

Abraham and his seed. We offer to Thee, O Lord, sacrifices and prayers, do Thou receive them in behalf of those souls whom we commemorate this day. Grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that life which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and to his seed.

It must be tolerably clear that at the period at which this chant took shape, both St. Michael and Abraham occupied a very prominent position in the minds of men with regard to the well-being of souls which had quitted this world. It is consequently interesting to find that in one of the very earliest known documents which deal with the question of an intermediate state and the power of intercessory prayer to ameliorate the lot of the departed, both Abraham and the Archangel St. Michael are introduced as the principal actors. This pseudepigraphic work, known as "the Testament of Abraham," is of somewhat uncertain date, but it is believed by its editor to have developed out of a writing of the second century after Christ.¹ It is hard to determine whether Jewish or Christian influences have predominated in its composition. But the following passage has in any case an interesting bearing on the question of the early origin of prayer for the dead :

And Abraham said to Michael, the chief-captain,

¹ It was published for the first time by Dr. Montague Rhodes James in the Cambridge Series, *Texts and Studies*, vol. ii, no. 2.