

Purgatory

In Roman Catholic theology, **purgatory** (Latin: *Purgatorium*, via Anglo-Norman and Old French)^[1] is an intermediate state after physical death in which some of those ultimately destined for heaven must first "undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven," holding that "certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come."^[2] And that entrance into Heaven requires the "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven," for which indulgences may be given which remove "either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin," such as an "unhealthy attachment" to sin.^[3] Only those who die in the state of grace but have not yet fulfilled the temporal punishment due to their sin can be in purgatory, and therefore, no one in purgatory will remain forever in that state nor go to hell. The notion of purgatory is associated particularly with the Latin Church (in the Eastern Catholic churches it is a doctrine, though it is not often called *purgatory*, but the *final purification* or the *final theosis*).



Image of a fiery purgatory by Ludovico Carracci

Although denying the existence of purgatory as formulated in Roman Catholic doctrine,^[4] the Anglican and Methodist traditions along with Eastern Orthodoxy, affirm the existence of an intermediate state, Hades, and thus pray for the dead,^{[5][6][7]} Eastern Orthodox Churches believe in the possibility of a change of situation for the souls of the dead through the prayers of the living and the offering of the Divine Liturgy, and many Orthodox, especially among ascetics, hope and pray for a general apocatastasis.^[8] Judaism also believes in the possibility of after-death purification and may even use the word "purgatory" to present its understanding of the meaning of Gehenna.^[9]

The word *purgatory* has come to refer also to a wide range of historical and modern conceptions of postmortem suffering short of everlasting damnation^[10] and is used, in a non-specific sense, to mean a condition or state of suffering or torment, especially one that is temporary.^[11]

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History of the belief

While use of the word "purgatory" (in Latin *purgatorium*) as a noun appeared perhaps only between 1160 and 1180, giving rise to the idea of purgatory as a place^[12] (what Jacques Le Goff called the "birth" of purgatory),^[13] the Roman Catholic tradition of purgatory as a transitional condition has a history that dates back, even before Jesus Christ, to the worldwide practice of caring for the dead and praying for them and to the belief, found also in Judaism,^[14] which is considered the precursor of Christianity, that prayer for the dead contributed to their afterlife purification. The same practice appears in other traditions, such as the medieval Chinese Buddhist practice of making offerings on behalf of the dead, who are said to suffer numerous trials.^[10] Roman Catholic belief in after-life purification is based on the practice of praying for the dead, which is mentioned in 2 Maccabees 12:42–44, what the Roman Catholic Church has declared to be part of Sacred Scripture,^{[15][16]} and which, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, was adopted by Christians from the beginning,^[17] a practice that presupposes that the dead are thereby assisted between death and their entry into their final abode.^[10]

Shortly before becoming a Roman Catholic,^[18] the English scholar John Henry Newman argued that the *essence* of the doctrine is locatable in ancient tradition, and that the core consistency of such beliefs is evidence that Christianity was "originally given to us from heaven".^[19] Roman Catholics consider the teaching on purgatory, but not the imaginative accretions, to be part of the faith derived from the revelation of Jesus Christ that was preached by the Apostles. Of the early Church Fathers, Origen says that "He who comes to be saved, comes to be saved through [a] fire" that burns away sins and worldliness like lead, leaving behind only pure gold.^[20] St. Ambrose of Milan speaks of a kind of "baptism of fire" which is located at the entrance to Heaven, and through which all must pass, at the end of the world.^[21] Pope St. Gregory the Great says that the belief in purgatory is "established" (constat) and "to be believed" (credendum), insisting, however, that the purgatorial fire can only purify away minor transgressions, not "iron, bronze, or lead" or other "hardened" (duriora) sins.^[22] By this he meant that attachments to sin, habits of sin, and even venial sins could be removed in purgatory, but not mortal sin, which, according to Catholic doctrine, causes eternal damnation. Over the centuries, theologians and other Christians then developed the doctrine regarding purgatory, leading to the definition of the formal doctrine (as distinct from the legendary descriptions found in poetic literature) at the First Council of Lyon (1245), the Second Council of Lyon (1274), the Council of Florence (1438–1445), and the Council of Trent (1545–63).^{[10][23]}



Image of a non-fiery purgatory (Gustave Doré: illustration for Dante's *Purgatorio*, Canto 24).

Christianity

Some denominations, typically Roman Catholicism, recognize the doctrine of purgatory, while many Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches would not use the same terminology, the former on the basis of their own sola scriptura doctrine, combined with their exclusion of 2 Maccabees from the Protestant Canon of the Bible, the latter because the Orthodox Churches consider purgatory a non-essential doctrine.

Catholicism

The Catholic Church gives the name purgatory to the final purification of all who die in God's grace and friendship but are still imperfectly purified.^[24] Though purgatory is often pictured as a place rather than a process of purification, the idea of purgatory as a physical place with time is not part of the Church's doctrine.^[25]

Heaven and Hell

According to Catholic belief, death is immediately followed by the judgment in which the soul's eternal destiny is specified.^[26] Some are eternally united with God in Heaven, envisioned as a paradise of unending bliss, where Theosis is completed and one experiences the beatific vision. Conversely, others reach Hell, that is chiefly a state of eternal, irreversible separation from God^[27] often envisioned as an abode of unending torment, often characterised as a fire that may be considered metaphorical.^[28]

Role in relation to sin

In addition to accepting the states of heaven and hell, Catholicism envisages a third state before being admitted to heaven. According to Catholic doctrine, some souls are not sufficiently free from the temporal effects of sin and its consequences to enter the state of heaven immediately, nor are they so sinful and hateful of Christ as to be destined for hell either.^[29] Such souls, ultimately destined to be united with God in heaven, must first be cleansed through purgatory – a state of purification.^[30] Through purgatory, souls "achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."^[31] The Church makes a distinction between mortal sin, which incurs both temporal punishment and eternal punishment, and venial sin, which incurs only temporal punishment.^[32] Mortal sin is a "sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent."^[32] "If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back."^[32]

In contrast, venial sin (meaning "forgivable" sin) "does not set us in direct opposition to the will and friendship of God"^[33] and, although still "constituting a moral disorder,"^[34] does not deprive the sinner of friendship with God or the eternal happiness of heaven.^[33] However, since venial sin weakens charity, manifests a disordered affection for created goods, and impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good, it merits temporal punishment.^[33]

The Church notes that purification from our sinful tendencies can occur during life. The situation has been compared to that of someone who needs to be cleansed of any addiction. As from any addiction, rehabilitation from the "disordered affection for created goods" will be a gradual and probably painful process. It can be advanced during life



Our Lady of Mount Carmel with angels and souls in purgatory. Baroque sculpture from Beniajan, Spain.



