

## The spiral walk: crossing that dread threshold

Tradition teaches that after his death and before his resurrection Christ descended triumphantly into hell, defeating the powers of evil and plundering it of the righteous who died before his time (Ephesians 4:7-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22). This is called the harrowing of hell.

We must have the courage to expose our own personal hells to Christ and let him harrow them with us, and that is precisely what Dante's\* great (Divine Comedy) poem allows us to do. *Malcolm Guite*

Here's a variety of comments on this topic and links to poems (with audio in cases) which, in Malcolm Guite's words, may allow such a harrowing....

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.

-*Apostles Creed\**

The spiritual life is marked by descent and resurrection. (*Anon*)

Open the map to him and make a start,  
and down the dizzy spirals, through the dark,  
his light will go before you. Let him chart  
and name and heal.

-From [Malcolm Guite's Through the gate](#) (full audio reading and text)~

there must take place that struggle  
no human presumes to picture:  
living, dying, descending to rescue the just  
from shadow.

-From [Denise Levertov's Ikon: the harrowing of hell](#) (full text)



*Harrowing of hades, icon, untraced*

Christ...is able to reach and redeem every part of ourselves and our world, even those aspects that may be hidden or long buried...Past, present and future are all one, and all redeemed through the overwhelming power of God's grace.

-*Janet Morley, The heart's time on Denise Levertov's Ikon: the harrowing of hell*

We who build so many hells on earth, need to know that there is no place so dark, no situation so seemingly hopeless, that cannot be opened to the light of Christ for rescue and redemption.

For all of us, somewhere within, there is a threshold or a gate beyond which we feel we dare not go, but it may be just past that threshold that our real healing and restoration needs to take place.

-*Malcolm Guite, Word in the wilderness on Malcolm Guite's Through the Gate*