

A COMPANION TO
DEATH, BURIAL,
AND REMEMBRANCE
IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND
EARLY MODERN EUROPE,
C.1300-1700



Edited by

PHILIP BOOTH & ELIZABETH TINGLE

A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early
Modern Europe, c.1300–1700

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Cover illustration: Pietà, Sizun parish church, Finistère, France. This Pietà was originally part of an early modern calvary in Kersanton granite, located in the parish close of Saint-Suliau church, Sizun.
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Philip Booth and Elizabeth Tingle

June 2020

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Abbreviations

AESC	<i>Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
AB	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
AfR	<i>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte</i>
AOGA	<i>Andreas Osiander d.A., Gesamtausgabe</i> , eds Gerhard Müller and Gottfried Seebaß, 10 vols (Gütersloh: 1975–1997)
BL	The British Library, London, UK
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis</i> , ed. A.P. Orbán, 353 vols (Turnhout: 1992)
EETS	Early English Texts Series
HER	<i>English Historical Review</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
MGH SS rer. Ger.	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorem Rerum Germanicarum</i>
MGH SS rer. Merov.	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorem Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (1844–55)
RHÉF	<i>Revue de l'Histoire de l'Eglise de France</i>
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
SCJ	<i>The Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
STC	Scottish Text Society
TNA	The National Archives, London, UK
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke</i> , kritische Gesamtausgabe, 128 vols (Weimar: 1883–1929)

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Introduction: Dying, Death, and Commemoration, 1350–1700

Philip Booth and Elizabeth Tingle

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.¹



In the Christian tradition, death was a punishment by God for the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. Banished from the Garden of Eden after eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, they were condemned to labour, until “you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”² But later in historical time, God sent his son Jesus Christ to earth to teach people how to overcome death and achieve eternal life, as witnessed in the gospels. Christ taught that if sinful humans would repent of their sins and love God, they would be saved from death, for as he said to Martha in the house of Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”³ The central narrative of Christian soteriology is the death of Christ himself, through crucifixion, and his resurrection from the dead three days later. Having triumphed over death, his purpose was to lead his followers to salvation. After Christ’s bodily ascension into heaven, the task of saving souls for eternity was passed to his church. The emphasis on Christ’s death and resurrection, and its representation in the eucharistic service, mean that death and commemoration lie at the very heart of Christianity.

The academic study of dying, death, and remembrance in Europe of the later Middle Ages and the early modern period has produced an enormous body of scholarship over the last thirty years and remains vigorous. This is partly a

¹ The Bible, Revised Standard Version. Rev. 21:4.

² RSV Gen. 3:19.

³ RSV John 11:25.

result of rich and often visually striking primary evidence: wills, handbooks and tracts, buildings, art and archaeological remains, are extant in some measure across all European regions. The fascination with the dead also mirrors our contemporary interest in commemoration; for public, ritualised remembrance – from war dead to locally significant individuals – seems to have replaced formal church observance in many communities, while contributing to local, regional, and national identities. Above all, for the historian, behaviours surrounding dying and death offer a lens through which to observe religious, social, and cultural practices and their change over time. Although all Christian communities share a belief in the hope of eternal life for the saved, how that worked in practice varied enormously: the understanding of the nature of eternity; explanatory glosses on the narrative of the gospels; the institutional framework established for the consolation of the dying and the deposition of the dead; the social and cultural conventions of death, were and are everywhere different. For this reason, the dead remain an important category of historical analysis.

This Companion volume comprises a collection of essays on current research on the history of Christian dying, death, and commemoration in the later Middle Ages and the Reformation centuries in Europe. The approach is multi- and interdisciplinary, with contributors writing from a range of disciplinary perspectives, theology, art history, archaeology, literature studies, historical anthropology and, predominantly, history. Some of the pieces treat with a short time frame to present new research on a specific theme; others offer a consideration of longer periods, to evaluate change over time. The volume also offers perspectives from eastern and western Europe; while the majority of the contributions are on the western churches, two important chapters discuss Greek and Russian Orthodox traditions. The aim is not to offer a definitive overview of studies of death and remembrance, for there are numerous existing surveys and collections to this end. Rather, its purpose is to engage in a dialogue with existing scholarship on two areas of current research: the physical passage from life to the afterlife, and emotional and cultural responses to death. The volume does not include all Christian traditions – dissenting groups receive less attention, apart from those which became ‘official’ creeds with the passage of time; the focus is European, rather than European colonies in the new and old world from the 15th century onward – because a full consideration of Christian practice would necessitate several volumes. In the remainder of this introduction, a summary of the historiography of death and commemoration is given, to contextualize the essays in the deep body of existing scholarship, followed by a discussion of current areas of interest and how the chapters of this volume contribute to these contemporary debates.

1 Context: Trajectories of the Historiography of Death and Commemoration

1.1 *Historical Demography, Mentalities and Mortality*

Modern studies of pre-modern dying, death, and disposal have their origins in the quantitative demographic studies of the French *annaliste* historians and in the *histoire sérielle* of the post-World War II era.⁴ Beginning with the pioneering study of the population history of the Normandy village of Crulai by Louis Henry and Étienne Gautier in 1958, quantitative studies have charted the statistics of mortality and burial across early modern Europe, where sources allow.⁵ Much of the early work was on France and England, areas with long series of parish registers, which provided the serial data necessary for these studies. In an influential work of 1960, Pierre Goubert published a demographic model of the city of Beauvais and its region in the 17th and 18th centuries, in which he argued that death and mortality conditioned structures of life more than birth.⁶ François Lebrun's landmark study of early modern Anjou of 1971 similarly examined demographic structures, mortality cycles, death rates, and their change over time and inspired numerous other regional studies.⁷ In England, it was primarily the new social history of the 1960s and 1970s, exemplified by the work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, founded by Tony Wrigley and Peter Laslett in 1964, that focused historical attention on mortality in pre-industrial society.⁸ Studies followed for other European regions and Iberia produced a particularly rich harvest. For Spain, the pioneering analysis of the population of Valladolid in the 16th century by Bartholomé Benassar stimulated studies of Castile-La Mancha, the Asturias region

4 For France, a useful short introduction to the historiography of death can be found in Régis Bertrand, "L'histoire de la mort: De l'histoire des mentalités à l'histoire religieuse," *RHEF* 86 (2000), 550–9.

5 Étienne Gautier and Louis Henry, *La population de Crulai, paroisse normande: Étude historique* (Paris: 1958).

6 Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730: Contribution à l'histoire sociale de la France du XVII^e siècle*, 2 vols (Paris: 1960).

7 François Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles: Essai de démographie et de psychologie historiques* (Paris: 1971).

8 Edward Anthony Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (London: 1981); Edward Anthony Wrigley and Roger Schofield, "English Population History from Family Reconstitution: Summary Results 1600–1799," *Population Studies* 37 (1983), 157–84; Lloyd Bonfield, Richard Smith, and Keith Wrightson (eds), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure. Essays presented to Peter Laslett on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford: 1986).

in the north, and Guadalajara and Lisbon in Portugal, to give a few examples.⁹ There are however fewer for eastern and Central Europe, where surviving serial sources are fewer, an exception being the Swiss territories, German and French-language regions, where there is rich archival material for death and dying in the later Middle Ages, particularly commemorative books and lists, much of which is unedited or unexamined.¹⁰ It was clear from these studies that mortality formed a fundamental structure of early modern society. Their originality lay in charting these structures in detail, over long periods of time and in their model of pre-industrial immutability, *la longue durée*.

Studies of mortality soon moved beyond statistical analysis to examine the impact of demographic structures on popular attitudes to death, part of the *histoire des mentalités* which emerged in the 1970s, influenced by the theory and methods of sociology, ethno-anthropology, and psychology. The most influential work was that of Philippe Ariès who, in the 1970s, published two texts that offered an interpretative framework within which death might be comprehended historically over long periods of time: *Western Attitudes Towards Death*, published in 1973, and *L'Homme devant la mort*, published in 1977, the latter translated into English as *The Hour of Our Death* in 1981.¹¹ Using a range of literary, personal, administrative, and visual sources, Ariès argued that the early modern centuries saw a move away from a concept of death as a collectively-experienced event to an individualisation of mortality. This was accompanied by a rise in the belief in a particular judgement at death rather

9 Bartholomé Bennassar, *Valladolid au siècle d'or: Une ville de Castille et sa campagne au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: 1967); José Camacho Cabello, *La población de Castilla-La Mancha (siglos XVI, XVII, XVIII): Crisis y renovación* (Toledo: 1997); Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro, *Demografía y sociedad en la España de los Austrias* (Madrid: 1996); Ángel Luis Velasco Sánchez, *Población y sociedad en Guadalajara: Siglos XVI – XVII* (Toledo: 2011); Teresa Rodrigues, *Crisis de mortalidade em Lisboa: Séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon: 1990). For overviews see Jordi Nadal, *La población española, siglos XVI a XX* (Barcelona: 1984) and Rosa Maria González Martínez, *La población española: Siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII* (Madrid: 2002).

10 Useful reference works for Germany are: Christian Pfister, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte und historische Demographie 1500–1800* (Berlin: 2007); Ulrich Pfister and Georg Fertig, “The Population History of Germany: Research Strategy and Preliminary Results,” Max Plank Institute for Demographic Research Working Paper, 2010, along with its bibliography. For Swiss examples: Rainer Hugener, *Buchführung für die Ewigkeit: Totengedenken, Verschriftlichung und Traditionsbildung im Spätmittelalter* (Zürich: 2014) and Arthur Bissegger, *Une paroisse raconte ses morts: L'obituaire de l'église Saint-Paul à Villeneuve (XIV^e – XV^e siècle)* (Lausanne: 2003).

11 Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Towards Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. P.M. Ranum (Baltimore and London: 1973); *L'Homme devant la mort* (Paris: 1977); *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. H. Weaver (London, 1981). See also Allan Mitchell, “Philippe Ariès and the French Way of Death,” *French Historical Studies* 10 (1978), 684–95.

than the final, collective “doomsday” of humanity. Historians agree that there were conceptual and methodological limitations to Ariès’s work, but these do not detract from its significance and impact.

Ariès’s publications stimulated a wave of focussed enquiries that incrementally modified, refined, and improved on his findings and methods. The work of Armin Nassehi *Tod, Modernität und Gesellschaft: Entwurf einer Theorie der Todesverdrängung* of 1989, developed a similar grand theory of the relationship between attitudes to death and modernity.¹² In Germany an influential group grew up in the late 1970s around Karl Schmidt and Joachim Wollasch at Freiburg and Münster universities, which combined the use of obituaries (*necrologi*) as serial sources with research about the social and religious functions of charity and donations. They created the research term “*memoria*” which summarizes the intertwined complex of liturgical commemoration, donation, and charity.¹³ This has become a seminal concept in understanding death and remembrance. Perhaps the most influential of this work is that of Otto Gerhard Oexle on *memoria*, and more specifically the notion of the dead as full members of society in pre-modern Europe, while Ludwig Steindorff used this concept to consider the mentalities and practices of the Slavic Orthodox world.¹⁴ These influential works led to the publication in the 1980s and 1990s of studies of death that were more methodologically and theoretically refined, and penetrating in their conclusions, which tested and debated the grand theories above.

In the 1970s, there was also renewed interest in theology, attitudes of the dying, and beliefs about the fate of the soul, as well as the material processes of mortality and interment. Much of the classic work was still focused on France. Pierre Chaunu’s great work *La mort à Paris* focused on changing attitudes to death, using *ars moriendi* works and testamentary evidence. He argued for the emergence of a “new eschatology” in the early modern period, a changed perception of death and judgement, and for the increasing secularisation of death in the 18th century.¹⁵ Michel Vovelle’s studies of southern France used

12 Armin Nassehi, *Tod, Modernität und Gesellschaft: Entwurf einer Theorie der Todesverdrängung* (Opladen: 1989).

13 Karl Schmidt and Joachim Wollasch (eds), *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedankens im Mittelalter* (Munich: 1984).

14 For example, Otto Gerhard Oexle, “Die Gegenwart der Toten,” in *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Louvain: 1983), 19–77; Otto Gerhard Oexle, “Memoria und Memorialbild,” in *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedankens im Mittelalter*, eds Karl Schmidt and Joachim Wollasch (Munich: 1984), 384–440; Ludwig Steindorff, *Memoria in Altrussland: Untersuchungen zu den Formen christlicher Totensorge* (Stuttgart: 1994).

15 Pierre Chaunu, *La mort à Paris: XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: 1978).

visual evidence and wills to argue that new attitudes to death and the afterlife emerged in the later Middle Ages, based on the increasing importance of belief in purgatory. This was reinforced during the Counter-Reformation, which taught that the whole life of humankind should be lived with the end in mind, culminating in the great baroque ceremonial of death.¹⁶ As with Chaunu, he argued that this cosmology changed in the 18th century, when fear of hell and the role of corporate salvation declined, and mortality was contained within the family, part of what Vovelle calls “dechristianisation.” Other regional studies confirmed this periodisation for France and other regions of western Europe. For the Middle Ages, Jacques Chiffolleau used wills from the papal territory of Avignon to argue for the emergence of a new individualism expressed in a novel sense of death as “one’s own death” across the period from the 13th to the 16th centuries. Increasing urbanisation, commercialisation, and migration led to new levels of social dislocation, the loss of ties to family and ancestors, and fears for salvation in an eschatology increasingly dominated by purgatory. The result was ever-increasing numbers of masses and intercessors for the soul, combined with “flamboyant” and “profoundly narcissistic” funerals. This was an individualism “marked by solitude, melancholy and angst.”¹⁷ For the early modern period, one of most prominent studies is Alain Croix’s magisterial thesis on Brittany, published in 1981.¹⁸ Croix argued that the cult of the dead was especially important in the dissemination of Counter-Reformation ideas after 1600. Studies of other regions of Europe soon followed.

Historians of the Low Countries largely supported French methodologies and conclusions. Jean-Pierre Deregnaucourt’s study of Flanders argues that the disturbances of war, famine, and plague traumatised the region of Douai leading to increased solitude; the Douaisians became “uprooted,” as seen in the decline of burials in ancestral graves.¹⁹ Michel Lauwers’s study of death rituals in Liège has argued for the emergence of the will in the 12th century as the instrument of liberation from the influence of the ancestors and of the formation of a new individualism: again, Ariès’s “la mort de soi” is important.²⁰

16 Michel Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIIIe siècle: Les attitudes devant la mort d’après les clauses des testaments* (Paris: 1973); *La mort et l’Occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: 1983).

17 Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l’au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d’Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rome: 1980).

18 Alain Croix, *La Bretagne aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles: La vie, la mort, la foi*, 2 vols (Paris: 1981).

19 Jean-Pierre Deregnaucourt, “Autour de la mort à Douai: Attitudes, pratiques et croyances 1250 à 1500” (Université de Lille Charles de Gaulle, PhD diss.: 1993).

20 Michel Lauwers, *La Mémoire des ancêtres, le souci des morts: Morts, rites et société au Moyen Âge (diocèse de Liège, XIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: 1997).

Attitudes towards death shown by literary sources were particularly prominent in Germany, as with the classic works of Alois Haason on the representation of death in medieval German literature and of Peter von Moos on consolation literature and grief.²¹ Yet medievalists studying the Central European evidence undercut Chiffolleau's arguments. For example, Ralf Lusiardi's study of late medieval testaments from Stralsund found no convincing evidence that teaching of purgatory had drastically changed testamentary practices.²² The idea of a pan-Christendom transformation of religious beliefs with the introduction of the doctrine of purgatory appears to have been regionally nuanced.

1.2 *The Black Death, Change and Continuity*

As part of the study of historical demography and its impact on mentalities, debates about the significance of the Black Death in European culture became prominent. The disease originated in "the East" and came into Genoa and Venice in 1347, probably on ships via the Black Sea ports, Greece, and Constantinople. In 1349–50 it reached Germany and Scandinavia, and in 1351–52 it continued through Poland and the north-western principalities of Russia. Thereafter, "plague" was endemic in Europe until the late 17th and early 18th centuries.²³ The effect on the European population was catastrophic, for it appears to have been a new, virulent strain of the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* against which human immunity was low, although over time the microparasite's potency became attenuated. Quantifying the scale of population loss is difficult because of a lack of contemporary population statistics, but most authors estimate its initial toll to have been 30–50 percent losses across Europe. What was particularly striking about the mortality was that it affected urban and rural areas alike and it could affect any social group.

21 Peter von Moos, *Consolatio: Studien zur mittellateinischen Trostliteratur über den Tod und zum Problem der christlichen Trauer*, 4 vols (Munich: 1971–1972); Alois Haas, *Todesbilder im Mittelalter: Fakten und Hinweise in der deutsche Literatur* (Darmstadt: 1989).

22 Ralf Lusiardi, *Stiftung und städtische Gesellschaft: Religiöse und soziale Aspekte des Stiftungsverhaltens im spätmittelalterlichen Stralsund* (Berlin: 2000).

23 Recent works on the Black Death in English include: Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *The Black Death 1346–1353: The Complete History* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester, NY: 2006); Andrew Noymer, "Contesting the Cause and Severity of the Black Death: A Review Essay," *Population and Development Review* 33 (2007), 616–27; Mark Bailey and Stephen Rigby (eds), *Town and Countryside in the Age of the Black Death: Essays in Honour of John Hatcher* (Turnhout: 2013); Joseph Byrne, *Encyclopedia of the Black Death* (Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, CO, and Oxford: 2012); Monica H. Green, (ed.), *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death* (Kalamazoo, MI: 2016).

Historians traditionally saw the Black Death as a great rupture in the social and political history of Europe.²⁴ It was argued that the plague changed the demographic system of Europe from a pre-modern one based on Malthusian positive checks – war, famine, plague – to a modern one of preventative checks of later ages at marriage, increased celibacy, and family planning. It was also argued to have underpinned the creation of modern Europe, transforming its vernacular culture into a capitalist system of interconnected technological progress and consumer societies.²⁵ In the last three decades, historians have questioned the seminal role of the Black Death in transforming the West and ushering in modernity. Neither social structures nor cultural norms underwent radical changes as a result of its advent in Europe. In the longer term, the Black Death caused some rebalancing of social and particularly tenurial relations and conditions of labour, as workers became scarce and settlements were abandoned over time.²⁶ In a survey of Europe, Evket Pamuk argues that the impact of population decline was not really evident in wage differentials until the mid-15th century.²⁷

Similarly, historians of the earlier 20th century saw the experience of the Black Death as ushering in a new religious culture focused on the macabre. This view owes much to the opening line of Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages* of 1919: "no other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death."²⁸ This statement was taken up and explored energetically by church and art historians, especially of French-speaking regions, such as Emile Mâle.²⁹ They saw a great shift in religious and artistic imagery, to skeletal figures, rotting corpses, and vividly emotional Passion scenes of Jesus Christ: the *Dies Irae*, *danse macabre*, *ars moriendi*, the frescoed cemetery of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Paris and the hall of the Marienkirche in Berlin.³⁰ Literature of the 14th century was seen as filled

24 Albrecht Classen, *Death and the Culture of Death: Universal Cultural-Historical Observations, with an Emphasis on the Middle Ages* (Berlin: 2016), 23.

25 David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* (Cambridge, MA: 1997); Richard Goldthwaite, *Building of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: 1980), 40–1.

26 Per Largeras (ed.), *Environment, Society and the Black Death: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Late-Medieval Crisis in Sweden* (Oxford: 2016), 18.

27 Evket Pamuk, "The Black Death and the origins of the 'Great Divergence' across Europe, 1300–1600," *European Review of Economic History* 11 (2007), 289–317.

28 Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919) translated into English as *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (London: 1924), 1.

29 Jean E. Jost, "The Effects of the Black Death: The Plague in Fourteenth-Century Religion, Literature, and Art," in *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: 2016), 193–238.

30 Classen (ed.), *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, 23; Jost, "The Effects of the Black Death," 193, 217; Erik Hühns, "Der Berliner Totentanz," *Deutsches Jahrbuch für*

with plague angst: Petrarch (1304–1370), Boccaccio (1313–1375), Chaucer (1340–1400), and Langland (ca. 1332–ca. 1400), were influenced by the Black Death and its impact. Norman F. Cantor concludes that spiritually, the century after the Black Death in Northern Europe was marked by the rise of intense personal mysticism, and penitentialism became the leitmotif of late medieval religion and mentality.³¹

Again, recent historians have adopted a more nuanced view to the Black Death's impact on European religion and culture. Ariès scarcely mentioned the plague at all in his history of death. While positing the later Middle Ages as an age of fear, anxiety, and trauma, Jean Delumeau emphasises 15th-century developments – the Schism of the Church and invasions of the Turks – to explain this new European-wide mentality.³² Rosemary Horrox argues that the chronology of the artistic representation of death warns against too close an association with the plague; representations of the three living and three dead show that there was a lively sense of the macabre before the plague, while the representation of Death as an armed, attacking corpse seems, in England at least, to postdate the plague by many years.³³ There was a change in funerary traditions over time, with greater numbers of masses for the dead and more spectacle, but the increasing importance of purgatory and indulgences, along with the development of the centrality of the eucharist in salvation, were almost certainly of greater significance. In short, current historiography emphasises that during and after outbreaks of great mortality, the explanatory framework of death and social upheaval remained traditional. The scourge was understood in long-standing, apocalyptic terms; reflections upon it and remedies to prevent it were developed within existing structures of religiosity, urban governance, and charitable provision.³⁴ The plague terrified individuals, its impact took a toll on communities, but it was dealt with within the traditional eschatologies of death across the later Middle Ages and early modern period.³⁵

Volkskunde 14 (1968), 235–46; see also work by Sophie Oosterwijk for example “Of Corpses, Constables and Kings: The Danse Macabre in Late Medieval and Renaissance Culture,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004), 61–90.

31 Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World that it Made* (London: 2002), 204.

32 Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en l'Occident (XIVe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: 1978).

33 Rosemary Horrox, “Purgatory, Prayer and Plague 1150–1380,” in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: 1999), 90–118, on 115.

34 Aron Ja. Gurevich, “The Merchant,” in *The Medieval World*, ed. Jacques Le Goff, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (London: reprint of 1997), 243–84, on 274.

35 Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester, *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque* (Kirkville, MO: 2007).

1.3 *Discontinuities? Reformation Revisionism, Religious Cultures and Death*

In the 1980s and 1990s, new areas of investigation were pursued. Prominent was the impact of religious change across the Renaissance and Reformation, using attitudes to death, burial, and commemoration as a way of understanding beliefs and religious practices of individuals and communities. At the core of the many currents of religious protest movements which arose in Europe after 1350 was the issue of the correct way for a soul to be saved for Christ. Therefore, the fate of the dying and the relationship of the deceased to the community of the living were fundamental to their theologies and pastorates. Such movements were more a feature of western or Latin Christendom than of the Orthodox churches of east and south east Europe in the period, although the experience of Islamic rule and proselytising in Ottoman regions had consequences for the mortuary and memorial practices of Christians living there. As a result of major religious shifts in this period, the way in which the dead were conceptualised and understood, as individuals and as a category, changed. One of the seminal contributions to scholarship on the dead of the Middle Ages was Gerhard Oexle's notion of the presence of the Dead (*Die Gegenwart der Toten*), who had a continuing and ongoing relationship with the living.³⁶ These ideas were explored by the authors of a collection edited by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, who noted that for the later Middle Ages, much historical writing has emphasised the reciprocity, exchange, and mutual gift-giving between the living and the dead. In some ways, the dead were perceived as an "age group," part of a continuum of human existence rather than wholly separate from it.³⁷ After the Reformations of the 16th and 17th centuries, the relationship with the dead became more distant or at least more formal, although the moment of death continued to be conceived as a threshold moment for individuals rather than simply the end of a life, a view which remained largely unchanged until the 18th century.³⁸ Across all confessions, "officially sanctioned exchanges with the dead operated alongside and within a 'black-market' of popular customs and beliefs."³⁹

36 Oexle, "Die Gegenwart der Toten."

37 N.Z. Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion," in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, eds. C. Trinkhaus and H. Oberman (Leiden: 1974), 327–8.

38 Hillard von Thiessen, "Das Sterbebett als normative Schwelle: Der Mensch in der Frühen Neuzeit zwischen irdischer Normenkonkurrenz und göttlichem Gericht," *Historische Zeitschrift* 295/3 (2012), 625–59, on 627–8.

39 Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2000), 7.

In the Latin west, a core cause of religious dissent was the theological development of a third place in the afterlife, purgatory. The belief held that the majority of the faithful dead did not pass immediately to heaven but underwent purgation of the debt due for their sin in this intermediary state and place in the next world. It was linked to the belief that all Christians, living and departed, were incorporated into a single “communion of saints,” and that those who were alive had the ability and the duty to ease the dead’s suffering in purgatory through commissioning of masses, saying of prayers, giving of alms, fasting, and the acquisition of indulgences.⁴⁰ The movements of reform and dissent of the later 14th and early 15th centuries, of John Wyclif and later, the so-called Lollards, in England; Jan Hus and his followers in Bohemia; the Waldensians of the western Alpine regions, all criticised the Catholic Church’s teachings on purgatory and popular practices around death and the afterlife. The radical groups offered an eschatology based on the biblical heaven and hell, alone.

The great schism of the Protestant Reformations developed similar eschatologies and institutionalised new beliefs and practices more formally, in states and societies where Catholicism was rejected. The result was a renegotiation of the relationship between the living and the dead. Martin Luther’s revolutionary theology of justification “by faith alone” (*sola fide*), salvation through the saving grace of God achieved only by faith, with no other mediator, undermined the whole intercessory framework of saints, priests, and fellow Christians. Luther’s rejection of purgatory as unscriptural and his criticism of the Catholic clergy as feeding upon the dead’s resources to the detriment of the deserving poor, reshaped the geography of the afterlife. Henceforth, there was only heaven and hell to receive the soul and no communion between the living and the dead: “the living could do nothing to alter the condition of the deceased, and ... the dead had no knowledge of the affairs of the living, a recognition of the reciprocal bonds between present and past generations.”⁴¹

The implications of this theology for the consolation of the dying, funerals, and post-mortem commemoration, were far-reaching. For the dying, extreme unction as a last rite disappeared and the presence of priests at the deathbed was not as necessary in Protestant regions as before. Ralph Houlbrooke has observed that in England, funerary practice came to have fewer services and shorter obsequies. The burial liturgy was transformed from a means of assisting the deceased through purgatory to a means of comforting and consoling the living.⁴² In regions which adopted the Reformation, institutions which

40 Gordon and Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead*, 3.

41 Gordon and Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead*, 10.

42 Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: 1988).

served the needs of souls, priests and colleges, requiems and chapels, were largely abolished. On monuments, intercessory symbolism was discouraged so instead, there was greater concentration on the status and family of the deceased. Conversely, Tridentine Catholicism restored belief in purgatory and the need for a strong intercessory framework for souls, along with more standardised Roman liturgies for the dying and burial across Europe. The changes wrought by religious schism to attitudes to the dying, death, and memorialisation are a core theme of this volume.

Longitudinal studies of dying, death, and disposal remained popular in the 1990s but rather than focusing on long-term structures, their core theme was the impact of religious change over time. The prime sources remained wills, along with obit rolls, necrologies, and family documents. Many of these studies were regional and linked to an interest in social history, the differential experiences of elite and non-elites, urban and rural groups. Three geographical regions in particular produced numerous studies. England remained prominent, linked to a strong revisionist historiography that increasingly saw the Reformation as a slow process largely imposed from above, rather than a rapid, grass-roots movement. Claire Gittings's pioneering work on the early modern period was followed by studies such as those of David Cressy on the impact of the Reformation on the life cycle, including death, and Ralph Houlbrooke's important work on death and the family.⁴³ This was taken further with numerous detailed investigations of individuals, communities and peer groups, for death became an important means of understanding religious choice and change. A second region rich in sociocultural studies was central Italy. A pioneering study by Sharon Strocchia examined the impact of the Renaissance on death and ritual in Florence, while Samuel Cohn focused on central Italian cities including Siena, to examine death, family, property transfers, and commemoration.⁴⁴ The third region rich in studies of death was Spain, where historians had a particular interest in the rituals of baroque Catholicism and the impact of the Counter Reformation. For example, Francisco Pinar published a study of preparation for death and burial practices in the city of Zamora and Carlos

43 Claire Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (Dover, N.H.: 1984); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: 1997); Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and Family in England*.

44 Sharon Therese Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: 1992); Samuel K. Cohn Jr., *Death and Property in Siena, 1205–1800. Strategies for the Afterlife* (Baltimore and London: 1988) and *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy* (Baltimore: 1992).

Eire examined the new capital, Madrid, alongside microstudies of the deaths of Philip II and Teresa of Avila.⁴⁵ More recently, their methodologies have been projected back in time and there are now detailed studies of medieval Toledo, Navarre, and Castile, among other regions.⁴⁶ Across Europe, however, we continue to have a better picture of towns than the countryside and of elites rather than common folk, largely because the wealthy are always more visible in documentary and material sources.

Since the 1990s, there has also been questioning and interrogation of grand models of continuity and change over time, and a demonstration of nuanced and varied attitudes to death and commemoration. In an important collection of essays edited by Gordon and Marshall, the central questions examined were the status of the dead, socially and ontologically, and the nature of their relations with the living, benign and malevolent. A major theme was “how the relations of the living with the dead were profoundly embedded in religious cultures, and, further, how those relations were not only shaped by, but themselves helped to shape, the processes of religious change.”⁴⁷ Every town, village and even family had its own experience of religious change, which affected its understanding of death and the afterlife. This is illustrated with some of the post-millennium longitudinal regional studies such as that by Clodagh Tait for early modern Ireland – contrasting the religious cultures of Catholic and Protestant in this divided territory – and Serge Brunet for the Pyrenees, caught between the different religious policies of France and Spain.⁴⁸ There is also now a strong tradition of looking comparatively across regions, largely in collections of essays on specific methodological themes or questions. Two important compendia are Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* and Joëlle Rollo-Koster (ed.), *Death in medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, which consider the cultural effects of death, using case studies from across the continent.⁴⁹ These regional studies often sit side

45 Francisco Pinar, *Muerte y ritual en la Edad Moderna: El caso de Zamora, 1500–1800* (Salamanca: 1991); Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-century Spain* (Cambridge: 1995).

46 Arturo Ruiz Taboada, *La vida futura es para los devotos: La muerte en el Toledo medieval* (Madrid: 2013); Julia Pavón Benito (ed.), *Morir en la Edad Media: La muerte en la Navarra medieval* (Valencia: 2007); Carlos González Minguez, *La muerte en el nordeste de la Corona de Castilla a finales de la Edad Media: Estudios y documentos* (Bilbao: 2014).

47 Gordon and Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead*, 3.

48 Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* (London: 2002); Serge Brunet, *La vie, la mort, la foi dans les Pyrénées centrales sous l'Ancien Régime* (Aspret: 2001).

49 Joëlle Rollo-Koster (ed.), *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed* (London: 2017).

by side rather than being clearly comparative, and few include the Orthodox and Muslim parts of Europe. But they offer implicit comparisons and they are expanding our knowledge of the nuances of belief and practice across Europe.

2 Current Themes and the Structure of This Volume

Since the new millennium, the historical examination of death and commemoration has splintered into a hugely diverse range of studies with a plurality of foci, and it is difficult to represent all the areas of current scholarship succinctly. To the editors here, three in particular stand out and will be discussed: ritual and performativity; the body, its treatment and representation; and the materiality of death. It is these three theoretical and methodological approaches that the essays in this volume address in their different ways. Here, authors enter into dialogue with recent debates and present new responses and case studies, based on multi-disciplinary considerations of texts, images and material culture.

2.1 *Ritual and Performativity*

Ritual and performativity have long of interest to anthropologists, sociologists, and archaeologists, and ceremonies around death have been privileged as sites of social construction. With the influence of the social sciences on the humanities, particularly from the 1990s, the study of mortuary ritual has been prominent. In the anglophone world, Paul Binski's edited collection of essays *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* of 1996 was influential because of its broad chronological sweep across late antiquity and the Middle Ages and its emphasis on visual evidence.⁵⁰ Ritual and performance as subject matter spoke to an academy increasingly influenced by postmodernism, semiotics, and the works of philosophers such as Michel Foucault on bodies, power, and political culture. The result was a proliferation of works on the iconographic and symbolic significance of death rituals.

Of especial importance for the Middle Ages and early modern period have been studies of the rituals, representations, and meanings of elite funerals, essentially of monarchs and the high aristocracy – partly in engagement with Ralph Giesey's pioneering 1960 examination of French Renaissance funeral ceremonies.⁵¹ Such studies demonstrate that in the later medieval period

⁵⁰ Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: 1996).

⁵¹ Ralph Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva: 1960); see also Alexandre Bande, *Le coeur du roi: Les Capétiens et les sépultures multiples, XIIIe-XVe siècles* (Paris: 2009).

funerary practice became more elaborate, formalised, and expensive, a reflection of its eschatological and social importance. Rites could last several weeks and include different ceremonial elements: procession, heraldic elements, requiem services, charity, gift giving, and feasting. While there were changes in the religious framing of funerals across the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, much of the ritual of power remained. The symbolic function of royal and noble funerary iconography for legitimation of power is shown by Reformed Protestants' destruction of such imagery in some regions, in protest against idolatry and also tyranny. All regions of Europe have attracted study of elite funerary rituals and while the iconography has regional differences, the style and function of elaborate interments were the same: a theatricalization of power and legitimation of succession. Again, the monarchs of France, England, Germany, and the Rhineland have received the most attention to date. Prominent works include Danielle Westerhof's examination of death and the noble body in medieval England, Juliusz A. Chrościcki's edited collection of essays on aristocratic and princely burials in Europe. Three German contributions stand out: Helga Czerny, *Der Tod der bayerischen Herzöge im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit 1347–1579* on funerary ritual associate with the Bavarian dukes across for the later Middle Ages and early Reformation period, and for the later period, Linda Brüggemann, *Herrschaft und Tod in der Frühen Neuzeit: Das Sterbe- und Begräbniszeremoniell preussischer Herrscher vom Grossen Kurfürsten bis zu Friedrich Wilhelm II. (1688–1797)* on Prussia, and Magdalena Hawlik-Van der Water, *Der schöne Tod: Zeremonialstrukturen des Wiener Hofes bei Tod und Begräbnis zwischen 1640 und 1740* on the Viennese court aristocracy.⁵² To this should be added studies of the papacy with Agostino Bagliani's study of papal funerals and Minou Schraven's work on early modern rituals in St. Peter's, Rome.⁵³ Gender has become an important lens through which to understand representations of power, and queenly and female aristocratic burials have provided rich sources of study. For example, Anne, duchess of Brittany and twice queen of France, received elaborate funerary rituals, at the

52 Danielle Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: 2008); Juliusz A. Chrościcki (ed.), *Les funérailles princières en Europe, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle. 1, Le grand théâtre de la mort* (Versailles: 2012); Helga Czerny, *Der Tod der bayerischen Herzöge im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit 1347–1579* (Munich: 2005); Linda Brüggemann, *Herrschaft und Tod in der Frühen Neuzeit: Das Sterbe- und Begräbniszeremoniell preussischer Herrscher vom Grossen Kurfürsten bis zu Friedrich Wilhelm II. (1688–1797)* (Munich: 2015); Magdalena Hawlik-Van der Water, *Der schöne Tod: Zeremonialstrukturen des Wiener Hofes bei Tod und Begräbnis zwischen 1640 und 1740* (Vienna: 1989).

53 Agostino Bagliani, *Le corps du pape* (Paris: 1997); Minou Schraven, *Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy: The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Commemoration* (Farnham: 2014).

royal mausoleum of Saint-Denis but also in her duchy capital of Nantes, where her heart was buried in the ducal mausoleum of the Carmelite Convent.⁵⁴

The ritual 'journey' of the medieval Christian body from deathbed to final resting place and beyond, is examined in this volume by Madeleine Gray. The essay commences with a discussion of current scholarship on the practice of commending the soul, material preparations of the body for burial, the funeral, and its associated liturgies for interment and commemoration. As a case study, Gray focuses on Welsh funerary culture, particularly of the nobility, which has important contrasts as well as similarities with the rest of Latin Christendom. Anna Duch contributes to the literature on royal burials with an examination of the English royal funeral of the later Middle Ages, a highly stage-managed event, from the moment of the king's death to his interment. Duch plays particular attention to elaborate gift giving. Every church which hosted the royal corpse received gifts from the king's household, with the final funeral mass immediately before interment being the most ornate and costly, involving the donation of cloths of gold and funerary achievements. Duch interrogates the theological beliefs attached to these oblations and dissects the intricate offertory ceremonies. Ultimately, she argues, although the theatrical performance was appropriate to the station of the king, the true objective of the ceremonies was common to all Christian funerals, the deliverance of a church's fees and the offering of votive oblations for the sake of the soul.

Protestantism in the western churches challenged and reshaped elite funerary practice. But while the theology of the soul's journey changed, theatricality and legitimation did not. This is shown in Gordon Raeburn's essay for this volume on Reformed communities, principally Scotland. Raeburn's study of burial in the churches of the Reformed Protestant traditions of Scotland and beyond shows how they attempted to reform death and burial through the removal of ceremony, ritual, and superstition, as well as the alteration of aspects of burial such as the appropriateness of certain locations or the performance of sermons. It uses the burial of the reformers themselves and examples of aristocratic burial, to show how exemplary burial should work.

If we turn to Eastern and Southern Europe, there were fewer dissenting religious movements, but again, early modernity saw shifts in ritual traditions of elites. Two contributions in this volume examine regions of Orthodox

54 Jacques Santrot, *Les doubles funérailles d'Anne de Bretagne: Le corps et le cœur (janvier-mars 1514)* (Geneva: 2017).

tradition. The Orthodox world was little influenced by the Reformation and Counter/Catholic Reform movements of Western Europe and there was no marked departure of doctrine or practice in the early modern period. The documentary bases for studies of Orthodox churches are also different from those of the Western churches, so both contributions here rely upon specific sources. Zachary Chitwood examines dying, death, and burial in the Orthodox tradition of Byzantium and the Greek Churches from the 14th to the 17th centuries. Here, in contrast with Western Europe, there was an absence of a theologically defined, purgatory-type space, but a different sort of hurdle to get into heaven, the tollgates. An important cause of change in Byzantine funerary and commemorative practices was the effect of Ottoman rule on the use of Christian charitable foundations or *waqf* and the decline of Constantinople as a focus for elite commemorative practices. Case studies of the religious houses of the Athonite Monastery of Pantokrator, the Dionysiou, and the Stauroniketa, and the example of the patron Mara Branković, wife of Murad II, illustrate elite practices of death and commemoration. Non-elite death and funerary traditions are also considered through an examination of the acts of the Pontic Monastery of Vazelon and the Macedonian Monastery of St John Prodromos. Ludwig Steindorff examines death, burial, and remembrance in the Orthodox tradition of the East of Europe, focusing on the territories of the former Kievan realm: the principalities united under the rule of the grand prince and later tsar of Muscovy, and the territories which were integrated in Poland and Lithuania. In Muscovy, while the tradition of monumental tomb building was modest compared to Western Europe, the practices of donating to churches and liturgical commemoration flourished among the Orthodox. The emergence of monasteries as centres of care for the dead was a new development from the second half of the 15th century. It was accompanied by a corresponding “pragmatic literacy,” that is, of a careful documentation of commemoration which is unique to this region. These practices were less common among the Orthodox in Poland-Lithuania, perhaps because of western influences. Here, monastic liturgical care for the dead had lost much of its attractiveness and was replaced by a move towards “visible” commemoration through monumental tombs.

Looking comparatively and over the long term, the Orthodox world had much in common with the Western tradition. The studies by Chitwood and Steindorff show that care for the deceased on the basis of donations was a common tradition in Catholic and Orthodox religious practice. Such comparisons have been highlighted by the work on endowments by Michael Borgolte and subsequent scholars. Borgolte looks at the interdependence between care for the deceased, foundation, and commemoration, common to Christianity,

Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism.⁵⁵ Yet there was no single, monolithic practice across Christianity, not even in the Orthodox world. In the eastern Slavic regions, there were clear differences between Muscovy and the Orthodox areas in Poland-Lithuania. In Muscovy, the role of the large monasteries as centres of care for the deceased from the 15th to the 17th centuries is reminiscent of monasteries like Cluny in the High Middle Ages. This did not occur in Poland-Lithuania. Yet only in Poland-Lithuania were Orthodox brotherhoods formed, following the Catholic pattern. The Greek and South Slav Orthodox world was heavily affected by the establishment of Ottoman rule and the fall of Byzantium. Christianity was no longer the religion of the ruler and the elite, and Christians were in an inferior position.

The richest seam of recent historical work probably comes in the form of studies of liturgical and para-liturgical commemoration for the dead, usually linked with studies of funerary practice and memorialisation. Again, with current interest in signification and meaning, the textual record and the gestural, visual, and aural aspect of liturgy, are used to illustrate changing belief over time; the transformative impact of the Reformation on liturgical commemoration is a common theme. The practices of the British Isles, particularly England, are well covered. Pioneering studies by Clive Burgess on Bristol, Caroline Litzenberger on Gloucestershire, and others, used wills to show the rate and extent of penetration of Protestant ideas into local communities, through their burial and commemoration practice.⁵⁶ Such work continues, with recent examples being Sally Badham's detailed survey of textual and material commemoration across England, Judith Middleton-Stewart's regional study of Suffolk, and Steve Werronon's of Ripon in North Yorkshire.⁵⁷ France and the Rhineland are represented by studies of conventual and collegiate church necrologies and civic wills. As examples, Michelle Fournié has studied responses to purgatory in the French Midi, largely through collegiate foundations in Toulouse; Charlotte Stanford has worked on the Book of Donors of Strasbourg Cathedral; Arthur Bissegger has analysed the practices associated with the donors of on a

55 Michael Borgolte, *World History as the History of Endowments, 3000 BCE to 1500 CE*, trans. Zachary Chitwood (Leiden and Boston: 2020).

56 Clive Burgess, "By Quick and By Dead: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol," *English Historical Review* 102 (1987), 837–58; Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire 1540–1580* (Cambridge: 1997).

57 Sally Badham, *Seeking Salvation: Commemorating the Dead in the Late-Medieval English Parish* (Donington: 2015); Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370–1547* (Woodbridge: 2001); Steve Werronon, *Religion, Time and Memorial Culture in Late Medieval Ripon* (Woodbridge: 2017).

mortuary roll at Lausanne; Rainer Berndt has edited a collection on *memoria* and memory related to the necrology of the Parisian Abbey Saint-Victor; and William J. Courtney has studied commemoration in the medieval University of Paris.⁵⁸ The impact of the Counter- and Catholic Reformations on memorial practice and changes in ritual forms has also seen rich regional explorations such as Elizabeth Tingle on Brittany.⁵⁹ Studies of post-Reformation German commemoration, Protestant and Catholic, have been particularly prominent, with Craig Koslofsky's study of transition from Catholic to Protestant *ars moriendi*, which paid particular attention to the Lutheran tradition, and Trevor Johnston's work on the Counter-Reformation of the Upper Wurttemberg region being of most importance.⁶⁰

Sermons as a form of *memoria* have stimulated a number of recent projects, particularly for Protestant territories. German Lutheran sermon studies include Ulrike Ludwig's analysis of texts of 16th-century funerary sermons for nobles who served the dukes of Saxony, showing the impact of religious change on representations of spirituality, particularly new emphases on piety, humility, and religious conduct.⁶¹ Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten's collection of essays, *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, focuses on Lutheran and Calvinist communities in Scandinavia, Germany, and Switzerland, and demonstrates that sermons show denominational differences. Partly, these consist in the use of genres: funeral sermons are frequently used by Lutherans, while they are much rarer in the Reformed tradition. They also find continuities, for example, between 16th-century Lutheran funeral sermons and the late medieval tradition of *ars moriendi*.⁶² A project on funerary sermons called "Preaching Death" based at the Université de Montpellier III took

58 Charlotte A. Stanford, *Commemorating the Dead in Late Medieval Strasbourg: The Cathedral's Book of Donors and its Use (1320–1521)* (Farnham: 2011); Bissegger, *Une paroisse raconte ses morts*; Michelle Fournié, *Le Ciel peut-il attendre? Le culte du Purgatoire dans le Midi de la France (1320 environ-1520 environ)* (Paris: 1997); Rainer Berndt (ed.), *Wider das Vergessen und für das Seelenheil: Memoria und Totengedenken im Mittelalter*, (Münster: 2013); William J. Courtney, *Rituals for the Dead: Religion and Community in the Medieval University of Paris* (Notre Dame, IN: 2019).

59 Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany 1480–1720* (Farnham: 2012).

60 Craig Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (Basingstoke: 2000); Trevor Johnson, *Magistrates, Madonnas and Miracles: The Counter Reformation in the Upper Palatinate* (Farnham: 2009).

61 Ulrike Ludwig, "Erinnerungsstrategien in Zeiten des Wandels: Zur Bedeutung der Reformation als Generationserfahrung im Spiegel sächsischer Leichenpredigten für adlige Beamte," *AfR*, 104 (2013), 158–84.

62 Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten (eds), *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead* (Gottingen: 2015).

an interdisciplinary look at English and French, largely Protestant sermons.⁶³ But Protestants were not the only sermonisers. The Counter Reformation also inspired preachers to speak of the dead. For Spain, Carmen M. Grace, has studied the sermon given by Fray Alonso de Cabrera on the death of Philip II, concluding that sermons were a central part of baroque funeral rites through which the preacher communicated the rules of conduct necessary to achieve salvation, and for reinforcing the legitimacy of the Habsburg dynasty.⁶⁴ Sermons have also been used to study gendered aspects of funerary traditions, specifically those related to women. Again, Protestant territories dominate. Femke Molekamp has studied 17th-century English funeral sermons written in commemoration of women, noting general themes such as women's piety, devotional life, and domestic activities.⁶⁵

The two-part chapter in this volume by Jacqueline Eales and Ruth Atherton charts the evolution of the funerary sermon in the Reformation, first in England, then Germany, and examines confessional differences in the genre. For England, Eales shows the growing importance of sermons for middling sort patrons and for women, across the later Middle Ages and more especially, in the post-Elizabethan period; for the German territories Atherton examines funeral sermons delivered in the Lutheran cities of Wittenberg and Nuremberg, in bi-confessional Augsburg, and in the Lutheran/Reformed Palatinate. Protestant sermons were not meant to eulogise the dead; instead, they were to instruct the living on how to live and die well, drawing attention to the dangers of living impious lives. Broader themes of identity and meaning suggest that sermons were influenced by local circumstances and individual state policies, rather than developed only along strictly confessional lines.

2.2 *The Body, Its Treatment, Representation and Meaning*

The centrality of the body to the exercise of power in post-modern scholarship has had a profound impact on the theorising of death and burial, as many of the essays in this volume show. In particular, the dead body or corpse has been examined as a social construct and a site of power and performativity.

63 A collection of essays on England and France, Catholic and Protestant, resulting from the project is Paula Barros, Inès Kirschleger, and Claudie Martin-Ulrich (eds), *Prêcher la mort à l'époque moderne: Regards croisés sur la France et l'Angleterre* (Paris: 2020).

64 Carmen M. Grace, "Exequias reales en la Contrarreforma: Doctrina católica y Barroco en el sermón funeral de fray Alonso de Cabrera (1549?–1598) por la muerte de Felipe II," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 92 (2015), 25–49.

65 Femke Molekamp, "Seventeenth-Century Funeral Sermons and Exemplary Female Devotion: Gendered Spaces and Histories," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 35 (2012), 43–63.

