PRAYER FOR THE DEPARTED IN THE FIRST FOUR CENTURIES.

To pray for the departed seems to be, in the last resort, an instinct of natural piety. Men who have grasped the continuity of human life before and after death, and believe in the efficacy of prayer, are moved by natural affection to remember in their prayers the souls of friends and relatives who, though dead to the world, are still alive in the sight of God. Thus when prayer for the dead first appears among the Jews, it is connected with faith in the Resurrection. The epitomist of Jason of Cyrene’s lost work on the Maccabees points out that Judas Maccabaeus, in providing for a sin-offering to be made for certain Jews who had fallen in the war, ‘took thought for a resurrection; for if he were not expecting that they which had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead.’

It might have been supposed that the Church, with her living hope of immortality, her fuller knowledge of the condition of the dead, and her strong sense of corporate union with departed members of Christ, would from the first have commemorated her dead, both in private devotions and at the Eucharist. Yet the first century has scarcely any evidence to offer upon the subject. The New Testament contains but one passage which can fairly be construed as a prayer for the dead. Early post-canonical writers are equally reticent. The long liturgical context in the letter of Clement, based, as Bishop Lightfoot at once perceived, on the Eucharistic Prayer of the

1 2 Macc. xii 43 f. The epitomist proceeds: ὅπει υἱει εὐσεβῆς ἡ ἱκτίνη, 5θεν πείρας τῶν τεθνηκότων τῶν ἐξελασμῶν ἐκοσμάτως, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀπολύθηραι, for which the Vulgate strangely gives: sancta ergo et salubris cogitatio pro defunctis exorare, ut a peccato solvereatur. See Berger Histoire de la Vulgate p. 23.
2 2 Tim. i 18 δόθη αὐτῷ (sc. τῷ Ὤσορόφῳ) ὁ Κύριος εἰρήν θλίων παρά Κύριον ἐν ἁλίῳ ἡμῖν, where the context perhaps suggests that Onesiphorus was dead when the letter was written.
contemporary Roman Church, and containing petitions for all sorts and conditions of living men both within and without the Christian brotherhood, makes no reference of any sort to the Christian dead. Nor are they mentioned in the Eucharistic forms of the Didache, unless we may regard them as included with the living in the petitions: συναχθήτω σοι ἡ ἐκκλησία ἀπὸ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς εἰς τὴν σὴν βασιλείαν . . . μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῆς ἐκκλησίας σον τοῦ οἴκου οὐκ οὖν πουρόδι καὶ τελεῖν σας αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ σοι, καὶ σώναζον αὐτὴν κ.τ.λ. 1

This lack of evidence continues until past the middle of the second century. But it would be easy to exaggerate its significance. The commemoration of the Christian dead is not a subject likely to have found a place in the letters of Ignatius, the apologies of Justin, or the polemics of Irenaeus. The letter of the Church of Smyrna on the martyrdom of Polycarp promises better things, and in one passage seems to be on the point of supplying the information which is sought. 'We laid his bones', the writers say, 'in a convenient place,' adding: ἔθα ως δυνατόν ἡμῖν συναγωγέονες ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ χαρᾶ παρέξει ό κύριος ἐπιτελεῖν τὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου αὐτοῦ ἡμέραν γενέθλιον, εἰς τῇ τοῦ προηθηκότος μνήμην καὶ τῶν μελλόντων δοκησίν τε καὶ ἐτοιμασίαν. 2 It is clear from this that the natalicia of martyrs were kept as early as A.D. 155; the mention of ἀγαλλιάσις and χαρά suggests the anniversary agape and perhaps the commemorative Eucharist, but it would be unsafe to press either point.

Meanwhile the inscriptions on Christian tombs speak with a less uncertain voice. Early dated inscriptions containing prayers for the dead are rare, but De Rossi produces from the cemetery of Callistus one belonging to the year 268 or 289 which has the words MARCIANE VIBAS INTER SANCTIS. 3 The cemetery of Domitilla yields the simpler and perhaps earlier ΖΗΧΗϹ ΕΝ ΘΕΩ, VIBAS IN PACE. 4 Other forms which occur in the Roman

1 Did. 9f. Both in their comprehensiveness and in their vagueness these petitions resemble the Anglican forms, 'that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom': 'that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation,' etc.

