

we must in any case attach some importance to the fact that if prayer for the departed is not explicitly commended in the New Testament, there is certainly no word which either directly or by implication condemns it. By the time that we are in possession of a Christian literature sufficiently copious to allow us to see into the heart, and to understand something of the daily religious life, of the typical Christian of the early centuries, the practice of prayer for the dead has evidently taken deep root, and has become a matter of general observance.

The earliest unmistakable example of Christian prayer for the dead is probably that afforded by the famous Abercius monument discovered some years ago at Hieropolis in Upper Phrygia by Sir William M. Ramsay. The significant part of the inscription which alludes allegorically to many of the most distinctive mysteries of the Christian faith terminates with the line :

LET THE FELLOW-BELIEVER WHO UNDER-  
STANDS THESE WORDS PRAY FOR ABERCIUS.

So in all our copies runs the text of the inscription, and no modern tombstone could ask for the prayers of the faithful in terms more explicit. If any doubt could be felt of the significance of such language, it would be removed by the lettering of a *stele* partly copied from the Abercius monument, and assignable with certainty to the year 216 after Christ ;