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VIII
PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD.

BY REV. GILBERT FEARING WILLIAMS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

On tombs of ancient Egypt have been found inscribed requests, as from those buried beneath them, that passers-by would pray for them. Here and here alone in all the ancient world we first find such praying held to be of any avail to the departed. Later and later it becomes a characteristic doctrine by consequence, of the views of ancient Paganism almost everywhere concerning the dead. In pagan Greece the very chief of the philosophers, and in pagan Rome the poets so view the condition of the departed as to make inevitable the thought of praying to effect some improvement in their condition. In the modern Paganism of India we have the burdensome services of the Srádd'ha or funeral obsequies for the repose of the dead, and for the securing of the efficacy of which it is inculcated that "donations of cattle, land, gold, silver, and other things" should be made by the man himself at the approach of death, or, "if he be too weak, by another in his name."

In Tartary "the Gurjumi, or prayers for the dead," says a most eminent authority, "are very expensive."

Works on Greece tell us of the *expensive* character of the mysterious sacrifice called the Teleté and to which Plato refers; and works on Egypt show us the exacting and expensive character for the celebration of funeral rites, and especially for the offices for the dead.

From ancient Egypt then the practice most evidently came, as the best works of the ripe scholarship and research of our day on that deeply interesting country very clearly show. We may say, and thus represent the exact truth of

our subject, that in Pagan Egypt we find the incubating nest of the practice of praying for the dead.

From this source we may trace it forward into the religion of the Jews, not as the latter was established by Almighty God through Moses, for there it is not to be found, but into the Jewish religion (yet not accepted by all Jews even then) as it was corrupted by the "Traditionists," called also Rabbinitists or Talmudists, constituting one of the three classes of Jews existing when *Messiah* appeared amongst them.

The Jews contracted this notion of prayers for the dead in their associations with the Babylonians during their captivity among them. On their return from this captivity, weakened in faith, they bring back with them the germs of this notion. Hence in the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament there is no intimation whatever of such a thing as prayers for the dead. Most certainly then will we look in vain in Old or New Testament to find preceptively or by example any such practice enjoined. In the Apocryphal 2d Book of the Maccabees we do find a reference to prayers for the departed. But in the first place the Maccabean books represent the Jewish religion when the corruptions of "Traditionists" had been introduced. Again, the books of Maccabees contain strong passages contradicting the idea that the departed either received or were to be benefited by prayer. Moreover the particular passages in 2d Maccabees are not altogether free from the well formed suspicion that they are interpolations of a later period. Yet again, the apocryphal Book of Wisdom sets forth in a canonical Scripture spirit, and even in phraseology that, "the souls of the righteous ARE in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the *unwise* they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction, BUT THEY ARE IN PEACE. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality . . . for God proved them and found them worthy of Himself . . . for grace and mercy are to His saints, and He hath care for His elect." And again, the

Prayers for the Dead, as referred to in 2d Maccabees, having been repudiated, in that the objects of those prayers are nowhere now recognized as within the character of life and conduct entitling them to the benefit of prayers, this solitary instance in this single and apocryphal book becomes removed from the sphere of evidence, and becomes a testimony which by universal agreement, it seems, is to be repudiated—indeed has been.

God gives through Moses minute directions concerning the dying and the burial of the dead. Every service and ceremonial for every feature of Jewish religious, and domestic life is found there, yet not a word nor an intimation of any prayers *for* the departed. Surely if it had been any part of the religion of the Jews, so comforting a privilege had never been permitted by God to be a matter even of legitimate inference, but been made a matter of positive teaching. That there is, as I say, a dead silence on this subject, preceptively or by example, in the whole Old Testament Scriptures, is such a fact as compels all lovers of truth to be cautious how they treat it.

Being absent entirely from Jewish orthodoxy, it can carry no weight whatever in its favor that we find it only as part of Jewish heterodoxy—as the work of the “Traditionists.”

It is claimed by the argument *a silentio*, that the Divine Saviour because He did not, *ipsisimis verbis*, condemn it, He therefore approved it. But our blessed Lord did denounce the Jewish corruptive introduction of these prayers as permissible either to individuals of their faith or to be used in their synagogue services. He did so when He denounced the *Traditions* by which His Father's religion had been adulterated, and under which this idea of praying for the dead was included, because it was essentially sanctioned in the Jewish creed as a work purely, as we know, of the “Traditionists.” And so when Justin Martyr was defending the Christian religion in his discussion with the Jew Trypho he tells him: “The Word of God *despises* the *Tradition* of the Jews”—(*Dial. cum Trypho*, cap. lxxx). The Maccabean prayers for the dead were among those “despised traditions of the Jews.”