Funerals of course had the body at their centre. With regard to the physicality and materiality of the corpse itself, two areas have received scholarly attention: representation and treatment. Ideas relating to the representation and understanding of the body constitutes a broad field of study which is difficult to categorise. It has been arising partly from medical history and interest in anatomy, but has since extrapolated out to an interaction with religious belief. For example, Katharine Park has studied dissection in late medieval England, France, and Italy, concluding that attitudes toward the recently dead and the length of time envisioned for the separation of body from soul resulted in Italians resisting division and northern Europeans opposing dissection. She argues that Italians identified the person more with the soul than the body and thus had no objections to autopsies, while northern Europeans viewed the body as an integral part of the person even after death and thus resisted procedures that dissected the corpse.⁶⁶ One of the recent seminal studies in this field is that of Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter*, on the materiality of death, the physical treatment of corpses, and their cultural construction in community and religious identity.⁶⁷ Schmitz-Esser argues that the significance of corpses relates directly to the cultures from which they originate, proposing that, as there are different cultures present throughout medieval Europe, so corpses had different meanings across the continent. He questions whether medieval literature about dying and death is really representative of actual practices as evidenced in archaeological finds and stresses the importance of using new archaeological and medical approaches to bodies to enhance our interpretation of more traditional evidence. Schmitz-Esser is particularly interested in the interactions between corpses and memory; he argues that the more medieval theologians sought to understand the relationship between death, the soul, and the body, the more they came closer to the bodies of the dead. This important study places the materiality of the body at the centre of scholarly discussions of death and the afterlife. For the early modern period, practices and cultural readings of human dissection remains a popular topic, for example with the survey of early modern England by Elizabeth T. Hurren, *Dissecting the Early Modern Corpse*, representing an important

66 Katharine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 50 (1995), 111–32.

67 Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers* (Ostfildern: 2014). English translation as *The Corpse in the Middle Ages: Embalming, Cremating and the Cultural Construction of the Dead Body*, trans. Albrecht Classen and Carolin Radke (Turnhout: 2020).

example.⁶⁸ Studies of dead bodies are enormously diverse, however, from their representation on the stage to their public use as relics and in other rituals, as discussed in a collection of case-study essays including Naples and Palermo, edited by Silvia Cavicchioli and Luigi Provero.⁶⁹

A second fecund area of study related to the dead body is linked more directly to power, the use of punishment and especially executions, as sites of the performance of justice and authority. There are increasingly numbers of studies of theatres of ritualised death across Europe. Adriano Prospero has provided a European overview, with Italian material figuring prominently, as has Franck Lafage.⁷⁰ Freddy Joris has provided several studies of executions over the medieval and early modern periods, and there is Pascal Bastien's *Une histoire de la peine de mort: Bourreaux et supplices* for Paris and London.⁷¹ Richard J. Evans examines the evolution of capital punishment in the German lands across the early modern and modern periods.⁷² Thea Tomaini's edited collection looks across different European regions, on three themes: interactions between the dead and the living; legal approaches to death in terms of criminals, executions, and regulations for burial; and funerary art and *memento mori*.⁷³ Art historians have used the rich evidence of pictorial representations of death to consider understanding and uses of bodies. John Decker, in *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European art, 1300–1650*, looks comparatively at the Netherlands and Italy in detail, but also at Germany and England.⁷⁴ In this volume, the dramatized, emotional impact of the representation of violent death is discussed by Ralph Dekoninck in a study of the iconography of martyrdom in post-Tridentine art. Dekoninck charts the historiography of the 'invention'

68 Elizabeth T. Hurren, *Dissecting the Early Modern Corpse: Staging Post-Execution Punishment in Early Modern England* (London: 2016).

69 Silvia Cavicchioli and Luigi Provero (eds), *Public Uses of Human Remains and Relics in History* (London: 2019).

70 Adriano Prosperi, *Delitto e perdono: La pena di morte nell'orizzonte mentale dell'Europa cristiana, XIV-XVIII secolo* (Turin: 2013); Franck Lafage, *Le théâtre de la mort: Lecture politique de l'apparat funèbre dans l'Europe du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: 2012).

71 Freddy Joris, *Mourir sur l'échafaud: Sensibilité collective face à la mort et perception des exécutions capitales du Bas Moyen Âge à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Liège: 2005); Pascal Bastien, *Une histoire de la peine de mort: Bourreaux et supplices: Paris, Londres, 1500–1800* (Paris: 2011).

72 Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany 1600–1987* (Oxford: 1996).

73 Thea Tomaini (ed.), *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: 2018).

74 John R. Decker (ed.), *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650* (Farnham: 2015).

of baroque death and tests its veracity in a study of artistic depictions of the deaths of martyrs. He finds a relationship between such dramatized deaths and the rhetoric of love, in particular through the iconography of ecstasy. The corporeal interest of these studies is clear.

Two essays in the volume focus on “special” bodies, whose earthly remains elicited distinctive responses from the living. In the first of these, Freddy Dominguez examines saints and relics, showing how the spiritual energy of holy bodies and objects remained tangible amid challenges posed by humanism and the Reformation. He concludes that it was imperative for the post-Tridentine church to reaffirm the place of the holy dead (and their remnants) and for Rome to control access to sainthood, to maintain its spiritual authority. Yet there remained ambiguities and tensions within the Catholic church in establishing the parameters of sanctity and holy objects, especially where it came to “living saints” and contemporary martyrs. Polina Ignatova’s essay charts different attitudes to the malevolent dead in her essay on ghosts and revenants. She argues that the undead were employed by narrators to convey particular messages, with different roles assigned to ghosts and to restless corpses. Ghosts were used to warn the living about hell and purgatory, and to ask for help to gain heaven; walking corpses usually appeared in “cautionary tale” narratives, where an individual was punished for their sins. The actions taken by the living to get rid of ghosts and wandering corpses such as prayers, burning a corpse or dumping it into water, and the meaning attached to these apotropaic items, are discussed. Ignatova shows great continuities of beliefs about the undead, from the central Middle Ages onwards.

2.3 *Materiality, Material Culture and Sacred Space*

The third category of analysis prominent in recent historiography and in this current Companion volume is materiality: the material culture of death and burial, and the use of sacralised place and space. One of the most important developments in this scholarship is the integration of archaeology and forensic anthropology into histories of late medieval and early modern death. While there have been many archaeological reports about burials over the last half century, their integration into narratives of material and religious culture has contributed new ways of thinking about the spatial arrangement of the dead, the ways in which bodies were treated, the history of disease and mortality, and changing social relationships, values and aspirations. Northern European studies are particularly prominent, because of the rate of urban development and the consequent archaeological intervention in these regions: England, the Low Countries, the Baltic states, and Scandinavia have produced important works on mortuary archaeology. A useful summary of research into

post-medieval burial archaeology across Europe is provided by Layla Renshaw and Natasha Powers. They explore the osteological study of demography and health; forensic archaeology and technological developments in the study of the dead; and the ontological and ethical status of the dead in archaeology.⁷⁵ In the burgeoning field of cemetery studies, two “projects” stand out. One is the work of Transmortale, an international research group based in the University of Hamburg and the Museum für Sepulkralkultur in Kassel, engaged in interdisciplinary approaches to dying, death, and grief. Their recent conference on the theme of “Materiality and Spatiality of Death, Burial and Commemoration” has been published in a special issue of the journal *Mortality* (2019). The second is the work of Sarah Tarlow and associates at Leicester University. Initially working on post-medieval Britain and Ireland, more recently they have expanded their scope to comparative studies of European regions.⁷⁶ Interesting documentary work has also come from late medieval Spain, where Ana del Campo has shown the increasing professionalisation and regulation of funeral services in Zaragoza, with sextons, professional mourners, and funeral directors being increasingly employed in the city.⁷⁷

One long-standing area of interest, which continues to generate large amounts of scholarship, is monumental commemoration. Since the new millennium, studies have expanded out of their art and family history heartland, to studies of theological and ritual function, social status and power. Every European region has generated important studies, largely for elites – because they left sumptuous monuments to their posterity – but also for lower social groups, where evidence survives. The conclusions of these studies are similar everywhere in Europe. In the Middle Ages, monuments were religious *memoria* for the good of the soul, “making” intercessory requests, visually and in text, and also designed to heighten the status of family and individual as well as to provide legitimacy for their domination of land and power. For England, Nigel Saul has produced several studies of the monuments constructed by the

75 Layla Renshaw and Natasha Powers, “The Archaeology of Post-medieval Death and Burial,” *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 50 (2016), 159–77.

76 Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief, and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: 2011); Annia Cherryson, Zoë Crossland, and Sarah Tarlow, *A Fine and Private Place: The Archaeology of Death and Burial in Post-Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Leicester: 2012); Sarah Tarlow (ed.), *The Archaeology of Death in Post-Medieval Europe* (Berlin: 2015).

77 Ana Del Campo, “Ceux qui travaillent avec la mort: Professionnalisation et travaux occasionnels de fossoyeurs, pleureuses et organisatrices de funérailles à Saragosse (Royaume d’Aragon) à la fin du Moyen Âge,” *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 123 (2011), 81–90.

nobility, for which excellent physical evidence survives: firstly, for the Cobham family of Kent, whose exceptional mausoleum of monumental brasses offers a microhistory of the later Middle Ages by itself, then a wider study of the patronage of the nobility in rural parish churches.⁷⁸ For the Low Countries, Douglas Brine has studied wall-mounted monuments in the churches of the towns, again highlighting the growing influence of belief in purgatory on design and inscription.⁷⁹ In this volume, Robert Marcoux focuses on France to examine the relationship between the body, funeral liturgy, and the functionality of tomb monuments in the later Middle Ages. He looks at ways in which the memory of the dead invested the liturgical space of churches. He describes major changes in appearance and setting of tomb monuments as they came to embody both worldly and spiritual values in the context of “flamboyant” piety. This included signs of individuality and status such as heraldic devices, portraiture, and social attributes, as well as the various features used to “trigger” intercession, particularly prayer. Christina Welch pursues some of these themes across the later Middle Ages and early modern period, in art and literature. In art, she traces the evolution of the image of death from the skeleton to the male grim reaper and explores the differential gendering of the “personality” of death in different linguistic communities; this is accompanied by an examination of death in vernacular literature, which tends to focus on purgatory. There was, of course, overlap in themes across texts and images.

The Protestant and Catholic Reformations did not see an end to monumental memorials, quite the reverse. Iconography changed and more text was used, but the didactic functions and social display remained. Of particular note are studies of monuments in central Europe, where confessional cultures came into close contact. Jeannie Łabno’s *Commemorating the Polish Renaissance Child* shows that there was a regionally unique tradition of erecting funeral monuments to young children and a distinctive iconography of the child as a sleeping putto with a skull. She concludes that although the putto-and-skull motif later became popular throughout Europe as a *memento mori*, only in Poland was it adapted to represent individual children.⁸⁰ Aleksandra Koutny-Jones examines commemoration in early modern Poland-Lithuania, through a

78 Nigel Saul, *Death, Art and Memory in Medieval England: The Cobham Family and their Monuments 1300–1500* (Oxford: 2001) and *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: 2017).

79 Douglas Brine, *Pious Memories: The Wall-Mounted Memorial in the Burgundian Netherlands* (Leiden: 2015).

80 Jeannie Łabno, *Commemorating the Polish Renaissance Child: Funeral Monuments and Their European Context* (Farnham: 2012).

range of baroque artworks such as coffin portraits, funerary decorations, tomb chapels, and religious landscapes, again discussing the relationship between intercession, status, and authority.⁸¹ For Protestant regions, historians have a tendency to see exceptionality: the rejection of purgatory and prayers for the dead changed the way the dead were memorialized. For England, two pioneering studies showed the decline of intercession and the rise of social and moral virtue as the predominant message of monuments: Nigel Llewellyn's work on domestic artefacts and their constant commemorative presence, and Peter Sherlock's study of monuments and memory, explore how early modern people attempted to be remembered, often in deliberately crafted messages to future generations.⁸² There has been a particular interest in epitaphs on post-Reformation funerary monuments, with their religious and Classical inspirations. Scott Newstok has studied English epitaphs in the light of changing confessional allegiances and national consciousness. He argues that an end to intercessory functions did not reduce the sumptuousness of display, for he found that aristocrats spent three times the amount at the end of the Elizabethan period than had been spent a century earlier and Puritans spent as much as other Protestants.⁸³ Monuments bear witness to the conscious crafting of social priorities, proprieties, and spiritual pieties.

The private sacred space affordable by elite dead with its privileged commemorative function was the family mortuary chapel. Initially spaces associated with personal priestly intercession for the soul, after the Reformation, elites of both confessions continued to construct and refurbish them in conventual (Catholic) and parish (Catholic and Protestant) churches. The chantry/family chapels of English parishes have been studied in detail by the archaeologist Simon Roffey.⁸⁴ Their use as burial and intercessory spaces in the Middle Ages was changed only by the elimination of their private liturgical function; families continued to use them as mausolea with ever more elaborate monuments. In France, the high-status Saintes-Chapelles have been studied by Julien Nolet. The original, built by Louis IX in Paris, was used to house the great relic of the Crown of Thorns and to act as a memorial chapel for the king. It was

81 Aleksandra Koutny-Jones, *Visual Cultures of Death in Central Europe: Contemplation and Commemoration in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania* (Leiden: 2015).

82 Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual 1500–1800* (London: 1991); Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: 2008).

83 Scott L. Newstok, *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs Beyond the Tomb* (Basingstoke: 2009).

84 Simon Roffey, *Chantry Chapels and Medieval Strategies for the Afterlife* (Stroud: 2008).

adopted as a design scheme by aristocrats claiming descent from Louis, replicated on their domains and legitimised by royal gifts of thorns. This way, family memorials were combined with a relic providing intercession with Christ.⁸⁵ The growth in Christology to which chapels were often linked can also be seen in Italian building projects, for example Robert Maniura shows that the burial chapel of Giuliano Guizzelmi (1446–1518), constructed in the crypt of Prato Cathedral below the altar of the great crucifix, demonstrates the use of this space as a primary intercessory strategy – one available only to the very wealthy of course.⁸⁶ Begoña Alonso Ruiz shows how in late medieval Spain there was a programmatic design of funerary chapels, covered by vaults of star-shaped ribs. Initially used in the great funerary chapels of Toledo and Burgos, they were imitated in an endless number of smaller chapels throughout the peninsula, resulting in a highly homogeneous group of structures erected within a limited span of time.⁸⁷ Chapel refurbishment declined in 16th century, but once the Reformation turbulence calmed, they reappeared. Vanessa Harding has shown the growth in private space commandeered in Paris and London churches by elites as has Elizabeth Tingle for early modern Brittany.⁸⁸

Confessional conflict over burial place shows in stark terms religious tensions caused by the Reformation. Location of burial was a serious issue in bi-confessional communities, for Protestants wanted to be laid to rest with their families and communities, while Catholics rejected the pollution that heretics caused in sacred earth. Early work on this subject was carried out in the context of the French Wars of Religion, specifically conflicts within towns, such as the kingdom-wide study of Penny Roberts for the 1560s.⁸⁹ Keith Luria examined coexistence and conflict in the use of burial space in 17th-century southern France.⁹⁰ He found differences between communities, indicative of levels of co-existences: in some places, rituals continued to be similar and space

85 Julien Noblet, *En perpétuelle mémoire: Collégiales castrales et saintes-chapelles à vocation funéraire en France (1450–1560)* (Rennes: 2009).

86 Robert Maniura, "The burial Chapel of Giuliano Guizzelmi and the Demands of Devotion," *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005), 185–200.

87 Begoña Alonso Ruiz, "Un modelo funerario del tardogótico castellano: Las capillas treboladas," *Archivo Español de Arte* 78 (2005), 277–95.

88 Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670* (Cambridge: 2002); Tingle; *Purgatory*.

89 Penny Roberts, "Contesting Sacred Space: Burial Disputes in Sixteenth-Century France," in *The Place of the Dead. Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 131–48.

90 Keith P. Luria, "Separated by Death? Burials, Cemeteries, and Confessional Boundaries in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 24 (2001), 185–222.

continued to be shared; in others, more distinct boundaries were created with the division of parish cemeteries into separated zones. As persecution of Huguenots increased, Protestant cemeteries were moved outside of communities, creating a physical separation between the groups. David Luebke has looked at burial practices in the bishopric of Münster, Germany, specifically at efforts by the region's Protestants to obtain churchyard burials in a Catholic-dominated city.⁹¹ Geert H. Janssen looks specifically at ritual funeral processions of stadholders in the Dutch Republic; in this multi-denominational state, these corteges were deliberately non-confessional, in order to transcend religious divisions in Dutch society.⁹²

2.4 *From Mentalité to Emotion*

Finally, studies of attitudes towards death have long flourished as part of a history of mentalities with which we began, and latterly, as part of a history of emotions. A central topic has been the means by which individuals prepared for death, particularly the genre of literature known as *ars moriendi* and its fate across the Reformation centuries. By these means, historians have attempted to access interior piety, changing strategies for salvation, and beliefs about the afterlife. Again, there is an enormous literature, which covers all European regions and crosses the Reformation divide. Germany and the Habsburg regions have been particularly rich in studies, with Koslofsky's discussion of Lutheran texts and the work by Austra Reinis on *ars* from the Habsburg territories.⁹³ Germany has been the focus of seminal studies on feelings and emotions, with Susan Karant-Nunn's *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany*, and Lynne Tatlock's edited collection *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany*.⁹⁴ Karant-Nunn presents a comparative study of the role of emotion or feeling in the religious experience of Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists in early-modern Germany, taking one of her case studies as pastoral support of the dying. She sees discernible "emotional scripts" at moments like this, at least as represented in guidance manuals and sermons, becoming integral to confessional identities and cultures. Ronald K. Rittgers's *The*

91 David M. Luebke, "Confessions of the Dead Interpreting Burial Practice in the Late Reformation," *AJR*, 101 (2010), 55–79.

92 Geert H. Janssen, "Political Ambiguity and Confessional Diversity in the Funeral Processions of Stadholders in the Dutch Republic," *SCJ* 40 (2009), 283–301.

93 Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*; Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The ars moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)* (Aldershot: 2007).

94 Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: 2010); Lynne Tatlock (ed.), *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden: 2010).

Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany relates emotions more directly to religious life, with an examination of consolation and its disciplinary function.⁹⁵ A recent project based in Finland has focused on northern Europe and has been published in three volumes to date by Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpiola: a general collection on cultures of dying and dying in medieval and early modern Europe, a volume on preparation for death, and one on planning for death, focusing on wills and property transfer.⁹⁶ Spain, with its highly visible baroque images of death, is another centre of important work, for example by Jaime Aurell on attitudes to death in the Middle Ages and that by Antonio Rey Hazas, *Artes de bien morir*, which looks across the Middle Ages and early modern period.⁹⁷

In this volume, Stephen Bates evaluates the means by which the dying were comforted and prepared for death in the later medieval Latin west, especially England. He investigates the range of strategies used by the living and by testators to provide for the sacraments, good works, and favourable saintly intercession, to build up heavenly credit for their souls. Despite the shock of the Black Death, Bates argues that the “art” of dying a good Christian death across the 15th and early 16th centuries was not regarded fearfully, but something to be approached with practicality and planning. In an essay on the Counter-Reformation in Europe, Elizabeth Tingle demonstrates changes in the way in which the dying were prepared for their journey in post-Tridentine Europe. The Council of Trent confirmed the salvatory status of purgatory, good works, the intercession of saints, and the importance of masses for the dead. However, the evolution of *ars moriendi* into devotional works containing personal meditations on death; the culture of will-making and testamentary practice; the sacramental preparation of the sick; and the role of confraternities in assisting the dying, made death more a concern for the individual while giving a greater role in its mediation to communities and religious groups, especially the clergy. A study of the emotional history of grieving is provided by Christopher Ocker, as it was understood by theologians and physicians across the period: the spiritual and physical manifestations of feeling, using vernacular

95 Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: 2012).

96 Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen (eds), *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Helsinki: 2015); *Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe* (Leiden: 2017); *Planning for Death: Wills and Death-Related Property Arrangements in Europe, 1200–1600* (Leiden: 2018).

97 Antonio Rey Hazas, *Artes de bien morir: Ars moriendi de la Edad Media y del Siglo de oro* (Madrid: 2003); Jaime Aurell (ed.), *Ante la muerte: Actitudes, espacios y formas en la España medieval* (Madrid: 2002).

literature, popular print, painting, and music. He finds many continuities in popular and learned responses to death and expressions of mourning, across the religious controversies of the 16th century and in contemporary changes in the practice of medicine.

This collection of essays shows, therefore, that within the fundamental, shared experience of mortality across all human societies, the responses to it were endlessly variable over space and time. We get new understandings of that variety, with studies of visual culture, the embodied experience, and emotion. The Black Death did not shatter the religious cultures of medieval Europe, rather, eastern and western Christianity was rooted and flexible enough to offer ways of understanding and coping with the catastrophe. The Reformation reshaped beliefs about the afterlife, but not the fact of mourning, or of verbal and physical commemoration of the dead. All societies continued to fear the returning dead, although the physical remains of special bodies could be exploited to the advantage of the living, as with the relics of saints. Above all, Christians everywhere shared a fundamental belief, even if the means to achieve it were contested, that the "... the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."⁹⁸ How they understood, acted on, and represented that belief, forms the core of this volume.

98 NRSV Romans 6:23.

PART 1

Dying, Death, Burial and the Afterlife



Changing Western European Visions of Christian Afterlives, 1350–1700: Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory

Elizabeth Tingle

For Christians of the pre-modern period, belief in an afterlife was a basic tenet of faith. The narrative of the New Testament is an exposition of the triumph of life over death, achieved by Jesus Christ through his passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Christian soteriology was – and is – therefore predicated upon a hereafter, the nature of which is determined by the actions of the living person, above all, faith in Christ. Such beliefs are restated with each recital of the Apostles' Creed, which proclaims the “resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.” To understand fully the nature of Christianity, it is vital to comprehend its eschatology for departed souls.

In the last twenty years, there has been a large literature on afterlives as believed and practised across the Renaissance and Reformation centuries, which will be drawn upon here.¹ What is clear is that during the later Middle Ages and early modern period, beliefs shifted in western Europe, in terms of how the soul achieved its eternal rest and where it resided. These changes will be explored in this chapter. The main body of evidence used consists of the writings of theologians in France, Spain, and the British Isles, as case studies. It will be demonstrated that beliefs in judgement, heaven, and hell remained largely constant across the period, but the attack on purgatory that followed the Reformation led to important transformations in belief and religious practice concerning the spiritual realms. Ultimately, the resultant debates about afterlives also led to some questioning of the evidence for a hereafter, among an educated elite increasingly interested in empirical observation. In this chapter, changing ideas about the geography of the afterlife, the nature of its component realms and the means by which the soul made the journey, will be discussed. First, we turn to the means by which souls made the transition from this world to the next.

¹ Rather than duplicating references, please see the volume editors' Introduction.

1 Transition to the Afterlife: Particular and Last Judgement

Christian eschatology rests upon a belief that after death each soul is judged by God and sent to the place in the afterlife which it deserves. Christians of the later Middle Ages believed that there were two points of judgement: the first was immediately after death and the second, at the end of earthly time. The relationship between particular – that is, individual – and general, or last, judgement, has changed in importance over time. Historians have proposed that over the late medieval and Reformation centuries, particular judgement became pre-eminent, while concern with the Last Judgement faded. The thesis of Philippe Ariès on the individualization of the experience of death in this period is important here.² Ariès argued that as death came to be seen as the fate of individuals rather than a collective experience, the Christian doctrines of Last Judgement at the end of time and of the permanency of hell were increasingly modified. Pierre Chaunu, historian of religious practice in early modern Paris, took up the argument, stating that “the thought of hell [was] more insupportable than that of death itself. Hell [was] total death, a second death.”³ To modify this dreadful fate, the concept of a particular judgement developed, where souls would be sent to a “third place” of purgatory to expiate their sins before achieving heaven. The theological implications of particular judgement were far-reaching for religious practice, and persistent over time, as we will see.

The Christian scriptures make clear that at the end of time, there will be a second coming of the Messiah – Jesus Christ – and the destruction of the earthly realm. This will involve the corporeal resurrection of the dead and a final or Last Judgement of all people, living and deceased. The good and the evil will be separated and sentenced to their eternal destination, heaven or hell. The Last Judgement was described in numerous ways in the New Testament: Matthew describes it as an allegorical separation of sheep and goats, while the Epistles and Revelation provide the faithful with an outline as to what will happen at that time. They state that the skies will open, and the Lord will appear with a great noise, the voices of angels and the trumpet of God. Those who have died in faith will rise first, followed by the living. They will be taken up to where Christ, fully God and man, will appear in his true body to judge.⁴ All Christians will have to account for themselves before God the sovereign magistrate, without recourse to appeal. He is a stern judge, incorruptible,

² Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (London: 1983).

³ Pierre Chaunu, *La mort à Paris: XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: 1978), 139.

⁴ 1 Thess 4:13–18.

inflexible, and inexorable.⁵ Apocalypse or the end of the world will follow and a new order under the rulership of God will commence. Rapture will lift the saved to heaven with Jesus Christ and damnation will cast the evil souls forever into hell. Belief in the Last Judgement as the ultimate fate of all human beings remained a central part of orthodox Christian belief across the period. It was the fate which all dreaded and for which all were enjoined to prepare, through faith and for some, by good works.

But from the time of the early church onwards, when it became apparent that the expected messiah would not appear immediately, Last Judgement was clearly going to occur at some time in the future. By the 14th century, there were seen to be two tribunals, one particular and immediate, and the other general, at the end of time. At death, souls underwent immediate judgement. In popular religious culture, they were weighed by the archangel St Michael, then sent to their spiritual destination until the day of resurrection. At that point, soul and body would be reunited, judged finally, and then sent to their eternal home of heaven or hell. There were tensions in this view, admitted by some theologians – there was no particular judgement in the Bible – but there is a good deal of evidence from late medieval religious practice to show the widespread internalisation of the belief. One example is the large number of advice guides or *ars moriendi* widely produced and illustrated with woodcut prints, showing the necessary preparations one should make for death. Indeed, these works played a considerable role in propagating the eschatology of particular judgement.⁶ Such preparations included calling upon heavenly intercessors, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints as the essays in this volume by Gray and Bates show. They required the undertaking of good works in life and after death such as charitable donations, funding of church construction and decoration, bridge and road building, and the provision of hospitals and alms houses. Above all, appropriate funeral obsequies were important, for it was widely believed that gaining a favourable judgement from God would be greatly aided by prayers and masses said for the deceased.⁷ Thus, during the later medieval centuries, funerary practice changed. The most striking transformation was

5 François Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles: Essai de démographie et de psychologie historiques* (Paris: 1971), 445–6.

6 See for example Roger Chartier, “Les arts de mourir 1450–1600,” *AESC* 31 (1976), 51–76; Daniel Roche, “La mémoire de la mort: Recherche sur la place des arts de mourir dans la librairie et la lecture en France aux 17^e et 18^e siècles,” *AESC* 31 (1976), 76–119; Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The ars moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)* (Aldershot: 2007).

7 Sara T. Nalle, *God in La Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca, 1500–1650* (Baltimore: 1992), 194.

the concentration of masses in the period immediately after death, with the first year afterwards being particularly important.⁸ Jacques Chiffolleau argues that funeral obsequies show that death was less of an instantaneous act than a process, involving stages which had to be passed through, closing at the end of twelve months with a year's mind service. At this point, the deceased passed definitively into the world of the dead.⁹ We can see this in the will of Jacques de la Croix, canon of Notre Dame of Nantes, who founded a mass "because he would have to give account [of his life] before his Sacred Majesty" and fearing this, he wanted "with all his heart to do something to honour the blessed Trinity."¹⁰ Medieval writers often described the deathbed scene in terms of a supernatural battle for the soul of the dying individual in which the heavenly and infernal hosts vied for possession of the prize.¹¹

With the fracture of western Christianity at the Reformation, Protestant theologians put greater formal emphasis on the Last Judgement, as part of their rejection of purgatory. In devotional handbooks and consolatory literature, the fate of the soul immediately after death was often glossed over. Comfort for the just in anticipation of the day of judgement became the main theme. Thus, Pierre de Moulin, Huguenot pastor in Paris and Sedan, in *Familière, Instruction pour consoler les malades, avec plusieurs prières sur ce sujet* of 1625 wrote: "The sick need not fear Judgement: they will not appear before God as before a severe and rigorous judge, but as a propitious and peaceful father to you through Jesus Christ" and Christ would be their advocate and intercessor on that day.¹² In the East Midlands of England, a common pictorial theme on Swithland slate gravestones was the angel of the resurrection, sounding the trumpet so the glorious dead might arise.

Yet in practice, particular judgement remained a core element of Protestant eschatology. The difference was in their rejection of the function of saintly intercessors at this tribunal, of the role of good works in swaying the decision of God and in the place of purgatory in salvation. Protestants faced judgement alone, clothed solely in faith, and God's decision was independent and absolute.¹³ John Calvin, the leader of the reformed church in Geneva, took literally St

8 See for example, Arthur Bissegger, *Une paroisse raconte ses morts: L'obituaire de l'église Saint-Paul à Villeneuve (XIVe-XVe siècle)* (Lausanne: 2003), 80–1.

9 Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (c.1320-c.1480)* (Rome: 1980), 147.

10 Archives Départementales de la Loire-Atlantique (ADLA) G 46. Diocèse of Nantes. Visitation 1573.

11 Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* (London: 2002), 12.

12 Pierre du Moulin, *Familière, Instruction pour consoler les malades, avec plusieurs prières sur ce sujet* (Geneva: 1625), 39.

13 Carlos Eire, *A Very Brief History of Eternity* (Princeton: 2010), 152.

Paul's statement that "when we leave our earthly abode ... we wait in heaven."¹⁴ Heinrich Bullinger, the leader of the reformed church in Zurich, in his tract *The Last Judgement* (1555), focused on the article in the Creed "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."¹⁵ As far as Bullinger was concerned, "if one believes one's sins to be forgiven, they are indeed forgiven. Christians can be comforted that there will be no more punishment. The everlasting joy promised by God will begin immediately at the moment of death."¹⁶ The elect would not stand trial they will be taken straight to heaven while the damned are judged. Clodagh Tait argues that amongst Irish Protestants, resurrection was envisaged as a two-stage process, with an increasing emphasis laid on the different locations of body and soul in the period before the day of judgement. This is exemplified by the will of Sir Edmond Stafford of Mount Stafford, County Antrim, written in 1644: leaving his soul in the hands of God, he expressed the hope that "it shall rest with the blessed trenitie in peace amongst the soule[s] of the faithful departed and at the second coming of my adored Saviour Jesus Christ that my soul and my bodye be Joyned together and rise againe to Eternall life."¹⁷ James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, stated that the dead bodies of those faithful who "had tasted of the first resurrection of the soul from sin" would be raised at the sound of the voice of the Son of God at "the second resurrection."¹⁸ We find similar statements of belief across the Protestant British Isles.

Intertwined with teachings about judgement was the doctrine of predestination, which became very important among Protestant theologians of the second generation and their successors. The question of God's selection of who should be saved and who condemned through judgement, that is, the composition of the elect and the reprobate, arose from the early church onwards. St Augustine's meditations upon sin led him to the doctrine of predestination, that God decided who would be saved from the beginning of time. Liliane Crété argues that for him, it was an essential marker of divine initiative in the destiny of individuals and a sign of the grandeur and justice of God. Luther,

14 2 Cor 5:1–4; Calvin's view is discussed in Liliane Crété, *Où va-t-on après la mort? Le discours protestant sur l'au-delà, XVIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Geneva: 2009), 47.

15 Heinrich Bullinger, *The Last Judgement* (1555), discussed by Bruce Gordon, "Welcher nit gloubt der ist schon verdampft': Heinrich Bullinger and the Spirituality of the Last Judgement," *Zwingliana* 29 (2002), 29–53.

16 Bruce Gordon, "In my Father's house there are many mansions': Heinrich Bullinger on Death and the Afterlife," in *A Linking of Heaven and Earth. Studies in Religious and Cultural History in Honor of Carlos M.N. Eire*, eds E. Michelson, S.K. Taylor, and M.N. Venables (Farnham: 2012), 164, 167.

17 Tait, *Ireland*, 153.

18 Tait, *Ireland*, 154.

with his Augustinian background, accepted predestination as part of a pastoral assurance of salvation. Calvin used the concept to underline three points: the absolute sovereignty of God, justification by grace alone without the needs for works, and the assurance of salvation.¹⁹ From Theodore de Bèze onwards, predestination became more prominent in reformed theologies and it came to be a core concept of Presbyterianism and Puritanism in the British Isles and the Americas. What was clear, was that the saved were only a small number compared to the huge number of damned. Some historians have argued that the growing emphasis on predestination resulted in an increase of Protestant anxiety about death. The safety net between hell and heaven that was purgatory had been removed, and those who may have doubted their membership of the elect awaited with dread the moment of death and judgement. Others disputed this conclusion, claiming that the loss of purgatory only served to render the likelihood of suffering in the next world increasingly remote. Tait favours the latter, arguing that the tone of funerary monuments and wills from late 16th and early 17th-century Ireland, supports an optimistic view of salvation. For example, the Chichester memorial in Carrickfergus Church, (ca. 1625) declared the hope of the Lord Deputy and his wife that “they ... shall here rest in peace untill the second coming of their crucified Redeemer whome they most constantly believe then to behold with their bodily eyes to their endless Blessedness and everlasting comfort.” Similarly, Alderman William Ball of Dublin’s will of 1598 commended his soul,

which I faythfully beleve to be saved by the pretious death and blood shedding of my dear Savior Jesus Christ without any worthinis or merite of mine owne ... to the holy hands of mine Eternall God to receve that Eternall Crowne of Glory which He hath promised to thos that die in His favour and fear.²⁰

These were confident statements of those who considered themselves to be among the saved.

In post-Reformation Catholic theologies, similar emphasis was laid on Last Judgement at the end of time, and particular judgement at the moment of death. In Peter Canisius’s *Summa Doctrinae*, this dual judgement is spelled out: “it is appointed to men to die once, and after this the judgement [Heb 9], to wit, both that particular which everyone hath at his death, and the last and

¹⁹ This summary is provided by Crété, *Où va-t-on après la mort*, 26, 38.

²⁰ Tait, *Ireland*, 152–3.

generall judgement, which expecteth all men at the end of the world.”²¹ While he spelled out the terrors of Last Judgement, like his Protestant counterparts, he stressed the mercy of Christ towards the saved, “that we may find Christ then a gentle judge and that day wherein heaven and earth shall pass, joyful unto us ... To him that feareth our lord, it shall be well at the last, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed.”²² The difference in Catholic eschatology was a continuing belief in purgatory as an alternative destination to hell. Chaunu shows that in Paris, wills increasingly asked for post-mortem bequests to help the soul navigate judgement and shorten the stay in purgatory, peaking in the decades of the mid-17th century. He argues that there was almost total victory of particular over final judgement in beliefs about the fate of the soul after death. The eternal destiny of women and men no longer needed the body, it was entirely assumed by the fate of the soul, what Chaunu calls a “second eschatology.”²³ It is to the location of these supernatural destinations, heaven, hell, and purgatory, that we now turn.

2 Shifting Geographies of the Afterlife, 1350–1700

The Christian Bible offers no clear description of either the nature of the afterlife or where it was located. For the Jews of the Old Testament, the hereafter was achieved at the end of time, when God would come to earth, raise and judge the dead, and set up his kingdom, as described in Daniel 12:2: “multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” In the intervening period between death and resurrection, there was obscurity as to whether souls would sleep or be taken unto the Lord until that time. The New Testament provided a few more descriptions on the places of everlasting punishment (hell or Hades) and reward (heaven) and above all, a detailed depiction of the process of Last Judgement in the Revelation of St John the Divine. Yet concrete detail on place was lacking, which opened up interpretation to the imagination. As a result, across the Christian centuries, the nature, location, and process of accessing the afterlife were elaborated and evolved.

By the beginning of the 14th century, western European Christians had developed a belief in an afterlife whose landscape comprised three broad realms,

21 For this chapter, the English translation was used: Peter Canisius, *A Summe of Christian Doctrine* (St Omer: 1622), 336.

22 Canisius, *A Summe of Christian Doctrine*, 341.

23 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 248.

heaven and hell as described in the Bible, but also a third place, purgatory. The origins of this geography lay in the central Middle Ages, during which Jacques Le Goff identifies a “growing spatial conception” of the afterlife, and by the 12th century, the emergence of a new topography of the other world.²⁴ By the later Middle Ages there was consensus of theological opinion of five distinct places of the afterlife: heaven, purgatory and hell, and within the latter, limbo for infants who died without baptism and limbo for patriarchs who died before Christ was born.²⁵ After death, Christian souls went to hell or to heaven, the latter usually after a time in purgatory. Hell was for people who died in a state of mortal sin or for those who were not baptised, including pagans, heretics, and infidels. Here, the damned spent an eternity of torment by a fire specially created to burn body and soul, and by the spiritual deprivation of the sight and succour of God.²⁶ Most medieval Christians considered that their lives were not so bad as to merit eternal damnation, however. They hoped to attain salvation and to pass eternity close to Christ. But only saints and martyrs were pure enough to enter heaven immediately, for most individuals lived a lifetime of sin. Therefore, there emerged a belief in a “third place” in the afterlife, purgatory, where all who died in a state of venial sin or who had not completed penances imposed in confession were purged of their faults. Once satisfaction was achieved, the soul would be released to heaven. Purgatory was formally defined by the Councils of Lyons in 1274 and Florence in 1439, although it was promulgated as doctrine only by the Council of Trent in 1563. The length of time it took to move from purgatory to heaven was determined by an individual's actions in their lifetime but it was also influenced by the ongoing community of the living through the process of intercession, directly, through Christ, and through the mediation of the saints and the Church.

The *Divine Comedy* of the Florentine Dante Alighieri, written in the second decade of the 14th century, provides a detailed geography of the afterlife as taught by the Latin Church of the later Middle Ages.²⁷ Dante, guided by the Roman writer Virgil and then by Beatrice, a childhood sweetheart who died young, journeyed through the three realms of the afterlife, hell, purgatory, and heaven, finally seeing God at the summit of salvation. Hell was depicted as a

24 Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire* (Paris: 1981).

25 Peter Marshall, “The Map of God's Word': Geographies of the Afterlife in Tudor and Early Stuart England,” in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 110–30, on 112–13.

26 Georges Minois, *Histoire de l'enfer* (Paris: 1994), 65–6.

27 Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. D.L. Sayers, 3 vols (Harmondsworth: 1955).

deep pit, somewhere under Jerusalem, descending into the core of the earth, where Lucifer had his domain. Purgatory was above ground, a mountainous island in the southern hemisphere, cast up by the impact explosion when Satan's fall created hell. It was a terraced mountain – inspired perhaps by the Tuscan hinterland – where one ascended upwards, finally achieving the Garden of Eden at the summit. Above was heaven, suffused with light from the sun and the celestial spheres, with God at the apex. Dante's imagining of the afterlife, heavily influenced by the Dominican St Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologia*, was reproduced many times in manuscript and then print. It remained influential in literary circles across the Renaissance and Reformation periods even if Dante's refined images were not necessarily the imaginings of the wider population.

The physical location of the spiritual realms was debated, although by the 14th century there was again broad consensus. According to the observant Franciscan Jacques Suarez writing in the early 17th century, heaven was above the earth, the celestial sphere, the seat of God, and entry was only allowed to humans because of the death and passion of Jesus Christ. Then there was hell, for the damned, underground. As part of the subterranean complex, there was also limbo. Purgatory was another infernal place, again underground.²⁸ It was considered by theologians such as Aquinas to be proximal to hell although not part of the infernal complex.²⁹ There are numerous surviving portrayals of the geography of the afterlife in church wall-paintings and glass – didactic tools for the laity, especially during Advent and Lent – and manuscripts. Pictorial representations mostly take the form of depictions of Doom or the Last Judgement. The chancel arch of Albi cathedral in France and the great west window of Fairford Church, Oxfordshire, England, are two high-quality examples from around 1500. Hell is depicted as a fiery, subterranean region, entered through the mouth of a great fish or sea monster. Purgatory lies next to it, outside but warmed by its flames. Heaven is above, where God the father, Christ the son, and a crowned Virgin Mary, sit in triumph, with angels, saints and the blessed. Angels act as messengers moving souls upward, while demons escort the damned below.

By tradition, it was possible to enter and experience physically the realm of purgatory, if one travelled to Ireland. A cave on an island in Lough Derg in Donegal was believed to be an entrance to "St Patrick's Purgatory" and a large body of folklore and literature grew up regarding visions of the torments of the

28 Jacques Suarès, *Torrent de feu sortant de la face de Dieu pour desseicher les Eaux de Mara, encloses dans la chaussée du Moulin d'Ablon* (Paris: 1603), 4–9.

29 Marshall, "The Map of God's Word" 112–13.

afterlife seen by pilgrims there. The Purgatory began to attract pilgrims from at least the 12th century, when Henry of Saltry wrote *The Purgatory of St. Patrick*, which circulated widely around Europe and inspired a range of other writings such as *Le Purgatoire de saint Patrick* of Marie de France.³⁰ The island continued to attract pilgrim-visitors across the Middle Ages into the 18th century, despite, or because of, sporadic attempts to suppress the pilgrimage, firstly by the papacy in the 1490s then by the civil authorities of the English state in the 1630s and 1640s.³¹ The literary work by Henry of Saltry continued to be translated and printed across the Reformation centuries. In the 1545 Paris edition of Jean Bonfans, for example, a knight relates the details of a pilgrimage to the monastery and “Purgatory” of Lough Derg in Ireland. Here, penitents took part in a range of rituals, the culmination of which was confinement for or 24 hours in an underground cave, fasting, praying, and meditating upon sin.³² Other authors’ descriptions of purgatory derive from this source. There were some alternative visions of purgatory. Robert Swanson observes that in late medieval writings on ghosts, souls might mingle together in a general or common purgatory or they might have an individual purgatory, a specific terrestrial site associated with their major sins. However, Swanson questions how widespread such an understanding was.³³ For most people, as far as we can tell, the tripartite realms of the spiritual world in their different locations was their chief way of imagining the destination of the soul after death.

The Reformation of the 16th century saw this eschatology challenged and the spatial arrangements of the afterlife altered. The main cause was the rejection of a belief in purgatory by Protestants. Luther rejected purgatory at the diet of Augsburg in 1530 and Calvin vigorously condemned it in the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536.³⁴ Purgatory was denied as non-biblical and the intercession of the saints and the living community for the souls of the dead was rejected, with only faith in Christ leading to redemption. An afterlife of heaven or hell alone, after final judgement, was accepted. Peter Marshall argues that English Protestants parodied “the absurdity of the Catholic geography of the afterlife, its tendency to particularise and localise

30 Myriam White-Le Goff (ed. and trans.), *Le purgatoire de saint-Patrick de Marie de France; accompagné des autres versions françaises en vers et du “Tractatus de Purgatorio sancti Patricii” de H. de Saltry* (Paris: 2019).

31 Tait, *Ireland*, 150.

32 Jean Bonfans, *Le purgatoire de saint Patrice* (Paris: 1547).

33 Robert Swanson “Ghosts and Ghostbusters in the Middle Ages,” *SCH* 45 (2009), 143–73, on 155.

34 Michelle Fournié, *Le Ciel, peut-il attendre? Le culte du Purgatoire dans le Midi de la France (1320 environ-1520 environ)* (Paris: 1997), 13–14.

imaginary realms, to map out the confines and borders of the hereafter.”³⁵ Protestants continued to debate the location of the two other realms of heaven and hell, however. In England, the mid-16th-century “Descensus Controversy” was a dispute over the meaning of the phrase in the Creed on Christ descending into hell, raising questions about its location. Some argued that hell really meant the grave; others, that it was a real place although it was best not to inquire where it was. Some religious radicals rejected the notion of a localised afterlife at all, asserting that heaven and hell were spiritual states experienced in this life. Marshall argues that over the Reformation decades in England, “distinct cracks in the edifice of conventional belief about a localised afterlife can be detected spreading slowly” largely because “reformers of all kinds were determined to disassociate themselves irrevocably from the typologies and language of pre-Reformation geographies of the afterlife, in particular the notion of the third place, Purgatory.”³⁶

In Tridentine Catholicism, the traditional geographical construction of the afterworld was reasserted, along with long-standing intercessory and communicative relationships with the souls contained there. Its spatial location was, however, debated, particularly as to whether it was a physical place or a metaphysical state. In France, writings of the early 17th century were particularly keen to locate purgatory, in defence of the doctrine against Protestant attacks. Hugues Burlat’s *Deux sermons de la resurrection du Lazare* of 1603 followed medieval descriptions which located that purgatory at the gates of hell, near to the upper regions, where punishments were not as severe as in the lower regions. But the same fire burned in purgatory and hell, although in the former, a soul’s sentence was of limited duration.³⁷ Yet André Duval, in *Feu d’hélie pour tarir les feux de Siloë*, also of 1603, stated that the church had never defined the location of purgatory, whether it was above or below the earth. Its precise location was not an article of faith. Duval believed that a soul judged by God after death is punished in the place that he wishes, above or below ground, for as long or as little as he pleases.³⁸ Duval supported this with quotes from the text of the mass for the dead, in which God was implored to “deliver the souls of the faithful departed from infernal punishments, from the deep lake, from the mouth

35 Marshall, “The Map of God’s Word,” 115.

36 Marshall, “The Map of God’s Word,” 110–11, 116.

37 Hugues Burlat, *Deux sermons de la resurrection du Lazare Par lesquels est verifiée l’intercession des saints, la confession auriculaire et le Purgatoire* (Paris: 1603), 62r–64r.

38 André Duval, *Feu d’hélie pour tarir les feux de Siloë, auquel est amplement prouvé le Purgatoire contre le Ministre du Moulin and respond aux raisons and allegations contraires* (Paris: 1603), 33, 43–4.

of the lion, from the fear that the pit of hell will swallow them and that they will fall into darkness.”³⁹ In 1605, Charles Durand published *Le purgatoire des fidelles deffuncts*, reiterating the subterranean location, while refuting a series of other beliefs. He related that some people claimed that purgatory existed in bad conscience, others, that it must be in the valley of Josephat or at the end of that place called Tophet, yet others claimed that purgatory was in the air. But he stated that all of these were false, for it was most likely that purgatory was situated in the bowels of the earth.⁴⁰

But over the 17th century, the location and spatial arrangement of purgatory became vaguer, more opaque, and from the 1650s, works devoted solely to purgatory began to disappear. Théophile Brachet de la Milletière’s work of 1640 denied the “superstition” of purgatory as a harsh place of punishment. Rather, he was vague about the abode of souls after death but before judgement day, although conceded that penalties could be exacted in the next life.⁴¹ Discussion of the afterlife and salvation were mostly confined to a wider literature of spirituality and living and dying well. More stress was laid on hell and how to avoid it, and the inferno remained located in the fiery underworld. The details of how each of these realms was imagined will be discussed below.

3 The Realms of the Afterlife: The Fall and Rise of Purgatory

3.1 *Heaven*

All Christians aspire to heaven, to live with Christ in everlasting bliss, yet biblical descriptions are few. Christian hopes of eternal felicity in a specific place were based largely on the words of Christ on the cross to the “good thief,” whom he promised “today you will be with me in paradise.”⁴² This was supported by St Paul, who told the Philippian Christians that “for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain ... I desire to depart and be with Christ” and that “our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴³ As for the physical experience of heaven, Christians believed that

39 Duval, *Feu d'hélie*, 57–8.

40 Charles Durand, *Le purgatoire des fidelles deffuncts* (Poitiers: 1605), 271. This is a copy of Anon, *Purgatoire des catholiques contre le debordements des eaux du lac de Genève* (n. p.: 1605). All citations here are taken from the Anonymous pamphlet.

41 Théophile Brachet de la Milletière, *Response du sieur de la Milletière à la lettre d'un de ses amis sur son 'Traité de la nécessité de la puissance du pape en l'église ou la doctrine du Purgatoire suivant le concile de Trente'* (Paris: 1640), passim.

42 Luke 23:43.

43 Phil 1:21–23, 3:20.

it was “above” somewhere, for the apostles had witnessed Christ ascending to heaven 40 days after his resurrection from the dead, “up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”⁴⁴ They knew that heaven was large with many parts, for Christ had said that “my father’s house has many mansions.”⁴⁵ Also, Revelation chapter 21 contained descriptions of heaven: it “shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal”; it was city-like, God was seated at the centre and it was illuminated by divine glory. With this outline information, Christians have imagined heaven and its residents in different ways, which they have illustrated in painting, glass and manuscripts, and in literature and sermons. Because there is no doctrinal statement on the nature of heaven, and therefore little potential for heresy, it is difficult to chart changes over time in different Christian traditions. They are greatly varied.

Two principal visions of the place and its occupants are seen in the period 1350 to 1700, with much continuity over time and between confessional groups. Theologians were often reluctant to extend their descriptions beyond the sparse but canonical words of scripture. As Calvin stated: “For though we are truly told that the kingdom of God will be full of light, and gladness, and felicity, and glory, yet the things meant by these words remain most remote from sense, and as it were involved in enigma, until the day arrive on which he will manifest his glory to us face to face.”⁴⁶ Thus, Volker Leppin observes that Calvin’s biblical interpretation folds the end-times into the present time, and his interest lies less in the depiction of the future as in the means by which we pass from the present to that future.⁴⁷ Despite this reticence on the part of biblical scholars, the period saw two dominant paradigms for describing heaven. One was the city and the other, the garden.⁴⁸ In the Middle Ages, argues Alistair Mcgrath, Christians most commonly visualised heaven as a garden modelled on that of Eden, “as a place of fertility and harmony, where humanity dwelt in peace with nature and walked with God.”⁴⁹ There were strong biblical contexts for this simile. Eden was the primal site of the created world, perfect in all ways, where God walked in the cool of the day. The Song of Songs used the

44 Acts 1:10.

45 John 14:2.

46 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), Book 3, ch. 25, vs 10. English translation online at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/history/calvin-institutes-christianity/book3/chapter-25.html> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

47 Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.), *The Calvin Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2009), 363.

48 Jerry L. Walls, “Heaven,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford: 2008), 401.

49 Alistair E. Mcgrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Oxford: 2003), 43.

garden as a perfect setting for love, with medieval Christians reading it as an allegory for Christ and the church. The resurrection scene in St John's Gospel is set in a garden, where Mary Magdalen thinks Christ is the gardener. Later medieval traditions of *hortus inclusus* are seen in a variety of media, literary, devotional and artistic.

