

DANTE'S CHRISTIAN ETHICS

This book is a major reappraisal of the *Commedia* as originally envisaged by Dante: as a work of ethics. Privileging the ethical, Corbett increases our appreciation of Dante's eschatological innovations and literary genius. Drawing upon a wider range of moral contexts than in previous studies, this book presents an overarching account of the complex ordering and political programme of Dante's afterlife. Balancing close readings with a lucid overview of Dante's *Commedia* as an ethical and political manifesto, Corbett cogently approaches the poem through its moral structure. The book provides detailed interpretations of three particularly significant vices – pride, sloth, and avarice – and the three terraces of Purgatory devoted to them. While scholars often register Dante's explicit confession of pride, this volume uncovers Dante's implicit confession of sloth and prodigality (the opposing sub-vice of avarice) through Statius, his moral cypher.

GEORGE CORBETT is Senior Lecturer in Theology and the Arts at the School of Divinity, University of St Andrews. Prior to this, he was Junior Research Fellow of Trinity College, and Affiliated Lecturer in Italian at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (2013), editor of *Annunciations: Sacred Music for the Twenty-First Century* (2019), and co-editor, with Heather Webb, of *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'* (2015–17).

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

*Founding Editor*Alastair Minnis, *Yale University**General Editor*Daniel Wakelin, *University of Oxford**Editorial Board*Anthony Bale, *Birkbeck, University of London*Zygmunt G. Barański, *University of Cambridge*Christopher C. Baswell, *Barnard College and Columbia University*Mary Carruthers, *New York University*Rita Copeland, *University of Pennsylvania*Roberta Frank, *Yale University*Alastair Minnis, *Yale University*Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Fordham University*

This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars, and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period c.1100–1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose, and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

*Recent titles in the series*Irina Dumitrescu *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*Jonas Wellendorf *Gods and Humans in Medieval Scandinavia: Retying the Bonds*Thomas A. Prendergast and Jessica Rosenfeld (eds.) *Chaucer and the Subversion of Form*Katie L. Walter *Middle English Mouths: Late Medieval Medical, Religious and Literary Traditions*Lawrence Warner *Chaucer's Scribes: London Textual Production, 1384–1432*Glenn D. Burger and Holly A. Crocker (eds.) *Medieval Affect, Feeling, and Emotion*Robert J. Meyer-Lee *Literary Value and Social Identity in the Canterbury Tales*Andrew Kraebel *Biblical Commentary and Translation in Later Medieval England: Experiments in Interpretation*

A complete list of titles in the series can be found at the end of the volume.

DANTE'S CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Purgatory and Its Moral Contexts

GEORGE CORBETT

University of St Andrews



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-48941-6 — Dante's Christian Ethics
 George Corbett
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108489416

DOI: 10.1017/9781108776875

© George Corbett 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Corbett, George, author.

TITLE: Dante's Christian ethics : Purgatory and its moral contexts / George Corbett.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Series: Cambridge studies in medieval literature | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019038190 (print) | LCCN 2019038191 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108489416 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108702447 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108776875 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321. Purgatorio. | Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321—Criticism and interpretation. | Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321—Ethics. | Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321—Religion. | Christian ethics in literature. | Deadly sins in literature.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PQ4447 .C58 2020 (print) | LCC PQ4447 (ebook) | DDC 851/.1—dc23
 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019038190>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019038191>

ISBN 978-1-108-48941-6 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Editions Followed and Abbreviations</i>	viii
Introduction	I
PART I ETHICAL AND POLITICAL MANIFESTO	I 3
1 Dante's Ethical Agenda: Vital Nourishment	15
2 Dante's Political Polemic: Church and Empire	45
PART II REFRAMING DANTE'S CHRISTIAN ETHICS	65
3 Dante's Theological Purgatory: Earthly Happiness and Eternal Beatitude	67
4 Two Traditions of Christian Ethics: Aquinas and Peraldus	86
PART III PENANCE AND DANTE'S PURGATORY	105
5 The Terrace of Pride, and the Poet As Preacher	107
6 The Terrace of Sloth, and the Sin of Scholars	133
7 The Terrace of Avarice, and the Love of Children	166
Conclusion	204
<i>Bibliography</i>	215
<i>Index</i>	229

Acknowledgements

This book grew out of my research at Trinity College, University of Cambridge, and at St Mary's College, University of St Andrews. I am deeply grateful to both these institutions for their intellectual and financial support.

I have been fortunate to present papers and lectures on my ongoing research at Trinity College, Dublin; University of Göttingen; University of Notre Dame; University of Bristol; Warburg Institute, London; St John's Seminary, Womersley; University of Cambridge; University College Cork; and the Institute for Theology, Imagination, and the Arts (ITIA), University of St Andrews. I am grateful for the questions, encouragements, and discussions with many scholars that emerged through those fora. An earlier and shorter version of Chapter 1 was published as 'Moral Structure', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante's 'Commedia'*, edited by Zygmunt G. Barański and Simon Gilson (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 61–78. Earlier versions of material included in Chapters 3–5 were previously published in the journals *Medium Ævum* (2014), *The Thomist* (2015), and *Le tre corone* (2017). I am grateful to the editors both for their readers' comments and for permission to reprint material here.

