



The Invention of Dante's Commedia

John G. Demaray

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Centuris before and after Dante's composition of the Commedia, European pilgrims on the greatest journey of their lives sailed to Egypt, retraced the path of the Exodus to Jerusalem, and then voyaged to the eternal city of Rome. Their travels carried them to remote regions beyond the sphere of Latin culture; consequently, a full knowledge of their once-famous pilgrimage has been lost to Dante scholarship. Here for the first time is a richly documented account of how that great circle pilgrimage served, in the Roman Church's first Jubilee Pilgrimage Year of 1300, as the figural model for Dante's pilgrimage beyond life in the Commedia. In this central study, John G. Demaray reveals how Dante invented his poem as an imitation of many heretofore unrecognizable earthly events, persons, and geographic sties recorded in the pilgrims' two primary "source books," the Bible and God's "book" of the world. Mr. Demaray examines recurrent patterns of interrelated episodes and figura appearing in the "source books" and the Commedia. He thus discloses fundamental components of the poem's structure and uncovers the basis of Dante's symbolism and allegory. This book draws upon close readings of Dante, a wealth of traditional commentary, and a voluminous body of hitherto untapped pilgrimage maps and writings from Near Eastern and European libraries. It benefits as well from the author's personal inspection of a chain of forgotten pilgrimage stations in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the Levant, and Italy.

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