To make the Holy Jesus the advocate of the prayers for the dead introduced by the Jewish corruptionists, who placed the Mishna on a level with the written law of Moses, and, in effect, far above it, is to make Him endorse as a part of his Father's old religion that which the Father nowhere teaches in the great canonical Scriptures.

There is no point upon which in the ancient Church the great fathers were so in agreement as upon the point of the supremacy of the Scriptures as the rule of faith. On all subjects they speak as men expressing private opinions, and there is much disagreement among them, but in the Scriptures as the Rule of Faith I find them more in harmony than on any other question. In vain then will we search in either Testament for an example or a command authorizing us to regard as necessary or even proper, the asking anything for those beloved souls "who have departed this life in God's true faith and fear." We will find in the sacred pages many exhortations to prayer; and important subjects are pointed out in great variety for the employment of devotional hours. Supplications for all sorts and conditions of men are enjoined. The old and the young; those that rejoice, and those that mourn; those that rule, and those that obey; unbelievers and Christians; the evil and the good; all these and many other divisions of human society are in their turn recommended to our pious attention; but it is always with a reference to the condition of those who still dwell on the earth, not of those whose bodies already sleep in the dust. We are taught to supplicate for the wicked, that they may be converted, and for the righteous, that they may abound yet more and more in all faith, and love, and godliness *whilst they are in this present world*; but neither for the wicked, that they may be pardoned, nor for the righteous, that they may grow more and more in happiness when they have been taken away. *A gradual advancement of the living towards perfection in grace* is a frequent theme in the apostolic requests unto the Lord; but in the entire Word of God from cover to cover we will not find a single passage in which the inspired

writers ever distinctly ask for gradual advancement of the departed towards a perfection in glory. "Peace and love from God the Father" is the opening or closing desire of several epistles to the *existing* or *living* members of the different churches; but "peace," and "rest," and "refreshment," and "light" is never once wished to be given to the departed Christians—on the contrary, *they* are expressly and in very words declared to possess rest, and to be at rest and in peace. How is it possible that the consolations of prayers for *peace*, light, refreshment, and rest for the faithful departed are so wholly wanting in those precious pages of "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort," and in the teaching of "the Man of Sorrows," who was *so* "acquainted with grief"? Did the Father forget to speak of them in His Word? Did the holy and blessed Jesus, His Son, forget to teach us so coveted a principle? Were the apostles so heartless, if they heard this from the Holy Spirit, who was to teach them afresh, by way of remembrance, "all things whatsoever that the Lord Jesus had told them," that they both suppressed the teaching, and refused to give the benefit even of their own prayers for those converted by them, and departing this life under their very eye? Could the great Paul solemnly assure the Christian world that "he had not shunned to declare unto them *the whole Gospel of Christ*," and yet have paid such indifferent attention to the Divine Teacher, while learning the Gospel, that he never listened to catch, that he might impart, instruction in the duty and propriety of living survivors praying for departed loved ones? How shall we understand the absence of the most positive teaching from the Divine Scriptures on a subject that touches our hearts so deeply, and with which our hearts are more constantly concerned than almost any other, and that is, our beloved dead, and if we may do anything to relieve or advance them in the intermediate state?

In the Divine Scriptures are no prayers for the departed and no warrant that we may presume so to pray.

In post-apostolic days, beginning with St. Clement of Rome as one must, there is not a hint in his writings of any

such thing as *praying for the dead*, but very decided evidence against it. The same is true of the writings of Ignatius. In Polycarp, Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Hegisippus, Theophilus of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Minutius Felix, Hippolytus, and Clement of Alexandria not a single word of such prayers, but most positive teaching against it.

