



# HUMAN SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

**Proverbs 14:12**

# **“It Works”**

**This philosophy is a classic example of “the ends justifying the means”**

**We cannot do evil that good may come (Romans 3:8; cp. 10:1-3)**

**In 1 Samuel 15, Saul and the Amalekites illustrate this philosophy**



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# **“We Have Always Done It That Way”**

**This philosophy teaches that an action is done because it has been practiced for a long time**

**In Mark 7:1-13, Jesus contrasted the traditions of men and the commandments of God**

**Several doctrines in the Catholic Church have tradition as their sole authority**



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## Purgatory

### Old Testament

The tradition of the Jews is put forth with precision and clearness in II Maccabees. **Judas**, the commander of the forces of **Israel**,

making a gathering . . . sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the **resurrection** (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to **pray for the dead**). And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to **pray for the dead**, that they may be loosed from sins. (**2 Maccabees 12:43-46**)

At the time of the Maccabees the leaders of the people of **God** had no hesitation in asserting the efficacy of **prayers offered for the dead**, in order that those who had departed this life might find pardon for their sins and the hope of **eternal resurrection**.

# Done It That Way"

### New Testament

There are several passages in the New Testament that point to a process of purification after death. Thus, **Jesus Christ** declares (**Matthew 12:32**): "And whosoever shall speak a word against the **Son of man**, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." According to St. Isidore of Seville (*Deord. creatur.*, c. xiv, n. 6) these words prove that in the next life "some sins will be forgiven and purged away by a certain purifying fire." St. Augustine also argues "that some sinners are not forgiven either in this world or in the next would not be truly said unless there were other [sinners] who, though not forgiven in this world, are forgiven in the world to come" (*De Civ. Dei*, XXI, xxiv). The same interpretation is given by **Gregory the Great** (*Dial.*, IV, xxxix); St. Bede (commentary on this text); St. Bernard (*Sermo lxvi in Cantic.*, n. 11) and other eminent theological writers.

A further argument is supplied by St. Paul in **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**:

"For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is **Christ Jesus**. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble: Every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

While this passage presents considerable difficulty, it is regarded by many of the **Fathers** and theologians 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. This, according to Bellarmine (*De Purg.*, I, 5), is the interpretation commonly given by the **Fathers** and theologians; and he cites to this effect:

- St. Ambrose (commentary on the text, and *Sermo xx in Ps. cxvii*),
- St. Jerome, (*Comm. in Amos*, c. iv),
- St. Augustine (*Comm. in Ps. xxxvii*),
- **St. Gregory** (*Dial.*, IV, xxxix), and
- Origen (*Hom. vi in Exod.*).

See also St. Thomas, "*Contra Gentes*," IV, 91. For a discussion of the exegetical problem, see Atzberger, "*Die christliche Eschatologie*", p. 275.

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## Purgatory

### Tradition

This doctrine that many who have died are still in a place of purification and that prayers avail to help the dead is part of the very earliest **Christian tradition**. **Tertullian** "De corona militis" mentions **prayers for the dead** as an Apostolic ordinance, and in "De Monogamia" (cap. x, P. L., II, col. 912) he advises a widow "to pray for the soul of her husband, begging repose for him and participation in the first resurrection"; he commands her also "to make oblations for him on the anniversary of his demise," and charges her with infidelity if she neglect to succour his soul. This settled custom of the **Church** is clear from **St. Cyprian**, who (P. L. IV, col. 399) forbade the customary **prayers** for one who had violated the ecclesiastical law. "Our predecessors prudently advised that no brother, departing this life, should nominate any churchman as his executor; and should he do it, that no oblation should be made for him, nor sacrifice offered for his repose." Long before **Cyprian**, **Clement of Alexandria** had puzzled over the question of the state or condition of the man who, reconciled to **God** on his death-bed, had no time for the fulfilment of penance due his transgression. His answer is: "the believer through discipline divests himself of his passions and passes to the mansion which is better than the former one, passes to the greatest torment, taking with him the characteristic of repentance for the faults he may have committed after baptism. He is tortured then still more, not yet attaining what he sees others have acquired. The greatest torments are assigned to the believer, for **God's** righteousness is good, and His goodness righteous, and though these punishments cease in the course of the expiation and purification of each one, "yet" etc. (P. G. IX, col. 332).

In **Origen** the doctrine of purgatory is very clear. If a man depart this life with lighter faults, he is condemned to fire which burns away the lighter materials, and prepares the soul for the **kingdom of God**, where nothing defiled may enter. "For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (**1 Corinthians 3**); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the **kingdom of God**; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our **God** to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood, and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works." (P. G., XIII, col. 445, 448).