Many other scholars and colleagues have supported me in numerous ways in researching and writing this book. I am deeply grateful to you all and I regret that, in these brief acknowledgements, I can thank only some of you by name: Zygmunt G. Barański, Theodore J. Cachey Jr., Edward Coleman, Mark Elliott, George Ferzoco, Roy Flechner, Simon Gilson, Robert Gordon, Jon P. Hesk, Claire Honness, Gavin Hopps, Margaret Anne Hutton, William P. Hyland, Tristan Kay, Robin Kirkpatrick, Rebekah Lamb, Anne Leone, John Marenbon, Franziska Meier, Christian Moevs, Vittorio Montemaggi, Daragh O'Connell, Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja, Richard M. Pollard, Matthew Treherne, Sr Valery Walker, Heather Webb, Michael Wilkinson, and Judith Wolfe. More specifically, I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of the book

Acknowledgements

vii

manuscript, as well as Daniel Wakelin, general editor of the Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature series, for their comments and suggestions. I am grateful to Linda Bree, who took an initial interest in this book, and I have been particularly fortunate in having Emily Hockley, as commissioning editor, to guide me expertly through the publication process. I would like to thank Ishwarya Mathavan as project manager, Jill Hopps as copy editor, Giuseppe Pezzini for amending some of my Latin translations, and my father Patrick Corbett for picking up some further errors in the proofs. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Elizabeth, *sine qua non*, to whom this book is dedicated.

Editions Followed and Abbreviations

A. Dante

Unless otherwise stated, the editions of Dante's works may be found in *Le Opere di Dante*, edited by F. Brambilla Ageno, G. Contini, D. De Robertis, G. Gorni, F. Mazzoni, R. Migliorini Fissi, P. V. Mengaldo, G. Petrocchi, E. Pistelli, and P. Shaw, and revised by D. De Robertis and G. Breschi (Florence: Polistampa, 2012).

A.1 Vernacular Works

Inf. *Inferno*
Purg. *Purgatorio*
Par. *Paradiso*
Conv. *Convivio*
VN *Vita nova*

A.2 Latin Works

DVE *De vulgari eloquentia*
Mon. *Monarchia*
Epist. *Epistole*
Ecl. *Eclogae*

B. English Translations

Unless otherwise stated, the translations are adapted from the following readily available and literally translated English editions.

B.1 Vernacular Works

- Convivio: A Dual-Language Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. by Andrew Frisardi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
Dante's Lyric Poetry, trans. by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling; introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996–2011).
La Vita Nuova, trans. by Mark Musa (Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1962).

B.2 Latin Works

- Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio*, trans. by Philip H. Wicksteed and Edmund G. Gardner (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970).
De vulgari eloquentia, ed. and trans. by Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
The Letters of Dante, trans. by Paget J. Toynbee, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); for the political epistles, however, *Dante Alighieri: Four Political Letters*, trans. by Claire Honess (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2007).
Monarchy, ed. and trans. by Prue Shaw. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

In most instances, the translation [in square brackets] follows the original passage. Where the sense of the original passage is clear from the main text, the original passage (in parentheses) follows the paraphrase. Discussion is always with regard to the passage in the original.

C. Commentaries

The following commentaries on the *Commedia* are cited according to the *Dartmouth Dante Project* <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/> (accessed 28 June 2018):

- Jacopo Alighieri (1322)
 Graziolo Bambaglioli (1324)

- Jacopo della Lana (1324–28)
 Guido da Pisa (1327–28)
 L'Ottimo Commento (1333)
 Anonimo Selmiano (c. 1337)
 Pietro Alighieri [1] (1340–42)
 Pietro Alighieri [2] (1344–55)
 Pietro Alighieri [3] (1359–64)
 Codice cassinese (1460–75)
 Choise ambrosiane (1355)
 Guglielmo Maramauro (1369–73)
 Giovanni Boccaccio (1373–75)
 Benvenuto da Imola (1375–80)
 Francesco da Buti (1385–95)
 Johannis de Serravalle (1416–17)
 Alessandro Vellutello (1544)
 Lodovico Castelvetro (1570)
 Gabriele Rossetti (1826–27)
 Giacomo Poletto (1894)
 Ernesto Trucchi (1936)
 Natalino Sapegno (1955–57)
 Giovanni Fallani (1965)
 Giuseppe Giacalone (1968)
 Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (1979)
 Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi (1991–97)
 Robert Hollander (2000–7)
 Nicola Fosca (2003–15)

The citation style used is: 'name', gloss to *cantica*, 'canto', 'line' (e.g., 'Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* XI, 76–90').