2 Mart. Polyc. 18. It is instructive to compare the later Pionian vītā, c. 20 προλογίον ἄρων ὑπὲρ τοῦ Βασιλέων.

3 Inscr. Chr. i p. 16.

catacombs are vivas in Spiritu sancto, spiritus tuo in refrigerio (or in pace et in Christo, or requiescat in Deo), spiritum tuum Deus refrigeret. In the catacomb of Priscilla there is the epitaph:

vos, precor, o fratres, orare huc quando venisti,
et precibus totis Patrem Natumque rogatis,
sit vestrae mentis Agapes came meminisse
ut Deus omnipotens Agapen in saecula servet.'

Another person who is commemorated 'Meruit titulum inscribi, ut quique de fratribus legerit roget Deum ut sancto et innocenti spiritu ad Deum suscipiatur.' This may not be very early; but the epitaph of Avircius Marcellus, written by himself within the second century, contains a similar appeal for the prayers of the passing Christian, which was meant to bear fruit after the death of the writer:

tauθ' ὃ νοῦν ἐβδαίοθ' ὑπὲρ [αὐτοῦ] πᾶς ὁ σωμψός.3

Avircius had visited Rome, and may have borrowed from a Roman monument this form of request to survivors. It is certainly remarkable that nothing of the same kind occurs among the numerous inscriptions on Christian tombs in Phrygia collected by Sir W. M. Ramsay.4 But if monumental testimony is scarce in the East, the literature of the time supplies evidence of the use both of prayers for the departed and of commemorative agapae or Eucharists. In the Acts of Paul and Thecla,5 Queen Tryphaena is solicited by her deceased daughter in a dream to beg the prayers of Thecla for her removal to the abode of the just (Ἰνα μετατεθῇ εἰς τοῦ δίκαιου τόπου). Upon this Tryphaena calls Thecla and says, Τέκνων μου δεύτερον Θέκλα, δεύτερο πρόσευκαί ὑπὸ τοῦ τέκνου μου, ἵνα ἔσται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, and Thecla, without hesitation (μηδὲν μελλήσασα), prays for Falconilla's salvation. The Leucian Acts of John represents the Apostle as celebrating the Eucharist at a tomb on the third day after death: τῇ οὖν ἡμέρᾳ ἐθνεν... παραγίνεται εἰς τὸ μνήμα τρίτην ἡμέραν ἔχονς τῇ Δρουσιανῆς, ὡς ἢρων κλάσοσαν ἐκεῖ.6 Thecla's prayer for the unbaptized dead finds a remarkable parallel in the prayer of Perpetua for her little brother Dinocrates, who is brought by her

3 Ramsay Cities and Bishops of Phrygia ii pp. 733, 738.  
4 No. 387 (Cities ii p. 534) is scarcely an exception, as Ramsay points out.  
5 Lipsius-Bonnet ii 1 p. 186.  
6 Lipsius-Bonnet i p. 255 f.
intercessions from a state of misery into one of comfort and enjoyment: ‘Dinocratem [video] mundo corpore, bene vestitum, refrigerantem . . . et satiatus accessit de aqua ludere more infantium gaudens.’

It is at Carthage, the scene of Perpetua’s martyrdom and perhaps the home of her childhood, that prayers and offerings for the faithful dead are first seen to take a recognized place in the services of the Church. Whether in North Africa Montanism helped to mature a movement which in other provinces of the Empire was still at its beginnings, must remain uncertain; but our knowledge of Carthaginian practice in this matter comes from the later writings of Tertullian, which were composed under Montanistic influence. Thus in the De Anima we read of the dead being, in the interval between death and burial, ‘laid to rest by the presbyter’s prayer’ (c. 51 ‘cum in pace dormisset et morante adhuc sepultura interim oratione presbyteri componeretur’); in the De exhortatione castitatis it is urged as an argument against second marriages that the prayers and annual Eucharists, which affection requires the widower to offer for the soul of a deceased wife, will create an impossible situation if he takes a second (c. 51 ‘duae uxorres eundem circumstant maritum, una spiritu, alia in carne; neque enim pristinam poteris odisse, cui etiam religiosiorem reservas affectum ut iam receptae apud Dominum, pro cuius spiritu postulas, pro qua oblationes annuas reddis. Stabis ergo ad Dominum cum tot uxoribus quot in oratione commemoras, et offers pro duabus et commendabis illas duas per sacerdotem’). The same objection is raised to the second marriage of widows in the De Monogamia (c. 10 ‘pro anima eius orat et refrigerium interim postulat ei et in prima resurrectione consortium, et offert annuis diebus dormitionis eius’).

In an earlier number of this JOURNAL I have called attention

1 Texts and Studies i 2 p. 74 f. (Passio S. Perpetuae, 7, 8). Dinocrates ‘no doubt had died unbaptized’; Augustine, who denies this (De anima ad Renatum i 10), was blinded by the desire to dispose of a disagreeable objection (ib. p. 29). On refrigerantem see below p. 513, note.