Altarpiece of the souls in purgatory. Church of the Immaculate Conception (Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain).

by voluntary self-mortification and penance and by deeds of generosity that show love of God rather than of creatures. After death, a cleansing process can be recognized as a still necessary preparation for entering the divine presence.^[35]

The writings of Saint Catherine of Genoa explain: "As for paradise, God has placed no doors there. Whoever wishes to enter, does so. An all-merciful God stands there with His arms open, waiting to receive us into His glory. I also see, however, that the divine presence is so pure and light-filled – much more than we can imagine – that the soul that has but the slightest imperfection would rather throw itself into a thousand hells than appear thus before the divine presence. Tongue cannot express nor heart understand the full meaning of purgatory, which the soul willingly accepts as a mercy the realization that that suffering is of no importance compared to the removal of the impediment of sin."^[36]

Pain and fire

Purgatory is commonly regarded as a cleansing by way of painful temporal punishment, which, like the eternal punishment of hell, is associated with the idea of fire.^[37] While "pain of the senses" (as opposed to "pain of longing" for the Beatific Vision) is not doctrinally defined as being a part of purgatory, the overwhelming consensus of theologians has been that it does involve pain of the senses. Several Church Fathers regarded 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 (https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1_Corinthians%203:10-15:10&version=nkjv) as evidence for the existence of an intermediate state in which the dross of lighter transgressions will be burnt away, and the soul thus purified will be saved.^[37] Fire was the Bible-inspired image ("We went through fire and through water")^[38] that Christians used for the notion of after-life purification.^[39] Saint Augustine of Hippo described the fires of cleansing as more painful than anything a man can suffer in this life,^[37] and Pope Gregory I wrote that there must be a cleansing fire for some minor faults that may remain to be purged away.^[40] Origen wrote about the fire that needs to purify the soul.^[41] Saint Gregory of Nyssa also wrote about the purging fire.^[42]



Another image of souls being purified by flames in purgatory

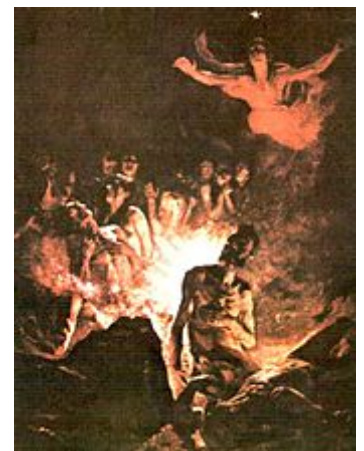
Most theologians of the past have held that the fire is in some sense a material fire, though of a nature different from ordinary fire, but the opinion of other theologians who interpret the Scriptural term "fire" metaphorically has not been condemned by the Church^[43] and may now be the more common view among theologians. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of a "cleansing fire"^[44] and quotes the expression "purgatorius ignis" (purifying fire) used by Pope Gregory the Great. It speaks of the temporal punishment for sin, even in this life, as a matter of "sufferings and trials of all kinds."^[45] It describes purgatory as a necessary purification from "an unhealthy attachment to

creatures," a purification that "frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin," a punishment that "must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin."^[46]

Prayer for the dead and indulgences



Image of a fiery purgatory in the Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry.



A depiction of purgatory by Venezuelan painter Cristóbal Rojas (1890) representing the boundary between heaven (above) and hell (below)



Catacomb inscriptions include prayers for the dead.^[47]

The Catholic Church teaches that the fate of those in purgatory can be affected by the actions of the faithful on earth. Its teaching is based also on the practice of prayer for the dead mentioned as far back as 2 Maccabees 12:42–46 (https://www.iblegateway.com/passage/?search=2_Maccabees%2012:42-46:42&version=dra), considered by Catholics and Orthodox to be part of Sacred Scripture.^[24]

In the same context there is mention of the practice of indulgences. An indulgence is a remission before God, through the mediation of the Church, of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven.^[48] Indulgences may be obtained for oneself, or on behalf of the dead.^[49] Despite popular perception, the Catholic Church has never taught that indulgences forgive any sins, for this is God's jurisdiction alone. Any persons who have taught that acts of charity such as indulgences can forgive sins have been condemned as heretics by the Catholic Church.

It is also a heretical position to suggest that indulgences are applied no matter how weak a Christian may be in his faith. An indulgence (or any act of charity for that matter) is dependent on the present faith of the individual Christian (see Johann Tetzel).



Statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel with souls in purgatory begging the Virgin for her intercession.

