheret huic mundo et divitiis et deliciis eius et diabolo propter ista, et etiam regibus et magnatis et prelatis et omnibus aliis amatoribus huius mundi. (*LSA*, Revelation 17. 1, p. 576)

Both Olivi and Dante give the *reges terrae* and the *meretrix magna*, as the secular and spiritual powers engaged in a process of mutual corruption, a more significant and complementary part to play. In *Inferno* XIX Dante identifies the *meretrix magna* explicitly with the sequence of papal decadence he has just witnessed, as he does in *Purgatorio* XXXII. For Havely, Ubertino's defence of Olivi in 1311 presents Olivi's apocalyptic doctrines in a way that aligns them quite closely with *Paradiso* XXVII's contrasts between St Peter (as the primitive Church) and the contemporary Popes as the corrupt Church.<sup>480</sup>

Dante too in *Inferno* XIX draws out a three-fold relationship between the Old Testament prophets' condemnation of idolatry, the significance of the *meretrix magna* of Revelation 17, and the current corruption of the Church. As Foster has noted, when Dante links the love of money to the sin of idolatry at the end of his great invective in *Inferno* XIX, the recollection is not of the gospels or St Paul but of the prophetic language of the Old Testament, and in particular Hosea: ‘Ipsi regnaverunt, et non ex me; principes exstiterunt, et non cognovi: argentum suum et

<sup>477</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 229.

<sup>478</sup> Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, p. 37.

<sup>479</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 229.

<sup>480</sup> Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 116.

aurum suum fecerunt sibi idola, ut interirent' (Hosea 8. 4) and Isaiah's apocalyptic prediction of the casting away of such idols at the end of time: 'In die illa projiciet homo idola argenti sui, et simulacra auri sui, quæ fecerat sibi ut adoraret, talpas et vespertiliones' (Isaiah 2. 20). When glossing the *meretrix magna* of Revelation 17, Olivi says:

Deinde breviter insinuat que est hec mulier de qua et propter quam tanta dixit, unde subdit (Ap 17, 18): 'Et mulier, quam vidisti, est civitas magna, que habet regnum super reges terre'. Nimis constat quod Roma et gens Romanorum imperabat toti orbi tempore Iohannis et huiusvisionis, et etiam quod per totum tempus plenitudinis gentium usque ad Antichristum seu usque ad tempus istorum decem regum fixit Christus in ea principalem et universalem sedem et potestatem imperii sui super omnes ecclesias et super totum orbem. An autem post Antichristum hec urbs iterum reparatur ut ibi usque ad finem seculi stet principalis sedes Christi sicut fuit a tempore Christi et citra, aut Christus post Antichristum reducat sedem suam ad locum unde manavit ad urbem Romam, puta in Iherusalem vel alibi, sue dispositioni est relinquendum. Neutrum enim horum potest certificari ex sacro textu nec ex aliquo certo et catholico dogmate fidei christiane. (*LSA*, Revelation 17. 18, p. 587)

This provides further evidence that Olivi is extending the meaning of the *meretrix magna* to encompass not only Pagan but also Christian Rome. However, Burr has noted Olivi's somewhat guarded attitude, which he shares with much of the tradition when dealing with Rome: Olivi in his commentary to Revelation 17 is careful to point out that the Church of the Just on pilgrimage is not what is intended, 'sed quoad multitudinem reproborum, qui eandem apud seperegrinantem ecclesiam iniquis operibus impugnant et blasphemant':

Hanc meretricem magnam dixerunt patres catholici Romam non quoad ecclesiam iustorum, que peregrinata est apud eam, sed quoad multitudinem reproborum, qui eandem apud seperegrinantem ecclesiam iniquis operibus impugnant et blasphemant. Non igitur in uno loco querendus est locus huius meretricis, sed sicut per totam aream romani imperii diffusum est triticum electorum, sic per latitudinem eius disperse sunt palee reproborum. (*LSA*, Revelation 17. 1, p.575)

and goes on to say:

Nota quod per predicta ornamenta (mulieris) possunt mystice intelligi omnia intellectualia dona quibus carnalis ecclesia abutitur in superbiam, iuxta quod et

Ezechielis XVI<sup>o</sup> improperat Deus sinagoge et ecclesie per eam figurate quod de vestimentis et auro et argento, que dederat ei, fecit sibi excelsa et imagines idolorum, et omnia ornamenta et divitias quas sibi dederat obtulit eis (Ezekiel 16. 10-19). (*LSA*, Revelation 17. 2, p. 575)

It seems to me that a key point of similarity between Olivi and Dante is that, where Joachim attributed the desolation of the new Jerusalem to an outside conqueror, both Dante and Olivi view it as an interior disease. For Olivi the pagans were in charge once more and thus Rome was more apt to represent the great whore: Rome was chosen by Christ to be the seat of his Church, and it was only in corruption that she could be called *meretrix magna*.<sup>481</sup> As Benfell has noted while the *meretrix magna* was a commonplace for Church corruption, Olivi seems to link the *mulier* of Revelation 12 with the *meretrix* of Revelation 17, with the suggestion that these ‘two’ women are in fact facets of the same person: the Church at different moments in her history: ‘Per generalem vero intelligentiam, hec mulier est generalis ecclesia et specialiter primitiva’ (*LSA*, Commentary on Revelation 12. 2, p. 497). The *mulier* is the Church and particularly the primitive Church which has become in her current corruption the great whore. It is suggested that this reading is one to which Dante himself is also drawn in *Inferno* XIX, as the whore seems to be one who was once pure; it is the process of corruption which is emphasised. Moreover this seems to me to belong to the practice of reading Revelation as history rather than as allegory even where it means somewhat tenuously conflating two characters from the book.

Olivi like Dante in *Inferno* XIX, seems to merge the beast and the woman: ‘sic mulier ista in quantum est carnalis et bestialis dicitur bestia, in quantum vero quondam prefuit et regnavit superbestiales gentes mundi et adhuc super plures bestiales sibi subditas dominatur, dicitur sedere super bestiam’ (*LSA*, Revelation 17. 3, p. 576).

Dante says:

Di voi pastor s'accorse il Vangelista,  
quando colei che siede sopra l'acque  
puttaneggiar coi regi a lui fu vista  
quella che con le sette teste nacque,  
e da le diece corna ebbe argomento,  
fin che virtute al suo marito piacque. (*Inf.* XIX, 106-11)

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<sup>481</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 213.

As Davis notes, ‘In both Dante and Olivi then we have a linkage of Church corruption with imagery from the apocalypse, imagery that associates the contemporary carnal Church with the harlot and beast of spiritual account’.<sup>482</sup>

Dante’s apocalyptic scenarios have much in common with those of Spiritual Franciscans. However I wish to suggest two key areas of difference between the two. These are the prophetic role assumed by Dante and the imperial dimension of Dante’s thought. I will consider these in turn.

#### **4.10 Dante’s prophetic role: Dante rewrites the Apocalypse**

I have considered in earlier chapters the process of Dante's investiture as a prophet highlighting how the key moments are linked to condemnations of Church avarice and lamentations for the consequent state of affairs on Earth. Dante’s first prophetic investiture occurs in the Earthly Paradise, Beatrice instructs him to watch and to write down what he seen. Beatrice’s words here echo those to John in Revelation I: 11-19 ‘Quod vides, scribe’ and ‘Scribe ergo quae vidisti’. It has also been noted that a great deal of the imagery of the procession derives from John’s Apocalypse. Given that we have seen Dante adopting the role of Old Testament prophet, and of St Paul, appropriating their language, their visions and ultimately their authority, how far can we see Dante as a new John, a prophet of an apocalypse which no longer lies in the future but even as the poem is being written is making itself manifest?

I would suggest one of the key ways in which Dante’s poetic apocalyptic exegesis differs from the formal commentary of Olivi is the free way in which Dante adapts and adopts apocalyptic imagery to his own purposes. Benfell has noted four ways in which Dante is appropriating imagery but also adapting it: he sees the harlot as having been made corrupt, there has been a process of degradation; there is no indication of this in the biblical text; Dante adds a husband for the harlot, the giant deriving from the Song of Songs; In the Bible the harlot is seated upon the beast and it is the beast with the heads and horns: in Dante the beast and the woman fuse into the figure of the woman with seven heads and ten horns. The addition of a husband additionally changes the meaning of the heads and horns: they are glossed in the bible as seven mountains and seven kings. In Dante’s version however these

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<sup>482</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 227.

adornments seem to carry a positive value at least until corruption set in.

The implications of this change are clear, Dante is adapting his source text to better criticise the Popes; the Church as an ungoverned spouse is a commonplace (Exodus 16. 8-15) to have her as one who has been corrupted by the figure of the pimp is unique to Dante. The harlot of courses glances at the pilgrim and this is the occasion of her chastisement by the Giant, whatever the significance of the nature of Dante's involvement in this sequence it seems clear that it is in some sense active rather than passive. Indeed as Bolognesi has noted 'Dante makes the curve of his private biography cross that of history, thus bestowing upon himself a historical role made nobler by the eschatological connotation of the narrative'.<sup>483</sup>

In *Purgatorio* XXIX, Dante in discussing the words of St John, regarding the four beasts of the gospel says:

ma leggi Ezechiël, che li dipigne  
 come li vide da la fredda parte  
 venir con vento e con nube e con igne;  
 e quali i troverai ne le sue carte,  
 tali eran quivi, salvo ch'a le penne  
 Giovanni è meco e da lui si diparte. (*Purg.* XXIX, 100-05)

As Hollander has noted, Dante's claim here mirrors the pretext of the entire poem, the author is one who has been afforded a unique vision and as a consequence is now entrusted with a vital prophetic task; his experience of the otherworld is to be treated as actual and not as imagined. As a result, his authority as teller of the tale is absolute, and even biblical testimony is secondary to his own.<sup>484</sup> Dante is afforded a vision which has allowed him to definitively resolve an apparent contradiction between two scriptural authorities. The phrasing of this resolution is of course a striking assertion of the authority of the text and its author; Dante does not say that it transpires that John was correct and Ezekiel incorrect, he says I saw for myself and the authority of my texts means John agrees with me, not I agree with John. The truth claims of the *Commedia* are absolute and seemingly in their authority on a par with scripture itself.

This assertion of authority on the part of the author is indicative of the wider programme of Dante's assertion of his own prophetic role and the consequent quasi-

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<sup>483</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 146.

<sup>484</sup> Hollander, DDP, Note on *Purgatorio* XXIX, 100, accessed 17 November 2014.

scriptural status to be afforded to the text. As Benfell has noted, in general Olivi stays closer to the literal text of Revelation where Dante adapts and adopts.<sup>485</sup> It seems to me that this is inevitable: we are dealing with two different genres of work. However, it is clear that both works also have an agenda which bears upon the current state of the Church. I would suggest that Olivi's is an exposition of scripture which bears upon the current state of the Church by reading current historical events as fulfilments of the book of Revelation; while this is a practice in which Dante too is engaged, Dante stands apart from Olivi in that his dealings with apocalyptic texts are also characterized by a willingness to adapt scripture which in turn suggests a willingness to appropriate, and to assert a scriptural authority akin to that of his source texts. As was noted in Chapter 3, the husband which Dante invents as a companion to the *meretrice* is not drawn from the Book of Revelation but is a Dantean invention, simultaneously a Virgilian allusion and as Pertile has noted, a reference to Psalm 18; he is an apocalyptic figure of both Christ and Antichrist whose purpose is to illustrate the perverse relationship between the temporal and secular powers,<sup>486</sup> and constitutes a visual recapitulation of the words of Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* XVI;

L'un l'altro ha spento; ed è giunta la spada  
col pastorale, e l'un con l'altro insieme  
per viva forza mal convien che vada (*Purg.* XVI, 109-11)

Dante claims to quote John but in fact is adding to him in order that his prophecies might better fit the contemporary political situation to which they refer.<sup>487</sup> His rewriting accommodates both the imperial and clerical, allowing him to visually illustrate his views on the causes of the current corruption. Dante then in *Purgatorio* XXXII and XXXIII is providing confirmation of the prophetic vision of John of Patmos, he is also adapting it and this adaptation I would argue is indicative of the greater insight which the author in his text claims to possess. We have a prophecy of a future reform which is Dante's own creation placed at the conclusion of a sequence in which an apocalyptic matrix is laid over contemporary history. Dante is showing

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<sup>485</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', p. 37.

<sup>486</sup> Pertile, 'Dante Looks Forward and Back', p. 58.

<sup>487</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', p. 37.



the Bible to be correct but also showing himself as modern-day successor to the biblical authors who sees the prophecies of the Bible fulfilled, and in seeing this fulfilment is able himself predict future reform. Dante's relationship with the Book of Revelation bears comparison with the methods and ideas of spiritual Franciscan exegetes, but for all that the Earthly Paradise is suffused with the language of apocalypse, it should be clear that here we are some distance removed from the apocalyptic concerns of the spiritual Franciscans, there is no interest here in the struggle between good and evil within the Church; Dante maintains a passionate advocacy for the correct ordering of human society, and the implications this has for both of man's divinely appointed ends. Benfell suggests the Spirituals used the book of Revelation as a means to examine and understand the crises within their own order and the apocalyptic role assigned to them. For Dante, Franciscan discourses provided a register, a vocabulary and a set of images that Dante found very useful in his articulation of his vision of corruption, but he is ultimately selective in his sources; a party of one in the very widest sense

Dante seems content to rewrite his source text in order to better focus the blame on the target of his ire, the corrupt papacy. If we see *Inferno* XIX using the Book of Revelation in the new 'historical' sense, then Davis feels it is very possible, but by no means demonstrable, that the various prophecies of the *Commedia* are coloured by the Spirituals' hopes of a new era to be ushered in by the victory of a poor and dedicated monasticism.<sup>488</sup> Moreover I would suggest that such a reading applied across Dante's key apocalyptic passages, in particular *Purgatorio* XXXII, suggests a similar linking of apocalyptic scenarios to contemporary events, and an approach to but not an explicit relation of apocalyptic figures to contemporary ones which is a hallmark of Olivi's manner

#### 4.11 The Imperial Dimension

In my view the fundamental difference between Olivi and Dante lies in the reasons Dante gives for how the current state of affairs came to be and how it will be resolved; both of these have an imperial dimension in Dante which is lacking in Olivi. For Dante it is the absence of a strong temporal ruler which allows the

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<sup>488</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 229.

fornication which both he and Olivi condemn. In Olivi the identification of the Church as a great whore is a cry for a restoration of Church poverty and an assertion of the role of his own order. It seems to me that in Dante the same identification is a cry for imperial power; this imperial power may compel the Church to poverty but that is by no means its sole function; the imperial dimension is central to Dante both as a solution to Church greed and as a means by which humanity might reach the happiness of this life.

Key to Olivi's vision is St Francis and the Franciscan order who he believed would play the central role in the reform of the Church. There is little in Dante to suggest that the Franciscans are capable of this or that they have the central role to play in the working out of God's historical design. Indeed, we may go further and say that the radical embracing of poverty that Dante envisions for the order actually makes it impossible; I believe Beatrice's prophecy in *Purgatorio* XXXII of one who is an 'heir of the eagle' suggests the Empire rather than the Franciscans as the source of this renewal.

The articulation of imperial concerns and the centrality of the imperial ideal to his social thought is one of the key ways in which Dante differs from the other writers I have been examining. For McGinn, the failure of Joachim and those who followed and interpreted him to account for the imperial dimension in society, imposed 'significant limitations on their theology of history as it failed to provide eschatological confirmation for all the essential structures of medieval society'.<sup>489</sup> The three main Spiritual authors, Olivi, Clareno and Casale show little interest in this aspect of the Empire's function, while it appears to me central to everything Dante does from the time of his exile, in the letters, the *Convivio*, the *Commedia*, and in the *Monarchia*. Even Manselli, a most passionate advocate of Olivi's being of fundamental importance to Dante, says that while the Spirituals did not ignore political power or the Empire 'a loro si mantengono pero in sostanza indifferenti'.<sup>490</sup> Where they were convinced of the unique importance of the eternal evangel and its realization on earth they occupied themselves little with earthly human society or institutions; in contrast, 'per Dante la nuova Chiesa potrà aversi solo se ci sarà anche

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<sup>489</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, p. 227.

<sup>490</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioachino Da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 76.

la “humana civilitas”<sup>491</sup> only in a society civilly organised would the achievement of poverty be possible.

This failure to account for the imperial dimension is typified by, but not limited to, Olivi’s views on the Donation of Constantine: not just of no interest but close to diametrically opposed ideas to those of Dante.<sup>492</sup> Dante’s views of the cause of, and solution to, the world’s problems are articulated in imperial terms. An imperial error of judgment is at the root of the problem and a reassertion of imperial power is its solution. Sergio Cristaldi has expressed a similar opinion by recalling the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia*, and comparing them to Olivi’s understanding of history noting that where Olivi envisaged a world in which the Church could reform itself and deliver peace, Dante was convinced that ‘la pace temporale rimanga indissolubilmente legata a un’istituzione civile indentificata con l’Impero Romano’.<sup>493</sup> The point is that the political expectations of the two diverged drastically; Benfell suggests that this fact is more important than it seems at first sight, because ‘the difference in attitude toward the Donation [of Constantine] points to a larger difference in the ultimate direction of History’.<sup>494</sup> Olivi blames the materialism of the fifth age for the Church’s current corruption and seems to imply that the Donation had been of benefit to the Church:

Ecclesia per totum tempus martirum usque ad conversionem Constantini imperatoris fuit sic dispersa et oppressa quod non habuit sic apparentem unitatem et potestatem in toto orbe sicut habuit tempore Constantini, exclusa idolatriaet paganismo et data sibi undique pace, quando et plenius apparuit romanam ecclesiam esse universalem matrem omnium membrorum Christi. (*LSA*, Commentary on Revelation 12. 13, p. 516)

And:

Consimiliter autem pontificatus Christi fuit primo stirpi vite evangelice et apostolice in Petro et apostolis datus, ac deinde utiliter et rationabiliter fuit ad statum habentem temporalia commutatus, saltem a tempore Constantini usque ad finem quinti status. (*LSA*, Septimum Notabile, p. 261)

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<sup>491</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioachino Da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 76.

<sup>492</sup> Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, p. 42.

<sup>493</sup> Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al gioachinismo*, p. 391.

<sup>494</sup> Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, p. 44.

Of course Dante's view of the Donation of Constantine is negative. When Dante condemns the Donation in *Inferno* XIX, he inverts Jesus's instruction to Peter to be the rock on which the Church is built, to inter the corrupt Popes within rock in a parody of the apostolic succession; they do not build upon the achievements of their predecessors but as each simoniac Pope dies he pushes his predecessor ever deeper into the pocket in which he is lodged. The Popes' being placed upside down may be intended to recall St Peter's own inverted crucifixion, and the fire which burns the soles of their feet may be a parodic representation of the Pentecostal fire which gave the gift of tongues to the apostles, a gift which these Popes have used only for self-interested purposes.

This series of inversions of the correct order of things represents the effects of systemic and individual corruption, the ultimate cause of which is the Donation; a radical inversion of the divine plan with the weakened Empire and the wealthy Church involving itself in temporal matters. Hollander suggests that Pope Sylvester, who cured Constantine of leprosy and was, as a result, rewarded by him with authority over the Roman empire, is thus the bottom-most Pope in the hole, the 'first rich Father,' a condition that was to his immediate benefit but to the eventual loss of all Christians'.<sup>495</sup>

Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre,  
non la tua conversion, ma quella dote  
che da te prese il primo ricco patre! (*Inf.* XIX, 115-17)

This lack of judgement is also recreated symbolically in an apocalyptic and historical context in *Purgatorio* XXXII:

Poscia per indi ond' era pria venuta,  
l'aguglia vidi scender giù ne l'arca  
del carro e lasciar lei di sé pennuta; (*Purg.* XXXII, 124-26)

Constantine's ill-judged but well intentioned gift to Pope Sylvester is central to Dante's explanation for the reasons for the current lamentable state of the world; a fact of which the former Emperor himself is now all too well aware. When the

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<sup>495</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Inferno* XIX, 115-17, accessed 02 December 2012.

pilgrim meets Constantine in the Heaven of Jupiter, Beatrice says to the pilgrim:

ora conosce come il mal dedutto  
dal suo bene operar non li è nocivo,  
avvegna che sia 'l mondo indi distrutto. (*Par. XX*, 58-60)

This is a view which Dante reiterates in the *Monarchia*; the fault is on both sides, both parties in the exchange should have been able to perceive the inappropriateness of the gift and of the recipient.<sup>496</sup> Foster suggests that Dante's view of the Donation as an inversion of the divine plan and as the reason for both the weakness of Empire and for the Church's desire to involve itself in temporal matters is consistent throughout *Inferno XIX*, *Monarchia III*, and the letter to the Italian Cardinals despite the obvious stylistic differences.<sup>497</sup> I would also add that it is one which remains consistent despite the different dates of composition with perhaps 15 years separating the composition of *Inferno XIX* and *Monarchia III*.

As Davis has noted, Olivi praises the virtues of pagan Rome but does not deal with the legitimacy of the continuation of the Empire: Dante is more radical than Olivi in the function he assigns to Rome as having a continued *political* function in the Christian world.<sup>498</sup> Olivi is not greatly concerned with the imperial facet of Rome nor with the belief, so important to Dante, that even after the conversion of the city the value of its earthly mission as bearer of temporal peace had not diminished: there is in Olivi's work, no emphasis on the separate roles of Church and state and thus of course no suggestion of the dualist view of man's purpose in life which Dante outlines in the *Monarchia* and which I will argue is the source of difficulty in interpreting the Earthly Paradise and Limbo in the *Commedia*.

That is not to say that Olivi is wholly without interest in the Roman inheritance. Davis notes that Olivi's views seem close to Dante's in *Inferno II* that God chose the Roman people for an historical mission, a point which is made even more explicitly by Dante in the *Monarchia*; Christ recognised and used Rome's dominion; he gave Rome sanctity and spiritual authority. Olivi, like Dante, but unlike other reformers had a vision of the continuity of Roman history.<sup>499</sup> Olivi

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<sup>496</sup> *Monarchia III*, x, 5-12 and 13-17.

<sup>497</sup> K. Foster, *The Two Dantes*, pp. 102-03.

<sup>498</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', pp. 65-66.

<sup>499</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 227.

viewed the *populus romanus* as linked to the *populus christianus* and argued that Rome was chosen for the seat of the Church both because she had won dominion and because of the virtue of her pagan citizens.

sic tota continua successio populi romani dicitur esse una gens vel unus populus, ita ut dicamus quod populus romanus fuit primo paganus et postea christianus; et secundum hoc quod est unius partis attribuitur toti vel alteri parti per sinodochem. (*LSA*, Revelation 17. 6, p. 577)

Likewise, the enormous debt owed by Dante to Pier Giovanni Olivi's *Lectura* in terms of language has recently been explored by Alberto Forni,<sup>500</sup> but, and for me this is fundamental, there is a difference in focus seemingly indicative of an abiding concern on Dante's part for the life of man on earth as an end in itself which requires a continued presence of temporal political power both as an Augustinian constraint and an Aristotelian means by which man may maximise his potential intellect. Forni states 'Above all an extraordinary intertextual metamorphosis emerges, worked out by Dante in the vernacular on the *sermo humilis* of the exegesis of Olivi, moving the contents, belonging *per se* to the providential history of the Church, to the entire human world with its needs such as language, philosophy, monarchy, and giving to the ancient people the citizenship 'di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano'.<sup>501</sup> The choice of Rome over Jerusalem reinforces the universal significance which the city of Rome has in Dante's political and eschatological thought; it is a city divinely mandated to be the seat of the two powers responsible for temporal and eternal happiness.

Manselli has noted Olivi's condemnation of those Christians who consider the first principles of Aristotle as though they were the words of Christ and his assertion that those who choose to express admiration for Arabic science commit a sin of idolatry.<sup>502</sup> When Olivi glosses Revelation 9. 1-12, describing the tribulations which will occur when the fifth angel blows his trumpet, he considers these verses as a foreshadowing of the various tribulations which the Church will undergo as part of its transition:

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<sup>500</sup> A. Forni 'The *Lectura super Apocalipsim* and the *Commedia*. Correspondence between the Texts', [http://www.danteolivi.com/?page\\_id=540](http://www.danteolivi.com/?page_id=540), accessed 07 November 2014.

<sup>501</sup> A. Forni, 'Pietro di Giovanni Olivi e Dante. Un progetto di ricerca', *Collectanea Franciscana*, 82 (2012), 87-156 (p. 156).

<sup>502</sup> Manselli, *La Lectura super apocalipism*, p. 208.