2 Texts and Studies i 2 p. 32 ff.

3 The oratio presbyteri in Tertullian’s time was perhaps not a precomposed form, but it is interesting to compare the orationes post obitum hominis of the Gelasian and the orationes in agenda mortuorum of the Gregorian Sacramentary.

4 J.T.S. iii p. 167.
to the special stress laid by the Carthaginian Church of the third century on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, adding, 'It is in keeping with this deepened sense of the reality of the Eucharistic commemoration that the Church in North Africa was the first Christian community, so far as we know, which offered the Eucharist for the benefit of the departed.' Even if the practice began with the Montanists, it must soon have become general among the Christians of Carthage, for Tertullian writes elsewhere in terms which imply that the Eucharist was offered as a matter of common custom at Christian burials and on the anniversaries of a death (De corona 3 oblationes pro defunctis, pro nataliciis, annua die facimus'). Cyprian, again, speaks of the offering of the Christian Sacrifice for the departed as having been regulated, and therefore approved in principle, by his predecessors. In Cyprian's own time to be remembered at the altar was evidently a highly valued privilege, and the discipline which withheld this privilege from offenders had become a formidable weapon in the hands of the bishop and presbyters of the Church. Such phrases as offerre pro aliquo, sacrificia pro aliquo (or pro dormitione alicuius) celebrare, apud altare Dei nominare in prece, deprecationem alicuius in ecclesia frequentare, are familiar to the readers of Cyprian, and present to the mind a picture of one side of Church life in Carthage during the third century which is impressive and well defined. We see the clergy and people surrounding the primitive altar: we hear the name of the deceased read out by the deacon, and the intercession offered for him by the bishop; we see the mourners go back to their homes comforted by the knowledge that their brother rests in the unity of the Church and in the peace of Christ. And when the anniversaria commemoratio of a martyr comes round, we catch the note of triumphant joy with which the Sacrifice is offered at his tomb.

1 Ep. i 2 'quod episcopi antecessores nostri religiose considerantes . . . censeunt ne quia frater excedens ad tutelam vel curam clericum nominaret, ac si quis hoc fecisset, non offerretur pro eo nec sacrificium pro dormitione eius celebretur'. See Hefele Councils (E. tr.) i pp. 86, 92; Benson Cyprian pp. 45, 92.

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It would be of great interest to know whether other Churches had by this time followed in the steps of Carthage. A passage in the Latin interpretation of Origen's commentary on Romans excites the hope that we have his testimony to a similar commemoration of the martyrs by the Church of Caesarea towards the middle of the third century. Rufinus represents him as refusing to decide between the readings χρειάζομαι and ινάρα in Rom. xii 13, since both subserve the purpose of edification: as to the latter, 'meminisse sanctorum sive in collectis solemnibus, sive pro eo ut ex recordatione eorum proficiamus, aptum et conveniens videtur.' But it has been doubted whether it is Origen who speaks here or Rufinus, and the question cannot be answered with certainty. The Latin commentary on Job which will be quoted further on, though perhaps Ante-Nicene, is not Origen's. Considering the speculative character of Origen's writings, 'his silence as to the prayers of the living for the dead is most remarkable,' especially when taken in connexion with the fact that he repeatedly alludes to the belief that the dead pray for the living. Yet Origen's silence is shared, so far as I have observed, by other writers of the third century, with the exception of those of North African extraction. To the witness of Tertullian and Cyprian I can add only a single sentence from Arnobius, who a few years before or after the end of the third century protests against the destruction of the churches on the ground that prayer is offered in them both for the living and for the dead ('cur immaniter conventicula [meruerunt] dirui? in quibus summus oratur Deus, pax cunctis et venia postulatur, magistratibus, exercitibus, regibus, familiaribus, inimicis, adhuc vitam degentibus et resolutis corporum vincione'). This reference to the intercession for the living and the dead in the liturgy compels us to believe that by the time of the last persecution the commemoration of the departed in the Eucharist had become so

1 Lommatsch vii 314 'memini in latini exemplaribus magis haberi: memorius sanctorum communicantes; verum nos nec consuetudinem turbamus, nec veritati praedicanimus, maxime cum utrumque conveniat edificationi.'
2 Sanday and Headlam Romans p. 362. I do not share the doubt, but it must be noted.
3 See below, p. 506.
4 Westcott in D.C.B. iv 135.
5 See hom. in Num. xxvi 6; hom. in Jos. xvi 5; de orat. 14.
general in the churches of the empire that an appeal could be made to it before the heathen world.