In his *Apologies*, especially his first, Justin Martyr, when he pleaded for toleration for the Christian religion before the emperors, used the opportunity thus afforded him for speaking out fully and plainly. Hence the free, frank, and communicative character of his *Apologies*. Knowing the emperors had heard the Christian assemblies' rites and teachings misrepresented, he tells them in detail of the proceedings in their worshipping gatherings; what books were read; what the character of the sermons preached; what the nature of their prayers, even entering into some of the very petitions used; in what attitude of body they were offered; in what places of the service the ministers were accompanied by the people, and in what parts he officiated alone; what were their sacraments: what was the mode of administering the sacrament of Baptism; what promises they made at it, and what benefits they believed themselves to receive by it; what was the Eucharist; what its ceremonial; for whom it was lawful to partake of it, and what were the blessings to be derived from it (*Apol.*, 1st, chap. 61, 65, 66; also Blunt on *Early Fathers*, pp. 132, 133.)

In these *Apologies* we shall not discover the slightest appearance of any desire or purpose, on Justin's part, to conceal or deceive, but on the other hand we do see everywhere indicated the most earnest wish to conciliate and deserve confidence by the most frank exposition of the perfect innocence and simplicity of the Christian ritual, and by opening to these emperors a full knowledge of the sacraments. Justin Martyr, like others of the fathers of the early Church, well knew the danger to himself personally and to his own Christian character, as well as to the precious faith of the divine Lord, if he had kept back any fact in an appeal or apology, which he declared to be a full and truthful one. Consequently so

careful was he against any concealment that he expressly tells the emperors that the cruelty visited upon the Christians was the result of ignorance of their religion on the part of their enemies, and expresses it as his principal desire to remove that ignorance that there might not be this plea, at least, for their further persecution. With these facts before us we can better understand the full and explicit description of the mode of celebrating the Holy Eucharist in the Christian Catholic Church in his day, as detailed by Justin Martyr in his *First Apology* (chapters 65-67). If any service for the *dead* had been taught or accepted as part of the Church's deposit of faith, we naturally would expect to find the fact, both of the practice recognized and for what in behalf of the dead supplications were made, detailed by Justin here. But no mention was made of the dead, or even allusion to them in this or any other service of the Church explained by him. Here, then, is historic witness that up through Justin's time the Catholic Church of Christ in conformity, as it evidently supposed itself to be, to the Divine Scriptures, never used any prayers *for* or *to* the dead. Will it be said Justin, on the score of the "Secret Discipline," quietly suppressed a knowledge of this practice in question from the Pagan emperors? What was to be gained by a suppression of this practice, and yet, being so explicit concerning the more sacred ordinance—the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist? But if suppression of anything done or taught in the early Catholic Church were a practice among the early Christians, how shall we be able to reconcile such conduct with Pliny the Younger's testimony, after a careful examination into the conduct and principles of the Christians, "everywhere [then] spoken against"; a part of which *testimony*, *ipissimis verbis*, was this, that "*they bind themselves* by a solemn oath *not to be guilty* of ANY *fraud*, NEVER TO FALSIFY THEIR WORD, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it." (*Plinii Epp.*, Lib. x., Ep. 97.)

These *Apologies* of Justin are exceedingly valuable in the

study of the formation of the early liturgies, in which, also, *originally* there was no mention whatever of the dead.

The most positive evidence that the early Christians never prayed for the departed is to be found in a large collection of facts and passages from all the fathers before the time of Justin. So far chronologically by the rule of St. Vincent of Lerins (which is, that "within the Catholic Church itself we must take great care that we hold that which has been *believed everywhere, always, and by all men*; for that is truly and properly Catholic"), praying for the dead finds no support.

Not a particle of evidence, to sustain the practice from Justin's time back to the days of the Apostles. In fact, to extend the scope of time covered by this assertion there is no evidence in behalf of prayers for or to the dead before the time of Tertullian, A.D. 200.

The very first mention of such prayers comes from Tertullian himself, a host of learned authors of all the churches admitting this. But whether they admit it or not, such is the fact beyond all possible denial.

And it is only after Tertullian became a Montanist heretic that he breaks the silence of the whole ancient Catholic Church, up to his day observed, with this mention of prayers for the dead. When a Christian Catholic, he makes not the slightest reference whatever to such a practice as even then thought of in the Church, but has as such left the very strongest teaching negating such belief.