This imagining persisted after the Reformation. Paula Mendes cites a number of examples of Portuguese Counter-Reformation hagiographies, which describe the mystical experiences of holy men and women, who visit heaven in their trances.⁵⁰ For example, Sister Mariana do Rosário (d. 1649), a nun of the order of St Clare from the Convent of the Saviour of the World in Évora, had a number of visits to Paradise as related in her Life of 1694 by Fr. António de Almada. She

found herself in spirit upon a field most beautiful ... for there the sight was enchanted by myriad hues fashioned together by Spring herself, and a gracious variety of wildflowers, gentle blossoms, which would surely win the jealousy of the most superb of gardens. The trees, alluring sight, their branches all in equal height, were decked in lovely leaves: some offered cool retreats to inhabitants beneath their shadows, others tantalised the senses with fruits.⁵¹

Many such examples could be given.

The most common motif for describing the Christian afterlife across the period was, however, the heavenly city, or the New Jerusalem, based closely on Revelation 21. This was an ancient view of paradise, perhaps best exemplified by St Augustine's great work *The City of God*. An English text compilation of the 14th century called *The Pearl*, includes a meditation on the nature of heaven: a redeemed people must live in a redeemed city, which takes the form of a perfect New Jerusalem, although whereas earthly society is rigorously stratified, there are no such distinctions in heaven.⁵² Again, this allegory of heaven continues in all regions of western Europe in the Reformation centuries, perhaps

⁵⁰ Paula Almeida Mendes, "Spiritual Experiences in Portuguese Hagiographies in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in *Soul Travel: Spiritual Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Jennifer Hillman and Elizabeth Tingle (Oxford: 2019), 207–34.

⁵¹ António de Almada, *Desposorios do Espirito celebrados entre o Divino Amante, e sua Amada Esposa a Ven. Madre Soror Mariana do Rozario Religiosa de veo branco no Convento do Salvador da Cidade de Evora* (Lisbon: 1694), 301–2. Translation to English is by Mendes, "Spiritual Experiences," 218.

⁵² McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 25.

the most famous in English literature being the celestial city of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, discussed below.

A third allegory sometimes employed was the house or castle paradigm, after John chapter 14. Bullinger, writing in the 1550s, used the image of a "mansion" with many rooms to explain the nature of heaven in a series of sermons and works on "last things." While Bullinger was clear that God could not be confined to any specific physical space, the Bible explained abstract concepts using descriptions of familiar material objects, so humans could understand them in their own, limited terms. Thus, heaven was described as God's seat or castle with many parts or spheres. It was a lovely place for the soul and the body, ethereal and celestial in a way that people cannot perceive. Beyond that, Bullinger was not prepared to speculate.⁵³ Tait shows that some Irish poets described heaven as a dwelling owned by the supreme king, "where mirth and feasting were presided over by the Virgin Mary, who even had the power to snatch souls from the devil as a reward for devotion to her."⁵⁴ Contemporaries expected to be invited to share in the grandeur of the greatest lord.

Whatever the setting of heaven, whether in a garden, house, or city, there were two broad ways of imagining the experience of the soul there. The first was theocratic, focused on a direct relationship with God; the second was relational, based on reunion with friends and family in a perfect continuation of aspects of this world.⁵⁵ Clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, tended towards a theocratic and strictly biblical view of heaven. Aquinas's influential opinion was of a perfect stasis before God. For him, the afterlife comprised contemplation of God, a perfect form of the earthly monastic existence.⁵⁶ This view finds its echo in 16th-century Catholic writing. The Spanish mystics believed the soul would merge with God in divine purity. St Teresa of Avila described heaven as comprising the vision and knowledge of the divine mystery. Here, the soul is united with God "like the bright light entering a room through two different windows: although the streams of light are separate when entering the room, they become one."⁵⁷ St John of the Cross shared the Teresian mystical vision. For him, the soul would unite with God and thus be transformed

53 Bullinger wrote a series of tracts on judgement and the afterlife in *The Last Judgement* (1555), *Compendium of the Christian Religion* (1556), *Concerning the Right Hand of God* (1561). They are discussed in Gordon, "In my Father's house," 157–73.

54 Tait, *Ireland*, 151.

55 McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 142ff.

56 The view of Bernhard Lang, *Meeting in Heaven: Modernising the Christian Afterlife 1600–2000* (Frankfurt am Main: 2011), 42.

57 Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. M. Starr (New York: 2003), 270.

into the divine.⁵⁸ Lay devotional writers could be equally theocentric but were more inclined to believe in the continuance of the soul as an individual being. Pedro de Medina, cosmographer and philosopher, conceptualised a highly ordered and hierarchical heaven in *Libro de la Verdad* of 1555.⁵⁹ The blessed are spatially arranged in a rigid hierarchy where everyone has their proper station for eternity. At the summit of the court, God reigns as the supreme monarch. Below the trinity, the Virgin Mary reigns as queen of heaven, clothed in glorious garments. Under Mary, the angelic hosts are set out like a squadron of military or government officials. Below the angels, the saints are also arranged according to their merit. Medina's heaven was one of order and stasis, with each being given a defined role.⁶⁰ Lope de Vega, in his religious play *Las cortes de la muerte* of the 1550s, wrote that "God lives eternally within walls of sapphire that are speckled with topaz. In his palace the Thrones and Powers shout forever their cry 'Holy, Holy', while the blessed spirits in their glory see and love that undivided essence, of which each attribute radiates immeasurable splendour."⁶¹ There was a reluctance to move too far beyond the words of Revelation.

Protestant clerical authors were also closely biblical and theocentric in their view of heaven, as one might expect. Charles Drelincourt, 17th-century Huguenot pastor of Charenton near to Paris, author of *Les consolations de l'âme fidèle contre les frayeurs de la mort* of 1651, described heaven as a "glorious palace." "When," he wrote,

will I be in the glorious company of the triumphant saints, who have palms in their hands, crowns on their heads and praises in their mouths? When will I find myself with the thousands of angels resplendent with light and glory? And with the seraphim who burn with a holy flame and fly continually around Your throne?⁶²

The English Puritan Richard Baxter, in *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* of 1649 argued that in heaven, the saints worshipped God perpetually, adoring God who had created and redeemed them. There would be never-ending songs of praise

58 John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ*, trans. online at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/canticle.html (last accessed 28/6/2020).

59 Pedro de Medina, *Libro de la Verdad* (Seville: 1549).

60 Lang, *Meeting in Heaven*, 62.

61 See for the text of the poem http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/las-cortes-de-la-muerte--o/html/fee84108-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html (last accessed 28/6/2020). Discussed in Lang, *Meeting in Heaven*, 62.

62 Charles Drelincourt, *Les consolations de l'âme fidèle contre les frayeurs de la mort* (Paris: 1650), 585.

to God's glory.⁶³ John Bunyan again followed Revelation 21 closely in his description of the heavenly city:

In that place you must wear crowns of gold and enjoy the perpetual sight and visions of the holy one, for there you will see him as he is. There also you shall serve him continually with praise, with shouting and thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the world ... There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing and your ears with hearing the pleasant voice of the Mighty One ... There also you shall be clothed with glory and majesty and put into an equipage fit to ride out with the King of Glory.⁶⁴

The soul has an independent and conscious existence, and an eternal function of extended praise of God.

An alternative model, although not necessarily mutually exclusive was of a perfect existence where one would be reunited with loved ones. Again, this is an ancient paradigm, with its origin in classical antiquity and the third century writing of Cyprian. It increased in importance in the post-Reformation period, shared across confessions. Spanish Catholic writers such as the Jesuit Martín de Roa described the social world of heaven in *Estado de los Bienaventurados en el Cielo* (1630): "Fathers, sons, and friends in particular will travel to the place of the beloved, where they will be welcomed with holy kisses. Holding each other in holy embrace, they will exchange compliments, and holding hands, they will converse, discussing the sublime ways by which divine providence has brought them to the world of everlasting joy."⁶⁵ English Protestants certainly internalised this view. The early 17th-century lawyer and diarist Bulstrode Whitelocke described his mother's response to her realisation of her imminent death in 1631, as a "passage to a better life," confident "that they should meet again in heaven and there partake of everlasting joys." His father, James Whitelocke, "was cheerful, yet would frequently say, that his time was but short in this world, and that he should hasten to meet his beloved companion in heaven, whither she was gone before, and he should soon follow after."⁶⁶ Bunyan also imagined personal reunions: "There you shall enjoy your friends

63 Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest, or A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory* (London: 1649).

64 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Ware: 1996), 128. Discussed in Lang, *Meeting in Heaven*, 44.

65 Martín de Roa, *Estado de los Bienaventurados en el Cielo* (Barcelona: 1630) fol. 49.

66 Bulstrode Whitelocke, *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke*, ed. Ruth Spalding (Oxford: 1990), 49, 62.

again, that are got thither before you; and there you shall with joy receive, even every one that follows into the holy place after you.”⁶⁷

Reunion with family was problematic for those people who had remarried or had multiple and complex relationships on this earth. Jesus, when asked by Sadducees about marriage partners in heaven, responded: “the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, because they cannot die anymore and are equal to angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”⁶⁸ Despite this denial of the persistence of personal relationships in heaven, this view of what Bernhard Lang calls “a heaven of friendly discourse” was to become the dominant paradigm by the 18th century.⁶⁹

3.2 *Hell*

Hell is the oldest and most clearly delineated realm of the Christian afterlife. In the Old Testament, there is no defined concept of hell, but there emerges over time a consideration that souls, especially wicked ones, will end up in a horrible place. This destination became linked with a place called “Sheol,” translated into Greek as Hades. It was an indeterminate place of shadows whose function varied from the unseen realm of the dead to the place where evildoers are punished. In the New Testament and the early church, a theology of an eternal, awful hell quickly developed. Jesus used the term “Gehenna” to refer to a dreadful place of everlasting pain. The Gospel of Matthew mentions hell in his relation of conversations between Jesus and Pharisees and Sadducees about “the wrath to come” and in other contexts of divine retributive justice.⁷⁰ It was a place linked with heat, as in Matthew’s description of end times, when,

just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ... The son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law breakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.⁷¹

More details of eternal punishment were provided by St John in Revelation. Again there was emphasis on perpetual, fiery torment for the damned: “And

⁶⁷ Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 128.

⁶⁸ Luke 20:34–36.

⁶⁹ Lang, *Meeting in Heaven*, 62.

⁷⁰ For example, Matthew 5:29–30, 18:9, 9:43–47.

⁷¹ Matthew 13:40–42.

the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night.”⁷² Thus, for the reprobate, defined as “the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars” their fate “will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”⁷³ The early church confirmed the existence of hell in Christian soteriology and elaborated on its eternally fiery punishments. The Apostles’ Creed stated that Christ descended into hell after the crucifixion. St Augustine articulated a judicial view of hell as a realm of punishment for crimes committed against God. Following the Gospels, he described a lake of fire in which the damned experience everlasting and unceasing torment, the unbearable spiritual and corporeal pain of being burned forever.⁷⁴ The Augustinian view had enormous, continuing influence on the doctrine of hell in the Middle Ages and early modern period.

Georges Minois argues that the doctrine of hell as it was understood in the Middle Ages reached a developed form in the 12th century.⁷⁵ For contemporaries of the 14th and 15th centuries, the best-known articulation of the Augustinian view was by Aquinas. In the *Summa Theologiae* he wrote that the damned are punished by eternal fire which was of a different order to that of the mortal world, for it was dark and perpetual; hell was capacious, likely to be in the middle of the earth, and its experience was corporeal as well as spiritual.⁷⁶ Satan as the ruler of hell and the role of demons as tempters and torturers became increasingly present in the Middle Ages. Dante placed Lucifer at the centre of hell while increasing numbers of saints’ lives and devotional tales included demons, such as we find in the *Lives* of Jacob de Voragine’s *Golden Legend*.⁷⁷ The dreadfulness of a demonic, sulphurous hell, clearly played on the minds of many contemporaries of the later Middle Ages.

The theologians’ descriptions and admonitions were disseminated and adopted in the towns and parishes of medieval Europe through devotional writings for clerical and literate elites, and through sermons and artistic representations for all Christians. Preachers of the mendicant orders gave vivid

72 Rev. 14:11.

73 Rev. 21:8.

74 Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. 21, Ch. 9. An English translation is available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120121.htm> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

75 Minois, *Histoire de l'enfer*, 77.

76 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, supplement to the third part, question 97, “On the punishment of the damned” online at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/5097.htm#article6> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

77 Many stories contain demons. See for an English version, Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. and ed. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: 1993).

hell-fire sermons, such as those of the Catalan Dominican Vincent Ferrer, the “angel of the apocalypse.” Visual representations of hell and its demons were widespread and portrayed the suffering of souls there by all sorts of hideous tortures. Romanesque tympanums of 12th-century churches such as Conques, Corbeil, Saint-Denis, Laon and Chartres, show the separation of the just and the damned on the day of judgement, the latter being led off to hell. By the later Middle Ages, this was an image found in most churches, even in remote rural areas, for example, in the western French province of Brittany, Alain Croix has located around fifty surviving sculptures and images of hell in churches that date before 1700.⁷⁸ Traditionally depicted in Doom or Last Judgement scenes, hell is usually portrayed at the bottom of the tableau, its entrance in the form of a large fish’s mouth. Ruled over by Satan, demons carry people off into its depths, where they are subjected to all manner of boiling, flaying and other punishments. Churches from Trogir cathedral in Dalmatia to Wenhaston in Norfolk, England, had depictions of inferno. Kate Giles has suggested that wall paintings and other images ubiquitous in medieval churches were an important way of teaching doctrine, “visual sermons” explained by clergy, used as preaching exemplars and the focus of personal devotions.⁷⁹ As Minois states, all imagined punishments were permissible, for they could only ever give an outline of the horrors that really awaited the damned. Such descriptions were supposed to be for pastoral purposes, to warn people how not to end up there. By such visual means, ordinary Christians learnt about hell.⁸⁰

Humanist scholars of the 15th century began a questioning of the afterlife that would ultimately lead to its reshaping in the Reformation. In *Devotio moderna* writings, such as the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, the role of hell in soteriology began to shift, away from a threat of fire and brimstone, to a more pastoral concept, to console people through present troubles and to aid in the combat against sin.⁸¹ Erasmus went so far as to deny the reality of punishment in hell, seeing it instead as an interior state, of perpetual anguish which accompanies the habit of sin.⁸² In practice, however, it seems that before the early 16th century, most Christians dwelt little on hell, which they

78 Alain Croix, *La Bretagne aux XVIème et XVIIème siècles: La vie, la mort et la foi*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1981), 2:1049.

79 Kate Giles, “Seeing and Believing: Visuality and Space in Pre-Modern England,” *World Archaeology* 39 (2007), 105–21.

80 Minois, *Histoire de l'enfer*, 76.

81 Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, book 1, chapter 1, available at http://catholicarchive.org/thomas_a_kempis/the_imitation_of_christ/1/24.html (last accessed 28/6/2020).

82 He was, however, forced to recant this view by the Sorbonne in 1526 and to confirm his belief in eternal fire. Minois, *Histoire de l'enfer*, 83.

hoped to avoid, and instead focused on managing purgatory, before achieving heaven. One of the outcomes of the Reformation was criticism and even rejection of purgatory by some groups, the ramification of which was a greater emphasis on hell across all confessional traditions. Piero Camporesi argues that “over no other age did hell exert such an attraction and repulsion and in so spasmodic and obsessive a form.”⁸³

Fear of judgement and hell was a major cause of Augustinian monk Martin Luther's new theology of grace, developed in the early 1520s. Jane Strohl comments that Luther's theology was permeated by eschatological struggle throughout. He believed that the Last Day was near, but that God would protect the faithful in the battle with Satan and that fear of the shadow of death is liberated by the gospel of Christ.⁸⁴ Yet Luther devoted few of his writings to hell fire and damnation and was reluctant to describe it in any detail. Thus, he wrote in his commentary on Jonah,

I am not so sure what hell is like before the Day of Judgement. The notion that hell is a specific place, now tenanted by the souls of the damned, as artists portray it and the belly servers preach it, I consider of no value, for we know that the devils are not yet in hell, but as Peter declares, they are “in ropes of nether gloom.”⁸⁵

For most of the first and second generations of Protestant reformers, hell was a biblical concept, over which Christ had triumphed and from which he would protect his faithful. They devoted few of their writings to elaborating its nature. Calvin mentions hell only in terms of redemption in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536).⁸⁶ Bullinger based his view of hell on Isaiah 30, the account of Topheth. He described hell as deep and wide, perfectly able to accommodate all the godless. The darkness of hell is illuminated by fire as the damned cry out. It is the fire of God's wrath, prepared by the devil and his angels. This fire is lit by the breath of God and there is sufficient wood to keep it burning for eternity.⁸⁷ But beyond the strictly biblical image he was not prepared to go,

83 Piero Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 1990), 28.

84 Jane E. Strohl, “Luther's Eschatology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: 2014), 353–63.

85 Martin Luther, *The Commentaries of Martin Luther*, Vol. 19. *Minor Prophets II. Jonah and Habakkuk* (St Louis, MO: 1974).

86 Calvin, *Institutes*, online at <https://archive.org/details/institutesofchroicalv/page/n6> and <https://archive.org/details/institutesofchroicalv/page/n6> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

87 Discussed in Gordon, “‘In my Father's house,’” 172.

emphasising instead God's redemptive grace. Hell was a warning to the sinner, but beyond that, not for speculation.

The Protestant hell of the later 16th century onwards was little different from that of the medieval inferno, although fiery preachers elaborated on the horrific fate of the damned. Written descriptions and published sermons continued to follow closely the biblical details, with elaboration. To the traditional blistering realm and endless, imaginative torture, was added a developed and personalised view of Lucifer as tempter of souls. For example, in the Irish Annals, good deaths were often described as victories over "the world, death and the devil," who lay in wait to drag the dying into hell.⁸⁸ A typical "sermon-pamphlet" description of hell is that of Drelincourt, in *Les consolations de l'âme fidèle* of 1650:

Imagine a man being gnawed by worms and burning in a fire, being constantly tortured and pinched with pliers, with wounds made from burning sulphur, molten lead and boiling pitch, and if it is possible to imagine crueller and more sorrowful torments, you will have only the slightest picture and broadest image of the torments of hell.⁸⁹

There was also stress on the despair provoked by the unbreachable distance from God. Agrippa d'Aubigné, author of *Les Tragiques*, devoted his fifth book to "Fire." In it, he described the worst experience of the damned, who were able to see what went on in heaven, to hear the divine music, but unable ever to join the blessed, for there were no bridges between heaven and hell.⁹⁰ Yet despite the fire-and-brimstone tracts and sermons, as with older traditions, the intention was not to elicit despair but rather a reformation of life, to encourage the sinner to repent.

The most famous Protestant representations of hell were literary, with English works being particularly prominent. Christopher Marlowe described Lucifer, his demons, and damnation in *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (ca. 1592), performed frequently in the 1590s and in the first decades of the 17th century.⁹¹ Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), followed medieval miracle play traditions of comic representations of Satan and his

88 Tait, *Ireland*, 136.

89 Drelincourt, *Les consolations de l'âme*, 28.

90 Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques* (Paris: 1995) discussed in Crété, *Où va-t-on après la mort?* 57.

91 Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (London: 1604).

realm.⁹² The most famous depiction of hell in English literature is John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1667. It tells the parallel tales of the expulsion of Lucifer from heaven and the Fall of Adam and Eve. Book 11 describes the court of Lucifer and his demons. Darkness, fire, and pain predominate. Thus, it is

this dark opprobrious den of shame ... [l. 59]
 Black fire and horror ...
 Mixed with Tartarean sulphur and strange fire,
 His own invented torments.⁹³

The punishment of the damned takes the traditional form of a burning lake:

At certain revolutions all the damned
 Are brought: and feel by turns the bitter change
 From beds of raging fire to starve in ice ...
 Periods of time, thence hurried back to fire.⁹⁴

The hell of the English Puritan of the 17th century had much in common with its medieval forebears. Hell was solid, terrible, a site of physical corruption and dreadful smell, with a fearsome capacity to terrorise.⁹⁵

Catholic Reformation visions of hell had much in common with those of Protestantism. Hell-fire sermons, devotional tracts meditating on eternal punishment and literary description of the underworld, all had parallels in Catholic religious culture. Jean Delumeau estimates that guilt/judgement sermons made up between 61 and 84 percent of known published works of preachers.⁹⁶ François Lebrun writes in his study of religious culture in Anjou that the most frequently used theme of late 16th and 17th-century catechists and preachers, was that of hell. In the catechism, a ubiquitous tool of religious learning from the late 16th century onwards, children learnt early on that the pains of hell were corporeal and spiritual.⁹⁷ The catechism of the diocese of Bourges, by

92 Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, ed. William Savage Johnson (New York: 1905), available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/50150> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

93 Version used here: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Philip Pullman (Oxford: 2005), book 2, lines 59, 68–69.

94 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 2, lines 598–603.

95 Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell*, 69–70, 101–102.

96 Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident* (Paris: 1978).

97 Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou*, 445–6.

way of example, stated that hell was the place for those who die in a state of mortal sin; that souls suffered eternal punishments of the senses; and it was “a horrible prison, a frightful dungeon, excavated in the centre of the earth ... the master of this sad place is Lucifer and the devils ... [there is] a lake filled with fire and sulphur, into which they are plunged, where they burn for ever.”⁹⁸ Even the saintly bishop of Geneva François de Sales, in his hugely influential *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609), wrote that the fear of hell was the last rampart against the forces of evil:

The damned are in the depth of hell ... where they suffer unspeakable torments, in all their senses and members; because as they have employed all their senses and members in sinning, so shall they suffer in them all the punishments due to sin. The eyes for lascivious looks shall be afflicted with the horrid vision of hell and devils. The ears for delighting in vicious discourses shall hear nothing but wailings, lamentations, desperate howlings; and so of the rest. Besides all these torments there is another greater, which is the loss and privation of God's glory, from the sight of which they are excluded forever.⁹⁹

However, this eschatological stress on hell had a pastoral function, to inculcate a fear of God in order “to renew affection for the suffering Christ and to bring about a change of conduct in the lives of the audience.”¹⁰⁰ Moral transformation was the goal, not fear for its own sake. This may not have been the result. In Paris, Chaunu observes that preaching discourse was dominated by the God of Judgement. While the son mitigated this judgement by his redeeming death, it was fear of God rather than love, which was widely taught.¹⁰¹

Depictions of hell are particularly rich in Iberian Catholic writings of the 16th century. St Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, composed from the 1520s and first published in 1548, offers a systematic meditation on hell in the fifth exercise of the first week. The participant is invited to consider the sight, sound, smell, taste, and feel of the awfulness of inferno and to recall the persons

98 Joachim de la Chétardie, *Catéchisme de Bourges*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1708).

99 François de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, seventh meditation ‘On Hell’, at <https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2014/07/28/prayer-ten-meditations-by-francis-de-sales/> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

100 John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death Among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: 1981) 228–9.

101 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 376.

lodged there.¹⁰² For St Teresa of Avila, hell was internalised. Teresa describes being plunged into hell in chapter 32 of her *Life*; the experience was granted to enable her to “understand that the Lord wished me to see the place that the devils had ready for me there, and that I had earned by my sins.”¹⁰³ Hell was a lived reality at the interior of the soul, for which human language was incapable of explaining the intensity of its awfulness. Carlos Eire argues that attention to the ego rather than the body marks a new departure in concepts of hell, which developed across the 17th century. For example, the Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nieremberg’s *The Difference Between the Temporal and the Eternal*, first published in 1640, states that the powers of the soul – will, reason, and memory – will suffer the worst torments. The will shall suffer eternal self-aborrence, and undying anger toward God and all of creation, eternally subject to “insufferable sadness.” The memory will remind one constantly of what one did wrong, and of what opportunities were missed.¹⁰⁴ For others, however, hell remained vivid and material. In *Desposorios do Espirito*, the Life of Sister Mariana do Rosário of Evora of 1694, she is described as taken to a place “due to its rigours of fire, but dissimilar in the horrendous clamours, and dissonant confusion,” which she assumed was hell, on account of “the blasphemies, the ire, the desperation, clearly shown it to be the place of the damned. Fear gripped the soul at the sight of the demons who, possessed by unquenchable hatred, tormented those poor wretches.”¹⁰⁵ For Loyola, the vision of hell was to “keep before me my wish to grieve and feel sorrow, and remind myself more of death and judgement.”¹⁰⁶ So we see again, hell used as a means of bringing the soul to God, ultimately merciful and compassionate.

Towards the later 17th century, there was some attenuation of interest in hell-fire punishment, evident among radical groups and some elite theologians. Rejection of hell was not new in the Reformation, for universalism – the belief that all would be saved, and none damned, by a merciful God – was long attributed to Origen. Radical groups emanating from Protestantism developed particular ideas about eternal punishment. For example, in the later 16th century, Socinian anti-trinitarians in Poland denied hell, stating instead that the

102 Ignatius Loyola, “Spiritual Exercises,” in *Personal Writings*, trans. J.A. Munitiz (London: 1996), 298–9.

103 *The Life of Teresa of Avila by herself*, trans. J.H. Cohen (London: 1958, 1987), 235.

104 Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *De la diferencia entre lo Temporal y Eterno* (Madrid: 1640), discussed in Eire, *A Very Brief History of Eternity*, 160.

105 Mendes, “Spiritual Experiences,” 227, and her translation of Almada, *Desposorios do Espirito*, 308–9.

106 Loyola, “Spiritual Exercises,” 300.

wicked were annihilated.¹⁰⁷ Certain Anabaptists such as Hans Denck in the early 16th century and some Quakers such as Gerrard Winstanley, leaned towards universalism.¹⁰⁸ They considered God to be perfectly benevolent, so all must be reconciled with him and saved. But even among more mainstream Catholics and Protestants, Georges Minois comments that the ideas of Origen resurfaced, quietly at first, but quickly spread within the clergy. For example, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet did not describe hell at all in any of his numerous works. His was a more spiritual conception of the afterlife, where hell is sin itself, it exists in each of us when we trespass and Christ descended permanently into our individual hells to offer us salvation.¹⁰⁹ The Jansenist Pierre Nicole saw hell as a place where souls were deprived of the love and sight of God. Despair was the real punishment of hell and physical elements were downgraded.¹¹⁰ Minois argues that the visualisation of hell which underpinned the teaching of the middle ages, also disappears in the 17th century. *The Fall of the Damned* of Rubens (ca. 1620) was about the last great artistic depiction, as the Counter-Reformation church put more dignity and order into portrayals of the afterlife, and greater emphasis on depictions of redemption.¹¹¹ Across the 18th century, there was a transformation of God the Judge into the God of Mercy, which attenuated the fear of hell.¹¹²

By the time Denis Diderot and his collaborators were putting together the *Encyclopédie* in the 1750s, elite scepticism about hell was increasing. In the entry on “Enfer” or Hell by Edmé-François Mallet, he stated that the belief existed among all people and that it was “employed by law-makers as the most powerful brake to stop licence and crime, and to contain men in the bounds of duty.” In the end, whatever the evidence from scripture and doctrine, he wrote ironically, “this only proved that reason alone was not sufficient to decide the question, it was necessary to have recourse to revelation to demonstrate the existence of eternity and just punishment in the future life.”¹¹³ Yet for the majority of Christians of all denominations, hell remained a real, powerful, biblical destination. It was to remain part of the cosmography of belief for centuries thereafter.

107 Hugh Pope, “Socinianism,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14 (New York: 1912) at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14113a.htm> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

108 See for example Gerrard Winstanley, *The Myserie of God* (London: 1649).

109 Discussed in Minois, *Histoire de l'enfer*, 102.

110 Discussed in Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: 1983), 306–7.

111 Minois, *Histoire de l'enfer*, 79.

112 Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell*, 47.

113 Denis Didérot, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné, des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 17 vols (Paris: 1751–1765), 5:667–70.

3.3 *Purgatory*

A central theme of histories of the afterlife in the Christian West is the importance of the emergence of beliefs in purgatory in the central Middle Ages.¹¹⁴ The significance of purgatory was that it reduced the finality of eternal damnation and made redemption “contingent on the efforts of both the living and the dead.”¹¹⁵ Jacques Le Goff, Pierre Chaunu, and Michel Vovelle have proposed a history of purgatory, with a rise in its belief up to the early 16th century, a subsequent ‘fall’ with the Reformation, followed by even greater prominence in the 17th century of Catholic/Counter reformation, until its undermining by the Enlightenment of the 18th century.¹¹⁶ This model has proved durable in many local and regional studies of death and mortuary practice, although it is more nuanced than has been stressed in an historiography which has privileged the later Middle Ages and the “century of saints.” Polemical literature, for example, shows that significant developments in Catholic theology and practice concerning concepts of purgatory, emerged during the later 16th century in the context of the wars of religion. Also, there existed a variety of ideas about the nature of purgatory and the most efficacious means of aiding souls, even in the 17th century.

The origins of purgatory in the central Middle Ages have been ably charted in numerous studies, most notably by Jacques Le Goff, and will not be repeated here.¹¹⁷ The timing of the adoption of purgatory as a popular belief is debated and it appears that it appeared at different times in different places. For France, Chaunu argues that the doctrine remained that of elites during the central Middle Ages and that it exploded into a tenet of popular piety in the 15th century, in northern France at least.¹¹⁸ Jacques Chiffolleau argues for an earlier appearance of purgatory in the papal territories of Comtat Venaissin and Avignon, and in Provence and Languedoc. He dates it to the 13th or early 14th centuries, brought in by mendicant preachers and disseminated by secular priests. Here, bequests for prayers multiplied among the laity from 1330–40, becoming widespread in the 14th and 15th centuries.¹¹⁹ Michelle Fournié

114 A more detailed discussion can be found in Elizabeth Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany 1480–1720* (Farnham: 2014), chapter 3.

115 Richard K. Fenn, *The Persistence of Purgatory* (Cambridge: 1995), 47.

116 Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire*; Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*; Michel Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1973); Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident*; Michel Vovelle, *Les âmes du purgatoire ou le travail du deuil* (Paris: 1996).

117 Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire*. See also Paul J. Griffith, “Purgatory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford: 2008), 427–45.

118 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 38, 976.

119 Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, 390, 408.

argues that in south-west France it was the second half of the 15th century when belief became widespread, shown by the frequency of church wall paintings depicting purgatory and an increase in the numbers of priests to serve obit masses.¹²⁰ Whenever its origins, in most regions purgatory was established as a fundamental religious belief amongst all social groups by 1500.

The dissemination of ideas was probably mainly through sermons, especially by mendicant preachers, and in teachings about indulgences. For example, two Paris doctors of theology, Nicolas Cappelly and Nicolas Payen, were censured by the Sorbonne in 1518 for preaching that donations to the crusade they were promoting, would directly deliver a soul from purgatory to paradise.¹²¹ An important medium for contemporaries was devotional works. The popular *ars moriendi* handbooks on how to “die well” contain little discussion of the nature of the afterlife, however, beyond warning of the “pains of purgatory” and recommending suffrages to shorten time spent here. The best guides to the nature of purgatory and advice on how to manage the experience of souls there, were popular saints’ lives and stories, read and recounted, at home and as exemplars in sermons. Many of these works had long lives. Bernardino da Siena’s published sermons included several short discussions of the fires of purgatory.¹²² Raymond of Capua’s 14th-century *Life* of St Catherine of Siena detailed her earthly purgatory, taken upon herself to save her father from post-mortem torment.¹²³ Catherine of Genoa’s purgatory, written down ca. 1514, circulated in manuscript and was printed in 1551.¹²⁴ Collections of miracle stories of the Blessed Virgin Mary frequently contained accounts of individuals in purgatory who had been released after their appeal to Our Lady’s intercession. Above all, the *Golden Legend* of Jacob de Voragine provided examples of saints who had experienced purgatory. His *Lives* of Saints Gregory, Patrick, Martial, and Dominic all mention the pains of purgation and some of the printed editions contain a section on the commemoration of All Souls, with discussion of the importance of suffrages for their relief.¹²⁵

120 Fournié, *Le Ciel*, 528.

121 Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Oxford: 1992), 19, 95.

122 For example, Bernadino da Siena, *The chirche of the euyll men and women wherof Lubyfer [sic] is the heed, and the membres is all the players dyssolute and synners reprobud* (Paris: 1511).

123 Written in Latin, an English-language version is Raymond of Capua, *Here begynneth the lyf of saint katherin of senis the blessid virgin* (Westminster: 1492).

124 Catherine de Gênes, *La Vie et les oeuvres spirituelles* (Lyons: 1610).

125 Voragine, *The Golden Legend*.

Saltry's *The Purgatory of St Patrick* gave highly detailed descriptions of the experience of purgatory and was translated numerous times across the later Middle Ages and early modern period. In the 1545 Paris edition of Jean Bonfans, the narrator-pilgrim describes the awful noises, horrible visions of devils, and terrible fires of punishment. He travelled through a field of sorrows, where men and women lay naked, nailed to the ground by their hands and feet, tormented by a dragon, while being beaten by demons. In a second field, serpents gnawed and toads ate the souls' "flesh." Souls were attached to a wheel of fire and plunged into a river of stinking, molten metal. But the souls thus tormented were alleviated of their pains by prayers and good works performed for them by the living. The pilgrim himself was delivered from the clutches of demons on several occasions by invoking the name of Jesus Christ.¹²⁶ A century later, in a version produced in 1643, the description had changed little, although the editor added a great freezing lake, with ice and snow, for sinners.¹²⁷ While the image of purgatory was one of dreadful torment, it was not meant to inspire fear for its own sake, but to cause serious attention to personal salvation. The best way to avoid purgatory was by living a virtuous life while on earth: penance, almsgiving, good works, avoiding sin, these were far more easily achieved in life than after death. But even after death, the length of time souls spent in purgatory could be reduced by the intercession of the living community of the faithful. Underpinning purgatory was a belief in the effectiveness of suffrage and the solidarity of the living and the dead.

As Clive Burgess states, a more instructive source of evidence and one that occurred more widely than text, is the services and good works commissioned by individuals to achieve post-mortem satisfaction and thus liberation from purgatory.¹²⁸ The enormous number of spiritual bequests found in the wills of the later Middle Ages show that the need for intercession for departed souls was widely internalised across the continent. By far the most important form of intercession was the mass. In the Avignon region, in the 13th century there were no such bequests but between the second half of the 14th century and the early 16th century, 65 to 70 per cent of testators requested masses to be said for their souls.¹²⁹ Popular religious culture was suffused with prayers for the dead. For example, in 1495, the bishop of Nantes in France ordered the appointment of a *réveilleur* or "awakener" in each parish, to rouse the faithful at midnight

126 Bonfans, *Le purgatoire de saint Patrice*.

127 François Bouillon, *Histoire de la vie et du purgatoire de S. Patrice* (Paris: 1643).

128 Clive Burgess, "An Afterlife in Memory: Commemoration and its Effect in a Late Medieval Parish," *SCH* 45 (2009), 196–217, on 196.

129 Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, 341.

with a handbell and a loud reminder to the faithful to pray for the departed.¹³⁰ Confraternities had as one of their main associational activities post-mortem intercession for former members and Duffy estimates that as many as one in three adults were member of such groups before the 1520s.¹³¹ Some were even set up solely to pray for souls: in the Breton diocese of Vannes, the founding statues of the Confraternity of the Departed (Trépassés) of 1543 stated the motive of the founders to be to relieve “the souls of the departed tormented by the burning flames of purgatory.”¹³² A key desire was for remembrance, so that the living would not forget the founder’s name and his/her continuing spiritual need. In the words of the foundation of Gillet Barbe in Sainte-Croix of Nantes in 1529, it was made “so that the parishioners and their successors would have memory and remembrance of the souls of Gillet, his mother and father ... to recommend them to God in their prayers.”¹³³ In 1581, Symon Le Goff of Auray linked a foundation with a bequest for maintenance of the chapel of Notre Dame in the cemetery of Saint-Goustan, “so that he, his predecessors and successors will be participants in the masses, prayers and devotions that will be said and made in the chapel.”¹³⁴

Indulgences, giving remission from time spent in purgatory, were also firmly part of religious and devotional life. Thus, in 1503, Bishop Guégen of Nantes consecrated several altars in Saint-Saturnin parish church and granted an indulgence of a year and a day to those who visited these altars on the first anniversary of their dedication.¹³⁵ The fraternity of Notre-Dame-des-Carmes in the Carmelite convent of Nantes obtained forty days’ pardon for its members from Bishop d’Acigné, when he confirmed the guild in 1475; further indulgences were gained in 1478, 1484, and 1500, and in 1518 Queen Claude obtained a bull of indulgences from Leo X in favour of the confraternity.¹³⁶ Individuals acquired indulgences when alive and after death. In 1481, Jean Spadine the younger of Nantes left 120 *livres* for cathedral rebuilding and papal indulgences.¹³⁷ Indulgences for projects such as these were widely hawked by *questors* in

130 Croix, *La Bretagne*, II, 1133.

131 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional religion in England c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven and London: 1992).

132 Archives Départementales du Morbihan (ADM) 57 G 3. Chapitre cathédrale de Vannes. Fondations.

133 ADLA G 461. Sainte-Croix de Nantes. Fondations.

134 ADM 6 E 2182. Notaire Kermadec. Auray 1561–82.

135 Nicolas Travers, *Histoire civile, politique et religieuse de la ville de Nantes (c.1750)*, 3 vols (Nantes: 1836–41), 2:256.

136 Yves Durand, *Un couvent dans la ville: Grands Carmes de Nantes* (Rome: 1997), 92.

137 ADLA G 466. Sainte-Croix. Fondations.

Europe. In 1494 the statutes of Bishop Jean d'Épinay of Nantes forbade rectors and vicars to allow pardoners to preach their indulgences more than once a year and then only after having seen their licences.¹³⁸

It was a dispute over the operation of indulgences that led to Luther's criticism of the Church. As a result, from 1517 onwards, the doctrine of purgatory was rejected by Protestant reformers and the institutions of intercession were abolished where states adopted the new churches. Reformed criticisms also undermined confidence in post-mortem intercession even among many Catholics. Erasmus's essay "The Exorcism or Apparition" in *The Colloquies* of 1518 showed scepticism about elaborate post-mortem intercession along with criticism of all elaborate forms of intercession.¹³⁹ Later, this view emerged from other Catholic reformers as well. For example, at a Privy Council meeting at Blois in August 1562, the Cardinal of Lorraine put forward five proposals for adoption as policy by the French delegation at the Council of Trent, including trimming the canon of the mass by omitting prayers for the dead.¹⁴⁰ Regional studies of popular practices show that adherence to the doctrine of purgatory may have declined in the mid- and later 16th century, at grassroots level. The most striking feature of 16th-century French post-mortem foundations is their mid-century decline. Nicole Lemaitre's work on the Rouergue shows that mass requests and foundations were at their height in the years 1530–1550 and declined thereafter.¹⁴¹ Philip Hoffman's study of the Lyonnais also shows a similar decline in post-mortuary intercession after 1530; in the Lyons parish of Saint-Nizier, the chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Grace recorded five foundations between 1481 and 1530, but no more thereafter until the 17th century. Hoffman argues that the evidence "points to a stunning shift in religious attitudes"; in his view, the conclusion is inescapable that people from all social classes came to question the efficacy of Catholic ritual for the dead.¹⁴² Stéphane Gal argues for Grenoble that by the 1580s, wills make no mention of purgatory at all; testators saw eternity in terms of heaven and hell.¹⁴³

138 Travers, *Histoire civile*, 2:226.

139 Desiderius Erasmus, "The Exorcism or Apparition," in *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. N. Bailey, 2 vols. (London: 1878), 2:391–401.

140 Stuart Carroll, "The Compromise of Charles Cardinal of Lorraine," *JEH* 54 (2003), 469–83, on 474.

141 Nicole Lemaitre, *Le Rouergue flamboyant: Le clergé et les fidèles du diocèse de Rodez 1417–1563* (Paris: 1988), 351.

142 Philip T. Hoffman, *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon 1500–1789* (New Haven, CT: 1984), 28–30.

143 Stéphane Gal, *Grenoble au temps de la Ligue: Étude politique, sociale et religieuse d'une cité (vers 1562-vers 1598)* (St Martin d'Hères: 2000), 248.

But with the onset of religious conflict in the 1550s, Catholic theologians turned to the defence of purgatory, along with other doctrines, to distinguish the faith from Protestantism and to rally the faithful in traditional practices. In the proliferation of tracts that emerged in the early religious wars in France, there was more emphasis on the infernal nature of purgatory and on judgement while the best way of saving souls was through the application of the sacrifice of the mass, to the living and the dead. One example is the writing of Melchior de Flavin, an observant Franciscan from Toulouse, who published two works in the 1560s: *De l'estat des âmes après le trépas, comment elles vivent estans du corps séparées et des purgatoires qu'elles souffrent ...* in 1563, then *De la préparation à la mort en trois traitez* in 1566.¹⁴⁴ He argued that purgatory existed so that God could render reward or punishment to everyone, according to their merits: "we see in this world the wicked prosper ... On the other hand, we see the wise poor, persecuted and afflicted ... Therefore there needs to be another place where the wicked are punished according to the quantity of their faults."¹⁴⁵ Purgatory was thus a grace bestowed by God on Christians to allow a time and place for penitence, after death, for those who had not accomplished it during their lifetimes and who therefore really deserved to go to hell.

Of even greater significance to the resurgence of purgatory were the rulings of the Council of Trent. The first decree to uphold purgatory was that on justification, of Session VI in 1547, and the decree on the doctrine of the mass, of Session XXII in 1562, which upheld the sacrifice as propitiatory for the living and the dead, that is, for those departed who are not yet fully purged. Finally, in Session XXV of December 1563, a decree concerning purgatory was issued, upholding that "there is a purgatory and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar."¹⁴⁶ Dissemination of the doctrine came through the Tridentine catechism. Designed to instruct clergy, it was widely taught from the pulpit and copied in derivative publications throughout Catholic Europe. Chapter VII comprised a discussion of the destinations of the soul in the after-life. Purgatory was the place "in which the souls of the pious are purified by a temporary punishment, that they may be admitted into their eternal country

144 Melchior de Flavin, *De l'estat des âmes après le trépas, comment elles vivent estans du corps séparées et des purgatoires qu'elles souffrent en ce monde et en l'autre après icelle séparation* (Toulouse: 1563; edition used here: Paris: 1579) and *De la préparation à la mort en trois traitez* (Paris: 1566, edition used here: Paris: 1578).

145 De Flavin, *Des âmes*, 9v.

146 Norman P. Tanner ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols (London and Washington: 1990), 2:796–7.

into which nothing defiled entereth.”¹⁴⁷ In line with the Tridentine decrees, the catechism mentions purgatory again in the article on the eucharist, for “the sacrifice of the mass is also available to the dead ... such is the efficacy of this sacrifice that it is profitable ... to all the faithful, whether living with us here on earth or already numbered with those who are dead in the lord, but whose sins have not yet been fully expiated.”¹⁴⁸ Further mentions occur in the sections on the Decalogue and on prayer, where exhortations are made for prayers for the dead, “that they may be liberated from the fires of purgatory.”¹⁴⁹ Together, the decrees of Trent and the Roman Catechism were vital in rehabilitating the doctrine and its suffrages. In Spain, for example, Sarah Nalle argues that in La Mancha, before 1555, only one third of testators made provision for souls in purgatory, usually for their relatives. By 1565, most men and women among all social groups were setting aside some money for the souls in purgatory and two thirds of these provided masses for anonymous souls.¹⁵⁰

What is notable about early Tridentine publications is their lack of details on the location and punishments of purgatory. Peter Marshall observes that early continental Counter-Reformation catechisms and commentaries gave purgatory minimalist treatment.¹⁵¹ This was to be the work of other authors. One of the greatest works on purgation, the *Dark Night of the Soul* of St John of the Cross, was written in the later 1570s. It emphasises despair and purification in this life as a sort of anti-chamber to purgatory. The author describes the mental torment of the soul who despairs of finding God, but who once purged, is illuminated by divine light and achieves union with its creator.¹⁵² In France, we see the beginnings of the detailing of purgatory in the 1580s and 1590s, in tracts produced in the context of a new wave of militant Catholicism in the kingdom. One of the most interesting is by the Franciscan Noël de Taillepied, *Psychologie ou traité de l'apparition des esprits ...* published in 1588.¹⁵³ The central paradox of the doctrine of purgatory, acutely criticised by Protestants, was that it appeared to negate the redemptive act of Christ's death on the cross for all sins. Taillepied explained the relationship between the two succinctly: while Christ has made satisfaction for our sins, for us to participate

147 Jeremiah Donovan (ed.), *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* (London, 1854), 59.

148 Donovan (ed.), *Catechism*, 248.

149 Donovan (ed.), *Catechism*, 403, 480.

150 Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, 191–2.

151 Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: 2002), 119.

152 St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (London: 2009).

153 Noël Taillepied, *Psychologie ou traité de l'apparition des esprits à scavoir des âmes séparées, fantômes, prodiges et accidents merveilleux qui precedent quelquefois la mort des grands personages ou signifient changements de la chose publique* (Paris: 1588).

in his merit we have to receive baptism and have faith. Also, so that sins might be pardoned, we must show penitence through tears, fasts, prayers, alms, and good works, the “fruits” of penitence.¹⁵⁴ Physical descriptions of purgatory had changed little since the early 16th century. Taillepie claimed that apart from the “normal place,” there were rivers and mountains where some souls would be purged, and special places where the living had sinned, that could also be used for purgation.¹⁵⁵

Michel Vovelle argues that the 17th century was the “great century” of purgatory. It was with the “classic” Counter Reformation in France that the doctrine once more became prominent as a driver of religious practice.¹⁵⁶ It was underpinned by an enormous number of publications, which combined anti-Protestant polemic and spiritual advice. Traditional views of the purposes and place of purgatory re-emerge, justified with reference to biblical texts. One of most influential was Pierre Victor Palma Cayet. For many years a Protestant and officer in the household of Catherine de Bourbon, sister of Henri of Navarre, in 1595 he converted to Catholicism and became a prolific writer and publicist for Henri IV. In 1600, he published *Le purgatoire prouvé par la parole de Dieu*, an examination of the scriptural evidence for purgatory, and in 1603, *La fournaise ardente et le tour de reverbere, pour évaporer les prétendues eaux de Siloé et pour corroborer le Purgatoire*, a refutation of the Reformed interpretation of these passages.¹⁵⁷ Palma Cayet upheld the traditional view of the function of purgatory but gave the role of sinful flesh greater stress: souls have to be purged because they are infected by the contagion of the body and have to be free of stains before they can appear before God. Although Christ’s sacrifice on the cross remitted all sins, the individual still erred because of its connection with the body.¹⁵⁸ However, purgatory came from God’s love. If he wanted to submit us to the full rigour of his justice for our sins, he would commit us to eternal damnation. But God remits our sins and gives us life, allowing the soul the opportunity to be cleansed in purgatory so that it might become pure and return to him.¹⁵⁹

154 Taillepie, *Psychologie*, 235.

155 Taillepie, *Psychologie*, 261.

156 Vovelle, *La mort*, 308.

157 P. V. Palma Cayet, *Le purgatoire prouvé par la Parole de Dieu* (Paris: 1600); P. V. Palma Cayet, *La fournaise ardente et le four de reverbere, pour évaporer les prétendues eaux de Siloé et pour corroborer le Purgatoire, contre les heresies, erreurs, calomnies, faussetez et cavillations ineptes du pretend minister du Moulin* (Saint-Germain lez Paris: 1603).

158 Palma Cayet, *Le purgatoire*, 6r.

159 Palma Cayet, *Le purgatoire*, 7v, 26v.

Works on purgatory of the 1620s and 1630s began to leave behind polemic debate and to concentrate increasingly on sin and suffrages, blending into more general literature on the Christian life and death. The greatest development was a move from emphasising purgatory as a place of judgement and justice where satisfaction was achieved for sins committed, to charity as the motive for punishment and for its remission. Good works became increasingly privileged as the best suffrage for souls in purgatory. The Jesuit Étienne Binet's tract of 1635, *De l'estat heureux et malheureux des âmes souffrantes en Purgatoire et des moyens souverains pour n'y aller pas ou y demeurer fort peu* has as its central premise that "there is no satisfaction more important in this world than to comfort suffering souls."¹⁶⁰ Binet proposed that of all the works of brotherly love and mercy, the most sublime, purest, and most advantageous was the service rendered to souls in purgatory.¹⁶¹ Hope as well as punishment was stressed, as purgatory became a means of pastoral consolation. From the second quarter of the 17th century, perhaps the most powerful and widely disseminated information about purgatory came in catechisms. Jean-Pierre Camus published an *Instruction Catholique du Purgatoire* in 1641 solely on the doctrine, in catechetical style. The first question, "what do you understand by the word purgatory?" was clearly answered with:

the purgation of souls by Jesus Christ, the tribulations and afflictions which purified the good, as gold was purified in a furnace and a 'third place' between paradise and hell where souls of the faithful paid temporal penalties due for their sins, once remitted of their sins and of eternal damnation.¹⁶²

Catechisms for children, youths, and ordinands also had developed sections on purgatory as part of a pedagogy of the afterlife.