# Done It That Way"

The Apostolic practice of **praying for the dead** which passed into the liturgy of the **Church**, is as clear in the fourth century as it is in the twentieth. **St. Cyril of Jerusalem** (Catechet. Mystog., V, 9, P.G., XXXIII, col. 1116) describing the liturgy, writes: "Then we pray for the Holy Fathers and Bishops that are dead; and in short for all those who have departed this life in our communion; believing that the souls of those for whom prayers are offered receive very great relief, while this holy and tremendous victim lies upon the altar." **St. Gregory of Nyssa** (P. G., XLVI, col. 524, 525) states that man's weaknesses are purged in this life by prayer and wisdom, or are expiated in the next by a cleansing fire. "When he has quitted his body and the difference between virtue and vice is known he cannot approach **God** till the purging fire shall have cleansed the stains with which his soul was infested. That same fire in others will cancel the corruption of matter, and the propensity to evil." About the same time the Apostolic Constitution gives us the formularies used in succouring the dead. "Let us pray for our brethren who sleep in Christ, that **God** who in his love for men has received the soul of the depart one, may forgive him every fault, and in mercy and clemency receive him into the bosom of Abraham, with those who in this life have pleased **God**" (P. G. I, col. 1144). Nor can we pass over the use of the diptychs where the names of the dead were inscribed; and this remembrance by name in the Sacred Mysteries--(a practice that was from the Apostles) was considered by **Chrysostom** as the best way of relieving the dead (In I Ad Cor., Hom. xli, n. 4, G., LXI, col. 361, 362).

The teaching of the **Fathers**, and the formularies used in the Liturgy of the Church, found expression in the early **Christian** monuments, particularly those contained in the catacombs. On the tombs of the faithful were inscribed words of hope, words of petition for peace and for rest; and as the anniversaries came round the faithful gathered at the graves of the departed to make intercession for those who had gone before. At the bottom this is nothing else than the faith expressed by the **Council of Trent** (Sess. XXV, "De Purgatorio"), and to this faith the inscriptions in the catacombs are surely witnesses.

In the fourth century in the West, **Ambrose** insists in his commentary on **St. Paul** (**1 Corinthians 3**) on the existence of purgatory, and in his masterly funeral oration (De obitu Theodosii), thus prays for the soul of the departed emperor: "Give, O Lord, rest to Thy servant Theodosius, that rest Thou hast prepared for Thy saints. . . . I loved him, therefore will I follow him to the land of the living; I will not leave him till by my prayers and lamentations he shall be admitted unto the holy mount of the Lord, to which his deserts call him" (P. L., XVI, col. 1397). **St. Augustine** is clearer even than his master. He describes two conditions of men; "some there are who have departed this life, not so bad as to be deemed unworthy of mercy, nor so good as to be entitled to immediate happiness" etc., and in the **resurrection** he says there will be some who "have gone through these pains, to which the spirits of the dead are liable" (De Civ. Dei, XXI, 24). Thus at the close of the fourth century not only

- were **prayers for the dead** found in all the Liturgies, but the **Fathers** asserted that such practice was from the Apostles themselves;
- those who were helped by the prayers of the faithful and by the celebration of the Holy Mysteries were in a place of purgation;
- from which when purified they "were admitted unto the Holy Mount of the Lord".

So clear is this patristic Tradition that those who do not believe in purgatory have been unable to bring any serious difficulties from the writings of the **Fathers**. The passages cited to the contrary either do not touch the question at all, or are so lacking in clearness that they cannot offset the perfectly open expression of the doctrine as found in the very **Fathers** who are quoted as holding contrary opinions (Bellarmine "De Purg.", lib. I, cap. xiii).

# **“The Bible Does Not Say Not To”**

**This philosophy puts a premium on the silence of the Bible**

**We must be content with what Christ has revealed (1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9)**

**This principle has sometimes been called “the law of exclusion”**



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# **“So Many People Cannot Be Wrong”**

**Someone once said their church was right because of the number of cars in the parking lot**

**Jesus (Matthew 7:13-14), Noah (Genesis 6:5-6), and Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:28-30)**

**This philosophy blatantly bases salvation purely on man, pure and simple**



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# **“This Is A Minor Issue”**

**Some believe that some issues are “major” and some are “minor,” i.e. they do not matter**

**Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:4) and Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6-7) show that “minors” are important**

**We will be judged by all of God’s word (John 12:48; Romans 2:16)**



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# **“They Are Doing It”**

**In 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 19-20, the Israelites were not content with God’s way**

**Some now look around and say, “Look what the denominations are doing”**



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# **“They Are Doing It”**

**In 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 19-20, the Israelites were not**

## **How Are Brethren Changing?**

- 1. They are changing the name of the church**
- 2. They are changing the requirements of salvation**
- 3. They are changing the nature of preaching**



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# **“They Are Doing It”**

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**Some churches are dead because they have gone beyond the gospel (Revelation 3:1-3)**



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# **“I Had Rather Do It Wrong Than Nothing At All”**

**In my estimation, this philosophy simply loses all touch with reality (2 Timothy 2:5)**

**People are not willing to follow this logic in any other endeavor in their life**

**Let's abound “in the work of the Lord” instead of throwing caution to the wind**



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# **How To Establish Scriptural Authority**

- 1. Command (Mark 16:15; Acts 15:20)**
- 2. Example (John 13:15; Acts 15:12)**
- 3. Necessary Inference (Matthew 22:33; Acts 15:11)**



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