Ad cuius evidentiam nota quod preter mala omnibus temporibus ecclesie et humano generi communia, erant tria gravissima circa finem quinti temporis ventura. Quorum primum fuit horrenda et effrenata laxatio clericorum et monachorum et laicorum seu vulgarium plebium. Secundum, sumens a predicta occasione[m], est hereticorum manicheorum et valentium eis in multis consimilium multa et pestifera inundatio. Tertium est aliorum ypocriticalium religiosorum cum primis multiplicatio et spiritus Christi et vite eius ab omnibus impugnatio, quamvis sub diversis modis et fraudibus, ut fiat perplexior temptatio fere inducens in errorem electos. (*LSA*, Revelation 9. 1, p. 447)

Olivi goes on to explain this third great tribulation as follows:

Ultimo pro tertia igitur temptatione impugnativa vite et spiritus Christi et predisponente ad sectam magni Antichristi, est sciendum quod casus stelle de celo in terram habentis clavem putei abissi ipsumque aperientis est quorundam altiorum et doctiorum et novissimorum religiosorum casus in terrenas cupiditates et in mundanorum philosophorum scientias curiosas et in multis erroneas et periculosas. Acceperunt enim ingenium et clavem ad aperiendam et exponendam doctrinam Aristotelis et Averrois comentatoris eius et ad excogitandum profunda et voraginoso dogmata obscurantia solem christiane sapientie et evangelice vite et purum aerem religiosi status ipsius, in tantum quod quidam eorum dicunt paupertatem altissimam non esse de substantia perfectionis eius et quod eius est habere sufficientiam aut saltem necessaria in communi; quidam vero quod usus pauper, id est altissime paupertatis secundum debitas circumstantias proportionatus, non est de substantia eius. Quidam etiam talia dogmata philosophica seu paganica suis theologicis tractatibus inseruerunt, ut ex eis multi clerici Parisius philosophantes omnes articulos fidei reiecerint preter unitatem Dei et solam philosophiam mundanam dixerint esse veram et humano regimini sufficientem. Dixeruntque mundum ab eterno fuisse et Deum per se et immediate nichil posse operari de novo, sed quicquid immediate potuit fecit necessario ab eterno. Ponuntque unum solum intellectum in omnibus hominibus et fere negant arbitrii libertatem. (*LSA*, Revelation 9. 1, p. 456)

It is clear that in both Dante and Olivi the book of Revelation can be used as an interpretative matrix to lay over contemporary events both to understand their theological and eschatological import and to ‘perform’ politics through the use of exegetical practices, in particular the historicizing reading of the events of Revelation. But we have Olivi’s horror at the Aristotelian doctrines being accepted at Paris standing in contrast to the way in which Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Ethics* inform the *Monarchia*’s arguments and creates a tension in the understanding of the Earthly

Paradise and of Limbo; Dante's allowing Aristotle into his salvation theology, even indirectly, creates a separation from the Spirituals and difficulties for our interpretation of Dante's views on the relationship of nature and grace as it plays out in the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*. It is Aristotle who underpins Dante's ideas of one of the purposes of Rome in mankind's life; all of Purgatory is concerned with a redirecting of the will, and there is much connectedness between Marco Lombardo's discourse and Dante's position in *Convivio*. Marco says that 'lume vi è dato a bene e a malizia' becoming good in earthly and purgatorial terms is not merely a matter of obedience and training of the voluntary power; the cognitive too has a key role. In the final book of the *Ethics* the proposition that human happiness consists in the activity of its highest power is reiterated by the 'light' of the intellect thanks to which we can discern good from bad. As Boyde notes, Marco tells Dante that this is the highest gift which God gave to man and Virgil tells Dante in *Purgatorio* XVIII that it is thus that the ancient philosophers (unaided by revelation) were able to bequeath morality (not just good behaviour in the sense of not being criminal) to the world.<sup>503</sup> It has been shown that in Dante, Olivi and Ubertino there is the idea of a divine providential intervention to resolve the current corruption in the Church. But, as Nardi noted, Dante's ideas of a 'messo di Dio' also carry fundamental differences: the Joachite reduction of this life to a waiting for the end was not suitable for a poet who had studied so much Virgil and Aristotle. For Dante it is not enough to reform the Church to put the world to rights, as it generally is for Olivi and Ubertino; the restoration of *imperium* was required for Aristotelian reasons.<sup>504</sup> The state is in Dante more than an opportunity for Virtue as it was for the Aristotelian Dominican Remigio, though it certainly possesses that function. The centrality of the Aristotelian conception of man's nature to Dante's view of humanity's purpose is related to what will be the key theme of the next chapter; the Roman Empire is a key component both in Dante's conception of history and how that history will conclude. The Empire and the Apocalypse are both present in Dante's Earthly Paradise and I will argue that this reflects Dante's view of history as being providential and

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<sup>503</sup> P. Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 98. This is an idea also found in the *Convivio*: 'Per seguitare lei diviene ciascuno buono' (*Conv.* III, xv, 12-13).

<sup>504</sup> Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale*, p. 275.



approaching its conclusion.<sup>505</sup>

#### 4.12 Dante, Ubertino and Olivi: Concluding Remarks

Both Dante and Olivi see in Revelation 17, a prophecy which finds its fulfilment in the contemporary Church, particularly in the greed and corruption of its leaders. Dante perceives broader implications and claims a broader authority which allows him to alter scripture even as he claims its authority. Both share a narrative of progressive corruption articulated through Revelation 17 in particular as containing the imagery that supports their sense of Church history. It seems clear that Dante was influenced by the Spiritual Franciscan reading of the Apocalypse in his use of Revelation 17 in the service of his vision of Church corruption but the difference in attitude towards Rome, typified by but not limited to the views on the Donation of Constantine, point to a larger difference in the ultimate direction of history for each writer.<sup>506</sup> Olivi, influenced by Joachim of Fiore, looks for a coming seventh age corresponding to the age of the Holy Spirit and the third age of world history, and the advent of St Francis is key to this vision. Francis began the renewal and his order would play a vital role in the sixth age resulting in the overthrow of the Antichrist. While, as Pasquini has noted, Dante adopts the sevenfold view of history and ‘le successioni dell’eta della Chiesa trovano riscontro, con notevole esattezza, in quelle indicate da Gioacchino da Fiore e riprese dall’Olivi’<sup>507</sup> there is no hint in Dante that the Franciscans have a role to play in the working-out of God’s historical design; Beatrice seems to suggest that it is the Empire rather than the Franciscans that will be the source of this renewal.

I have suggested that Dante is appropriating the language of Spiritual Franciscan apocalyptic discourses and that like them he is doing so in order to engage in critique of Church corruption and to suggest remedies for the ills of the world. It seems clear however that there are fundamental differences of approach and interest: Dante writes the *Commedia* as though he believes himself to be a prophet and presents his text as a prophetic work; Dante assigns a fundamental role

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<sup>505</sup> For the reception and treatment of Aristotle by Dante and in Dante’s time, see S.A. Gilson, ‘Dante and Christian Aristotelianism’, pp. 65-109.

<sup>506</sup> Benfell, ‘Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse’, p. 47.

<sup>507</sup> Manselli, *La Lectura*, p. 60.

to the Empire in effecting reform of the Church: an external rather than an internal solution. Olivi blames the materialism of the fifth age, Dante blames the Donation of Constantine. While Dante is by no means unique in casting himself in the role of divinely inspired speaker, he is seemingly unique in being a prophet of empire who uses the language of those whose social programme is in many respects at variance to his own. Even when Dante may be seen to be close to the thought of a particular individual on subjects which are fundamental to his world view, there is no suggestion that he is following the individual exclusively or uncritically. In accepting Boniface's legitimacy, Dante is closer to Olivi than to Ubertino, although as has been seen Dante is closer to Ubertino than Olivi in picking out specific contemporary Popes to represent a mystical Antichrist,<sup>508</sup> and even here Dante's identification is implied rather than explicit.

Dante perceives broader, more universal implications and claims a broader prophetic and intellectual authority which allows him to author his own pseudo-scriptural poem often through the use, and the re-writing, of scripture itself. In the *Commedia*, the *Monarchia*, and in his political letters, Dante links Christian and imperial history together; in doing so he also ties spiritual salvation and temporal happiness together; a concern as remote from Olivi as it is from Ubertino. Spiritual Franciscan exegesis and preaching provided a vocabulary and a set of images that Dante found very useful in his articulation of his vision of a political ideal which was uniquely his.<sup>509</sup> For Dante, justice, and the peace which ensures it, is only possible under a universal empire. The Emperor has an indirect but key role in man's salvation: If he does not restrain Church greed the Church does not function; if the Church does not function more souls will be lost. The consequences of these differences for our understanding of the Earthly Paradise and Dante's Limbo, are topics to which I will return in Chapter 5

#### 4.13 Remigio and Dante

If Dante's thought shows the presence of Aristotelian elements in his concept of the purpose of society, and man's purpose in this life, it distances him from the Spiritual

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<sup>508</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 65.

<sup>509</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', p. 49.

Franciscan lines of prophetic and apocalyptic thought, the methods, imagery and utility of which he freely appropriates. It was with the Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella rather than the Franciscans at Santa Croce that the Thomistic synthesis of Aristotle and Christian thought was transmitted. I highlighted in Chapter 2 the figure of the Dominican lector Remigio de' Girolami as a key political thinker in the Florence of Dante's formative years. Moderate in outlook and a civic patriot, in his writing he eulogised saints and scriptural figures but also Cicero and other heroes of ancient Rome and Davis has noted the strong resemblance between Remigio's political theories and his view of Roman history and those of the poet.<sup>510</sup>

The twin Aristotelian ideas that man both naturally wishes to learn and is naturally a political creature seem axiomatic to Dante. At the opening of the *Convivio* he says: 'Si come dice lo Filosofo nel principio de la Prima Filosofia, tutti li uomini naturalmente desiderano di sapere' (*Convivio* I, i, deriving from *Metaphysics*. I, i, 980<sup>a</sup>). For Dante it is also self-evident that God's intention is that man should live communally as *Paradiso* VIII makes clear:

Ond' elli ancora: 'Or di: sarebbe il peggio  
per l'omo in terra, se non fosse cive?'  
'Si,' rispuos' io; 'e qui ragion non cheggio.' (*Par.* VIII, 115-17)

We may say that there are perhaps three key areas in which Remigio appears to have a direct relationship to Dante's thought. Remigio, who had heard Aquinas in Paris, may well have been one of the key conduits of Christian Aristotelianism between Paris and Florence as he was lector at the convent school of Santa Maria Novella by 1273 and by 1289 he had been promoted to the lectorate of the provincial *studium theologiae* in Florence, a position which he held until 1303.<sup>511</sup> Remigio is a potential source for Dante's acceptance of the key Aristotelian postulate regarding human society as natural, which regards man as a social and political animal: the *Nichomachean Ethics* are the key Pagan proof for Remigio's arguments on these matters. Secondly Remigio is a likely candidate for having influenced Dante's revision of his ideas regarding the positive nature of the Roman Empire from his

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<sup>510</sup> Davis, 'Education in Dante's Florence', p. 249.

<sup>511</sup> Mulchahey, 'First the Bow is Bent in Study', p. 390.

former negative assessment.<sup>512</sup> Thirdly, Mineo views Remigio's works as essential in understanding the intellectual atmosphere of Florence in Dante's time, as many of the key concerns in Dante also appear in the works of the Dominican lector. For example, as will be discussed below, *Contra Falsos Ecclesie Professores*, written before 1303, contains a large section on the two supreme powers.<sup>513</sup> It adopts a moderate position between extremist of either papal or imperial cause and anticipates Dante in condemning the Donation of Constantine. As we will see Remigio's views on the Donation of Constantine in *Contra Falso Ecclesie Professores* are strikingly similar to those of Dante.

Remigio seems quite extreme in his views on the need for this participation in society and the effects of society not functioning correctly: a man living other than as a citizen is less than a man. He says:

totum enim prius necessarium est esse parte. Interempto enim toto nec erit pes neque manus nisi equivoce, velut si quis dicat lapideam; corrupta enim erit talis. Omnia enim opere diffinita sunt et virtute; quare non iam talia existantia non dicendum eadem esse sed equivoca», quia scilicet carent operatione et virtute per quam diffiniuntur, sicut diffinitio pedis est quod est membrum organicum habens virtutem ad ambulandum. Unde destructa civitate remanet civis lapideus aut depictus, quia scilicet caret virtute et operatione quam prius habebat, puta miles in militaribus, mercator in mercationibus, artifex in artificialibus artis sue, officialis in officialibus, pater familias in familiaribus, et universaliter liber in operibus liberis, puta ire ad podere suum, facere ambasciatas, habere dominia aliarum civitatum. Ut qui erat civis florentinus, per destructionem Florentie iam non sit florentinus dicendus sed potius flerentinus. Et si non est civis non est homo, quia homo est naturaliter animal civile, secundum Philosophum in VIII *Ethicorum* et in I *Phisicorum*. (*De Bono Comuni*, IX)

This has implications for the individual who chooses to live according to what is best for him rather than the community but, by extension, also has serious implications for all citizens, where it is the leaders of the state who suffer the malaise of *cupiditas* – a society which is not functioning because of the greed of its leaders is one which does not truly exist and therefore its members however individually virtuous they may be, are not fully human. Remigio's whole political position in *De*

<sup>512</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 219.

<sup>513</sup> Remigio de' Girolami, *Contra falsos ecclesie professores*, critical edition ed. by Filippo Tamburini (Rome: Libreria Editrice della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1981).

*Bono Comuni* has a tendency to subsume the individual with the corporate mission. In Charles Till Davis's phrase, 'In general Remigio has far more to say about the responsibilities of the citizen to the state rather than vice-versa and a tendency to develop the kind of radical corporationalism which all but smothers the value of individual perfection'.<sup>514</sup>

It seems to me that in relating this to Dante's position, while it is apparent that there are many points of similarity and shared concerns principally in the acceptance of the key Aristotelian postulate that man is by nature a social animal, there are at least three fundamental differences. Firstly, as will be discussed in more detail below, Remigio's views on the hierocratic question are at best nuanced, at worst a fudge; in Dante there is no ambiguity about the route via which the Emperor derives his power. This emerges in both the *Monarchia* where the third book is dedicated to proving the point that this power derives directly from God and in the political letters where Dante describes God as 'a quo velut a puncto bifurcatur Petri Caesarisque potestas' (*Ep. V, v*).

Secondly, as Francesco Bruni has neatly outlined, there is a fundamental difference in focus between Dante's and Remigio's political visions, notwithstanding the fact that Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics* are key texts in the works of both men. In the *Monarchia* and the *Convivio*, an individual is a constituent part of the family, the neighbourhood, the city, the kingdom and finally the universal monarchy. As Bruni notes, in *De Bono Comuni*, Remigio proceeds in the same way but with a final decisive difference: 'oltre il regnum per Remigio non c'è l'impero universale ma il bene dell'universalis Ecclesia'.<sup>515</sup> In *De Bono Comuni 2*, the communal good resolves itself in the Good of the Commune; for Dante the communal good exists, as this is one element of the hierarchy he outlines, but the communal good and inter- and intra-communal peace can only be maintained where the greater authority of the Empire presides.<sup>516</sup> Remigio asks if Florence were destroyed who could call themselves Florentine; citizenship consists in membership of the city-state. Dante's definition of citizenship transcends that of Remigio by making it universal; a man

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<sup>514</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 219. This is an idea first suggested by Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, p. 478.

<sup>515</sup> F. Bruni, 'Presentazione', in *Remigio dei Girolami, Dal bene comune al bel del comune: i trattati politici*, ed. by E. Panella (Florence: Nerbini, 2014), pp. 7-18 (p. 16).

<sup>516</sup> Bruni, 'Presentazione', p. 16.

exiled from Florence unjustly does not in the eyes of God have his citizenship removed; Dante asserts his continuing citizenship as Florentine in the exilic political letters. But more importantly for Dante all men, beyond their citizenship of their home city, are also citizens of the universal Empire; Remigio's notions of citizenship, would not have seemed wrong to Dante but incomplete and insufficient in their parochialism.

Thirdly, in Dante, the common good is a necessity for realising the potential of the individual, in the Aristotelian sense of the actualization of the potential intellect; this seems similar in Remigio but the concept of collective living for individual fulfilment of human potential seems absent. In Remigio, man lives collectively principally for the good of the state and his eternal soul; in Dante man lives collectively for the good of the state, his eternal soul, and, fundamentally, for his own realization as a human being here and now, although this is not to say that in Dante these aspects are not interrelated and even mutually dependent. Even in Dante's Paradise the ideal, indeed paradigmatic, community of citizens, there is, it seems, no question of the individual being subsumed; their wills are at peace and aligned in the same direction but they are clearly still themselves, indeed fully themselves. They are in fact perfections of their individual selves and for Dante it was their purpose as human beings to become so: 'noi siam vermi | nati a formar l'angelica farfalla' (*Purg.* X, 124-25). There seems to be little in Remigio which echoes the sentiments of a Piccarda Donati or Charles Martel in the *Commedia*. The fully realised human being *per se* seems to hold little interest for Remigio. Dante's unequivocal 'yes' to the question of whether it would be worse for man 'se non fosse cive?' is a sentiment which Remigio would likely have approved; both seem to accept the proposition that citizenship is a natural state for man and that he is diminished by exclusion from it. Remigio's focus is on community and on what is good for the community, and it is never made clear whether Florence acknowledges any temporal superior. Dante's focus is at once on communal structures and on the individual: the latter achieves his divine potential through the agency of the former and the principal agency in this is of course the Empire. It seems likely that in Charles Martel's question and Dante's response (given that we are now in *Paradiso*) we are seeing Dante's ideal of the *simultaneous* perfection of individual and

community.<sup>517</sup>

#### 4.14 The Donation of Constantine in Dante and Remigio

I sought in my discussion of Dante and Olivi to offer a brief comparison of their views on the Donation of Constantine as a means to illustrate some of the fundamental differences in their approach. When we turn to make the same comparison between Dante and the Dominican Remigio de' Girolami we find more points of contact, but there are also fundamental differences of understanding and interpretation.

Remigio's assertion that 'prefectus ecclesiasticus non debuit habere principale et directum dominium super temporalia' (*Contra Falsos*, Ch. 26, 18-20) seems wholly consonant with Dante's views. The scriptural authorities he cites to support these arguments are all drawn from the New Testament, he cites II Timothy 4 'Nemo militans Deo implicat se negotiis sæcularibus' for the injunction that it is God's will that the Church should not involve itself in secular matters. Likewise, John, 6. 15 is used to demonstrate that Jesus, in his refusal to be king of the Jews, had rejected temporal power for himself and thus for the Church (*Contra Falsos*, Ch. 26, 29). Like Remigio, Dante cites Christ's life as a model for how the Church should behave in terms of renouncing political authority: 'Forma autem Ecclesie nichil aliud est quam vita Cristi, tam in dictis quam in factis comprehensa: vita enim ipsius ydea fuit et exemplar militantis Ecclesie, presertim pastorum, maxime summi, cuius est pascere agnos et oves' (*Monarchia*, III, xv, 3).

Remigio makes reference to the legend that, at time of the Donation, a voice from heaven said 'hodie infusum est venenum ecclesie Dei' (*Contra Falsos*, Ch. 26, 25). Davis has noted that this is a legend also cited by John of Paris and in Manfred's letter to the Romans.<sup>518</sup> Remigio, like Dante, regarded the Donation as a poison for the Church which made it unable to restrain itself from earthly greed. As Hollander observes, from the time of the earliest commentators there was an understanding that

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<sup>517</sup> For the ways in which Dante's afterlife mirrors earthly political life and structures see C. E. Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City: The Poetry of Citizenship in Dante* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006), especially pp. 51-63.

<sup>518</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 220.

Dante's voice from heaven in *Purgatorio* was a sort of calque on the story.<sup>519</sup>

Poscia per indi ond' era pria venuta,  
 l'aguglia vidi scender giù ne l'arca  
 del carro e lasciar lei di sé pennuta;  
 e qual esce di cuor che si rammarca,  
 tal voce uscì del cielo e cotal disse:  
 'O navicella mia, com' mal se' carca'. (*Purg.* XXXII, 124-29)

Dante's other references to Constantine within the *Monarchia* are instructive. Prue Shaw has noted that Books I and II of the *Monarchia* close with a reference to Christ's birth and death respectively: 'The key events in human history which legitimise the Roman Empire'.<sup>520</sup> It is noticeable that precisely where the fundamental importance of these key events is highlighted, at the close of both books, mention is also made of the Donation and on both occasions the close of the chapter and the allusion to Constantine are the trigger for an apostrophe to the people of Italy. This linking of the key legitimizing events, the birth and death of Christ, serve, rhetorically, to cast a different light on the actions of Constantine and Pope Sylvester. The actions of these two are a betrayal of God's intentions and of Christ's sacrifice even if, in the case of Constantine he was led astray by his own good intentions. The fruits of the Donation, once the Donation is seen for the betrayal of Christ's wishes that it is, cannot be used by the Church to legitimise its temporal ambitions. 'Desinant igitur Imperium exprobrare romanum qui se filios Ecclesie fingunt, cum videant sponsum Cristum illud sic in utroque termino sue militie comprobasse' (*Mon.* II, xi, 7). Christ recognised Roman authority through submitting to its law at the census following his birth and at the Crucifixion.

In *Monarchia* I, xvi, 3 Dante uses the language of the Gospels, in this case John XIX, 23 to make the seamless garment of Christ symbolize the Empire, its rending caused by the Donation of Constantine. This chapter is also the final one of Book I of the *Monarchia* and is the occasion for an apostrophe to the human race – making it clear that the cupidity enabled in the Church by the donation also affects all humanity. 'O genus humanum, quantis procellis atque iacturis quantisque naufragiis agitari te necesse est dum, bellua multorum capitum factum, in diversa

<sup>519</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Par.* XXIII, 124-29, accessed 12 April 2015.

<sup>520</sup> Shaw (trans.), *Monarchy* p. 62.



conaris!' (*Mon.* I, xvi, 4). Dante's apostrophe contains a clear allusion to the many-headed beast of Revelation which is also present in the Earthly Paradise in *Purgatorio*; likewise the image of storm and shipwreck is one to which Dante uses in the prophecies and invectives against Florence in the *Commedia* (*Par.* XXVII, *Purg.* VI), as well as in the opening of the letter to the Florentines (*Ep.* VI, i).

The centrality of the Donation to Dante's accounting for the current state of the Church and its flock is further emphasised by a second reference to Constantine and the effect of the Donation on Italy at the close of Book II of the *Monarchia*. 'O felicem populum, o Ausoniam te gloriosam, si vel nunquam infirmator ille Imperii tui natus fuisset, vel nunquam sua pia intention ipsum fefellisset' (*Mon.* II, xi, 8). Rhetorically this functions well within the overall scheme of the *Monarchia* as at the close of each book it focuses the attention of the reader on the relevance of the treatise to them, and draws attention to what will be the cornerstone of Dante's argument in Book III that the power of the Emperor derives directly from God and is not dependent on or mediated by the Pope, nor does the Pope have the right to interfere in temporal matters. As Prue Shaw has observed, the crux of Dante's argument depends on the unsuitability of the donor and of the recipient; the linking together via apostrophe and allusion of the birth and death of Jesus, the fullness of time which is mentioned at the close of Book I and the Donation of Constantine at the close of Books I and II allow Dante to foreground the arguments and themes which are the central concerns and premises on which his arguments in Book III will depend, and to highlight the providential and interrelated nature of the twin streams of human history, the Christian and Roman.

While his views on the negative impact of the Donation seem clear and bear considerable resemblance to those of Dante, Remigio's views on the key question of the appropriate power relationship between Church and Empire are by no means clear. In Chapter 26 of *Contra Falsos*, Remigo argues 'quia occupatio circa temporalia diminuit devotionem et amorem circa Deum et spiritualia et ideo prefectus ecclesiasticus non debuit habere principale et directum dominum super temporalia' (*Contra Falsos*, Ch. XXVI, 18-20). This is a proposition with which Dante would seem to be in agreement in, for example, his dire warnings in *Purgatorio* XVI about the consequences of uniting the functions of Church and Empire.

Remigio in *Contra falsos ecclesie professores* tends to excuse Papal intervention in secular matters, such as the deposition of Frederick II *ratione peccati*, an argument which of course had contemporary resonance to Remigio's audience as it was that deployed by Boniface VIII in his dispute with Philip the Fair. This fundamental difference between Remigio's thesis and that of Dante becomes apparent in Chapter 28; for Remigio the secular power is derived from the ecclesiastical 'potestas regalis dependet a sacerdotali et causatur ab ea et quod potest amovri ab ea ratione delicti, et hoc concedimus' (*Contra Falsos* XXVIII, 16-17) and in extreme circumstances the Pope may intervene in the event of an imperial vacancy or imperial malfeasance. In Chapter 29 Remigio says: 'Auctoritates vero Novi Testamenti ostendunt quod papa habet auctoritatem super omnes et omnia aequaliter, scilicet quantum spiritualia et ratione delicti' (*Contra Falsos*, XXIX, 4-5). This 'concession' has been foregrounded in Chapter 18 where Remigio is discussing the question with reference to 'ratione sumta ex suppositione fidei' (Matthew 16. 19), employed three times to support the argument that 'auctoritatis pape excedat omnes huius mundi auctoritates' (*Contra Falsos*, XVIII, 5).<sup>521</sup> At this point, as well as asserting the supremacy of the papacy in the hierarchy, Remigio also states that 'papa immediate habet auctoritatem suam a Deo, sicut etiam anime super quas auctoritatem habet immediate creantur ab ipso. Principes autem seculares habent auctoritatem scilicet a Deo mediante homine etiam ipso papa, sicut etiam corpora, super que sola auctoritatem habent motum et sensum a Deo recipiunt mediante anima' (*Contra Falsos*, XVIII, 28-34). Dante is aware of Matthew 16. 19 as a key text in the debate and dedicates all of *Monarchia* III, 8 to demonstrating that the conclusions of his opponents' syllogistic reasoning are false.

