

0. Purgatory and Dante's Divine Comedy - Story Preface

1. ANCIENT ORIGINS
2. A PLACE CALLED PURGATORY
3. DANTE ALIGHIERI
4. PURGATORY ILLUSTRATED
5. ILLUSTRATIONS OF GUSTAVE DORE
6. DANTE COLLECTION at NOTRE DAME
7. PURGATORY and the PROTESTANT REFORMATION
8. PURGATORY in the MODERN WORLD



La commedia illumina Firenze on the wall of the Florence Cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, by Domenico di Michelino depicting Dante holding a copy of the Divine Comedy, next to the entrance to Hell. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Purgatory - what a grand thing!

Saint Catherine of Genoa

Thoughtful people have long disputed whether Purgatory—a place, it is said, where a person’s soul is purified after death—actually exists.

Far from viewing it as “a grand thing,” Protestant reformers, like Martin Luther, thought Purgatory (and the economy which supported it) was nothing more than a Church scheme to separate people from their money. The soul of a dead person, reformers declared, either went straight to heaven, or straight to hell. Souls didn’t make an intermediate stop at a place called Purgatory.

Where did the idea of Purgatory originate? Does it have ancient roots? Modern acceptance? Do scholars believe Dante’s *Divine Comedy*—which devotes an entire section to Purgatory—is merely a lyrical poem, to be studied and enjoyed as great literature, or do they think it is a theological masterpiece, to be taken as absolute truth?

Let's search for answers to these questions.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Purgatory-and-Dante-s-Divine-Comedy>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Purgatory-and-Dante-s-Divine-Comedy>



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Image online, courtesy the amazon.com website.

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