



Dark Way to Paradise: Dante's Inferno in Light of the Spiritual Path

Jennifer D. Upton

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Dante's Inferno is often presented today in lurid 'gothic' terms as if it were no more than an entertaining demonic freak-show. Alternately, it is taken as merely a cultural and political commentary on Dante's own place and time, cast in allegorical terms. But the Inferno, and the Divine Comedy as a whole, are much more than that. The human passions, and the Mystery of Iniquity of which they are expressions, are fundamentally the same in any place and time; the Inferno presents not so much a history of sin as a catalogue of the archetypes of sin, the fundamental ways in which all of us are tempted to betray the human form. Based on the works of a number of the Greek Fathers, on the writings of several members of the Traditionalist School, notably Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon, and on the kind of wide personal experience of the violation of the human form that is available to anyone in these times with both the requisite discernment-rooted in love and the courage to keep his or her eyes open, Jennifer Doane Upton has once again seen Dante's Inferno as it really is. It is the record of the struggle of the human mind, will, and emotions to discover and name, by the grace of God, the sins resident in the human soul. As both a traditional re-presentation and a contemporary revisioning of the 'examination of conscience', individual and collective, Dark Way to Paradise is at once an exegetical masterpiece and a handbook of demonology of concrete use to any true physician of the soul. In its direct application of metaphysical principles to 'infernal psychology', it is unique among Dante commentaries. And in a time like ours, when the Western Church appears to be dissolving before our eyes, to save again what Dante himself saved out of the great medieval Christian synthesis has never been so timely.

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