However we choose to interpret the 'quoddammodo' clause at the end of the *Monarchia*, an issue to which I return in the next chapter, it is clear that there is no concession of the explicitness and breadth we find in Remigio, and, as was noted above, when we turn to the political letters Dante's position is clear: God is 'a quo velut a puncto bifurcatur Petri Caesarisque potestas' (*Ep.* V, v). To summarize Remigio's position, we may say that he holds that the two powers have separate and generally autonomous areas of authority but that the power of the Empire derives

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<sup>521</sup> 'Et tibi dabo claves regni cælorum. Et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in cælis: et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in cælis' (Matthew 16. 19).

from that of the Papacy where the power of the Papacy derives directly from God. Remigio demonstrates this through reference to scripture and to Aristotle; though in his concessive statements Aristotle is notably absent. Remigio accepts the hierarchical position but seems to wish to minimise its consequences; he condemns the Donation but does not adopt wholly non-hierocratic positions as a result. Dante's view, as it is articulated in the third book of the *Monarchia*, and, in my view, in the *Commedia*, is that the power of the Empire derives, unmediated, from God and this derivation is the basis on which his view of the relationship between the two powers and thus his whole political world view is premised.

#### 4.15 Conclusion

Mineo feels that in *Paradiso* the consideration is that the end of the world is imminent and that this is a new perspective with respect to the rest of Dante's oeuvre.<sup>522</sup> Likewise Honess has spoken of a new concentration in *Paradiso*, reflecting Dante's abandonment of hope for imminent earthly political reform which might once more restore the universal peace enjoyed by man under Augustus, and his movement towards the view that true peace is only now achievable in heaven.<sup>523</sup>

The apocalyptic discourses of the Spiritual Franciscan movement provided a readymade vocabulary with which such concerns could be articulated, even though, as we have seen, there are considerable areas of difference between Dante and the Spirituales; 'Dante rejects the political ideology of the Spiritual Franciscans, partially agrees to their eschatology, and fully consents to their notion of radical poverty'.<sup>524</sup>

Viewing *Paradiso* as thus distinct from the rest of the *Commedia* means that Dante's phrase 'che poca gente piu ci si disira' at *Paradiso* XXX, 132 raises a difficulty: if Mineo's thesis of the imminence of the end of the world is correct, and similarly Honess's idea of an abandonment of political hope, how does one reconcile waiting for a restoration of a set of historical circumstances with the notion that the end of the world is at hand? Mineo's answer is, taking into account the more generic nature of all the prophecies of *Paradiso*, that Dante in his later years has formed a

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<sup>522</sup> Mineo, *Dante un sogno di armonia terrena*, p. 43.

<sup>523</sup> Honess, 'Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile', *The Italianist* 33 3 (pp. 484-504), p. 500

<sup>524</sup> Bolognesi, 'Dante and the Friars Minor', p. 47.

view which while still 'apocalittico-escatologica' no longer bears the Franciscan Joachimite idea of a period of waiting for a long period of spiritual regeneration.<sup>525</sup> Perhaps by now the works of the Antichrist seemed more complete than when the last cantos of the *Purgatorio* were being composed.

Whether Dante believed in political reform as an ongoing possibility at this time is hard to know. It is thus difficult to say whether he is appropriating Joachite imagery with the intention that a Last World Emperor is understood, with a consequent implication that shortly the Emperor will go to Jerusalem as per the Pseudo-Methodius legend, and that this is a signal for the Last Judgement, or whether we are dealing with an appropriation of it to refer to a political new Augustus. It is never explicit in Dante whether he genuinely felt the last days to be at hand and we are left to speculate on the extent to which Dante utilises the rhetorical value of messianic and apocalyptic language versus an actual belief in the end being nigh. Given what happened under the last Augustus, is there really a distinction between the rhetorical and the literal belief and might not Dante's view have wavered through the long composition of the *Commedia* as the changing political landscape saw peaks and troughs in his own optimism and pessimism? While Dante's Emperor seems to be one who will reform the Church in order to let human society flourish, contextually the prophecy of the DXV seems to make it clear that this reform is one which forms part of an apocalyptic chain of events which is already under way as seems to be the case in much of the Franciscan writings of the time. As Havely as has observed, 'the DXV doesn't have to be Francis for us to recognise that contemporary exegesis was imagining a closely comparable kind of redemptive advent'.<sup>526</sup>

Dante's passionate desire for urgent political reform should not obscure the fact that what Dante is advocating is arguably a fundamentally reactionary position. 'The Spirituals believed in progress, Dante in *renovatio*. They hoped for a new age, Dante for the return of an old one.'<sup>527</sup> For Pertile, Dante's position in the political letters is a purely reactionary one and Dante's dream is the reality from which most Italian city states had been escaping over the previous two centuries. While Dante

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<sup>525</sup> Mineo, *Dante un sogno di armonia terrena*, p. 43.

<sup>526</sup> Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 120.

<sup>527</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 69.

clearly understands that a quest by an individual, a city, or a nation for material fulfilment is doomed to failure, his alternative is, Pertile suggests, worse: ‘a contented immobility, a frozen world whose only desires are fixed on heaven [...] is morally dubious, socially unjust and politically unworkable’.<sup>528</sup> ‘Dante’s ideal of a totally static society cannot be sustained except in a world which is shot through with the eschatological tension toward the kingdom of God on Earth’.<sup>529</sup> A reactionary position means we must not think of Dante’s political model as containing any suggestion of separation of Church and state. It is the very opposite, and in the end confirms what it sought to prove wrong, that is: ‘every human activity belongs to the sacred sphere, the same sacred universe of space and time’.<sup>530</sup>

While Dante’s natural allies in a reactionary programme of a newly impoverished Church and a universal Empire, may well be the Joachites, the Spiritual Franciscans, and the Fraticelli, and while it may be that these connections are fundamental, it is imperative to remember that these run only with respect to the Church.<sup>531</sup> Dante profoundly believes in the charismatic value of social and political institutions and as has been noted the reinstated universal Empire above all others.<sup>532</sup> It does not seem to me that in either the *Commedia* or the *Monarchia*, the two orders, Franciscan and Dominican, are as fundamental to Dante’s reforming ideal as they are in the writings of their own members for the simple reason that the Empire is fundamental to this process in Dante in a way which it is not in Joachite and Pseudo-Joachite writings or the writing of those seen as responsible for a revitalisation of Joachimism in Florence. That is not to say there is undue negativity, indeed it is arguable that the role given to the orders in their own literature, via Ubertino and Olivi for instance, particularly as their being a fulfilment of Joachite prophecies of the two orders of spiritual men who would purify the Church and usher in a new spiritual age, is one which we find in part in Dante particularly in the role ascribed to them in *Paradiso* XI. It is by no means clear that this is a model which the Orders will be able to induce, or compel, the institutional Church to adopt while the imperial dimension in human society is not operating correctly. Had

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<sup>528</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p. 63.

<sup>529</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p. 64.

<sup>530</sup> Minio-Paluello, ‘Remigio Girolami’s *De Bono Communi*’, p.71.

<sup>531</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p. 64.

<sup>532</sup> Pertile, ‘Dante Looks Forward and Back’, p. 64.

Dante wished to make his poem an explicit statement of Franciscan or Pseudo-Joachite sentiment there was no shortage of material to allow him to do so. He does not make an explicit statement but the centrality of apocalyptic imagery to the presentation of the Earthly Paradise means it is here we should look: here we have prophecy of imminent reform set within an apocalyptic context and a vision of history which both seem to suggest that if the end of the world is not imminent then at least we have the advent of a figure who will have a key role to play in an apocalyptic series of events. Earlier in this chapter I referred to Benfell's suggestion that the differences in attitude towards the Donation of Constantine which we find in Olivi and Dante are indicative of 'a wider difference which points to a larger difference in their views of the ultimate direction of History.'<sup>533</sup> For me this presents a difficulty, as Benfell does not define what precisely he means by this phrase. Presumably both Olivi and Dante as medieval Catholic Christians believed that all history led towards its own conclusion, the Last Judgment, after which, time, and thus history, would cease to exist. The distinction seems to me to be more about who should determine the course of that history, Church or Empire, and what function human existence *per se* has in history. I will argue in Chapter 5 that this distinction between the Franciscan exegesis of the Book of Revelation and Dante raises difficulties for our understanding of Dante's Earthly Paradise, the means by which it is reached, and what it represents in the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, and ultimately places in tension the relationship between nature and grace as it is articulated in the two works.

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<sup>533</sup> Benfell, 'Dante, Peter of John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', p. 44.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Introduction

I have sought in previous chapters to highlight some of the numerous points of contact between Dante and his contemporaries particularly with regard to their views on Church poverty, on the relationship between the Church and the Empire, and how the language of prophecy is frequently adopted to address these issues. Havely suggests that Dante is polysemously combining these discourses with a number of sources and traditions, Franciscan and other'.<sup>534</sup> The previous chapters sought to emphasise the rich tradition of uses of prophetic apocalyptic language to which Dante had access and to begin to demonstrate some of the polysemy to which Havely refers. I have discussed how the appropriation of the language of prophecy in Duecento Italy has a substantial engagement with contemporary political and theological disputes. In particular, I have examined the ways in which this occurred in disputes between the Spiritual Franciscan movement and the papacy and how the language of apocalyptic prophecy was deployed more widely as a register in which political arguments and propaganda were conducted, nowhere more so than in the condemnation of the anti-papal activities of Frederick II which we find in Pseudo-Joachite writings, many of which themselves originated from within the Franciscan movement.

There is a strong case to be made that Dante is appropriating the reformist apocalyptic discourses of the Spiritual Franciscans in his presentation of the Earthly Paradise, and elsewhere in the *Commedia*, and that he shares their concern for the necessity of reforms which will return the Church to a state of apostolic poverty. Other influences such as that of the Dominican, Remigio de' Girolami, have been explored, but the apocalyptic context and language of the Earthly Paradise cantos make the Franciscans of particular relevance here. In this sense at least we have Dante and the Spirituales deploying similar language to bolster a similar argument. Bolognesi endorses Davis' opinion that Dante combines diverse soteriologies,

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<sup>534</sup> Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 121.

secular and divine, and foresees the coming of a temporal and a spiritual reformer; in other words, ‘Dante links Francis and Augustus’.<sup>535</sup> This chapter will explore the ways in which the imperial aspects of Dante’s understanding of history influence his prophetic manner.

I have suggested both that Dante is unique in the breadth and purpose of the prophetic role which he assigns to himself in the *Commedia*, the *Monarchia*, and in the political letters, and that the political and social agenda which Dante advances through his use of prophetic language serves to distance him from many of his putative sources. I have suggested in Chapter 4 that Dante’s views on the role and nature of the Roman Empire as both a historical fact and a current political force are of particular importance. The role assigned by Dante to the Roman Empire has implications for his view of the nature and purposes of human society which raises questions regarding the nature, purpose and symbolic value of Dante’s Limbo and the Earthly Paradise whether in the *Commedia* or in the *Monarchia*. In this chapter I wish to consider in more depth the way in which Dante’s ‘political’ prophecies relate to his vision of Roman history, Roman virtues and the Roman imperial ideal.

Briefly, to allow me to establish a critical position for the rest of the chapter, I will consider the relationship between the way that the term Earthly Paradise is used in the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* and suggest ways in which establishing consonance or dissonance between the two uses of the term creates problems for our wider understanding of Dante’s view of humanity’s purpose. I will then examine to what extent the events depicted in the *Commedia*’s Earthly Paradise suggest that Dante is presenting himself as a prophet of the Apocalypse: how does the apocalyptic language of the Earthly Paradise relate to Dante’s political ideals? Thirdly, and principally, this chapter will discuss the prophecies of the *Commedia* in relation to Dante’s views of the exceptional providential role he affords to the Roman Empire. How are these views articulated, what are the consequences of Dante’s prophecies of a renewed Roman Empire for our understanding of the fate of the virtuous pagans in Limbo, and what can the salvation of Cato and Ripheus tell us about the possibilities and limitations of what might be termed ‘virtuous citizenship’?

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<sup>535</sup> Bolognesi, ‘Dante and the Friars Minor’, p. 47; Davis, ‘Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*’, p. 59.



## 5.2. The Earthly Paradise and the two powers in the *Commedia* and *Monarchia*.

In Book III of the *Monarchia* Dante says:

Duos igitur fines providentia illa inenarrabilis homini proposuit intendendos: beatitudinem scilicet huius vite, que in operatione proprie virtutis consistit et per terrestrem paradisum figuratur; et beatitudinem vite eterne, que consistit in fruitione divini aspectus ad quam propria virtus ascendere non potest, nisi lumine divino adiuta, que per paradisum celestem intelligi datur. Ad has quidem beatitudines, velut ad diversas conclusiones, per diversa media venire oportet. Nam ad primam per phylosophica documenta venimus, dummodo illa sequamur secundum virtutes morales et intellectuales operando; ad secundam vero per documenta spiritualia que humanam rationem transcendunt, dummodo illa sequamur secundum virtutes theologicas operando, fidem spem scilicet et karitatem. (*Mon.* III, xvi, 7-8)

Dante here suggests that man has two purposes in life which are provided by providence: the happiness of this life and the happiness of the next. These are achieved by different means. The former, which consists in the ‘operatione proprie virtutis’ is one to which ‘per phylosophica documenta venimus’. There is no suggestion, in the *Monarchia* at least, that this is a state of affairs which pagan man could not achieve; indeed the pagan Roman Empire is the paradigm, the embodiment, of the realisation of this possibility and a fundamental part of the mechanism by which the communal and individual blessedness of this life is achieved. The *Monarchia* has then what is termed a dualist position: man has two ends in life and, this is key, ‘it is nowhere required that the attainment of the first goal be a first step towards the attainment of the second goal’.<sup>536</sup> In contrast, the fiction of the *Commedia* adheres to the more unitary view of human experience where the happiness of this life is subordinate to the happiness of the next and where God is required to allow this happiness to be achieved.<sup>537</sup> Here, in the fiction of the poem, the *Monarchia*’s ‘figure’ for the happiness of this life becomes a real but transitory place, not an ideal to be realised but a place to be passed through to the happiness of the next life; perhaps more a reminder of what was lost at the Fall than

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<sup>536</sup> C. S. Singleton, *Dante Studies II: Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 206.

<sup>537</sup> Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher*, p. 151.

a figure for what fallen man might still achieve.

Dualism, with its separating of nature and Grace, which, throughout the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia*, does not appear to have troubled Dante with the theological questions it raises, seems perhaps to finally give concern at the very end of the political treatise. In the previous paragraph to the one quoted above, Dante has asserted that he has reached the goal of answering the *Monarchia*'s three key questions. These are: whether the universal monarch is necessary for the well-being of the world; whether the Roman people took on the governorship of the world by right; and whether the authority of the universal monarch derives directly from God. The answer to all of these questions is of course yes, but the last of them appears to have pushed Dante towards the final statement in the treatise:

Que quidem veritas ultime questionis non sic stricte recipienda est, ut romanus Princeps in aliquo romano Pontifici non subiaceat, cum mortalis ista felicitas quodammodo ad inmortalem felicitatem ordinetur. Illa igitur reverentia Cesar utatur ad Petrum qua primogenitus filius debet uti ad patrem: ut luce paterne gratie illustratus virtuosius orbem terre irradiet, cui ab Illo solo prefectus est, qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator. (*Mon.* III, xvi, 17-18)

Discussion has often focussed on Dante's use of the word 'quodammodo' in this final paragraph of the treatise where he discusses the relationship between the temporal power and the spiritual power and likens this relationship to the one that exists between the happiness of this life and the happiness of the next.<sup>538</sup> As Ascoli notes these issues are complicated by attempts on the part of critics to demonstrate either continuity or discontinuity between the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* which in turn is of course tied to the controversy over dating.<sup>539</sup> The *Commedia* was composed over a period of fifteen years from before Henry's election to long after his death; whatever date we apply to the *Monarchia*, it is still contemporary (*pace* d'Entrèves) with the composition of the *Commedia*. This allows the possibility that the *Commedia* is potentially as much a product of the differences in purpose and genre than any profound rethink of his views on the ways in which the political relates to

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<sup>538</sup> D'Entrèves, *Dante as a Political Thinker*; Nardi, *Dal Convivio alla Commedia*; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*; A. Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004). For a critical history of the debate see Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 230 notes 1 and 2 and p. 249, note 27.

<sup>539</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 230.

the soteriological.

In the last chapter of *Monarchia* Dante crystallizes the central dualism which theoretically underlies his broader ethical, political and theological world view: the two goals of man and the two institutions divinely ordained for man to follow this goal (*Mon.* III xv, 1-18).<sup>540</sup> Corbett has suggested that Dante's dualism may be seen as a radical solution to the challenge of the reception of the *Nichomachean Ethics* in the West, that is to say how to reconcile Aristotle's natural order and purpose of man to the Christian order of Grace.<sup>541</sup> The political ramifications of dualistic strategy are correspondingly extreme and the filial relationship which Dante allows of the Emperor to the Pope is the only concession made.<sup>542</sup> For Took, while this final paragraph cannot be an acceptance of *potestas indirectas*, there may well be a concession on the existential level, for whatever the dialectical value of Dante's distinctions, the individual stands at once not consecutively but contemporaneously in time and eternity, 'hence the final caveat testifying not to a weakness of political will, but to the perennial problem of reconciling the exigencies of an Aristotelian and a Christian conscience'.<sup>543</sup>

While there is much in Dante's philosophy of history which is reactionary and static, Dante's dualism in the sense defined by Corbett is potentially radical. Corbett identifies difficult ethical problems with Dante's dualistic strategy: it potentially relegates the function of Christianity solely to man's eternal destiny in the next life; it can tend to make Christianity the icing on the cake of Pagan reason; the intrinsic perfectibility of human nature appears to render God's healing grace unnecessary, thus raising the question of what in Dante's view was lost at the Fall? This is not Aquinas's idea of the need for Grace in this life; there is dichotomy and tension in man's pursuit of an earthly goal and his apparently competing pursuit of an eternal goal.<sup>544</sup>

If we accept that the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* appear to differ in relation to what they allow in terms of man's ability to fully realise his human potential without divine assistance, there are a number of not necessarily mutually

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<sup>540</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 48.

<sup>541</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 49.

<sup>542</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 55.

<sup>543</sup> Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher*, p. 17.

<sup>544</sup> Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 5.

exclusive explanations. In the first place, it is necessary to consider issues of genre. Given the different approaches of the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, the one prophetic the other analytical, basic structures, even basic ideological structures, may well be expected to differ. And such an internal contradiction would hardly be unique in Dante's thought: it is enough to think of the different interpretations of the 'donna gentile' in the *Vita nova* and the *Convivio*, for example. Dante's thesis in the *Monarchia* may be held to require two distinct ends for man as not to do so would begin to undermine his central argument of the separation of the roles of Empire and Church, and imply a subjugation of Emperor to Pope which Dante wishes in the treatise to deny. Likewise, I do not see that there is any textual evidence to necessarily regard the *Monarchia* as an optimistic forward-looking treatise. There is arguably a different focus; the *Commedia* seems to look forward in inchoate but seemingly certain hope while the *Monarchia* looks backwards and may be seen as an analysis of failure more than as a blueprint for the future. It should be remembered that the Earthly Paradise of the *Commedia* is, within the fiction of the poem, a real place, while in the *Monarchia* the Earthly Paradise is a model or ideal for the happiness of this life; this distinction means we need not necessarily be surprised if the two are not wholly consonant.

Secondly an argument may also be made, beyond the 'concessive' final paragraph, that there are elements of the *Monarchia* where Dante departs from, or at least nuances, the radically dualistic programme which characterises much of the work and generally so distinguishes it from the *Commedia* politically. As Took has noted,<sup>545</sup> where the *Monarchia*'s discussion focusses on providence, rather than on dualism, Dante may be seen to be holding to the generally negative Augustinian view of human nature as inherently tending to waywardness as a result of the Fall.<sup>546</sup> This impinges on the *Monarchia* to check its all-pervading sense of man's independent capabilities; there is no sense in which the Emperor will not always be required to continue to work as a curb on man's appetites. It is not a two stage process of first controlling greed and then, the task being complete, moving on to create the conditions appropriate for mankind to realise its potential; these appetites or deficiencies inherent in man due to the Fall, cannot be removed by good

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<sup>545</sup> Took, *Dante Lyric Poet and Philosopher*, p. 171.

<sup>546</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, IV. 4.

government, merely curbed by it in order to allow the Emperor to fulfil the second and more exalted of his roles. The need to curb cupidity is constant and will always remain, such is fallen human nature; here is the Augustinian idea of the natural tendency to waywardness and the more negative function of government. As Kempshall has noted, John of Paris, who as we have seen in Chapter 2 is close to Dante's thought on a number of matters, argued that it was perfectly possible to be morally virtuous in the absence of grace or charity and, like Dante, his political conclusion stemmed from this: 'it was possible for temporal power to exercise its moral functions perfectly (and not just legitimately) without the supervision of the Church'.<sup>547</sup>

But if the conception of man's character following the Fall is somewhat Augustinian, the solution proposed is emphatically not, nor is it Thomist. This line of thought, where a more Augustinian manner is present in Dante in the *Monarchia* which serves in part to check its explicit dualism, is perhaps rendered more problematic given the way in which this issue is addressed in the central, and explicitly political, cantos at the centre of the *Purgatorio*. Critics such as Chiavacci Leonardi, commenting on these verses have sought to assign an extreme negativity to Dante's view of the Fall:

Che l'uomo, fin dalla nascita, a causa del peccato d'Adamo abbia questa inclinazione al male e ignoranza del bene, per cui, se gli fosse permesso di agire come vuole, cadrebbe in ogni sorta di delitti, è dottrina di sant'Agostino nel *De civitate Dei* (XXII, 1-2), a cui Dante chiaramente si ispira (cfr. *Conv.* IV, ix, 8-10).<sup>548</sup>

It seems to be that the position is more nuanced, and Dante here in the *Commedia*, seems to favour a weakness in men as a consequence of the Fall which is some way short of being an inclination towards evil, particularly given the language of childishness, naivety and innocence in which Marco Lombardo couches his argument in *Purgatorio* XVI. This seems close to the 'infirmatatem peccati' of *Monarchia* III, xiv-xv, where the twin authorities of Church and Empire are guides away from this weakness. The relationship between Limbo and the Earthly Paradise

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<sup>547</sup> Kempshall, 'The Utility of Peace in *Monarchia*', in *War and Peace in Dante*, ed. by John C. Barnes and D. Connell (Dublin: Four Courts Press), pp. 141-72 (p.158).

<sup>548</sup> A.M. Chiavacci Leonardi, DDP, note on *Purg.* XVI, 93, accessed 18 September 2014.

and its consequences for our understanding of what was lost at the Fall is a subject to which I will return later in this chapter.

Thirdly and finally, a point of contact between *Monarchia* and *Paradiso* lies in the focus on the Church and Church poverty rather than on the Empire. This point, and the idea that the Emperor will ensure salvation through his curbing of Papal cupidity, seem to be concerns common to the two works. The problems of dating aside, this focus on Church poverty is a key one as it seems that for all their differences, this is the topic that links the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* and separates them both from the *Convivio* in which Church is largely absent while, for all the *Monarchia* is a treatise on empire, it is the Church and the Empire's relationship to it which occupies centre stage,

Limentani has concisely defined the three schools of critical thought regarding the final paragraph of the *Monarchia*.<sup>549</sup> The first of these is that this passage nullifies and flagrantly contradicts the spirit and letter of the rest of the book and serves to destroy the independence of the two powers and thus represents a 'complete breakdown in Dante's dualism'.<sup>550</sup> Secondly we may seek to minimize the import of this concessive final paragraph and regard it as a last-minute correction by which nothing of substance is really changed.<sup>551</sup> Thirdly we have the idea of the passage as a partial recantation of what has gone before indicative of a realization on Dante's part that he has overstepped the mark in eliminating the need for God in human happiness to such an extent.<sup>552</sup> Limentani, feels this last suggestion is uncharacteristic and, if correct, is unique in Dante's *oeuvre*. It is also important to bear in mind that in the midst of this controversial final statement the central premise of the book is reasserted; moreover the reverence owed by Emperor to Pope has already been mentioned and is thus not brand new at this stage.<sup>553</sup>

We also need to consider what *precisely* the *Monarchia* is saying with regard to the Earthly Paradise and its attainability. In paragraph 7 of *Monarchia* III, xvi, there is a clear distinction between the use of the verbs *figuro* ('figuratur', 'is figured

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<sup>549</sup> U. Limentani, 'Dante's Political Thought', in *The Mind of Dante*, ed. by U. Limentani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1965), pp. 113-37 (p. 125).

<sup>550</sup> M. Wilks, *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 145.

<sup>551</sup> D'Entrèves, *Dante as a Political Thinker*, p. 58.

<sup>552</sup> B. Nardi, *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Florence: Editori Laterza, 1967), p. 285.

