

SIN, REPENTANCE AND SALVATION:

ETERNAL THEMES IN THE DIVINE COMEDY

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Abstract: The Divine Comedy is one of the greatest and most enduring masterpieces in the history of world literature, and this article is devoted to a deep exploration of that timeless work. The poem's three parts — Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso — are examined in turn, with the inner structure and symbolic meaning of each carefully unfolded. Through this profound spiritual journey from the depths of Hell to the heights of Heaven, eternal themes of sin, repentance, and salvation are rendered with extraordinary poetic power. The vivid characters, raw human emotions, and rich philosophical ideas woven throughout the poem elevate The Divine Comedy far beyond a mere work of medieval literature — placing it among the greatest spiritual and artistic inheritances of all humankind.

Keywords: The Divine Comedy, Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, medieval literature, sin and salvation, philosophy, poetry, spiritual journey, literary imagery.

Dante Alighieri's "The Divine Comedy" is one of the highest achievements of world literature, embodying within itself both the medieval worldview and the thinking of the Renaissance era. Through writing this work, Dante expressed moral, philosophical, and religious views. The work was written in 1308–1321, and although it was originally known simply as "Comedy" the great poet of the Renaissance, Giovanni Boccaccio, later added the word "Divine" to it, so that the work came to be called "The Divine Comedy". The external structure of the work consists of three parts. 1. Inferno (Hell) — led by Virgil, Dante passes through the nine circles of hell. Each circle contains souls punished for a particular sin. 2. Purgatorio (Purgatory) — here Dante meets souls who are being purified and describes their journey toward paradise. 3. Paradiso (Paradise) — Dante's guide here is Beatrice, who leads the poet on a journey through the heavenly realm and brings him to the Divine Light of God. The work speaks of humanity's struggle for moral integrity. In Paradise, Saint John asks Dante: "Tell me, what does your soul aspire to?" In fact, this question was

addressed not only to Dante but to the whole of humanity. This work urges us to reflect on how our choices shape our lives. It calls on us to ask ourselves: Do we find ourselves in hell? Do we toil in dumping grounds? Or do we behold paradise? In the work, Dante also mentions great teachers of both the West and the East. In the hell section of the work, he names Democritus, Thales, Heraclitus, Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, as well as the Eastern thinkers Abu Ali Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. In the Purgatory section, the heroism of the ancient king of Turon, of Cleopatra's daughter, of the legendary woman warrior Samurai, and of Tomyris is depicted. The plot of the work begins with the protagonist Dante's extraordinary spiritual journey. In the middle of the journey of his life, Dante suddenly finds himself lost in a dark and frightening forest. This dark forest is a symbol of sin and error. To guide him, the ancient Roman poet Virgil appears. Virgil leads him first through Hell, then through Purgatory.

In Hell, Dante and Virgil pass through nine circles. Each circle is designated for a particular sin: in the first circle, in a pleasant and tranquil setting, dwell those punished merely for not having been Christian — among them great sages such as Homer, Horace, and Aristotle. The further down one descends, the graver the sins become, and the punishments grow correspondingly harsher. In the second circle, those who lost their reason because of passion are swept around in a storm. In the fifth circle, the wrathful and the hateful fight one another in a swamp. In the eighth circle, liars, sorcerers, the corrupt, and hypocrites suffer various torments. In the ninth — the deepest — circle, traitors lie frozen in eternal ice. At the very center of this circle stands Lucifer — Satan — buried in the ice. Purgatory, in turn, is the complete opposite of Hell. Here, souls are not undergoing punishment but are on the path of purification. Purgatory is depicted as a tall mountain of seven levels — each level corresponding to one of the seven deadly sins: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust. As souls pass through these levels, they are cleansed of their sins and rise ever higher. At the summit of the mountain lies the divine garden — Eden. The ideological foundation of the work is built around the themes of sin, repentance, purification, and salvation. Dante shows that every person must answer fully for their own conduct, that no sin goes unpunished, but that the path to salvation is not closed even to one who truly repents. Love, meanwhile, is portrayed from beginning to end as the central force that sets everything in motion. In the final line of Paradise, Dante writes: "The Love that moves the sun and the other stars" — a line that has become one of the most famous closing lines not only of this work but of the whole of medieval literature. "The Divine Comedy" is not merely a religious work — it is a vast encyclopedia that unites medieval theology, philosophy, politics, astronomy, and history within a single poetic

system. In this work, Dante places many real figures of his time — popes, kings, military leaders, philosophers — into Hell, Purgatory, or Paradise, thereby in effect rendering a sharp political and moral judgment on his own era. The influence of the work on world culture is incomparable. The English poet T.S. Eliot called Dante "the greatest poet of European poetry after Shakespeare." The Russian writer Dostoevsky is also known to have drawn inspiration from "The Divine Comedy." The painter Sandro Botticelli, the sculptor Auguste Rodin in his works "The Thinker" and "The Gates of Hell".

In conclusion, it can be said that "The Divine Comedy" — even though more than seven hundred years have passed — remains a work that still astonishes the reader, makes them think, and stirs their soul. Its greatness lies in the fact that it is, at one and the same time, a deeply religious, a sharply political, and a sincerely personal work. Through depicting the torments of Hell, the hopes of Purgatory, and the light of Paradise, Dante is, in essence, seeking the answer to one simple yet eternal question: how should a person live? It is precisely this question that has made "The Divine Comedy" one of the supreme works not only of medieval literature, but of the literature of all humanity.

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