Mastrobuono, Antonio. *Dante's Journey of Sanctification*. Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1990. Pp. xiii, 279.

The publication of this book marks a milestone in North American Dante studies. Its long first chapter on sanctifying grace (129 pp.) is a heavily documented and closely reasoned dismantling of Charles Singleton's view of the course and divisions of the *Divine Comedy* (from the famous *Dante Studies II: Journey to Beatrice*). After two shorter chapters on particular points of exegesis in the poem, the book closes with an "appendix" of chapter length (67 pp.) that refutes thesis after thesis from the studies of John Freccero (now collected as *Dante: the Poetics of Conversion*), some of them elaborations of the errors made by Singleton, others repeated in turn by the next generation (Giuseppe Mazzotta is cited on pp. 233 and 267). Mastrobuono does not reject the theological approach to Dante that Singleton and his followers promoted nor does he hesitate to read the Comedy himself with the "four senses" of the theologians. His point is rather that no sound perception of the hermeneutic framework of Dante's poem will be possible unless we first get our theology straight.

On that score, the chief difficulty is Singleton's notion of a reformation of nature by its own powers that occupies the first two divisions of the pilgrim's journey and prepares him for the reception of sanctifying grace with the coming of Beatrice. The "human justice" thereby acquired is a figment of the critic's imagination. The primitive integrity of our first parents has been irrevocably lost since the Fall, and in the New Covenant, grace is the only way to the restoration of nature. Mastrobuono's case is built on a detailed analysis of the treatise on grace in the *Prima Secundae* of Aquinas (and its echoes in Dante's text), appropriate both because Thomas taught nothing unusual in this area and because Singleton supported his own construct with citations of that same treatise: texts out of context, unrelated fragments juxtaposed, and sometimes the wrong side of the argumentation, as Mastrobuono demonstrates.

In essence, the sanctification of the soul is not a process in which a plurality of "conversions" occur. Justification takes place in an instant when the soul accepts the operating grace of God; the only process is the fulfillment of that conversion, so to speak, which is the work of acquiring merit (in the state of grace) under the cooperating grace of God. Human nature is not related to grace as matter to form (like body and soul), but as a complete substance to an acquired attribute. Thus Singleton badly mistook the relevance of the account of human genesis given by Statius; it has no special bearing on the pilgrim's course, but is a generic description of the origin of any human being, so framed as to explain the manifestation of souls after death. The results are false analogies and a perpetual reversal of the orders of grace and nature, most obvious when Singleton labels as supernatural the infusion of the rational soul, which everyone else would recognize as an act of creation in the natural order. Conversely, the whole area of Virgil's guidance through the first two parts of the journey is an effect of grace, not human nature rising from sin by its own ability as Singleton would have it. Mastrobuono finds that Singleton attributes to Virgil powers that are really divine, an overestimation of the classic poet's

role that recent scholarship on Virgil's limitations would also tend to correct. From the start, the Roman poet is a willing if imperfect instrument of grace, who first appears to rescue the pilgrim, we are told, by a special divine dispensation.

Cause and effect are continually reversed as well in Singleton's construct. The pilgrim's liberation from vice (the habits of sin), signified by the erasure of P's from his forehead, is not a preparation for the reception of sanctifying grace, but an effect of that grace working itself out in penance and meritorious deeds. As a fact, every other soul who ascends the mountain through those stages is already in the state of grace. Mastrobuono finds evidence throughout the first two canticles for describing the pilgrim in this way, but his most brilliant textual work is on the dialogue between Virgil and Dante in *Inferno* 2, where all the emotional and spiritual effects of conversion that were listed by St. Thomas can be found in the poet's description of his own experience. The pilgrim received sanctifying grace on answering humbly but freely the divine call to the difficult journey brought to him by Virgil as messenger. The two sides of justification cannot be separated and made to succeed each other in time. The reformation of nature that liberates us from guilt and subjects our lower powers to reason and will is impossible without the elevation of the soul to participate in the life divine, the higher powers subjected to God. And the whole is the work of God.