Prayers for the dead and indulgences have been popularly envisioned as decreasing the "duration" of time the dead spend in purgatory, an idea associated with the fact that, in the past, indulgences were measured in terms of days, "quarantines" (i.e. 40-day periods as for Lent), or years, meaning, not that purgatory would be shortened by that amount of time, but that the indulgences were equivalent to that length of canonical penance on the part of a living Christian.^[50] When the imposition of such canonical penances of a determinate duration fell out of custom these expressions were sometimes popularly misinterpreted as reduction of that much time of a soul's stay in purgatory.^[50] A prayer roll that once belonged to Henry VIII^[51] claimed that "this image of pity devoutly say 5 *Pater Noster*, 5 *Ave Maria* and 1 *Credo*..." gave a pardon and reduction of time in purgatory of "52,712 years and 40 days of pardon."^[52] In Pope Paul VI's revision of the rules concerning indulgences, these expressions were dropped, and replaced by the expression "partial indulgence", indicating that the person who gained such an indulgence for a pious action is granted "in addition to the remission of temporal punishment acquired by the action itself, an equal remission of punishment through the intervention of the Church."^[53]

Historically, the practice of granting indulgences, and the widespread^[54] associated abuses, led to them being seen as increasingly bound up with money, with criticisms being directed against the "sale" of indulgences, a source of controversy that was the immediate occasion of the Protestant Reformation in Germany and Switzerland.^[55]

As a physical place

However, in antiquity and medieval times, Heaven and Hell were widely spoken of as places existing within the physical universe: Heaven "above", in the sky; Hell "below", in or beneath the earth. Similarly, purgatory has at times been thought of as a physical location. This is nowhere maintained in the Catholic Catechism of 1992.

In 1206, a peasant named Thurkill in England claimed that Saint Julian took him on a tour of purgatory. He gave precise details, including descriptions of what he called purgatory's "torture chambers", and was widely believed, including by the Church historian Roger of Wendover.^[56]



Dante gazes at purgatory (shown as a mountain) in this 16th-century painting.

In Dante's fourteenth-century work *La divina commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*), purgatory is depicted as a mountain in the Southern hemisphere. It is apparently the only land there. Souls who loved God and man half-heartedly find themselves at Mount Purgatory, where there are two levels and then Seven Levels representing the Seven Deadly Sins with ironic punishments. For example, on the first level for Pride, the penitents are weighed down by huge stones. This forces them to look down in humility at the pavement, which depicts examples of sinful Pride such as Arachne. When they reach the top, souls will find themselves at Jerusalem's antipode, the Garden of Eden itself. Thus, cleansed of all sin and made perfect, they wait in this Earthly paradise before ascending to Heaven.

In 1999, Pope John Paul II referred to purgatory as "a condition of existence,"^[25] implying that it is most likely not an actual physical location or place, but is a state wherein "those who, after death, exist in a state of purification, are already in the love of Christ who removes from

them the remnants of imperfection."

In 2011, John Paul II's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, spoke of Saint Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510) and how, despite the view in her time that the purification of souls (purgatory) was pictured as a location in space, the saint saw purgatory as a purifying inner fire, such as she experienced in her profound sorrow for sins committed, when compared with God's infinite love. She said "The soul presents itself to God still bound to the desires and suffering that derive from sin and this makes it impossible for it to enjoy the beatific vision of God."^[57] The Pope commented: "We too feel how distant we are, how full we are of so many things that we cannot see God. The soul is aware of the immense love and perfect justice of God and consequently suffers for having failed to respond in a correct and perfect way to this love; and love for God itself becomes a flame, love itself cleanses it from the residue of sin."^[58]

Latin Catholicism

The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, first published in 2005, is a summary in dialogue form of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It deals with purgatory in the following exchange:^[59]

210. What is purgatory?

Purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of heaven.

211. How can we help the souls being purified in purgatory?

Because of the communion of saints, the faithful who are still pilgrims on earth are able to help the souls in purgatory by offering prayers in suffrage for them, especially the Eucharistic sacrifice. They also help them by almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance.

These two questions and answers summarize information in sections 1020–1032^[24] and 1054^[60] of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992, which also speaks of purgatory in sections 1472 and 1473.^[49] Earlier statements are those of the Council of Trent in 1563^[61] and the Council of Florence in 1439.^[62]

The Latin Rite of the Catholic Church does not teach that the suffering of purgatory is imposed by God. Among the many theologies that attempt to explain purgatory,^[63] one might maintain that it is the burning regret one feels when one's life is revealed in full after death, and the remorse that precedes putting this behind and passing on to the state of blessedness.^[58] Knowing the acts of love that those on earth are offering for one might conceivably make more bearable the remorse.

Saints devotees of purgatory

In this list some saints appear that defended, venerated or had visions of the souls of the Purgatorio according to the catholic tradition:

- Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)^[65]
- Nicholas of Tolentino (1245–1305)^[66]
- Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231)^[67]
- Elizabeth of Portugal (1271–1336)^[68]
- Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373)^[69]
- Catherine of Sweden (1330–1381)^[67]
- Lidwina of Schiedam (1380–1433)^[70]
- Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510)
- Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi (1566–1607)^[71]
- Peter of Saint Joseph de Betancur (1626–1667)^[72]
- Pio of Piedrelcina (1887–1968)^[73]
- Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938)^[74]

Eastern Catholicism

The 23 *sui iuris* Eastern Catholic Churches, which are in full communion with the Pope, also have a similar concept. There are however some differences between the theologies of the Latin Church and some of the Eastern Catholic Churches on aspects of the concept, mostly relating to terminology and speculation. The Eastern Catholic Churches of Greek tradition do not generally use the term "purgatory", but agree that there is a "final purification" for souls destined for heaven, and that prayers can help the dead who are in that state of "final purification". In general, neither the members of the Latin Church nor the members of these Eastern Catholic Churches regard these differences as points of dispute, but see them as minor nuances and differences of tradition. A treaty that formalized the admission of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church stated: "We shall not debate about purgatory, but we entrust ourselves to the teaching of the Holy Church,"^[75] implying, in the opinion of a theologian of that Church, that both sides can agree to disagree on the theological speculations and opinions of what is called purgatory, while there is full agreement on essential dogma.^[76] Between the Latin Church and some other Eastern Catholic Churches, such as the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, there is no variance about theological opinions of purgatory.^{[77][78]}