Evidence for increasing preoccupation with purgatory among ordinary Catholics is the rising demand for intercession, shown in numerous studies across Europe.¹⁶³ Chaunu shows that in later 17th-century Paris, 70 per cent of

160 Étienne Binet, *De l'estat heureux et malheureux des âmes souffrantes en Purgatoire et des moyens souverains pour n'y aller pas ou y demeurer fort peu* (Rouen: 1635), 1.

161 Binet, *De l'estat heureux*, 9–21.

162 Jean-Pierre Camus, *Instruction Catholique du Purgatoire* (Paris: 1641), 30.

163 For example Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*; Hoffman, *Church and Community*, chapter 4; Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou*; Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory* (Cambridge: 1995); Trevor Johnson, *Magistrates, Madonnas and Miracles: The Counter Reformation in the Upper Palatinate* (Farnham: 2009).

testators demanded masses, more than half stating “as soon as possible after death.”¹⁶⁴ Similarly, Catherine Marle’s study of Valenciennes in the later 17th century, after it had been incorporated into the French kingdom, shows that around 50 per cent of testators asked for masses and 90 per cent of these asked for short-term cycles, with a figure of 100–299 most frequently demanded.¹⁶⁵ These were testators such as Adeline Nuz, who in 1601 founded an obit in the Cathedral of St-Pol-de-Léon “to pray God for her soul ... and to participate in the merits of the masses, prayers, orations and suffrages which will be said there.”¹⁶⁶ Similarly, in 1657, Ollivier Bottin gave money to the hospital-general of Nantes, “desiring to participate in the prayers, merits and sufferings of the poor.”¹⁶⁷ The motives were clear, as for example in a foundation document of 1662, where David Le Cléguerec and Jeanne du Mur founded an obit in the parish church of Cléguer in Vannes diocese, “for the remission of their sins and for the prosperity of their family. ... to pity them and exempt them from the flames of purgatory.”¹⁶⁸

Purgatory was also the concern of communities, for it was dependent on mutual aid. Thus, in 1657 in the parish of Languidic in the diocese of Vannes, Henriette Colle was moved to found a mass in perpetuity “by the spirit of God, by charitable zeal and by commiseration for the pains which the faithful departed suffer in the flames of purgatory, where they are held until full satisfaction and perfect expiation is achieved for the sins they committed through weakness or otherwise during their lives.”¹⁶⁹ Parish devotions included the *bourse des défunts* in Rannée and a *boîte des trépassés*, that is, charity boxes for souls, in Saffré and Châteaubriant, all in Nantes diocese, to assure a minimum of regular prayers in memory of those who were too poor to pay for their own masses or who lacked family members to pray for them.¹⁷⁰ Devotional, parish, and craft confraternities were concerned to provide decent funerals, prayers for the dead, and continuing perpetual intercession, as they had in earlier decades. They commissioned requiem services, provided lights and decorations for altars and chapels. Specialist confraternities focused on intercession for the dead increased in number, Trépassés, Agonisants of various dedications,

164 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 424, 427.

165 Catherine Marle, “Le salut par les messes: Les valenciennes devant la mort à la fin du XVIIe siècle,” *Revue du Nord* 79 (1997), 45–67, on 54.

166 Archives Départementales de Finistère (ADF) 9 G 7. Confrérie des Trépassés. Fondations.

167 ADLA H dep 3/1 B3. Hôtel Dieu de Nantes. Dons.

168 ADM G 878. Cléguer. Fondations.

169 ADM 6 E 1815. Notaire Cadic. Hennebont 1654–44.

170 Croix, *La Bretagne*, 2:1135.

and of Bonne Mort (the Good Death). The new, widely popular, rosary and holy sacrament confraternities also had intercession for dead members at the heart of their activity. The 1661 statutes of the rosary confraternity of Arradon in Vannes diocese stated that there would be four anniversaries held a year for deceased confreres; following the death of a member, the others undertook to say a rosary or, if wealthy enough, to have a mass said for them at the rosary altar, within 40 days of the death.¹⁷¹ The collectivity guaranteed post-mortem intercession, with its annual services and regular prayers with an assured congregation.

After 1600, indulgences also re-emerged as a popular part of the economy of salvation, most commonly in three forms: masses said at privileged altars, church pardons, and confraternity membership. Privileged altars possessed indulgences for masses said before them which, in the words of the Jesuit Marc de Bonnyers, gave the sacrament “double the strength” for souls.¹⁷² They were extremely popular: Ollive Godart’s bequest of 1639 for two weekly masses in the Carmelite church of Nantes “at the altar privileged for the deceased” and Jeanne Gillot’s foundation of 1648 of an anniversary in the Minimés’ church at the “privileged altar” are examples.¹⁷³ Individual parish churches also sought papal indulgences, to attract visitors and their donations on feast or pardon days. In 1670, the parish church of Saint-Gonnéry in Vannes diocese received a plenary indulgence from Clement x for seven years “for the augmentation of the religion of the faithful and the salvation of souls” for visitors to the church on their feast of the Assumption.¹⁷⁴ There were also indulgenced activities. Participation in the Forty Hours’ devotion, for example, gave pardons to the participants; we see examples in Martigné-Ferchaud in 1622 and Blain in 1665, both in Nantes diocese.¹⁷⁵ The greatest consumers of indulgences, however, were confraternities. Plenary indulgences were granted on condition that on the first day of their entry members would repent, confess, and receive the holy sacrament. Plenary remission was also granted to the dying if they confessed and received the sacrament, if they could support it, or at least had contrition in their hearts. A plenary indulgence was also granted for visiting the chapel or altar of the confraternity on its principal feast day.

171 ADM G 1143. Arradon. Fondations.

172 Marc de Bonnyers, *L’advocat des âmes de purgatoire ou moyens faciles pour les aider* (Lille: 1640), 62.

173 ADLA H 227, H 321. Carmes de Nantes. Fondations.

174 ADM 48 G 5. Cathédrale de Vannes. Fondations.

175 Alain Croix (ed.), *Moi, Jean Martin, recteur de Plouvellec: Curés journalistes de la Renaissance à la fin du 17e siècle* (Rennes: 1993) 91, 190.

From the 1650s in France at least, published works devoted solely to purgatory began to decline. Discussion of the afterlife and salvation were mostly confined to a wider literature of spirituality and living and dying well. The management of a soul's destination was increasingly the work of the living individual. With Jansenism and other influences from the mid-17th century, the details of purgatory became more muted. Jansenists attacked "the frivolous concept of a God whose punishment could be bought off so cheaply, by human intercessions."¹⁷⁶ Théophile Brachet de la Milletière's work of 1640 stressed the need to pray for the dead and to perform charitable acts in their name, but denied the "superstition" of purgatory as a harsh place of punishment. He was vague about the abode of souls after death but before judgement day, although conceded that penalties could be exacted in the next life. Stress was on prayer and good works rather than purgation.¹⁷⁷ Even among mainstream Catholics, there was a downplaying of purgatory in the later century. McManners shows that devotional writers systematised the intercessory duties of the Christian year, with individuals counselled to make petitions for the dead on the anniversaries of their death, one day a month and on All Souls' Day. In 1695, Guillaume Amfrye de Chaulieu wrote that "my God is not a cruel god" and for Pierre Bayle, the notion of infernal suffering was completely incompatible with the goodness of God.¹⁷⁸ This decline in purgatory continued into the Enlightenment, a part of the process which Vovelle calls "de-Christianisation." Again, we can see the popular response in France in changing religious practices. After 1660, there is clear evidence of decline in post-mortem foundations. In Normandy, new foundations fell by 75 per cent after 1700, where Philippe Goujard argues for changing conceptions of eternity, an idea of time more rooted in history.¹⁷⁹

4 Conclusions

The Christian who prepared for death in the 14th century was ready to face immediate judgement and for his/her soul to be sent, in all probability, to purgatory. This would be unpleasant, but of temporary duration – even if the concept of time was different in the afterworld – because once their debt to God had been expunged, souls would be released to heaven. At the end of time,

¹⁷⁶ McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 127.

¹⁷⁷ Brachet de la Milletière, *Response*, passim.

¹⁷⁸ McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 127.

¹⁷⁹ Philippe Goujard, *Un catholicisme bien tempéré: La vie religieuse dans les paroisses rurales de Haute-Normandie 1680–1789* (Paris: 1996), 363.

they expected to be reunited with their body, then to pass eternity with Christ in paradise. Hell was a possibility, but one which most people hoped to avoid, with a bit of pious effort in this life and some well-placed investments for post-mortem intercession. Of course, there were some independent thinkers who had their own versions of the afterlife, as well as dissenting sects such as Lollards and Hussites who denied purgatory. But for most Christians in the late Middle Ages, the afterlife depicted on their parish church wall helped them to visualise the spiritual realm, with heaven above, hell below and purgatory somewhere in between.

The Protestant rejection of purgatory at the Reformation had a significant impact on religious practice for those who belonged to a reformed tradition. Predestination of the elect to heaven or hell, without intercession or mediation, became orthodoxy. In practice, most Protestants took comfort from the view that faith in Christ would save them, and they would pass directly to heaven, to await the last day and final judgement. Catholics maintained a tripartite afterlife, with purgatory as the initial destination for most. The widespread adoption of plenary indulgences meant for many that their stay would be of short duration, if at all.

So, the terrors of hell and even of purgatory receded over time. The afterlife was increasingly seen as a blissful place where friends and family were reunited, possibly as angels, in the bosom of Christ. Hellfire sermons and anticipation of Last Judgement were still widespread, but as calls to repentance and the living of a right life, whether as a form of good work or a sign of election, whatever one's confessional allegiance. So, as with Sir Walter Raleigh, faith bought consolation,

And from which Earth, and Grave, and Dust,
The Lord shall raise me up I trust.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Epitaph of Sir Walter Raleigh, written by himself (1618), from John Hayward (ed.), *The Penguin Book of English Verse* (Harmondsworth: 1956), 38.

Preparations for a Christian Death: The Later Middle Ages

Stephen Bates

The later Middle Ages are frequently characterised, even denigrated, as a period obsessed with death. Its art was replete with innovations such as the *danse macabre* and the cadaver tomb; its literature likewise abounded in stories of the dead interrupting the living with warnings of the afterlife and, of course, there is ample evidence for the popularity of books on the art of dying a “good death”.¹ In 1965, Johan Huizinga asserted that “no other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death”.² Subsequently, Thomas Boase wrote of the period’s “morbid indulgence in disgust which answered some need now hard to understand”.³ Allan Galpern concluded that “Catholicism at the end of the Middle Ages was in large part a cult of the living in the service of the dead”, but Natalie Zemon Davis, writing in the same collection of essays, stressed that “the connection was not just one of the living serving the dead, but was reciprocal. The living did for the souls in purgatory; the saints in paradise did for the living.”⁴ Eamon Duffy was also critical of Galpern’s formulation. “It won’t quite do”, he wrote, “late medieval responses were more complex and more varied”. Duffy argued that the diverse preparations found in parishes reflected “a means of prolonging the presence of the dead within the community of the living.”⁵ In order to achieve this, contemporaries

1 As discussed in chapter 11 of this volume, by Christina Welch.

2 Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. F. Hopman (Harmondsworth: 1965), 134.

3 T.S.R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgement and Remembrance* (London: 1972), 106.

4 A.N. Galpern, “The Legacy of Late Medieval Religion in Sixteenth-Century Champagne,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, eds Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: 1974), 141–76, on 149; Natalie Zemon Davis, “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, eds Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: 1974), 307–38, on 328.

5 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: 2005), 302–3.

adopted what Robert Swanson called “a complex amalgam of strategies to speed progress through purgatory to eternal bliss”.⁶ This chapter argues that, in this context, the “obsession” proves on examination to be entirely reasonable, both in the sense of being judicious (*contra* Boase) and moderate (an important qualifier to Huizinga’s assertion). It reveals the “innovations” of the period to be a development of existing cultural trends, often with clear precursors. The essay has a geographical slant towards English religious culture but makes telling comparisons with other regions and draws on transnational texts such as *Elkerlijc* and *L’Ordinaire des chrétiens*. In doing so, it connects local preparations for death to a more homogeneous set of “European” beliefs about, and responses to, mortality. Consequently, the analysis of the relationship between popular understandings of the afterlife, and lifetime investments and behaviours, offers illumination on how late medieval society ended up with such a macabre culture.

1 Remember to Die

Preparing for a Christian death was a lifelong preoccupation. In scripture, Ecclesiastes affirmed that “the heart of the wise was in the house of mourning”.⁷ The Wisdom of Ben Sira, known in the contemporary canon as Ecclesiasticus, advised “in all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin”.⁸ St Paul had written that those who set their minds on “the flesh”, as opposed to “the spirit”, were hostile to God and consequently could not please him (with obvious soteriological implications), a principle affirmed by Christ’s parable of the rich fool who stored up his goods with no thought to the afterlife.⁹ This wisdom was a touchstone of the monastic tradition of *quotidie morior*, “dying daily”, and was repeated in literature throughout the late medieval period.¹⁰ In his *Secretum*, written between 1347 and 1353, Petrarch advised “think of death which is certain, the hour of death which is uncertain, but in all times and in all places imminent”.¹¹ Around 1420, Thomas à Kempis asserted in

6 Robert N. Swanson “Praying for Pardon: Devotional Indulgences in Late Medieval England,” in *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Robert N. Swanson (Leiden and Boston: 2006), 215–40, on 215.

7 Ecclesiastes 7:5 in the Vulgate (7:4 in NRSV).

8 Sirach 7:40 in the Vulgate (7:36 in NRSV).

9 Romans 8:6–8; Luke 12:13–21.

10 Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:31.

11 Francesco Petrarca, *Prose*, eds G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, E. Carrara, and E. Bianchi (Milan and Naples: 1955), 187.

the *Imitation of Christ* that “very soon the end of your life will be at hand: consider, therefore, the state of your soul ... If you are not ready to die today, will tomorrow find you better prepared?” Subsequently Thomas asked “why do you not prepare yourself against the Day of Judgement?”¹² In 1496 the first printed Latin edition of Catherine of Siena’s *Il Dialogo* introduced a new prologue lamenting that, if only men “wolde sadly ponder those ylles that be prepared for them that shall be exyled” from “that heuently Hierusalem”, they would surely lose themselves “frome all erthely affeccyons, and full faste renne vnto it, and all thynges contrary and lettynge, exchewe as dethe, as truly they be moche worse than dethe indede”.¹³ The rhetoric of these exhortations moved beyond the potential for earthly comforts to distract good Christians from right living, to impose a dichotomy between selfishness and holiness through lifetime behaviours.

The long-standing message of *memento mori*, literally “remember [you are going] to die”, was driven home to ordinary people by the liturgy, sermons, and morality plays. The lengthy fast of the Lenten *quadragesima* subordinated the “flesh”, while the season of Advent foregrounded preparations for the Second Coming. In his homily for *septuagesima* Sunday, which traditionally addressed the meaning of Lent, the Augustinian canon John Mirk (d. ca. 1414) summoned parishioners “to thynke on deth Inwardly”, while in that for the first Sunday of Advent he cautioned, “he that wyll not trauayle his body in good werkes ... shall trauayle euer with fendes in helle. And for drede of deth he must make hym euer redy to god, whan he wyll sende for hym”.¹⁴ Popular preachers such as Bernardino of Siena (d. 1444) believed that “constant meditation upon death and its aftermath” would make audiences flee sin, despise the world and the desires of the flesh, and pursue good works.¹⁵ In the Dutch drama *Elckerlijc*, translated into German and Latin as well as English, the protagonist finds he cannot take his goods with him, complaining, “alas I haue the loued & had great pleasure, all my lyfe dayes on good and treasure”, to which his goods reply:

12 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: 1952), 57, 60.

13 Raymond of Capua, *The Orcharde of Syon in the whiche is conteyned the reuelacyons of seynt Katheryne of Sene* (London: 1519), 2r; Catherine of Siena, *Dialogus Seraphice ac Diue Catharine de Senis cum nonnullis aliis orationibus* (Brescia: 1496), A2r.

14 John Mirk, *The festyuall* (London: 1508), 3v.

15 Franco Mormando, “What Happens to Us When We Die? Bernardino of Siena on ‘The Four Last Things,’” in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, eds Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: 1999), 109–42, on 110–11.

That is to thy dampnacyon without lesynge
 For my loue is contrary to the loue euerlastynge
 But yf thou had me loued moderately duryng
 As to the poore to gyue parte for me
 Than shouldest thou not in this doloure be.¹⁶

Such sentiments were a call to Christian virtue and sociability, and it would therefore be a mistake to see only a contempt for the world in the late medieval emphasis on the macabre.

In contrast to modern culture, which marginalises both death and the dead, the immanence of the afterlife could be a banal reality for the medieval mind. Philippe Ariès, the doyen of studies on death in western Europe, saw it as death “tamed”, that is, calmly accepted and ritually prepared for as a collective experience. Ariès suggested that Christian iconography from the 12th century revealed a changing emphasis from the Second Coming to the Last Judgement with a concomitant shift from salvation to damnation.¹⁷ This transition, thought Ariès, instilled a new individual consciousness into the dying person, but that seems an odd conclusion. The *ars moriendi*, for example, offered both clergy and laity a guide to collective deathbed ritual and emphasised the importance of their contribution in facilitating the passing of the soul of *moriens*, the dying man (or woman), to glory. Donald Duclow goes so far as to call the genre “a guide for ‘taming’ death”.¹⁸ The *ars moriendi* literature drew on the liturgical office for the visitation of the sick, *De visitatione infirmorum*. Yet, as Duffy points out, Ariès did not deem this official text on preparations for death worth discussing.¹⁹ More significantly, Ariès was dismissive of purgatory as a “dogma that was limited to a small elite of theologians”.²⁰ This is demonstrably false and, indeed, it is the “birth” of purgatory that initiates and undergirds the cultural changes in representations of death that take place in the half-millennia before the Reformation.

16 *A treatyse how the hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature to come and gyue a counte of theyr lyues in this worlde and is in maner of a morall playe* (London: 1535?), B2v; *Den spiegel der salicheit van Elckerlijc* (Antwerp: 1501?), B7r.

17 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (Harmondsworth: 1983), 99.

18 Donald F. Duclow, “Dying Well: The *ars moriendi* and the Dormition of the Virgin,” in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, eds Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: 1999), 379–429, on 396.

19 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 313.

20 Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 306; cf. Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge: 1995), 4–5.

2 Mapping the Eschatological Landscape

In truth, the New Testament is only slightly less vague than the Old on the “last things” and it left considerable room for developments in response to theological or pastoral pressure. Consequently the eschatological schema of the Middle Ages evolved and was a good deal more complex than the simple binary of “going to heaven” and “going to hell” explicit in Christ’s story of the sheep and the goats.²¹ Jacques Le Goff located the transition of purgation from a process to a place in the late 12th century, though the development was not as revolutionary as he proposed, and had more to do with consolidating existing theological speculation.²² In fact the main fault in Le Goff’s thesis lies in a misreading of Augustine’s *Enchiridion* (written after 420), which presented a tripartite division of souls divided between the *valde boni*, *valde mali*, and an intermediary group, the *non valde boni* (“the not very good”). Le Goff reads a fourth category, the *non valde mali* (the “not very bad”), into Augustine and suggests that the 12th-century transition involved a reduction from a fourfold to a threefold scheme.²³ Le Goff also located the concept of limbo to around the same time in what he calls “the great reworking of the geography of the hereafter”.²⁴ Purgatory’s impetus was rooted in the pastoral reassurance that polluted souls really could find their way into the purity of heaven. Thereafter, its existence transformed the afterlife from a final destination to a transformative sojourn. Limbo was the temporary state of justified souls who had died before Christ, and therefore had to wait for his redeeming work on the cross to make their entry into heaven possible, but it also remained the state of the unbaptised dead, bound by Original Sin, in the popular imagination (it never became a doctrine of faith). Medieval theologians can be found dividing limbo to distinguish *limbus patrum* (the limbo of the Fathers) from *limbus infantium*, (the limbo of infants), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) concluding, for example, that “the limbo of the fathers and the limbo of infants are without doubt different”.²⁵ This situates the urgency of child baptism, usually just a couple of days after birth, as a preparation for

21 Matthew 25:31–46.

22 Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (London: 1984), 4.

23 Graham Robert Edwards, “Purgatory: ‘Birth’ or Evolution?” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), 634–46, on 639; Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: 2001), 29, 91.

24 Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, 45.

25 “*Limbus patrum et limbus puerorum absque dubio differunt*”: Thomas Aquinas, *Super quarto libro Sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (Venice: 1481), B3r.

death, and goes a long way to explaining the contempt for anabaptists in the 16th century.

The eschatological waters of the early Middle Ages were opaque: further additions to the landscape of the afterlife came directly from Christ's tale of the rich man, "Dives", and Lazarus, in which the latter was taken after death not to heaven but to "the bosom of Abraham", and from his assurance to the crucified thief that "today you will be with me in paradise".²⁶ In Second Temple Judaism these two places were equated as one of the divisions in the underworld of *sheol* (the other, the destination for Dives, being *gehenna*). This equation was followed by some Christian theologians in late antiquity.²⁷ Patristic eschatology such as Augustine's introduced ambiguity, however, by creating space for purgation. This sort of thinking required a first or particular judgement at death as opposed to the Last Judgement, and transitory places for the habitation of disembodied souls. So, for example, Tertullian (d. ca. 225) regarded the temporary repose of the righteous as Abraham's bosom, in what he called an "*interim refrigerium*", while paradise was the refuge of the perfect, such as martyrs.²⁸ While some writers, for example Julian of Toledo (d. 690), subsequently persisted with a three-part otherworld, others including Gregory the Great (d. 604), Isidore of Seville (d. 636), Bede (d. 735), Boniface (d. 754), and Goscelin (d. ca. 1107) presented four-parts.²⁹ Their cosmologies were supported by monastic visions of the afterlife such as that of the Irish monk Fursey (d. 650) and German Benedictine Wetti (d. 824). Bede recorded that of the Melrose monk Drythelm; Boniface that of a monk from Much Wenlock in Shropshire. Bede would subsequently write of those who "after death, consoled in the bosom of Abraham in blessed rest, await the beginning of heavenly peace with joyful hope".³⁰ The culmination of these developments was that at death *moriens'* soul either went to purgatory and thence to Abraham's bosom to await the Last

26 Luke 16:19–31, 23:43.

27 Cf. Augustine, "*ergo post hanc vitam etiam sinus ille Abrahae paradisi dici potest*", and Pseudo-Chrysostom, writing no earlier than the 5th Century: "*sinus Abrahae, paradisi est*"; Augustine, "*De Genesi ad Litteram Libri Duodecim*," in *PL*, vol. 34 (Paris: 1861), 482; Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea in Quatuor Evangelia*, ed. P. A. Guarienti, vol. 2 (Turin: 1953), 228. Helen Foxhall Forbes misattributes the latter quote to Aquinas himself: Helen Foxhall Forbes, "*Dividuntur in Quattuor: The Interim and Judgement in Anglo-Saxon England*," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 61 (2010), 659–84, on 680, n. 108.

28 Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, trans. Ernest Evans, vol. 2 (Oxford: 1972), 454–55; Isabel Moreira, *Heaven's Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: 2010), 25.

29 Foxhall Forbes, "The Interim and Judgement in Anglo-Saxon England," 662, 670, 674, 678; Moreira, *Heaven's Purge*, 149, 261 n.33.

30 "*In sinu Abrahae post mortem beata requie consolati supernae pacis ingressum spe felici expectabunt*": Bede, "*Homiliae X, In Die Circumcisionis Domini*," in *PL*, vol. 94 (Paris: 1850),

Judgement, the receipt of a new heavenly body and entrance into heaven for all eternity; or to limbo if he or she were unbaptised; or to hell where, at the Last Judgement, the damned would also receive new bodies before embarking on a fresh phase of eternal agony.

In spite of all this, in the 13th century Aquinas could still write of some authors identifying five “*receptacula animarum*”, refuges of the soul, not counting the earthly paradise from which Adam and Eve had been ejected.³¹ The arrival of purgatory as a noun in the 12th century, officially defined in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons and reaffirmed in 1439 during the Council of Florence, therefore offered clarity for those preparing for a Christian death in the later Middle Ages. Then, in the 14th century, a controversy erupted concerning when souls could attain the beatific vision and “see” God.³² This culminated in the papal constitution *Benedictus Deus*, issued by Benedict XII in 1336, which enshrined in dogma the belief that the *visio beatifica* was available to the souls out of purgatory. *Benedictus Deus* asserted that all souls shortly after death and purification, but before the Last Judgement and the receipt of new resurrection bodies, would be with Christ in heaven, in paradise, and joined to the company of the holy angels.³³ “Paradise” and “the bosom of Abraham” were affirmed as synonyms for heaven, hence the absence of an interim Abraham’s bosom from either Dante’s *Divine Comedy* or images of the *sphaerae* of the Ptolemaic universe such as that in the de Lisle psalter.³⁴ Nevertheless the relevance of the *sinus Abrahae* to late medieval understanding was reflected in its place in the breviary, offices for the dead praying that angels would lead the soul of the departed there (the *Suscipiat*), and in art as on the 13th-century tympanum of Rheims Cathedral which showed angels physically carrying souls to Abraham,

54; cf. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, ed. Ignatius Brady, vol. 2 (Grottaferrata: 1981), 236.

31 Aquinas, *Super quarto libro Sententiarum*, B3r. The posthumous supplement to the *Summa Theologica* comprises this same material; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, vol. 12 (Rome, 1906), *Supplementum Tertiae Partis*, 146.

32 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: 1996), 212–14; Virginia Brilliant, “Envisaging the Particular Judgment in Late-Medieval Italy,” *Speculum* 84 (2009), 314–46, on 316.

33 “Mox post mortem suam et purgationem praefatam in illis qui purgatione huiusmodi indigebant, etiam ante resurrectionem suorum corporum et iudicium generale, post ascensionem Salvatoris nostri domini Iesu Christi in caelum, fuerunt sunt et erunt in caelo, caelorum regno et paradiso caelesti cum Christo, sanctorum Angelorum consortio aggregatae”: Benedict XII, *Acta Benedicti XII (1334–1342)*, ed. Aloysius L. Tautu, vol. 8 (Rome: 1958), 10–13.

34 BL Arundel 83 II, 123v.

who held them in a sheet. In an intriguing development, above the memorial brass of Laurence de St Maur (d. 1337) at Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire, it is Christ who holds the sheet receiving his soul although the accompanying text reads “*in sinu Abrahe angeli deducant me*” (angels carry me to the bosom of Abraham). This innovation may reflect revised wording in monastic breviaries: “may Christ, who has called you, receive you, and may the angels raise you up to Abraham’s bosom”.³⁵ These tropes testify to a popular conception that angels waited around the deathbed to receive the soul from the mouth of the dying and carry it to the patriarch “as a small childlike naked eidolon held in a cloth”.³⁶ There are fine 14th century examples of this motif sponsored by the noble Durazzo family at both Santa Chiara (ca. 1344) and San Lorenzo (ca. 1381) in Naples.³⁷ Overall though, this elaboration and extension of the post-mortem passage of the soul put distance between the death of the individual and their resurrection at the last day, shifting the emphasis from the general to the particular judgement.

The advent of purgatory as a place may have encouraged the repentant to know that they could still find redemption in a merciful God but, in doing so, it risked diminishing the retributive threat of God’s justice for those anticipating sinful behaviour. Consequently, it evolved. In the 14th century, Dante considered the souls in purgatory to be “content within the fire” (*color che son contenti nel foco*) of purification or, in Mark Musa’s translation, “those who rejoice while they are burning”, and this same understanding can be found in Catherine of Genoa’s writing at the turn of the 16th century.³⁸ Catherine’s vision was of souls placed in “God’s burning love” and who, even in the midst of suffering, “behold only the goodness of God”. She can even write of their joy as incomparable, “except the joy of the blessed in paradise”, concluding, “the souls in purgatory at the same time experience the greatest happiness and the most excessive pain”.³⁹ Purgatory could therefore invoke both fear and hope in late medieval mentalities but in the hands of reform-minded preachers and writers the

35 Maria R. Grasso, “The Ambiguity in Medieval Depictions of Abraham’s Bosom in the Areas and Spaces of the Christian Afterlife,” in *Place and Space in the Medieval World*, eds Meg Boulton, Jane Hawkes, and Heidi Stoner (New York: 2018), 103–113, on 108.

36 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 110; Peter Marshall, “Angels around the Deathbed: Variations on a Theme in the English Art of Dying,” in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, eds Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: 2006), 83–103, on 85.

37 Brilliant, “Envisaging the Particular Judgment in Late-Medieval Italy,” 323.

38 Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Volume I, Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: 2003), 71.

39 Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on Purgatory*, trans. H. E. Manning, 4th ed. (London: 1858), 1, 3–4, 6, 36.

emphasis shifted towards the former. As Ralph Houlbrooke has remarked, “if purgatory was not to seem a soft option for the rapidly swelling numbers of prospective inhabitants, it had to be depicted as a fearsome place”.⁴⁰ Contemporary assessments and texts such as the anonymous *Revelation of Purgatory* (1422) imagined a breadth of punishments apposite to specific sinful acts, though making use of flames in particular.⁴¹ This repositioned purgatory to be closer to Dante’s *inferno* than his *purgatorio*. Indeed the author of *L’Ordinaire des chrétiens*, a treatise written around 1468, asserted that every man ought to understand that purgatory “is one parte of hell & the place of ryght maruaylous payne”.⁴² There is a diversity and ambiguity in these readings that probably falls short of the guilt culture that Jean Delumeau has sought for in this period. However bleakly it was painted, purgatory remained the lesser of two evils.

Preparing for a Christian death meant navigating this complex topography, largely through prayer. It was a truism understood by all, from ploughman to pope, that the living were but one third of Christendom, the church militant, and that the broader *ecclesia* embraced in fellowship those in purgatory, the church suffering, and those in heaven, the church triumphant. Together they formed a single and cohesive communion of saints, a mystical body with Christ as their head, conceived from the metaphor established by St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, and reinforced by an article of the Apostles’ Creed.⁴³ This was a universal extension of social relations, which the *Golden Legend* called “the dette of entrechaungynge neyghbourhede” and is the vital context for understanding late medieval memorial culture.⁴⁴ In theory, through purity and propriety in life, all could store up a repository of “merits”; in practice nobody was likely to accrue sufficient resources to pay off their sinful debt. Yet that debt did not define the relationship with God, theologians distinguishing absolution of guilt from the remission of punishment. It was therefore possible to die as friends with God, in a “state of grace” to use the contemporary pastoral language, if one had received the absolution contained in the sacrament of penance: this meant dying contrite and confessed. The saints, however, had by definition been in credit when they had died and consequently had merit

40 Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480–1750* (Oxford: 1998), 35.

41 See the descriptions in John Fisher’s sermon on Psalm 6 in his exposition on the seven penitential psalms: John Fisher, *The fruytfull saynges of Dauyd the kynge and prophete in the seuen penytencyall psalmes* (London: 1508), aa2r–cc1r.

42 *The Ordynarye of crystyanyte or crysten men*, trans. Andrew Chertsey (London: 1502), LL2r; *L’Ordinaire des chrétiens* (Paris: 1494), sig. s5r.

43 1 Corinthians 12, *passim*. The communion of saints forms part of the ninth article of the Apostles’ Creed.

44 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea sanctorum* (Westminster: 1483), 346r.

to spare, which they had added to the inexhaustible fund generated by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The metaphor of the body merged with the mercantile image to produce what Robert Shaffern has called the "communion of suffragers".⁴⁵ The church militant mediated for the suffering, while the triumphant, in their turn, interceded in both the world of the living and in the process of purifying those souls already in purgatory. The author of *The Ordinary of Christian Men* believed that "they of purgatory praye for theyr benefactors aswel".⁴⁶ As Diarmaid MacCulloch puts it, "the dead in purgatory, with a good deal of time on their hands, could be expected to reciprocate with their own prayers".⁴⁷ This was a far more complex set of exchanges than that portrayed by Galpern.

3 The Cultural Turn to the Macabre

Popular piety in the later Middle Ages should therefore be read in the context of lives that did not end with death. Parishioners were reminded of this from the pulpit on feast days, in the moralising sermons of the friars, by dramatists, and by the art of their churches. Buonamico Buffalmacco's *Triumph of Death* in the Camposanto in Pisa (ca. 1340) is a pictorial homily situated along the route for funerary processions, and therefore "seen at a moment when viewers' thoughts would have turned naturally toward its theme".⁴⁸ The earliest fully-formed Last Judgement is probably that on a 12th-century tympanum above the west portal of the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques; the most famous, that of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, was completed in 1541.⁴⁹ Other important medieval examples included Giotto's fresco on the west wall of the Capella degli Scrovegni in Padua, painted around 1305, and the large fresco in the basilica of Sainte-Cécile at Albi, prepared by Flemish artists in the 1480s. The "doom", as it was known locally, was a ubiquitous adornment of English parish chancel arches. As the largest and (in combination with the "rood" scene) the most central piece of art in the church, it was an imposing reminder to parishioners that they should live each day with their own

45 Robert W. Shaffern, "The Medieval Theology of Indulgences," in *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Robert N. Swanson (Leiden and Boston: 2006), 11–36, on 19.

46 *The Ordynarye of Crystyanyte*, H2r; *L'Ordinaire des chrétiens*, e3r.

47 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (London: 2004), 13.

48 Brilliant, "Envisaging the Particular Judgment in Late-Medieval Italy," 327–28.

49 Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 100.



FIGURE 2.1 The weighing of souls, with the Virgin Mary intervening, mid-14th century, St Botolph, Slapton, Northamptonshire. Logically the Virgin does not practice the rosary, so the beads used in her intervention here reflect the lifetime pieties of the devotee in preparation for judgement.

SOURCE: © STEPHEN BATES

inevitable judgement in mind. There are several surviving examples, including fine paintings at St Thomas and St Edmund Church, Salisbury, and Holy Trinity Church, Coventry.

Another common trope was the *psychostasia* or weighing of souls, typically conducted by St Michael with the prayerful soul in one scale-pan and an amorphous mass or demon in the other, representing sin. These might appear on tympanums as at Bourges Cathedral (13th century), or on the wall of the nave as at All Saints church, Catherington in Hampshire (early 14th century). The intrinsic weight of the soul in such images was implicitly its good deeds which had accrued merit. The weighing had scriptural precedent: Job says, “let me be weighed in a just balance, that God may know my integrity”; Daniel tells Belshazzar, “you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting”.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Job 31:6; Daniel 5:27.

To contemporaries, however, it represented the particular judgement that occurred at death and provided motivation for the faithful to accrue merit in life while trying to avoid filling the counterweight with sins. There were important interactions in these images with devilish figures pulling at the scale-pan of sin in an attempt to secure a conviction, while saints mediated in a spiritual tug-of-war. At the hospital of St Wulfstan in Worcester, a painting from around 1500 shows the Virgin Mary interceding in a weighing of souls; the words "*Maria ora pro nobis*" (Mary, pray for us) are discernible above her head, reminding the viewer that her help was not normative but rather a consequence of a lifetime of devotion, developing a personal relationship with the saint. Indeed, *The myracles of our blessyd lady* described the Virgin as advocating against irreverent monks and even, in one instance, petitioning her son to convict an entire monastery during a scene of *psychostasia*:

The moder of god came & kneled byfor her sone complaynyng & sayd
O moste ryghtwyse Iuge, thys mannes bretheren ful neglygently & breue-
ly & vnreuerently saye myn houres & therfore commaunde Iugement to
passe ayenst theym.⁵¹

More innovative art depicted Death personified, an early example being found in the late 13th-century Westminster Abbey bestiary.⁵² A more imaginative example is that of Death playing chess with a man in the church at Täby near Stockholm, a fresco dated to around 1490. In literature, the cautionary tale of the three living and the three dead was fairly widespread by the end of the 13th century.⁵³ "Ich wes wel fair; such schel tou be; for godes love bewer by me" warn the corpses.⁵⁴ These motifs were concerned with the living and intended to provoke them into preparing for death.

Significantly, nearly all of these tropes are found before the great demographic disaster of the mid-14th century: the Black Death. The plague is often singled out as the origin of the macabre in late medieval culture, but should be better thought of as a catalyst affecting pre-existing trends. Certainly there were innovations in the following century: the decorating of tombs with carved cadaver sculptures; the *ars moriendi* literature; the *danse macabre*. Yet these were additions to an established and vibrant culture of *memento mori*

⁵¹ *The myracles of oure blessyd lady* (Westminster: 1496?), C2v.

⁵² Rosemary Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer and Plague: 1150–1380," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: 1999), 90–118, on 93.

⁵³ Binski, *Medieval Death*, 135.

⁵⁴ BL Arundel 83, 127v.



FIGURE 2.2 The three living and the three dead, 15th century, St Giles, Packwood, Warwickshire. The figures are unusually positioned here on either side of the chancel arch, making them a central feature of the painted scheme of the church and (probably) associating them with a scene of the Last Judgement.

SOURCE: © STEPHEN BATES

designed to confront the laity with the relationship between life and afterlife in an age, lest we forget, already familiar with higher mortality rates. “That which I am now, they once were, and that which I shall be, they are now” appeared in the funeral epitaph of Peter Damian (d. 1072), while the macabre is readily found in monastic writings of the 12th century.⁵⁵ Among the poems of the Franciscan Jacopone da Todi (d. 1306) is “On the contemplation of death and the grave to counter pride”.⁵⁶ Indeed there is a genre of poetry known as *vado mori* which has its genesis in a hymn contained in *De contemptu mundi*, a treatise written around 1195 by the future Innocent III, and which would influence poets well into the 15th century including François Villon and William Dunbar:

On to the ded gois all estatis,
Princis, prelotis, and potestatis,

55 Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York: 1990), 42, 44–6.

56 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 132.

Baith riche and pur of al degre;
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*⁵⁷

Although the relationship between the two is uncertain, *vado mori* literature shares some characteristics with the *danse macabre* including the list of representative characters and the anthropomorphism of Death. There may also have been dramatic antecedents to the dance of death, but as art it originated from a fresco decorating the wall of the cloister of the Cemetery of the Innocents in Paris, completed in 1425.⁵⁸ That painting was destroyed by 17th-century building work but by then this extraordinarily popular motif had been reproduced in manuscript and, from 1485, in print. An adaptation by John Lydgate was painted on the walls of old St Paul's Cathedral in London around 1430. It was a largely northern European phenomenon although there are surviving frescos in St Mary on the Rocks in Beram, Istria, and in several churches across Lombardy and Trento. The characters and number of dances vary but encompass the whole of humanity: pope, emperor, knight, merchant, and even a child. A separate women's dance appeared in 1482.⁵⁹ Death is represented as an emaciated corpse speaking in a sarcastic and sometimes threatening tone, with more than a hint of social criticism aimed at rich bishops and fat-bellied abbots, underlining the central message that he was no respecter of persons.⁶⁰ Death was the great leveller. The anticipated impact of word and image were recorded by Lydgate in his prologue:

O 3ee folkes, harde herted as a stone
 Which to the world haue al your aduertence
 Like as hit stolde, laste euere in oone
 Where ys 3owre witte, where ys 3owre prudence
 To see a forne the sodeyne vyolence
 Of cruel dethe that ben so wyse and sage
 Whiche sleeth, allas, by stroke of pestilence
 Bothe 3onge and olde, of low and hie parage.⁶¹

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- 57 William Dunbar, "Lament for the Makaris"; R.T. Davies (ed.), *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology* (Evanston: 1964), 251.
 58 Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: 1987), 6–7.
 59 Ann Tukey Harrison (ed.), *The Danse Macabre of Women: Ms. fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale* (Kent, Ohio, and London: 1994), 6.
 60 Cf. Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11.
 61 Huntington Library Ellesmere 26/A.13, 1r.



FIGURE 2.3 The cadaver monument to Bishop Richard Foxe (d.1528), Winchester Cathedral. The striking image of a disintegrating body intentionally contrasts with the reputation of the wealthy statesman and cleric in an act of abjection designed to unsettle the viewer.

SOURCE: © STEPHEN BATES

Such scenes were, as Duffy asserts, not the articulation of despair but “part of a concerted attempt by religious and moral teachers to persuade the laity of the transience of earthly pleasures and goods, and the need to seek eternal salvation at all costs.”⁶² The same can be said of the cadaver tomb, known as a *transi* (after the Latin imperative, “go across!”), although these semi-decomposed effigies primarily served the purpose of fostering memorialisation and encouraging prayer for the soul of the occupant.⁶³ The *transi* was, again, an almost entirely northern European trend, emanating out of late 14th-century France.⁶⁴ In the 1420s, Masaccio incorporated a painted

62 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 307.

63 Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley and London: 1973), 3–4.

64 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 140; Christina Welch, “Exploring Late-Medieval English *Memento Mori* Carved Cadaver Sculptures,” in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomaini (Leiden: 2018), 331–365, on 332.

version below his *Trinity* in the Basilica di Santa Maria Novella, in Florence with the accompanying text, “*Io fui già quel che voi siete e quel ch’io son voi ancor sarete*” (“I was what you are and I am what you will be”). *Transi* images occasionally made their way into books of hours such as the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* (ca. 1420) and even *ars moriendi* texts.⁶⁵ Yet two-tier *transi* tombs have a striking similarity to the layout of a typical saint’s shrine, which allowed for an “ingress of limbs” at the cadaver level, imposed below the traditional *gisant*.⁶⁶ These developments testify to an evolution rather than a revolution in the presentation of death, which suggests continuity in the underlying rationale.

Importantly, Christianity embraced a long-standing impulse toward laicisation, emboldened through the reforming efforts of the friars, and evidence for this can be seen in the establishment of chantries and guild chapels from as early as the 12th century, foundations that appropriated the public role of the Church in order to shorten the stay in purgatory.⁶⁷ Such was the impact of lay investment in unbeneficed clergy that Duffy concluded that it reshaped the organisation of the late medieval Church.⁶⁸ The Avignon papacy from 1309 offered one ready explanation not only for the chastisements of the plague but of the Great Famine of 1315–22, as well as more prosaic calamities such as the Hundred Years War. Hence, in Gabriele de Mussis’ *Istoria de Morbo*, written around 1350, God asks a sinful humanity “What are you doing, held captive by gangs of worthless men, soiled with the filth of sinners? Are you totally helpless?”⁶⁹ The traditional, sanctifying protection of the Church from the demonic forces that brought epidemics and famines was seen to fail, increasing the demands of the laity upon the clergy (a set of expectations labelled by older historiography as “anticlericalism”) and inclining some contemporaries to greater spiritual self-reliance. Subsequently they perceived those demons shifting their threat from the community to the individual soul.⁷⁰ One important impact the Black Death did make, however, was that it decimated the priesthood, the clergy presumably putting themselves at risk

65 BNF Latin MS 9471, 159r; Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 114.

66 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 147–9.

67 Howard Colvin, “The Origin of Chantries,” *Journal of Medieval History* 26 (2000), 163–73, on 165; David Crouch, “The Origin of Chantries: Some further Anglo-Norman Evidence,” *Journal of Medieval History* 27 (2001), 159–80, on 177–8.

68 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 301.

69 Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death* (Manchester: 1994), 14.

70 Norman Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: 1975), 73.

of this most contagious of diseases by attending its victims to administer the last rites. Infamously, at the height of the epidemic, the Bishop of Bath and Wells authorised confession to a layman or “even to a woman if a man is not present”.⁷¹ This instruction reveals the profound importance of the sacraments to the dying, but it is also suggestive of a new age of lay proactivity in preparing for death.

4 Practical Planning

Confronted with the purgatorial system, parishioners moderated their behaviour and spent handsomely on relevant investments. They were guided by mnemonics such as the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven virtues, preached in sermons and often represented in church art such as the stained-glass scheme in All Saints, North Street in York and the polyptych originally situated in an almshouse in Alkmar and now in the Rijksmuseum of the Netherlands.⁷² These publicly displayed tropes promoted active participation in the Christian community. The works of mercy comprised six acts encouraged by Christ’s teaching on the judgement of the nations: feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and visiting prisoners.⁷³ To these was added the burial of the dead, derived from the then canonical book of Tobit, which explains its absence from the north transept rose window in Freiburg Münster and its low priority in English wills.⁷⁴ Amusingly, Mirk’s “syxe werkes of mercye” comprise all seven, “to gyue mete & drynke clothe herberowe [i.e. harbour] vysyte prysones, comferte the syke blynde lame, and to burye them that ben deed”, and are said to have “comen oute of the ten commaundementes”.⁷⁵ That people acted literally on these exhortations is borne out by Lady Margaret Beaufort, who housed twelve poor, sick folk and ministered to them personally.⁷⁶ “Almes delyuereth ye soule from deth” reads Mirk’s homily for the first Sunday in Lent, but the previous week’s sermon offered a caveat:

⁷¹ Horrox, *The Black Death*, 272.

⁷² Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum SK-A-2815.

⁷³ Matthew 25:35–6.

⁷⁴ Tobit 1:16–18; Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (London and New York: 1997), 20.

⁷⁵ Mirk, *The festyuall*, 10r.

⁷⁶ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 69.



FIGURE 2.4 Faith, St Mary & All Saints, Willingham, Cambridgeshire, early 16th century. The virtue is anthropomorphised as a woman holding a chalice in one hand and a cross in the other. The image forms part of a scheme in which the biblical virtues on the south wall of the nave face the cardinal virtues painted on the north wall.

SOURCE: © STEPHEN BATES

Though a man praye & do almes dedes, go a gylgremage haue full fayth & byleue, teche & preche, fast & suffre penaunce neuer soo moche, crye & wepe neuer so lowde, & be out of charyte god hereth hym not.⁷⁷

The seven virtues comprised the three given by St Paul, faith, hope, and charity, with four cardinal virtues drawn as much from Plato as from scripture: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Virtues were often personified in morality plays. They acted as a counterpoint to the use of the seven deadly sins in confession: a positive rather than a negative exhortation that encouraged proactivity in preparing for judgement.⁷⁸ This is borne out in *Everyman*, where the protagonist is deserted by his friends, kinsmen, and property and, at the

⁷⁷ Mirk, *The festyuall*, 17r, 13v. Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.

⁷⁸ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 58–9.

end, by Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Five Wits (his senses). Good Deeds or Virtue (*"Duecht"*) alone stays with him, commenting:

All ertly thyng is but vanyte
 Beaute strength and discrecyon do man forsake
 Folysshe frendes and kynnesmen that fayre spake
 All fleeth saue good dedes and that am I.⁷⁹

This point is reinforced by the doctor attending the deathbed, who brings the play to a close:

Remembre beautye, fyue wyttes, strength, and discession
 They all at ye last do eueryman forsake
 Saue his good dedes there dothe he take
 But beware, for and they be small
 Before god, he hath no helpe at all.⁸⁰

A life of vice was expected to shorten life. Obviously, sinful behaviours could result in illness from cirrhosis for the intemperate to venereal disease for the lustful. But more than this, medieval mentalities distinguished between a "natural" death and one that was untimely, basing their understanding largely on Avicenna's 11th-century *Canon of Medicine*. They understood from the Psalms that everyone was endowed with a set length of life, though this varied from person to person.⁸¹ Natural expiry was regarded as painless, calm, and morally neutral, while a premature death was painful, riddled with anxieties and the consequence of sin.⁸² Richard Oram speaks of the "fundamental medieval belief in the moral or spiritual nature of disease" to emphasise the tension in

79 *How the hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature*, C3v; *Den spiegel der salicheit van Elckerlijc*, D6r-v.

80 *How the hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature*, D4r; *Den spiegel der salicheit van Elckerlijc*, D7v.

81 "The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong": Psalm 89:10 in the Vulgate (90:10 in NRSV). Karine van 't Land observes that "the common people said that a dog lived for nine years, a horse three times as long as a dog, which made 27 years, while a man lived three times the life span of the horse: 81 years"; "Long Life, Natural Death: The Learned Ideal of Dying in Late Medieval Commentaries on Avicenna's Canon," *Early Science and Medicine* 19 (2014), 558–83, on 572.

82 Philip Morgan, "Of Worms and War: 1380–1558," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: 1999), 119–46, on 121; van't Land, "Long Life, Natural Death," 582–3.

finding a medical cure for a spiritual malady.⁸³ Some paid large sums for advice from physicians on how to attain the ideal, natural death, advice that largely focussed on diet in old age.