<sup>553</sup> Limentani, 'Dante's Political Thought', pp.125-27; cf. *Mon.* III, iv, 20.

by’) and *intellego* (‘intelligi datur’, ‘it is given to understand’) This is a distinction which Prue Shaw reflects in her translation:

Ineffable providence has thus set before us to aim at: i.e the happiness in this life, which consists in the exercise of our own powers and is figured in the earthly paradise; and happiness in the eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of the vision of God (to which our own powers cannot raise us except with the help of God’s light) and which is signified by the heavenly paradise. (*Mon.* III, xvi, 7)

To put it simply, man’s eternal happiness *is* in heaven – it could not, in Christian terms, be elsewhere – but the happiness of this life is *figured in* the Earthly Paradise – the one *represents* the other, but they are not identical. In the dualistic *Monarchia*, a state figured by the Earthly Paradise may be achieved on Earth through the Aristotelian actualisation of the potential intellect which is most easily done under the conditions of peace and justice assured by the Emperor, and this may be enough to bring man, through human reason as personified by Virgil, to the Earthly Paradise, although to enter it would require Grace.

Faced with the *Monarchia*’s bold statement as to man’s ability to regain an Edenic state, one is forced to interpret Dante’s meaning in one of two ways. The first is that we should not take Dante at his word, and should therefore interpret the *Monarchia* to mean that man, through human reason as personified by Virgil, is shown as being capable as reaching in this life *the edge* of the Earthly Paradise but requires Grace to enter. While this would seem to have the benefit of beginning to diminish the differences between the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, it should be recalled that in accepting this we are putting words in Dante’s mouth to some extent. The second interpretation is that Dante means what he says in the *Monarchia* and the position adopted is simply different from that of the *Commedia*.

I would suggest that the part of the Earthly Paradise to which Virgil is able to come has much in common with the Dantean Limbo. Reason can guide man here, or better, to the state for which these areas are figures, but without Christ man cannot cross the river; the sacramental immersion is unavailable to Virgil. This is an interpretation which seems suitable at an allegorical level, as it would make the point at which Virgil takes his leave of Dante analogous with his eternal state in Limbo. It is not, of course, the only possible interpretation, but it appears to be a logical one

which has the advantage of also attenuating some of the differences between the meaning of the term Earthly Paradise in *Monarchia* and the *Commedia*.

Principally, in comparing the two works I would wish to emphasise that the prophecies of the *Commedia* together with the overall message of the *Monarchia*, not least its wholly negative attitude to the Donation of Constantine, make clear that a dysfunctional Empire is likely to result in a dysfunctional Church, and vice versa and that in general it is the Church which is principally to blame for the confusion of the two powers. I do not wish to diminish the importance of the *quoddammodo* clause, merely to note that there is also a wider and sustained concern for the consequences of a disordered relationship between the two, even where the nature of the relationship is potentially ambiguous or nuanced. I would further argue that whatever relationship Dante is seeking to establish between the happiness of this life and that of the next, there is never any suggestion that he concedes the Church now has a role to play in temporal governance; the Empire is, and will always remain the principal means through which reform will occur.

Dante's prophetic message is, in part, one of political reform. He is one whose prophetic insight sees the solution to the world's problems as lying in a reordering of the relationship between the two divinely mandated institutions of Church and Empire; God's assistance may now be required to achieve this dream, creating for Dante's final political position what we might term a 'graced dualism', which I would define as a fundamental need for God in this life which emphatically continues to refute any suggestion of an attendant need for Church participation in temporal affairs. The implication, in the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, seems to be that the Empire is the tool with which God will bring this reform about. God may be required now to resolve the world's problems in the political order, the Church emphatically is not; not least because its corruption is their principal cause. The final paragraph of the *Monarchia* suggests a form of subordination of Empire to Church at the same moment as it suggests that the happiness of this life is in some sense subordinate to the happiness of the next. Given that man's ultimate purpose in being created was to return to God, this is eminently logical but Dante's politics suggest that the longed for reform will only be achieved by the 'junior' partner restraining the 'senior'; this is a radical suggestion being placed in the service of a fundamentally reactionary imperial political aspiration. I will argue in this chapter



that Dante's reactionary politics are of imperial renewal but need to be read and understood within the apocalyptic framework in which they are articulated in the Earthly Paradise.

### 5.3 Dante as Prophet of the Apocalypse?

How then does an engaged but reactionary political outlook, featuring as it does an abiding concern for earthly governance, relate to the apocalyptic imagery we find in the Earthly Paradise? Chapter 2 of this thesis discussed some of the strands of apocalyptic thought and expectation which were present in Duecento and early Trecento Italy and sought to highlight how these at times served to critique political and religious institutions particularly as a form of political prophetic propaganda which sought to place contemporary figures, both positively and negatively within an apocalyptic context. Chapter 2 also sought to demonstrate how non-scriptural myths, such as those of the angelic Pope, the papal Antichrist or the Last World Emperor were placed within an apocalyptic context. In relating these practices to Dante's key apocalyptic scenes, *Inferno* XIX and *Purgatorio* XXXII, one is struck by the fact that the parade of Church history in the Earthly Paradise does not culminate in a pen portrait of someone explicitly of the stamp of Henry VII, but rather with the mysterious and perhaps deliberately indecipherable prophecy of the DXV. If Dante is attracted to the non-scriptural myths and their linkage to an apocalyptic context he certainly makes no attempt to outline these explicitly in the contexts where one would expect to find them; not only does Dante not embrace these non-scriptural prophetic myths, but the prophecies he does use are unclear and imprecise. The lack of certainty on the specifics however need not be indicative of a lack of certainty in divine providence; the prophecy of the DXV, however we prefer to interpret it, as Christ, as a Holy Roman Emperor, or as being deliberately multi-valent in its obscurity, is surely evidence of that continued belief and is perhaps also indicative of a Joachite cast of mind: 'DXV seems to embody the literal expectation of a time to come when history will be brought to its fruition'.<sup>554</sup> If the ambiguity is intentional in the prophecy, there is no ambiguity that it will be fulfilled. Beatrice's words do not carry doubt regarding the advent of the DXV:

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<sup>554</sup> Reeves, 'Dante and the Prophetic View of History', pp. 332-34.

ch'io veggio certamente, e però il narro,  
 a darne tempo già stelle propinque,  
 secure d'ogn' intoppo e d'ogne sbarro (*Purg.* XXXIII, 40-42)

Once more we may note the coincidence of the relationship of certainty of mind to prophetic speech, Beatrice's words seem to carry the suggestion that were she uncertain she could not speak, and also that her certainty on the matter is the reason for her speech. As we have seen it is precisely at this point that Dante's investiture as prophet occurs, and the corruption of the Church is contextually linked with Dante's investiture as prophet. I would suggest that Dante's investiture as prophet is also to be linked contextually with Beatrice's assertion of the certainty of the coming reform. Beatrice authorises Dante; the author's certainty is that of heaven itself. In this sense Dante the author is as much a 'messo di dio' (*Purg.* XXXIII, 43-45) as the DXV himself; Dante casts himself as latter day Baptist who announces a messianic intervention in a way which reflects the type of relationship developed between Dante and Henry VII in the political letters.

The certainty of the reform coupled with the ambiguity of its precise nature, seems to lend support to Mineo's assertion that it is more important to understand what the DXV represents in apocalyptic and eschatological terms than *who* it may be.<sup>555</sup> The conflation of apocalyptic imagery with prophecies of imperial renewal and ecclesiastical reform seem to me to leave open, but by no means confirm, the possibility that Dante's great reformer may well have been envisioned in terms of the myths of the Last World Emperor who is to be the heir of the eagle; a temporal ruler with a key role to play in the events of the last days; particularly and crucially in the reforming of the Church and its corrupt relations with secular power. Dante conceives of human history as being providential, and this view would seem to reduce the functional separation of Church and State even in the act of separating them. In a providential Christian history, particularly given Dante's conception of the Roman Empire, all politics must have a theological dimension, as it is intimately linked to human salvation, as restraining papal greed is, principally, the moral duty of the Emperor. In this light, and particularly if we continue to regard the *Monarchia* as wholly consonant with the *Commedia*, it would be curious if politics were absent

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<sup>555</sup> Mineo, 'Gli Spirituali Francescani e l'apocalisse di Dante', p. 42.

from Dante's conception of the last days. Scott's suggestion is that contextually the Earthly Paradise requires the presence of an imperial element if we believe that the two ends of Man outlined in the *Monarchia*, also pertain in the earthly paradise: it is the Church *and* the Empire which, at an allegorical level, should lead men here.<sup>556</sup> I would suggest that even if we cannot accept that the two ends of man pertain in quite the same way in the *Commedia* as they do in the *Monarchia*, then this would still not make the presence of an imperial element surprising; as I will argue later in this chapter, the 'imperial solution' continues to be the only realistic means by which earthly happiness of any sort can be achieved.

Kaske argues that the apocalyptic imagery surrounding these two cantos supports the interpretation of its culminating prophecy referring to Christ. Thus the 'puttana' deriving from the *meretrix* of Revelation 17 bears her common exegetical significance of *ecclesia carnalis* while the Giant then is an Antichrist (usually a giant in medieval takes on the 666 of Revelation 13-18).<sup>557</sup> For Kaske, in the light of this, the closing section of *Purgatorio* XXXII stands to be read allegorically as a portrayal of a late stage in human history with the Antichrist in charge of the Church and its carnal members. I would disagree with Kaske's interpretation of the DXV, as I feel convinced by Scott's arguments that we cannot separate the two halves of the prophecy: the Eagle's heir is the DXV and that must provide at least an imperial dimension to the prophecy.<sup>558</sup>

Non sarà tutto tempo senza reda  
l'aguglia che lasciò le penne al carro,  
per che divenne mostro e poscia preda;  
ch'io veggio certamente, e però il narro,  
a darne tempo già stelle propinque,  
secure d'ogn' intoppo e d'ogne sbarro,  
nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque,  
messo di Dio, anciderà la fuia  
con quel gigante che con lei delinque. (*Purg.* XXXIII, 37-45)

In support of an imperial interpretation of these words, Davis has noted how Beatrice's assertion that the Eagle will not long be without an heir is one which

<sup>556</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 189.

<sup>557</sup> Kaske, 'Dante's *Purgatorio* XXXII and XXXIII', pp.310-11.

<sup>558</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 204. Davis also prefers this explanation: C.T. Davis, 'Dante's Italy' in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays*, pp. 1-22, (p. 6)

recalls the terms in which imperial propaganda earlier in the century had presented Conrad, the son of Frederick II, as the ‘son of the Eagle, that is, heir of the Emperor.’<sup>559</sup>

Hollander makes the point of the potential multi-valency of the prophecies – potentially referring to the second coming of Christ and of his imperial messianic predecessor Henry VII: ‘If the two great prophecies foretell a temporal leader, they also tell the coming of Christ as a fulfilment of the *figura* which the temporal saviour is’.<sup>560</sup> ‘In the very non-specificity of Dante’s Veltro and DXV prophecies which allows them to feed perfectly into the *Commedia*’s vision of providential history; the prophecies at some level must come true because the current injustice is manifest, God is just, and God has promised via the Bible that Christ will return’.<sup>561</sup> Flexible prophecies such as these maintain the veracity of the text and keep it open to historical possibilities instead of risking obsolescence.<sup>562</sup> Chapter 4’s consideration of the reception of Joachite thought in Franciscan circles cited McGinn’s view that one of the principal weaknesses of Joachite eschatology was its failure to account for the imperial temporal dimension in human experience. Likewise the relative unimportance of the Empire in the Joachite-influenced discourses of Dante’s Spiritual Franciscan contemporaries in Florence was noted. Dante in fusing *political* expectation with apocalyptic language seems to diminish this difficulty and accounts for the political within a Christian eschatological context. As has been discussed, much contemporary apocalyptic writing had the Emperor as a form of Antichrist and, in the case of Frederick II, apocalyptic language was harnessed as a positive element in the Emperor’s own political propaganda. It seems to me that Dante-*poeta* in the Earthly Paradise is projecting political aims; but he also seems to be seeking to place the political in its correct context; he demonstrates how things have gone wrong and continue to go wrong. Moving from the present to the future, he shows how these matters will be resolved by placing the apocalypse firmly within an historical framework.

Chapter 3 considered the nature of Dante’s prophetic investiture, and the

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<sup>559</sup> J. Deér ‘Dante in seiner Zeit’, *Dante Alighieri 1265-1321* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1966), pp. 26-49; cited in Davis ‘Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*’, p. 54.

<sup>560</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's 'Commedia'*, p. 183.

<sup>561</sup> Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia*, p. 214.

<sup>562</sup> Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia*, p. 215.

sources he utilises. I now wish to consider what is the extent and function of the authority which Dante ascribes to himself. Steinburg suggests that that the function of the *Commedia* as text is, in part, to sustain the laws that the political authorities should be enforcing and that it serves as a supplement to, but not a substitute for, the paternal role of institutions in educating and disciplining their subjects.<sup>563</sup> At the risk of over-reading, to see the *Commedia* in this light makes it tempting to see Dante not only as prophet and as apostle but also as law-giver: a new Justinian, a new Cato and, combining the roles, a new Moses fulfilling the promise of the purgatorial hymn for all mankind by leading them from slavery and by showing them how they might, in spite of everything, yet achieve the promised land of happiness in this life and the next

In her article on the Heaven of the Sun, Meekins notes Dante's criticism of the Dominican order for its renunciation of its early commitment to poverty in 1246.<sup>564</sup> Thomas condemns the Dominicans as a flock of sheep that has strayed because of a greed for richer food, lines Meekins takes as a criticism of the fact that the Dominicans have rejected poverty and humility, qualities so well exemplified by the lives of both St Francis and St Dominic. As has been noted the image of the good shepherd is one which Dante uses in letter XI as part of his identification with Jeremiah, It is notable that this imagery of the corrupt shepherds is one which Dante uses to illustrate Florence's own corruption in *Paradiso* IX:

La tua città, che di colui è pianta  
che pria volse le spalle al suo fattore  
e di cui è la 'nvidia tanto pianta,  
produce e spande il maladetto fiore  
c'ha disviate le pecore e li agni,  
però che fatto ha lupo del pastore. (*Par.* IX, 127-32)

All this stands in contrast to Christ, the good shepherd and in the context of the papacy to the episode after the resurrection where Christ repeatedly tells Peter to feed his sheep.<sup>565</sup> It is tempting then, given that it is St Peter authorising the poet to speak in *Paradiso* XXVII, to see a role for Dante as a successor to St Peter himself,

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<sup>563</sup> Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law*, p. 58.

<sup>564</sup> Meekins, 'Reflecting on the Divine', pp. 46-47.

<sup>565</sup> John, 21, 15-17.

that is to say in a pseudo-papal role in the absence of the papacy fulfilling its proper function. The papacy leads astray both itself and its flock through its greed and its intervention in temporal affairs. It was noted in Chapter 3, that in letter XI to the Italian Cardinals, Dante seeks to defend himself from the charge that he is guilty of the same kind of presumption as that shown by Uzzah touching the ark with the defence that Dante, like Uzzah, does not seek to touch the sacred ark itself but rather to redirect the oxen (cardinals) pulling the cart on which the ark (church) is carried. It appears Dante in the *Commedia* is providing himself with functions which derive from an *ad hoc* papal investiture made necessary by the seriousness of the times. If the throne of St Peter, in the eyes of St Peter himself, is empty and Rome is made a sewer, then the prophet must act. It is as though Dante were recasting the hierocratic assertions that in the absence of an Emperor the Pope is authorised to step in to take up temporal authority: Dante is told by St Peter that in the eyes of God his seat is vacant, this authorises Dante's text, if not Dante himself to act vicariously. As Christ tells Peter to feed his sheep, so Dante is told by St Peter to speak out, and assured by Cacciaguida that his words will provide 'vital nodrimento' (*Par.* XVII, 131) to his audience. The author is at once a prophet of divine retribution, a prophet of political reform and one who is prepared through his text to take on duties of pastoral care. Dante's own words in the *Commedia* provide the right pastoral and even Petrine nourishment which the mendicants and the papacy are failing to provide. Beatrice, in Canto XXIX of *Paradiso*, tells Dante how preaching in Florence is so detached from the truth:

sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno,  
tornan del pasco pasciute di vento,  
e non le scusa non veder lo danno. (*Par.* XXIX, 106-08)

and contrasts this with Christ's own intentions:

Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento:  
'Andate, e predicate al mondo ciance';  
ma diede lor verace fondamento (*Par.* XXIX, 109-11)

Dante is adopting in the *Commedia* the type of preaching the current mendicants should be performing but like the Pope they are misled by greed and as we see in

*Paradiso* XXIX, 85-126, the mendicants deceive their ignorant flock. As Davis says, Dante was obviously influenced by the Franciscans in his critical attitude to the contemporary Church, but the centrality of imperial reform to his world view makes him liable to criticise the corruption of the mendicant orders too: 'A clergy that was in no position to reform itself is what we seeing the *Commedia*'.<sup>566</sup>

If as Steinburg suggests the poem is intended to serve as a magisterial yet temporary measure aimed at ensuring the continuity of normative legal institutions, then we must also read the apocalyptic scenarios of the Earthly Paradise and Marco Lombardo's monologue in *Purgatorio* XVI in this light; as we have seen throughout this thesis it is central, literally and metaphorically, to the *Commedia* that it lies with the individual to choose right from wrong: free will exists as a light within man to discriminate. Human laws should reflect nature's laws but in the absence of a ruler to put his hand to the bridle there remains within man a light to choose right; only under these circumstances can punishment for right and wrong ever be just

Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto  
libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia  
per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto. (*Purg.* XVI, 70-72)

However, Dante feels that this is a choice which is extremely difficult to make correctly in the absence of institutions, Empire and Papacy doing their assigned job. The apocalyptic scenarios which follow Dante's 'coronation' and which accompany his investiture as prophet, emphasise the temporary nature of the poem's functionality; the suggestion is that such are the signs of the work of the Antichrist and his presence on Earth that little time is left. Nonetheless, his attachment to the rule of law remains as it relates to the universal peace at the time of Christ's birth; the implication seems to be that the world must be put straight to allow Christ to return, just as the Roman Empire was allowed by providence to be at its fullest extent to allow Christ to be born. If Dante's view of the incarnation is one which has an essential political context then perhaps we should not be surprised if for Dante the political situation for the second coming needs to mirror that of the first. Dante's poem is a prophetic text which communicates this to the world but in the absence of political hope, it is also a means by which those readers who have understood

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<sup>566</sup> Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', p. 65.

Dante's message may themselves be happy on Earth and ultimately saved, even in the functional absence of the earthly institutions which should aid this.

In letter VI to the Florentines Dante shows them the freedom which lies in subjection to the higher power just as in *Purgatorio* XVI, the universal implications of this doctrine are made clear by Marco:

A maggior forza e a miglior natura  
liberi soggiacete; e quella cria  
la mente in voi, che 'l ciel non ha in sua cura.  
Però, se 'l mondo presente disvia,  
in voi è la cagione, in voi si cheggia;  
e io te ne sarò or vera spia. (*Purg.* XVI, 79-81)

Dante is told that he is free in his subjection to a higher power as the Florentines and, elsewhere, the French are told that claims for jurisdictional autonomy can never lead to true freedom.<sup>567</sup> As Hollander has noted, from the very first the *Commedia* establishes a context for the poem that is both universal and particular; Dante, as Virgil says to Cato: 'libertà va cercando' (*Purg.* I, 71) and we now see that freedom for the individual, in this case Dante himself, lies in the will being conformed to that of God; this joyous freedom in conformity is also the idea which underpins Dante's political philosophy of the Universal empire; the political structures imitate those of man's ideal relationship to God and we should not be surprised as the political structure are themselves divinely ordained for man's temporal happiness.

Steinberg argues that the purpose of the purgatorial journey must be understood in terms of the type of freedom Dante is trying to achieve; the journey to freedom is the journey to achieve the yoke of freedom, not to achieve personal authority, the joyful submission to the *ius commune*; the ascent, and the coronation over self in particular, does not exempt Dante's character from being subject to institutional authority, rather it demonstrates precisely how institutions should form subjects.<sup>568</sup> This is not an allegorical or moral reading but one which occurs fundamentally on the historical plane; the two institutions are to be returned to their correct functions within history to be prepared (perhaps) for the end of history. This

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<sup>567</sup> Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law*, p. 57.

<sup>568</sup> Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law*, p. 57.



method seems to echo those outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis whereby the apocalyptic grid was laid over contemporary events and the book of Revelation was thus used as a tool to both understand and critique the present. If in Dante's Earthly Paradise we are justified in seeing a similarity of approach to contemporary apocalyptic ideas in terms of a tendency to read historically, are we able to see in Dante the next step that was taken by others: the desire to directly equate contemporary figures with figures from the Book of Revelation? It will be recalled that St Francis was treated thus by Bonaventure and Olivi as the Angel of the Sixth seal. So too Frederick II was seen as the seventh head of the beast, and while Olivi stopped short of identifying specific Popes as the Antichrist, Ubertino da Casale did not.<sup>569</sup>

The last section of Canto XXXII of the *Purgatorio* and the beginning of Canto XXXIII have occasioned extensive critical debates over imagery and interpretation. It seems to me that whatever line one prefers, the historical (rather than allegorical) nature of the apocalypse is central, as is its imminence. If we concur with Durling and Martinez that the final affliction of the Church, which as is noted occupies four tercets rather than the two or three given to the others, probably refers to the vicissitudes of the Church after the fictional date of the pilgrim's journey then we may see Dante adopting the same methods as texts such as the *Super Hieremiam* in terms of the use of fictive dating to allow pseudo-prophecies, their certain fulfilment and thus to add veracity to the poems *ante eventum* prophecies and to better critique the present; *Inferno* XIX also makes use of *post-eventum* prophecies to predict Boniface's damnation, and *Purgatorio* XXXII does likewise with its predictions of the Babylonian captivity. As we transition from *Purgatorio* XXXII to *Purgatorio* XXXIII we transition from *post* to *ante eventum* prophecies from an allegorical representation of the past to prophecies of the future. The prophecy of the DXV will be fulfilled soon:

ma tosto fier li fatti le Naiade,  
che solveranno questo enigma forte  
sanza danno di pecore o di biade. (*Purg.* XXXIII, 49-51)

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<sup>569</sup> Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor Vitae* (Bk.V 465b).

Beatrice here confirms the imminence of the DXV's advent and this seems to tie her words to those in *Paradiso* XXVII where the imminence of the reform is emphasised; the agent of reform may have altered between the composition of the prophecies, a period which may have seen the failure of Henry VII's mission, but the certainty of the imminent advent of reform seems to remain. As Hollander has noted, strictly speaking this seventh and final calamity is a vision, and is also an *ante-eventum* prophecy, since the Church only moved to Avignon in 1309 after the election to the papacy of Clement V in 1305. By this point in the text, we have surveyed, in 52 lines, nearly thirteen centuries of the history of the Church. The harlot and the giant, the whore of Babylon 'cum qua fornicati sunt reges terræ' (Revelation 17. 2) and Philip IV of France, bring the history to its conclusion.<sup>570</sup>

If we accept the most widely accepted, but by no means explicit, meaning of the last twenty lines of *Purgatorio* XXXII, where the ungirt whore is Boniface VIII and the giant refers to Philip the Fair, then Dante's words here deal with the past but in the fiction of the poem deal with the here-and-now and the immediate future. This is *post eventum* prophecy as a commentary on contemporary events. As Pertile noted the kiss between Whore and Giant alludes not only to Revelation but also to the Song of Songs.<sup>571</sup> As the Song was normally interpreted as figuring Christ's marriage to the Church, this scene potentially represents an inversion or corruption of the relationship. If so it is interesting that in this apocalyptic context, ideas of inversion and perversion are to the fore, as in *Inferno* XIX, which likewise contains a profusion of prophetic apocalyptic imagery, including the idea of the church as the whore of Babylon fornicating with the kings of the earth (*Inf.* XIX.106-108). *Inferno* XIX condemns the corrupt papacy, inverts the sacrament of baptism, and parodies the papal succession. It seems to me that disordering of structures is characteristic of Dante's vision of the apocalypse. Church cupidity and the Empire's unwillingness or inability to take on the role assigned to it thus form part of a wider apocalyptic chain of events, suggesting that Dante's providential history is coming towards its conclusion. Pertile's analysis which convincingly demonstrates the centrality of the Song of Songs as a key text in the dramatic sequences of *Purgatorio* XXXII, a drama populated by apocalyptic imagery, raises the question of the function of such

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<sup>570</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Purg.* XXXII, 148-60, accessed 11 January 2015.

<sup>571</sup> Pertile, 'Dante Looks Forward and Back', p. 58.

intertextuality; that is to say, what is the function of underpinning a drama of apocalypse and the degradation of the Church with a text which in the exegetical tradition was read as representing the marriage of Christ and the Church. Clearly at one level this subtext serves as a bitter reminder of how far from Christ's original intention the Church now is while in an apocalyptic context the suggestion of an inverted or perverted relationship cannot but suggest an Antichrist figure.