When, as a Montanist heretic, he does refer to it, he does not by a single syllable indicate that such a thing as praying for the dead was at all practised in the Catholic Church around him in the world, nor does he furnish a particle of evidence, in all his extant works, which would preclude the supposition that such a practice was one of the peculiar notions, or outgrowths of, or appropriations from, the old Pagan notions, by his own heretical Montanistic sect. (See Tertull. *De Anima*, c. lviii., and Bp. Kaye's *Tertullian*.) He really appears to attribute his views to the teaching of Montanus, the head of his sect. All the evidence we

have from Tertullian on prayers for the dead is his simply,—and without citing or adducing a single warrant from recognized sources of evidence,—making a point against second marriages (which he considered and pronounced to be adulterous), by attempting to show that the woman or man once married, “prays,” as he says, “for the soul of his [or her] deceased partner, that he or she may have fellowship together *in the first resurrection*.” And from this point of his teaching he proceeds to ridicule (a weapon of which he was not always a scrupulous master) the idea that the husband married a second time can come with acceptance before the Lord to “*commemorate*,” as he says, “*two wives*” in prayer,—the whole of his testimony on this point looking as if the views of prayers for the dead he held originated largely in his own mind, and were fabricated to sustain a hobby—and a flat contradiction as it is of the teaching of our Divine Lord and his Apostles—that a second marriage was adulterous.

Where did Tertullian get his authority for breaking the death-like silence of the ages before him in the primitive Catholic Church, with his ideas of such prayers? He himself answers this question. After naming several customs of discipline and ceremonial usages, *including prayers for the dead* (but not, however, any matters of *faith*),—which customs for the most part are now repudiated by all the branches of the Church, Tertullian adds: “If for these and other regulations you demand the law of the Scriptures *none can be found*; *tradition* will be held up before you as originating, *usage* as confirming, and *faith* as practising them (Tertull., *De Corona*, c. iii., and iv.). He nowhere asserts or claims *praying for the dead* to be an *apostolic* tradition. And to show what little respect his “tradition,” “usage,” and “faith” are entitled to or receive there is no Church, Anglican, Greek, or Roman, and no Christian of any type or school that accepts Tertullian’s views on praying for the dead, or his forms or phraseology of such prayers, or that does not in a positive way scout his sentiments entirely. Then what is his opin-

ion worth? He can be cited only for such a practice as he taught or indulged, because his "tradition," "usage," and "faith" are urged as that behind which he would sustain himself; if, therefore, he be rejected as a witness and his views of prayers for the dead be universally repudiated, as they are, it follows that, in repudiating the practice as he presents it, he himself is rejected, and in rejecting him we reject the prop, or first foundation writer, on whom the practice rests for its start in the ancient days of the Church Catholic. Tertullian's works, Bishop Kaye on *Tertullian*, Ackerman's *Christian Elements in Plato*, and the superb Bampton Lectures for 1886, by the Rev. Dr. Charles Biggs, on "The Christian Platonists of Alexandria," are works of necessary study on our subject.

Tertullian when speaking of his prayers for the dead, *i. e.*, as he refers to the practice, says they were made at the customary *annual* oblation of the commemorative "*thanksgiving*" for souls "already received into the *presence* of the Lord." What therefore I have briefly given concerning Tertullian shows that, his never having given an intimation of such prayers when a Catholic father, but referring to them only when a Montanist heretic and excommunicate from the Church, then speaking of such a view of the practice as no Church and no individual Christian anywhere accepts and follows; and his confessing, evidently when challenged by Church people to give Scripture proof and warrant for his teaching about prayers for the dead, that no such Scripture proof could be found, makes his testimony utterly valueless, because absolutely false.

His testimony concerning the *commemorating* the *pious* dead," by "an annual" oblation of "*thanksgiving*,"—to use his very words, is not inconsistent with the essence and spirit of the *Scriptural* religion of the Christian Catholic Church. But that he ever taught that prayer was offered as a generally prevailing practice, or as being *helpful* to the dead, there is nothing in his writings to warrant.

Nay, in several places, he rather strongly negatives, inferentially, such teaching. And the scope of the prayers

for the dead he refers to and uses is that the departed righteous "may have part in the *first* resurrection, not at all for any change in their condition, either as being released from sin, or advanced in any way, between death and the first resurrection, but only, as I say, that they may come back to enjoy the millennium, and not be detained till the second resurrection after the millennium when the final judgment and doom are fixed for the wicked. But even in this view Tertullian's teachings flatly contradict the most express teachings of our Lord and the Holy Apostles, which constitute the sweetest consolation of the Christian religion, viz., the divine right guaranteed to every faithful soul, of coming back with Christ as "His first-fruits," with no mention or hint of any prayer as being at all needed to secure it for the departed righteous, or hindering their coming if such prayers be not offered.

