

Is Purgatory solely a Catholic teaching? Do Protestants believe in Purgatory?

According to Catholic Church doctrine, Purgatory is an intermediate state after physical death in which those destined for heaven "undergo purification", so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. Some Protestant denominations do believe in the existence of Purgatory, for example: Anglicans of Anglo-Catholic origin and Lutherans of High Lutheranism. Some other denominations reject Purgatory as having no basis in Scripture.

Does Purgatory have a doctrinal basis in Scripture?

The word Purgatory does not appear directly in Scripture. However, many doctrinal teachings, even ones as basic as the Trinity, do not appear directly in Scripture. But the basis for the Trinity is soundly rooted in the New Testament so the lack of a precise word is not an impediment to doctrine. As for Purgatory, the use of fire in Scripture to warn, reveal or purify is frequent - whether in a pillar of fire (Numbers 9), a burning bush (Exodus 3) or a consuming fire (Hebrews 12). In Corinthians 3, Paul states that all saints must pass through fiery judgement in which each man's work will be manifest. This is clearly not a reference to the fires of hell, for he is speaking of the judgement of saints. This certainly sounds like undergoing purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter heaven. But the final authority, Jesus himself speaks of expiation of sins after death in Matthew 12:32: "...**whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.**" Jesus' own words indicate that there is a way for sins to be forgiven after death. These Scriptural references are just a few of those theologians use as the basis for doctrine regarding Purgatory.

References from New American Bible