We must now retrace our steps in order to examine a group of witnesses by which more light may be thrown upon details of Church life and worship in the third century than we have been able to gain from the literary remains of the time. Reference has been made to the earliest of Church orders, the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.* The *Canons of Hippolytus* are scarcely less disappointing than the *Teaching*; the directions which they give for the celebration of the Eucharist contain no form of intercession for the living or the dead. One paragraph, however, recognizes the use of the memorial *agape*: *c. 33 i, 3* 'If an anamnesis is held for the dead, let them receive the mysteries before they sit down; and let it not be held on the first day [of the week]. After the offering, before they sit down, let the bread of exorcism be distributed to them.' More is to be learnt from Hauler's Verona fragments of the *Didascalia, c. 61*: 'in memorius congregantes vos, et sacrarum scripturarum facite lectiones et ad D(eu)m preces indesinenter offerite, et eam quae secundum similitudine(m) regalis corporis Chr(ist)i est regalem eucharistiam offerte tam in collectis vestris quam in coemiteriis et in dormientiu(m) exitione; panem mundum praeponentes qui per ignem factus est et per invocationem sanctificatur, sine discretione orantes offerite pro dormientibus.' Even in its Greek original, this order may not have been earlier than the middle of the

1 See above p. 501.
2 According to Funk the *Canons* belong to a much later period. See *J.T.S.* viii p. 307 ff.
4 The interesting passage in the *Commentary* on Job printed among the works of Origen (Lommatzsch xvi p. 238) may be cited here at length, as showing the mind of the ancient Church in its memorial festivals: 'nos non nativitas diem celebramus, cum sic dolorum atque tentationum introitus; sed mortis diem celebramus, utpote omnium dolorum depositionem atque omnia tentationum effugationem. Diem mortis celebramus quia non moriuntur hi qui mori videntur: propterea et memorias sanctorum facimus, et parentum nostrorum vel amicorum in fide morientium devote memoriag agimus, tam illorum refrigero gaudentes quam etiam nobis piam consummationem in fide postulantes. Celebramus nimium religiosos cum sacerdotibus convocantes, fideles una cum clero, invitantes adhuc egenos et prosperos, pupillos et viduas saturantes, ut fiat festivitas nostra in memoriam requiei defunctis animabus quarum memoria celebramus, nobis autem efficiatur in odorum suavitatis in conspectu aeterni Dei.' Whoever the writer of this Commentary may have been, his view of the *memoriae* is surely in the best spirit of the third century.

4 P. 85 f.
fourth century; but these directions may well represent, like the Hippolytean Canons, the practice of the third. With the peace of the Church and the conversion of the Empire the evidence, both literary and liturgical, becomes abundant. Eusebius tells us that the obsequies of Constantine were the occasion of a great act of intercession for the Emperor who had put an end to persecution. As his body lay before the altar, priests and people with many tears poured forth their prayers for his soul (λέος δὲ παμπληθῆς σὺν τοῖς τῷ θεῷ ἱερομένοις... τὰς εὐχὰς ὑπὲρ τῆς βασιλείας ψυχῆς ἀποδίδοτα τῷ θεῷ). Eleven years after Constantine’s death, Cyril bears witness to the permanent commemoration of the departed in the Liturgy of Jerusalem: εἰτα καὶ (i.e. after the commemoration of the saints) ἤπερ τῶν προκεκουμημένων ἀγίων πατέρων καὶ ἐπικόπων καὶ πάντων ἄσπος τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν προκεκουμημένων, μεγάλην δήσιν πιστεύοντες ἔσεσθαι τὰς εὐχὰς ὑπὲρ ἅν ἡ δήσις ἀναφέρεται, τῆς ἀγίας καὶ φροκαδεστάτης προκεκουμήνης θυσίας. Perhaps at the very time when Cyril was instructing his neophytes at Jerusalem, in the Delta Bishop Serapion was engaged in compiling the office-book which a happy discovery put into our hands some eight years ago. Here at length we find the actual words of a fourth-century liturgical intercession for the departed: § 1 parakalούμεν δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων τῶν κεκουμημένων, δὲν ἐστιν καὶ ἡ ἀνάμνησις. ἁγίας τὰς ψυχὰς ταῦτας, σὺ γὰρ πᾶσας γινώσκεις ἁγίαν πάσας τὰς ἐν Κυρίῳ κομμηθέντας καὶ συγκαταρθήσουσαν πάσας ταῖς ἁγίαις σου δινάμεσιν, καὶ δὸς αὐταῖς τόπον καὶ μονὴν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου. Still more interesting is the prayer which the Egyptian bishop provides for the burial of the dead. § 18 δέομεθα σε περὶ τῆς κομμῆσεως καὶ ἀναπαύσεως τοῦ δούλου σου τούτῳ