It may be argued then that if we see the last lines of *Purgatorio* XXXII as referring to post-1300 events then the allusion to the contemporary papacy as a whore consorting with kings is clearly the state of affairs considered in abstraction by Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* XVI; the confusion of the two powers is here shown being worked out in Dante's pseudo-prophecy. Thus we are taken from the realm of an explanation of political theory in *Purgatorio* XVI to a demonstration of the consequences of how ignoring the truths Marco has outlined are now playing out in the contemporary political scene. Moreover this demonstration is placed within an apocalyptic context which suggests that the history being played out in front of the pilgrim is approaching its conclusion.

#### **5.4 Roman Exceptionalism: The Earthly Paradise and the Virtuous Pagans**

This thesis has shown the ways in which Dante adopts a number of roles imitating and seeking to appropriate the authority St Paul, Isaiah, and Jeremiah for example. It has also sought to demonstrate that, while Dante's prophetic manner is related to and influenced by the apocalyptic discourses of his predecessors and contemporaries, particularly those of the Spiritual Franciscan movement, his imperialist politics and a faith in the divinely instituted nature and role of the Roman Empire serve to distance him from these putative sources. This section will seek to demonstrate how Dante's 'Roman exceptionalism' in which a providential and primary role is assigned to the political structures and moral values of Roman power is an area which underpins his political thought, and to assess how this is articulated in the prophetic aspects of his poetry. I argue that Dante's dualist, syncretist and providential view of history is reflected and articulated in his use of prophecy regarding Roman citizens and the key role assigned to them in the history of mankind. It has been noted earlier, and I wish to restate here, that in Dante the solution to the curbing of man's tendency towards

cupidity lies with the state not the Church.<sup>572</sup> Marco Lombardo's speech is followed, as we cross the centre point of the poem, by Virgil's discourse on love. Virgil's limitations and misunderstandings have been made clear throughout the poem but the key speech on human desire and the ways in which it is both potentially salvific and destructive is given to the prophet of the Roman state; understanding of the purposes of correctly ordered human love is as possible for the Roman Pagan as for the Christian, in part because the Roman state is responsible for the regulation of these desires and because for Dante the state was fully functioning prior to Christ. The cross reference between *Monarchia* and *Paradiso* occurs precisely at the moment when Dante is talking about free will. This seems to me to make the case that in terms of love there is no discrepancy; free will to choose the Good as a manifestation of innate love is central to the *Monarchia*'s politics as it is to Beatrice's discourse in *Paradiso* V. The cross reference is not to Virgil's discourse at the centre of *Purgatorio* but to Beatrice's completion and expansion of it: it is not, though it could be, 'sicut in *Purgatorio* Comedie iam dixi'.

I believe that when we examine the prophecy of the DXV, as Mineo advised, in terms of *what* it represents in apocalyptic terms, rather than *who* it represents, we should remember that the idea that the eagle will not long be without an heir (*Purg.* XXXIII, 33) strongly suggests that a head of state is being prophesied, and that, whatever apocalyptic context we place this in, some political function continues to be envisaged. Dante's belief is that universal peace is only possible under conditions of justice; this state of affairs allows man to maximise his potential intellect, that is to become fully human in an Aristotelian sense. This is something which should be borne in mind when we consider the identity of those pagans whom Dante chooses to present as being saved. Mankind, through correct exercise of free will, can achieve this earthly happiness for which the Earthly Paradise, in the *Monarchia* at least, is a figure. This is a state best and most easily achieved under an emperor who acts as both a restraining and enabling force in allowing humanity to correctly use its free will. I believe a key to understanding or at least diminishing the difficulties caused by the presentation of those of Trojan/Roman stock in the *Commedia*, Virgil, Cato, Ripheus to take three of the most prominent examples, is through an examination of Dante's attitude to history in general and to the way in which

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<sup>572</sup> Nardi, *Dal Convivio alla Commedia*, p. 290; Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 242.

providence guides history and Roman history in particular.

Dante tells us in *Convivio* IV, iv that he had once believed that the Romans ruled the world through force of arms, but latterly came to believe that their success was evidence of the providential mission entrusted to them. Christian Moevs notes that Dante does not claim that the Bible itself actually argues for empire,<sup>573</sup> but, as Hollander says, the *Monarchia* (II, xi, 1), on its own authority, does'.<sup>574</sup> *Monarchia* II, xi, 1 says: 'Et si romanum Imperium de iure non fuit, peccatum Ade in Cristo non fuit punitum; hoc autem est falsum', and this is a line of thought also found in the political letters. For example in letter V, 7 Dante says: 'Unde Deum romanum Principem predestinasse relucet in miris effectibus; et verbo Verbi confermasse posterius profitetur Ecclesia'.<sup>575</sup>

In the Justice cantos of the *Paradiso*, the eagle's speech addresses Dante's concern at the apparent absence of justice where a man who innocently lacks faith is, through no fault of his own, condemned to be excluded from blessedness. Dante is told that no one ever ascended to heaven who did not have faith in Christ either before or after the Crucifixion and that those pagans presented as being saved were miraculously afforded a faith sufficient to allow them to believe in Christ to come. However, it is surely no coincidence that Dante's examples of such a possibility being realised consist of Roman or proto-Roman individuals: the Emperor Trajan; the Trojan Ripheus, and Cato of Utica; we do not have Aristotle or Homer, but of course neither do we have Virgil. The suggestion seems to be that while the possibility of a pagan soul being saved is a remote one, it is one which emphatically does exist. As Padoan has pointed out, Aquinas, Bonaventure and Albertus Magnus could all be cited in support of the assertion that there is the potential for a virtuous pagan to be saved, and even Augustine with his generally negative view of the pagans concedes that gentiles could be among the elect.<sup>576</sup> But with the above examples we are, in general, dealing with intuitions of the truth, not explicit faith afforded by miracles. As Hollander suggests, it is the insistence on the necessity of

<sup>573</sup> C. Moevs 'The Metaphysical Basis of Dante's Politics, in *Le culture di Dante. Atti del quarto Seminario dantesco internazionale*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone *et al.* (Florence: Cesati, 2004). p.218.

<sup>574</sup> Hollander, DDP, note on *Par.* XXVII, 142-48, accessed 14 June 2015

<sup>575</sup> See also Romans 13. 2, quoted in Ep. V, 4.

<sup>576</sup> G. Padoan, *Il pio Enea, l'empio Ulisse, Tradizione classica e intendimento medievale in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1977), p. 109.

an explicit faith for Ripheus that distances Dante from scholastic authority, not the fact that he is present in Heaven.<sup>577</sup> In the light of this distinction, it is interesting to note the reaction of some early commentators on the *Commedia* to Dante's presentation of Ripheus in *Paradiso*. Jacopo Della Lana, the Anonimo Fiorentino, and the *Ottimo Commento* state, that Ripheus is in Heaven because of his love of justice, but they do not express surprise at Ripheus's presence nor do they suggest that Dante's invention is at odds with Church doctrine.<sup>578</sup> Even Da Buti, who is at pains to state that the salvation of Ripheus is of course a fiction, there being no evidence that Ripheus is saved, does not assert that Dante, in placing Ripheus in Heaven, is necessarily at odds with Church teaching.<sup>579</sup>

The virtues which are embodied in Dante's saved Pagans are the virtues of the divinely ordained Roman state and the virtues, justice above all, which Dante regards as essential for the happiness of this life. I have suggested in this chapter that the prophecies of the Earthly Paradise are a point at which politics and theology are brought together and fused and at least partially reconciled. I believe that the prophecies that pagans will be saved (especially given the 'Roman' identity of Dante's examples) represents a resolution of the tensions between nature and Grace, politics and theology in the *Commedia* and that this is made possible through Dante's view of history in general and the providential nature of the Roman Empire in particular. The Empire's current role in man's happiness and, indirectly, in his salvation, is part of the same providential Roman history which produced Cato, Ripheus and Virgil. I would argue that this marks Dante's final political position: if hope of imminent political reform is abandoned in the *Paradiso*, then belief in providence remains, indeed it must remain; as the Roman Empire was at its fullest at the birth of Christ in a period of universal peace, and Christ submitted to its civil authority, in allowing his name to be entered on the census and allowing himself to

<sup>577</sup> Hollander, Note on *Par. XX*, 103-05, DDP, accessed 16 December 2008.

<sup>578</sup> *Jacopo della Lana bolognese*, Note on *Paradiso XX*, DDP, accessed 19 January 2009; *Anonimo Fiorentino*, Note on *Paradiso XX*, DDP, accessed 19 January 2009; *L'Ottimo Commento*, Note on *Paradiso XX*, DDP, accessed 25 January 2009. Della Lana states 'fue di tanta dirittura e giustizia e di virtudiosa vita, in quanto si può per umana vita acquistare, e per le vertuose opere in abbondanza per lui fatte, tanto che eccede la detta possanza, sì furono cagione di estimare, che grazia divina li sopravvenisse perchè era sì perfetto', words repeated verbatim by the *Ottimo Commento* and the *Anonimo Fiorentino*.

<sup>579</sup> 'Questa è fizione del nostro autore, come lo lettore intelligente può comprendere, che di questo non c'è alcuna prova; cioè che Rifeo troiano sia salvo', Da Buti, note on *Par. XIX*, DDP accessed 14 February 2015.

be crucified.

As Dante and Virgil emerge onto the shores of the mountain of Purgatory, they see 'quattro stelle / non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente' (*Purg.* I,23-24). The light from these stars upon Cato is such that Dante says that they: 'fregiavan sì la sua faccia di lume, / ch'i 'l vedea come 'l sol fosse davante' (*Purg.* I, 38-39). The four stars represent the four cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, temperance, and courage, as is conclusively demonstrated in the Earthly Paradise where they reappear as four maidens at the right wheel of the chariot: 'Noi siam qui ninfe e nel ciel siamo stelle' (*Purg.* XXXI, 106).<sup>580</sup>

Being a wholly good human being in the absence of God is in theory possible and the eagle's words suggest that such is the depth and breadth of divine justice that it can be sufficient:

Ma vedi: molti gridan 'Cristo, Cristo!'  
che saranno in giudicio assai men *prope*  
a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo;  
e tai Cristian dannerà l'Etïòpe,  
quando si partiranno i due collegi,  
l'uno in eterno ricco e l'altro inòpe. (*Par.* XIX,106-111)<sup>581</sup>

In the *Monarchia* Dante says, 'illud inenarrabile sacrificium severissimi vere libertatis tutoris Marci Catonis [. . .] ut mundo libertatis amores accenderet, quanti libertas esset ostendit dum e vita liber decedere maluit quam sine libertate manere in illa' (*Mon.*, II. v. 17). This view of Cato's suicide as a sacrifice for liberty is one which the author has Virgil voice in the opening canto of *Purgatorio* when Virgil explains the presence of the pilgrim in Purgatory:

Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta:  
libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,  
come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.  
Tu 'l sai, ché non ti fu per lei amara  
in Utica la morte, ove lasciasti  
la vesta ch'al gran dì sarà sì chiara. (*Purg.* I. 71-75)

In these two *terzine* the reason for Cato's sacrifice, a renouncing ('rifiutare') of his

<sup>580</sup> See also *Convivio* IV, xxvii for a view of Cato as embodying the four cardinal virtues.

<sup>581</sup> For overviews and bibliography on the question of Cato's salvation see R. L. Martinez 'Cato of Utica', in *The Dante Encyclopaedia*, pp. 146-49 and Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* pp. 69-84.

life for the cause of 'libertà', a preference for death over submission to tyranny, are placed alongside a statement of his eschatological destiny. The body ('la vesta') left behind in Utica following his suicide will, like the bodies of all souls, be restored to Cato at the Last Judgement ('al gran dì') but while the bodies of those in the Wood of Suicides will hang on trees, Cato's body will be 'si chiara' like all those who are sufficient in God's eyes. In the light of the line of argument I have been pursuing, it is notable that Virgil's words here, at the opening of *Purgatorio* are echoed by Dante poetà, who speaking generally of the resurrection of souls at the last judgment, says:

'Quali i beati al novissimo bando  
surgeran presti ognun di sua caverna,  
la revestita voce alleluando,' (*Purg.* XXX, 13-15)

In this light Cato may be seen to represent for Dante not only a sacrifice for political or personal freedom from tyranny but further, by this contextual linking of his suicide and his salvation, a symbolic prefiguration of the true freedom promised to humanity under the Christian dispensation.<sup>582</sup> Scott has pointed out that the exercise of free will, 'Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza / fesse creando' as Dante terms it at *Paradiso* V, 19-20, has both political and soteriological aspects in Dante's thought.<sup>583</sup> This is particularly noticeable in the *Monarchia* where Dante is discussing the need for just rule within the political authority in order that man can best direct his free will:

Hoc viso iterum manifestum esse potest quod hec libertas sive principium hoc totius noster libertatis est maximum donum humane nature a Deo collatum sicut *Paradiso* *Comedie* iam dixi quia per ipsum hic felicitamur ut homines, per ipsum alibi felicitamur ut dii. Quod si ita est, quis erit qui humanum genus optime se habere non dicit, cum potissime hoc principio possit uti? Sed existens sub Monarcha est potissime liberum. (*Mon.* I, xii, 6-10)

Not only is freedom of the will the greatest gift of God to man, but further it is the source of our happiness both here and in Heaven, and this plenitude of freedom can only be enjoyed under the conditions of justice which a Universal monarchy alone can provide. Dante has told us in *Monarchia* I. xii. 2, that liberty is based, first and

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<sup>582</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 74.

<sup>583</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 75.



foremost, on freedom of the will and, as Scott notes, free will lies structurally and thematically at the heart of the *Commedia* with the major discourse on the matter coming in the sixteenth canto of the *Purgatorio*, that is to say centrally both to the *cantica* and to the *Commedia* as a whole.<sup>584</sup> Cato in exercising his free will to choose death rather than to submit, against the dictates of his conscience, to tyranny, is making the greatest use of God's supreme gift to man: 'La libertà politica, per la quale si uccise Catone, si trasforma nella libertà morale spirituale del cristiano'.<sup>585</sup>

As Hollander has noted, the mention, in a Christian context, of the giving-up of life for liberty cannot but point to Christ's sacrifice; the historical Cato's motives are understood by Dante as implying the kind of devotion to liberty that is the mark of Christ.<sup>586</sup> The fusion or conflation of Roman and Christian virtues in Cato means that 'la trasfigurazione a cui è sottoposto il personaggio deve avere anche per forza un valore più profondo'.<sup>587</sup> Cato is a predestined figure, 'il più degno di significare Iddio' as Dante puts it in *Convivio* IV. I would emphasise that he is a predestined figure individually but he is also a member of a predestined race. Raimondi relates this to Auerbach's figural analysis whereby Old Testament figures and events are shadowy prefigurations announced prophetically and destined to find their fulfilment in the New Testament through the life of Christ.<sup>588</sup> Dante in the fiction of Cato seems to be coming close to applying the same kind of relationship to Cato and Christ; the political and personal liberty for which Cato died is here transformed into an act of Christ-like self-sacrifice and given the divinely ordained nature of the Roman imperial enterprise may be intended to be read as actually anticipatory of Christ's sacrifice.

Giuseppe Mazzotta has criticised Auerbach's approach for not sufficiently taking into account *who* Cato is, and argues that the very historicity of Cato, beyond the way he was revered as a sage in the Middle Ages is at play in Dante's presentation of him. As noted elsewhere, Foster has argued convincingly that it is Aristotle and the *Convivio* that underpin Dante's Limbo; it is interesting that we may

<sup>584</sup> ..Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p.72.

<sup>585</sup> E. Proto, 'Nuove ricerche sul Catone dantesco', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 59 (1912), 193-248 (p. 230).

<sup>586</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's 'Commedia'*, p. 128.

<sup>587</sup> R. Raimondi, 'Purgatorio I', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligera: Purgatorio*, (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), p. 18.

<sup>588</sup> E. Auerbach, 'Figura', in *Dante: The Critical Complex, Vol. 4*, ed. by R. Lansing, (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-76 (p. 60)

also view *Convivio* IV as being a gloss on the ways and extent to which pagans participate in Christian history and the ways the two histories are in fact one. As Mazzotta says, *Convivio* IV, v, 3 provides a sustained framework of man's *restauratio* as a continuous historical process extending from the Fall and including the secular city.<sup>589</sup> For those such as Dante whose theology of history saw men as instruments of God, it was not difficult to extend this providential logic to those outside the *storia sacra*, and logically this extension must apply to the Roman Empire: as the Jews were the chosen race for receiving and dispensing the religion of God to the peoples of the earth, so the Romans were the race chosen to receive and dispense the knowledge of law and justice, as Dante tells us in *Monarchia* II, and as is confirmed by Justinian in *Paradiso* VI. Reading the *Commedia* vertically, we see that *Paradiso* VI is in praise where *Inferno* VI and *Purgatorio* VI are condemnation: 'By telling the story of history through its emblem, the eagle, Dante implies that history is a purely symbolic construct – by this implication he manages to preserve a crucial distinction between the providential, immutable structure of history and the changing process of events. This distinction is crucial to explaining Dante's awareness that history enacts a providential plan but it appears on the stage of the world as a succession of violence'.<sup>590</sup>

It is striking that if we see Aristotle and the *Convivio* as underpinning the Dantean Limbo, when we turn to the *Convivio* itself it is Dante's Cato, seemingly destined for Paradise, who is cited as the embodiment of the central Aristotelian proposition regarding man's civic nature and the need for his being a useful citizen in his maturity. Moreover, Dante does this in terms which once more have Christological resonance: Cato is one whose birth was for the benefit of the whole world 'ché, sì come Aristotile dice, l'uomo è animale civile, per che a lui si richiede non pur a sé ma altrui essere utile. Onde si legge di Catone che non a sé, ma a la patria e a tutto lo mondo nato esser credea' (*Conv.* IV, xxvii). As a prefiguration of Christ, Cato's role in life was to choose self-sacrifice, and in death to act as guardian of the realm whose summit is a figure for the state of freedom and justice in this life and is also the means by which the ultimate freedom of the heavenly city is attained. While we cannot be sure that at the time he wrote the *Convivio*, Dante believed in

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<sup>589</sup> G. Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 18.

<sup>590</sup> Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 181.

Cato's salvation, it seems to me that in the *Convivio* we are seeing civic and imperial loyalty and self-sacrifice beginning to be conceived in the Christological terms which will find its fullest expression in the *Commedia*

In the bottom of the pit of Hell we have seen the conspirators Brutus and Cassius in the mouth of Satan for their treachery to Caesar (*Inf.* XXXIV, 65-67) and yet in the very next canto we find Cato, an opponent of Caesar, acting as guardian of the mountain of Purgatory and afforded, it may be surmised, a privileged position in being there. It seems that in Dante's conception, Cato's opposition to Caesar was not to be seen in the same terms as that of the conspirators. Perhaps, as Joan Ferrante has suggested, the distinction between them is that Cato fought against the Empire but remained true to his principles, whereas Brutus and Cassius who had been republicans, reverted to being loyal to Caesar, were pardoned by him and subsequently betrayed him.<sup>591</sup> This of course can only be speculation, as Dante never makes clear, other than through their respective eschatological destinies, the differences between the conspirators and Cato. Even accepting Ferrante's suggestion, I would argue that there does still seem to be a paradox produced by Dante's praise of Cato in spite of his republicanism and opposition to the Roman Empire, given that Dante viewed the Empire as being divinely ordained both for man's temporal happiness and to prepare the world for the coming of Christ.

Scott has noted that Dante in the *Convivio* (IV. v. 12) states of Rome that, 'Da Bruto primo consolo infino a Cesare primo prencipe sommo, noi troveremo lei essultata non con umani cittadini ma con divini'. This use of 'infino a', in Scott's view, implies Rome's glorious tradition came to an end with the founding of the Empire. This, coupled with the fact that Dante does not include a single pagan emperor in *Inferno* has allowed the assertion that the general divide between Republic and Empire is brought together in Dante's thought as a continuous process; both 'Cato's actions and Caesar's violence and illegality are vindicated by God's providential design'.<sup>592</sup> Scott asserts that in Dante's conception, 'the ideal emperor will work to bring about what Julius Caesar, the first "emperor" [...] himself violated, the ideal of republican civic virtue'.<sup>593</sup> The virtues of the Roman Republic are to be

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<sup>591</sup> Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy*, p. 194.

<sup>592</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 81.

<sup>593</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 79.

taken up in the Empire of the modern Holy Roman Emperor. Dante says, in the *Convivio*, that it is his belief that only under an empire will the feuds of princes be prevented (*Conv.* IV, iv, 1-4). Through his presentation of Cato, he is telling us that it is the virtues of the Republic, the magnanimity and *pietas* which Cato personifies, which should inform and guide the actions of the Emperor.

Despite all the bars to his salvation, with his own self-sacrifice Cato becomes ‘un ombra che annuncia di lontano e nei limiti di un gesto imperfetto, il vero Cristo liberatore’.<sup>594</sup> For Dante it seems the process, following the Fall of once more making man acceptable to God is one which was worked out in history which is to say in the dual strands of providential history the Christian and the Roman.

It is possible to see Dante not only excusing the suicide of Cato (that is, presenting an explanation of why, in his view, it is not a bar to his current office or to his eventual salvation) but more, actually presenting his suicide as a positive act and one which was integral to his salvation. In this interpretation, suicide for the love of country is not interpreted as a sin nor is it seen as a pagan act without Christian repercussions, which adhered to the pagan moral code; rather it is seen as a pagan act of such goodness, motivated by love, that Dante is able to present it as an act of charity. Mazzotta has demonstrated that frequently in medieval historiography, the idea of *pro patria mori* is presented as a manifestation of charity, where the sacrifice of Cato, or any citizen, for his community is able to be compared in intent to Christ's own self-sacrifice.<sup>595</sup> Davis notes Remigio de' Girolami's praise of Cincinnatus and Cato and his positive view of Cato's patriotism and suicide.<sup>596</sup> This link between patriotic self-sacrifice and Christ's sacrifice with specific reference to Cato is one that would have also been available to Dante through medieval readings of Lucan's *Pharsalia* in which Cato speaks and acts in ways that the Middle Ages found suggestive of Christ.<sup>597</sup> Davis suggests that the *De Bono Comuni* may have been significant for Dante's alteration of his views of Rome more generally. In *De Bono Comuni* Remigio invokes the Roman heroes as men who subordinated all else to the common good, and while his examples are derived from Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, V, 18), Remigio changes Augustine's conclusions almost as much as Dante does;

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<sup>594</sup> Raimondi, ‘*Purgatorio* I’, p. 23.

<sup>595</sup> Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 60.

<sup>596</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 84.

<sup>597</sup> Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 61.

Rome's nobility is not attributed to love of glory but rather to civic unselfishness: 'bonum comune preferendum sit bono privato proprio, multiplici auctoritate infidelium' (*De Bono Comuni* II); 'probatur exemplis creaturarum habentium amorem rationalem idest hominum infidelium' (*De Bono Comuni* V).

As Davis notes, in *De bono pacis* the methods to achieve political peace (the subordination of the individual to the communal) are Aristotelian and the definition of what peace is (the correct functioning together of component parts the peace of the body made analogous to the peace of the state) are Augustinian but it is also noted that Remigio generally identifies peace at the temporal level as being synonymous with the Aristotelian concept of the common good.<sup>598</sup> We are at some distance here from the Augustinian idea of human society as a great thievery. Like Remigio, Ptolemy of Lucca was lavish in his praise of the virtues of Republican Rome, but was able to use its virtues as the antithesis of Empire to support a hierocratic position. Despite all their differences a common factor between Ptolemy, Remigio and Dante is a willingness to rewrite Augustine's generally negative views of Roman virtues in *De Civitas Dei* V, 18: 'Ptolemy was the first of them to launch a frontal attack on Augustine's view of history [...] for Ptolemy unlike Augustine, the Roman republic recalled Eden and foreshadowed the virtues of the pristine church'.<sup>599</sup>

Although Remigio is orthodox in drawing on Augustine and the Church Fathers, he is also willing to strain their authority. In the conjoining of Augustine and Aristotle, Remigio follows Aquinas and anticipates Dante. Chapter 5 of *De Bono Comuni* aims to show that that man's *amorem rationalem* disposes him to make sacrifices, even his own life for the common good: Augustine's prohibitions about suicide as selfish (*De Civ. Dei*, I, 23) are accepted throughout the chapter, but are not accepted unquestioned: Remigio manages to insinuate that Cato preferred to kill himself rather than submit to the tyranny of Caesar; Cato, together with other Roman heroes, is an exemplary model of political virtue.

Item Cato interfecit se ipsum, ut aliqui opinantur, quia dominium Urbis venerat ad manus Iulii Caesaris, existimans ex hoc rem publicam in magnum periculum incidisse. Augustinus tamen dicit quod hoc fecit Cato - ut fertur Cesar

<sup>598</sup> Davis, 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist', p. 200.

<sup>599</sup> Davis, 'Roman Patriotism and Republican Propaganda', p. 231.

dixisse - quia invidit glorie Cesaris in tantum quod noluit sibi parci ab eo sicut speravit et voluit parci filio suo; et subdit Augustinus: 'vel, ut nos aliquid mitius dicamus, erubuit, scilicet quod sibi parceretur a Cesare'. (*De Bono Comuni*, V)

Panella suggest that 'ut aliqui opinantur' is a reference to Cicero's more positive view of Cato's self-sacrifice in *De officiis* I, 31.<sup>600</sup> A similar reassessment of Augustine's negative view of Cato's suicide may be found in *Monarchia* II, v, 15, where Dante says: 'ut mundo libertatis amores accenderet, quanti libertas esset ostendit dum e vita liber decedere maluit quam sine libertate manere in illa';

and in *Monarchia* II, v, 17:

Non enim alia in causa Marcus Cato fuit, alia ceteri qui se in Affrica Cesari tradiderunt. Atque ceteris forsitan vitio datum esset si se interemissent, propterea quod levior eorum vita et mores fuerunt faciliores; Catoni vero cum incredibilem natura tribuisset gravitatem, eamque perpetua constantia roborasset, semperque in proposito susceptoque consilio permansisset, moriendum ei potius quam tyrampni vultus aspiciendus fuit.