One obvious response to the apotropaic anxieties of the 14th century and subsequent increased laicisation was to pray more at home. Contemporaries brought monasticism and the liturgy into the household, following the wisdom that contemplative Marys were superior to worldly, distracted Marthas.⁸⁴ Thereafter, no other book was produced in such numbers as books of hours, whether in manuscript or print, which included within its texts both the Hours of the Virgin (known as the Little Office) and the most efficacious means of reducing time in purgatory, the Office for the Dead.⁸⁵ The latter comprised the readings for vespers, matins, and lauds, and were evidently read together corporately as well as individually.⁸⁶ Owners marked obits in the calendar that opened *horae* as reminders to pray for their dead relatives on the anniversary date and no doubt anticipated the same service from their heirs. One particularly touching and prosaic example is where a 15th-century hand, possibly belonging to a man named Nicholas from Bury St Edmunds, has added 'my moder departyd to god' against 27 November.⁸⁷ Books of hours were also employed during mass: parishioners were agents in their own participation of the liturgy and made the service less of a passive spectacle for themselves. An extension of this personal piety was self-mortification, which was advocated by some writers as a means of taming the flesh.⁸⁸ Public flagellation was condemned by Clement VI in 1349, but this was to do with an act considered as an atonement for sins and which therefore challenged the efficacy of the sacrament. By contrast it remained a legitimate act of private contrition. It is only after Everyman scourges himself that Good Deeds (Virtue) is able to mediate for him:

83 Richard Oram, "Disease, Death and the Hereafter in Medieval Scotland," in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, eds Edward J. Cowan and Lizanne Henderson (Edinburgh, 2011), 196–225, on 202, 211.

84 Luke 10:41–42.

85 Roger S. Wieck, "The Death Desired: Books of Hours and the Medieval Funeral," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, eds Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: 1999), 431–76, on 431–2.

86 Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers, 1240–1570* (New Haven and London: 2006), 57.

87 Cambridge University Library Ee.1.14, 8r, reproduced in Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 47; Paul Binski and Patrick Zutshi, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts: A Catalogue of the Collection in Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge: 2011), 180–1.

88 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 64.

In the name of the holy trynnye
 My body sore punysshed shalbe
 Take this body for the synne of the flesshe
 Also thou delytest to go gaye and fresshe
 And in waye of dampnacyon yu dyd me brynge
 Therfore suffre nowe strokes and punysshenge.⁸⁹

When the thrust of personal piety was not focussed on self or the object of the works of mercy, contemporaries directed it toward specific saints and objects. Local icons were obvious targets of veneration, but people were prepared to travel long distances to visit far-off shrines, relics, and significant cities such as Rome and Jerusalem. The latter might offer indulgences: Margery Kempe was moved to go “vysyten serteyn places for gostly health”.⁹⁰ But travelling to see the blood of Christ at Hailes Abbey or the body of St James at Compostela entreated the help of the *communio sanctorum*, for there were sacred spaces where saints were more amenable. Some pilgrimages were made by those seeking help with a particular affliction, perhaps trying to avoid the deathbed altogether. Cardinal Wolsey’s journey to Walsingham in August 1517 got him out of London during an outbreak of sweating sickness.⁹¹ Often, however, pilgrimages were made with the end in mind; either one’s own or that of a deceased relative or friend. That many were closely associated with eschatological angst is revealed by the number of posthumous, vicarious peregrinations provided for in wills. In this context the most important saint by far was the Virgin Mary. As the mother of Christ she was considered particularly effective at getting a soul in and out of purgatory promptly and the growth of her *cultus* during the later Middle Ages displaced many local and merely thaumaturgic saints.⁹² Local Marian icons embraced a breadth of tropes including the *Mater dolorosa* under the rood and the enormously popular image of the *Pietà*. These were empathetic simulacrum for the grieving and the thanatologically anxious.

The most important way of securing communal suffrages was a place on the bede-roll, a parish register of the departed read out publicly in full at least once a year, and in an abbreviated form every Sunday at the bidding of the bedes during Mass. The latter incorporated a general intercession for all the souls in

89 *How the hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature*, B5v. *Den spiegel der salicheit van Elckerlijc*, C5r.

90 BL Additional MS 61823, 11v.

91 J.S. Brewer (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, Volume 2, Part II* (London, 1864), 1154.

92 Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: 1994), 175.

purgatory, but the roll itself was reserved for “theym that fynde ony lyght in this chirche or gyue ony behestes boke belle chalyce or vestemente, surplys, awter-cloth or towayle. londes rentes, lampe or light, or ony other adournementes”.⁹³ Wills often provided for a “month’s mind”, a requiem mass for the deceased one month after death, and a “year’s mind” or “obit”, an annual repetition of the funeral. Wealthier testators might establish almshouses populated by bedesmen who had the responsibility to pray for the soul of their benefactor. The less well-off typically made provision for a fund to maintain a votive light before a saint’s image. Similarly, enrolling in a prayer fraternity was a clever strategy since inscription in the register of members ensured one was prayed for while in purgatory. So, for example, when the Hanseatic merchant Hinrik Kernenade drafted his will in the mid-15th century, he left a gift to Bergen’s Corpus Christi guild specifically that they might sing masses for his soul and include his name in their *denkelbuch* (notebook).⁹⁴ Consequently guilds, which were once understood primarily in economic terms, are now recognised to have had an important religious role. Their statutes often required members to attend recitations of the Office for the Dead for deceased members, although Philip Morgan has suggested that “weight of numbers drove further commemoration into a subsumed collective identity in which prayers were directed on behalf of all dead members”. He concluded, “there were clear physical limits to the community of the dead”.⁹⁵ Guilds could, however, take practical steps to encourage participation in commemorative services: in 1515, the London Company of Drapers decided to divide the livery in half, in order to alternate attendance at funerals and obits.⁹⁶ In 1409, in another innovative move, the Oslo shoemakers’ guild made an agreement for local Dominicans to sing masses for deceased guild members in return for an annual donation.⁹⁷ It was also common for guilds to pay the funeral expenses of poorer members or of merchants and craftsmen working away from their families.⁹⁸ While membership of a guild was commonplace, a more distinctive means for securing communal suffrages

93 Mirk, *The festyvall*, 204r.

94 Håkon Haugland, “‘To Help the Deceased Guild Brother to His Grave’: Guilds, Death and Funeral Arrangements in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway, ca. 1300–1900,” in *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen (Helsinki: 2015), 152–83, on 163.

95 Morgan, “Of Worms and War,” 133.

96 Laura Branch, “Fraternal Commemoration and the London Company of Drapers, c.1440–c.1600,” in *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation Europe*, eds Elizabeth C. Tingle and Jonathan Willis (Farnham: 2015), 96–111, on 97.

97 Haugland, “‘To Help the Deceased Guild Brother to His Grave,’” 164–5.

98 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 153.

was through affiliation with the mendicant orders. Some entered orders at the point of death or sought to be buried in a friar's cowl.⁹⁹ The popularity of belief in the sanctifying power of the cowl was such that Erasmus chose to satirise it, in passing, in his colloquy *The Shipwreck* (1523).¹⁰⁰ These preparations to be prayed for corporately offer further evidence against the new individualism perceived by Ariès.

Beyond the desire for inclusion on the bede-roll, considerable investment was made towards the material culture of parish churches both through lifetime gifts and testamentary bequests. These included the building and extending of churches and private chapels, and the purchase of vestments or plate for the clergy. Spending on the decoration of these structures accounted for the significant impact on artistic representation, as well as architectural forms, and the multiplication and diversification of macabre tropes. Masses were endowed in monasteries and chantries. Lifetime donations were supplemented by alms at the funeral, purchasing the particularly efficacious prayers of the poor. Likewise some testators provided doles for prisoners or hospitals, dowries for poor maidens or maintenance of parish roads and bridges, charitable acts which they expected to impact on the weighing of their soul.¹⁰¹ Testators regularly made plans for the location of their bodies, especially after the Black Death where they were concerned to avoid being interred in a plague pit with relative anonymity.¹⁰² Burial in one's parish church or churchyard was normative but not always possible if death had taken place far away, a particular concern for merchants and explorers, and was prohibited for certain types of criminal, suicides, unbaptised children and the excommunicate.¹⁰³ Lepers were also excluded.¹⁰⁴ Members of the gentry and nobility might have a family crypt or mausoleum; the practice of dismemberment

99 Daniell, *Death and Burial*, 155–6.

100 Desiderius Erasmus, *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago and London: 1965), 145.

101 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 114.

102 Samuel K. Cohn Jr, "The Place of the Dead in Flanders and Tuscany: Towards a Comparative History of the Black Death," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 17–43 on 26, 29.

103 Michael Tymowski, "Death and Attitudes to Death at the Time of Early European Expeditions to Africa," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 54 (2014), 787–811, on 800–1; Anthony Perron, "The Medieval Cemetery as Ecclesiastical Community: Regulation, Conflict and Expulsion 1000–1215," in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomaini (Leiden: 2018), 253–73, on 262–3.

104 R.N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215–c.1515* (Cambridge: 1995), 298; Morgan, "Of Worms and War," 130.

among high-ranking nobility to proliferate prayers at multiple sites of interment was abolished, albeit ineffectively, by a papal bull of 1299.¹⁰⁵ Some testators specified burial in a cathedral or religious house. Others sought burial near the high altar where they might benefit from the sanctifying power of the mass, or in a dedicated space such as a lady chapel, which brought them into proximity with their patron and advocate, physically under the cloak of the *Mater misericordiae*. In the Lady Chapel of St Peter's Abbey in Ghent, for example, lie five Flemish counts and the original tomb of Isabella of Austria, sister of Charles v.

All these posthumous prayers and memorial activities were the product of careful preparations in life although, curiously, most wills and testaments remained nuncupative, that is, directed verbally from the deathbed. Technically the will dealt with land (and might be subject to more onerous legislation), while testaments dispensed with personal property including the soul. It was part of the responsibility of the priest performing the last rites to remind *moriens* of the duty to make proper provision, usually orally to the witnesses around the deathbed where it would be written down and read back for confirmation, and usually before receiving absolution, encouraging bequests to the church and the poor.¹⁰⁶ The result was often "the strategic ventilation of several pious gifts to ascertain the suffrages of a wide variety of beneficiaries", the culmination of a lifetime of targeted bequests.¹⁰⁷ Typical testamentary gifts included offerings to the parish church, such as forgotten tithes, livestock, and produce, and vestments and plate for the clergy. Lorraine Attreed's study found that 45 per cent of pre-Reformation English wills included donations to friaries or monasteries.¹⁰⁸ Because it was situated alongside confession, will-making was a spiritual duty and the intestate was regarded with a sort of infamy.¹⁰⁹ A critical decision was the appointment of reliable executors; *Dives and Pauper* cautioned against the "fals executoures that wolden make themself riche with

105 Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: The Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse," *Viator* 12 (1981), 221–270, on 264–65.

106 Charles Gross, "The Medieval Law of Intestacy," *Harvard Law Review* 18 (1904), 120–31, on 120.

107 Francine Michaud, "Wills and Testaments," in *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster (London and New York: 2017), 114–29, on 122.

108 Lorraine Attreed, "Preparations for Death in Sixteenth-Century Northern England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13 (1982), 37–66, on 48.

109 Eugene A. Haertle, "The History of the Probate Court," *Marquette Law Review* 45 (1962), 546–54, on 547.

dede mennys godes".¹¹⁰ Consequently the Church encouraged lifetime giving and written testaments.

5 The Hour

To the late medieval mind, a good death took place peacefully in a bed following confession, absolution and receipt of the eucharistic host (known collectively as "shrift and housel" in England). It was an oft repeated truism, however, that while death was certain the hour was unknown. This was perceived as God's encouragement to daily readiness for judgement; people might postpone reforming their lives in preparation for death if they knew when it would happen. "O deth thou cummest what I had ye leest in mynde", laments Everyman, "I may saye deth geueth no warnynge".¹¹¹ In the English debate poem, *A disputacioun betwyx þe body and wormes*, the once beautiful lady complained to the creatures devouring her corpse, "when þou leste wenest, *venit mors te superare*".¹¹² Considerable effort was made to avoid a sudden death (known variously as *mors subita*, *mors improvisa* or *mors repentina*), including a proliferation of pieties which specifically claimed to protect against it. Prayer to St Erasmus, for example, ensured the devotee would receive the sacraments in the hour of death, that "he shal haue to his levyng, resonable substance to his endyng":

And sothely, or þe soule fro the body twyne,
He shalle haue contricion & shrift of his syn,
And he shalle receyue, or he be ded,
Cristes owne body in forme of bred.¹¹³

Daily protection from sudden death was afforded by seeing an image of St Christopher who was, as a consequence, regularly made the subject of wall paintings directly opposite the church door, facilitating a sighting; likewise, beholding the consecrated host, in other words, the actual body of Christ, guaranteed preservation that day. There was a sharp increase in the number of prayer promises included in books of hours, such as the so-called Charlemagne

110 Henry Parker, *Dives and Pauper* (London: 1493), G6v.

111 *How the hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature*, A3r, A4r; *Den spiegel der salicheit van Elckerlijc*, A8r.

112 BL Additional MS 37049, 32v.

113 Carl Horstmann (ed.), *Sammlung Altenglischer Legenden* (Heilbronn: 1878), 198.

prayer, which again guaranteed the sacraments on the deathbed.¹¹⁴ Owners copied in additional prayers such as *Deus propitius esto mihi*, which promised its user “he schall never die in sodeyn deth”.¹¹⁵ A German woodcut of Christ’s wounds circulating in the 15th century claimed to protect anyone kissing it “with devotion” from sudden death or misfortune.¹¹⁶ A compilation of prayers probably completed by the Herefordshire priest John Graseley in 1441 added a rubric to a prayer of Bede’s that “whoseuer seith this preyor folowyng euery day knelyng on his knees ... he shall not dye without confession and xxx dayes afore his deth he shall seen oure lady aperyng to hym”.¹¹⁷ Priests were instructed to tell their parishioners to kneel down at the consecration of the host in mass, “whenne they here the belle ryng”, and to pray:

Schryfte & howsele, lord, þou graunte me bo,
Er that I schale hennes go.¹¹⁸

Since unexpected expiry did not allow proper preparations for the afterlife, there was often concern that the restless body or soul might return as a revenant or ghost respectively, and there is evidence of communities engaging in rituals to prevent this.¹¹⁹ Such fears may have transformed images of the three living and the three dead into those of the hunters hunted in which the cadavers physically attack rather than verbally engage the princes.¹²⁰ Examples of this can be seen in the hours of Joanna of Castile (ca. 1500), probably made in Ghent, where the corpses carry lances in the style of Death, and in the Stuart de Rothesay Hours, made in early 16th-century Italy, where they are shown in combat with three knights.¹²¹ This can only have added urgency to the need to prepare for one’s own death properly, but must also have contributed to a

¹¹⁴ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 275.

¹¹⁵ Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 105.

¹¹⁶ Jill Hamilton Clements, “Sudden Death in Early Medieval England and the Anglo-Saxon *Fortunes of Men*,” in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomaini (Leiden: 2018), 36–67, on 37–8.

¹¹⁷ Bodleian Library Oxford. Lyell 30, 49v.

¹¹⁸ John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, eds Edward Peacock and F. J. Furnivall, revised ed. (London: 1902), 10.

¹¹⁹ Kirsi Kanerva, “Restless Dead or Peaceful Cadavers? Preparations for Death and Afterlife in Medieval Iceland,” in *Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe*, ed. Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpola (Leiden: 2018), 18–43, on 29–30.

¹²⁰ Christine Kralik, “Dialogue and Violence: The Three Living and the Three Dead,” in *Mixed Metaphors: The Danse Macabre in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie Köll (Newcastle Upon Tyne: 2011), 133–54, on 154.

¹²¹ BL Additional MS 35313, 158v; BL Additional MS 20927, 119v.

sense of communal responsibility in ensuring the good death of individuals within that community.

Sudden deaths might occur in a variety of ways: by fatal accidents, especially drowning in an age dependent on water-borne transport, or (as Martin Luther could testify) being struck by lightning. Death might result from a fight, perhaps at the hands of robbers. Barbara Hanawalt characterised late medieval society as one where all men carried weapons and settled trivial arguments with violence, reading this as a consequence of the low value placed on human life.¹²² If this is a fair assessment then it reflects something of the failure of moralists to “Christianise” behaviour in the parishes. Yet a violent end was not necessarily a “bad” death as many a martyr could testify.¹²³ During wartime, those preparing for combat might expect to be confessed beforehand, as were the English before Agincourt, and battlefield chantries were sometimes constructed afterward, such as St Mary Magdalen built in 1406 on the site of the battle of Shrewsbury.¹²⁴ Erecting such chapels was seen as a penitential act by their patrons. Although condemned criminals at least knew the hour of their death and could make some preparations, their attendance by a confessor prior to execution was typically hurried (hence the English expression to receive “short shrift”). The refusal of the sacraments to condemned prisoners was censured by the papacy in 1317, but was often the practice as communities attempted to extend the sentence passed in life to the hereafter.¹²⁵ Of course confession to a priest involved admitting the crime. This created a perverse dynamic if a sentence was unjust, though, as Nicholas Terpstra has pointed out, unfair executions were more and not less meritorious because they emulated how the martyrs had died.¹²⁶ Indeed, James Davis has highlighted the potential for imitation of the martyrs, especially with decapitation.¹²⁷ By concentrating the mind of the offender on their impending demise however, capital punishment

122 Barbara A. Hanawalt, “Violent Death in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18 (1976), 297–320, on 316.

123 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 44.

124 Raphael Holinshed, *The chronicles of England* (London, 1585), 552.

125 Adriano Prosperi, “Consolation or Condemnation: The Debates on Withholding Sacraments from Prisoners,” in *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville, MO: 2008), 98–117, on 111.

126 Nicholas Terpstra, “Theory into Practice: Executions, Comforting, and Comforters in Renaissance Italy,” in *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville, MO: 2008), 118–158, on 132.

127 James Davis, “Spectacular Death: Capital Punishment in Medieval Towns,” in *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster (London and New York: 2017), 130–48, on 133.

could also bring about contrition and repentance. In Italy, fraternities of lay comforters would prepare the condemned during the final night. On the journey to the place of execution, these “*confoterie*” would sing *laudes* and hold an image of Mary, Christ or the martyred saints on a *tavoletta* before the prisoner in an attempt to maintain devotional focus and obscure the sound of any crowd.¹²⁸ The use of executed saints such as Catherine of Alexandria and John the Baptist on *tavolette* is particularly striking and suggests that condemned prisoners were encouraged to appropriate the hagiographical experience and see themselves as Christian victims. Nevertheless, where public confessions were made before the scaffold, the felon was expected to hold themselves up as an immoral example not to be followed in a sort of inverse sermon; a ritual that “allowed reintegration into society before being despatched from it.”¹²⁹ Of course, none of this applied if the crime was heresy.

Theoretically, those who spent their lives preparing for death need not fear the *mors improvisa*.¹³⁰ Agnes Paston recorded the sudden demise of Sir John Heveningham in these terms: he “herd iij. massys, & cam hom agayn nevyr meryer, & seyed to hese wyf that he wuld go sey a lytyll devocion in hese garden & than he wuld dyne, and forth wyth he felt afeyntyng in hese legge & sydd don”.¹³¹ This was both a sudden and a “good” death and, as Duffy remarks, must have been a comfort to his wife.¹³² Erasmus, writing to Joost Vroye in 1523, shared this sentiment:

It is strange to recount the abhorrence with which ordinary people regard sudden death, to such an extent that there is nothing they pray God and the saints to deliver them from more frequently or with more feeling than from death sudden and unforeseen. To die suddenly is common to good men and bad alike. Herod suddenly perished when smitten by an angel. Eli the high priest, who was a good old man, dies by a fall from his chair. The dreadful thing is not to die suddenly but to die the death of the wicked. And this superstitious fear that mortals have invents for itself vain

128 Pamela Gravestock, “Comforting with Song: Using *Laude* to Assist Condemned Prisoners,” in *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville, MO: 2008), 31–51, on 40; Massimo Ferretti, “In Your Face: Paintings for the Condemned in Renaissance Italy,” in *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville, MO: 2008) 79–97, on 79.

129 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 214.

130 Horrox, “Purgatory, Power and Plague,” 95.

131 BL Additional MS 34888, 88r.

132 Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 64.

remedies, an image of St Christopher, some particular brief prayers to the blessed Virgin, certain words and signs akin to those used in magic.¹³³

For those who survived to the deathbed, final preparations were idealised and based in part on the character exhibited by Christ as he died on the cross and in part by the stylised Dormition of the Virgin Mary.¹³⁴ This latter exemplar was publicly reproduced in mystery plays such as the York cycle, as well as in parish art.¹³⁵ Often, only when the family were sure that death was inevitable would they summon the priest: there was a widespread but misguided belief that the last rites imposed a penitential lifestyle thereafter.¹³⁶ The responsibility of preparing *moriens* for the last hours clearly fell on the immediate family and friends, and explains the turn to texts like the *ars moriendi* (this communal solidarity is even more evident during the death of a monk). Earlier compendia of faith such as Henry Suso's *Booklet of Eternal Wisdom* (ca. 1328) included sections on how to die, and following these precedents Jean Gerson included a layman's ritual drawing on the deathbed liturgy in his *Opusculum tripartium*.¹³⁷ This seems to have been developed by local Dominicans following the Council of Constance in 1418 into the *Speculum artis bene moriendi*, and then contracted into the famous illustrated block-book on deathbed temptations. There were other important texts in this genre including the *Cordiale quattuor novissimorum* (usually attributed to either Gerardus de Vliedervoven or Denis the Carthusian). The *Speculum* drew short of offering certainty of salvation, and its consolations have therefore been regarded as paradoxical.¹³⁸ It asserted that:

None oughte to haue despayre in noo wyse, how moche felon and euyl he hath ben, though that he had commyted as many murthers and theftes as there ben dropes of water and smalle grauell in the see ... god dyspyseth neuer a contryte herte and humble, and also the pyte and mercy of god is moche more than ony iniquyte or wyckednes.¹³⁹

133 *Collected Works of Erasmus: Volume 9, the Correspondence of Erasmus, letters 1252 to 1355, 1522 to 1523*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson (Toronto, 1989), 414–15.

134 Duclow, "Dying Well," 395.

135 Sue Niebrzydowski, "Secular Women and Late Medieval Drama," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 43 (2013), 121–39, on 137.

136 Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer and Plague," 96.

137 Mary Catherine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well* (New York: 1966), 17–24.

138 Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The ars moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)* (Aldershot: 2007), 17.

139 *The arte and crafte to knowe well to dye* (Westminster: 1490), A3r.



FIGURE 2.5 Death of the Virgin, alabaster panel, 37.6 x 24.2 cm, late 15th century. A.9-1946. Mary passes a palm branch to the beardless apostle John. It symbolised her victory over sin and death: like the martyrs, who also carry palms, her soul will go directly to heaven. Her deathbed is a pious, serene, and communal event.
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This message was consistent with that of stories from the *Golden Legend* and *Miracles of the Virgin* that the most un-Christian scoundrels were capable of redemption, even at the last, so long as they were contrite.

As *moriens* lay dying, a host of demons gathered by with temptations to despair of salvation or deny the faith. No living person could counter the unseen hoard, but they could draw on that broader community of saints to whom so much of their piety had been focussed. The *ars moriendi* clearly makes the dying the central actor in the ensuing drama, it is their responses to the demonic temptations that determine his or her fate, but as they declined into irrationality and unconsciousness the onus fell increasingly on their supporters to invoke intercession. They were to pray the rosary, and “hertly beseke oftentimes that blessyd moder of mercy, to praye for them & that she wyl be with them at the houre of dethe”.¹⁴⁰ They were to hold up a crucifix or an image of the Virgin or other favoured saint as a devotional focus. Now into the death-room came saints, angels, the Virgin and even Christ himself. Alison Beringer is keen to situate the Passion as the central deathbed devotion, but such is the Virgin’s importance in these matters that Edward Muir posits her as the “only hope” of the expiring, “less a judge than a kind referee in the cosmic contest”, while Duffy affirms, “Mary was above all the saint of the deathbed”.¹⁴¹ John Mirk recorded something of the conflict that one might encounter at the end in narrating the death of the scholastic theologian Robert Grosseteste in one of the homilies in his *Liber festivalis*. As Grosseteste lay on his deathbed a “grete multitude of fendes” engaged him in disputation, such that they “nyghe tourned hym out of the byleue and put hym into dyspayre”. Though the intellectual prowess of this renowned scholar availed him little, the Virgin’s timely arrival dispersed the malignant fiends allowing the safe escort of the bishop’s spirit into everlasting bliss.¹⁴² Consequently, the *ars moriendi* instructed those supporting *moriens* to

call into his helpe þe right glorious virgyn marie, whiche is þe veray means of all synners & she þat adressith them in ther necessitye; sayeng to hir in this maner, Quene of heuen moder of mercy & refuge of synners I mekeli the byseche that thou wolte reconcile me to thi dere

140 A *lytyll treatyse schortely compyled and called ars moriendi that is to saye the craft for to deye for the helthe of mannes sowle* (Westminster: 1491), A1r; *The Doctrynnalle of dethe* (Westminster: 1498), 6r.

141 Alison L. Beringer, “The Death of Christ as a Focus of the Fifteenth-century *Artes moriendi*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113 (2014), 497–512, on 505–6; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 1997), 46; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 318.

142 Mirk, *Festial*, 15r. Cf. *Myracles of oure blessyd lady*, Eir.

sone, in callynge his worthi goodnes for me vnworthi synner that for the loue of the he wyll perdone and forgyue me my synnes and brynge me in to his glorie.¹⁴³

This is, of course, exactly the drama represented in images such as the *psychostasia* in Worcester, which encouraged Marian devotion for precisely this moment. With her power over the Devil as Empress of Hell, it is the Virgin who is most important in this spiritual battle. The priest walked to this scene with the host in a pyx, preceded by his clerk carrying a candle and ringing a bell, so that the community might know a death was imminent and pray for the soul. The dying person was sprinkled with holy water and then interrogated on the articles of the faith and their sorrow for their sins. Thereafter the priest heard confession, pronounced absolution, and anointed those areas of the body that had likely commissioned sin (notably those relating to the five senses). If the dying were able to receive it, the priest offered the host, known in this context as the *viaticum*. For those unable to ingest it, merely viewing the consecrated wafer had a salvific effect.¹⁴⁴ This completed the preparations for a good death.

6 Conclusion

Preparation for death in the later Middle Ages was, according to Ralph Houlbrooke, “the most important business of earthly existence”.¹⁴⁵ Jean Delumeau saw in these preparations “the transformation of the natural fear of death into a religious fear of judgement”, but this seems to miss a fundamental problem that the “good news” of Christ has always had to carry with it: it comes with a certain amount of bad news too.¹⁴⁶ Salvation was from the human condition, separated from God and prone to sinful behaviour, and that could not be described in affirming terms. Yet as Mirk pointed out, the Church was a mother and “taketh good hede to the chyldern as a good moder ought to do”.¹⁴⁷ Christianity sought to “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death”.¹⁴⁸ For Julian of Norwich, a woman who had received the last rites in

143 *Arte and crafte to knowe well to dye*, A7r-v.

144 Wieck, “The Death Desired,” 436.

145 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 57.

146 Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, 55.

147 Mirk, *The festyuall*, 5v.

148 Hebrews 2:15.

anticipation of death, all fear other than “reverent dread” was simply wrong.¹⁴⁹ The answer was to speak the truth with love.¹⁵⁰ Philippe Ariès thought the macabre was an expression of “a passionate love for this world and a painful awareness of the failure to which each human life is condemned”.¹⁵¹ Perhaps, but it was fundamentally an expression of the need to re-order one’s moral priorities in line with Christian eschatology. Life was transient whereas eternity, as the name suggests, was not.

Following the *ars moriendi*, the sick person was asked, “art thou joyfull that thou deyst in the faith of our lorde Ihesu cryste”.¹⁵² This was an exhortation to move away from fear, and even guilt. A good death in the later Middle Ages was a joyful death. Undoubtedly some preachers emphasised both guilt and fear in an attempt to jolt their audiences into self-reformation; indeed his study of Bernardino of Siena’s sermons on the *quattuor novissima* led Franco Mormando to speak of “the role of terror in Christian pastoral practice”.¹⁵³ Yet Bernardino also thought death was a release from the prison of life, a sentiment that (presumably) unwittingly echoed the old man in Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale:

Ne deth allas wol not haue my lyf
 Thus walke I lik a recheles caytiff
 And on the grounde whiche is my modris gate
 I knocke with my staf erly and late
 And say leue modir lete me yn
 Lo how I vanyssh flesh blood and skyn
 Allas whan shal my bonys be at reste.¹⁵⁴

In preparing for such a rest, medieval culture created an environment that encouraged moral conformity, several forms of piety, social integration, parish investment, and the active remembrance of deceased members of the community. Though they must have experienced an understandable measure of anxiety, the well-developed eschatological schema and the availability of

149 Amy Appleford, “The ‘Comene Course of Prayers’: Julian of Norwich and Late Medieval Death Culture,” *The Journal of English and German Philology*, 107 (2008), 190–214, on 199.

150 Ephesians 4:15.

151 Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 129–30.

152 *Arte and crafte to knowe well to dye*, A5r.

153 Mormando, “What Happens to us When we Die?” 131.

154 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Whan that Aprill with his shouris sote* (Westminster: 1477), 244v.

practical works on the art of dying well meant that the terminally sick were not approaching the unknown. Consequently, the laity were not conditioned to approach death fearfully, but as practically as they would when guided by any other conduct literature.

Deathbed and Burial Rituals in Late Medieval Catholic Europe

Madeleine Gray

Death is both an event and a process: a truism which is reflected in later medieval rituals surrounding the deathbed and the subsequent disposal of the body.¹ There is a clear tension between the prayer that the dead may rest in peace and the practicalities of disposing of the body – disposal which may result in fragmentation in the case of saints, or the embalmed bodies of the elite. In understanding this tension, Arnold Van Gennep's tripartite analysis of deathbed and burial rituals as celebration of the dead, liminal rituals of purification, and the burial ceremony as a process of reintegration still has its relevance, but the overt focus in most later medieval rituals was on the need to ensure salvation.² This focus responded to heightened levels of concern about the fate of the soul and the development of ideas about purgatory. Meanwhile, recent research has focused on the body itself as a material object, a "social resource" which could be deployed by the living to articulate ideas about belief, power and social position, while the body also retains a social presence.³

Much of our source material for this study comes from liturgical texts, especially those with illustrations showing the deathbed, preparation of the body, and funeral. Wills frequently made provision for the funeral. These sources are of course heavily weighted towards the élite, though the Avignonese wills studied by Jacques Chiffolleau even included testamentary dispositions made by beggars and vagabonds.⁴ Woodcuts from the *ars moriendi* tradition and

1 On the ambivalent status of the corpse, see Liv Nilsson Stutz, "A Proper Burial: Some Thoughts on Changes in Mortuary Ritual, and how Archaeology can begin to understand them," in *Death and Changing Rituals: Function and Meaning in Ancient Funerary Practices*, eds J. Rasmus Brandt, Marina Prusac, and Håkon Roland (Oxford: 2014), 1–16, on 2–7.

2 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: 1960), esp. 146–65.

3 For discussion of these issues see Joanna R. Sofaer, *The Body as Material Culture* (Cambridge: 2001), esp. 19–20; Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers* (Ostfildern: 2014).

4 For details see Roger S. Wieck, "The Death Desired: Books of Hours and the Medieval Funeral," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, eds Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara J. Gussick (New York: 1999), 431–76; Gloria Fiero, "Death Ritual in Fifteenth-Century Manuscript

representations of deathbeds and funerals as part of the Seven Sacraments and the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy can give a better idea of the deaths and funerals of the lower and middling orders of people, especially the laity. Books of advice for priests supplement the liturgical sources. Archaeological evidence for burial practices is invaluable though mainly confined to monastic sites: excavating graveyards in current use is problematic. For Wales (a country part of the British Isles but quite distinct from England), the survival of a considerable body of elegiac poetry in the Welsh language illustrates a distinctive perspective on commemoration and the fate of the soul, as well as providing incidental detail on funeral practices.⁵ Examples from this literature and from other late medieval Welsh sources will provide some of the key examples for this chapter.

1 The Deathbed

Deathbed rituals were first formulated for monastic communities, though lay involvement was being encouraged by the Carolingian period.⁶ The 14th-century customary of St Augustine's, Canterbury, gives a vivid picture of the deathbed of a late medieval monk.⁷ The entire convent would process to his bed in the infirmary with holy oil and water, cross, candles, and incense. After the dying monk had made a final confession, been absolved, and received the anointing with holy oil and the final eucharist, he was left in the care of a spiritual adviser of his own choice and the infirmary servants. When his death was imminent, he was laid on sackcloth and ashes, or sometimes sprinkled with ashes. The community then reassembled, said the Creed, and chanted litanies and psalms. After the death, they went to the abbey church to sing the Office of

Illumination," *Journal of Medieval History* 10/4 (1984), 271–94; Sarah Schell, "The Office of the Dead in England: Image and Music in the Book of Hours and Related Texts, c.1250–c.1500" (University of St Andrews, unpublished PhD thesis, 2011), 61–104; Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge, vers 1320-vers 1480* (Paris: 2011 edition), xvii, 57.

5 David Hale, "Death and Commemoration in Late Medieval Wales" (University of South Wales, unpublished PhD thesis, 2018), available online at [https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/studentthesis/death-and-commemoration-in-late-medieval-wales\(7d14b42e-a69b-4968-9398-aad3b96748e0\).html](https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/studentthesis/death-and-commemoration-in-late-medieval-wales(7d14b42e-a69b-4968-9398-aad3b96748e0).html) (last accessed 28/6/2020). This is a detailed study in English of this very useful resource, with translations of many of the key texts.

6 For a detailed study of early developments, see Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: 1990); on lay involvement see esp. 196–200.

7 Etheldred Taunton, *The English Black Monks of St Benedict*, 2 vols (London: 1897), 1:305–6; see also Geoffrey Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial* (London: 1977), 64–7.

the Dead. The body was then washed, clothed in its habit and carried into the church. Psalms were recited continuously until the funeral mass and burial.

While these rituals were monastic in origin, they soon extended into lay use. By the 14th century, secular provision for the pastoral care of the dying was well established, in principle at least. This was also the period during which (in southern France, at any rate, according to Chiffolleau) the laity began to take a strong interest in the ordering of funeral rituals.⁸ While the church strengthened its control of the process, the liturgy for the commendation of the soul and the Office of the Dead appeared in most Books of Hours, ensuring that lay people were increasingly able to participate. Illustrations of the Office in Books of Hours also suggest concern for the proper performance of the rituals surrounding death and burial.⁹ Medieval woodcuts showing the Seven Sacraments and in books of advice on dying well (the *ars moriendi*), and illuminations in Books of Hours, show the deathbed as intensely social, with friends and family gathered to pray and encourage the dying. The prayers for the commendation of the soul were sufficiently well known that they could be quoted on the tomb of Thomas Phillips, a minor Monmouthshire gentleman buried at Tintern Abbey on the Welsh border, probably in the late 15th century.¹⁰

A series of papal edicts, general and local church councils in the 12th and 13th centuries had regularised and attempted to make universal what was probably already the customary practice.¹¹ There was an increasing number of manuals of advice for the clergy which outlined how to proceed with the dying. Depictions of the last of the Seven Sacraments show the priest holding a crucifix before the face of the dying person. As Julian of Norwich makes clear in her *Showings*, this was to “comfort thee ther with”.¹² The dying person was to

8 Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, 123–6; Jacques Chiffolleau, “Ce qui fait changer la mort dans la région d’Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge,” in *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: 1983), 117–33.

9 This is the central argument of Fiero, “Death Ritual in Fifteenth-century Manuscript Illumination”, though the earlier wills cited by Chiffolleau suggest that to some extent this concern predates the disruption of the Black Death.

10 M. Gray, “Jesu mercy, Lady help’: Late Medieval Tomb Carvings at Tintern,” in *The Monuments Man: Essays in Honour of Jerome Bertram*, ed. Christian Steer (Donington: 2020).

11 On developments in the 12th and 13th centuries, see Joseph Avril, “La pastorale des malades et des mourants aux XI^{ème} et XIII^{ème} siècles,” in *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: 1983), 88–106.

12 Julian of Norwich, *Showings: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Denise Nowakowski Baker (New York: 2005), 7.

make a final confession, receive absolution, the final eucharist and the anointing with holy oil. The same ritual was followed for the humblest parishioner and the highest officeholders of the church: the pope himself had to receive absolution and the *viaticum*, though he had also to absolve his cardinals and entrust the church to them.¹³ The importance of this final confession and communion is clear from the rhyme which English worshippers were taught to say at the elevation of the host at mass:

Ihesu! for thy holy name
 Schelde me to day fro synne and schame
 Schryfte and howsele, lord, thou grante me bo,
 Er that I schale hennes go,
 And verre contrycyone of my synne
 That I, lord, neuer dye there-Inne ...¹⁴

Further evidence comes from the popularity of paintings and other depictions of St Christopher, the saint who would protect you from an evil death.¹⁵ Wall paintings of the saint faced the main door in many parish churches. Woodcuts were also popular. One with the promise *Cristofori faciem die quacumque tueris, Illa nempe die morte mala non morieris* (On whatever day you see the face of St Christopher, that day you will not die an evil death) was printed in 1423. It is one of the earliest European examples of printing, with the words cut into the wood rather than using movable type.¹⁶

We have of course no way of knowing how conscientious parish priests were. In the huge parishes of mountain regions like Wales, the Alps and the Pyrenees, with settlements many miles from the parish church, attendance at the deathbed could not always have been possible. That parishioners expected it, though, is clear from their complaints when it did not happen. The visitation returns of the diocese of Canterbury in 1511 are full of anxieties about absentee priests, “wherby many have died without shrifte or hoselle”.¹⁷ The 15th-century Florentine merchant Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli was tormented by a dream of

13 Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, trans. David S. Peterson (Chicago: 2000), 115–8.

14 Edward Peacock (ed.), *Instructions for Parish Priests. By John Myrc* (London: 1868), 9–10.

15 Eleanor Pridgeon, “Saint Christopher Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches c.1250–c.1500” (University of Leicester, unpublished PhD thesis, 2008), available online at <https://bra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/7964/1/2010pridgeoneephdpdf> (last accessed 7/1/2019).

16 John Rylands Library JRL MS 366 (17249).

17 K.L. Wood-Legh (ed.), *Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham and his Deputies, 1511–12* (Maidstone: 1984), quote on 64; see also 62, 115, 119.

his son Alberto, a pious child who had died kissing a *tavola* of the Virgin Mary but without the last rites.¹⁸

2 The Ordo Commendationis Anime

The liturgy for the commendation of the soul which followed the rites of confession, absolution, the eucharist, and the final anointing had also reached its fullest and most complex form by the 14th century.¹⁹ There were of course many variants: as Matthew Salisbury has pointed out for England, even within a tradition as apparently well-established as the Sarum rite, there could be a range of local traditions. Salisbury suggests that by the later Middle Ages, the rites for the commendation and commemoration of the dead were among the most stable, possibly because of their familiarity from Books of Hours. There was however more variation in monastic communities. Each order had its own usages, both in the liturgy for the commendation of the soul and the Office of the Dead.²⁰ In matins of the Office of the Dead, for example, while some communities drew all nine readings from the Book of Job (though not always using the same texts), others took the final reading from one of the Gospels or Epistles, the Book of Revelation, or non-scriptural sources such as Augustine's *Enchiridion*.²¹

The liturgy for the commendation of the soul began after the final anointing and when the dying person was actually *in articulo mortis*. It was important to know when that point had been reached: lists of the signs of impending death ("Whanne mine eyhnen misten; And mine eren sissen ...") were commonplaces of medieval literature.²² In the Sarum rite, the liturgy began with the recitation of the Creed then continued in its fullest form with the penitential psalms and the prayer *Parce domine, parce servo tuo*, "Spare, O Lord, spare thy servant,

18 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: 1998), 54–7.

19 On its development, see Paxton, *Christianizing Death* and John S. Lampard, *Go Forth, Christian Soul: The Biography of a Prayer* (Peterborough: 2005).

20 Matthew Cheung Salisbury, *The Secular Liturgical Office in Late Medieval England* (Turnhout: 2015), 47–57, 133–9, 165; for the scale of variation, mainly on the responsories and versicles for Matins, see Knud Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead* (Aarhus: 1993).

21 Ottosen, *Office of the Dead*, 53–93.

22 Rosemary Woolf, "Lyrics on Death," in *Middle English Lyrics*, eds Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L. Hoffman (New York: 1974), 302–5; for the full text of "Whanne mine eyhnen misten" see Luria and Hoffman, *Middle English Lyrics*, 224.

whom thou hast deigned to redeem with thy precious blood".²³ This was followed by a lengthy litany invoking God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, angels and archangels, patriarchs and prophets, and an extensive list of saints. This would have taken some time: recitation of the penitential psalms alone requires about twenty minutes.²⁴ The final clauses of the litany imply that death may already have taken place:

Agnus dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere anime eius
 Christe ihesu miserere anime eius
 Agnus dei qui tollis peccata mundi dona ei pacem eternamque felicitatem et gloriam sempiternam.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on his soul. Christ Jesus, have mercy on his soul. Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, give him eternal peace and everlasting glory.

After this the priest began the prayer *Proficiscere anima* (Go Forth, Christian Soul)

Proficiscere, anima christiana, de hoc mundo, in nomine Dei Patris omnipotentis, qui te creavit: in nomine Jesu Christi Filii Dei vivi, qui pro te passus est: in nomine Spiritus Sancti, qui in te effusus est ...

Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created you; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for you; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out on you ...

and continued with prayers for the release and protection of the soul and for its reception into heaven.

3 Preparation of the Body

The liturgy performed a social as well as a spiritual function: it bridged the space after death had taken place but before the work of preparing the body

23 J. Wickham Legg (ed.), *The Sarum Missal: Edited from Three early Manuscripts* (Oxford: 1916), 423–30.

24 H. Gittos and S. Hamilton (eds.), *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation* (Farnham: 2016), 30.

for burial could begin. For most people, this involved washing, possibly further anointing, and wrapping in a shroud. Illustrations in Books of Hours suggest that for the laity the washing and shrouding was normally the work of women. This was something that communities of beguine women often undertook, either as part of their charitable work in caring for the sick and dying or in return for bequests.²⁵ The white linen shroud was a sign that the dead person had confessed and received the last rites.²⁶

Manuscript illuminations, wall paintings of the Last Judgement and representations of the last of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy, the burial of the dead, suggest a range of styles for shrouds: tightly sewn, loosely swathed, pinned to fit the body or knotted at the head and foot. A Parisian Book of Hours now in the Pierpont Morgan Library shows a body being sewn into a tightly-fitting shroud with a large black cross.²⁷ The corpse in the last of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy at Llandcarfan in the Vale of Glamorgan has a shroud which seems to be knotted at head and foot but still tightly-fitting, with a small cross over the right breast. By contrast, the Death figure at Llandcarfan has a loosely fitting shroud with a large knot at the head. Apart from the Death figure, these illustrations show the shroud covering the face, though separate face cloths were sometimes used and can be found on effigies.²⁸ However, the implication of the Welsh poetry is that the face could sometimes be exposed: Iolo Goch (ca. 1320–ca. 1398) described the body of Tudur Fychan with

Anhudded oer iawn heddiw
O ro a phridd ar ei ffrîw

A very cold covering today / Of gravel and earth on his face.²⁹

The shrouded figures on the tomb chests of Thomas and John White in Tenby (Pembs.) are loosely swathed, with their faces exposed.

25 Christine Guidera, "The Role of the Beguines in Caring for the Ill, the Dying and the Dead," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, eds Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara J. Gusick (New York: 1999), 51–73.

26 Christopher Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: 2006), 50.

27 Pierpont Morgan Ms M231 f. 137, reproduced in Roberta Gilchrist and Barney Sloane, (eds), *Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain* (London: 2005), cover and 21.

28 For discussion and examples see Brian and Moira Gittos, *Interpreting Medieval Effigies: The Evidence from Yorkshire to 1400* (Oxford: 2019), esp. 178–80.

29 *Iolo Goch: Poems* ed. Dafydd Johnston (Llandysul: 1993) no. 4 lines 63–4; Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 114. For biographical material on the Welsh poets cited here, see the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, online at <https://biography.wales> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

For most people, burial took place soon after death. For the elite, however, procedures could be more complex. Arranging a high-status funeral could take months: bodies might have to be transported for hundreds of miles. Embalming techniques changed during our period, partly through increased knowledge but also in response to ecclesiastical criticisms. Thirteenth-century embalming techniques were crude and not always effective. After removal of the internal organs (sometimes including the brain and eyes), the body might be slashed all over before being placed in salt. Sometimes, aromatic oils and spices were used instead of (or as well as) the salt. Papal funeral ceremonial included washing the body with white wine and herbs, stopping all the orifices with myrrh, incense, aloes and musk, and anointing the whole body with balsam.³⁰

These practices were probably the origin of partible burial: the viscera had to be buried where they were removed, the heart could be separately embalmed and be buried in a different location from the body. This then became a convenient solution for great landowners who wished to acknowledge family connections with more than one religious institution; it also offered the further advantage that it secured prayers from more than one community. In the most extreme form of embalming, known as the *mos teutonicus* (though it was not confined to Germany), after removal and burial of the organs, the body was boiled, leaving only the bones to be transported to their eventual burial place.³¹

These practices were widespread among the elite in the 13th century, though there was considerable variation across western Christendom. Estella Weiss-Krejci suggests that throughout our period partible burial was more common

30 Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, 134.

31 This discussion of the debate over embalming and partible burial is based on Elizabeth A.R. Brown, "Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: The Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse," *Viator* 12 (1981), 221–70; Katharine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of the History of Medicine* 50 (1995), 111–32; Estella Weiss-Krejci, "Excarnation, Evisceration, and Exhumation in Medieval and Post-Medieval Europe," in *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, eds Gordon Rakita, Jane Buikstra, Lane Beck, and Sloan Williams (Gainesville: 2005), 155–72; Danielle Marianne Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: 2008) and "Aristocratic Executions and Burials in England, c.1150–c.1330: Cultures of Fragmentation" (University of York, unpublished PhD thesis, 2004); Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, "The Corpse in the Middle Ages: The Problem of the Division of the Body," in *The Medieval World*, eds Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson (London: 2001), 327–41; Sally Badham, "Divided in Death: English Medieval Heart and Viscera Monuments," *Church Monuments* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Sally Badham for an illuminating discussion of developments after *Detestande feritatis*.

in France, England and Scotland, while excarnation was more commonly practised in Germany for simply practical reasons of transport.³² Both were much less common in Italy than in northern Europe. By the end of the 13th century, though, they were the subject of considerable debate. Saints' bodies were routinely exhumed and divided, but there were arguments against extending this to others. In 1299, Boniface VIII issued the bull *Detestande feritatis*, an impassioned attack on embalming procedures, with its strongest denunciation reserved for the *mos teutonicus*. He insisted on burial as soon as possible, at or near the place of death. He was however happy to accept the exhumation of bodies for transfer to a more permanent place of burial once they had been naturally defleshed.³³

Both sides in the debate reflect the same belief that something of the identity of the individual remains in the body after death. (The same belief is of course the foundation of medieval relic cults). They differ, though, in their attitude to the process of decay. If control of the body was an important aspect of nobility, physical decomposition was a challenge which had to be resisted.³⁴ For Boniface and those who agreed with him, decomposition was an essential precondition for regeneration.³⁵

It is difficult to assess the impact of Boniface's bull, as our evidence is so patchy and geared towards the most wealthy and powerful. The bull was included in the canonical collection *Extravagantes communes* but did not find its way into any of the great collections of decretals or canon law. In a will drawn up in 1302, Blanche of Navarre, mother-in-law of Philip the Fair, declared that if division of the body was genuinely forbidden, she was to be buried in the Franciscan church which she founded at Nogent-l'Artaud.³⁶ However, it was always possible to attempt to secure a dispensation. Elizabeth Brown lists a number of dispensations secured and refused, and suggests that the process actually made dismemberment and partible burial more fashionable as it signified the high status of the person buried.³⁷ Nevertheless, the evidence of wills and surviving datable heart tombs suggests that, while there may have been a decline in the number of partible burials in the early 14th

32 Weiss-Krejci, "Excarnation, Evisceration, and Exhumation," 160.

33 For examples of this, mainly of royal corpses, see Weiss-Krejci, "Excarnation, Evisceration, and Exhumation," 165–6.

34 This is the key argument of Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body* and "Aristocratic Executions and Burials".

35 Bagliani, "The Corpse in the Middle Ages," 338–40.

36 Cited in Brown, "Death and the Human Body," 252.

37 Brown, "Death and the Human Body," 252–62.

century, numbers rose again thereafter. The number of recorded dispensations suggests that partible burial was particularly popular in France, but it has to be remembered that we have firm evidence only for those whose status and visibility led them to apply for dispensation. While Boniface was clearly articulating concerns held by many others, his was an extreme position and after his death in 1303 it was increasingly ignored. The evidence of wills and tombs suggests that many simply continued the practice without bothering to seek permission. Boniface's most severe criticism was reserved for complete dismemberment in the *mos teutonicus*, and that certainly seems to have become much less popular after 1300. While Italians were in general less ready to accept division of the body for embalming or partible burial, they were paradoxically much more ready to conduct autopsies and to dissect human bodies for the study of anatomy.³⁸

Some level of embalming was necessary if the body was to lie in state for any length of time. The popes were themselves embalmed to some extent, though their burials were usually comparatively rapid as the cardinals could not proceed to elect a new pope until after the funeral. However, they might lie in state with their faces exposed for up to eight days, the duration of a *novena*, a prayer-cycle of nine days.³⁹ Henri de Mondeville's *Chirurgie*, written between 1306 and 1320, suggested that the faces of royalty and senior ecclesiastics would be exposed when they lay in state, but not the faces of the "middling sort", knights and barons.⁴⁰ (The implication of this for his book was that the highest class would require more careful embalming.) However, the continuing popularity among lesser landowners and even townspeople of semi-effigial tomb carvings, which have been interpreted as showing the bodies partly covered by the funeral pall but with faces exposed, may suggest that this custom spread further down the social hierarchy.