Tertullian's prayers are all given an application or limitation which could never have been a Catholic practice because they exclude souls whose offence in Tertullian's eye—I refer to monogamy—is, by express statement on the Divine page, no offence whatever in the eye of the Divine Master and Judge. For these reasons weighed with the additional facts that no Christian writer before him mentions or even faintly alludes to such a thing as prayers for the dead, but *per contra* some of them do furnish evidence which makes it impossible to our believing for a moment there was anywhere observed such a practice in their day—I say for these reasons this testimony of Tertullian is simply and justly entitled to no credit, and his whole position therefore impossible of defence.

It is important to remember that this very writer, who is the first to introduce the mention of prayers for the dead, has left behind him on record this testimony against any prayers benefiting the departed soul: "We therefore maintain that *every* soul, whatever be its age on quitting the body, *remains unchanged* in the same *until* the time shall come when the *promised perfection* shall be realized in a state only tempered to the measure of the peerless angels."

Here positively declaring his belief that in the state intermediate to death and the full fruition of bliss in heaven after the great resurrection, the soul does and can experience no change;—so, thereby, he sets forth that his idea of prayers for the dead was simply that of commemorative *thanksgiving*, as he indeed so styles these prayers, and not in any sense, as recognizing any compensatory discipline which prayers can improve to the souls, or souls continue to suffer under, if no prayers be offered.

Scholars charge Tertullian with self-contradictions—this may be a sample; or to his “very obscure style,” which is a criticism that the eminent father, Lactantius passes upon him, may be attributed this seeming contradiction. But of one thing we can have no doubt, that it is only after having heretically forsaken the Christian Catholic Church and under his heretical following he issues the tractates in which, exclusively, we find his references to prayers for the dead. It is evident therefore that he is not the authority upon whom Christians can justify themselves in adopting such a clearly-to-be-traced pagan-born practice as praying for the dead, a practice which the Jews brought back from Babylon as a gross corruption of their religion; which our Divine Lord severely denounced in them as among the corrupting “traditions of men”; which some modern Jewish scholars admit and repudiate as a corruption of their religion as given them by God, and which distinguished authorities like Dr. McCaul and others have most learnedly shown to form no part whatever of the inspired faith of Mosaic Judaism.

When we add that Tertullian held and taught that, in places where there were no clergy, any Christian *layman* could exercise the functions of the *priesthood*, by baptizing and consecrating and administering the Holy Eucharist, we can see that those who cite him as the foundation stone in the early centuries of the Church for prayers for the dead, could be and should be held to both cite and follow him, for *laymen* as such, under certain conditions, being warranted in exercising all the more sacred functions of the priesthood. I think we will be quite justified in heeding this sound

Catholic advice of St. Jerome: "Read Origen, *Tertullian*, Novatus, Arnobius, Apollinaris, and others of the ecclesiastical writers, but with this *caution*, that we should make choice of that which is good, but take heed of embracing that which is not so; according to the Apostle who bids us prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good." (*Hier. Ep.*, 76, *ad Tranquil.*)

By St. Jerome's advice Tertullian cannot stand as a witness in favor of the practice under review.

But Tertullian speaks of the harmless "annual commemorative thanksgivings" for the holy examples of the righteous dead, and is followed by St. Cyprian, who explicitly connects Tertullian's name with the practice. Strange that Cyprian should still consider him as his "master," as he styled him, even after he became an excommunicated heretic. Yet so it seems he does. But he only follows him in the idea of "commemorative thanksgivings" for the holy dead. As neither of these authors by word or hint asserts that prayer for the dead was of universal adoption in the primitive Church, the conclusion becomes reasonable that, as these two men represented one branch of the Church, the African, therefore these "commemorations" may be said to be, at best, but a provincial practice belonging to the African Church alone, because found only there. And these facts throw a great deal of light on the early liturgies, in which at first no mention of or allusion to the dead had place, then into which later came commemorative thanksgiving for the righteous dead, then later still actual prayers for the dead, among which we find included the name of the very blessed Virgin Mary herself, as well as the *martyrs*. To show this process of *development* in those liturgies, and to show it was a development by corruption, we need only cite the fact that, as we now know and have them, these old offices could never have been known to the great and courtly Bishop of Hippo, St. Aurelius Augustine, for the latter says in his Sermon 17: "It is an *insult* to the martyrs that we should pray for them, for we ought rather to commend ourselves to their prayers."