Panella argues that this similarity is indicative of a wider connectedness between *De Bono Comuni* V and *Monarchia* II: 'medesima prospettiva di valorizzazione delle virtù della romanità classica, quasi medesimi la riorientazione dei prestiti da Agostino'.<sup>601</sup>

But as we saw in the previous chapter, where Remigio thinks of Florence, Dante thinks of the whole world. The commune, the city state, at least as long as humanity is tainted by cupidity, can only ever be a building block of the wider universal empire. 'Cato is among the Roman heroes praised for *amorem rationale* all these irrespective of faith fought for the common good and thus stand to be considered along with figures from scripture'.<sup>602</sup>

There are further elements in Cato which add to the Christian dimension of this Roman individual and which take the Dantean Cato far beyond the admittedly virtuous individual conceived of by Aquinas, for whom pagan virtue and good works

<sup>600</sup> <http://www.e-theca.net/emiliopanella/remigio2/8540.html>, note on *De Bono Comuni* V, accessed 20 August 2015.

<sup>601</sup> Panella, *Dal bene comune al bene del comune*, p. 123.

<sup>602</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 84.

could never be more than a result of a natural disinclination towards evil or a desire for earthly fame:

Sed numquid omnes infideles habent mala opera? Videtur quod non: nam multi gentiles secundum virtutem operati sunt; puta Cato, et alii plures. Sed dicendum, secundum Chrysostomum, quod aliud est bene operari ex virtute, aliud ex aptitudine et dispositione naturali. Nam aliqui ex dispositione naturali bene operantur, quia ex eorum dispositione non inclinantur ad contrarium; et hoc modo etiam infideles potuerunt bene operari: [. . .] Vel dicendum, quod licet infideles bona facerent, non tamen faciebant propter amorem virtutis, sed propter inanem gloriam. Nec etiam omnia bene operabantur, quia Deo cultum debitum non reddebant.<sup>603</sup>

As Singleton has noted, the pagans did not have sanctifying Grace or the three theological virtues that attend such Grace, and without these 'Deo cultus debitus' is impossible.<sup>604</sup> However, the Dantean Cato is, it seems, saved and has, in a certain way, come to be able to pay due honour to God.

The figural parallels of Cato and Moses have been widely noted. The lights illuminating the face of Cato 'come 'l sol fosse davante' (*Purg.* I. 39) recall the face of Moses described in Exodus 34. 29. Hollander has demonstrated that frequently in medieval art Moses was depicted with a forked beard, a trait which Dante adopts in his depiction of Cato with a beard that 'cadeva al petto doppia lista' (*Purg.* I. 36).<sup>605</sup> In canto II of the *Purgatorio*, the purgatorial souls arriving on the shores of the mountain sing *In exitu Israel de Aegypto*, the psalm of the Israelites' exodus from the slavery of Egyptian captivity to the freedom of the promised land which, as Dante has explained in the letter to Can Grande serves within the polysemous reading of the *Commedia*'s meaning to allegorically represent the release from sin, and the freedom to be attained by a Christian death and the purgatorial ascent of the mountain.<sup>606</sup> As Moses was unable to enter the Promised Land, so too was Cato unable to witness the fulfilment of Rome's imperial destiny.<sup>607</sup> As Cato is a figure of Moses, so both of them are figures of Christ whose face shone at the

<sup>603</sup> Aquinas, *In Ioannis evangelium*, III, iii, 5, <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/cih03.html>, accessed 10 August 2014.

<sup>604</sup> Singleton, note on *Inferno* IV, 38, DDP, accessed 27 January 2012.

<sup>605</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, p. 125.

<sup>606</sup> See *Ep.* XIII, 7-8.

<sup>607</sup> Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 230.

Transfiguration.<sup>608</sup> It is Christ who leads man from the slavery of sin, through the sacrifice of his own life in a journey which is prefigured by that of Moses and a sacrifice prefigured, in Dante's conception, by that of Cato. This can only seem incongruous if one forgets the centrality of a single providential history to Dante's conception of the world. Christian and imperial history are not merely concurrent they are intertwined and interconnected, a situation which reflects and endorses Dante's political views making the temporal state of man a fundamental aspect of his eternal happiness. His prophecy of the DXV is an expression of confidence in this providence as is the reference to Scipio in *Paradiso* XXVII; the presence of Cato and Ripheus are, at one level at least, proof positive of the rightness of the role that Dante's world ascribed both to the Roman Empire at the time of Christ's birth and the Roman Empire in his own day; the core value of justice shared by both is the justice which should underpin all earthly government – not merely as a bridle on greed but as the means to ensure the conditions by which man can be fully human. Dante's saved pagans are examples of people whose behaviour is informed by the virtues which the Emperor and the Empire should embody. In the political letters where Dante is *par excellence* the prophet and herald of Empire we see him developing the same kind of figural relationships. Just as Moses is made a figure for Cato so Moses is a figure for Henry. The opening paragraphs of letter V hail Henry as the one who shall deliver his people from captivity and lead them to the Promised Land:

Arrexit namque aures misericordes leo fortis de tribu Iuda; atque ululatum universalis captivitatis commiserans, Moysen alium suscitavit, qui de gravaminibus Aegyptiorum populum suum eripiet, ad terram lacte ac melle manatem perducens (*Ep.* V, 1)

We may take these parallels further and note that just as there appears to be a Christological dimension in Dante's Cato, Henry too is hailed in such terms as Dante quotes the words of St Paul 'Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile quo signa surgunt consolationis et pacis' (*Ep.* V, 1).

If Dante is able to conceive of both Moses and Christ as having figural relationships with both Cato and Henry this seems to suggest a strong affinity in

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<sup>608</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's 'Commedia'*, p. 126.



Dante's mind between the latter two. I would suggest that it is the concept of assuring human freedom through Roman virtues that is the key point of contact; this is the freedom for which Cato dies and which Henry, or any emperor should work to ensure. Like the prophecy of the DXV the type of freedom intended is potentially multi-valent depending on the exegetical level at which we consider the work: political and moral freedom here prefigure freedom from sin. In this sense the phrase 'libertà va cercando', which Virgil uses to relate Dante's own quest to that of Cato, comes to mean the role that Rome and its political institutions have to play in the happiness of this life and of the next. If Cato, a suicide and a Republican, can stand figurally for Christian freedom from sin, then we may ask whether we are justified in applying such figural elasticity to other theologically 'difficult' areas of the *Commedia*. Relating the 'real' Earthly Paradise of the *Commedia* and the 'figural' *Monarchia* in this way, may assist in subduing many of the difficulties in reconciling the two which were outlined earlier in this chapter. It may be because only one aspect of the character's history actually matters or else that the figural value of these people or places alters depending on the context in which Dante employs them or the point, political or theological, that he is seeking to make. Just as we are not meant to have the idea that Cato hated the Empire to the forefront of our minds but rather that he loved his country, so perhaps we are intended to say that Dante's Earthly Paradise suggests that human reason can be our guide to earthly happiness not that Dante is dealing in theological impossibilities by allowing his Virgil to come to the edge of Eden.

Ripheus, is referred to only briefly in the *Aeneid*, 'cadit et Ripheus, iustissimus unus / qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi / dis aliter visum', but it appears that these words, perhaps, as Scott has suggested, prompted by his reading of Boethius,<sup>609</sup> had such a profound effect on Dante that he was prepared to take Ripheus as his example that ignorance of Christ was not an absolute bar to salvation. Unlike in the case of Trajan, there was no tradition of Ripheus having been saved, and, as we have seen, commentators on *Paradiso* stressed that Ripheus, as a saved soul, is a Dantean invention. Dante has, of course, already indicated through his presentation of both Cato and Statius, his willingness to invent a salvation, for

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<sup>609</sup> J. A. Scott, 'Dante, Boezio e l'enigma di Rifeo [Par. 20]', *Studi Danteschi*, 61 (1989), 187-92, (pp. 190-92).

narrative and allegorical purposes, for an individual who would ostensibly seem to have been destined for Limbo. Ripheus was a Trojan warrior and thus part of the race that was destined, in Dante's view divinely mandated, to establish the Roman people in Italy. But not only was he a 'proto-Roman', he was one who embodied the virtue of Justice which was and for Dante should once again be, the principle which underpins governance.

Ripheus' relative anonymity means that although his presence is surprising, it comes with a limited range of theological and historical baggage: he is one whom the authority of Virgil has suggested, but also one who has no other biographical details. The phrase 'Dis aliter visum' coming so soon after 'iustissimus', means we may see Dante rewriting Virgilian history, and attempting to alter Virgilian conclusions; Virgil asserts that Ripheus is the most just of the Trojans but is not rewarded by the gods. Dante is prepared to accept Virgil's judgement on the justness of Ripheus, even to accept it being sufficient to ultimately merit a place in Heaven, but the consequences are altered: a negative judgement of the pagan gods on a pagan man in a pagan work despite his justness, is reworked to become the positive judgement of a Christian God on a Christian man in a Christian work. The justice of the Christian God is shown in the figure of Ripheus to be universal, unknowable in its methods to man, and qualitatively different from that of the pagan gods. As will be discussed later in this chapter in the case of Dante's assertion of Ripheus's salvation, we have Dante in his role of prophet interacting with Virgil's partially sighted prophecies; Dante is at once respectful of his prophetic forbear but keen to outline how his vision is wider and sees clearly where Virgil saw only hazy prefigurations.

Proto noted that just as Dante was able to take from Virgil his estimation of Ripheus as 'iustissimus', so he was able to take from Lucan a similar explanation that Cato too, while on earth had fixed all his love upon justice: 'Iustitiae cultor, rigidi servator honesti' (*Pharsalia* II, 389).<sup>610</sup> In presenting the reader with Ripheus and Cato as two examples of the possibility that a pagan soul might be saved, Dante is doing a number of things simultaneously. He is asserting the unknowability of divine judgement, he is reinforcing the tragedy of the exclusion from Paradise of Virgil and Aristotle, but it seems to me that in his most prominent examples he is

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<sup>610</sup> Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)* with an English translation by J. D. Duff (London: W. Heinemann, 1928)

also making a statement about Roman exceptionalism and a statement about the virtues which should inform the rule and rulers of his own society; in choosing these examples he is asserting once more the divine, providential, nature of Rome's imperial mission. We have Roman or proto-Roman heroes seemingly being saved in part at least, on the authority of Roman authors and being saved in part at least due to their love of justice, the virtue which above all others should guide imperial rule. If God's motive for saving these souls is ultimately presented as a mystery beyond human comprehension, I would suggest that the reasons for Dante's assertion of their salvation is less of a mystery; it allows him to fuse the political and the theological in prophecies of salvation which speak to both the theological and political concerns of the *Commedia* and of Dante's exilic works more generally. The possibility that pagan souls might be saved is not unique to Dante, but Dante chooses pagans who fit perfectly into the *Commedia*'s political system and personify the values which should underpin it; a political system which as I have shown is one which is intimately connected in its functions to man's eternal salvation.

Dante is the prophet of restored imperial power and renewed Church poverty as the twin methods by which man can achieve the happiness both of this life and of the next. In the previous chapter, I quoted Manselli's words: 'per Dante la nuova Chiesa potrà aversi solo se ci sarà anche la "humana civilitas"'.<sup>611</sup> Only in a society organised along the lines Dante advocates in the *Monarchia*, would the achievement of poverty in the Church be possible. This is the sort of society which itself is informed by the virtues embodied by those souls, pagan as they were, whom Dante presents as saved in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. It seems that for Dante, in both the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, behaving well as a citizen (and this can only be as a citizen of a universal Roman empire, and is seemingly wholly synonymous with being good in a moral sense), is possible without God, but it is vanishingly difficult without good societal structures.

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<sup>611</sup> Manselli, *Da Gioachino Da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo*, p. 76.

Man's tendency to cupidity is one which it lies with the state to control, but in exercising such control, the state assumes a far more exalted role to allow man to be fully human and to live in the state of peace which justice ensures.

### 5.5 The limits of 'virtuous citizenship': Dante's Limbo

The blessedness of Cato, Ripheus and Trajan problematizes the status of those in Limbo as it might make us question whether they too ever had the opportunity to come to God. It seems that for Dante, while, in the case of a pagan, ill exercise of free will is sufficient to damn him, as occurred in the case of Ulysses, correct exercise of free will is not enough to save him unless he is granted the necessary Grace to believe in Christ.

An acceptance of the view that Grace is not required to regain a quasi-Edenic state while on Earth, may immediately be seen to raise issues regarding Limbo, as it seems to run counter to Dante's idea of the inhabitants of Limbo as having fully followed the philosophical virtues, as not having sinned, and yet as relegated to Hell. Such an acceptance would logically lead us to ask if the inhabitants of Limbo do in fact represent, as Foster suggests, Dante's conception of the maximum moral and intellectual excellence that human beings may achieve through their own powers.<sup>612</sup> Dante's point of arrival in *Convivio* III is that through knowing and loving as best he can, man is made like God; through contemplation he is assimilated and proportioned to his creator. Dante is saying here that Philosophy is a means of homecoming to God, but insists on this as an esoteric rather than a rational experience.<sup>613</sup>

Kenelm Foster's assertion is that within the *Commedia* man without Grace can only ever achieve a state akin to the Dantean Limbo.<sup>614</sup> Foster makes clear that such an interpretation cannot but create the notion that the Earthly Paradise as symbol, has changed its value from the *Monarchia* to the *Commedia*. This would make Limbo in the *Commedia* an antitype or at least a pale and incomplete simulacrum of the Earthly Paradise. While orthodox theology tended to deny that

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<sup>612</sup> Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 160.

<sup>613</sup> Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher*, p. 90.

<sup>614</sup> Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 196.

man could live a good life without the assistance of Grace this seems to be Dante's position in the *Monarchia*, and in Kenelm Foster's view accounts for the radical departures from orthodoxy of the Dantean Limbo. Foster has described Dante's political thought between 1300 and 1310 as being characterised by 'a tendency to regard human life as directed to ends attainable on Earth and relegate man's divinization to life after death',<sup>615</sup> and has said that to pass from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia* is to be aware of two immediate differences: the shift of focus from life within time to its end result after death, and the fact that the soul's journey to its last end is impossible without divine assistance here and now. 'God is now the goal of human striving here and now, there is a new recourse to supernatural assistance'.<sup>616</sup> It is argued that the new concentration in Dante was not absolute, a small corner of the rationalist survives from the *Convivio* into the *Commedia* and perhaps accounts for the extraordinary decision to locate virtuous pagans in Limbo; it is the *Convivio*, underpinned by Aristotelian rationalism, which defines the Dantean Limbo. Commentators throughout the centuries have noted that the Dantean Limbo departs in numerous ways from the accepted Church teaching on the matter. Most significant it would seem, is the fact that rather than being reserved for unbaptised babies who, still bearing the mark of original sin, could not be admitted to Heaven, Dante's Limbo is, in addition, populated by 'turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi, / d'infanti e di femmine e di viri' (*Inf.* IV., 29-30). For Aquinas such a situation could never be, as 'non est possibile aliquem adultem esse in solo peccato originali absque gratia',<sup>617</sup> a soul without God is thus damned to fall into mortal sin. Dante's decision was a source of criticism and puzzlement amongst contemporary and near contemporary commentators on the *Commedia*. Da Buti, who as we have seen was not troubled by the theological implications of Ripheus' salvation says of Dante's decision that, 'in questo si discorda l'autore dalla santa Chiesa la quale non pone in questo se non li parvoli'.<sup>618</sup> Among modern critics, Padoan has noted that the 'nobile castello' (*Inf.* IV, 106) the abode of the 'spiriti magni' (*Inf.* IV, 119) represents an even more radical departure from theological tradition than that of Dante's Limbo as a whole.

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<sup>615</sup> Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 160.

<sup>616</sup> Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 164

<sup>617</sup> *De Veritate*, q.24 a.12 ad 2. <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/qdv24.html> accessed 22 January 2016.

<sup>618</sup> Da Buti, Note on *Inferno* IV, 25-52, DDP, accessed 02 February 2009.

Padoan notes that the radical nature of this departure was recognised as such by Dante's early commentators who saw that by presenting these souls as supremely good in human terms and lacking only faith, and further, through the extraordinary daring in putting a dome of light in the depths of Hell, Dante is affording a degree of Grace to the *spiriti magni* who inhabit the castle as a reward for their earthly fame that he denies the other Virtuous Pagans who dwell outside the dome of light.<sup>619</sup> The pilgrim asks Virgil:

O tu ch'onori scienzia e arte,  
 questi chi son c'hanno cotanta onranza,  
 che dal modo de li altri li diparte? (*Inf.* IV, 73-75)

and receives the reply:

[. . .] “L'onrata nominanza  
 che di lor suona sù ne la tua vita,  
 grazia acquista in ciel che sì li avanza.” (*Inf.* IV, 76-78)

The light of the castle of *Inferno* IV is a small ray of God that the pagans have loved, and in a certain sense and in a certain measure they have honoured him indirectly through their virtue. The light is a merest spark compared to the light of the Empyrean but is nonetheless extraordinary and is a conscious violation of the norms that theological investigation had established.<sup>620</sup> Singleton too has noted that, in conceiving that such fame would win merit in Heaven, Dante is venturing beyond established doctrine, as he is generally in his conception of Limbo. Singleton points out that Augustine had allowed the possibility that there would be a certain attenuation of suffering in Hell for such good deeds as these pagans were able to perform even without sanctifying Grace and that Dante here appears to have made ‘a positive appraisal of so negative a concession’.<sup>621</sup>

Dante’s Limbo is thus a marginal place geographically and spiritually, both in hell and yet not fully so; its occupants must abandon all hope, but do not face the judgment of Minos for sins committed. But it also seems to represent a compromise theologically which does not assume that Virgil and his fellows must fall into sin

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<sup>619</sup> Padoan, *Il pio Enea*, p.117.

<sup>620</sup> Padoan, *Il pio Enea*, p.117.

<sup>621</sup> Singleton, Note on *Inferno* IV, 74, DDP, accessed 14 January 2014.

beyond original sin, but equally seems to rule out the possibility that the Earthly Paradise, within the *Commedia* at least, can be reached without God; if it were possible, who better than Virgil, or Aristotle to do so? This is a compromise which would place the *Aeneid*'s Elysian Fields within their correct Christian context. This idea of Limbo as the 'so far but no further' of human potential and intellect would be a wholly satisfactory explanation of Dante's Limbo were it not for the presence of pre-Christian pagans elsewhere in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Their presence does not invalidate this argument but it does make us look again, particularly given the Roman virtues embodied by those saved; being a Roman citizen is insufficient for salvation, likewise the suggestion in *Paradiso* XX, is that such is divine justice that even those born on the shores of the Indus may be closer to God than the many false Christians. Nonetheless, Dante's saved pagans are Romans or ancestors of Romans and his choice to name them among the blessed seems at once a statement of Christian belief and of political philosophy; unsurprisingly as in Dante's conception the two are indissolubly linked.

### **Chapter 5.6 Roman Citizenship, Roman Prophecy, and Roman Destiny**

In view of my assertion which has underpinned this thesis that there is a political dimension to the *Commedia*'s prophecies, but that these prophecies advocate a fundamentally reactionary position, that is a desire to emulate and recreate an historical set of political and social circumstances, I wish now to discuss the way in which Dante's prophetic practices relate to those he found in Virgil. Earlier in this thesis I noted the rhetorical denial of Dante's predecessors for his journey, Aeneas and Paul, in *Inferno* II, and Chapter 3 considered the ways in which Dante identifies with *inter alia* St Paul and constructs an authority analogous to that of the prophet to the gentiles. This section will focus on the self-identification with Aeneas and with Virgil and will examine the consequences of this self-identification for our understanding of Dante's politics and his political prophecies.

Citizenship is for Dante as it was for Remigio and for Aquinas to be defined in Aristotelian terms as being a reflection of our human nature as social or political animals designed to live in society with and for the benefit of our fellow citizens; we

cannot achieve earthly happiness individually, but only communally.<sup>622</sup> And it is clear that for Dante, the right ordering of human society is willed by God ‘ius in rebus nichil est aliud quam similtudine divine voluntatis’ (*Mon.* I, ii, 3). But Dante’s notion of citizenship places the abstract notion within a specifically Roman political reality: only through the submission to the Emperor, who is the successor of Augustus, could such happiness be achieved. The fact that Roman citizens are chosen as Dante’s worked examples of the possibility that a pagan soul may be saved should be seen in the light of how Dante perceived the nature of citizenship more generally. There is universality in Dante’s conception of Rome and its mission and he is able to present its history, and the role of its citizens, within a Christian eschatological context. Romanness, as is clear from *Convivio* I. iii. 4, consists in accepting and living by the Roman moral civic and cultural virtues, wherever one lives.<sup>623</sup> In an ideal world every person in Christendom would be a true citizen of Rome and every citizen of Rome would be a true Christian.

If Roman imperial history is providential and intimately linked to salvation history then it is no surprise that Virgil, as the author of that history, should be privileged within the *Commedia* as a prophet. As Nicola Fosca has said of the *Aeneid*, ‘Un merito fondamentale dell’opera Virgiliana, per l’Alighieri, sta proprio nell’aver anticipato fondamentali verità cristiane’.<sup>624</sup> In the Middle Ages the Virgilian epic was not only perceived as a poetic story or indeed as an historical record of Rome’s foundation, but was also seen as being a source of fundamental philosophical truths. Commentators such as Bernardus Silvestris interpreted the *Aeneid* in such a way that, under an *integumentum*, Aeneas is representative of the typical human spirit and the successive books of the *Aeneid* are held to represent the stages of development of man both physically and morally.<sup>625</sup> Equally significantly it was in Virgil’s Fourth *Eclogue* that the famous prophecy of a child descending from on high

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<sup>622</sup> See *Conv.* IV, iv, I: ‘E pero dice lo Filosofo che l’uomo naturalmente è compagnevole animale’; Remigio de’Girolami, *De Bono Comuni* IX; Aquinas ‘homo naturaliter est animal politicum et sociale’ (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIae. Q.72. a. 4. co); Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. by Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), III. 6: ‘Man is by nature a political animal’.

<sup>623</sup> P. Armour, ‘Dante and Popular Sovereignty’, in *Dante and Governance*, ed. by J. Woodhouse (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997), pp. 27-45 (p. 34).

<sup>624</sup> Fosca, Note to *Inferno* XXIII, 145-48, DDP, accessed 11 February 2009.

<sup>625</sup> *The Commentary on the First Six Books of the 'Aeneid' of Virgil Commonly attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, ed. by J. W. Jones and E. F. Jones (Lincoln, NA and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), p. xiii.



was to be found:

magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.  
iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;  
iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto. (*Eclogue IV*, 6-8)

These are lines which the author has Statius paraphrase in *Purgatorio XXII*.

[...] Secol si rinova;  
torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,  
e progenie scende da ciel nova. (*Purg. XXII*, 70-72)

It was Virgil who led Statius to be a poet and it was Virgil who led him to be a Christian: 'Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano' (*Purg. XXII*, 73). It was Virgil's words that Statius found so consonant with those of the new preachers of Christianity that he began to frequent them:

e la parola tua sopra toccatasi  
consonava a' nuovi predicanti;  
ond'io a visitarli presi usata. (*Purg. XXII*, 79-81)

The idea that a pagan prophetic text could have acted as a gateway to salvation is striking; but, more than this, if a pagan prophet's poetry can do this, we are surely meant to ask how much more effective must be the words of a Christian prophet's poem. Where Virgil's words, as unconscious *vates*, were able to save one man, the explicit revelation which Dante now records is one which is intended to save all those who read his poem. Dante's poem is the completion of Virgil's precisely because its prophecies are written with a greater degree of insight. The *Commedia's* author is writing in the light of Christ's sacrifice and as one who has been granted a privileged view of how Virgil's imperial prophecies fit into general history and the apocalypse.