The pall was not normally buried with the body, though in some of the most elaborate burials it may have been. While most people were buried in a shroud and uncoffined, some (and not only the elite) were clothed. Hurried burials during serious outbreaks of plague were also likely to be clothed, possibly rather than being shrouded. Syr Dafydd Trefor's (d. ca. 1528) description of Owain ap Maredudd ap Tomos, *Gwyn ei grys yn y gown gro* (White his shirt in a gown of gravel) might suggest he was buried in white clothes, though "shirt"

38 Park, "Life of the Corpse," 113–6.

39 Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, 107–8, 132–8.

40 Henri de Mondeville, *Die Chirurgie des Heinrich von Mondeville (Hermondaville) nach Berliner, Erfurter und Pariser Codices*, ed. J.L. Pagel (Berlin: 1892), 390–39, referenced in Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body*, 53–4.

could be a poetic reference to a shroud, chosen for the alliteration necessary in traditional Welsh poetry.⁴¹ For those who received the full burial ritual, the clothed body could then be wrapped in a shroud, in cerecloth (linen soaked in beeswax), or in strips of lead. Wooden coffins became more common in the 15th century, though illustrations in Books of Hours often show bodies being lowered into the grave with only a shroud, even after comparatively elaborate funeral rituals.

Our evidence for coffins, shrouding, clothing, jewellery and other adornments comes mainly from burial in monastic precincts, since it is usually impossible to excavate burial grounds still in use.⁴² Manuscript illuminations can also be informative. Popes, bishops, and archbishops were customarily buried in their vestments, some with their monastic habits underneath, probably after an impressive lying in state.⁴³ At least some priests were buried in their mass vestments, and they were sometimes depicted thus on their tombs. Priests were usually buried with replica chalices and patens made from low-grade pewter: like their vestments, these are sometimes shown on their tombs.

Monks, nuns and friars were buried in their habits, sometimes with hair shirts or wrapped in haircloth. The survival of buckles, belt slides and chapes, tags and buttons, suggests that wealthier lay people were also sometimes buried clothed. Jewellery is found very occasionally in graves, as are coins. More common are crosses – both those that were clearly from personal adornment and specially-made mortuary crosses, with and without inscriptions. Rosary beads and pilgrim badges are also occasionally found. A significant number of lead bullae from papal documents (possibly from indulgences) have been found in graves in England and Wales, though this seems to be a purely regional practice. The Welsh poetry makes reference to weapons and armour on graves – *tarian a maneg Llandduw dan y llen ddu deg* (the shield and gloves of Llanddew under a fair black mantle), *Gweddy yng Nglyn Egwestl ... Gweled ei darged a'i lafn durgoch* (We have seen, in Glyn Egwestl ... his shield and ruddy steel blade).⁴⁴ Lines

41 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 113.

42 Much of this section is based on Gilchrist and Sloane, (eds), *Requiem*, 80–111.

43 For a study of episcopal lying-in-state and funeral rituals, see Geraldine A. Johnson, "Activating the Effigy: Donatello's Pecci Tomb in Siena Cathedral," in *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, eds Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo and Carol Stamatis Pendergast (Farnham: 2000), 99–128.

44 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 122, 156–7; H.M. Edwards, (ed.), *Gwaith Madog Dwygraig* (Aberystwyth: 2006), 83, for other examples D.J. Bowen, "Agweddu ar Ganu'r

in Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog's *marwnad* for Syr Rhoser Salbri of Lleweni (d. 1530),

Ei ddur, a'i faich, oedd ddaered,
A maner llew, main ar lled

His steel, and his burden, was his earth/bequest, And his lion standard,
stones across him

have been interpreted as suggesting that he was buried in his armour and wrapped in his standard.⁴⁵

Several of the Welsh commemorative poems describe burial in coffins. Dafydd ab Edmwnd's (fl. 1450–1490) *marwnad* for Dafydd ab Ieuan of Llwydiarth refers to *chwyr a bwrdd a chay /r/ bedd* (wax and board and closing the grave), suggesting a body wrapped in cerecloth and a simple coffin made of planks.⁴⁶ Stone coffins were more unusual by the 14th century, but Mab Clochyddyn's (fl. ca. 1380) *marwnad* for Gwenhwyfar, the wife of Hywel ap Tudur ap Gruffudd of Coeden in Anglesey, describes her burial *mywn rhwym maenwaith*, "in a prison of stonework" and says *Llun a roed dan llen*, "her countenance was placed under a sheet", suggesting that she was wrapped in a shroud and then placed in a stone coffin.⁴⁷ While shrouding and confining has been seen as part of a strategy to maintain the integrity of the body until its resurrection, the Welsh poetry often describes it in terms of confinement – *mewn daeardd* (in a dungeon), *mewn arch yngharchar* (imprisoned in a coffin), *mewn gro a cherriig mae'n garcharawr* (he is a prisoner in gravel and stones), *Eglwys Siat yn i gloi sydd* (he is locked in Chad's church).⁴⁸ Some of the references to keys and locks may suggest burial in locked chests or with symbolic padlocks: *clo durdderw* (a lock of hard oak), *Eglwys Fach a gloes [e]i fedd* (Eglwys Fach which locked his grave), *chlyd fur, a chlo dur du* (thick wall, and hard black lock).⁴⁹

Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Deg a'r Bymthegfed," *Llên Cymru* 9 (1966–7), 61, and "Sylwadau ar Oes y Cywyddwyr Cynnar," *Ysgrifau Beirniadol* 7 (1971), 28.

45 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 79.

46 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 109–11.

47 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 117 and 399–401.

48 Roberta Gilchrist, "Transforming Medieval Beliefs: The Significance of Bodily Resurrection to Medieval Burial Rituals," in *Death and Changing Rituals*, eds J. Rasmus Brandt, Marina Prusac, and Håkon Roland (Oxford: 2015), 379–97; Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 110, 112–13, 120.

49 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 109, 137, 379–82; cf. Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 178–9.

4 The Office of the Dead

There were prayers to accompany the washing and shrouding of the body, though they are sometimes omitted in later texts.⁵⁰ In the Sarum liturgy, the ritual continues immediately with vespers and Vigils for the Dead. This is certainly how it would have proceeded in a monastic community. For a lay person, it was more likely that the body would be moved to a church and the Office of the Dead sung or said there on the night before the funeral, though it was sometimes said in the home.⁵¹ While there is still debate about its development, the Office had its origin in the psalms sung after death in the Roman *Ordo defunctorum*.⁵² It was developed and elaborated in monastic usage into a sequence of three services to be said after the regular services of vespers, compline, and matins.

Vespers of the Dead began with the antiphon *Placebo domino in regione vivorum* (I will please the Lord in the land of the living), taken from Psalm 114 in the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible.⁵³ It continued with psalms, antiphons, versicles, the Magnificat and Paternoster, and a series of collects. Matins of the Dead began with the antiphon *Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam* (Direct, O Lord my God, my steps in your sight), from Psalm 5. Thereafter it was formed of three nocturns, each with psalms and other chants and readings taken mainly from the Book of Job. The precise choice of readings might vary but the theme was the same. While the psalms offered comfort, the trials of Job spoke to the trials which the dead would endure in purgatory. Lauds followed the same pattern as vespers, with psalms, antiphons, versicles and collects. Vespers was often known as *Placebo* from its opening antiphon, and matins as *Dirige*: the whole Office was commonly referred to as *Placebo and Dirige* or simply *Dirige*. When used immediately after a death or immediately before the funeral, vespers was said or chanted over the coffin on the evening before the funeral, and matins and lauds on the morning of the funeral.

The Office of the Dead was included in the Book of Hours and frequently appended to the psalter. It would thus have been a familiar part of lay devotion,

50 Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 70–1.

51 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, CT: 1992), 368–9.

52 On the early development of the Office, mainly in a monastic context, see Schell, “The Office of the Dead in England,” 37–60 and for discussion of music in the Office, 153–88.

53 This paragraph summarises the outlines in Roger S. Wieck, “The Death Desired: Books of Hours and the Medieval Funeral,” in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, eds Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara J. Gusick, (New York: 1999), 431–76; Schell, “Office of the Dead in England”; Ottosen, *Latin Office of the Dead*, 31–49.

but it was always part of the monastic daily routine. This regular performance of the liturgy for the dead was one of the advantages of burial in a monastic church. While there could be considerable variation in detail between the liturgical texts of the different religious orders, and even between different houses of the same order, the overall structure of the office was stable by 1300 and its repetition in close proximity to the bodies of the dead was valued.⁵⁴

5 Burial Location

Monastic performance of the liturgy for the dead was certainly one of the influences on choice of burial location. For most people, there was little or no choice: they were buried in the enclosure around their parish church. This was still sacred space, consecrated and set aside (and needing to be reconsecrated if it was polluted by violence or spilt blood, or by the burial of anyone who had been excluded from Christian burial). While most urban graveyards were in close proximity to churches, in France for example, the Roman cemetery outside the walls of Arles and the Merovingian cemetery in the suburbs of Bordeaux continued in use through the later medieval period.⁵⁵ Pressure on space was already becoming a problem in some towns. As early as 1277 the archbishop of Pisa had given land for an enclosed cemetery immediately within the walls but some way from the cathedral.⁵⁶ Plague cemeteries were often extra-mural but temporary. In 1480, however, the duke of Bavaria and the city council of Munich sought permission from the pope to move the permanent burial places of the city away from the centre to the outer wall. A number of German towns developed extra-mural cemeteries in the early 16th century: Freiburg im Breisgau in 1514, Nuremberg in 1518, Ansbach in 1520, and Zwickau in 1521.⁵⁷ It has been suggested that, by breaking the link between the living and the dead, this may have helped to prepare the way for the more radical changes of the Reformation.⁵⁸

Burial inside the church was becoming more common by the 14th century but was still restricted to the local élite, and burial in the chancel was of course

54 On the range of variation, see Ottosen, *Latin Office of the Dead*. See also Sally Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture before 1650* (Aldershot: 2007), 201–16 for specifically Welsh variants.

55 Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the After-life* (New Haven, CT: 1991) 131.

56 Colvin, *Architecture and the After-life*, 364–7.

57 Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (Basingstoke: 2000), 41–2.

58 This is the underlying argument of Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*.

particularly prized.⁵⁹ Chest tombs and alcove tombs inside churches suggest burial inside the chest, but this was very rare: the body was usually placed under the floor of the church, possibly in a stone coffin or a stone- or brick-lined shaft or vault.⁶⁰ By the 15th century, though, some elite corpses were being placed in elevated sarcophagi (something Archbishop Charles Borromeo of Milan would try to prevent in the later 16th century).⁶¹ Where the Welsh poems specify or hint at a burial place, it is most frequently in the chancel, even *ym min allawr*, at the edge of the altar.⁶² Burial in monastic chancels was possible: the poet Llywelyn ab y Moel (d. 1440) was buried *Yng nghôr Ystrad, rad rybudd, Marchell yng nghanell ynghudd* (In the choir of Ystrad Marchell [or Strata Marcella, near Welshpool in Powys], blessed warning, hidden in the sanctuary).⁶³

Monastic burial was the traditional choice for the wealthiest and most powerful. The foundation and endowment of a monastery or friary was partly to create a family mausoleum and secure the privilege of burial for the founder and their descendants.⁶⁴ The first known benefactor of the Cistercian house at Aberconwy in North Wales, Gruffudd ap Cynan ab Owain Gwynedd, was buried there, as were several successive rulers of Gwynedd and their sons.⁶⁵ Gruffudd's cousin and ally Llywelyn ab Iorwerth founded a Franciscan friary at Llanfaes on Anglesey to house the tomb of his wife Siwan (Joan, illegitimate daughter of King John of England) and his grandson Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's wife Eleanor de Montfort was buried there.⁶⁶ Their involvement in pastoral

59 Colvin, *Architecture and the After-Life*, 144–51; Ronald Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion: Social Ideals and Death Rituals during the Later Middle Ages," in *Mirrors of Mortality: Social Studies in the History of Death*, ed. Joachim Whaley (London: 1981), 40–60, on 43–4.

60 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 137. For an example of a body found in an alcove tomb, see Sally Badham, "What Lies Beneath: A Discovery at Much Marcle, Herefordshire," *Church Monuments Society Newsletter* 29/2 (2014), 16–19.

61 Colvin, *Architecture and the Afterlife*, 220–1, 235.

62 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 123.

63 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 125.

64 Paul Crossley, "The Architecture of Queenship: Royal Saints, Female Dynasties and the Spread of Gothic Architecture in Central Europe," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: 1997), 263–300.

65 David Stephenson, "The Rulers of Gwynedd and Powys," in *Monastic Wales: New Approaches*, eds Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (Cardiff: 2013), 89–102, on 91.

66 Andrew Abram, "Monastic Burial in Medieval Wales," in *Monastic Wales: New Approaches*, eds Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (Cardiff: 2013), 103–15, though his identification of Llanfaes as a distinct mausoleum for women of the royal house of Gwynedd is based on a misunderstanding of the evidence for the burial of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's mother Senana.

work meant the houses of friars were particularly popular places for burial in the 14th, 15th, and early 16th centuries. In London alone, there are records of over a thousand tombs in the city's friaries. These are mainly antiquarian records of the tombs of the aristocracy and armigerous gentry: many more must have been buried in the precincts of the friaries.⁶⁷ Those buried in religious communities had the benefit of the regular round of prayer there, and the promise that at the Last Judgement they would rise in the company of people already acknowledged as holy. By the 14th century, though, there was also awareness of the advantages of burial in a parish church. Monastic churches could be overcrowded, and the Cistercians in particular were resistant to the idea of impressive effigy tombs obstructing the patterns of worship. Burial in monastic precincts continued to be popular. For the aristocracy, it meant burial alongside the ancestors. Archaeological evidence from some monastic sites suggests more secular burials in the later medieval period, including less well-furnished graves and more burials of women.⁶⁸ However, wealthy landowners and townspeople were increasingly likely to endow chapels in parish churches and to establish chantries or other foundations for regular services. They were then more likely to choose burial there. The change in patterns of endowment may originally have been triggered by the overload of monastic commemoration, the focus specifically on intercessory masses rather than other forms of prayer, and a move towards more specific endowments whereby a monastery was given land explicitly to maintain a chaplain to say intercessory masses. Once that had been established, it was possible to move to making similar endowments in non-monastic churches – initially in cathedrals and collegiate churches but subsequently in parish churches.⁶⁹

Chantry foundations could be very diverse in scale. The collegiate church at Tong, founded by Isabel de Pembridge in 1410, had a staff of a warden, four chaplains, two clerks and thirteen almsfolk, and became the burial place

67 Christian O. Steer, "Burial and Commemoration in the London Friaries," in *The Friaries of Medieval London From Foundation to Dissolution*, ed. Nick Holder (Woodbridge: 2017), 272–92.

68 For example, Grenville G. Astill and Susan M. Wright, "Perceiving Patronage in the Archaeological Record: Bordesley Abbey," in *In Search of Cult: Archaeological Investigations in Honour of Philip Rahtz*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge: 1993) 125–37, esp. 132–5.

69 Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: 2016), 14–15, 135–7, 161–83; Colvin, *Architecture and the After-life*, 152–76. On the relationship between tombs and chantries see Anne McGee Morganstern, "The Tomb as Prompter for the Chantry: Four Examples from Late Medieval England," in *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, eds Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo and Carol Stamatis Pendergast (Farnham: 2000), 81–98.

of the Vernons, lords of Tong. On a much smaller scale, the north chapel at Howell (Lincs.) was built by the Hebden family and became their burial place.⁷⁰

For many of those who had a choice, burial with other members of the family was the main consideration: but there were other influences. The emphasis in medieval Welsh commemorative poetry on the dedicatory saint of the church – “Yng nghongl gwyngor Beuno” (In the corner of Beuno’s blessed chancel), “draw ’nhŷ Deiliaw” (yonder in Teilo’s house), “yn nghôr Cynllaw” (in Cynllaw’s choir)⁷¹ – suggests that it was burial near the saint that was valued. In the early 16th century, the body of Gruffudd Carreg of Carreg, north of Aberdaron, was taken across the dangerous Bardsey Sound “i dir y saint ... unllwybr Ynys Enlli” (to the land of the saints ... the one path to Ynys Enlli) to be buried on the island which was the legendary burial place of twenty thousand saints.⁷²

For women, the decision lay between burial with the husband and his family or return to her own family. While surviving effigy tombs suggest that married couples were generally buried together, the Welsh poetry offers some striking examples of women from middle-ranking gentry families returning to their own family base for burial. In the early 16th century, Catrin the wife of Wiliam Glynllifon was taken across Gwynedd to her father’s vault at Gloddaithe east of Conwy, “gwyddfa’i thad Egwlys Gloddaithe”.⁷³ Marged Bawdrem was taken “i dre’i thad, wrth ddeheudir ... ar fôr a thir” (to the town of her father, in the south ... on sea and land).⁷⁴ Effigy tombs, too, can be misleading. Lady Katherine Gordon, widow of the pretender Perkin Warbeck, was commemorated in effigy on the magnificent alabaster tomb commissioned by her third husband Sir Mathew Cradoc in Swansea. However, she married again and was

70 Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, 1–4.

71 Hale, “Death and Commemoration,” 126, 128, 134 and references therein.

72 Hale, “Death and Commemoration,” 143.

73 Hale, “Death and Commemoration,” 142.

74 A. Cynfael Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Morgannwg*, vol. 1 (Aberystwyth: 2004), 49 ll. 31–2 and notes on 219; see also Guidera, “The Role of the Beguines,” 57 for wills requesting burial with the woman’s family. For some royal examples, see John Carmi Parsons, “‘Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour’: The Burials and Posthumous Commemorations of English Queens to 1500,” in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: 1997), 317–37. See also Kathleen Nolan, “The Queen’s Body and Institutional Memory: The Tomb of Adelaide of Maurienne,” in *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, eds Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo and Carol Stamatidis Pendergast (Farnham: 2000), 249–67. The tomb itself is mid-12th century but the chapter makes more general points.

eventually buried alone, with another elaborate alabaster tomb, in the parish church of her own Berkshire estates at Fyfield.⁷⁵

There were also those who were excluded from consecrated ground. Suicides, the excommunicated, and children who died unbaptised had to be buried elsewhere. John Mirk, an Augustinian prior from Shropshire in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, listed those who were excluded: as well as excommunicates and suicides, unconfessed thieves and adulterers, and those killed in jousting.⁷⁶ Dismemberment and burning were a punishment for the most severe crimes precisely because they prevented burial.⁷⁷ On the other hand, there were religious institutions which claimed the privilege of offering burial to criminals and those otherwise excluded. The Knights Hospitallers of Clerkenwell had a separate cemetery for burying London criminals, the Pardon Churchyard.⁷⁸ There were also separate emergency burial grounds during particularly virulent outbreaks of epidemic diseases such as the plague. Marchione di Coppo Stefani's matter-of-fact account of plague burials in 1348 Florence, suggests haphazard burial:

And those who were responsible for the dead carried them on their backs in the night in which they died and threw them into the ditch, or else they paid a high price to those who would do it for them. The next morning, if there were many [bodies] in the trench, they covered them over with dirt. And then more bodies were put on top of them, with a little more dirt over those; they put layer on layer just like one puts layers of cheese in a lasagna.⁷⁹

But archaeological evidence demonstrates that even in the most difficult circumstances, burial could be well-organized.⁸⁰ War graves were more likely to be haphazard and might include deliberate prone burials.⁸¹ Excavation of the battlefield at Towton in north Yorkshire, one of the key battles in the Wars of

75 M. Gray, "The Property of a Lady (Katherine Cradock, d.1537)," *The Swansea History Journal: Minerva* 21 (2013/14), 82–93.

76 *John Mirk's Festial*, edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A.II ed. S. Powell, vol. 2, EETS, OS 335 (2011), 259–61. See also Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion," 54–8.

77 Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body*, 115–35.

78 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 73–4.

79 Marchione di Coppo Stefani, *Cronaca fiorentina. Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, Vol. 30*, ed. Niccolo Rodolico (Città di Castello: 1903–13), online at <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/osheim/marchione.html> (last accessed 1/2/2019).

80 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 74–7.

81 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 73, 153–4.

the Roses, found a shallow grave with the remains of 38 individuals, apparently deposited rapidly but with some attempt at east-west orientation. Several were laid prone, and in some cases this may have been deliberate.⁸² Battlefield casualties might not be buried for some time. The Battle of Aljubarrota in Portugal was fought in 1385 but the bodies were not buried until 1392, when a chapel was built on the site of a communal burial ground.⁸³

According to Mirk, a woman who died in childbirth could be buried in the churchyard but the foetus had to be removed and buried separately.⁸⁴ There was considerable debate about the status of unbaptised children. Women who had died in childbirth or before they had been churched were also sometimes excluded from consecrated ground. There were nonetheless accommodations in practice. *Sanctuaires de répit*, sanctuaries of grace, were places where children who had been born dead were brought in the hope that they would revive for long enough to be baptised.⁸⁵ A 15th-century collection of miracles at the tomb of Philippe de Chantemilan, a devout laywoman from Vienne, listed no less than 18 children born dead and revived there.⁸⁶ A midwife could claim the child had breathed and baptise it; women could be churched by proxy.⁸⁷ In about 1400, a monk of Byland recorded a story of a stillborn child who had been buried unbaptised but appeared to the father who was able to baptise it.⁸⁸ Archaeological evidence suggests mothers dying in childbirth could be buried with their stillborn infants, and an extension of the cathedral graveyard at Hereford seems to have been used for a number of infant burials, though these were haphazardly arranged and may represent clandestine burials.⁸⁹

82 Veronica Fiorato, Anthea Boylston, and Christopher Knüsel (eds), *Blood Red Roses: The Archaeology of a Mass Grave from the Battle of Towton AD1461* (Oxford: 2007), 40, 186.

83 Fiorato, Boylston and Knüsel (eds), *Blood Red Roses*, 180, citing E. Cunha and A.M. Silva, "War Lesions from the Famous Portuguese Medieval Battle of Aljubarrota," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 7 (1997), 595–99.

84 John Mirk's *Festial*, 260.

85 Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 145.

86 Pierette Paravy, "Angoisse collective et miracles au seuil de la mort: Résurrections et baptêmes d'enfants mort-nés en Dauphiné au XVe siècle," in *La Mort au Moyen Âge. Colloque de l'Association des historiens médiévistes français* (Strasbourg: 1977), 87–102.

87 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 72; M. Gray, "Ritual Space and Ritual Burial," in *Faith of our Fathers: Popular Culture and Belief in Post-Reformation England, Ireland and Wales*, eds Joan Allen and Richard Allen (Newcastle upon Tyne: 2009), 11–25, on 15–16.

88 Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 145.

89 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 72; Ron Shoesmith, *Hereford City Excavations 1: Excavations at Castle Green* (London: 1980), 51.

6 The Funeral and Associated Liturgies and Practices

The proper performance of the liturgy and other rituals was important for the welfare of the dead person's soul: many medieval ghost stories involve apparitions complaining that they cannot rest because the rituals have not been performed.⁹⁰ As the illustrations in Books of Hours make clear, ritual actions as well as words were important.⁹¹ Funeral processions for the élite could involve a ceremonial journey, carrying the coffined body from the place of death to the place of burial. For everyone, though, there was some degree of formality. One of the main functions of local guilds and confraternities was supporting and attending the funerals of members. For the poorest, there were candles, palls and biers provided by the parish. Guilds might also help with the funerals of the poor. The guild of Holy Cross in Stratford-on-Avon provided candles to burn in the houses of deceased members, and all members of the guild were to accompany the corpse to the church. In addition, however:

It is also ordained by the bretheren and sisteren, that if any poor man in the town dies, or if any stranger has not means of his own out of which to pay for a light to be kept burning before his body, the bretheren and sisteren shall, for their souls' health, whosoever he may be, find four waxes, and one sheet, and a hearse-cloth to lay over the coffin until the body is buried.⁹²

The body could be coffined to be carried to the church, even if it was subsequently removed so that the coffin could be reused. It was carried on a bier, usually covered by a pall. These could be made of rich fabrics and decorated, though towards the end of our period they seem to have become simpler. In southern France they were often white.⁹³ In northern Europe, they were more commonly black with a large white cross. Wealthy families might have their

⁹⁰ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 2–3.

⁹¹ Michel Vovelle, "L'histoire des hommes au miroir de la mort," in *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: 1983), 1–18. The description of the funeral ritual which follows is based largely on miniatures in Books of Hours as described by Roger Wieck in "The Death Desired" and in his *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: 1988) and *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (New York: 1997), and in Schell, "The Office of the Dead in England," 73–104.

⁹² *English Gilds. The Original Ordinances of more than one hundred Early English Gilds ...*, eds Toulmin Smith and Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: 1870), 214–5.

⁹³ Chiffolleau, "Ce qui fait changer la mort dans la région d'Avignon," 122.

own pall; guilds usually had one for the use of members; parishes might have one to be hired out or might be given cloth to provide a pall for the poor. The family pall of the Fayrey family of Dunstable (Beds.) depicted members of the family and emblems of their business associations, the Merchants of the Staple and the Mercers' Company.⁹⁴ The pall of the Clothiers' Guild of Worcester included panels with emblems of the cloth trade: shears, habicks (the iron claws used to stretch cloth for shearing), teasel frames, combs and brushes.⁹⁵

During our period, funeral processions became more complex. As early as the 9th century, Bishop Jonas of Orléans had urged the laity to attend funerals as a charitable act, and burial of the dead was one of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy.⁹⁶ In southern France, by the 14th century, merchants, artisans, and even labourers could ask to be accompanied to their graves by "figurants" – members of confraternities, bedesmen, torchbearers, acolytes, crucifers.⁹⁷ Gifts of money or clothing to the poor in return for their presence in the funeral procession also secured their prayers for the dead person's soul. The presence of additional clergy – local priests or monks – could be paid for or could be a charitable act. The wall painting depicting Burying the Dead in Lllancarfan (Vale of Glamorgan, Wales) shows a charitable funeral, but there are five or six tonsured figures around the shrouded corpse. The funeral procession would be accompanied by the ringing of bells. Bells would already have been rung at the time of death, and they would announce the month's mind. Bequests for the construction or repair of bell towers and the provision of bells were a common feature of late medieval wills: they were also a very visible (and audible) way of securing prayer for one's soul.⁹⁸

On reaching the church, the corpse was placed before the altar. Candles would be placed, at least one at the head and the foot, though there could be many more. Most guilds were required to provide specified numbers of candles and torches for the funerals of members. The ordinances of the Guild of the Resurrection of Our Lord in Lincoln were very specific:

94 <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O122998/the-fayrey-pall-funeral-pall-unknown/> (last accessed 11/7/2019).

95 T.J. Bridges, "The Funeral Pall of the Clothiers' Company of Worcester," *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society* 3rd ser. vol. 12 (1990), 2010–11. I am grateful to Christine Buckley for both these references.

96 Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 197.

97 Chiffolleau, "Ce qui fait changer la mort dans la région d'Avignon," 121; *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, 132–6.

98 For examples in East Anglia see Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370–1547* (Woodbridge: 2001), 108–10.

When a brother or sister dies, a hearse shall be put about the body, with thirteen square wax lights burning in four stands, at placebo, dirige and mass; and there shall be four angels, and four banners of the Passion ... And offerings shall be made; and as many masses shall be said for the soul of the dead, as there are bretheren and sisteren in the gild.⁹⁹

The coffins of the wealthy could be surmounted by a hearse or catafalque designed to carry lights, heraldic devices and religious imagery. Candles and torches were expensive, and in their wills some people stipulated that any that were not completely used up were to be kept for the use of the church.

If the Office of the Dead had not been said at home, it would now be said or sung in church, vespers on the night before the funeral, matins and lauds in the morning. Where possible, music contributed to the Office and enhanced its emotional impact.¹⁰⁰ The site for the grave was marked with a cross, and the grave was dug during the Requiem Mass. This concluded with a final absolution of the corpse, and the procession reformed to carry the bier to the grave. Here the body was given one last blessing with holy water before being lowered into the grave. As well as earth, charcoal, ash, lime, or chalk could be placed in the coffin or around the body. Plants were sometimes added, particularly evergreens, symbols of the Resurrection, and hyssop, a token of repentance.¹⁰¹ The Welsh poetry frequently refers to bodies being placed on or covered with *gro*, gravel or small stones, possibly as a form of 'clean' earth. Phrases like *gro a phridd* (gravel and soil) in Iolo Goch's marwnad for Tudur Fychan clearly suggest that *gro* is something different from *pridd* (soil).¹⁰²

7 Grief and Mourning

The Office of the Dead, the Requiem Mass and the funeral liturgy were geared mainly to benefiting the soul of the deceased, but they were also to help the living to grieve. There is a sense in which rituals of remembering are also rituals of forgetting, allowing those who are left to move towards acceptance of their loss.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, the emotional arousal of the liturgy was an important

99 *English Gilds*, eds Smith and Smith, 176.

100 On music in the Office of the Dead, see Schell, "Office of the Dead in England," 167–88.

101 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, 120–5, 180.

102 Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 111–4. The *University of Wales Dictionary* gives "the earth as the resting-place of the dead" as one variant meaning of *gro* but this is arguably a misreading, based on its appearance in the commemorative poetry.

103 Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 5–6.

part of the consolidation of memory.¹⁰⁴ The early Christian church discouraged excessive grief as implying lack of faith in the Resurrection but acknowledged that grief could be caused by separation.¹⁰⁵ Philippe Ariès's argument that the expression of grief at a medieval funeral was ritualised and conventional has been challenged by more recent research.¹⁰⁶ Some 13th-century tombs had representations of extremes of deathbed and funeral mourning, though there was debate over the appropriateness of this.¹⁰⁷ In 14th-century Italy, Coluccio Salutati advocated less ostentatious display and a more dignified and meditative form of grieving.¹⁰⁸ However, *marwnadau*, commemorative Welsh poetry from the 14th and 15th centuries, typically include statements of extreme and even extravagant grief at the loss to family and wider society: "dros dayar weiddi" (weeping across all the earth), "gwaed a wyl beirdd gwedy ef" (the poets weeping tears of blood for him), "trist wylofain" (sad lament), "côr ag uban ... cri 'mhob llan" (a choir of wailing ... crying in every church).¹⁰⁹ The 15th-century poet Guto'r Glyn was particularly fond of likening tears of mourning to Noah's flood. In his elegy for Hywel ab Owain of Llanbryn-mair, he exclaimed:

Am ei hoedl y mae hedliff,
A môr llawn yma'r â'r llif.
Dŵr Noe oedd daear a naint
I'm hwyneb am ei henaint.

¹⁰⁴ Del Alamo and Pendergast, (eds), *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ For a summary, see Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo, "Lament for a Lost Queen: The Sarcophagus of Doña Blanca in Náhera," *The Art Bulletin* 78/2 (1996), 31–33, reprinted in Del Alamo and Pendergast, *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, 43–80.

¹⁰⁶ Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death: from the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: 1974); Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (London: 1981). For more recent perspectives see, for example, the articles in "Medieval and Early Modern Responses to Death and Dying," special number of *Parergon* 31/2 (2014), Rebecca F. McNamara and Una McLivenna, "Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying," 1–10; Naama Cohen-Hanegbi, "Mourning under Medical Care: A Study of a *consilium* by Bartolomeo Montagnana," 35–54; Alicia Marchant, "Narratives of Death and Emotional Affect in Late Medieval Chronicles," 81–98. For the general context of the history of emotions see, e.g., C. Stephen Jaeger (ed.), *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter / Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages* (Berlin: 2003); Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras, "Monumenta et memoriae: The 13th-century Episcopal Pantheon of León Cathedral," in *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, eds. Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo and Carol Stamatis Pendergast (Farnham: 2000), 269–99, esp. 270–1.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen-Hanegbi, "Mourning under Medical Care," 42–3.

¹⁰⁹ Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 153–8.

There is an overrunning flood of tears because of his life, and the flood is becoming a whole sea here. The waters of Noah, covering earth and valleys, were over my face because of his old age.¹¹⁰

Like the French *plainte funèbre*, these *marwnadau* are often formulaic, but the formulae testify to a sense of what is appropriate and even expected.¹¹¹

The Welsh poets are also one of our best sources for grief at the deaths of children. Here again, Ariès's pioneering work has been modified by more recent research. Ariès went so far as to suggest that the death of a young child was treated as we would now treat the death of a pet, the body being "buried almost anywhere".¹¹² This has been challenged, notably by Shulamith Shahar and, specifically for England, Nicholas Orme; by Erika Langmuir with reference to visual imagery and by Sophie Oosterwijk and Sally Badham in the specific context of tomb carvings and other memorials.¹¹³ In Wales, later medieval poetry certainly suggests deep grief for the loss of very young children. Several poets wrote of their grief at the deaths of their own children, and there are also references to mourning for the children of patrons.¹¹⁴ Gwilym ap Sefnyn (fl. ca. 1440) compared his sorrow to that of Adam on being expelled from Eden, and wrote movingly about his dead children:

Llawen oeddwn, gwn ganlllys,
wrth feithrin Rhobin a Rhys ...

110 <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem-selection=040> (last accessed 3/2/2019); Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 162–5.

111 On the French funeral lament, Claude Thiry, *La plainte funèbre* (Turnhout: 1978).

112 Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. R. Baldick (Harmondsworth: 1979), 37.

113 For an overview of the debate, see Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berlin and New York: 2005), especially the introductory chapter, "Philippe Ariès and the Consequences: History of Childhood, Family Relations and Personal Emotions: Where do we stand today". See also Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: 1990); Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven, CT: 2001); Erika Langmuir, *Imagining Childhood* (New Haven, CT: 2006); Sophie Oosterwijk, "Chrisoms, Shrouds and Infants on English Tomb Monuments: A Question of Terminology?" *Church Monuments* 15 (2000), 44–64; Sophie Oosterwijk, "A swith feire grave: The Appearance of Children on Medieval Tomb Monuments," in *Family and Dynasty in Late Medieval England*, eds R. Eales and S. Tyas, Proceedings of the 1997 Harlaxton Symposium (Donington: 2003), 172–92; Sophie Oosterwick, "Madonnas, Mothers, Mites and the Macabre," *Church Monuments* 18 (2003), 10–22. Sally Badham, *Seeking Salvation: Commemorating the Dead in the Late-Medieval English Parish* (Donington: 2015), esp. 83.

114 D.R. Johnston (ed. and transl.), *Galar y Beirdd: Marwnadau Plant/Poets' Grief: Medieval Welsh Elegies for Children* (Cardiff: 1993); Hale, "Death and Commemoration," 180–95.

Bu – och fi nad byw iach fail –
 Sioned, hi a'm cusanai

I took delight, I who know a hundred courts, in nursing Robin and Rhys
 ... There was – oh if only she were alive and well! – Sioned, she used
 to kiss me.¹¹⁵

8 After the Burial

After the grief of the funeral, the funeral feast can be seen as a rite of reincorporation, or as the next stage in the social construction of the dead body. These occasions could be lavish. The funeral feast of Bishop Mitford of Salisbury in 1407 involved feeding 1,450 members of his household and guests. Twenty-nine cooks worked for three days; 30 spits and 4,002 platters and dishes had to be hired.¹¹⁶ On a much smaller scale, guilds could contribute to the simple food after a member's funeral. In 1442–3, the guild of Holy Cross at Stratford-upon-Avon supported one Matilda during her final illness and provided 4d. worth of bread and ale for her funeral and a further 1d. worth of ale afterwards.¹¹⁷ It was probably at the funeral feast that many of the Welsh commemorative poems were first performed, making them part of the ritual of remembrance. The sometimes rather formulaic expression of the poems suggests they were composed in some haste, but the conventional language is part of the process of acceptance and reconciliation.

St Augustine had encouraged the conversion of the funeral feast towards charity for the poor, and feeding the poor was by the end of the first millennium an important part of the commemoration of the dead.¹¹⁸ Wills from the late medieval period often include doles of food to the poor, explicitly or implicitly in return for their prayers and attendance at the funeral. However, this did not necessarily mean they were invited to the feast. Some tomb carvings show funeral and anniversary feasts specifically for the poor.¹¹⁹ When Hugh Johns, a wealthy Welsh brewer living in Bristol, made his will in 1505, he left 2d each to 24 poor men holding torches at his funeral *cum prandio competenti*, “with a decent meal”, but the implication is that they would be fed separately

¹¹⁵ Hale, “Death and Commemoration,” 188–9, 336–9.

¹¹⁶ Christopher M. Woolgar, *The Culture of Food in England, 1200–1500* (New Haven, CT: 2016), 198–9.

¹¹⁷ Woolgar, *Culture of Food in England*, 125.

¹¹⁸ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 26–7, 136–7.

¹¹⁹ Ameijeiras, “*Monumenta et memoriae*,” 272–3.

from his family and friends.¹²⁰ As with so many other aspects of late medieval charity, there was an increasing tendency by the end of the 15th century to concentrate on neighbours and fellow parishioners.¹²¹ Food was used to create community, but the scope of that community was limited. The prayers of those who knew the dead person were perhaps becoming more valued than the prayers of casual recipients of charity.

Meanwhile, the physical body still had a journey to make: decomposition, skeletonization, relocation to a more honourable burial place, to a shrine, or to the parish charnel house. The trajectory of the socially constructed body was even more complex. For some, there were rituals of commemoration, from monuments and masses to entry on the parish bede roll. For others, there were rituals of degradation: exposure, dismemberment, hanging in chains. Even the most extreme degradation, death by burning, left bone fragments which could be collected for veneration or further punishment. In death as in life, the social identity of the body was both constructed and complex.

120 TNA Prob/11/14 f. 286.

121 Woolgar, *Culture of Food in England*, 229–31.

“Do This in Remembrance of Me”: Offerings, Identity, and Bills in the Medieval English Royal Funeral

Anna M. Duch

The English royal funeral during the Middle Ages was a highly stage-managed event. From at least the 14th century onward, the royal house had to follow a carefully choreographed series of instructions, set forth in books such as the *Liber Regalis* and the *Liber Regie Capelle*. Every moment – the embalming of the body, the religious ceremonies, and the burial – had the objective of conveying the status of the deceased to the funeral's viewers. Yet, at the same time, the king was still a Christian in need of burial and a soul in need of care. This was not forgotten during the conspicuous consumption that inevitably transpired as part of the royal funerary and burial ceremonies. As astutely observed by Ralph Giesey regarding the royal exequies in Renaissance France,

all the superstructure of the symbolic attachment of sovereignty to the corpse [...] was appended to the essentially religious rites. “Appended” is the proper word for there was never any real fusion of the secular and religious elements.¹

The medieval funeral mass for a king or queen in England never became “The King’s Funeral Mass” or “The Queen’s Funeral Mass.” The same basic religious rituals were performed, although this was obscured by the luxury and drama that played out over the course of the weeks and months following a monarch’s death.

This chapter will examine the English royal funeral during the late Middle Ages, as a case study to illustrate the general features of death and disposal in chapters 2 and 3 of this volume. The focus will be on royal expenditure to secure the status and reputation of the monarch, as well as to pay the necessary fees to the churches; the method and delivery of payment was integrated into the pageantry of the royal funeral. The funerals of kings will be contrasted

¹ Ralph Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva: 1960), 29.

with the most basic requirements of a commoner's Christian funeral, with particular reference to activity requested by those who made wills in late medieval York. The comparison will serve as a reminder that medieval people had shared, universal anxieties about death, regardless of their station in life. Even kings cowered in the face of death and its uncertainties, though they had thousands of pounds of wax burning for their souls compared to the poor, who hoped to render up enough for a candle. Discussion of kings with irregular funerals due to abdication or deposition will be minimal. This discussion will not extend to the tombs of kings but instead focus on ritual activity and its costs.²

Within the literature surrounding the English royal funeral during the medieval period, more emphasis is placed upon the statements of status and power conveyed by the ceremonies, than the actual costs and mechanics of executing such a high-profile event. Even in the essays in this volume, with minor exceptions, the price paid for exequies and later commemorative activity is not mentioned. Although contemporary financial records have been published, they are rarely complete and typically do not explicitly state what certain objects were used for in relation to the funeral.³ Information collected by antiquarians, such as W.H. St. John Hope, also tends to lack a clear understanding of function; objects are fetishized and extensively discussed without determination as to what they actually were used for during the course of the royal funeral. Stating an object was purchased for a funeral does not inform the historian as to how it was used. Works such as "The Exequies of Edward III and the Royal Funeral Ceremony in Late Medieval England" by Chris Given-Wilson have been more successful in connecting the pageantry with the money spent to achieve it, but this area remains in need of further development.⁴

Patronage of churches and the close relationships between testators and their local religious have been examined in previous studies. Samuel Cohn, Jr., in an examination of Italian Renaissance material culture, has examined the wills of testators who lived outside of the major cities, who were not necessarily rich, and who had varying concerns regarding people and their possessions. This included what they left to their burial churches and other financial

2 For work on post-Reformation wills, see Lorraine C. Attreed, "Preparation for Death in Sixteenth-Century Northern England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13/3(1982), 37–66.

3 Frederick Devon (ed.), *Issues of the Exchequer, Being a Collection of Payments Made Out of His Majesty's Revenue, from King Henry III to King Henry VI, inclusive* (London: 1837) can be a useful source, but it is incomplete, has inaccuracies within the transcriptions, and has issues with accurate dates.

4 Chris Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward," *EHR* 124/507 (2009), 259–82.

matters, what Cohn describes as “pious and non-pious bequests.”⁵ Christian Steer’s recent work on the Grey Friars in London and its non-elite patrons has brought an additional dimension to a church that has been mostly discussed in the context of its queenly benefactors, Margaret of France (d. 1318) and Isabella of France (d. 1358).⁶ However, most academic studies do not place the mortuary, exequies, and anniversary of a monarch into the same religious and social context as that of a commoner; there is a segregation by class, as if the rites celebrated in the chapel of the monarch were completely different creatures from those celebrated by the fishmonger or wool carder. In this chapter, royal funerals will be analysed and set within the wider soteriological concerns shared by all late medieval Christians.

1 Preparing the Body

The expectations for an English royal funeral by the mid-15th century are most clearly conveyed in the *Liber Regie Capelle*, the governing book for the Chapel Royal, the clergy and choristers who were in direct service to the king of England and often travelled with him.⁷ An extant copy of this book, created ca.1448–9, resides in the archive at Evora, Portugal.⁸ The *Liber Regie Capelle* was not innovative in its own time. Rather, it was an accumulation of practices at royal ceremonies which had already been implemented and performed, as evidenced by monastic accounts, chronicle narratives, and financial records. The *Liber Regie Capelle* includes a transcription of a much older text, titled “De Exequiis Regalibus,” which describes the embalming and dressing of the king

5 Samuel Cohn, Jr., “Renaissance Attachment to Things: Material Culture in Last Wills and Testaments,” *The Economic History Review* 65/3 (2012), 984–1004.

6 Christian Steer, “Souls of Benefactors at Grey Friars Church, London,” in *Medieval Londoners: Essays to Mark the Eightieth Birthday of Caroline M. Barron*, eds Christian Steer and Elizabeth New (London: 2019), 297–322; W.M. Ormrod, “Queenship, Death, and Agency: The Commemorations of Isabella of France and Philippa of Hainault,” in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2008 Harlaxton Symposium*, eds Caroline M. Barron and Clive Burgess (Donington: 2010), 87–103; Michael Robson, “Queen Isabella (c.1295/1358) and the Greyfriars: An Example of Royal Patronage Based on Her Accounts for 1357/1358,” *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007), 325–48; Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, *The Grey Friars of London: Their History with the Register of Their Convent and an Appendix of Documents* (Aberdeen: 1915).

7 Walter Ullman (ed.), *Liber Regie Capelle*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 92 (London: 2010 [1959]), 111–5.

8 Bibliotheca Publica e Arquivo Distrital, Evora (Portugal) MS CV/1-36, formerly MS 36.

in a manner befitting his station.⁹ The *Liber Regie Capelle* then establishes the appearances and activities that would have been seen during the royal funeral. These exequies were often lengthy, justifying the need to embalm the body.

After a person's death, their body was prepared for burial. For a common person, this typically was limited to being wrapped in a shroud; clothing was costly and did not always go to the grave with the deceased.¹⁰ The bodies were typically not laid out for display and were interred within days of death. According to French royal physician Henri de Mondeville in his *Cyrurgia*, embalming a common person was "not useful or necessary, and it pays nothing."¹¹

For those higher in society, what could be done for them depended upon what they could pay and the objective of preservation: to retain a human appearance or to take the remains to a distant place for burial.¹² In England, all post-Conquest monarchs were interred with an intact external appearance, so that they could be viewed post-mortem in their regalia prior to being coffined.¹³ For someone of rank or money, the bodily orifices were plugged with preservatives, and the body was rubbed with balms, spices, and herbs and

- 9 The "De Exequiis Regalibus" text appears in multiple manuscripts connected to Westminster Abbey, including (but not limited to) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C 425; London, Westminster Abbey, MS 37 *Litylinton Missal*; Westminster Abbey MS 38 *Liber Regalis*; and Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarra, MS 197. The text has been dated as early as the 13th century and as late as the third quarter of the 14th century; cf. John Wickham Legg (ed.), *Missale ad Usus Ecclesie Westmonasteriensis*, iii, Henry Bradshaw Society, 12 (Bury St. Edmunds: 1999 [1897]), ix; Percy Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation* (Oxford: 1937), 80; Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony*, 85; Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200–1400* (London: 1995), 196.
- 10 Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (Woodbridge: 1998), 38–9.
- 11 Henri de Mondeville, *Chirurgie de Maître Henri de Mondeville*, trans. and ed. E. Nicaise (Paris: 1893), 569–70.
- 12 Madeleine Gray, in chapter 4 above, refers to the embalming style used for the transport of bodies, which often destroyed any human-like appearance for the sake of getting the remains where they were needed to go. English embalming was highly effective by the beginning of the 14th century, as evidenced by the good condition of Edward I's body; see below. John (d. 1216) was also reported to be very well preserved at his tomb's opening in 1529; see J.H.P. Pafford, "King John's Tomb in Worcester Cathedral: An Account of Its Opening in 1529 by John Bale," *Transactions of the Worcester Archaeological Society* 35 (1958), 58–60. Nuance is needed here, as different methods of embalming were employed for different priorities among the royal houses.
- 13 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 112. Giesey proposes that Henry II of England (d. 1189) was the originator of this custom; Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony*, 21. This author wonders whether this was just the first successful effort; Henry I (d. 1135) may have attempted to be presented but decayed prior to his arrival at his foundation at Reading; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum* (Oxford: 1996), 702–3.

then wrapped tightly in a shroud. If there was concern about the body's longevity post mortem, the bowels could be evacuated.¹⁴ For esteemed persons whose faces were to be exposed and bodies on display for four days or more, Mondeville prescribed that a balm should be applied to the face.¹⁵ The last, most involved measure to keep a noble body for more than four days was to eviscerate it, removing the internal organs and replacing them with fragrant herbs and salt. Optionally, the extracted organs could be stored and buried separately, which was only occasionally done in England after 1299; although embalming still happened, the extracted body parts were not given a separate funeral as they were in France, a practice that continued until the French Revolution.¹⁶ For an elite person, embalming was a necessary part of their exequies, since their body would be out of its grave for an extended period to permit a procession appropriate to their rank as well as the votive activity that came with it. In contrast with English custom, most other European royal and noble houses could tolerate division of the royal body, even to the point where nothing could be visually presented.¹⁷

Embalming within itself could also be interpreted as a sign of status and money. Any attempt at preserving a body was a temporary measure; inevitably, decay would set in, but someone of means could afford to try to maintain the integrity of the body long enough to have elaborate exequies. In 1377, £21 was spent solely upon the embalming of Edward III, who had died on 21 June 1377 and was interred at Westminster Abbey on 5 July 1377.¹⁸ This space between death and burial was not uncommon for medieval English kings of the 14th

14 Mondeville, *Chirurgie*, 569–70. Mondeville's text crossed the Channel no later than the late 1300s, as an English surgeon translated it into Middle English; see London, Wellcome Library, MS 564.

15 Mondeville, *Chirurgie*, 572. Mondeville stated that he attempted to use it on two French kings with little to no benefit. He was likely referring to Philippe IV in 1314 and Louis X in 1316.

16 Mondeville, *Chirurgie*, 572–3. Boniface VIII issued the papal bull *De Sepulturis* in 1299. In it, he explicitly banned the *abusum destatande feritatis* (the detestable abuse of savagery) of *mos teutonicos*, a form of excarnation. Whether this was meant to condemn the specific practice or all forms of post-mortem division is debated to this day. For the text of the bull, see Georges Digard, Maurice Faucon and Antoine Thomas (eds), *Les Registres de Boniface VIII: Recueil Des Bulles de Ce Pape*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1885), 575–6.