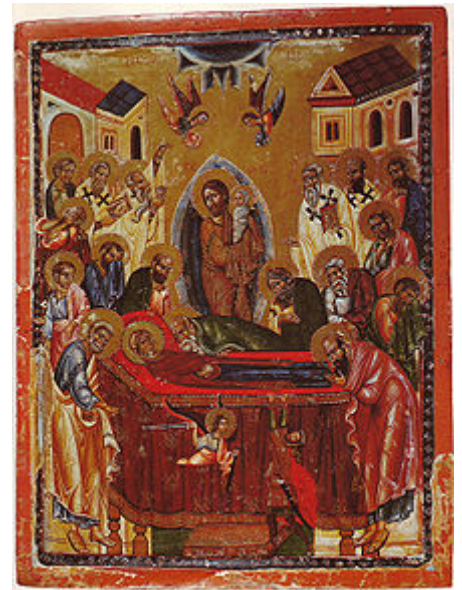
Eastern Catholic Churches belonging to the Syriac Tradition (Chaldean, Maronite, and Syriac Catholic) generally believe in the concept of purgatory but use a different name, like "Sheol". They claim that this does not contradict the Latin Rite doctrine.^[79]

Eastern Orthodoxy

While the Eastern Orthodox Church rejects the term "purgatory", it acknowledges an intermediate state after death. It believes in the determination of Heaven and Hell as stated in the Bible and that prayer for the dead is necessary. According to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America:



Saint Nicholas of Tolentino is considered protective of the souls of Purgatory according to the Catholic Church.^[64]



The Dormition of the Theotokos (a thirteenth-century icon)

The moral progress of the soul, either for better or for worse, ends at the very moment of the separation of the body and soul; at that very moment the definite destiny of the soul in the everlasting life is decided. ...There is no way of repentance, no way of escape, no reincarnation and no help from the outside world. Its place is decided forever by its Creator and judge. The Orthodox Church does not believe in purgatory (a place of purging), that is, the inter-mediate state after death in which the souls of the saved (those who have not received temporal punishment for their sins) are purified of all taint preparatory to entering into Heaven, where every soul is perfect and fit to see God. Also, the Orthodox Church does not believe in indulgences as remissions from purgatorial punishment. Both purgatory and indulgences are inter-correlated theories, unwitnessed in the Bible or in the Ancient Church, and when they were enforced and applied they brought about evil practices at the expense of the prevailing Truths of the Church. If Almighty God in His merciful loving-kindness changes the dreadful situation of the sinner, it is unknown to the Church of Christ. The Church lived for fifteen hundred years without such a theory.^[80]

Eastern Orthodox teaching is that, while all undergo a Particular Judgment immediately after death, neither the just nor the wicked attain the final state of bliss or punishment before the Last Day,^[81] with some exceptions for righteous souls like the Theotokos (Blessed Virgin Mary), "who was borne by the angels directly to heaven."^[82]

The Eastern Orthodox Church holds that it is necessary to believe in this intermediate after-death state in which souls are perfected and brought to full divinization, a process of growth rather than of punishment, which some Orthodox have called purgatory.^[83] Eastern Orthodox theology does not generally describe the situation of the dead as involving suffering or fire, although it nevertheless describes it as a "direful condition".^[84] The souls of the righteous dead are in light and rest, with a foretaste of eternal happiness; but the souls of the wicked are in a state the reverse of this. Among the latter, such souls as have departed with faith but "without having had time to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance ... may be aided towards the attainment of a blessed resurrection [at the end of time] by prayers offered in their behalf, especially those offered in union with the oblation of the bloodless sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, and by works of mercy done in faith for their memory."^[85]

The state in which souls undergo this experience is often referred to as "Hades".^[86]

The *Orthodox Confession* of Peter Mogila (1596–1646), adopted, in a Greek translation by Meletius Syrigos, by the 1642 Council of Jassy in Romania, professes that "many are freed from the prison of hell ... through the good works of the living and the Church's prayers for them, most of all through the unbloody sacrifice, which is offered on certain

days for all the living and the dead" (question 64); and (under the heading "How must one consider the purgatorial fire?") "the Church rightly performs for them the unbloody sacrifice and prayers, but they do not cleanse themselves by suffering something. The Church never maintained that which pertains to the fanciful stories of some concerning the souls of their dead who have not done penance and are punished, as it were, in streams, springs and swamps" (question 66).^[87]

The Eastern Orthodox Synod of Jerusalem (1672) declared that "the souls of those that have fallen asleep are either at rest or in torment, according to what each hath wrought" (an enjoyment or condemnation that will be complete only after the resurrection of the dead); but the souls of some "depart into Hades, and there endure the punishment due to the sins they have committed. But they are aware of their future release from there, and are delivered by the Supreme Goodness, through the prayers of the Priests and the good works which the relatives of each do for their Departed, especially the unbloody Sacrifice benefiting the most, which each offers particularly for his relatives that have fallen asleep and which the Catholic and Apostolic Church offers daily for all alike. Of course, it is understood that we do not know the time of their release. We know and believe that there is deliverance for such from their direful condition, and that before the common resurrection and judgment, but when we know not."^[84]

Some Orthodox believe in a teaching of "aerial toll-houses" for the souls of the dead. According to this theory, which is rejected by other Orthodox but appears in the hymnology of the Church,^[88] "following a person's death the soul leaves the body and is escorted to God by angels. During this journey the soul passes through an aerial realm which is ruled by demons. The soul encounters these demons at various points referred to as 'toll-houses' where the demons then attempt to accuse it of sin and, if possible, drag the soul into hell."^[89]

Protestantism

In general, Protestant churches reject the doctrine of purgatory. One of Protestantism's central tenets is *sola scriptura* ("scripture alone"). The general Protestant view is that the Bible, from which Protestants exclude deuterocanonical books such as 2 Maccabees, contains no overt, explicit discussion of purgatory and therefore it should be rejected as an unbiblical belief.^[90]