1 Wordsworth Ministry of Grace p. 29.
2 It is interesting to compare the form which these directions receive in the Apostolical Constitutions (vi 30): ἀπαραπτότοι δὲ συναφροίζεσθε ἐν τοῖς κομμητηρίοις την ἀνάγνωσιν τῶν ἱερῶν βιβλίων παρομένων καὶ πάλαι ὑπὲρ τῶν κεκουμημένων πατέρων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἀ' αἰώνιον ἁγίων, καὶ τῶν δαλαφῶν ὑμῶν τῶν ἐν Κυρίῳ κεκουμημένων, καὶ τὴν αὐτίσιν τὸν βασιλείου σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ δεκτὴν εὐχαριστίας προσφέρετε ἐν τῇ παρασκευῇ ὑμῶν καὶ ἐν τοῖς κομμητηρίοις, καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἐξόδοις τῶν κεκουμημένων πάλαι ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτῶν, ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ Κυρίου.
3 V. C. iv 71. 4 Catech. myst. v 9. 5 J.T.S. i pp. 106, 112.
6 Here followed the recitation of the names, for the next clause is preceded by the rubric μετὰ τὴν ὑποθολὴν τῶν ὀνόματων. See Brightman, ad loc. 7 J.T.S. i pp. 268, 275.
Another half-century brings us to the probable date of the Apostolical Constitutions. The liturgy of the eighth book, which may be taken to represent on the whole the liturgy of Antioch, recalls Cyril's account of the Jerusalem liturgy, but with the noteworthy difference that the great saints and the martyrs are included in one petition with the faithful generally, the Sacrifice being offered equally for all (c. 12 ετί προσφέρομεν σοι καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων τῶν ἀνάστησαν καὶ ἄγιοι, πατριάρχαι, προφῆται, . . . λακών, καὶ πάντων δὲ ἐπιστασθείς αὐτὸς τὰ ὅνομα). Explicit mention is made later in the same book of any person lately deceased who was to be commemorated: c. 41 ὁ διάκονος προσόθεσε καὶ ταῦτα . . . ὑπὲρ τῆς κοιμήσεως τοῦδε η τῆς ἡμέρας δεηθῶμεν, ὅπως ὁ φιλάνθρωπος θεὸς προσδεξάμενος αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀφήσῃ αὐτῷ πάν ἁμάρτημα ἐκούσσαι καὶ ἀκούσσαι καὶ θεος καὶ εὐμενής γενόμενος καταράζῃ εἰς χρόνον εὐσεβῶν ἀνεμένων. The bishop then offers a prayer to the same effect, and the form ends with a direction to solemnize with psalms, lessons, and prayer the third, ninth, and fortieth days after death, as well as the anniversary (ἐπιτελείσθω δὲ τρίτα τῶν κεκομιμημένων . . . καὶ ἐνατά . . . καὶ τεσσαρακοστά . . . καὶ εἰςαύλια ὑπὲρ μνειῶν αὐτῶν). It is added that such celebrations are of service only to the faithful; to give alms to the poor on behalf of others is futile; their condition remains what it was before death (ἡ γὰρ περιόντι ἐχθρὸν ἢν τὸ θέου, δήλου ὅτι καὶ μετάστατο). Lastly, the sixth book of the Constitutions repeats the directions of the Didascalia about cemetery commemorations and Eucharists.

The fourth century yields an abundance of literary evidence upon the subject of prayer for the departed. A few examples must suffice. In the picture of contemporary Church life which concludes the Panarion, Epiphanius writes: ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν τελευτησάντων, ἐξ ὅνομας τὰς μνήμας ποιοῦνται, προσευχὰς τελοῦντες καὶ λατρείας καὶ οἰκονομίας. More than once, both in his earlier

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1 Lagerde p. 257 f. Yet a little further on, in the deacon's proclamation, a distinction seems to be drawn: τῶν ἀγίων μαρτύρων μνημονεύσαντοι . . . ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐν πίστει ἀνασκευασμένων δεηθῶμεν.