There are several distinct tendencies in Freccero's work that Mastrobuono criticizes, some of them inherited from Singleton. Ignoring the references to faith and hope in *Inferno* 1, for example, and diagnosing the pilgrim's intellectual pride instead, may be influenced by Singleton's notion that none of the theological virtues can be had without the sanctifying grace that comes from Beatrice, whereas Aquinas taught explicitly that faith and hope could be possessed without grace and therefore apart from charity. Freccero also adopts the thesis that grace can somehow touch separately the intellect and the will, rather than informing the whole soul (its essence as against its powers). That, together with a confusion of will and the appetites, vitiates his interpretations both of "the firm foot" (which in any case ignores the meaning Dante gives that metaphor in *Purgatorio* 18) and of the three beasts. Mastrobuono also attacks Freccero's proposal of an Augustinian model for Dante's conversion, as from death to life or between opposites. A rather partisan Thomism prevents him from seeing how that model might apply to his own views, but at least he raises the legitimate question how much of Augustine's influence one might find in Dante when the poet relegates that Saint to an obscure position in Paradise, and shows that Freccero's combination of the Augustinian model with Singleton's notion of justification as a process makes it necessary for him to postulate repeated conversions, as at the end of *Inferno*, when the pilgrim and his guide literally turn around. This arbitrary procedure has no warrant in the text and could lead to absurdities.

Mastrobuono is merciless with detail on the logical problems he finds abounding in Freccero's work. In Lucy's early speech, the wolf is not the river, as Freccero argued, but death, as the biblical sources of Dante's lines about the beast make clear. Passages from St. Paul and St. Gregory are made to fit Singleton's first phase of justification, whereas clearly both authors were talking about the tensions of life in the state of grace. Christology is hardly relevant either to Manfred, who is outside the pale in Ante-Purgatory, or to Ugolino's children, who mean only literally what they say. The "neutral angels" are no more "neutral" than the slothful, since it is strictly impossible to will nothing; they must choose themselves and a sin of omission is still a sin. The contradictions are at their worst when Freccero broaches questions about the relation of language to reality in his later studies. Thus *terza rima*, which starts out as a formal structure giving

the narrative coherence in the way that the Word unifies history, ends up as a kind of substance conferring meaning on the poetry, and theological analogates are reversed, so that transcendent reality becomes a projection of Dante's beliefs. This is a way of accommodating Dante to contemporary skepticism that would require us to reject the poet's own aesthetics and that of his age (which Mastrobuono lays out in detail). Similarly, on the last lines of the *Paradiso*, besides inserting a kind of Platonic-pantheist merger with the entire universe in the place of St. Bernard's mystical union with God, Freccero concludes that the language has only itself as referent, whereas Dante clearly meant to refer to the most Real of realities, his poetry self-conscious because of the supreme difficulty of that enterprise.

Mastrobuono's two exegetical studies are of unequal quality. Chapter 2 attempts to demonstrate that the second day in Purgatory answers to Easter Sunday, rather than the first as is usually maintained. The premise is good: that Purgatory has its own temporal standards beyond the calendar time of our hemisphere (the only calendar time there is), but it is not consistently applied. It is not clear why Ps. 109, the first psalm of Sunday Vespers, should illuminate the order and content of the sculptures on the cornice of pride (the physical reality of which the author curiously denies). They are in fact seen around noon (midnight in Jerusalem), and the fifth psalm of Sunday Vespers (Ps. 113) has already been sung near the start of the canticle by souls arriving from Italy's evening. The stairway to Purgatory's gate certainly symbolizes the sacrament of Penance, but that sacrament is not nearly as closely connected with Easter as is Baptism, which is re-enacted at the end of the first canto. Mastrobuono's case that the *Te Deum* sung when Dante mounts those stairs was a hymn reserved for Easter Sunday is not convincing, but even weaker is his implicit assumption that the singing is a special incident of the pilgrim's journey. We should rather presume that it accompanies the ascent of any soul at that point, as the *Gloria in excelsis* sung when Statius completes his penance is probably sung for any soul's liberation. Echoes of Easter and Christmas are bound to permeate Purgatory, and most of the visual and auditory features of that world are presented as its regular furniture, perceived, sometimes even produced by any and all who pass by one particular place. Thus the liturgical play which is such a wonder for the poet in the Valley of the Princes does not prevent Malaspina from staring at the pilgrim instead, whose presence among those shades while alive is more of a wonder at the moment than the Compline drama that they all awaited, we are told, as something familiar.