Another view held by many Protestants is *sola fide* ("by faith alone"): that faith alone, apart from any action, is what achieves salvation, and that good works are merely *evidence* of that faith.^[91] Justification is generally seen as a discrete event that takes place once for all during one's lifetime, not the result of a transformation of character. However, most Protestants teach that a transformation of character naturally follows the salvation experience. Instead of distinguishing between mortal and venial sins, Protestants believe that one's faith dictates one's state of salvation and one's place in the afterlife. Those who have been saved by God are destined for heaven, while those have not been saved will be excluded from heaven. Accordingly, they reject any notion of a provisional or temporary afterlife state such as purgatory.^[92]

Some Protestants hold that a person enters into the fullness of one's bliss or torment only after the resurrection of the body, and that the soul in that interim state is conscious and aware of the fate in store for it.^[93] Others have held that souls in the intermediate state between death and resurrection are without consciousness, a state known as soul sleep.^[94]

As an argument for the existence of purgatory, Protestant religious philosopher Jerry L. Walls^[95] wrote *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (2011). The book evoked reviews and news stories. It received a positive review in the Roman Catholic University of Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews.

Historically informed, philosophically competent, and theologically alert, . . . as careful and fair a discussion of the doctrine of purgatory as one is likely to find.^[96]

The Christian Century suggested that, if Protestants followed Walls' logic, they might accept his view of an intermediate state without calling it purgatory.^[97] Within early Christianity, he finds "biblical hints of purgatory" and examines them. In a survey of Christian writers, whom he calls the "Fathers and Mothers of Purgatory", Walls finds the beginnings of the doctrine of purgatory in their writings. These three sources led up to the "birth of purgatory" in the 12th century. The 13th century saw the beginnings of purgatory's adoption and its adoption as doctrine in 1274.^[98] Walls does not base his belief in purgatory primarily on Scripture, the Mothers and Fathers of the Church, or the Magisterium (doctrinal authority) of the Roman Catholic church. Rather his basic argument is that, in a phrase he often uses, it "makes sense."^[99] For Walls, purgatory has a logic as in the title of his book. Walls documents the "contrast between the satisfaction and sanctification models" of purgatory. In the satisfaction model, "the punishment of purgatory" is to satisfy God's justice. In the sanctification model, Wall writes that "Purgatory might be pictured . . . as a regimen to regain one's spiritual health and get back into moral shape."^[100] In Roman Catholic theology, Walls finds that the doctrine of purgatory has "swung" between the "poles of satisfaction and sanctification" sometimes "combining both elements somewhere in the middle." He believes the sanctification model "can be affirmed by Protestants without contradicting their theology" and find that it "makes better sense" than an instantaneous purging of sin at the moment of death.^[101]

While purgatory was disputed by the reformers, the Early Patristic Theologians of the Eastern Church taught and believed in "apokatastasis", the belief that all creation would be restored to the original perfect condition after a remedial purgatorial reformation. St. Clement of Alexandria was one of the early church theologians who taught this view through key scriptures. Many today are discovering that the reformers did an injustice to Early Christian understandings concerning purgatorial restoration. Protestants have always contended that there are no second chances. However, Lutherans have a similar doctrine of what may happen to the unevangelized in a book titled *What about those who never heard*. Also several Apologists of both Protestant, Universalist and Catholic backgrounds dig deeper into the subject in the book, "Four Views of Hell". Thomas Talbott^[102] and David Burnfield (<http://www.patristicuniversalism.com/>) both wrote books defending the Early Church view of the unlimited atonement, and the ultimate salvation of all mankind.

Anglicanism

Purgatory was addressed by both of the "foundation features" of Anglicanism in the 16th century: the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and the Book of Common Prayer.^[103]

Article XXII of the Thirty-Nine Articles states that "The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory . . . is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."^[104] Prayers for the departed were deleted from the 1552 Book of Common Prayer because they suggested a doctrine of purgatory. The 19th century Anglo-Catholic revival led to restoring prayers for the dead.^[105]

John Henry Newman, in his *Tract XC* of 1841 §6, discussed Article XXII. He highlighted the fact that it is the "Romish" doctrine of purgatory coupled with indulgences that Article XXII condemns as "repugnant to the Word of God." The article did not condemn every doctrine of purgatory and it did not condemn prayers for the dead.^[106]

As of the year 2000, the state of the doctrine of purgatory in Anglicanism was summarized as follows:

Purgatory is seldom mentioned in Anglican descriptions or speculations concerning life after death, although many Anglicans believe in a continuing process of growth and development after death.^[107]

John Henry Hobart, an Anglican bishop, writes that "Hades, or the place of the dead, is represented as a spacious *receptacle* with gates, through which the dead enter."^[108] *The Anglican Catechist* elaborates on Hades, stating that it "is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, in which the soul does not sleep in unconsciousness, but exists in happiness or misery till the resurrection, when it shall be reunited to the body and receive its final

reward."^[109] This space is divided into Paradise and Gehenna "but with an impassable gulf between the two,"^[5] Souls, with exception of martyrs and saints, remain in Hades until the Final Judgment and "Christians may also improve in holiness after death during the middle state before the final judgment."^{[110][111]}

As such, the *Book of Common Prayer* includes prayers for the dead, both that they may be "purged" of "defilements . . . contracted" in their "earthly life" and that they may increase in the "knowledge and love" of God.^[112]

Leonel L. Mitchell (1930-2012) offers this rationale for prayers for the dead:

No one is ready at the time of death to enter into life in the nearer presence of God without substantial growth precisely in love, knowledge, and service; and the prayer also recognizes that God will provide what is necessary for us to enter that state. This growth will presumably be between death and resurrection."^[113]