2 Lagerde p. 274 ff.

3 C. 30 (Lagerde p. 124 f.). See above p. 506.

4 Panar. iii 2. 21.
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homilies delivered at Antioch and after he went to Constantinople, Chrysostom warmly commends prayers and offerings for the dead. Thus, in preaching on 1 Corinthians, he urges: Βοσθώμεν τοίς αὐτοῖς (sc. τοῖς κεκομιμένοις), καὶ κόπον ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐπιτελῶμεν. ἐλ γὰρ τοὺς πάθας τοῦ Ἰωβ ἐκάθαρεν ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς θυσία, τὰ ἀμφιβάλλεις εἰ καὶ ἡμῖν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀπελθόντων προσφέροντι γίνεται τις παραμοθία; . . . μὴ δὴ ἀποκάμουεν τοῖς ἀπελθοῦσι βοσθώτες, καὶ προσφέρουτε ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν εὐχάς. Similarly, in the later homilies on Philippians: εἰς εἰκή ταῦτα ἐνυμοθετήθη ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀποστόλων τὸ ἐπί τῶν φρικτῶν μυστηρίων μνήμην γίνεσθαι τῶν ἀπελθόντων ἱσασων αὐτοῖς πολὺ κέρδος γινόμενον, τολὴμ τὴν ἀφέλειαν. In the case of catechumens who die before receiving baptism, he recommends almsgiving: ἐνεστὶ πένησιν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν διδώναι ποιεῖν παραψυχὴν τὸ πράγμα· καὶ γὰρ παρ' ἄλληλον ἡμᾶς ἀφέλεσθαι βούλεσται ὁ θεός. The Historia Lausiaca has several instances of the use of a commemorative agape or Eucharist in the Egyptian monasteries, e. g. § 16 ἀρτοὺς ἀποφέρω, ἐπειδὴ ἀγάπη 3 ἐστὶ τού δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, καὶ αὐριον σαββάτου διαφάνειον χρεά τῶν προσφορῶν; § 22 συνέβη τοῦ μέν τὰ τεσσαρακοσία 4 ἐπιτελεύθαι, τοῦ δὲ τὰ τρίτα, παρὰ τῆς ἀδελφότητος. Such commemorations are forbidden in the case of two nuns who have committed suicide (§ 33). An interesting passage in the ‘Canonical Answers’ attributed to Timothy of Alexandria 5 regulates the practice of the Egyptian Church in this matter, directing that the Sacrifice shall be offered only where the suicide can be definitely traced to insanity. In the West the evidence comes chiefly from Milan and Carthage. About 387 Ambrose writes to a friend who is mourning the loss of a sister: ‘non tam deplorandam quam prosequendam orationibus reor, nee maestificandam lacrimis tuis, sed magis oblationibus animam eius Domino commendandam arbitror.’ No one who has read the Confessions will have for-

1 Hom. in 1 Cor. xli 5.  
2 Hom. in Phil. iii 4.  
3 E. C. Butler H.L. p. 193: ‘it may be questioned whether the Agapé in the present passage be not identical with the Eucharistic Celebration.’  
4 Ῥακοσώτα is the reading of important MSS, but Abbot Butler prints τεσσαρακοσώτα, partly for textual reasons, partly because the Greek practice, ancient and modern, seems to have been to commemorate the departed on the fortieth day, the Western and Oriental on the thirty-fifth’ (H.L. p. 100).  
gotten the touching references which Augustine makes to the belief entertained upon this subject by his mother and himself; how Monnica on her death-bed ‘tantummodo memoriam sui ad altare fieri desideravit’; how Augustine and his friends fulfilled her last wish ‘in eis precibus quas tibi fudimus cum offerretur pro ea Sacrificium pretii nostrri, iam iuxta sepulcrum posito cadavere priusquam deponeretur, sicut illis [at Milan] fieri solet’; how, finally, the reader of the Confessions is besought to carry on the chain of prayer: ‘ut quotquot haec legerint, meminerint ad altare Tuum Monnicae famulae Tuae.’ It is pleasant to learn from Possidius that when Augustine’s own time came, the same pious care was bestowed upon himself. Of Augustine’s judgment on the efficacy of prayers for the dead more than one explicit record remains in his works; the following from the Enchiridion may be cited here: ‘Cum ergo sacrificia sive altaris sive quaecunque eleemosynarum pro baptizatis defunctis omnibus offeruntur, pro valde bonis gratiarum actiones sunt, pro non valde malis propitiationes sunt, pro valde malis etiamsi nulla sunt adiumenta mortuorum, qualescumque vivorum consolationes sunt; quibus autem prosunt, aut ad haec prosunt ut sit plena remissio, aut certe ut tolerabilior fiat ipsa damnatio.’

