Nick Havely examines the connections between Dante, the Franciscans and the Papacy as they appear in the Commedia, and presents the poem as one concerned with an often dramatic confrontation between authority and idealism in the Church. Havely draws on a wide range of literary, historical and art-historical sources relating to the controversy about Franciscan poverty during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. He argues that the Spiritual Franciscans' strict interpretation of evangelical poverty provided the poet with a means of addressing the state of the contemporary Papacy and of imagining the renewal of the Church. He also explores the origins and afterlife of the debate about this form of poverty and Dante’s contribution to it. This study will appeal to scholars interested in medieval religious and intellectual history, as well as to readers of Dante’s poem and other medieval visionary and political writing.

**Nick Havely** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. He is the translator of Chaucer’s Boccacio (1980, 1992); editor of The House of Fame (1994), Chaucer’s Dream Poetry (1997) and Dante’s Modern Afterlife (1998); and author of numerous articles on Italian and English medieval literature, including the chapter on ‘Literature in Italian, French and English’ in volume VI of The New Cambridge Medieval History (2000).
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Dante and Virgil (left) confront Guido da Montefeltro as Franciscan in the flames (centre), with Pope Boniface VIII enthroned (right).
DANTE AND THE FRANCISCANS
Poverty and the Papacy in the ‘Commedia’

NICK HAVELY
'... nulla pastorali auctoritate abutens, quoniam divitia mecum non sunt'.

Dante, Ep. 11.5

'Bakker has... contended that his years in prison were his salvation. He re-read all the scriptures and crucially concluded that the so-called “prosperity preaching” of his Praise The Lord days – wherein he equated dollar-wealth with godliness – was misguided. [. . .] And donations, believe it or not, are rolling in.’

_The Independent on Sunday, 15 June 2003_
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Dante and Virgil confront Guido da Montefeltro as Franciscan in flames, with Pope Boniface VIII enthroned. From Madrid, BN MS 10057, 51r (Italian, middle of the fifteenth century), illustrating Inferno 27 (by permission of the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte).

frontispiece

1: St Francis and the devil in dispute over the soul of Guido da Montefeltro; Boniface VIII absolves Guido. From Florence, Riccardiana MS 1005, 8tr (Bolognese, second quarter of the fourteenth century), illustrating Inferno 27 (by permission of the Direzione, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence).

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2: St Francis listening to the Gospel and removing his shoes. From the scenes of the Life of St Francis in the Bardi Dossal, Santa Croce, Florence (mid to late thirteenth century; by permission of the Prefettura di Firenze).

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3: The Stigmatization at La Verna, from the panel of scenes from the Life of St Francis in the Church of San Francesco, Pescia (dated 1235 and signed by Bonaventura Berlinghieri; by permission of the Ordine Francescano, Pescia).

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4: St Francis before Innocent III and the Sultan, with the Stigmatization. From Florence, BN, MS Banco Rari 39, 351v (Lombard, c. 1400), illustrating Paradiso 11 (by permission of the Direzione, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence).

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5: St Francis renouncing worldly goods. From Florence, BN, MS Banco Rari 39, 349r (Lombard, c. 1400), illustrating Paradiso 11 (by permission of the Direzione, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence).
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Note on citations, translations and manuscript sources

Quotations from the Commedia follow the text established by G. Petrocchi in ‘La Commedia: secondo l’antica vulgata’ (3 vols., Milan, 1966–7), and those from Dante’s other works follow the editions mentioned in the Notes and Bibliography. The Vulgate Bible is cited from the Biblia Vulgata, ed. A. Colunga and L. Turrado (4th edn, Madrid, 1965), and the translations are from The New Jerusalem Bible (Standard Edition), general editor H. Wansbrough (London, 1985). All other translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

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Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1222.2
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88
Abbreviations

AFH Archivum Franciscanum Historicum (Quaracchi).
ALKG Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters, ed. H. Denifle and F. Ehrle (7 vols.) (Berlin, 1885–1900).
1 Celano Thomas of Celano, Vita prima.
2 Celano Thomas of Celano, Vita secunda.
Conv. Dante, Convivio.
DDjb Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch.
DS Dante Studies.
DVE Dante, De vulgari eloquentia.
Ep. Dante, Epistolae.
Abbreviations

FF  Fonti francescane: Scritti e biografie di san Francesco d’Assisi; Cronache e altre testimonianze del primo secolo francescano; Scritti e biografie di santa Chiara d’Assisi, ed. E. Caroli (Padua, 1990).

GDLI Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, ed. S. Battaglia (19 vols. [continuing], Turin, 1961–). 

GSLI Giornale storico della letteratura italiana.

Habig St Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: An English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St Francis, ed. M. A. Habig (Chicago, 1973).

Inf. Dante, Inferno.

JEH Journal of Ecclesiastical History.

Mon. Dante, Monarchia.

Par. Dante, Paradiso.


Purg. Dante, Purgatorio.

SCH Studies in Church History.