Anglican theologian C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), reflecting on the history of the doctrine of purgatory in the Anglican Communion, said there were good reasons for "casting doubt on the 'Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory' as that Romish doctrine had then become" not merely a "commercial scandal" but also the picture in which the souls are tormented by devils, whose presence is "more horrible and grievous to us than is the pain itself," and where the spirit who suffers the tortures cannot, for pain, "remember God as he ought to do." Lewis believed instead in purgatory as presented in John Henry Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius*. By this poem, Lewis wrote, "Religion has reclaimed Purgatory," a process of purification that will normally involve suffering.^[114]

Lutheranism

Martin Luther, founder of the Lutheran Church, believed that it was of no avail to pray for the dead.^[115] Nonetheless, a core statement of Lutheran doctrine, from the Book of Concord, states: "We know that the ancients speak of prayer for the dead, which we do not prohibit; but we disapprove of the application *ex opere operato* of the Lord's Supper on behalf of the dead. ... Epiphanius [of Salamis] testifies that Aerius [of Sebaste] held that prayers for the dead are useless. With this he finds fault. Neither do we favor Aerius, but we do argue with you because you defend a heresy that clearly conflicts with the prophets, apostles, and Holy Fathers, namely, that the Mass justifies *ex opere operato*, that it merits the remission of guilt and punishment even for the unjust, to whom it is applied, if they do not present an obstacle." (Philipp Melancthon, *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*).^[116] The Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church, however, believes in the doctrine of purgatory, as well as papal infallibility and all Roman Catholic dogma. Additionally, High Church Lutheranism, like Anglo-Catholicism, is more likely to accept some form of purgatory.

Methodism

Methodist churches, in keeping with Article XIV - Of Purgatory in the Articles of Religion, hold that "the Romish doctrine concerning purgatory ... is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God."^[117] However, in the Methodist Church, there is a belief in Hades, "the intermediate state of souls between death and the general resurrection," which is divided into Paradise (for the righteous) and Gehenna (for the wicked).^{[118][119]} After the general judgment, Hades will be abolished.^[119] John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, "made a distinction between hell (the receptacle of the damned) and Hades (the receptacle of all separate spirits), and also between paradise (the antechamber of heaven) and heaven itself."^{[120][121]} The dead will remain in Hades "until the Day of Judgment when we will all be bodily resurrected and stand before Christ as our Judge. After the Judgment, the Righteous will go to their eternal reward in Heaven and the Accursed will depart to Hell (see Matthew 25)."^[122]

Mormonism

Mormonism, the group of beliefs espoused by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, teaches of an intermediate place for spirits between their death and their bodily resurrection. This place, called "the spirit world," includes "paradise" for the righteous and "prison" for those who do not know God. Spirits in paradise serve as missionaries to the spirits in prison, who can still accept salvation. In this sense, spirit prison can be conceptualized as a type of purgatory. In addition to hearing the message from the missionary spirits, the spirits in prison can also accept posthumous baptism and other posthumous ordinances performed by living church members in temples on Earth. This is frequently referred to as "baptism for the dead" and "temple work."^[123] Mormons believe that during the three days following Christ's crucifixion, he preached his gospel to inhabitants of spirit prison.^[124]

Judaism

In Judaism, Gehenna is a place of purification where, according to some traditions, most sinners spend up to a year before release.

The view of purgatory can be found in the teaching of the Shammaites: "In the last judgment day there shall be three classes of souls: the righteous shall at once be written down for the life everlasting; the wicked, for Gehenna; but those whose virtues and sins counterbalance one another shall go down to Gehenna and float up and down until they rise purified; for of them it is said: 'I will bring the third part into the fire and refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried' [Zech. xiii. 9.]; also, 'He [the Lord] bringeth down to Sheol and bringeth up again'" (I Sam. ii. 6). The Hillelites seem to have had no purgatory; for they said: "He who is 'plenteous in mercy' [Ex. xxxiv. 6.] inclines the balance toward mercy, and consequently the intermediates do not descend into Gehenna" (Tosef., Sanh. xiii. 3; R. H. 16b; Bacher, "Ag. Tan." i. 18). Still they also speak of an intermediate state.

Regarding the time which purgatory lasts, the accepted opinion of R. Akiba is twelve months; according to R. Johanan b. Nuri, it is only forty-nine days. Both opinions are based upon Isa. lxvi. 23–24: "From one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come to worship before Me, and they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched"; the former interpreting the words "from one new moon to another" to signify all the months of a year; the latter interpreting the words "from one Sabbath to another," in accordance with Lev. xxiii. 15–16, to signify seven weeks. During the twelve months, declares the baraita (Tosef., Sanh. xiii. 4–5; R. H. 16b), the souls of the wicked are judged, and after these twelve months are over they are consumed and transformed into ashes under the feet of the righteous (according to Mal. iii. 21 [A. V. iv. 3]), whereas the great seducers and blasphemers are to undergo eternal tortures in Gehenna without cessation (according to Isa. lxvi. 24).

The righteous, however, and, according to some, also the sinners among the people of Israel for whom Abraham intercedes because they bear the Abrahamic sign of the covenant are not harmed by the fire of Gehenna even when they are required to pass through the intermediate state of purgatory ('Er. 19b; Hag. 27a).^[125]

Islam

Islam has a concept similar to that of purgatory in Christianity. Barzakh is thought to be a realm between paradise (Jannah) and hell (Jahannam) and according to Ghazali the place of those who go neither to hell or to heaven.^[126] But because it does not purify the souls it resembles more the Christian limbo than the purgatory.