These remarks of Augustine, as well as those already quoted from Chrysostom, suggest that in the fourth century the question was being asked, ‘To what purpose is this expenditure of prayer and Eucharist upon the departed members of the Church?’ As a matter of fact, doubts were freely expressed upon the subject more than a generation before Augustine’s time. Before A.D. 350 Cyril of Jerusalem had heard the point debated. ‘I know many,’ he tells his neophytes, ‘who say, “What is a soul, leaving this world with sins or without them, profited by being remembered in the prayer?”’ He replies that in offering the supplications of the liturgy we offer Christ sacrificed for our sins, and thus propitiate God both for the dead and for ourselves. But the

1 Conf. ix 32, 36, 37.
3 Catech. myst. v 10 oida γάρ πολλοίς ταύτα λέγονται Τί δειλαι τα ἐξωτερικά ἁμαρτήματα διάσπασομεῖτ’ θυσία τοῦ κόσμου, ἢ ὁ μὲν ἁμαρτήματα, ἢ τις τῆς προσευχῆς μημονεῖς;
4 Idib. Χριστὸς ἴδωρα συμμετέχον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἁμαρτήματος προσφέρεται, εἰς εὐθυμίην ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τε καὶ ἣμῶν τῶν πιλασθείσων θεῶν.
question needed a more complete answer than it received from Cyril. A few years later the dissatisfaction which was felt came to a head in the outspoken words of Aerius of Pontus. Aerius condemned the practice of offering the Eucharist for the dead as at once irrational and mischievous: τίνι τῷ λόγῳ μετὰ θάνατον ὄνομάζετε ὄνοματα τεθνεῶσιν; εἰρήνεια γὰρ ὁ ζων, ἡ οἰκονομία ἐποίησε· τί ἀφεληθῆσαι ἐπὶ τεθνεῶσι; εἰ δὲ δῶς εὐχὴ τῶν ἐνταῦθα τοὺς ἐκεῖς ἄνθρωπος, ἀφ᾽ αὐτῶν ἡ μηδὲ ἀνθρωποεῖτο, ἀλλὰ ποιησάτω φίλους τινὰς δι᾽ αὐτοῦ βούλεται τρόπον, ἦτοι χρήματι πείσας, ἤτοι φίλους ἀξιώσας ἐν τῇ τελευτῇ, καὶ εὐχέσθωσαν περὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς μὴ τί ἔκει πάθη, μηδὲ τὰ ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ γενόμενα τῶν ἀνηκέστων ἀμαρτημάτων ἐκζητηθή.  

The retort of Epiphanius to this somewhat crude attack on the established practice of Christendom is temperate beyond his wont. The practice rests, he says, on the conviction that the departed members of the Church still exist, and live with Christ; to pray for them is not more futile than to pray for friends who are away upon a journey. And even if our prayers do not wholly cancel their sins, we may render service to them by praying. In the liturgy we name both the righteous and the sinful, seeking mercy for the latter, and honouring the former, while at the same time we distinguish between the relative holiness of the saints and the unapproachable purity and majesty of our Lord. In any case it is too late to attempt to change the inflexible rules of our Mother, the Church, who has ordained prayers and offerings for the dead (ἡ μήτηρ ἡμῶν ἡ ἐκκλησία εἴχε θεσμοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ κειμένους δίκτυος, μὴ δυναμένους καταλυθήναι).

Epiphanius knew himself to be on the winning side, and Aerius made so little impression on his own age that our knowledge of his name and opinions is perhaps due to the Panarion. If we can trust Epiphanius, he deserved to fail; in any case, there was

1 Eustathius of Sebaste, whose appointment to that See was, according to Epiphanius, the occasion of the outbreak of Aerius, was consecrated about A.D. 356.
2 Epiph. haer. 75, 2.
3 Ibid. 7 τί ἐν εἴπω τοῦτον προορισμένον; . . . οἰκονομία μὴν τοῦ παρόντος ὠς τοις ἀκαθάρτοις ζωῇ . . . ἀφελεί δὲ καὶ ἡ ἕκα τῶν [ἀκαθάρτων] μὴν ἀνθρωποεῖτο κ.τ.λ.
4 Aerius is mentioned also by the Latin heresiologists, Philaster (c. 72), Augustinian (c. 53), Isidore (c. 39), Paulus (c. 18), Honorius of Autun (c. 54); but their information, so far as it refers to Aerius himself, was probably derived from Epiphanius.
need of a stronger man and one of more saintly character to begin a successful crusade against a practice which perhaps was coeval with Christianity, and certainly had been making steady progress in the Church for two centuries and a half. The Aerians seem scarcely to have survived their founder; any remaining tendency to call in question the offering of prayers and Eucharists for the departed was effectually checked by the authority of the great leaders of Christian thought and life who flourished during the next fifty years.