Now it is a fact, and as we all well know, that the early liturgies do all thus "insult" the martyrs, for every one of them *pray for* the martyrs. All doctrinal development in the ancient Church, because ignoring the Scriptural and so the Divine injunction "to contend for the faith," with this strong adverbial phrase added, "*once and for all* delivered to the saints," has been a development in and to corruption. Hence as all the evidence—and in its details it is voluminous and most overwhelmingly against the practice, and from every source—goes to sustain the charge that, from some individual heretical teaching, prayers for the dead take their start, and in gradual progress of *apostatical* perversion of the truth, they pass from the harmless thankful commemoration of the faith and early examples of the righteous dead into praying for them, this last in turn to be again so changed that the righteous dead are no more prayed *for*, but prayed *to*, or invoked in behalf of the living; and the intercessory prayers of the living for the dead limited to the half wicked and half good, or, in other words, to the half-saved Christians; and finally to the altogether wicked and godless souls also, *for such souls* are distinctly, though in defiance of all Scripture, and even of the testimony of Tertullian and St. Cyprian, made objects of these prayers by the here most certainly misguided and fallible Augustine and Chrysostom—not, it is true, on the supposition that they may thereby be ultimately saved, but that they may have help to *endure their eternal torments*.

As the Roman Catholic Church has placed seventy or more passages of St. Augustine's writings in her Expurgatory Index, I think we can feel ourselves safely under the approval of God if we place this teaching of both these noted fathers in the Expurgatory Index of the primitive Catholic faith.

If possible, our closing witness gives us yet more remarkably strong evidence on the subject of this paper, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 4th century. He says: "*Many*" in the Church *opposed* the then insinuated practice of praying for the dead. He attempted to "persuade" [his own word] to its accept-

ance "by an illustration"—again his own words—or argument, which I think, by every one who has studied it, must be pronounced to be absurdly puerile, and in no possible sense a proper representation of the relation God bears to men. Cyril's presentation and defence of this practice is that these prayers are not made for the righteous departed alone, such as we exclusively find them to be in the earlier of the early liturgies, but are made equally for "sinners," for those who die in unforgiven sins. In other words, Cyril's teaching is a form of Purgatory that is repudiated in the official teaching of the Church of Rome. So little is he regarded as setting forth correctly the primitive notion of prayers for the dead, that Dr. Pusey, the late Cardinal Newman, but then Dr. Newman, and Mr. Keble, when conjoint editors of Cyril's works in the Oxford edition of the fathers, all united in rejecting this evidence of Cyril as really falsifying the teaching of the Church Catholic before him. Their note being, in part, in these words: "St. Cyril, *by himself*, as little proves the latter [*i. e.*, praying in the Eucharistic rite for departed sinners] as Tertullian that the Son of God is not from eternity." (Oxford Ed., *St. Cyril*, p. 275, note "a.") Cyril further makes this false use of his idea of prayers for the dead, by teaching most unmistakably the *invocation of saints*—a thing most solemnly warned against by St. Chrysostom and others of the fathers. But Newman, Pusey, and Keble agreed in this judgment on Cyril's teaching concerning the *Holy Eucharist* and prayers in relation to the departed: that it was Cyril's "private and *erroneous* explanations," the very words of their *note*; therefore, along with Tertullian's heresy in denying the co-eternity of God the Son with God the Father, they set this particular teaching of Cyril aside as false and uncatholic.