In some cases, the Islamic concept of hell may resemble the concept of Catholic doctrine of purgatory,^[127] for Jahannam just punishes people according to their deeds and releases them after their habits are purified. A limited duration in Jahannam is not universally accepted in Islam.^[128]

Purgatory and life review

The life review undergone by those who have had a Near Death Experience (NDE) can resemble a sort of purgatory. Bruce Horacek Ph.D and the International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS) write about the Life Review:

"During a predominantly pleasurable NDE, usually while in the light, the NDEr may experience a life review. In this review, the NDEr typically re-views (sees again) and re-experiences every moment of his/her life. At the same time, the NDEr fully experiences being every other person with whom the NDEr interacted. The NDEr knows what it was to be on the receiving end of his/her own actions including those that caused others pain. At this time, the NDEr usually reports feeling profound remorse, along with extreme regret that the harm cannot be undone. At the same time, the NDEr typically reports feelings consistent with unconditional love from the light, which communicates forgiveness because the NDEr was still learning how to become a more loving person. NDErs tend to say that this "learning how to love" is the purpose of life."^[129]

In Richard Matheson's novel *What Dreams May Come*, a newly-dead character sees all the events of his life unfold in reverse, then later experiences the same thing slowly, in a self-evaluation process that the novel equates with purgatory. This may be seen to complement the final description under "Roman Catholicism" above.

Cultural references

Literary references to purgatory go back at least as far as Dante Alighieri. In his *Divine Comedy* story *Purgatorio*, Mount Purgatory is split into different terraces for those being made to be ready for heaven. At the top of Mount Purgatory is the Garden of Eden.^[130]

In the 1991 film *Defending Your Life*, "purgatory is like Paradise City" in which "souls hang around awaiting the verdict of their hearings."^[131]

The TV series *Sleepy Hollow* uses purgatory as the world of the dead and undead, with characters often forced to travel to purgatory to find key items or rescue important allies.^[132]

The movie *Gabriel* takes place in purgatory, which the Fallen Angels have transformed into a Dark City.

Purgatory is referenced in the American TV series *Supernatural* as a place to which all monsters go after they are killed. It also serves as the prison of the Leviathans (essentially God's prototypes, locked into purgatory since they were too dangerous).^[133]



La Divina Commedia di Dante (Dante and the Divine Comedy), fresco by Domenico di Michelino, in the nave of the Duomo of Florence, Italy

See also

- Anima Sola
- Araf
- Bosom of Abraham
- Dante's Purgatorio
- Future probation
- Garden of Eden
- Gehinnom
- Christian views on Hades
- Heaven (Christianity)
- Christian views on hell
- History of Purgatory
- Indulgence
- Intermediate state
- Limbo
- Olam Haba
- Paradise
- Penance
- Sheol
- Soul sleep
- Spirit world (Latter Day Saints)
- Spirits in prison
- St Patrick's Purgatory
- Venial sin

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82. Michael Azkoul, *What Are the Differences Between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism?* (http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/ortho_cath.html)
83. Ted A. Campbell, *Christian Confessions: a Historical Introduction* (Westminster John Knox Press 1996 ISBN 0-664-25650-3), p. 54
84. *Confession of Dositheus* (<http://www.cresourcei.org/creeddositheus.html>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090221201226/http://www.cresourcei.org/creeddositheus.html>) 2009-02-21 at the Wayback Machine., Decree 18
85. *Catechism of St. Philaret of Moscow*, (http://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/eng/Orthodox_Catechism_of_Philaret.htm#gen0) 372 and 376; Conostas H. Demetry, *Catechism of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/catechis.html>) p. 37; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (London: Mowbrays, 1974) p. 96; cf. "The Orthodox party ... remarked that the words quoted from the book of Maccabees, and our Saviour's words, can only prove that some sins will be forgiven after death" (OrthodoxInfo.com, *The Orthodox Response to the Latin Doctrine of Purgatory* (http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/death/stmark_purg.aspx))
86. *What Are the Differences Between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism?* (http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/ortho_cath.html); Conostas H. Demetry, *Catechism of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/catechis.html>) p. 37
87. *Orthodox Confession of Faith* (<https://web.archive.org/web/19990421091223/http://esoptron.umd.edu/ugc/ocf1c.html>), questions 64–66.
88. In both the Greek and Slavonic Euchologion, in the canon for the departure of the soul by St. Andrew, we find in Ode 7: "All holy angels of the Almighty God, have mercy upon me and save me from all the evil toll-houses" (**Evidence for the Tradition of the Toll Houses found in the Universally Received Tradition of the Church**). (<http://pages.prodigy.net/frjohnwhiteford/tollhouses.htm>) "When my soul is about to be forcibly parted from my body's limbs, then stand by my side and scatter the counsels of my bodiless foes and smash the teeth of those who implacably seek to swallow me down, so that I may pass unhindered through the rulers of darkness who wait in the air, O Bride of God" (**Octoechos, Tone Two, Friday Vespers**). (http://www.anastasis.org.uk/weekday_vespers1.htm) "Pilot my wretched soul, pure Virgin, and have compassion on it, as it slides under a multitude of offences into the deep of destruction; and at the fearful hour of death snatch me from the accusing demons and from every punishment" (**Ode 6, Tone 1 Midnight Office for Sunday**). (http://www.anastasis.org.uk/weekday_vespers1.htm)
89. "Saint Luke the Evangelist Orthodox Church is a Chicago Parish of the Orthodox Church in America located in Palos Hills, Illinois" (<http://www.stlukeorthodox.com/html/evangelist/2000/deathtoll.htm>). www.stlukeorthodox.com.
90. Robert L. Millet, *By what Authority?: The Vital Question of Religious Authority in Christianity* (Mercer University, 2010), 66.