This brief examination of the evidence of the first four centuries points to some results which it may be well to collect here.

1. Although prayer for departed friends may have been occasionally offered by individual Christians from the very first, there is nothing to show that the dead were commemorated by name, in agape or Eucharist, during the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic periods. Such commemorations probably began in the second century with the holding of memorial agape at the tombs of the martyrs and afterwards at those of other Christian dead. If the Eucharist was associated with the cemetery agape, whether it was held concurrently or immediately preceded the feast, the names of the dead may thus have found admission into the Eucharistic prayer. Early in the third century the Eucharist itself was, in North Africa at least, offered for the faithful departed, and before the end of the same century intercession for the dead seems to have been everywhere a familiar feature of the liturgy; while special celebrations of the Eucharist in memory of deceased individuals, in the cemeteries as well as in the churches, were advocated in contemporary manuals of Church life. The fourth century, with its assured freedom from persecution, its veneration for the martyrs, its growing sense of the greatness of the Mysteries and the unity of the Body of Christ, held still more firmly by

1 He was alive when Epiphanius wrote (cf. § 1 ὁ ἐν νησίῳ Ἰάννας ὁ ἀγαπητός ἐτοι καὶ ἐπέμνεν στήχος ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Κριστοῦ); his followers were numerous at first (§ 3 ὁ παπάς ὁ πρώτος ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Κριστοῦ) and, as Philaster seems to say, abounded in Pamphylia till near the end of the fourth century.

2 Dr. Keating (Agape and Eucharist. p. 156) suggests that the mortuary agape was originally in all probability a grafting, so to speak, of the Christian Agape upon the immemorial custom of funeral feasts.

3 It was the first care of the tyrant Maximin in 311 to find a pretext for stopping the meetings of Christians in the cemeteries (Eus. H. E. ix 3 πρώτον μὲν ἐναράξῃ ἡμᾶς τίς ἐν τοῖς κοιμητηρίαις συνέοιδος δεδομός παράτησα).
these commemorations; and notwithstanding the opposition of malcontents such as Aerius, and the reluctance of the worldly to burden themselves with the spiritual care of their dead, the practice of offering prayers, Eucharists, and alms for deceased members of the Church thenceforward established itself as an important factor in the Christian life both of East and West.

2. It may be that at first no attempt was made to analyse the purpose of these prayers and offerings. It was enough that by means of them the Church kept alive the memory of her departed members, and commended their souls and bodies to the keeping of Almighty God. The precise benefit to be reaped by the departed themselves was not clearly indicated; even towards the end of the fourth century, Chrysostom is content to speak of an undefined help or profit which they would receive from the prayers of the living. On the other hand, Tertullian, with the Western love of definiteness, already counts up the principal advantages to be gained by the dead; the prayers of the Church will bring them refrigerium, refreshment and rest after the toils of life, such as Lazarus found in the bosom of Abraham, and a part in ‘the first resurrection’. Forgiveness of sins was also expected to follow from these intercessions. No importance can be attached to the case of Falconilla or to that of Dinocrates; in both accounts we are dealing only with private speculations, which cannot be taken to reflect the general belief of the Church. The Church of the first four centuries was careful not to encourage prayer for any but such as had departed in the faith of Christ. But what of Christians who had passed away with sins committed after baptism? Might not prayers and Eucharists gain for them a remission more or less complete? The fourth century answered the question generally in the affirmative, attaching special weight in this connexion to the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Evidence to this effect has been found in the Catecheses of Cyril, in the Apostolic Constitutions, and in the Enchiridion of Augustine. Augustine works out the principle into a careful statement, in which the benefits received by the departed are graduated according to the class to which in the judgement of God they severally belong.

A middle course between this position and the vagueness of the early Roman vivas in pace is followed by the Egyptian bishop, Serapion. His petitions for a fuller sanctification of the soul after death, and its reunion with the body, will commend themselves to many who dare not be more explicit. One may be permitted to regret that so chastened and reasonable a form of intercession for the departed was not before the Reformers of the sixteenth century when they fixed the practice of the English Church. It is in great part the fear of over-definiteness, in regard to a sphere of life whose conditions are still so imperfectly known, which debars thousands of private Christians from the comfort of prayer for their dead, and whole communions from reciting the names of the faithful departed in the liturgy, after the example of the ancient Church.

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