It is remarkable, however, that St. Cyril never presumed to give, in defence of his particular and peculiar teaching on prayers for the dead, a single passage from or reference to Holy Scripture, nor does he say one word about its having been generally adopted and observed in the Church from the earliest ages before him—proofs which he hardly could

have forborne alleging (the most convincing and silencing as they must have been), rather than confine his defence and proof to an illustration, the most absurd and actually foolish, as I think the universal sentiment must be concerning it. Had he felt that such Scriptural and primitive Catholic evidence stood ready to serve him, beyond doubt he would have seized and presented it with avidity, for, let us not forget, he was thrown upon the defence of his teaching on this question by, as he says, "the opposition of *many*"; and he did actually attempt to defend his teaching. Again: he himself had laid down the sacred rule, *ipsissimis verbis*, that nothing was to be accepted as *Christian truth* save what could be clearly established by Holy Scripture; and he even commended his own teaching to the same inspired test and touchstone (*Catech. Mystag.*, iv., p. 30, Oxford ed.). How then shall we reconcile with this rule of St. Cyril, the fact that he attempted to defend the corrupt practice of praying both for the righteous and the unrighteous dead, when the evidence carefully *studied* will most certainly convince any one that such a practice was not only not originally any part of the Church's teaching, but that the strongest positive evidence is presented from the ancient Church against praying *for ANY* of the dead? How shall we reconcile Cyril with these facts, for facts they most certainly are, unless study and evidence be a delusion. There can, I think, be but one answer, and that is that he may have derived his defence of these prayers from the Apocryphal or Deutero-Canonical books. And yet this cannot be possible, for in his cataphetical instructions to his candidates for Holy Baptism he distinctly repudiates entirely the whole of the Apocryphal books, and enjoined receiving the twenty-two books of the Old Testament just as my Church receives them to-day. So we see that to reconcile Cyril on this point is an impossible thing to do. Cyril sets forth his peculiar teaching on our subject, yet without a single appeal to, or proof from, the Word of God—a confession this that in that Word he could find nothing to serve him. Had he believed that the case so often cited of St. Paul and

Onesiphorus, was one of prayers by the Apostle for the departed Onesiphorus he would have seized it hastily, and thereby silenced all opposition, but he knew, what we well know to-day, that the sentiment of the early Church was that, Onesiphorus was at the time *living*—as St. Chrysostom, and Theodoret before him, assert he was—when St. Paul uttered the prayer—"The Lord reward him in that day," and sending greeting to his household, yet not mentioning *him*; a thing this same Apostle also did in the case of the household of Stephanus, when, as we are expressly told afterwards incidentally in Scripture, Stephanus was *living*.

It is no slight evidence of the comparative newness of praying for the dead and the generally recognized fact that it was no part of the Christian religion as taught by the Holy Jesus and His Apostles that, in Jerusalem, the mother of all the Christian Church, "*many*" opposed Cyril's teaching the right of such prayers; that there "*many*" did not, and would not, pray for the dead, as Cyril admits.

As long as a man's faith is exposed to the temptations and trials of *this* life, he may well pray God to have mercy on him and turn from his soul the evils he most justly has deserved; but when his faith has by death been placed beyond the danger of falling, then surely "Jesu have mercy on him"; "Let light, refreshment, rest, and peace descend upon him," are but words of pure unbelief, and infidel to the very express precious words and promises of the Lord Jesus Himself. The Pagan *Requiescat in pace* sounds far more full of doubt about the soul for which it is said, and far less full of comfort, too, than the Christ-believing teaching of the *Requiescit* of the New Testament—the very word of God Himself, and attested by the "even so" of the Holy Spirit, as the Divine judgment and benediction on *all who* die in the Lord; and this benediction not said over them centuries, or even one year, or one month after death, when any prayers can be had for them, but pronounced by Almighty God upon them instantly as the soul wings its flight to Him who gave it.

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin"—

sin of any dye, iniquity, transgression, trespass, unrighteousness, rebellion, faults of any sort, crimes, corruptions, depravity, omissions and neglects of duty, departures from the law and love of God, backslidings of the most ungrateful character—all this is included, for it says “ALL *sin*.”

It is the immense power and value of this “cleansing blood” of Jesus Christ that is the living and dying Christian’s assurance that “there is therefore now no condemnation” for him here and hereafter, and so no need whatever, after death, of another’s prayers. Hence the consistent silence of the entire Word of God concerning any intercession for the dead; while it abounds in the sweetest expressions of Divine care and tender guardianship for the sleeping dust of the faithful, and the most clear assurances of the earned *rest* of those souls that have died in the Divine Cleanser from all sin, the adorable and precious Jesus, the Giver of immortal life.