Dante's prophetic voice in the letters, as it is in the *Commedia*, is a fusion of the biblical and the Virgilian. At the opening of letter V, between the citations of St Paul and the allusion to Psalm 18 which were discussed in Chapter 3 we have Dante's image of the freshening eastern wind, bringing new hope for humanity's current tribulations. Here the prophetic language is not biblical but Virgilian. Dante says 'iamque aurae orientales crebrescunt' (*Ep. V*, 1) drawing on *Aeneid III*, 530

‘crebrescunt optatae aurae portusque patescit iam propior’. This is of course an effective image as it stands, having resonance with both the story of Aeneas and the Christian story with their ideas of divinely willed homecoming, but is particularly striking if we relate it to the context from which it is extracted. This is the occasion of Aeneas’ first glimpse of Greek-occupied Italy, thus drawing implicit parallels between Aeneas’ divinely ordained mission to come to Italy to found the civilization which will become the Roman Empire and what Dante sees as Henry’s divine mission to come to Italy to refound the Roman Empire as a new Augustus; ideas of Florentine and Roman foundation and refoundation are explored in the next section of this chapter. To paraphrase this passage of the *Aeneid* here asserts the poet’s own prophetic ability and suggests a self-identification with Virgil and with Aeneas akin to the self-identification with St Paul, and with his mission which have been the focus of earlier chapters of this thesis. At this point I wish to note that this section of the *Aeneid* is also the occasion for a prophecy by Anchises that before the peace must come war which features a profusion of imagery of bridled forces which Dante will use to describe the Emperor’s role in the *Monarchia*,<sup>626</sup> and of unbridled horses to describe Italy’s turmoil in the absence of an Emperor in *Purgatorio* VI.<sup>627</sup> Anchises sees four white horses on the Italian shore and says:

bellum, o terra hospita, portas:  
 bello armantur equi, bellum haec armenta minantur.  
 sed tamen idem olim curru succedere sueti  
 quadripedes et frena iugo concordia ferre:  
 spes et pacis (*Aeneid* III, 39-43)

Read in its wider context Dante’s brief Virgilian allusion carries the threat to the princes of Italy that while peace is an option which can be taken by submitting to Henry’s rule and God’s will, the alternative of war against an opponent whose

<sup>626</sup> *Mon.* III, xvi,10 ‘in camo et freno’. See also *Conv.* IV, ix, 3 for the Emperor as the rider of human will.

<sup>627</sup> Che val perché ti racconciasse il freno  
 Iustiniano, se la sella è vòta?  
 Sanz’ esso fora la vergogna meno  
 Ahi gente che dovresti esser devota,  
 e lasciar seder Cesare in la sella,  
 se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota,  
 guarda come esta fiera è fatta fella  
 per non esser corretta da li sproni,  
 poi che ponesti mano a la predella. (*Purg.* VI, 88-96)

mission is divinely sponsored is inevitable if they fail to submit. In the letter to the Florentines Dante will say ‘Vos autem divina iura et humana transgredientes [...] primi et soli iugum libertatis horrentes’ (*Ep.* VI, 2 ). It is clear that this yoke is no hardship being a natural and divinely willed state which provides the conditions of peace which ensures justice and human happiness. The passage in Virgil, used among a wealth of messianic adulation for Henry, containing its presentiments both of the Gospels and of Dante’s own political ideas,<sup>628</sup> stands alongside the famous fourth *Eclogue* as evidence of Virgil, not only as one who had however imperfectly prophesied Christ’s advents, but as one who had understood fundamental truths about the nature of human society; in a very practical sense Dante understands that peace lies in submission to the divine will but this is not a subjugation for humans on Earth any more than ‘n la sua volontade è nostra pace’ suggests subjugation in the hereafter.

The three key *ante eventum* prophecies of the *Commedia* are delivered by Virgil, by Beatrice and by St Peter to Dante *personaggio*. Beyond the prophecy of the Veltro, Virgil is also the mouthpiece for the author’s assertion that Cato is saved, seemingly because of his commitment to justice. It seems to me that this ability of a Roman pagan to intuit the need for a divinely ordained political solution is related to Dante’s view of Rome as having a key role to play in salvation history. In the *Convivio* Dante is keen to highlight the way in which providential history functions to indissolubly tie together the Christian and the Roman. The birth of Christ coincided with the universal peace established by the Emperor Augustus:

[...] ne la sua venuta nel mondo, non solamente lo cielo, ma la terra convenia essere in ottima disposizione; e la ottima disposizione de la terra sia quando ella è monarchia, cioè tutta ad uno principe. (*Conv.* IV, v, 4)

But in the next paragraph, this ‘ottima disposizione’ is presented by Dante not as coincidence but as a conclusion of a process of the working out of providential history begun a thousand years earlier:

E tutto questo fu in uno temporale, che David nacque e nacque Roma, cioè che

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<sup>628</sup> ‘Tollite iugum meum super vos, et discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde: et invenietis requiem animabus vestris. Jugum enim meum suave est, et onus meum leve (Matthew 11. 29-30).

Enea venne di Troia in Italia, che fu origine de la cittade romana, sì come testimoniano le scritture. Per che assai è manifesto la divina elezione del romano imperio per lo nascimento de la santa cittade che fu contemporaneo a la radice de la progenie di Maria. (*Conv.* IV, v, 6)

The Christian strand of providential history is of course absent in Virgil, but the idea of a people destined by God to rule the world is common to both. The idea of ‘impero sine fine’ as a gift from God is not only accepted by Dante it is absorbed and contextualised within his Christian eschatology. The *impero* is a gift to the Romans but Dante is now showing us in the central political and apocalyptic prophecies of the *Commedia* (and he is able to show us in a way that Virgil could not), what the ultimate purpose of the Empire is. The apocalyptic context in which the prophecies of the DXV are placed suggest that this role is now to prepare the world for the conclusion of history as it had previously prepared it for the coming of Christ.

### 5.7 Foundation myths: Florence and Rome

Virgil’s work is in part of course Rome’s foundation myth, the justification and explanation of its dominance expressed in terms of the fulfilment of destiny and divine will. Virgil’s work endorses and exalts both the foundation of the Roman line thorough Aeneas and the ‘refoundation’ of Rome through Augustus’ achievement of the *pax romana* bringing the lengthy civil wars to a close. In my opinion, Dante’s view of providential history justifies reading the *Commedia*’s reactionary prophecies as constituting a refoundation myth which is the successor and the completion of Virgil’s myth in the *Aeneid*. There is only one history, and the state of affairs with which Dante deals belongs to the same unfolding of history which is the subject of the vision of the future presented to Books VI and VIII of the *Aeneid*; Rome, and Roman ascendancy, are divinely willed in Virgil as they are in Dante. I believe that just as we have seen Dante’s willingness to appropriate and even correct biblical sources, so too can we see the imperial vision of the *Commedia* as representing a confirmation but also a correction, that is to say a Christian contextualization, of the prophecies of the *Aeneid* in its assertion of the unique place that the Roman Empire holds in God’s plan for the world. Both Dante and Virgil present a cosmology to their readers in which the universe is created for the purposes of Rome achieving universal dominance; in both the success of Rome is the fulfilment of a divine will.

Dante was able to find in the *Aeneid* prophetic language which predicted the past and future glory of Rome. Virgil utilises *post-eventum* prophecies as a technique to assert the divine mandate for Rome's future dominance. In Book I Jupiter predicts the expansion of Roman power to universal proportions through conquest but, significantly, ends with a prediction of a completely new era of peace (*Aen.* I, 257-96), a peace now being fulfilled under the reign of Augustus. As Hardie has pointed out, the Roman imperial sense which we find in the *Aeneid* of a city which reaches to the limits of the Universe is not an accurate reflection of the historical growth of the empire; the extravagance of such formulations by Virgil suggests a mythical or mystical equation of the city with the universe: an urban model with a cosmic archetype.<sup>629</sup> It seems to me that in Dante's formulation of the Rome where Christ is a Roman we are presented with the Christianised fulfilment of that archetype, a sense in which the Roman ideal is truly universal: it is the paradigm of a society for which mankind should strive on earth and a Christian contextualisation of Rome's foundation myth which underpins the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* alike.

Dante in general changes the common exegetical view of the Roman Empire. As Davis has noted, while Jerusalem and Babylon are antithetical in Christian thought, Rome and Babylon are not but at times are presented as such in the *Commedia*; Jerusalem is positive, Babylon negative and Rome can be either; for Dante, Rome is the vision of Earthly peace and harmony, the seat of Empire and Pope, and the point from which man departs for heaven.<sup>630</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, in letter XI as in *Purgatorio* VI, 76-78, Dante is able to co-opt Jeremiah's lamentation for Jerusalem in her widowhood to refer to the current state of the city of Rome deprived of her spouse the Emperor: 'Quomodo sola sedet civitas, plena populo! Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium' (*Ep.* XI, 1). The justifications for the universal and predominant role of Rome which were available to Dante through Virgil's prophetic language and vision of history means that Florence's ambitions, or those of France, must always be constrained by their status as subordinate to Rome, and assertions of political independence are contrary to divine will. The Florentines are Babylonian precisely because in murmuring against

<sup>629</sup> P. R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 365.

<sup>630</sup> C. T. Davis, 'Rome and Babylon in Dante', in *Dante: The Critical Complex*, Vol 5, ed. by R. Lansing (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 69-90 (p. 70).

the Roman Empire they were seeking to found new kingdoms:<sup>631</sup> ‘Quid, fatua tali opinione summota, tanquam alteri Babilonii, pium deserentes imperium nova regna temptatis, ut alia sit Florentina civilitas, alia sit Romana?’ (*Ep.* VI, 2). But, as was seen in the previous chapter, Rome can also be Babylon where the papacy is concerned; Rome has therefore a hellish as well as a heavenly dimension and ‘Rome's pagan persecutors prefigure her wicked Popes: for the latter as well as the former drink the blood of the saints. It is in this sense that the whore and the beast as they appear in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* can extend the relevance of the imagery in Revelation to a new Babylonian stage of Rome's history’.<sup>632</sup> It is notable that the reference to drinking the blood of the saints with its allusion to the Whore of Babylon comes in St Peter's words to Dante in *Paradiso* XXVII which as we have seen contains Dante's ultimate endorsement of his prophetic identity and the reference to Scipio's providential role.<sup>633</sup> The next, imminent, and perhaps ultimate development in history will have simultaneously messianic, apocalyptic and imperial elements: Rome's imperial role is in part to subdue its own Babylonian aspects as part of this development. Rome can be positive or negative in Dante but the Christian Roman Emperor's mission to re-establish the universal empire, supported by historical precedent and as a manifestation of the divine will, can only ever be positive; the Florentines in rejecting or obstructing imperial rule are not merely being self-interested but are working against God's providential plan for the world. Dante's invective against them in the political letters is the righteous anger of one who sees God's will perverted by the besetting greed of his own countrymen.

Both in the *Commedia* and the political letters, Dante makes use of Florence's most important foundation myth to reiterate both its imperial origins and the requirement for it to remain faithful to the Empire. In *Inferno* XV Dante utilises the myth which has Florence being founded by Julius Caesar; Florence was populated by the Romans after Fiesole was destroyed, an event which marked the end of Catiline's treachery. The Florentine nobility, allowed the surviving Fiesolans to move into the city and mix their base population with the Roman stock from which ill-advised act derive the city's problems; Dino Compagni's *Chronicle* (II. 20)

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<sup>631</sup> Davis, ‘Rome and Babylon in Dante’, p. 73.

<sup>632</sup> Davis, ‘Rome and Babylon in Dante’, p. 77.

<sup>633</sup> Revelation 17. 6; *Par.* XXVII, 58-59.

strikingly draws negative parallels between Corso Donati, the leader of the Black Guefts, and Catiline. For Dante, as it is for Villani, the evidence for Florence's role, as a daughter of Rome (*Conv.* I, iii) but never its successor, is present in its own foundation myth; Florence is 'figliuola e fattura di Roma'.<sup>634</sup> As Honess has noted, the 'sementa santa' (*Inf.* XV, 76) of the Romans, which Brunetto claims lives on in Dante, will eventually bear fruit in the letter to the Florentines (and in the letters which precede and follow it), in the form of a strong statement of support for the imperial cause, while the Florentines' resistance to this cause immediately identifies them, in Brunetto's terms, as descendants of 'quello ingrato popolo maligno | che discese di Fiesole ab antico' (*Inf.* XV, 61–62).<sup>635</sup> These are lines which carry a strong suggestion that Dante's prophetic status, like that of Virgil, is closely connected to his Roman citizenship as well as his Christian faith; his very Romanness both as citizen and in terms of the virtues which he, like Cato, embodies, qualify him for the office. Brunetto equated communes with the ancient city republics, at the same time spreading in Florence a new, unmedieval taste for pagan republican Rome, and for Cato against Caesar.<sup>636</sup> Davis notes Brunetto's esteem of Cicero, and suggests Latini was, to a large extent, responsible for the reassessment of Cicero and his coming to be seen primarily as politician and rhetorician rather than a Stoic. Previously little or no attention had been paid to Cicero's Aristotelian insistence on the need for man to play an active role in his political community; this line of thought permeates via the *Tresor* and the *Rettorica* to the *Convivio* (IV, v, 19); Cicero in Latini is a civic hero and the political element is central to Latini's view of him. This seems indicative of a new late medieval focus on Cicero's political career, particularly his stand against Catiline's conspiracy. It is Latini in *Inferno* XV who tells the pilgrim of the consequences of Catiline's conspiracy and how this relates to the foundation of Florence and its current factional strife. As Steinburg has suggested, in Brunetto's *Rettorica*, a partial translation and commentary of Cicero's *De Inventione*, the exiled Florentine statesman draws inspiration from the exiled

<sup>634</sup> Villani, *Nuova Cronica* IX, 36.

On Dante and Florence's foundation myths, see Keen, *Dante and the City*, pp. 22–30; R. Quinones, *Foundation Sacrifice in Dante's Commedia* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); N. Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence: A Study in Medieval Historiography', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V (1942), 198–227.

<sup>635</sup> Honess, 'Ecce nunc tempus acceptibile', p. 492.

<sup>636</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*, p. 462.

Roman statesman. In *Inferno* XV, Brunetto's pupil now inherits the role of the Roman Cicero against Catiline: 'his sacrifice for the common good will bring short lived disgrace but ensure glory in posterity'.<sup>637</sup> The providential nature of Rome to human history is a common theme in both Brunetto and Dante: in Latini, as so often with Dante, patriotism is placed within the context of the Roman heritage. Holmes has noted the potential link between showing the parallel providential development of the Jewish and Roman worlds, and also that beyond these specifics, Brunetto links the history of the Duecento up to the battle of Tagliacozzo with the history of Empire and Papacy stretching back to the Romans, to the primitive Church, to the Trojans and the Old Testament.<sup>638</sup>

When in letter V Dante warns his fellow Italians that to resist Henry VII is to resist God's will, he suggests they should search to see whether any trace of the inheritance of the Trojan and Latin forbears remain in them, as these are the opposites of barbarism and should guide the Italians towards an understanding of the Emperor as their true leader and a successor of Augustus and that acceptance of this is the only way to avoid annihilation at his hands; Dante here reiterates that the Roman Emperor now is the same as then. It is noticeable that here the traditionally Christian motif of pity for the repentant is an attribute of the Empire, and that the reason for this pity for the repentant is not that the Empire is guided by the Church's teachings but rather that the sovereignty of the Empire derives from the fountain of Pity, God himself:

Sed an non miserebitur cuiquam? Ymo ignoscet omnibus misericordiam  
implorantibus, cum sit Cesar et maiestas eius de Fonte defluat pietatis. Huius  
iudicium omnem severitatem abhorret, et semper citra medium plectens, ultra  
medium premiando se figit (*Ep.* V, 3)

In respect of the line of argument I have been pursuing it is notable that Virgil presents Cato in the *Aeneid* as the antithesis of Catiline just where Aeneas is being shown the site where Rome will stand:

Tartareas etiam sedes, alta ostia Ditis,

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<sup>637</sup> Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law*, p. 39.

<sup>638</sup> G. Holmes, *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 78. See *Convivio* IV. v and *Tresor* I. 34.



et scelerum poenas, et te, Catilina, minaci  
 pendentem scopulo Furiarumque ora trementem,  
 secretosque pios, his dantem iura Catonem (*Aen.* VIII, 667-70):

Dante found this description of Cato the lawgiver in the pseudo-prophetic ekphrasis of the shield of Vulcan in *Aeneid* VIII, 667-70 where the parade of future Roman history is shown to the city's forefather. In the *Aeneid*, as in Dante, we see the victories of Rome as divinely willed, and in the *Aeneid*, as in Dante, Roman victory forms part of the cosmic as well as the political order: 'the location of Catiline and Cato as archetypal figures of sinner and judge in the underworld makes the equation explicit: Roman and divine justice are one and the same thing'.<sup>639</sup> But as we have seen in the case of Ripheus, Dante's divine justice is not always that of Virgil and so Cato is transposed in a Christian context from the law-giver in the Elysian Fields, to being guardian of Purgatory: this is at once an acceptance and subversion of Virgilian judgements, but is also a Christian contextualisation and reappraisal of a virtuous Roman life. As we have seen earlier in this chapter it is possible to see in the Dantean Limbo the Elysian Fields being placed by the author in their 'correct' Christian context. If this is the case, then Cato's transition from Elysium to Purgatory is one which shows Dante emphasising Roman justice both in ancient times and in Dante's own day as being potentially analogous to and even informed by the Christian God's justice. Cato and Ripheus are thus to be seen as a pendent pair, positive and negative Virgilian judgements recast by the Christian poet.

As we saw in the previous section, in paragraph 2 of Letter VI it is clear that the fate that will befall Florence will be due to its unwillingness to submit to the Empire. Dante terms this the duty of submission to the Empire (*Ep.* VI, 2). The Florentines, in yielding to the Emperor, would enjoy the greater liberty that comes with universal monarchy. But Dante tells them, 'primi et soli iugum libertatis horrentes, in Romani principis, Mundi regis et Dei ministri, gloriam fremuistis' (*Ep.* VI, 2). Likewise, in *Purgatorio* VI, when Dante predicts that vengeance shall soon fall upon the Florentines, it is in part because they have rejected their role as Roman citizens by rejecting the true liberty that can only exist under the Empire.

As Scott and Davis have noted, we have in Latini's *Tresor* a possible source

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<sup>639</sup> J. E. G. Zetszel, 'Rome and its Traditions', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. by Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 188-203 (p. 199).

for Dante's views on Rome's success as being a product of virtue not of military might. In Chapter III, 37 of the *Tresor* entitled 'Le jugement Caton', Brunetto argues that Cato spoke of the Roman heritage which Catiline had defiled and said that it had been gained though virtue of arms, through wisdom and righteous government and integrity.<sup>640</sup> The suggestion is that this influence from Dante's youth feeds in to the ultimate vision which the *Commedia* will portray: of a universal empire whose wisdom and integrity personified by Cato were indicative of a providential mission to bring peace to the world. Man is by nature a political and civic animal but to elevate one's citizenship of Florence (or indeed the city itself) above Rome is to work against the divine plan. The sinfulness of this refusing of the yoke of liberty is made clear in the letter as is the imminent punishment:

Nulla etenim conditio delinquentis formidolosior, quam impudenter et sine Dei timore quicquid libet agentis. Hac nimirum persepe animadversione percutitur impius, ut moriens obliviscatur sui qui dum viveret oblitus est Dei. (*Ep.* VI, 2).

Brunetto Latini's words in *Inferno* XV suggest it is the un-Romanness of Florence and the undue influence of 'le bestie Fiesolane' (*Inf.* XV, 73) which are the source of its problems. It seems that these citizens are less than human and stand in contrast to the fully realised human beings which can only be achieved in the conditions of peace and justice which the Empire alone can ensure. Just as for Remigio a man who is not a citizen is not really a man, so the 'Fiesolan' Florentines are less than human for rejecting their God-given citizenship of the universal empire.

The Fiesolan influence stands as the cause of internal political strife and as a metaphor for the absence of Roman virtue; thus we have once more the flexible typological relationship between cities in Dante's conception, the Florentines are at once Babylonian and Fiesolan, agents of discord, when they should be Roman citizens and contributors to the wider unity of the Empire. The Florentines are refusing to be Roman in terms of practical politics but also in terms of the virtues and history which should inform such politics; they refuse to see the signs of God's will which history, and indeed their own foundation myth, should have made clear to them. In this light, letter VI is also striking for its reference to the Roman colony, Saguntum, in Spain, which is presented as antithetical to Florence and potentially as

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<sup>640</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 90; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 76.

a metaphor for everything that Florence is failing to be. Dante does not deny that a city on the side of right may suffer, but one cannot change loyalties merely for one's own benefit; loyalty to the empire is loyalty to God's scheme for man. Dante says of Florence's suffering that 'Utque breviter colligam, quas tulit calamitates illa civitas gloriosa in fide pro libertate, Saguntum, ingnominiöse vos eas in perfida pro servitute subire necesse est' (*Ep.* VI, 4). A colony in Spain is hailed for its loyalty to Rome where Rome's own daughter Florence is condemned for its disloyalty. This is a passage which stands alongside Dante's presentation of Cato in *Purgatorio* I. The antithetical relationship of freedom/slavery is recast here as is the figural relationship between the moral freedom embodied by Cato and the freedom promised to man under Christ, a link strengthened by the singing of Psalm 113, *In exitu Israel*, the freeing of the Jewish people standing as a prefiguration of the freedom promised to all the world under Christ. The loyal Roman, like the loyal Roman colony suffered for the cause of liberty, which he valued above life itself; conversely the sufferings of Florence are precursors to its enslavement; Cato's virtues are the antithesis of those of Florence and should serve as a model for the city's leadership whom the letter addresses.

As we saw earlier, *Monarchia* I, xii, 2, tells us that liberty is based, first and foremost, on freedom of the will. It is the correct exercise of this will that is the linkage between the Spanish colony and Cato; in choosing to conform itself to the divine plan manifest in history Saguntum chose loyalty to the Roman state and by extension to Roman values rather than a self-interested submission to tyranny. For Dante, not only is it greed which drives the Florentines' rebellion, it is greed which makes them blind to the will of Providence which Dante now sees so clearly dictates their role as Roman citizens. Fiesole was destroyed by the Romans for giving refuge to Catiline and his fellow conspirators, and such is the nature of providential history that, whatever resistance the Florentines put up, Dante suggests that the divinely willed imperial renewal must prevail now, as it did in Catiline's time, even in the face of treachery:

Quid vallo sepsisse, quid propugnaculis vos et pinnis armasse iuvabit, quum advolaverit Aquila in auro terribilis, quae nunc Pirenen, nunc Caucason, nunc Atlanta supervolans, militia coeli magis confortata sufflamine vasta maria quondam transvolando despexit? (*Ep.* VI, 3)

It is instructive to connect all this to the *Commedia*'s final ante-eventum prophecy in *Paradiso* XXVII and to the *Paradiso*'s key political statement in *Paradiso* VI. As Hollander has noted, *Paradiso* VI constitutes an absolutely unorthodox 'history of the Caesars', unorthodox in the sense that it is shaped by a Christian point of view'.<sup>641</sup> This history includes the defeat of Carthage by Scipio, and the siege of Fiesole by Pompey against the forces of Catiline:

Sott' esso giovanetti trïunfaro  
 Scipione e Pompeo; e a quel colle  
 sotto 'l qual tu nascesti parve amaro. (*Par.* VI, 52-54).

The long history of the republic is condensed into a narrative of military victories and concludes with the above tercet. The contextual linking of Scipio and Pompey, and thus the defeat of Carthage and of Fiesole, must make us consider the providential intervention prophesied in *Paradiso* XXVII as being part not merely of a political solution to the current crisis, but also a move towards a refoundation of a society informed by the virtues of the republic and the authority of the empire. We have the subjugation by the Roman republic of an external (Carthage) and an internal (Catiline) threat, and Rome moves towards universality as part of the providential plan via Scipio's defeat of Carthage; the strong implication of the words of *Paradiso* XXVII is that providence will provide a similar, perhaps necessarily military, solution, to crush the external (French) and internal (Florentine) opposition to God's plan for the world. This is not to eliminate the Church but to place it centrally. As we have seen, the end to Church corruption can only come where the imperial power is there to ensure it; the victories necessary for Rome's initial domination and the birth of Christ, are perhaps to be seen as prefigurations of the victories necessary for Rome to assume here a/the final role in ensuring earthly peace for the final acts of human history.