91. Alan Richardson, John Bowden, eds, *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 1983), s.v. sola fide, 545.
92. Alan Richardson, John Bowden, eds, *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 1983), s.v. salvation 519.
93. John Calvin wrote: "As long as (our spirit) is in the body it exerts its own powers; but when it quits this prison-house it returns to God, whose presence it meanwhile enjoys, while it rests in the hope of a blessed Resurrection. This rest is its paradise. On the other hand, the spirit of the reprobate, while it waits for the dreadful judgment, is tortured by that anticipation" (*Psychopannychia* by John Calvin) (http://ude.net/bible/psychopannychia_by_john_calvin.htm)
94. Martin Luther, contending against the doctrine of purgatory, spoke of the souls of the dead as quite asleep, but this notion of unconscious soul sleep is not included in the Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran theologians generally reject it. (See *Soul Sleep* – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.) (http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic_topicID=78&culitem_itemID=5245)
95. [https://www.hbu.edu/Choosing-HBU/Academics/Colleges-Schools/School-of-Christian-Thought/Departments/Department-of-Philosophy/Faculty/Jeremy-Neill-\(1\).aspx](https://www.hbu.edu/Choosing-HBU/Academics/Colleges-Schools/School-of-Christian-Thought/Departments/Department-of-Philosophy/Faculty/Jeremy-Neill-(1).aspx).
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97. "The Christian Century" (<http://www.christiancentury.org/reviews/2012-07/purgatory-jerry-l-walls>). August 2, 2012. Retrieved April 28, 2015.
98. For example, Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (Oxford, 2012), 10-14, 17.
99. For example, Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (Oxford, 2012), 71.
100. Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (Oxford, 2012), 76, 90.
101. Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (Oxford, 2012), 90.
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103. Colin Buchanan, *Historical Dictionary of Anglicanism* (Scarecrow, 2006), 510.
104. <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/articles-of-religion.aspx>.
105. Colin Buchanan, *Historical Dictionary of Anglicanism* (Scarecrow, 2006), s.v. "Petitions for the Departed", 356-357.
106. <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/tract90/section6.html>.
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108. Hobart, John Henry (1825). *The State of the Departed*. New York: T. and J. Swords. p. 32.
109. Holden, George (1855). *The Anglican Catechist: Manual of Instruction Preparatory to Confirmation*. London: Joseph Masters. p. 40. "We are further taught by it that there is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, in which the soul does not sleep in unconsciousness, but exists in happiness or misery till the resurrection, when it shall be reunited to the body and receive its final reward."
110. Shields, Charles (2009-05-01). *Philosophia Ultima*. Applewood Books. p. 184. ISBN 9781429019644. "Some Anglican divines, from like premises, have surmised that Christians may also improve in holiness after death during the middle state before the final judgment."
111. Jonathan, Fr. (5 September 2012). "Either the Saints Are Alive or Jesus is Dead" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140413132553/http://conciliaranglican.com/2012/09/05/either-the-saints-are-alive-or-jesus-is-dead/>). The Conciliar Anglican. Archived from the original (<http://conciliaranglican.com/2012/09/05/either-the-saints-are-alive-or-jesus-is-dead/>) on 13 April 2014. Retrieved 10 April 2014. "His Majesty venerates the blessed Martyrs and other saints now reigning with Christ, Who is the head of the triumphant and of the militant Church, and he does not doubt that they assiduously pray for the necessities of the Church, and firmly believes that their prayers are not useless."
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113. Leonel L. Mitchell, *Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on The Book of Common Prayer* (Church Publishing, 1991), 224.
114. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Mariner Books, 2002), 108-109.
115. Question 201 of Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (Concordia Publishing House, 1991 edition) answers the question "For whom should we pray?" as follows: "We should pray for ourselves and for all other people, even for our enemies, but not for the souls of the dead" The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110329121101/http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2687>)

116. "Apology XXIV, 96" (http://bookofconcord.org/defense_23_mass.php).
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119. Smithson, William T. (1859). *The Methodist Pulpit*. H. Polkinhornprinter. p. 363. "Besides, continues our critical authority, we have another clear proof from the New Testament, that *hades* denotes the intermediate state of souls between death and the general resurrection. In Revelations (xx, 14) we read that *death* and *hades*-by our translators rendered *hell*, as usual-shall, immediately after the general judgment, "be cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death." In other words, the death which consists in the separation of soul and body, and the receptacle of disembodied spirits shall be no more. *Hades* shall be emptied, death abolished."
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121. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (8 March 2001). *American Methodist Worship* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=I1TDD5-CLIEC>). Oxford University Press. p. 202. ISBN 9780198029267. Retrieved 10 April 2014. "Decisions made during life were therefore inseparably connected to what came after life. Upon death, according to Wesley, the souls of the deceased would enter an intermediate, penultimate state in which they would remain until reunited with the body at the resurrection of the dead. In that state variously identified as "the ante-chamber of heaven," "Abraham's bosom," and "paradise"."
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Further reading

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- Gould, James B. *Understanding Prayer for the Dead: Its Foundation in History and Logic* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016).
- Le Goff, Jacques. *The birth of purgatory* (U of Chicago Press, 1986).
- Pasulka, Diana Walsh. *Heaven Can Wait: Purgatory in Catholic Devotional and Popular Culture* (Oxford UP, 2015) online review (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0048721X.2016.1188636?journalCode=rrel20>)
- Tingle, Elizabeth C. *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany 1480–1720* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013).
- Walls, Jerry L. (2012). *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=kFqzG3UPz3EC&pg=PA61>). Oxford UP.

External links

- "Is Purgatory in the Bible?" (<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/theological-disputes/is-purgatory-in-the-bible.html>). A Catholic answer. Is Purgatory in the Bible? (<https://web.archive.org/web/20141104205818/http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/theological-disputes/is-purgatory-in-the-bible.html>) on Internet Archive
 - Church Fathers on Purgatory (<http://www.churchfathers.org/category/salvation/purgatory/>)
 - Purgatory (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/483923/purgatory>). Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 2009.
 - English c. 1200 wall painting with an image of a ladder, reminiscent of icons such as the (<http://www.paintedchurch.org/chaldon.htm>) Ladder of Divine Ascent, which has been interpreted as a "purgatorial ladder"
 - Quran Inspector: Chapter 7: "The Purgatory (Al-A'araf)" (سورة الأعراف) (<http://submission.org/QI#7>) at submission.org
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