17 E.A.R. Brown, "Philippe le Bel and the Remains of Saint Louis," *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* 95 (May-June 1980), 175–82, though Giesey, *Royal Funeral Ceremony*, 21, points out that this practice ceased among French monarchs by the late 1300s. Various examples can be found in G. Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. E. Palmai (New York: 2000).

18 TNA E 101/398/9, fo.24; see also Chris Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward III," 264.

and 15th centuries; Edward I died on 7 July 1307 and was interred at Westminster Abbey on 27 October 1307, and Edward II died on 21 September 1327 and was interred at Gloucester Abbey on 20 December 1327. This pattern continued through the reign of Henry V, who died on 31 August 1422 and was not buried at Westminster Abbey until 7 November 1422. Embalming was a required element of a royal funeral. Otherwise, the royal corpse would not endure the full range of masses, processions, and rites suitable for a king.

While a common person was often stripped of his clothing for the sake of the living and wrapped in a shroud, the king maintained his clothing in death as he did in life. According to "De Exequiis Regalibus," the late king wore an ankle-length tunic and a decorated pallium. He was to wear a crown over a shroud or coif on his head. In the case of Edward II and possibly others, the coif and other undergarments were from the king's coronation.¹⁹ His beard was arranged fittingly on his chest. The hands were to be wrapped with the individual fingers separated so that gold-fringed gloves could be placed upon them, along with a ring atop the right glove on the middle finger. The king was to hold a rod with a ball and cross in the right hand, a sceptre in the left, with the rod and sceptre both crossing the king's chest. The feet were shod in silk boots and sandals. A confirmed, nearly ideal example of this practice was discovered at the tomb opening of Edward I in 1774; those present could hardly find any deviation from the prescriptive text.²⁰ Also confirmed at Edward I's tomb opening was the fact he was embalmed; his skin had tanned rather than rotted, and his features remained distinguishable and recognizable. Edward I's body had been cared for appropriately and fittingly for his station at his death in 1307. This evidence also indicates that the activity described in "De Exequiis Regalibus" was seemingly well-practiced, given the success of Edward I's embalming, long before it was recorded.

2 The Procession: Navigating Purgatory and Society

The next step after preparing the body for burial was to escort it on a bier to its site of burial. For a common person, that was typically a short trip to the local parish church, and the deceased was accompanied by friends and family. If the deceased was a member of a guild or a fraternity, community members

19 TNA E 361/3, r. 8/16. King John was also coifed and crowned, Worcester Cathedral Additional MS 438 (old Additional MS 77B), f. 48B.

20 Joseph Ayloffe, "An Account of the Body of King Edward the First, As It Appeared on Opening His Tomb in the Year 1774," *Archaeologia* 3 (1775), 377–85.

would provide support for the deceased, both in terms of personal presence and financial or material aid.²¹ Should family, friends, or community be unable to provide, the parish church may have supplied the deceased with a herse and pall to drape over it for a small fee.²² A herse was a wooden superstructure that would hold a shrouded body or a coffin and potentially candles. This is different from our modern hearse, which only carries the body from place to place, like a bier or a catafalque. The medieval herse varied in size, based upon the status of the deceased, as did the number of candles it would hold. Social status was demonstrated through the height and size of the herse, along with how much decorated wax and wood was utilized.²³ If feasible, gifts would be given to the mourners who lined the streets during the procession. For those lower in society, pieces of clothing, food, fuel for fires, and other immediate needs were distributed, while those further up in society tended to give increasingly elaborate gowns and caps. Not only was this an expression of wealth, it was also a trade: new clothes for prayers. This established a link between the continued needs of the living and the need of prayers for the dead in the context of the doctrine of purgatory.

Since the early days of Christianity, unofficial and indirect references to an 'in-between' space for departed souls had existed in Christian texts, indicating that these souls were not yet in heaven but certainly not in hell.²⁴ As discussed in chapter 1 of this volume, the doctrine of purgatory was officially adopted in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons, establishing that souls passed through a time of purification or purgation prior to entering heaven. With the increasing observance of this doctrine, the deceased Christians became the direct beneficiaries of prayers, though such activity had previously existed. For example, upon attaining his majority in 1227, Henry III began to ask for prayers for the soul of his father John, a practice he continued until his death in 1272, two years before the Second Council of Lyons.²⁵ By the 14th century, the gifts given

21 See prior chapters in this volume by Stephen Bates and Madeleine Gray for further discussion on the involvement these groups. For specific examples from London, see Jessica Lutkin "The London Craft of Joiners, 1200–1550," *Medieval Prosopography* 26 (2005), 129–64; Doreen Leach, "The Turners of Medieval London," *Medieval Prosopography* 28 (2013), 105–36.

22 Rosemary Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer, and Plague: 1150–1380," in *Death in Medieval England: An Illustrated History*, eds Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: 1999), 102.

23 The only surviving image of a medieval herse comes from the 1532 mortuary roll of Bishop John Islip, held in the Westminster Abbey Muniments.

24 Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: 1986), though hotly debated, remains a key text.

25 The earliest example I have found of Henry III's personal agency in this matter is dated 17 March 1227, wherein he refers to the 100 *solidates* of land that had been assigned to the

at funerals were a tacit bargain for prayers, which would expedite this purification.²⁶ Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that the doctrine of purgatory acted as social control. Because purgation was an experience of suffering to be purified, prayers and good works would expedite the unpleasant experience, with the guarantee that such prayers would not be wasted; the soul was already destined for heaven.²⁷

The procession, herse, and prayers offered for a king were rooted in the same concerns, but they manifested at an entirely different level of expenditure. The *Liber Regie Capelle* continues the narrative of the king's funeral on procession.²⁸ Someone with high rank would likely have a large herse with many candles, and for kings, multiple herse were typical. Henry v had no fewer than eight herse set up for him during his procession in England, from Dover to Westminster Abbey, in 1422. It cost £300 12s 6d for the eight herse, with the one at Westminster more lavishly decorated and likely more expensive than the rest, as there was further discussion of compensation to Westminster Abbey for £53 6s 8d for the last herse as well as 200 torches.²⁹ Similarly, Edward III's final herse at Westminster Abbey in 1377 cost £59 16s 8d, while the immediately preceding herse at St. Paul's was £11.³⁰

Henry v's exequies of 1422 had a vast procession, with members from all levels of society clothed in black. Some of these people were given the mourning clothes as gifts in exchange for their prayers, including the poor who lined the streets of the English towns that Henry's body passed through.³¹ *Hall's Chronicle* offers that about 500 men of arms "all in black harness and their horses barded black" and 300 persons holding torches were positioned on each side of Henry's bier as it was taken from Dover to Westminster.³² The king of England was meant to be at the top of society, and that message was conveyed

abbot of Croxton, the office held by John's embalmer in 1216, "for the soul of King John." "Calendar of Fine Rolls of the Reign of Henry III," *Henry III Fine Rolls Project*, https://finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_025.html, #141 (last accessed 20 May 2020; TNA C 60/25 m. 8.)

26 Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 51.

27 Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body* (New York: 1995), 280–1.

28 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 113–4.

29 Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer*, 336.

30 W.H. St. John Hope, "The Funeral, Monument, and Chantry Chapel of King Henry the Fifth," *Archaeologia* 65 (1915), 129–86, on 131.

31 Friedrich W.D. Brie (ed.), *The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, vol. 2 (New York: 1971), 429–30; 493.

32 Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle, containing the History of England during the Reign of Henry the Fourth and the Succeeding Monarchs to the End of the Reign of Henry the Eighth*, (London: 1809), 114.

by the king's executors, through mustering people, dressing them (and their horses), and providing them with candles. Henry v also ensured that the poor would pray for him, even after his funeral. In the third version of his will, in 1421, Henry v ordered that within a year of his death, 30 paupers were to be provided with clothing and food in exchange for reciting the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin. He also requested that, every year, 24 paupers with 24 torches were to attend his anniversary hours and masses, receiving 5d for each. These men then were to receive £20 from the abbot.³³

Meanwhile, in his will of 1493, John Beseby, merchant of York, asked that 40 shillings of bread be distributed to paupers on his behalf. He left little Mald John-son his best two silver spoons. He wanted a priest to sing for his soul and for that of his father, his mother, Mr. Beverley to whom he was apprenticed, and all Christian souls. Every day for a year, while wearing his mass vestments, the priest should visit the grave and say *De Profundis* with the collect and then sprinkle holy water on the grave.³⁴ Beseby did not have thousands of mourners, nor did he have the money to feed and provide for 30 poor men or have a permanent anniversary. However, at his own social and economic level, he desired the same spiritual care that Henry v did.

Beseby also asked that four pounds of wax burn about his body. In medieval funerals, candles were key indicators to the social status of the dead person (more wax equated to more status), but they were also thought of as necessary to provide light for the deceased, as the living petitioned, "Rest eternal grant them, Lord, and light perpetual shine on them." Some English parishes would break the paschal candle into smaller portions to supply the poor dead with candles for their funeral.³⁵ John Chambelleyne, a York butcher, gave 12d for three torches to burn during his *dirige* and requiem mass in 1516.³⁶ For kings as well, candles were explicitly part of their commemoration. In his will, Edward III simply asked that he be buried at Westminster Abbey with his forebears with little ostentation. However, he did request that his tomb be well-lit.³⁷ In accordance with this will, 7511 pounds of wax was purchased to make torches, candles, and lamps,

33 Patrick Strong and Felicity Strong, "The Last Will and Codicils of Henry V," *EHR* 96/378 (1981), 91.

34 *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York*, vol. 4, Publications of the Surtees Society 53 (Durham: 1869), 86.

35 Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer, and Plague," 103.

36 Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 47.

37 John Nichols (ed.), *A Collection of All the Wills Now Known to Be Extant ...* (London: 1780), 60. For the legal difficulties of enacting this will, see Chris Given-Wilson, "Richard II and His Grandfather's Will," *EHR* 93/367 (1978), 320–37.

and assumedly to decorate the herse.³⁸ For Edward III's first anniversary, Richard II ordered candles to burn, along with other high-ranking commemorative activity; out of £29 6s 8d spent on the anniversary, £17 went toward candles and people and objects to hold the candles.³⁹ Chambelleyne's four torches may have been comparatively dimmer than Edward III's funeral or anniversary candles, but they served the same function and expressed the same concerns.

The 7511 pounds of wax used for Edward III's funeral was exponentially greater than the breaking of paschal candles for the poor, but even that was soon dwarfed by Richard II's expenditure on wax for the funeral of his wife, Anne of Bohemia, in 1394. An indenture for wax for Anne's funeral shows that approximately 14,800 pounds of wax were to be divided among four locations that her procession would pass through from Sheen: Wandsworth received 1570 pounds of wax, St. Mary Overie 1450 pounds of wax, St. Paul's 4330 pounds of wax, and Westminster Abbey 7440 pounds of wax.⁴⁰ After subtracting the necessary tapers, torches, work lights, wax that was wasted during the course of construction, there was about 10,100 pounds of wax that was to be utilized in the construction and decoration of the herse, including devotional images and tabernacles. Based upon the language used, a herse was to be as architecturally complicated as the larger church structures, although temporary in construction.⁴¹ To create a building of wax – something impermanent – was a massive show of wealth, yet the more than 4500 pounds of wax for candles also reflected the religious concerns of the living for the dead.

Ultimately, Anne of Bohemia's Westminster herse and its wax was purchased back from the abbey for £66 13s 14d by the royal house.⁴² The gift of the herse or the money it had been worth acted as partial payment for the exequies or, had those expenses already been paid, as a votive gift to garner prayers for the deceased. Had the abbey kept it, the wax and wood from the herse would have been used for other purposes or sold to another purchaser for the upkeep of the abbey church and its fabric. Compared to its initial cost, £66 13s 14d is somewhat of a lacklustre return; the indenture indicates a sum of £690 15s 7d was paid out in the course of collecting the wax and supplying Roger Elys, wax chaundler, with it, and the abbey's herse took up about half of the 14,800 pounds of wax.⁴³ Frederick Devon makes mention of one of the purchases of

38 TNA E 101/398/9, f. 24; Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward III," 268.

39 *Issues of the Exchequer*, 211.

40 TNA E 101/403/4.

41 Robert Willis, *Architectural Nomenclature of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 1846) 74–7.

42 Hope, "The Funeral, Monument, and Chantry Chapel," 143.

43 Richard Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, 1B (London: 1786), 170.

1500 pounds of wax in *Issues of the Exchequer*, but this is only a portion of the total expenditure for this funeral.⁴⁴ A later entry indicates Richard II was still paying off his debt to Elys's executors in 1397, as a payment of £41 8s 10d was rendered on 7 November.⁴⁵ However, the lack of value of the herse after the funeral is partly the point: this is meant to be conspicuous consumption, excess beyond anything else to show that the English royal house – especially the king, Richard II – had the greatest means and could spend the most at the top of society.

Along with the gifts given to mourners and the candles within the churches, votive activity was a part of the procession. Performed at each location where the body was taken, the Office of the Dead was composed of the liturgical hours of vespers, matins or vigil, and lauds. Vespers and matins had set times, dusk and midnight, respectively. Lauds had variation in timing. In monastic communities, lauds was said separately, a short while after matins.⁴⁶ However, in the case of funerals, matins and lauds were always held consecutively, whether the location was secular or monastic, thus the habit of chroniclers referring to them as one service, *Dirige*. The *Liber Regie Capelle* describes matins in some detail. Matins for a king or royal person required nine lessons or readings, taken from the book of Job. Normally, a cycle of matins is performed with three lessons per day over the course of three days, with a day's break before starting the next cycle. For someone of status, nine lessons were done in a day. For a king, the bishops would read the first eight lessons, and the archbishop would read the last lesson.⁴⁷ An archbishop or someone of high station was required by the *Liber Regie Capelle* to preside over the royal exequies.

The *Liber Regie Capelle* states that a king was to receive the Office of the Dead and three votive masses (of the Blessed Virgin, of the Trinity, and Requiem) at each location where he was taken in procession. This reflected the king's status and his capacity for conspicuous consumption; only a man of a certain level of power and money could afford all of this. Not having at least single mass of requiem for the deceased was offensive; all Christians needed that, even a pauper. A king not having enough hours and masses was socially disturbing, as the king's status was perceived to be undermined.⁴⁸

44 *Issues of the Exchequer*, 256.

45 *Issues of the Exchequer*, 265.

46 John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: 1991), 74.

47 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 113.

48 Disruptive royal funerals, such as those of Henry VI and Richard III, are more extensively discussed in Anna M. Duch, "‘King by Fact, Not By Law’: Legitimacy and Exequies in Medieval England," in *Dynastic Change: Legitimacy and Gender in Medieval and Early*

After the Office of the Dead and before the three votive masses, it is suggested by *Liber Regie Capelle* that there was a communion service, as the archbishop administered the eucharist and wine to those present of a certain station.⁴⁹ This is a notable deviation from common custom at the time, as communion of both kinds was not available to the laity. At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, a lay person was to receive communion at least once a year at Easter. This may have been laid down to avoid any risk of sacrilege, whether by taking the host from the church with bad intent or even simply spilling the wine, the blood of Christ.⁵⁰ At the Council of Lambeth in 1281, it was deemed that only priests should take both kinds of communion, while the laity would only have the host.⁵¹ Exceptions seem to have been made for anointed monarchs, particularly at their coronation, and by papal bull.⁵² A possible explanation for the communion service at the English royal funeral may be found in their marital connections to the French royal house.

During the 14th century, the French monarchy actively sought to attain large numbers of papal bulls and indulgences to extend royal privileges and, arguably, to further establish the sacerdotal character of a familial line that had produced Louis IX.⁵³ This included, but was not limited to, choosing their own confessors, being able to divide their body parts into multiple burial sites to solicit prayers, and being able to receive communion in both kinds. In a series of indulgences issued on 20 April 1351, Pope Clement VI extended these privileges to Jean II, his family, and all relatives perpetually and without limit.⁵⁴ This would potentially include Jean II's distant cousin, Edward III, but it more likely

Modern Europe, eds Ana Maria Rodrigues, Manuela Santos Silva, and Jonathan Spangler (New York: 2019), 170–86.

49 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 113, states "Post exequias autem unum et species ministrantur archiepiscopo et ceteris iuxta status suos."

50 Lee Palmer Wandel, *Eucharist in the Reformation* (Cambridge: 2006), 32–3. See also Ian A. McFarland, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: 2011), 170–2 for a general overview of the history of eucharistic practice.

51 J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 24 (Venice: 1780), 405.

52 Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Monarchy and Miracles in France and England*, trans. J.E. Anderson (New York: 1989 [1961]), 119–20; n. 42 on 340–1 extensively documents the dispensations for the French monarchy.

53 The concept of *beata stirps* and its political uses is discussed in Anna M. Duch, "Chasing St. Louis: The English Monarchy's Pursuit of Sainthood," in *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, eds Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Russell E. Martin, and Zita Eva Rohr (New York: 2019), 330–51.

54 Adolphe Tardif (ed.), *Privileges Accordés à la Couronne de France par le Saint-Siège* (Paris: 1855), 223–61. Marc Bloch indicates the privilege stems from indulgences issued in 1344 to Philippe VI, but the 1351 indulgences extend the privilege to all relatives perpetually and without limit.

included his first cousin, Philippa of Hainault, Edward's wife. Edward III and Philippa were the great-grandparents of Henry V, who had married Katherine of Valois, Jean II's great-granddaughter. Ultimately, at the time of the *Liber Regie Capelle's* composition in the late 1440s, there was no theological obstacle to the English royal family receiving communion in both kinds alongside the priests, bishops, and archbishops.

Thereafter, vigil was kept in the church throughout the night, which likely involved the guarding of the body as well as prayer. On the morrow, the three masses were celebrated for the soul of the deceased: the mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mass of the Trinity, and the mass of requiem. The first two masses were always votive masses, meaning that they were offered as a gift or token to the Blessed Virgin and the Trinity. Typically, a reciprocal gift from these entities was expected; in the context of a recent death, the gift may be intercession or aid in expediting the soul's stay in purgatory. The requiem mass, in the case of the procession or on anniversaries, was votive in nature as well, but at the funeral, it was the final mass that preceded burial and had accompanying special prayers at the end.

3 Paying the Bills

Votive masses were not essential to the actual rite of burial. Regardless of station, all Christians needed a requiem mass, and this did not require a payment to a priest. However, there was a certain social expectation that to receive, one should give. The mortuary fee was "technically not a fee at all but a voluntary gift of the testator for forgotten tithes."⁵⁵ This was essentially a catch-all measure to ensure the person was in good standing with their burial church at death. The mortuary fee could have been met with the deceased's best possession, if that had not been already been sold to pay off debt, as was commonly requested in wills. Miles Metcalf of York willed his best gown to the parson of his parish church "in the name of my mortuary." He requested also that a priest sing for his soul for two years in exchange for 14 marks in his parish church.⁵⁶

At each mass during the royal funeral, an offering of gold cloth was to be made: 16 for the first mass (the Blessed Virgin Mary), 24 for the second mass (Trinity), and 30 for the final mass (Requiem).⁵⁷ This offering occurred along the procession route as well, but the most cloth was to be given at the final

55 Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 54.

56 *Testamenta Eboracensia*, IV, 9.

57 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 113.

three masses at the burial site. Lords of the blood were expected to make offerings of gold cloth as befitting their station, and they did so at Henry v's funeral.⁵⁸ The cloths of gold were a reflection of the status of the king and those offering them up, not to mention they were highly portable. On the back of the sacrist's roll at Westminster Abbey, Roger Cretton recorded the income received from Henry v's funeral in 1422.⁵⁹ This was not just money, but the objects the Abbey received as part of the funeral including the cloths of gold and the other gifts made. Although Edward III and Henry VII also had funerals at Westminster Abbey, similar information has not been found. However, this information survives for Katherine of Valois's funeral in 1437, similarly on the back of the sacrist's roll.⁶⁰

In total, Westminster Abbey received 222 cloths of gold from mourners during the exequies of Henry v in November 1422.⁶¹ The two largest offerings came from the absent eleven-month old Henry VI: 13 cloths of gold at *Dirige* and 24 cloths at the requiem mass. Queen Katherine, widow of Henry v, offered nine cloths of gold at the *Dirige* and 16 cloths at requiem. Next came the dowager Queen Joan of Navarre, the widow of Henry IV, who offered 11 cloths at *Dirige* and 13 at the requiem but then purchased back her entire offering for £33 6s 8d to the abbey. Lord Bouchier purchased back his three cloths of gold as well (one from *Dirige*, two from requiem), while the Count of March bartered his offered 13 cloths of gold for a single gown of "cloth of gold of Damascus."⁶² The money went into Westminster Abbey's coffers, while the unredeemed clothes of gold remained useful for liturgical purposes or for re-sale.

In comparison, Westminster Abbey received 91 cloths of gold for dowager Queen Katherine when she died in 1437. The two largest offerings came from the King, Henry VI, with five for *Dirige* and seven for the requiem, and from dowager Queen Joan, four for *Dirige* and six for requiem.⁶³ Despite the fact that it appears Henry VI celebrated the anniversary of his maternal grandmother, Isabeau of Bavaria, dowager queen of France, at the same time, Cretton is very clear about what was offered for whom. Henry VI was the only one to offer

58 Thomas Walsingham, *The St. Albans Chronicle: The Chronica majora of Thomas Walsingham*, vol. 2, eds and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (Oxford: 2011), 779.

59 Westminster Abbey Muniments, London (WAM) 19664v.

60 WAM 19678v.

61 WAM 19664v.

62 WAM 19664v. The roll is transcribed in part in Hope, "The Funeral, Monument and Chantry Chapel," 139–44 and 186.

63 WAM 19678v.

cloths of gold for Isabeau, and just two at that. Twenty-six banners were offered for Katherine, and four for Isabeau.⁶⁴

The verse of Cretton's sacrist's roll also reveals goods that the Abbey had kept from the effigies of Henry v and Katherine of Valois. An effigy was typically a mannequin that represented the recently deceased monarch or consort, and it lay atop the coffin for all to see. Most English effigies were made of wood, but Henry v's effigy had been made of boiled leather in France.⁶⁵ The dead monarch was typically shown to the peers of the realm in private, but he was not shown to the public along the route of transport from the site of death to the site of burial. An exception to this was the brief transit of Henry III's body from Westminster Palace to Westminster Abbey in 1272, where he was displayed openly to the public. Most of his successors and their consorts were either simply confined or they had effigies on top of their coffins. The effigy was dressed in the finery that the person would have worn in life to convey high status.

What happened to the clothes, jewels, and crowns on the effigies varied. In the case of Edward II, the first monarch with a documented effigy in England, the Great Wardrobe issued two sets of clothing for Edward II's funeral in December 1327. One set of Edward II's clothes (mantle, tunic, dalmatic, belt hose, shoes, cap, and spurs) was returned to the Great Wardrobe, likely after having been placed on the effigy. The other set (tunic, shirt, cap, gloves, and coronation coif) did not, and this set likely went to the grave with Edward II.⁶⁶

In other cases, the items did not return to the Great Wardrobe. These items may have ended up at the burial church in part payment for the exequies. This is suggested by the sacrist's rolls from the funerals of Henry v and Katherine of Valois. From the effigy of Henry v, Westminster Abbey received a large mantle of purple velvet and a gown of the same fabric, ermine fur from another mantel, two minivers, a crown of silver and gilt with stones and pearls, a long silver

64 Amusingly, because of the Hundred Years' War and Henry's own status as disputed King of England and France, Isabeau could not be referred to as the Queen of France. She was instead referred to as the Duchess of Bavaria. That title was not her own, but the English royal house had to hedge between the king's claim on the crown of France and the need for the king's grandmother to be of adequate station; author's conversation with W.M. Ormrod.

65 Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas Johnes (London: 1840), 484–5. See also Anthony Harvey and Richard Mortimer (eds), *The Funerary Effigies of Westminster Abbey* (Woodbridge: 2003) for the broader tradition of effigies for members of the royal family and high-ranking nobility.

66 David Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London: 1996), 429–32. See also Seymour Phillips, *Edward II* (London: 2010), 553–4.

and gilt sceptre, a smaller silver and gilt sceptre with ball and cross, a ring with a precious stone, and two armbands of silver and gilt with pearls and stones.⁶⁷ In 1437, the abbey retained items from Katherine's effigy after her funeral, including a gilt crown, a gilt sceptre, two rings, and what may be two armbands, all silver.⁶⁸ Given that kings and queens were to be dressed in clothing befitting their station within their coffins, their effigies were dressed similarly to be viewed by the populace. This was another assertion of wealth and status, but permitting the burial church to retain these luxury items reflected the reality that somehow, all of this pomp had to be paid for and the royal house was not necessarily able to pay in currency.

4 The Slight of Hand: The Presentation of Achievements

It is at this point that we must rejoin the prescriptive text of the *Liber Regie Capelle* and its indirect description of how the royal funeral was paid for. Three different transactions occurred during the offering of arms, in a short period of time. The first was the payment to the church. The second was the presentation of banners, arms, and hatchments – the achievements that would be part of the king's permanent memorial in the church, used to decorate his tomb. The third was the bringing of the shield with which to perform a raising ceremony. The exact inclusion and order of these three events changed over time. The payment to the funerary church was an on-going process throughout the other two transactions; as the symbolic presentations were made, more material was funnelled into the vestry, stables, and coffer of Westminster Abbey.

According to the *Liber Regie Capelle*, a mounted horseman rode into each church at the end of its requiem mass. The horse was to have belonged to the deceased, and both the animal and the man were clothed in the arms and armour of the dead king.⁶⁹ At the steps of the high altar, the pair offered the banners most often used by the king – his personal arms, the banners of his personal saints, and his insignias *de guerre*. The rider and the horse would be stripped of their armour and trappings and depart the main church. The exequies would continue, but the activity at that particular church had just been paid for, although it was hidden among the ceremonies of the day.

The horse and its trappings and the rider's armour were worth money and were items that the church could resell. A documented example of this system

67 WAM 19664v.

68 WAM 19678v.

69 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 114.

comes from the reign of Edward III. In a letter close dated 14 February 1353, Edward III ordered an investigation to determine the exact disposition of the fine that was supposed to have been paid for the funeral of John of Eltham, his brother, who had died in 1336 on campaign in Scotland.⁷⁰ The fine was valued at £50 in lieu of the horse and armour offered on the day of John's funeral at Westminster Abbey, in part payment of £100 owed. The armour worn by the rider and the horse was part payment for the exequies.⁷¹ These items could have been kept by Westminster Abbey but instead were redeemed for money, just like the cloths of gold could be. The physical items were given as surety against the debt owed, and, in 1353, Edward III was attempting to determine whether that debt had been paid.

The easiest way to transport battle-ready plate and mail armour – which usually weighed about 50 pounds – was to have someone wear it. The easiest way to transport the wearer and a horse was for the said gentleman to ride the mount, possibly right into the church. For a king or someone of great status, this would be repeated multiple times. Great men of the realm often had multiple sets of armour and horses to offer. Between 1372 and 1374, the royal house purchased several sets of fine quality armours. One seems to have gone to Thomas of Woodstock, as he is affiliated with the following: a pair of plates with the arms of the Edward III and Thomas of Woodstock which cost £4 13s 8d, a pair of leg harnesses £10 5s, arm defences 40s with a pair of gauntlets to match at 26s 8d, and a bascinet 40s. This is a total of £20 5s 4d, and this does not include any mail that would have been worn under the plate.⁷² The inventory of Thomas's goods seized in 1397 shows that he owned a respectable amount of armour, totalling over £100 at a single residence.⁷³ If Thomas of Woodstock had had a normative funeral and burial, one or more sets of his armour would have been offered at his funeral to offset the cost of it.⁷⁴

70 *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1349–1354* (London: 1906), 527–8.

71 Christopher Daniell offers an excellent explanation and breakdown of the church's mortuary fees, which covered not only the liturgies, but the labours of the bell-ringers and gravediggers; Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 52–4.

72 Thom Richardson, "Armour in England 1325–99," *Journal of Medieval History* 37/3 (2011), 304–320, on 317. These figures are taken from TNA E 101/395/1 and TNA E 101/397/10.

73 Viscount Dillon and W.H. St. John Hope, "Inventory of the Goods and Chattels Belonging to Thomas, Duke of Gloucester and Seized in His Castle at Pleshy, Co. Essex, 21 Richard II (1397): With their values, as shown in the Escheator's Accounts," *The Archaeological Journal* 54 (1897), 275–308, on 307.

74 Thomas of Woodstock duke of Gloucester died under suspicious circumstances in 1397, accused of treason. He did not receive a funeral or burial typical of the station of duke or as son of a monarch.

Andrew Ayton notes that while the values of most horses fluctuated, the horses mentioned at Henry v's funeral, destriers, remained particularly expensive and desirable for men of status.⁷⁵ Most relevant to this argument, Richard II rode upon a destrier worth £200 at his coronation on 16 July 1377.⁷⁶ It would be reasonable to consider that, at Edward III's funeral on 5 July 1377, a horse of similar value was offered to offset the costs of his funeral and remind those present that he had been the king.

In his article on Edward III's exequies, Chris Given-Wilson compares the offering of arms at the funerals of Edward III in 1377 and Henry V in 1422, using Thomas Walsingham's description of Henry V's exequies in the *Historia Anglicana*:

[...] three destriers with their riders were led up to the high altar of Westminster as is customary (*ut moris est*), splendidly armed with the royal arms of England and France, and there the riders were stripped [of their arms]; and, once the arms had been completely removed, they were carried, together with banners of the arms of St. George, England, and France, and images of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary, in an unbroken line around the corpse.⁷⁷

Using this quotation, Given-Wilson questions what exactly Walsingham was trying to convey here: were presentations of arms at royal funerals customary (*ut moris est*) in 1422, despite the fact Edward III in 1377 was the only other king known to have had such a rite performed?⁷⁸ Given-Wilson also speculates as to whether there was just one ceremony or potentially two, due to a differences in an account from the London Brewers' Company:

At the requiem mass, there were offered up at the high altar of Westminster church four steeds, royally caparisoned, with a knight wholly and

75 Andrew Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy Under Edward III* (Woodbridge: 1994), 194–7.

76 Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, 37.

77 Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward III," 272, translating Thomas Walsingham, "Historia Anglicana, pt. 2," *Chronica Monasterii Sancti Albani*, vol. 1, ed. H.T. Riley, RS 28 (London: 1864), 346: "Adducti etiam fuerant ad majus altare Westmonasterii tres dextrarii cum eorum sessoribus ut moris est, armis Regis Anglaie et Franciae optime armatis et sessori inibi inde expoliati. Arma vero integer ablata cexilla insuper circa corpus defuncti ferebantur, arma Sancti Georgii, Angliae, et Franciae, ac imaginum Sanctae Trinitatis, Sanctae Mariae, continenter." See also Walsingham, *The St. Albans Chronicle*, II, 778–9.

78 Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward III," 274.

completely armed with the king's coat armour and a crown upon his head sitting royally upon one of the said steeds.⁷⁹

Ultimately, Walsingham's *ut moris est* can be interpreted differently. It may not necessarily be the ritual offering of arms or horses as a royal person or as a noble person that was the tradition, but rather, Walsingham recognized all of this stagecraft for what it actually was: giving the church its fee and making votive offerings for the sake of the soul of the deceased. In isolation, Walsingham's sentence states that at Henry V's funeral, the riders and horses were led to the high altar of Westminster Abbey, as was customary (*ut moris est*), wearing the arms of England and France, and they were stripped of those goods.⁸⁰ Now it was up to the royal house to redeem those items for money, if desired. The performance created a funeral appropriate to the station of the king, even though the true function of these ceremonies remained the same as would be found in the funeral of a commoner.

The second transaction was the presentation of the achievements, or the decorations intended for the king's tomb at the burial church. According to the *Liber Regie Capelle*, at the final requiem at the site of burial, the rider and the horse with the banners of the king arrived at the altar. He was then followed in by another soldier on horseback who arrived to offer the king's shield.⁸¹ Only the burial churches kept and displayed the achievements of the deceased king, so the rider with the shield only appeared at the final requiem.⁸² This also meant that the burial church received the most sets of armour and horses, as the *Liber Regie Capelle* mentions at least three riders to bear the banners, the shield, and other achievements, such as a sword or helm. The riders would then leave the intended achievements at the high altar, give up their armour, trappings, and horses, then exit. The presentations of arms and hatchments were a slight of hand; the actual offering to the church and payment for the funeral – the battle armour and horses – disappeared into the vestry or into the stable while attention remained on the “offered” decorated items surrounding the dead king.

79 Given-Wilson, “The Exequies of Edward III,” 272; quotation from *A Book of London English 1384–1425*, eds R.W. Chambers and M. Daunt (Oxford: 1931), 146.

80 Walsingham, “*Historia Anglicana*, pt. 2,” 346; Walsingham, *The St. Albans Chronicle*, II, 778–9.

81 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 115.

82 For the investigation of the achievements of Edward III at Westminster Abbey, see WAM 62481–62485; the sword and replica shield remain on display.

There was considerable disparity between the worth of the decorative achievements that remained visible and the actual battle-ready arms, armour, and horses that disappeared. The decorated equipment offered at the funerals Edward III, Henry V, and others who had similar rituals, such as Edward of Woodstock (the Black Prince), was not likely used by the original owner in the field of battle or at the tournament. In many cases, it was crafted specifically for the funeral.⁸³ It may have been deliberately created larger for display purposes, such as Edward III's seven-foot, eighteen-pound sword.⁸⁴ Since it did not need to face true battle, it could be made with lesser quality materials for a low price.⁸⁵ Henry V's funeral achievement helm is a great helm, a style that was used in battle prior to 1400; it was out of practical use by the time he started his military career.⁸⁶ Admittedly, the helm style was still popular for use at the tournament, but Henry V did not joust. In addition, the helm was not specially crafted for the funeral; the accounts for Henry's funeral only pay 33s 4d for the painting of the helm and crest, not for the actual crafting of it.⁸⁷ Henry's achievement helm was an old-fashioned helm with new, detailed coat of paint.

Likewise, because of the rise of plate armour in England during the 14th century, by 1353, there was little use for a heater shield in the field; this is the style of shield, a *scuta*, used in the surviving achievements of the Black Prince and Henry V.⁸⁸ The preferred functional shield styles by the third-quarter of the 14th century were the target (a small, hand-held round shield) and the pavise (a door-like shield that could be propped up on a battlefield).⁸⁹ The shield used in the funeral of Henry V likely had belonged to the household of Henry IV, as the arms of Navarre mark the interior. The style of both the helm and the shield offered at Henry V's funeral harkened back to earlier times of glory, such the prime of the military careers of Edward III and the Black Prince.⁹⁰ The use

83 For the Black Prince, see James Mann, *The Funeral Achievements of Edward the Black Prince* (London: 1951), 4.

84 Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward III," 275.

85 Mann expresses some of these ideas when examining the achievements of the Black Prince, *The Funeral Achievements*, 3–4, but these are more thoroughly discussed in Beard's analysis of Henry VI's helm; C.R. Beard, "The Tomb and Achievements of King Henry VI at Windsor," in *Fragmenta Armamentaria*, vol.2, pt. 1, ed. F.H.C. Day (Frome: 1936), 2–4. These were not battle-ready pieces of armour or weaponry; they would have shattered if actually struck. W.M. Ormrod calls the quality of Edward III's sword "surprisingly crude," in *Edward III* (New Haven: 2011), 580.

86 Claude Blair, *European Armour, circa 1066 to circa 1700* (London: 1978), 73.

87 Hope, "The Funeral, Monument, and Chantry Chapel of King Henry the Fifth," 136.

88 Richardson, "Armour in England," 319.

89 Richardson, "Armour in England," 320.

90 Blair, *European Armour*, 197.

of an older style helm and shield connected Henry V's accomplishments in France visually with the shield of his great-grandfather in Westminster and the achievements of his great-uncle in Canterbury.⁹¹

It is apparent that the painted achievements were not worth as much as the armour worn by the riders. The riders wore armour that could be worn in battle; it was serviceable and worthwhile for the family to redeem for usage again, or the church could find someone to sell it to. In contrast, the achievements were never expected to be used again. They were to be on display. Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs state that the offering of achievements was still a method of payment during this period.⁹² However, this misses a key point: the achievements were inalienable, as they were intended to be part of the permanent monument. The family was not going to buy them back, nor could the church resell them during the lifetime of the deceased's family. This was a mark of status, not charity or monetary riches.

The third transaction was the presentation of the shield to do the raising ceremony, which marked the ritual end of the king's reign. In a highly symbolic gesture, the shield and the arms of the second soldier were crossed, as if to say, *Consummatum est*.⁹³ In turn, then, a lord received that shield and inverted it as if to say *Vivit* (sic) *rex*, the king lives. This referred to not only the continued survival of the body politic or the office of the king, but also the transfer of the kingship to the new mortal body. The order of service in *Liber Regie Capelle* ends abruptly, stating that afterwards a solemn dinner was held for the guests. The actual burial service and prayers took place after the offering of the shield, though this is not explicitly stated by the text.

A royal funeral with all the elaborate ceremonies and offerings of arms and cloths of gold was an expensive venture, but that was, in part, the point; only someone of a certain status and wealth could pay for all of this. The use of armour and horses as payment at a funeral has a longer history than the ritualized display with which it is now affiliated. The activity progressed from the functional, necessary form of payment made in the 14th century to the splendid, formalized presentation of achievements found in the *Liber Regie Capelle*. On the back of the sacrist's roll for Henry V's funeral in 1422, the following was given to Westminster Abbey and meant for sale or redemption: four horses with their bridles, four saddles, one sword with all the affiliated armour for

91 The conference *Beyond Agincourt: The Funeral Achievements of Henry V*, held at Westminster Abbey on 28 October 2015, discussed this and other matters. It was indicated that the conference proceedings would be published at a future date.

92 Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, *Royal Funerals of the House of York* (London: 2005), 27.

93 *Liber Regie Capelle*, 115.

one man, five luxuriously decorated trappers (two of which the executors of the king purchased back), four great banners, 15 smaller banners, 39 pensyles (pennants?), a cloth of the Trinity, and 120 yards of fabric. Let us not forget also the effigy itself and the clothes it was dressed in for the procession, mentioned previously. Wood from the barriers that had been erected around the herse and eighty-three yards of black cloth from the herse were also given to the Abbey and apparently divided up among those who lived and worked there, with the remainder going to the poor.⁹⁴ All of this was potentially useful, wearable, and redeemable, if so desired by the royal house, or sellable for the Abbey. This was how a royal funeral was paid for.

Any excess could have gone toward the 20,000 or more masses mentioned in the wills of Henry v, the votive activity that would care for his soul. In the last will of Henry v, he requested three masses a day every day (and named which specific ones he wanted in the Use of Sarum, rather than the Use of Westminster), as well as yearly requiem masses. Henry v also requested upwards of 20,000 masses for his specific devotions and for the sake of his soul.⁹⁵ Within his will, Henry v declared that this would be paid for by the assignment of rents of at least £100 to Westminster Abbey. However, that was not the only way he attempted to provide for his soul. During his lifetime, Henry v elected to bind parties legally in organising anniversaries and chantries for his soul. Indentures for physical items, such as tombs, had been in use for centuries, but to create indentures for intangible items, such as prayers, was novel in the early 15th century. An example of such an agreement can be found between the king and the dean and chapter at Chichester, dated 12 August 1414.⁹⁶ This indenture included the grant of rents, fees, and services of Wilmington Priory; the fees to be paid to the chaplain; what moneys Henry would send for the upkeep of the building and others resident at the church in which the chantry was; which masses were to be said, as well as what days of the week these masses were to be said; if there was to be anyone else to be prayed for; and if the chaplain died, what qualifications Henry and his council would look for in a new candidate. This became common practice for his reign, and Henry VII later used this model extensively in the establishment of

94 WAM 19664v. This is also transcribed in Hope, "The Funeral, Monumental and Chantry Chapel," 140–2.

95 Strong and Strong, "The Last Will and Codicils of Henry V," 90–1. This will superseded another from 1415, in which he also asked for at least 20,000 masses; Thomas Rymer (ed.), *Foedera* (The Hague: 1745), IV, pt. 2, 138–9. In a second will, he dealt predominantly with matters of land; *A Collection of Wills*, 236–42.

96 *The Calendar of Close Rolls, 1413–1419* (London: 1913), 89–90.

elaborate anniversaries for himself, his wife Elizabeth of York, and his mother Margaret Beaufort.⁹⁷

Very few people below the rank of knight request any sort of marker for their grave, let alone a tomb with achievements or indentures with Westminster Abbey for perpetual anniversaries. The poor who benefited from distributed clothes and food would have the king's name in their mouths, and he would not be forgotten. However, even those of comparatively limited means wanted to their memory to linger. In his will of 1493, John Lepton requested that his bay horse be given as his mortuary fee and that he be buried in the new aisle near the altar of Saint Anne. The window closest to the altar was to be glazed with white glass by Lepton's executors; when the priests did their daily duties, they would recall Lepton.⁹⁸

5 Conclusions

In this chapter, the elaborate nature of the royal funeral in medieval England has been contrasted with the less opulent arrangements made by the people of York; they were knights, merchants, and other people of some means who made wills to address their concerns for this life and the next. Little Mald John-son received John Beseby's best spoons, just as Katherine of Valois received some of Henry V's best silver. There still remains a large section of the population outside the reach of most historical research, the nameless members of the crowd who watched the king's herse, impossibly tall and burning bright in procession. They also watched the priests bless graves, listened to *De Profundis* without knowing what it meant, and obediently waited for their chance to say prayers and psalms so that they could get a portion of bread or a cloak, if they were lucky. These people performed spiritual labour and received compensation in life for it, as they not only aided in the spiritual journey of the king's soul, but also his reputation and the maintenance of his status as king of England. Only a king could muster hundreds, thousands of people to sing for his soul, an intersection of financial and spiritual economy.

However, even with all the ceremony and pomp, all of the prayers purchased, and gifts given, anxiety over death and what happens thereafter is evident in the wills of kings. Edward III reflected on the nature of the transitory world in his will, while his grandson Richard II fretted over what might become of

97 For example, *The Calendar of Close Rolls, 1500–1509* (London: 1963), 138–57, is a seven-part indenture between Henry VII, Westminster Abbey, and other persons.

98 *Testamenta Eboracensia* IV, 130.

his body and his burial in his own final testament.⁹⁹ The elaborate indentures and the various wills and codicils of Henry v may have been an expression of his unsureness and worry. When the window-dressing and conspicuous consumption of the king's station is stripped away, he becomes a man who asks for prayers for his soul and those of his father and mother, asks his executors to care for his wife and heirs, and attempts to rectify any debts or wrongdoing in his life – and remains worried as to whether this would all come to pass. Despite all the spiritual comforts they could pay for, kings seemingly had no better sense of assurance than those who could never afford such grand exequies and commemoration. After all, once they were dead, they were no longer kings that could muster, pay, and command the living.

99 For Edward III, see *A Collection of All the Wills*, 59; for Richard II, see *A Collection of All the Wills*, 194.

The Reformation of Burial in the Protestant Churches

Gordon D. Raeburn

There was no single Reformation of death and burial. There was never simply a Protestant way of death. Different reformers had different beliefs on the subject, and ultimately this led to a range of practice across the European continent. This occurred not only within the Protestant churches, but in some regards the Catholic Church also reacted to the Reformation, and this too was reflected in certain aspects surrounding death and burial. Of course, the act of placing the corpse in the ground was not the only important aspect of a burial. Throughout Europe following the Reformation the act of burial continued to be viewed as a method by which the laity could be comforted, but also educated. As noted by Ruth Atherton, the attendance at a burial would often be much larger than a regular church service, and for many ministers this opportunity was one that should not be passed up.¹ In this chapter, some of the varieties of the Protestant way of death will be examined comparatively, but with particular reference to the Scottish Reformed tradition.

Many of the first Protestants had no true burial location, as these individuals were executed for their outspoken beliefs, and were largely burned at the stake, with their ashes dumped in the sea or other bodies of water, or otherwise left to scatter where they fell. Of course, this did not prevent the memorialisation of certain locations to serve as a focal point for the various strands of Reformation, some of which survive to this day. Indeed, following the martyrdom of Walter Myln in St Andrews, Scotland in 1558 John Knox claimed that:

In testification that they would his death should abide in recent memory, there was cast together a great heap of stones in the place where he was burnt. The Bishop and Priests, thereat offended, caused once or twice to remove the same, with denunciation of cursing, if any man should there

¹ Ruth Atherton, "The Pursuit of Power: Death, Dying and the Quest for Social Control in the Palatinate, 1547–1610," in *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation Europe*, eds Elizabeth C. Tingle and Jonathan Willis (London: 2016), 25–48, on 41.

lay any stone. In vain was that wind blown; for still was the heap made, till the Priests and Papists did steal away by night the stones to big (build) their walls, and to other their private uses.²

These executions, however, would not continue to serve their intended purpose, and throughout Europe Reformation sentiment solidified, aided by the gruesome public executions of those early converts. Following the execution of Patrick Hamilton in St Andrews in 1528 John Knox reported John Lindsay as having stated:

My Lord, yf ye burne any mo, except ye follow my counsall, ye will utter-ly destroy your selves. Yf ye will burne thame, lette thame be brunt in how [low] sellarris; for the reik of Maister Patrik Hammyltoun hes infected as many as it blew upoun.³

This led ultimately to the development of several Protestant denominations, necessitating a discussion of the subject of burial from these new Protestant perspectives. The significance of the fate of the remains of the early Protestant martyrs should not be ignored however, as it serves to highlight the importance of the disposal of a corpse for the community which identified with the deceased. As will repeatedly be argued below, the disposal of the dead is an important way for the living members of the community to cement their identities.⁴ During times of uncertainty and social change, such as the Reformation, these methods of disposal would become particularly significant, and as such the burial of the dead would frequently be very difficult to reform. Communities across Europe were reluctant to let these practices go.

There has been somewhat of a resurgence in the study of early modern death and burial in recent years, and with the advent of areas of study such as the history of emotions, fresh light has been shed upon older interpretations. This, however, does not change a fact noted elsewhere in this volume;

2 John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland*, ed. C.J. Guthrie (London: 1899), 155–156. Cf. J. Moffat Scott, *The Martyrs of Angus and Mearns; Sketches in the History of the Scottish Reformation* (Paisley: 1885), 263. Unfortunately, neither Knox nor Scott recall what happened to the ashes of Myln, merely that a cairn was built upon that spot. As Guthrie notes, a granite obelisk, erected in 1842, now stands on the site of the “heap of stones.” Cf. Knox, *The History of the Reformation*, 156, n. 1.

3 John Knox, *The Works of John Knox*, vol. 1, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: 1864; repr. New York: 1966), 42.

4 Gordon D. Raeburn, “Death and Dying,” in *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe, 1100–1700*, eds Andrew Lynch and Susan Broomhall (London and New York: 2019), 200–215, on 211.

that the majority of surviving material related to death and burial concerns the upper echelons of society. It is far harder to find material dealing with the actual practices of the common man and woman. We do, however, have a variety of sources at our disposal. Through liturgies, *ars moriendi*, and a wealth of printed sermons we can determine what the instructions were to the ideal forms of death and burial. Various sources, including mortality rolls, disciplinary records, and church session records can shed light upon the actualities of death and burial, sometimes in contrast to the ideals. Letters and diaries can offer glimpses at the emotions surrounding funerals and the loss of loved ones, and wills can show us the desires of those about to die. Drawn together, these various sources provide us with an image of the realities of death and burial in early modern Europe, and the changes wrought by the Reformation. These are the focus of this chapter.

1 Rewriting Burial in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe

As with other notions of the reform of the Catholic Church, the practices and rituals surrounding burial had been discussed and debated internally long before the early 1500s. The Catholic Church was not, after all, as monolithic as may otherwise have been believed. Yet there were some universal practices in relation to death, and it was these that provoked the reactions of the early reformers, in varying ways.

Interestingly, not all of the early strands of reform believed that all of the practices and rituals which surrounded death should be stripped away, and in certain cases some aspects of death culture were left intact. Some, however, advocated for a cleaner break from the older practices. Craig Koslofsky notes the horror felt by Lutherans upon the suggestion that their doctrines had somehow led to funerals with no procession, song, or sermon. He notes that from their very inception Lutheran congregations still held to the importance of honourable funeral rites.⁵ As such, while Luther dismissed the invocation of the fourteen Holy Helper saints as empty superstition, he continued to recommend taking the eucharist at the point of death.⁶ Indeed, those around

5 Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead. Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (London and New York: 2000), 92.

6 Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Personal Luther: Essays on the Reformer from a Cultural Historical Perspective* (Leiden: 2018), 175. The saints in question are Acacius, Barbara, Blaise, Christopher, Cyriacus, Catherine of Alexandria, Denis, Erasmus of Formiae, Eustace, George, Giles, Margaret of Antioch, Pantaleon, Vitus.

him in the weeks before his death stressed how Luther, through his actions in those final weeks, experienced a Protestant form of penance.⁷ In Lutheran early modern Germany, a death without repentance, absolution, or sacrament would result in a burial without ceremony; no knell, procession, song, or clergy. The only people present would be relatives, and even then, only if they wished to appear. Additionally, in such cases the deceased frequently were buried in unconsecrated ground.⁸ For certain reformers this would not be an inherent issue, but for much of the laity burial in consecrated ground remained significant, and was deemed important for the soul of the deceased. In certain respects, it could be suggested that the first attempts at burial reform, particularly within the Lutheran areas of Germany, were gentle enough so as to hold on to certain aspects of funerary tradition, as without them it could appear that all that was Christian had been stripped from the practices.