As was noted in my discussion of the *Monarchia*'s Pauline language in Chapter 3, Dante, on being told (by Virgil) of the journey he must undertake, expresses himself unworthy as he is neither Aeneas nor Paul. These are Dante's most famous precursors for the journey to the realms of the afterlife. Given the type of

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<sup>641</sup> Hollander, DDP, Note to *Par.* VI, 36-96, accessed 16 February 2015.

providential history I have been defining, it stands to be reiterated how these two at once represent God's two chosen people the Romans and the Jews but are both Roman citizens, as is Dante himself. I suggested earlier that Moses in his role as liberator is made to prefigure both Christ and Henry and is recalled in Dante's description of Cato: the Italians are the tribe of Israel whom Henry is coming to liberate, and viewed in this way Dante's figural relationships indicate that Scripture has a prophetic function revealing the fulfilling of God's grand design but also that these figural relationships extend beyond the biblical and encompass both traditions, Roman and Judaeo-Christian. It seems to me that Dante is prepared to use Virgil's poem in much the same way, assigning to its prophecies of Rome's destiny a quasi-scriptural value which he also claims for his own poem. Certainly he does not explicitly differentiate in his works between the authority of scripture and that of Virgil and has shown his willingness to rewrite and correct both where his prophetic vision has shown him truths which were only half seen by his precursors. Nowhere is this more clear than in the salvation of both Ripheus and Cato where, as we have seen, we have simultaneous acceptance and correction of Virgil's authority. The Christian God in Dante's fiction/history, is reversing the judgement of the Pagan gods in Virgil's own account: these ultimately are authorial not divine assertions but the fiction of the *Commedia* allows Dante to present them as if they were divine. It was noted earlier that even Augustine with his generally negative view of the pagans concedes that non-Christians could be among the elect, but as Fumagalli has pointed out, Augustine's proof of this possibility is the biblical figure of Job who 'nec indigena nec proselytes idest advent populi Israel fuit, sed ex gente Idumaea genus ducens, ibi ortus, ibidem mortuus est' (*De Ci.v Dei*, XVIII, 47). Augustine goes on to say: 'Divinitus autem provisum fuisse non dubito, ut ex hoc uno scieremus etiam per alias gentes esse potuisse, qui secundum Deum vixerunt eique placuerunt, pertinentes ad spiritalem Ierusalem'. Fumagalli notes the similarities between Dante's words and those of Augustine but for all their similarities we cannot obscure the fundamental difference that where Augustine drew on the Bible, Dante, to address the same question, drew on the *Aeneid*.<sup>642</sup>

Dante is a new Aeneas, not only because of the journey he undertakes, but

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<sup>642</sup> E. Fumagalli, 'Dante e Virgilio', in *Il giusto Enea e il pio Rifeo*, Pagine dantesche, Biblioteca Dell' 'Archivium Romanicum', series I, vol. 391 (Florence: Olschki Editore, 2012), pp. 215-245 (p. 218).

because of the task assigned to him. Driven from his native land he must work to bring about the state of affairs which Aeneas effected: namely to create the conditions in which Rome may be (re)born. The *Aeneid*, as history, is seen by Dante as the story of providence moving hesitantly and uncertainly forward to create the conditions which God had ordained for mankind's greatest happiness and for his salvation. Dante's knowledge and prophetic insight is able to read the *Aeneid*, and its author as an unconscious part of a universal history which is at once Roman and Christian. Once more we may recall Mazzotta's gloss on *Convivio* IV as outlining an historical process extending from the Fall and including the secular city. As we saw in Chapter 2, both Villani and Latini place Florence within a universal historical context, but Dante does so in a more 'profound' way; not only is Dante's a distinct and perhaps unique political agenda, his is a political ideal which indissolubly links the temporal to the eternal making the Christian and the Roman co-dependent. Aeneas is representative of the typical human spirit read at the moral level, and like Cato is an embodiment of Roman virtues; for Dante he is also an historical figure who is a decisive participant in the historical process which is now coming to its conclusion.

Davis has suggested that Dante's conception of Rome provides a point of conciliation between the *Monarchia's* (perhaps) impossible desire to return to the past, and the *Commedia's* dream of a miraculous impossible future: for all that Pagan Rome might serve as an exemplum; Dante does not wish a return to Pagan Rome. Nor does he expect a descent of a heavenly Jerusalem on Earth and a withering away of church institutions; he wishes rather, for the fulfilment of Rome's destiny a reordering around the two lights provided to man. If we must single out a guide for such a vision it is not Augustine, who denied the possibility of true earthly justice, nor is it in the book of Revelation however we interpret it, morally or historically, but rather in the author of the *Aeneid* and *Eclogue* IV.<sup>643</sup> 'History is to Dante as he thought it to be to Virgil: saga and prophecy; and its central theme is the unfolding of God's providence through the instrumentality of Rome'.<sup>644</sup> But Dante's vision of history 'is more balanced and richer than either the doctrinaire imperialist or the

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<sup>643</sup> C.T. Davis, 'Dante's Vision of History', 'Dante's Vision of History', in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays*, (pp. 23-41), p. 27.

<sup>644</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 234

sectarian Franciscans from whom he derives much of his imagery. The vision depends on a harmony between his three visions of Rome: the historical city chosen by God to unify the world; the capital of the Christian Empire; the head of the Christian Church'.<sup>645</sup> Virgil is the prophet and herald of the first of these aspects. Dante endorses Virgil's vision but enriches and completes it by placing it within an apocalyptic context and by acting as advocate of all three aspects of Rome's destiny and as prophet of its resumption of all these roles.

As Mazzotta has noted, for Dante the *Aeneid* has a teleological design, however when Augustine glosses *Aeneid* I's 'imperium sine fine dedit' (*De Civ Dei* II, 29) 'he transposes the imperium from the dimension of the intended eternity of the earthly city to the heavenly city. Rome can be acceptable only as a prefiguration of the Church as to Augustine the history of the earthly Rome is another tragic instance of the eternal corruption of secular life. Dante on the contrary will use the same line of the *Aeneid* to account for the providentiality of the Roman Empire'.<sup>646</sup> In *Convivio* IV, he says:

Onde non da forza fu principalmente preso per la romana gente, ma da divina provedenza, che è sopra ogni ragione. E in ciò s'accorda Virgilio nel primo de lo Eneida, quando dice, in persona di Dio parlando: 'A costoro – cioè a li Romani – né termine di cose né di tempo pongo; a loro ho dato imperio senza fine'. (*Conv.* IV, iv, 11-12)

This is a difference between Augustine's and Dante's readings of the *Aeneid*'s history. Despite their differences, both the neo-platonists and Augustine agree that the story of the *Aeneid* is one of desire, not of the Christian God's providence being worked out through the advancement of the Roman people.<sup>647</sup> With the establishment of Virgil as an unconscious prophet and the Roman Empire being the working out of God's providential plan, Dante is able to appropriate the *Aeneid* in the *Monarchia* as a quasi-scriptural text; the *Aeneid* and the history of the people it described had both been motivated by divine revelation.<sup>648</sup> Davis emphasises the immediacy of Dante's conception of God's providence acting amongst his chosen

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<sup>645</sup> Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, p. 233.

<sup>646</sup> Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p.159.

<sup>647</sup> Mazzotta, *Dante Poet of the Desert*, p. 159.

<sup>648</sup> Davis, 'Dante's Vision of History', p. 27.

people and that the immediacy of this relationship fits into the eschatological aspects of Dante's thought; the idea that a future leader would rescue Christianity from chaos and fulfil the promise of Roman order. Dante's reading of the *Aeneid* means Virgil is an intellectual but also an historical *maestro* he is 'qualified' to make the prophecy of the Veltro, both as historian and as unconscious prophet. God had willed Rome's conquests which were therefore just in themselves but also served the wider purpose of ensuring justice on Earth. In the *Monarchia*, Dante says: 'Propterea satis persuasum est quod romanus populus a natura ordinatus fuit ad imperandum: ergo romanus populus subiciendo sibi orbem de iure ad Imperium venit' (*Mon.* II, vi). His evidence of the divine plan being worked out is once more taken from the *Aeneid* and Anchises' prophecy of Rome's future:

Quod etiam Poeta noster valde subtiliter in sexto tetigit, introducens Anchisem premonentem Eneam Romanorum patrem sic: Excudent alii spirantia mollius era, credo equidem; vivos ducent de marmore vultus, orabunt causas melius, celi que meatus describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent: tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento. Hee tibi erunt artes, paci que imponere morem parcere subiectis et debellare superbos. (*Mon.* II, vi)

In making use of the *Aeneid*'s prophecies of Rome's future greatness to endorse his own political world view where Rome will be great again, Dante accepts the veracity of Virgil as prophet of Rome's divine mission, and at the same moment presents his own completion and recontextualisation of Virgil's words.

I have argued that Dante's prophetic vision is tied to his vision of history and that the way in which this vision is articulated derives from a range of sources, biblical and classical. My discussion of apocalyptic expectation in late Duecento Florence has emphasised the way in which a particular reading of the book of Revelation as an historical text facilitated its deployment in contemporary political and theological disputes. My reading has also emphasised Dante's approach to his intellectual sources, which is at once syncretic and idiosyncratic; in this light I wish to consider a further potential influence of the *Aeneid* on Dante's prophetic historical understanding and manner. It is a fundamental strength of the *Aeneid* that it is not an epic of the life of Augustus, under, and for, whom it was written, but rather an historical epic with ties to the present into the past, which legitimates and contextualises Augustus' rule and presents all of history as building to this point of



universal peace under the authority of Rome. In book IV, of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas and his followers visit the site of the battle of Actium, which took place in 31BC, a few years before the poem was begun. The battle is foregrounded as part of a systematic effort on Virgil's part to conflate the struggles of Aeneas with those of his descendant Augustus. It is in Book IV of the *Aeneid* that Dido is described as being pale with death to come, 'pallida morte futura' (IV, 644), a phrase which recurs in the *ekphrasis* in book VIII, where Aeneas is shown Cleopatra, 'pallentem morte futura' (*Aeneid* VIII, 709). The Carthaginian queen who imperils Aeneas' destiny is recalled in the description of Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen whose defeat at the hands of Augustus had ensured the fulfilment of Rome's destiny to rule the world.

I have noted earlier in this section the quasi-scriptural authority which Dante gives to the *Aeneid*, and to his own work. In the *Convivio* (IV, v) Dante emphasises his belief in the entwined stands of history, with Aeneas's departure from Troy coinciding with the founding of the house of David, and Christ's birth coinciding with the rule of Augustus. While the linkage of Aeneas and Augustus in Virgil clearly has a propagandist role and serves to form a cohesive historical narrative for Rome's destiny, the dual meaning of the *Aeneid*'s principal characters as referring to both ancient and contemporary figures may have suggested more than merely political propaganda to Dante. We have seen how Dante, in all his exilic works, develops typological relationships between historical and modern figures. We may speculate whether Dante in reading the *Aeneid* as fulfilled prophecy, as a history of Rome, and potentially, as a divinely inspired text, saw the same kind of relationships of prefiguration and fulfilment that he saw in the Bible and which formed the basis for the type of exegesis which, as we have seen, allowed scripture to be deployed in contemporary political and theological debates in a far more direct and immediate manner; Dido is a prefiguration of Cleopatra and Aeneas is a prefiguration of Augustus.

Virgil's tragedy lies in part in his partial understanding of Christian truths, and I believe it is possible that, given Dante's view of Virgil as an unconscious prophet of Christ, he was able to read the *Aeneid*'s history like that of the Bible; I suggest that Dante believed that Virgil read Roman history as providential and designed for a single purpose but could not see what the ultimate function of that purpose was. Dante conflates and unites the two strands of human history but he

does so through an act of formal separation of roles; apparent conflicts between the roles of secular and religious institutions are removed; the self-evident unity of purpose is asserted through the act of defining the separateness of their roles as divinely ordained. Such distinctions must be false as the two belong to the same divine plan but only through separation can true cohesion be achieved. In my view both poems in their prophetic practices, and in the related practices of the presentation of historical figures as alluding or prefiguring contemporary ones, are designed to transcend the immediate historical context, and to place all of history in the service of a single all-encompassing vision for the world.

## 5.8 Conclusion

In the previous chapter I noted Benfell's assertion that a fundamental difference between Dante and Olivi was their respective attitudes towards Rome in all its facets, past and present, temporal and spiritual, and typified but not limited to their views on the Donation of Constantine, which point to a larger difference in the ultimate direction of history for each writer. I would suggest that Benfell's use of the word 'ultimate' is problematic; the 'ultimate' direction of history for a medieval Christian writer cannot but be towards the Second Coming and the Last Judgement. It seems to me that it is the 'proximate' direction of history where the fundamental difference lies, although as I have sought to emphasise in my discussion of Dante's political views, the ultimate and the proximate are inextricably linked. But nonetheless, Benfell's assertion is convincing and as Williams has asserted, 'Although the *telos* of the Comedy is identical with the *telos* of human existence as Dante understood it, namely the vision of God, the poem is in an important sense more human than divine'.<sup>649</sup> Williams suggests that the centrality of and focus on the human identity of the souls in the afterlife is indicative of the fact that the *Commedia* is less concerned with abstract goods than human salvation worked out through specific instances. What some of the *Commedia*'s commentators have seen as the tension between earthly and otherworldly concerns in the poem – or, more starkly, between politics and theology – might alternatively be seen as the necessary relation assumed

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<sup>649</sup> A. N. Williams, 'The Theology of the *Comedy*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.201-17 (p. 204).

by its author between behaviour in this life and one's fate in the next.<sup>650</sup>

Viewing the relationship between politics and theology in the way I have outlined means that the use of prophecy with a political dimension, which appears to predict the advent of a temporal leader, is particularly significant; Dante generally affords an extremely high status and range of functions to the Emperor and seems to support his salvation theology with his reading of history. Dante, in his political writing, seems to fluctuate between two extremes, the Aristotelian and the Augustinian. It is enough to think of the famous justification of the universal monarchy taken from *Convivio* IV, iv. At the beginning of this passage Dante's argument is confidently Aristotelian – he even refers directly to 'lo Filosofo' to back up his point that 'l'uomo naturalmente è compagnevole animale' and that happiness and fulfilment can *only* be found in community. But as the passage goes on a more Augustinian note sets in: the 'gloria d'acquistare' which inevitably taints human communities and leads to war and discord in and between human communities exactly parallels Augustine's focus on the role of *cupiditas*: the desire not only for material goods, but for power and domination over others that is the consequence of our fallen human condition.

However, where Augustine draws a clear distinction between the City of Man and the City of God and tends to feel that the corruption of the world is inevitable and that no state of true justice is attainable on Earth,<sup>651</sup> Dante tends to feel that correct temporal leadership can ensure peace and thus allow a state of Justice in which man may achieve one of his two divinely appointed ends, the beatitude of this life.<sup>652</sup> This view also distances Dante from Aquinas, who does not view happiness in this life as an end in itself; ideas of a separate and final earthly happiness are expressly denied by Thomas in *Summa Theologica* (I a, I I ae, Q.3, art.5). For Thomas, the essential organizing principle is hierarchy: earthly happiness is a hazy prefiguration of blessedness accorded to man by revelation. For Thomas all humanity proceeds towards redemption; for Dante men were created men and must have some specific function as such: for him this is the actualisation of the potential intellect. It was this position which led to the charge of Averroism against Dante.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> Williams, 'The Theology of the *Comedy*', p. 204.

<sup>651</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, IV, 4.

<sup>652</sup> *Monarchia*, I, iii.

<sup>653</sup> Williamson, 'De beatitudine huius vite', p. 154.

In fact Dante's position is orthodox in the sense that he agrees that each man possesses a possible intellect but extends beyond it applying the doctrine of plenitude to individuals, where the Church applied it as a cause of differentiation between species; the originality in Dante's thought lies in the formulation of a universal temporal *res publica* which extends indifferently over Christians and Pagans.<sup>654</sup>

The idea that man has two divinely appointed ends to his existence radically increases the importance we must attach to the true, *ante eventum*, prophecies of the *Commedia* if we are to interpret them in a primarily political vein; it may also begin to explain the apocalyptic and messianic tone of the final cantos of the *Purgatorio*. Not to heed the prophecies of the *Commedia* is not merely to risk unhappiness and discord in the political sphere, it is an active decision to work against God and against his providential plan for mankind's happiness, a happiness that is available to all humans, here and now, if only the twin authorities, Church and state, performed their roles correctly and adhered to their divinely mandated remits. The prophecies of the *Commedia* together with the overall message of the *Monarchia* make clear that a dysfunctional Empire is likely to result in a dysfunctional Church, and vice versa: a view which gives the Empire an indirect, but fundamental, role in man's eternal happiness in addition to its direct responsibility for his temporal fulfilment. It is, perhaps, in these lines of thought about the exalted function of the Empire that Dante's principal originality as a political thinker lies. The key difference between Dante's conception of the political function of Empire and that of contemporary political theorists such as Remigio de'Girolami, is Dante's view, entirely absent from the others, that 'temporal life is independent because it is directed to an end which is dialectically as final as the eternal end'.<sup>655</sup> Williamson asks, given that such a view is lacking in dualist theologians of the time, does it appear in the more extreme arguments for imperial autonomy (or even superiority) put forward by civil lawyers? Williamson admits that the available evidence is vast but admits that he has found no trace of such documents.<sup>656</sup> This being the case we may, in Dante's conception of the ideal Emperor as both a leader of man towards earthly beatitude and a device for the

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<sup>654</sup> Williamson, 'De beatitudine huius vite', p. 155.

<sup>655</sup> Williamson, 'De beatitudine huius vite', p. 151.

<sup>656</sup> Williamson, 'De beatitudine huius vite', p. 152.

regulation of the corruption and greed in the Church (both of which are assured by the Emperor, existing beyond cupidity, ensuring conditions of the peace which leads to justice), be dealing with an unprecedented advocacy of a position which attaches extreme importance to the role of Empire and a positive view about what man can achieve. I have sought to show in my treatment of Dante's Roman exceptionalism that there is a strong case to be made that Dante's prophecies of apocalypse and prophecies of renewal, in the Earthly Paradise and elsewhere in the *Commedia*, are in fact one and the same, or at least faces of the same coin. Dante's position in the *Commedia* seems to accept the current need for God's assistance in this life, while it emphatically continues to refute any suggestion of an attendant need for Church participation in temporal affairs which remain the province of the Empire. This state of affairs is one which is necessary to restore the correct order of the world's institutions to something akin to those at the time of Christ's birth and to begin to allow history to move towards its conclusion.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### 6.1 Restatement of Interpretative Assumptions.

This thesis began by considering how the dating and chronology of Dante's works bear upon interpretation of its political message and thus on its prophecies. Working on the assumption that the *Monarchia* is contemporary with the *Paradiso* and that both were composed following the death of Henry VII, I suggested that we should accept that the *Commedia*, the *Monarchia* and the political letters are consistent in what they advocate in terms of practical politics and that in all these works we can see Dante adopting the prophetic voice and assuming a prophetic identity in the service of concerns which are at once theological and socio-political. I noted that even if we accept that there is consistency across the works in terms of what is being advocated (and thus prophesied) it is more difficult to say that there is consistency across the works in terms of what is hoped for, but the fundamentals of Dante's political position if not his aspiration do not alter: a repauperised Church and a restored Empire in a role which is at once restraining and enabling will ensure the universal peace in which true justice can prevail. Dante's view of history as providential is central to this: human happiness both in this life and the next is made available in and through historical processes and divinely ordained institutions; I argue that this does not alter even when the focus of Dante's optimism, and perhaps of his prophecies, fails. Chapter 2 highlighted the breadth of intellectual interest and activities in late Duecento Florence and sought to emphasise the importance of the mendicant orders in articulating interrelated key strands of thought which find their place in Dante's world view: the ideal of church poverty; apocalyptic expectation and prophecy; the imperial ideal; and the utilisation of Aristotle in discourses regarding the nature and function of human society.

#### 6.2 'Graced Dualism' and 'Imperial Messianism'

In the *Commedia* at least, it appears that mankind can no longer regain the quasi - Edenic state suggested in the *Monarchia* without divine assistance. Chapter 5

suggested various solutions to the impasse this creates in reconciling the two works, and I argue that we may be dealing with a position I have termed ‘graced dualism’: a belief in the earthly institutions as separate, a rejection of any temporal power for the papacy, but, now, a belief that this ideal state of affairs cannot be achieved without divine assistance.

I suggest that this divine assistance to all mankind comes through Dante himself as prophet, but also will come when the prophecies are fulfilled. The rhetoric for an imperial ‘*messo di dio*’ existed in the prophetic language of both imperial and anti-imperial propaganda notably in the apocalyptic messianic adulation and condemnation which surrounded the rule of Frederick II and his heirs. As we have seen, while the Joachite avenging emperor is defiant towards God and the Church and yet the servant of God who will purge the Church of its corruption, the Last World Emperor by contrast is a noble, God-fearing figure who rescues the Church in its hour of need; Dante seems to combine elements of both prophetic traditions in his own predictions. The Emperor will come, but the need for the Empire will not disappear as a result; Church and Empire will work together and maintain their own roles in the future. This position serves to distance Dante politically from many of his putative sources; even where his language echoes the messianic and apocalyptic tone of the Spiritual Franciscans, his political concerns, principally his imperial aspirations, are remote from those of his sources.

### 6.3 Use of Prophecy

The authority which Dante, as prophet, assumes allows him to appropriate, critique, and ultimately transcend, his intellectual forbears. The *ecstasis*, which constitutes the fiction of the *Commedia* and the position of the authorial voice, is a standing beyond common understanding, which is one definition of what it means to be a prophet. Dante is syncretic in his prophetic practices, fusing classical and biblical in support of a political ideal which is based on the correct relationship between the political and the clerical. This is a relationship which for Dante is corrupt in the contemporary world, but whose correct ordering is self-evident in the history of human society. Dante’s gift as a prophet is only in small part to be able to see the future and then only as shadowy truths; his gift is, rather, the insight given to him to

be able to read all of human history, secular and imperial, as a single divinely ordained continuum which his poetry, itself part of the gift of prophecy, now communicates to the world.

Prophecy is fundamental to Dante's purposes in communicating the key messages of the *Commedia*: his aspirations for the future and his analysis of the past and present; it allows him to analyse the future in terms of a set of beliefs about society which are founded in a belief in a providential history which plays out in the political life of man. I have shown in this thesis that just as Dante's central message in the *Commedia* fuses the theological and the political, so too the prophecies of the *Commedia* represent a fusion of numerous and diverse intellectual sources, biblical and classical, contemporary and ancient, without ever wholly advocating the interests of any one group. I suggest that this occurs most prominently in the way in which Dante appears to admire Franciscan poverty as a model for the Church, although there is no hint, in our poet, of the idea, which is central to the Franciscans' own beliefs, that the Franciscans have a role to play in the working-out of God's providence in history.

#### 6.4 Rome

The prophecies of the *Commedia* together with the overall message of the *Monarchia* make clear that a dysfunctional Empire is likely to result in a dysfunctional Church, and vice versa: a view which gives the Empire an indirect, but fundamental, role in man's eternal happiness in addition to direct responsibility for his temporal fulfilment. For some, the Emperor was an Antichrist or a scourge of the Church; with an evil or at best ambiguous role in the apocalyptic drama. Only in Dante is he a messiah, who through his rule will ensure the happiness of mankind. I would argue that the specifically political and earthly aspects of the Emperor's role never cease to be at the forefront of Dante's mind even in the highest circles of Paradise. It is, perhaps, in these lines of thought about the exalted function of the Empire that Dante's principal originality as a political thinker lies.

Dante's views on how his ideals might be realised are articulated in concert with prophecies of their advent; I have sought to show in my treatment of what I have termed Dante's 'Roman exceptionalism' that there is a strong case to be made



that the prophecies of apocalypse and prophecies of renewal, in the Earthly Paradise and elsewhere in the *Commedia*, are in fact one and the same, or at least faces of the same coin. I have highlighted in particular the suggestion that Dante was convinced that both man's earthly happiness and his eternal salvation were rendered more or less likely not merely by the choices he made in life but also by the prevailing historical situation which, at that time, threatened the ultimate salvation of every Christian. In linking this state of affairs with the thoughts of Joachim, Dante found and was able to construct the idea of an eschatological-apocalyptic historical transition, whereby the contemporary scene, the corruption of the church and the impotence of the Roman Empire, were cast within an apocalyptic framework.

Where Virgil narrates the story of Aeneas, Dante narrates the story of his own journey, the function of which is to provide him with a role which is at once that of Virgil and of Aeneas. He makes his own text the Bible of Empire and his own role the bearer of the news of renewal and a refoundation of the world order which will complete the works of Aeneas and of Virgil. The *Commedia* is a work which at once owes a great debt to the *Aeneid*, seeks to imitate it, to complete it, but ultimately to transcend it, by virtue of being written in the light of Christian revelation and simply at a later point in the single narrative of human history, wherein the Roman is not diminished or rendered irrelevant by the Christian but is completed by it and naturally unified with it and should now serve as its protector.

The Roman and the Jewish people were the two chosen by God to prepare the world for the advent of Christ; Dante's unification of Roman and Judaeo-Christian prophecy seems to me to represent a logical register in which discourses on political society placed within an apocalyptic framework should be articulated; a dream of convergence of the two key strands of human history needs must be articulated in a language which performs a similar convergence. Dante sees how the Roman and the Jewish came together for the Incarnation and utilises the two strands of prophecy belonging to the two strands of history: he is Jeremiah and Isaiah, he is Paul, he is Virgil and Aeneas, but now he is able, given his position in history and his status as a prophet 'messo di dio', to understand these prophecies in the wider context of a single predestined history for mankind. But Dante of course does not merely understand these prophets: he appropriates their words and their authority and in so doing establishes himself as their successor: a prophet of the end of days perhaps,

but one for whom the political, in its broadest sense of the correct ordering of human society, remains central. The Roman and the Judaeo-Christian must now work together; Dante's reading of history suggests that only with such unity will souls be saved as history moves towards its conclusion. While it is clear from the *Convivio* that Dante does not feel that the conditions which pertained at the birth of Christ can ever be regained, this is the paradigmatic situation which man must strive to achieve.

This thesis does not make Chapter 4 on Dante and contemporary apocalyptic expectation its principal focus, nor does it make Chapter 5 on Dante and Roman prophecy its ultimate point of concern, because I believe that Dante's appropriation of, and deeply held belief in, both traditions allows him to see a unified universal world view, and permits him, perhaps as the subject matter of the work dictates, a syncretic approach which makes him a unique poet with a unique vision which sees the order of the universe wholesale; sees the proper relationship of the parts to the whole; and sees how man's behaviour should imitate and form part of the divinely ordained structure of the universe.

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