The author has revised the calendar of the journey through Purgatory in an effort to find a period of "suspension" that would correspond to the empty ecclesiastical time of waiting between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, the Holy Saturday vigil commemorating the absence of the Redeemer. Rather than locate that in the empty waiting of the souls in Ante-Purgatory, however, it might be better to find the correspondence where the narrative itself is suspended, because pilgrim and guide meet no-one and therefore nothing happens but a long climb from the center of the earth to the shore of the southern Mountain. Without confrontations or conversations, that ascent no doubt takes less time than the descent, but it would still occupy the better part of a day and night (or night and day on this side of the earth). Mastrobuono's chronology requires the implausible corollary that the climb was done in an instant, by some miracle that is never mentioned.

Chapter 3 questions tradition with more success. The author shows that the translation of Beatrice's enigmatic prophecy into Roman numerals (DXV) that then lend themselves to alphabetic and verbal manipulation is only a creation of the early commenta-

tors, repeated now for centuries, but with no foundation in the text of the poem. Beatrice in fact describes her intent in ways that would tell us to seek for visual imagery instead, some shape or geometric form. Dante's use of an Aristotelian simile for vision leads Mastrobuono into a complete treatise on scholastic theories of perception and intellectual conception. Together with a canvass of numerical references and visual forms from the Easter Liturgy, that enables him to perform a suggestive experiment at drawing with Beatrice's numbers that both jibes with one of the shapes mentioned in the context (the pilgrim's staff) and produces the figure of Christ in His Second Coming as the solution of the enigma, supported by other hints that Beatrice gives.

Although these two exegetical studies in Chapters 2 and 3 are interesting and provocative, it is the first and fourth parts of the book that should have the most far-reaching effects. In a curious way, they actually call for a return to tradition. It is something of a scandal, as the author well recognizes, to expose the extent to which perhaps the leading stream of American Dante scholarship has been plagued with deviations into personal mythologies created by the critical imagination wandering after a favourite but irrelevant thesis from ancient or modern philosophy or a nostalgia for the Garden of Eden. The discussions of Singleton and Freccero do not make very easy reading, not only because they are polemical, but also because Mastrobuono insists on the conceptual precision characteristic of scholastic theology. But that very discipline occupied a fundamental place in Dante's intellectual background. To take it seriously and to carry out the hard work of rectifying so many misconceptions would bring American Dante scholarship yet farther along the way to easy communication and fruitful collaboration with its European colleagues.

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Marcello Ciccuto. *Figure di Petrarca. Giotto, Simone Martini, Franco Bolognese*. Napoli: Federico & Ardia, 1991 (Dal certo al vero. Biblioteca di filologia, letteratura e filosofia 4). Pp. 152.

Ciccuto's book is an invitation to meditate upon at least two things: firstly, on Petrarch's relationship with the figurative arts; secondly, on how to write a scholarly book. While the first invitation is consciously offered by Ciccuto, the second one is consciously imposed by the reviewer. I would like to focus upon the latter invitation first.

What immediately catches the reader's attention is that there is as much typographic space dedicated to the footnotes as there is to the body of the text. If one were to give a cursory glance to some scholarly work produced in Italy, it would become clear that such a typographic ratio is not without precedent. One could surmise that the great magnitude of space allotted to footnotes reflects the spirit of the series which published Ciccuto's book: "Dal certo al vero". This Vichian title clearly underscores the fact that the relative validity of our interpretation depends on the certitude-status of the knowledge we possess. It follows, then, that the encyclopedia of knowledge we draw from in order to interpret must be both verifiably sound and in some way present during the act of interpretation. This is a basic precept of the humanist philological practice which informs the work of figures, for example, such as Lorenzo Valla, Angelo Poliziano, and some centuries