In the majority of those areas of Europe influenced by the works of John Calvin, burial practices would ultimately become far sparser affairs, containing little ceremony, and actively avoiding anything that may have been deemed superstitious or intercessory. Examples of burials such as these can be seen from across early modern Europe. Walloon synods instituted very simple burials, and Strasbourg, in the Rhineland, briefly embraced what would ultimately become the norm in the Reformed areas of the continent.⁹ Until approximately 1533 Strasbourg practised funerals along very simple lines, with no graveside prayers or sermons. However, the first Strasbourg Synod protested against what they saw as extreme practices, citing the burials of the Old Testament Patriarchs and the first Christians as examples of the validity of prayers and sermons at burials, noting that in performing them the dead were honoured.¹⁰ In Geneva in the 1541 *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* it was determined that:

It will be good that the carriers be warned by us to discourage all superstitions contrary to the Word of God, not to do duty at too late an hour,

7 Karant-Nunn, *The Personal Luther*, 185–6.

8 Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London and New York: 1997), 168–9.

9 Andrew Spicer, “‘Rest of their bones’: Fear of Death and Reformed Burial Practices,” in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, eds William Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: 1997), 167–183, on 168.

10 William D. Maxwell, *John Knox's Genevan Service Book, 1556: The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book used by John Knox while a Minister of the English Congregation of Marian Exiles at Geneva, 1556–1559* (Edinburgh and London: 1931), 56.

and to make a report in the case of sudden death, in order to obviate all inconvenience that might thereby arise.¹¹

In a similar vein to Calvin's instructions for Geneva, John Knox determined that in Scotland following 1560 it was simply to be the case that:

The corps is reuerently brought to the graue, accompagnied with the congregatio[n], with owte any further ceremonies, which beyng buried, the minister goeth to the churche, if it be not farre of, and maketh some comfortable exhortacion to the people, towchyng deathe, and resurrection.¹²

This is, surprisingly, even vaguer than the *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of Geneva. It is unclear if the minister should be present at the burial, nor is it made clear what constitutes a too distant church. This text was perhaps too vague, as it was ultimately followed by a lengthier set of instructions, in which it was determined that there should be no superstition or sermon, and no prayers for the dead. If a minister was present, he was there only in a personal capacity, and he was not to perform any ceremony whatsoever.¹³

In many ways this early Calvinist approach would become the model for other Reformed regions of Europe. Superstition and intercession on behalf of the dead were avoided, and attendance was not compulsory. Indeed, the presence of a minister was not even mandated. Other areas of Europe, however, were not quite so stark in their approaches. In Frankfurt in 1554 Pollanus (Valérand Poullain), published a liturgy that was essentially a translation of Calvin's Strasbourg liturgy. Importantly however, when addressing burial Pollanus added the instruction that "at funerals the pastor is to go before, and give an exhortation and prayer at the grave."¹⁴ The mandated presence of a minister at the funeral stressed the importance of burial for good Christians,

11 John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J.K.S. Reid (London: 1954), 68; Gordon D. Raeburn, "Rewriting Death and Burial in Early Modern Scotland," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 18/3 (2016), 254–272, on 257.

12 *The forme of prayers and ministracion of the Sacraments, and used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneua: and approued, by the famous and godly learned man, Iohn Caluyn* (Geneva: 1556, STC-16561), 88.

13 James K. Cameron, ed., *The First Book of Discipline* (Edinburgh: 1972), 45–46, 199–201; Raeburn, "Rewriting Death," 259–260.

14 George W. Sprott, *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland, commonly known as John Knox's Liturgy, with Historical Introduction and Illustrative Notes* (Edinburgh and London: 1901), 198.

and perhaps reinforced in the minds of the laity the importance of at least some ceremony, which could not have been a surprise to Pollanus or other early reformers. In England the *Book of Common Prayer* showed a development of thought on the subject of death and burial. It had initially been printed in 1549, and revised in 1552 and 1559, and its section addressing the form of burial to be employed by Protestants was one aspect that was occasionally revised.¹⁵ In all versions it was specified that a priest must meet the corpse at the church style, and was to say or sing a set order of words from scripture affirming the bodily resurrection.¹⁶ Upon arrival at the grave the priest would then say or sing further scriptural verses while the body was prepared for burial, while the body was being buried, and once the burial was complete. Subsequently a lesson was to be given upon 1 Corinthians.¹⁷ Removed in the 1552 and 1559 versions, however, was the entreaty that God

graunt vnto this thy seruauant that the synnes whiche be committed in this worlde be not imputed vnto him, but that he escapyng the gates of hel and paynes of eternal darkenes: may euer dwell in the region of light, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the place where there is no wepyng, sorowe, nor heauines:¹⁸

It could be suggested that this was a form of intercessory prayer, and as such would not have sat comfortably with other Reformed denominations, leading, perhaps, to its subsequent removal. It should perhaps be unsurprising that, with such a variety of instruction as to the matter of death and burial, the actual practices themselves would vary across Europe, as will now be investigated.

2 Location

As discussed elsewhere in this volume, late medieval burial locations were dependent on a great many factors, including the nature of the death, the

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- 15 For more on the history of *The Book of Common Prayer* more generally, see John E. Booty (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer 1559, the Elizabethan Prayer Book* (Charlottesville and London: 1976), 327–384.
 - 16 *The Boke of common praier, and administracion of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies in the Churche of Englande* (London: 1552, STC-162862), fol. 121^r. Cf. Booty (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer*, 309–13.
 - 17 *The Boke of common praier*, fol. 121^r–122^v.
 - 18 *The booke of the common praier and administracion of the Sacramentes* (London: 1549, STC-16269), fol. Clxiii^r.

geographical location of the death, and the social status of the deceased, among others. Prior to the Reformation intra-mural burial was seen throughout the Catholic world as beneficial to the deceased, as it would decrease the time to be spent in purgatory. As early as 1525 Luther began to advocate extra-mural burial. For Luther this did not just constitute burial outside of the fabric of the churches, but rather burials were ideally to take place outside of the city walls.¹⁹

One of the central tenets of the Reformation was the rejection of the doctrine of purgatory, and therefore of the efficacy of intercessory acts.²⁰ As such there was no longer any spiritual justification in Protestant areas of Europe for intra-mural burial. Protestants did not subscribe to the belief in purgatory, and the burial of the deceased within the fabric of the church could not, therefore, lessen the time spent there by the soul of the departed. Koslofsky has noted, however, that Luther's primary justification for extra-mural burial was medical. Luther argued that the risk of infection from overcrowded graveyards, as well as too shallow burials within the churches, should be justification enough for the removal of burials from within the bounds of cities.²¹ There are suggestions from across Europe that these were valid concerns. At Boleskine, on the south bank of Loch Ness in Scotland, in 1684 the minister noted in a letter that "severall coffines were hardly under ground, which was like to be very dangerous and noisome to the hearers of the word within the s[aid] church."²² The later editor of those records commented on the situation, claiming that

[the] dogs that followed the people to church fought over the human bones that protruded through the earthen floor; and for the malignant fevers that so often ravaged the country, the foul air which the worshippers breathed while they worshipped was not less responsible than the insanitary condition of their dwelling-houses.²³

19 Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*, 47.

20 As a brief aside, as a reaction to the Reformation, during its sessions regarding death, the Council of Trent strongly reinforced the Catholic belief in purgatory and the efficacy of intercessory acts. Cf. *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H.J. Schroeder (Illinois: 1978), 29–46, 145–146, 214, 246.

21 Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*, 47.

22 William McKay (ed.), *Records of the Presbyteries of Inverness and Dingwall, 1643–1688* (Edinburgh: 1896), 118.

23 McKay (ed.), *Records of the Presbyteries of Inverness and Dingwall*, xvii.

In the Minutes of the Synod of Argyll in 1709 reference was made to “the stench occasioned by the burials in the church of Kilmun.”²⁴ In Catholic Brittany, although somewhat later than other records in this study, in 1836 it was claimed that in ossuaries “shreds of putrefying flesh attract dogs which no-one cares to chase away.”²⁵ Despite the possibility of exaggeration in these, occasionally second-hand reports, they do reinforce the notion that burial grounds were overcrowded, and if health concerns could be used as motivation for their removal, then that was the direction from which the issue would be approached. Indeed, from a brief survey of other Lutheran areas of Europe following the Reformation it seems clear that intra-mural burial was rather tenacious. For example, the practice continued in Denmark, was further developed in Trondheim, Norway through the authorisation of a detailed price list for burial in the cathedral, and actually increased in Tallinn, Estonia in the 17th century.²⁶

Other Protestant denominations too took issue with intra-mural burial, also with varying degrees of success. The Reformed Church on Guernsey had similar concerns to Luther about unsanitary burials.²⁷ In Scotland burial was to be a sober affair taking place in a dedicated location, external to the fabric of the church, and ideally away from the towns and cities.²⁸ Attempts were made in Zurich to remove all burials outside of the city walls.²⁹ In Geneva it was determined that “[t]he dead are to be buried decently in the place appointed. The attendance and company are left to each man's discretion.”³⁰ It is clear, however, that the location of a burial continued to be an important issue following the Reformation, hence the continuing desire for intra-mural burial, and some churches, such as the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, continued to allow

24 Duncan C. MacTavish (ed.), *Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1636–1651* (Edinburgh: 1943), 62 (footnote).

25 Prosper Mérimée, *Notes d'un voyage dans l'Ouest de la France* (Paris: 1836), 165.

26 Birgitte B. Johannsen and Hugo Johannsen, “Re-forming the Confessional Space: Early Lutheran Churches in Denmark, c. 1536–1660,” in *Lutheran Churches in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer (Farnham: 2012), 241–76, on 256; Øystein Ekroll, “State Church and Church State: Churches and their Interiors in Post-Reformation Norway, 1537–1705,” in *Lutheran Churches in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer (Farnham: 2012), 277–310, on 284; Krista Kodres, “‘Das “Geistliche Gebäwde” der Kirche’: The Lutheran Church in Early Modern Estonia as a Meeting Place of Theological, Social and Artistic Ideas,” in *Lutheran Churches in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer (Farnham: 2012), 333–76, on 354.

27 Spicer, “‘Rest of their bones,’” 171.

28 Cameron (ed.), *The First Book of Discipline*, 45–46, 199–201; Raeburn, “Rewriting Death,” 259–60.

29 Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: 2002), 277.

30 Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, 68; Raeburn, “Rewriting Death,” 257.

the practice, although without any superstition or ceremony.³¹ Taking this variety further still, Clodagh Tait has noted that Protestants in Ireland embraced the traditional burial sites, including intra-mural burial locations, and actively shunned simple funeral rites.³² The rather confused approach to this topic can be seen in the work of Pierre Viret who, writing in Lausanne in the 1550s, held that for the Christian, no one piece of land was any more suitable than the rest, yet at the same time, for Viret land could be corrupted by the presence of “infidels.”³³ With such a confused approach by certain prominent reformers, it is no wonder that the importance of burial location would be such a persistent sticking point for Protestantism.

The persistence of the laity in this regard, as with all aspects of the reformation of burial, led to greater and lesser degrees of the implementation of new rules across the continent. In some instances, it can be suggested that prominent reformers did lead by example. Calvin's burial in Geneva in 1564 was a very simple affair. He was buried in the common churchyard with no ceremony or ritual, and no gravestone was placed upon the grave.³⁴ The burial of Knox in 1572 was similarly an exemplar for prominent Scottish Protestants. Knox was buried in the churchyard of St Giles, Edinburgh, with little pomp.³⁵ Zwingli's death was rather different to other reformers, having died in battle, although in life he had been opposed to any burial markers.³⁶ Yet the same cannot be said for certain members of the laity. Indeed, one of the most contentious aspects of burial reform was the prohibition against intra-mural burial. The desire to be buried within the fabric of the church remained strong for certain members of society, possibly due to lingering belief in the efficacy of intra-mural burial for the soul of the deceased, but also as a mark of social status and in order to maintain connections to ancestors. Public outcry throughout the Reformed Swiss states led to the continuation of the old ways of burial.³⁷

31 Spicer, “‘Rest of their bones,’” 174, 175; Andrew Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: 2007), 134.

32 Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* (Basingstoke: 2002), 60–1.

33 Bernard Roussel, “‘Ensevelir honnestement les corps’: Funeral Corteges and Huguenot Culture,” in *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559–1685*, eds Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: 2002), 193–208, on 199.

34 John Wilkinson, *The Medical History of the Reformers: Luther, Calvin and Knox* (Edinburgh: 2001), 75; Thomas Fuller, *Abel Redivivus, or, The Dead Yet Speaking* (Wing-F2401. London: 1652), 284.

35 Wilkinson, *The Medical History of the Reformers*, 108; David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. T. Thompson, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: 1843), 242.

36 Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 275.

37 Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 277.

Possibly even more problematic for the reform of burial was the persistence throughout Europe of the charnel house or ossuary, where the dried bones of older burials were collected in order to serve as a *memento mori*.³⁸ As Philippe Ariès noted, “it was important to see ... The bones and skulls were arranged around the courtyard of the church so as to form a backdrop for the daily life of those sensual times.”³⁹ While ossuaries certainly did function in this fashion, as did other centrally located reminders of death and mortality,⁴⁰ they were also possessed of a very practical aspect. Considering the aforementioned importance of burial location, burial space was at a premium. Through the removal of bones to the ossuaries fresh burial plots became free, and the cycle could continue.⁴¹ The ossuaries thus provided a place wherein the bones of the more distantly deceased could be stored with dignity.⁴²

The lingering desire of the laity for the old ways of burial was rarely thwarted by official proclamations against it. In Scotland a compromise of sorts would be found in the classification of burial aisles as extra-mural. Studied in detail by Andrew Spicer and others, in brief a burial aisle was essentially an annexe built onto the side of pre-existing kirk buildings, often also serving as accommodation during services for the family of the laird who had it built.⁴³ Although tenuous, the distinction was acceptable for many Reformed ministers. Indeed, this acceptance of burial aisles is exemplified in William Birnie's 1606 work, *The Blame of Kirk-Bvriall*, in which he noted:

And because they were but adjacent and incontinuous, being but severally set as to-falles [lean-tos] to the continent Kirks, they got therefore among vs the name of lles, that yet they keep. And this kynde may content our most honourable.⁴⁴

38 Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 277.

39 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (London: 1981), 61.

40 Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, “Introduction: Placing the Dead in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 1–16, on 11.

41 Elizabeth Musgrave, “*Memento Mori*: The Function and Meaning of Breton Ossuaries, 1450–1750,” in *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, eds Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth (London: 1997), 62–75, on 65.

42 Musgrave, “*Memento Mori*,” 70.

43 Spicer, *Calvinist Churches*, 66–7.

44 William Birnie, *The Blame of Kirk-Bvriall, Tending to Perswade Cemiteriall Civilitie* (STC-3089. Edinburgh: 1606), sig. C4^r.

Of course, not all Protestant movements held to the same view of ritual and ceremony as those of Reformed Protestantism, and the burial of Martin Luther in Wittenberg in February 1546 serves as a distinct counterpoint to the burials of Calvin and Knox. Luther had died four days earlier in the town of his birth, Eisleben, yet the Elector John Frederick insisted upon a burial in Wittenberg. As such Luther, despite his condemnation of the practice, was placed in a pewter coffin, and buried beneath the floor of the Castle Church, directly in front of the pulpit.⁴⁵ It is not difficult to understand then, why prominent members of European society believed that they, too, should be allowed to continue this practice. And if a family had the means at their disposal, they could certainly find ways around almost any regulation concerning burial.

3 Sermons and Services

The act of placing the corpse in the earth was not the totality of the burial process, and there were many surrounding practices which would also be affected in a variety of ways by the Reformation. Across the spectrum of early modern Protestant Europe, the issue of funeral sermons saw a great variance of practice. As noted above and discussed in detail by Atherton in chapter 12 of this volume, Lutheran areas in general supported the use of a funeral sermon, Luther himself gave many, while on the whole Calvinist areas did not.⁴⁶ Similarly, in Zurich and Berne the minister might say a few words at the graveside, and the congregation could gather at church for prayer, but a sermon was forbidden.⁴⁷ Even within these denominational divides, however, there was far from universal observance. In Scotland in particular, the issue of funeral sermons would arise time and again between 1560 and at least 1645, and it is difficult to argue that they ever truly stopped for any length of time.⁴⁸

In Lutheran Germany it was actively acknowledged that only the “prominent” among society were to have a sermon at their funeral.⁴⁹ Indeed, in 1525

45 Wilkinson, *The Medical History of the Reformers*, 31.

46 See, for example, Neil Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter: Writings on Death* (Leiden: 2007).

47 Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 275.

48 For a more in-depth study of post-Reformation funeral sermons in Scotland see Raeburn, “Rewriting Death,” 267–69.

49 Interestingly, Sigrun Berg, referencing Nils Gilje and Tarald Rasmussen, notes that in Lutheran northern Norway, everyone was entitled to a funeral sermon, not only the elites. Cf. Sigrun H. Berg, “The Influence of the Reformation on Religious Practice in the North,” in *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway, Vol. 2: Towards a Protestant*

Luther himself preached a funeral sermon for Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, and in 1532 he preached at the funeral of Duke John of Saxony.⁵⁰ In 1576, the Heidelberg theologian Daniel Tossanus preached a funeral sermon for Elector Freidrich III, and, astonishingly, in 1609 Philipp Han gave a funeral sermon in Magdeburg Cathedral for Jesus.⁵¹ On the whole, Lutheran Germany only approved of funeral sermons for those of sufficient rank to justify them, which obviously differed greatly from the Calvinist point of view on the subject. It is interesting to note, however, that when funeral sermons were to take place, there was an expectation that they would follow a specific pattern, using Luther's death as an exemplar of the perfect Christian death.⁵² One interesting exception to this general trend, however, may be seen from the surviving funeral sermons printed in Nördlingen, a Free Imperial City located in Swabia, Bavaria. It would appear that in Nördlingen the Lutheran pastors used funeral sermons, or at least the printed versions facilitated by the relatives of the deceased, as teaching tools for the laity.⁵³ In them they emphasised the family life of the deceased, and the love they had for their spouse and children.⁵⁴ They detailed the emotionality of the deathbed, and they emphasised the grief of the family left behind.⁵⁵ Rather than explicitly modelling the sermon on the death of Luther, these local pastors attempted to teach the laity through the example of local notables.

Not all of Germany was Lutheran, however. In the Rhenish Palatinate, one of the Calvinist areas of Germany, the same general attitude towards sermons was held as by the other Calvinist areas of Europe, with the expectation that

North, eds Sigrun H. Berg, Rognald H. Bergesen, and Roald E. Kristiansen (Hanover: 2016), 19–46, on 37.

50 Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: 2010), 195–202; Fred W. Meuser, "Luther as Preacher of the Word of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: 2003), 136–48, on 145.

51 Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, 195–202. Jesus was, of course, the most "prominent" of "citizens."

52 Volker Leppin, "Preparing for Death. From the Late Medieval *ars moriendi* to the Lutheran Funeral Sermon," in *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, eds. Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten (Göttingen: 2015), 9–24, on 17–21; Sivert Angel, "Preachers as Paul: Learning and Exemplarity in Lutheran Funeral Sermons. A Motif-Perspective on Faith and Works in Face of Death," in *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, eds. Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten (Göttingen: 2015), 173–198.

53 Eileen T. Duggan, "The Funeral Sermon as a Key to Familial Values in Early Modern Nördlingen," *SCJ*, 20/4 (1989), 631–44, on 638, 643.

54 Duggan, "The Funeral Sermon as a Key," 638.

55 Duggan, "The Funeral Sermon as a Key," 639; 641–2.

all were to receive them, both rich and poor alike, as long as the sermon in no way praised the deceased.⁵⁶ It should be noted at this stage, however, that the Reformed Protestant prohibition against funeral sermons did not mean that the subject of death was never raised. On the contrary, it was important for the reformers that the laity contemplate the reality of death on a daily basis. To that end many *ars moriendi* works were produced,⁵⁷ and death was a common subject of regular sermons. Luther preached on the topic regularly, in addition to his frequent funeral sermons, but for others such as Knox the regular sermons were the only appropriate place for such a lesson.⁵⁸ Elsewhere Ole Peter Grell records an example of this continued contemplation of and discourse on the reality of death and mortality in a letter of a Dutch Reformed minister in London in the 17th century.⁵⁹ Death was to be an ever-present thought, not merely on the occasion of a funeral.

4 Public Performances of Grief

The topic of the emotions surrounding death is addressed elsewhere in this volume, and as such will not be covered extensively here. Yet the presence of emotions at the point of burial should briefly be discussed. As Madeleine Gray has highlighted in chapter 3, emotionality and grief at burial was perceived in various fashions prior to the Reformation and cannot simply be considered as a ritualistic practice devoid of true feeling. This would remain the case in the early modern period, but the performance of emotions at a burial would be addressed by various early reformers.⁶⁰

As with the variety of attitudes and practices seen above, the approach towards the emotions surrounding death and burial differed across Europe, and also met with varying degrees of resistance to change. In Catholic areas of

⁵⁶ Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, 205.

⁵⁷ Juanita F. Ruys, "Dying 101: Emotion, Experience, and Learning How to Die in the Late Medieval *artes moriendi*," *Parergon* 31/2 (2014), 55–79.

⁵⁸ Meuser, "Luther as Preacher of the Word of God," 145; Cameron, (ed.), *The First Book of Discipline*, 201.

⁵⁹ Ole Peter Grell, *Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: 2011), 305–7.

⁶⁰ For a more detailed analysis see, for instance, Gordon D. Raeburn, "Death, Superstition and Common Society following the Scottish Reformation," *Mortality* 21/1 (2016), 36–51, on 40–45; Raeburn, "Death and Dying,"; Raeburn, "The Reformation of Death and Grief in Northern Scotland," *Nordlit* 43 (2019), 54–67.

Europe mourning, particularly weeping, was an important indicator of faith.⁶¹ In Lutheran areas public grief remained an important aspect of death and burial. Luther stressed that grief was understandable, particularly at the death of a dear person.⁶² However, in what would become a common theme across Protestant Europe, the grief experienced should have been tempered by the belief that the deceased was in a better place. Faith in the Resurrection should be displayed, and people should not mourn like “heathens with no hope.”⁶³ In a contrast to Luther’s approach, Bruce Gordon has noted that when Zwingli in Zurich eradicated Catholic burial traditions, he encountered lingering adherence to the old ways, due to the pastoral comfort they had offered the laity, who often were presented with no new channels for their grief.⁶⁴ In Reformation England the same situation can be seen in that the aforementioned abandonment of intercessory acts by the reformers ultimately deprived the relatives of the deceased of a crucial method by which grief could be dealt with, namely, channelling that grief into actions.⁶⁵ This did, however, have certain positive results, in that means of commemoration were developed more fully. Ralph Houlbrooke has noted how in this instance the denial of traditional methods of processing grief inspired Protestant ministers to develop different approaches, and led to a great increase in practical advice for the Christian life. In a further contrast, in Scotland the Protestant clergy did not have the same range of options as their English counterparts. As Houlbrooke subsequently suggested, the more militant Protestants viewed sermons and intercessory acts as unscriptural, and rife with the potential for raising the deceased up as a better Christian in death than they ever had been in life, all in return for a not insubstantial payment.⁶⁶ For the more strictly Calvinist reformers all such abuses were to be excised from funerals. There was to be no ritualised avenue for the release of the emotions, primarily grief, that surrounded death.⁶⁷

Of course, displays of emotion themselves were not forbidden at this time. As the Swiss reformer Pierre Viret had stated, “the grief of those who are witness to

61 William A. Christian Jr., “Provoked Religious Weeping in Early Modern Spain,” in *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretations*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: 2004), 33–50, on 33.

62 Karant-Nunn, *The Personal Luther*, 191.

63 Karant-Nunn, *The Personal Luther*, 201.

64 Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 273–4.

65 Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: 1998), 228.

66 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, 297; Raeburn, “Rewriting Death,” 267–69.

67 Raeburn, “Rewriting Death,” 254–61; Gordon D. Raeburn, “Death, Burial Customs and Rites,” in *A Companion to the Scottish Reformation*, ed. Ian Hazlett (Leiden: forthcoming).

death must be able to express itself, but not to excess.”⁶⁸ Indeed, in the *Institutes* Calvin himself stated that “you see that to bear the cross patiently is not to have your feelings altogether blunted, and to be absolutely insensible to pain ...”⁶⁹ It seems clear that for most, if not all, of the reformers, emotions had their place at a funeral, but that displays of mourning should not be allowed to become excessive. Indeed, it would appear that for the majority of reformers grief was not the issue. Rather it was the potential for these methods of displaying grief to develop over time into empty ceremonies, devoid of true feeling, or, inversely, that ritualised displays of sorrow could potentially lead to irrational, perhaps even mindless behaviour, which seemed to deny any belief in the doctrine of election, or no comfort in the belief that the deceased was now in God’s hands. As Debora K. Shuger has noted, “emotions present a threat to rational objectivity but not to faith, particularly if one understands faith in the Protestant sense of *fiducia*, or trust.”⁷⁰ Therefore, it seemed entirely possible both to engage in ritualistic displays of grief and to adhere to Protestant concepts of death and resurrection. Against this, however, is the simple fact that, for the reformers, the only true way to measure someone’s faith, particularly at such a time as a funeral, was whether or not the individual concerned was carrying themselves in the correct Protestant manner, namely with a certain solemn dignity. Anything more than restrained emotions could be perceived as an attempt to intercede with God to ensure that the deceased, because they had been so loved during their life, would attain salvation. Indeed, as Zwingli noted, “that a person, out of concern for the dead, calls on God to show them mercy, I do not disapprove. But to stipulate a time for this and to lie for the sake of gain, is not human, but devilish.”⁷¹ As with so many aspects of early modern death and burial however, the belief in the efficacy of intercessory acts would prove difficult to excise completely.

5 Death, Burial, and Identity

As noted at the start of this chapter, the specific methods of the burial of the dead performed by communities are interlinked with their very identities. The strength of a community’s identity, as well as the level of its autonomy, can

68 Roussel, “*‘Ensevelir honnestement les corps’*,” 198.

69 John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics, 20–21 (London: 1961), 3.8.9.

70 Debora K. Shuger, “The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric,” in *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretations*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: 2004), 115–132, on 121.

71 Huldrych Zwingli, *Writings, Volume One. In Search of True Religion: Reformation, Pastoral and Eucharistic Writings*, trans. H. Wayne Pipkin (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: 1984), 353.

often be inferred from burial rituals. Strong communities with clear identities can dictate how the dead are to be buried; weaker communities can have their practices controlled from outside. Interesting examples of this can be seen from the fringes of early modern Europe, such as the *coronach* in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the *caoineadh* in more remote parts of Ireland, and similar practices from the Basque areas of France and Spain, as well as Turkey and Greece.⁷² All of these practices involved highly ritualised displays of emotion, namely wailing and shrieking performed by older women, and attempts were made by various authorities, both Catholic and Protestant, to stop these traditions from occurring. Some were more successful than others. Of course, remote locations offer a certain amount of strength to communities wishing to continue certain practices. In the more remote regions of Sweden, for instance, Lutheran pastors continually attempted to prevent the indigenous Sámi from performing burials in the forests, instead attempting to enforce burial within the churchyard, a protracted struggle throughout the 17th century.⁷³ In Sámi areas of Norway some groups had converted to Christianity in the medieval period, and were willingly buried with Christian rites, while others only accepted Christianity at face value.⁷⁴ In all of these cases the remoteness of their homes gave these groups far greater autonomy than had they lived closer to more densely populated Christian areas. As an aside, an interesting contrast to this can be seen from Narva, in modern day Estonia, which in the early modern period was variously controlled by Russia and Sweden. There the Orthodox population continued their own rites and rituals, and Protestant visitors were amazed to see practices more reminiscent, in their eyes, of paganism than anything Christian, including picnicking on the graves of relatives, and expressing their grief through wails and howls.⁷⁵

72 Raeburn, "The Reformation of Death and Grief in Northern Scotland," 58–60; Raeburn, "Death, Superstition and Common Society following the Scottish Reformation," 44–5; Patricia Lysaght, "'Caoineadh os Cionn Coirp': The Lament for the Dead in Ireland," *Folklore* 108 (1997), 65–82, on 66; Mark Goldie, "The Scottish Catholic Enlightenment," *The Journal of British Studies* 30/1 (1991), 20–62, on 52; Cia Sautter, "Women, Dance, Death, and Lament in Medieval Spain and the Mediterranean: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Examples," in *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster (London and New York: 2017), 93–113, on 110.

73 Gunlög Fur, "Reading Margins: Colonial Encounters in Sápmi and Lenapehoking in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Feminist Studies* 32/3 (2006), 491–521, on 498.

74 Siv Rasmussen, "The Protracted Sámi Reformation – or the Protracted Christianizing Process," in *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway: Introductory Studies*, eds. Lars I. Hansen, Rognald H. Bergesen, and Ingebjørg Hage (Oslo: 2014), 165–184, on 165, 167.

75 Evgeny Khodakovsky, "Defining the Other: Northern European Views of Russian Orthodoxy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Protracted Reformation in*

For those not granted such acceptance, distance does not guarantee safety however. As such, throughout the early modern period Protestants were denied specific burials by Catholic authorities, and *vice versa*. This is a situation that would eventually change, particularly in areas with a delicate balance of Protestants and Catholics. In the late 16th century, French Protestants had been given access to certain cemeteries in order to bury their dead, but the Catholics who continued to use those cemeteries interfered. For both sides the right to use the cemeteries symbolized their membership of a community, but the established Catholic order did not wish to share its sacred space with outsiders. The Protestants, on the other hand, were desirous of using the old cemeteries as they had been the burial places of their ancestors; they did not want to be seen as abandoning the past.⁷⁶ Elsewhere, Penny Roberts has noted the continuing desire of Huguenots to be buried with their Catholic ancestors, and Vanessa Harding has noted that a burial near one's family continued to be important in early modern Paris.⁷⁷ Clodagh Tait has noted this among Irish laity, and Keith M. Brown has noted a similar desire for continuity among the Scottish aristocracy.⁷⁸ In Gaelic areas of Scotland and Ireland this desire remained particularly strong.⁷⁹ Interestingly, by the early 17th century, in certain areas of France Protestants and Catholics came to communal decisions to share cemeteries, although partitioning them into adjacent burial grounds. Through such partitions both groups could be secure of their place in the community.⁸⁰ Similar arrangements could be found across Europe, with Catholics being buried in Protestant churches in England and Ireland, and Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists being buried alongside one another in Münster.⁸¹ Of course, this not

Northern Norway: Towards a Protestant North, eds. Sigrun H. Berg, Rognald H. Bergesen, and Roald E. Kristiansen (Hanover: 2016), 237–252, on 246.

76 Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, 315–16.

77 Penny Roberts, "Contesting Sacred Space: Burial Disputes in Sixteenth-Century France," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 131–148; Vanessa Harding, "Whose Body? A Study of Attitudes towards the Dead Body in Early Modern Paris," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 170–187.

78 Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration*, 66; Keith M. Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland: Wealth, Family and Culture, from Reformation to Revolution* (Edinburgh: 2000), 251–270.

79 Raeburn, "Death, Burial Customs and Rites," see all; Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration*, 66.

80 Keith P. Luria, "Separated by Death? Burials, Cemeteries, and Confessional Boundaries in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 24/2 (2001), 185–222, on 189, 200.

81 Peter Marshall, "After Purgatory: Death and Remembrance in the Reformation World," in *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, eds. Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten (Göttingen: 2015), 25–44, on 38.

to imply that such accommodation was the rule across early modern Europe, and tensions could frequently erupt into violence and the disinterment of the dead.⁸²

Liturgical disputes, however, were often far easier to overcome than long held prejudices, such as that against the Cagots, a persecuted minority found in Navarre, Aragón, Béarn, and Brittany, among other locations.⁸³ In terms of burial, this community represented the powerless, in that they were required to bury their dead away from the Spanish, Navarrese, and French communities who surrounded them, not for any particular religious or liturgical reasons, but simply due to generations of prejudice. Their identity was decided for them from outside of their boundaries, and they were instructed as to what to do with their dead.

6 Conclusion

As has been argued throughout this chapter there was no single reformation of death and burial that can be applied to Europe as a whole. Each strand of reform largely followed its own path when it came to the burial of the dead, even those that had been influenced or inspired by earlier groups. There were, however, universal experiences, in that every reform movement was faced with a certain amount of resistance from the laity. Most communities, to a greater or lesser extent, resisted the total reform of burial for as long as they could, regardless of the extent of the changes with which they were being presented. Different reform movements addressed this resistance in different ways. Initial attempts generally focussed on quelling resistance with repeated proclamations and church visitations in order to ensure correct practice. Popular opinion, however, could not easily be denied, and there continued to be a great demand among the laity for some semblance of ritual or comfort on the occasion of a death or burial, as well as adherence to the idea of the importance of burial location. This led to the aforementioned disparity of practice across Protestant Europe, even in areas with broadly similar theology. Zurich, for instance, continued to experience large crowds seeking prayer and comfort at churches following burial, while such practices were discouraged in Geneva.⁸⁴ As noted elsewhere, in Scotland some attempts at compromise were made, so

82 Marshall, "After Purgatory," 39; Koslofsky, *The Reformation of Death*, 115–32.

83 Alain Guerreau and Yves Guy, *Les Cagots du Béarn: Recherches sur le développement inégal au sein du système féodal européen* (Paris: 1988).

84 Atherton, "The Pursuit of Power," 42.

that other, perhaps more important, reforms could successfully be implemented, and in the more remote fringes of Europe there is evidence which suggests pre-Christian and Christian burial practices existed side by side in a very slow period of integration, which was not drastically altered by the Reformation.⁸⁵

Yet it was not simply a reluctance to embrace change that drove resistance. As the way in which a community buries and honours its dead is intricately tied to its communal identity, to have its rites and rituals stripped away was often viewed as a threat to those identities. Indeed, this is reinforced by the fact that in areas that remained Catholic the Counter-Reformation led to an increase in the veneration of the dead, as can be seen, for example, from Breton speaking areas of Brittany, where the building of ossuaries increased rather dramatically between 1550 and 1660.⁸⁶ Elsewhere, Catholic exiles railed against what they saw as the dishonouring of the dead, which may have reinforced, to a certain extent, the continuing desires of the laity in regard to burial.⁸⁷ Try as they might, the reformers were never fully able to enact every desired change even among those who otherwise willingly embraced reform, and there remained a great variety of burial practice throughout early modern Europe.

85 Raeburn, "Rewriting Death," 269; Siv Rasmussen, "Churches in Finnmark County and the Torne Region in the Early Modern Period," in *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway, Vol. 2: Towards a Protestant North*, eds. Sigrun H. Berg, Rognald H. Bergesen, and Roald E. Kristiansen (Hanover: 2016), 47–80, on 58.

86 Musgrave, "Memento Mori," 62–63.

87 See, for example *Certain Tractates, together with the Book of Four Score Three Questions, and a translation of Vincentius Lirinensis by Ninian Winzet*, ed. James K. Hewison, vol. 1 (Edinburgh and London: 1888), 113; Thomas G. Law (ed.), *Catholic Tractates of the Sixteenth Century, 1573–1600* (Edinburgh and London: 1901), 60, 273.

The Counter Reformation and Preparations for Death in the European Roman Catholic Church, 1550–1700

Elizabeth Tingle

Is any man sick amongst you? Let him bring in the priest of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of our Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and our Lord will lift him up, and if he be in sin, his sins shall be forgiven him.

JAMES 5:14



Comfort of the dying and preparation for one's own death were fundamental to the religious duties of a Catholic Christian. Based on the gospel accounts of the acts of Jesus, visiting the sick and comforting the afflicted were traditional corporeal and spiritual acts of mercy. By the time of the Reformation, the elements of a 'good death' were, in their idealised form, represented in the literary and artistic genre known as the *ars moriendi*, as other authors in this volume demonstrate. The theory and practice of dying shown in these works, which were widely internalised by most western Christians, continue to be influential in the Roman Catholic Church across the early modern centuries. The dying individual was counselled to display spiritual strength, religious awareness, resignation, and charity. He or she died at home, surrounded by family and household, assisted by clergy: it was to be an orderly process. In contrast, however, many real deaths were messy: people died accidentally, unconsciously, or unrepentant.¹ It was widely held that the avoidance of a 'bad' death of this sort required preparation. To this end, the church and popular culture provided a

¹ Vanessa Harding, "The Last Gasp: Death and the Family in Early Modern London," in *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives*, eds Mary Ann Lyons and James Kelly (Dublin: 2013), 78.

range of advice guides, institutions, and practices to prepare individuals for this crucial rite of passage. The baroque or Counter-Reformation traditions of preparation for dying, and the institutions designed to support them, will be examined in this chapter.

Three important features of preparations for death in early modern Catholic communities were developments of those present in the later Middle Ages, reasserted in the revival of the church militant from the Council of Trent onwards. Firstly, belief in purgatory was strongly restored after something of a mid-16th-century decline. To prepare for this, intercessory activity before and beyond the grave was vital. Secondly, the increasing prominence of the sacrament of the eucharist as the most efficacious means of intercession was a dominant feature of Tridentine Catholicism: during a lifetime and on the deathbed. Thirdly, the increased clericalization of religious life, with the presence of the priest gaining more authority in the post-Tridentine period, was a corollary of the sacramentary nature of the rite of passage. These evolutions affecting the religious culture of the preparation of the soul for death, will be examined here with particular reference to France and especially to the duchy of Brittany, in western France, which is rich in evidence for pre- and post-mortem religious culture in the early modern period. They will be explored through a study of pastoral theology, using advice literature, then of practice, through sacramental ritual, popular institutions and practices, over the late 16th and 17th centuries.

1 Handbooks for Dying: Advice Books and Devotional Treatises

As a number of chapters in this volume show, one of the most important devotional genres of the later Middle Ages was the *ars moriendi*, or handbooks on how to 'die well'. The origins of the *ars moriendi* seem to lie with the *Speculum artis bene moriendi* written in 1415 by an anonymous Dominican friar, based on the tract *De arte moriendi* of Jean Gerson. This was translated into most European languages and was among the earliest books to be printed.² Another popular work was the *Hortulus animae*, published in Strasbourg in 1498 and widely disseminated.³ The function of these works was to provide guidance on

2 A concise outline of developments over time in the *ars moriendi*, with illustrations of specific texts, can be found at https://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/f_view/BML:BML_00GOO01001THM0001ars_moriendi_3 (last accessed 28/6/2020).

3 Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying. The Ars Moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)* (Farnham: 2007); see chapter 1 for discussion of *ars moriendi* publications in Germany before the Reformation.

salvation. The underpinning assumption, reflecting popular belief, was that an individual's eternal fate was determined in large part at the moment of death. While there was a constant admonition from churchmen to live well, to avoid the necessity for final acts, this did not prevent contemporaries from privileging the process of dying and the final moments as a site of salvation. Thus, an elaborate series of rituals and gestures, prayers, masses and almsgiving, assisted by clergy, friends, family, and saintly intercessors, were prescribed, to assist an individual's transition to the next world, to elicit a favourable judgement from God. While many people did not die an ideal death, as Vanessa Harding states, "the literature of prescription offered a set of customs for model circumstances; perhaps these could not always be observed, but they helped both to establish norms and expectations and to shape practice more widely."⁴ The precepts of the *ars moriendi* would persist, although in altered form, across the early modern period.

Ars moriendi tracts traditionally consist of six chapters, mostly devoted to deathbed rituals. The first chapter explains that dying has a good side and consoles the reader that death was not to be feared; the second chapter outlines the temptations that beset the dying and the best methods to avoid them; the third lists questions to ask the dying and the consolation to be given through the redemptive powers of Christ's love. The fourth chapter stresses the need to imitate Christ's life, the fifth outlines the rules of behaviour for family and friends gathered at the death bed, and the sixth chapter contains prayers to be said for the dying person. In the mid-15th century in the Netherlands, a 'short' version of the *ars moriendi* emerged based largely on the second chapter of the longer version. It was illustrated with eleven woodcut pictures of the temptations that beset the dying person, the means of resisting them, and a final 'scene' of the good death, where demons are vanquished. The long and short versions of the *ars* were popular: there were nearly 100 printed editions in Europe before 1500. Roger Chartier shows that Paris was the most important single production centre, followed by Leipzig and Cologne. His study of *ars moriendi* has shown that they were at their most popular in the first third of the 16th century, although they declined in popularity and production after 1530.⁵

From the 1520s, the tenor of writing about preparation for dying began to change. Humanists and reformers preferred to place the 'art of dying' within a broader 'art of living' a good Christian life, which included constant reflection upon and preparation for death and a wider repertoire of devotional

⁴ Harding, "The Last Gasp," 83.

⁵ Roger Chartier, "Les arts de mourir, 1450–1600," *AESC* 31 (1976), 51–76.

behaviour than deathbed acts. Early examples of this *ars vivendi* are Jean Raulin's *Doctrinale mortis* of 1518 and is Josse Clichtove's *De doctrina moriendi* of 1538.⁶ The thought of death should guide our entire life; Clichtove in particular considered a lifetime of repentance and asceticism to be better preparation than deathbed conversion. The most influential of these works was Erasmus's *De preparatione ad mortem* of 1534, which ran to 64 editions over the next three hundred years, 35 in Latin, 9 in Dutch, 3 in English, 3 German, 7 French, 2 Czech, and 5 Spanish.⁷ Erasmus's work "emphasised the doctrines of grace and forgiveness over those of punishment and damnation, but insisted that these benefits could be gained only through deliberate effort and preparation."⁸ Devotional and advice manuals continued to be produced through the second half of the century. To these were added early catechisms such as those of Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine, containing pedagogical statements of faith, with pithy teaching on Last Things and the sacramental framework of dying.⁹

The early years of the 17th century saw advice literature take off in quantity and scope, as never before. They were increasingly in the vernacular and took the form of meditations on death, preparation handbooks, and advice manuals on how to look after the sick. Daniel Roche's study of 17th-century *ars moriendi*-type literature has shown that some 400-500,000 editions of handbooks were produced, representing 7 to 10 per cent of all religious publications of the period.¹⁰ For France, Michel Vovelle argues that the main period of production of literary works was before 1640 although Roche claims that the second half of the century was more productive.¹¹ During the *grand siècle*, spiritual interests changed, to a further emphasis on lifetime actions. The 'old-style'

6 Jean Raulin, *Doctrinale mortis* (Paris: 1518); Josse Clichtove, *De Doctrina moriendi opusculum necessaria ad mortem foeliciter oppetendam preparamenta declarans* (Paris: 1538).

7 For a French version see Desiderius Erasmus, *Préparation à la mort, nouvellement composé et publié par le discret docteur Érasme avecques aulcunes prières et pseaulmes de la sainte Escripiture, moult prouffictables à tous christiens* (Lyons: 1538); Pierre Chaunu, *La mort à Paris: XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: 1978), 277.

8 Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge: 1995), 24.

9 Versions used here are Peter Canisius, *A Summe of Christian Doctrine* ([St. Omer: 1622]); Robert Bellarmine, *Shorter Catechisme* ([St Omer: 1614]).

10 Daniel Roche, "La mémoire de la mort": Recherche sur la place des arts de mourir dans la librairie et la lecture en France aux 17e et 18e siècles," *AESC* 31 (1976), 76-109, on 105-6.

11 Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: 1983), 308-10; Roche, "La mémoire de la mort," 83-6. Roche states that in the first half of the 17th century, one to two per cent of all books produced were on dying, a figure which rose to five per cent after 1650, but which fell off thereafter.

works of Gerson, Clichtove, and even Erasmus, went out of fashion and new authors came to the fore, who wrote devotional handbooks of a more didactic or practical form. To avoid damnation, preparation for death was a daily necessity. It was not to be left until late in life, as mortality could strike suddenly; it was to be part of a regular routine and life of prayer for all ages.¹² One of the most influential of such works across Catholic Europe was Robert Bellarmine's *De Arte Bene Moriendi*, published in Rome in 1620, a handbook on living and dying well, with precepts on virtue and the sacraments as means to salvation.¹³ It was very popular, with at least five Latin editions known in France alone between 1620 and 1665, an early translation into French in 1620 and one into English at Douai in 1622, for example.¹⁴ The work was divided into two parts: the precepts to follow while a person was in good health, largely virtues, then those to be observed when one was dangerously ill, largely sacramental. To live well, one needed to abandon worldly interests and honours, persevere in hope, faith, and charity, be sober, just, and pious, fast, pray continuously, and prepare to meet Christ. In addition, participating in the sacraments and keeping the Ten Commandments was excellent preparation. A vital part of the 'good life' as opposed to the 'good death' was devotion to works in emulation of Christ. Barbara Diefendorf has argued that by the 1630s, among female elites in Paris at least, a preference for charitable service came to supplant penitential asceticism as the dominant spiritual mode, reflecting a gentler Salesian spirit and more optimistic view of God. Further, Roche argues, religious practice emphasised interiorization and individual action rather than collective ritual.¹⁵ The 'sites' of salvation strengthened: Christ and his sacrament of the altar, devotion to Mary, and participation in good works. Ronnie Po-Hsia comments that action rather than fear was the Counter-Reformation's answer to the fragility of human existence. Through good works the Church "anchored the existence of the faithful to this-worldly pursuits and prevented its drift to despair over ultimate fate in the next world."¹⁶

From the 1650s, handbooks solely devoted to dying a good death began to disappear, and advice was increasingly confined to a wider literature of spirituality. The view that the highest form of union with God might best be

12 John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death Among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: 1981), 199.

13 Robert Bellarmine, *De Arte Bene Moriendi* (Viterbii: 1620).

14 Robert Bellarmine, *L'art de bien vivre pour heureusement mourir* (Paris: 1620).

15 Roche, "La mémoire de la mort," 105–6.

16 Ronnie P. Hsia, "Civic Wills as Sources for the Study of Piety in Münster, 1530–1618," *SCJ* XIV (1983), 321–348, on 347.

achieved through an active life of Christian service continued to gain ground.¹⁷ In France, works such as *La Douce et sainte mort* of Père Crasset (1681) ran to over forty editions. *L'avant-coureur de l'éternité* (1643) of Jérémie Drexel, *L'Ange conducteur* (1681) of Jacques Coret, and other such tomes were the new best-sellers of the era. In these works, preparation for death was again the work of a whole lifetime and they also offered prayers and actions to guide the reader. Coret's *L'Ange conducteur* for example was written for the confraternity of the Guardian Angel, the central aim of which was to help members achieve a good death, as "the greatest good we could wish for, and the most important matter we have in this world" although there were no particular obligations upon confreres other than general good works and devotions.¹⁸ The book was a collection of prayers for all liturgical and life-cycle occasions, including one for the dying, that they should have a holy death. In these works, a well-regulated life and the performance of good works were the best guarantees of eternal life: spiritual combat necessitated permanent mobilization. Jean de Saint-Samson's handbook on illness *La Mort des saints précieuse devant Dieu* of 1656 counselled four ways a person should prepare themselves for death. The first was behavioural, the movements and passions of the soul should be tamed, pain, hope, fear, love, hatred, desire, anger, levity, anxiety, presumption, envy, and other such emotions should be eliminated. The second was by use of the sacraments, especially the eucharist. The third was through experience of adversity, illness, and sadness, which needed to be borne with resignation. Finally, one should prepare for death by learning how to die well.¹⁹ Resignation, recourse to the sacraments, contrition, and faith were the means of achieving a good death. There were some continuities with the *ars* of the later Middle Ages, however, in many works. In particular, the deathbed as the site of the final battle over the soul between demons and angels continued to have common currency.

With Jansenism and other rigorist influences from the mid-17th century, the role of external actions became more muted. Jansenists attacked "the frivolous concept of a God whose punishment could be bought off so cheaply, by human intercessions."²⁰ Indeed, John McManners argues that by the later 17th century,

17 Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity. Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: 2004), 171, 243.

18 The edition used here is Jacques Coret, *L'Ange conducteur de la dévotion chrétienne* (Liège: 1746), xxii.

19 Jean de Saint-Samson, *La Mort des saints précieuse devant Dieu ou les moyens de mourir saintement, et dans la grâce de Dieu* (Paris: 1657), 165.

20 McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 127.

most devotional works did not dwell on death. While their message was clearly that we die but once and must ensure that we make no mistakes, preparation for death was part of a regular routine of prayer. In most writings, hope and salvation outweighed the burden of judgement and fear. Even gloomy spiritual writers advocated a way of life of charity, prayer, and austerity daily offered to God, as the best preparation for the end.²¹ Also, Roche argues that the readership began to change. The art of dying was above all the reading matter of the clergy and seminarian rather than the laity.²² These were the deathbed specialists, the mediator of the sacraments, by whose hands a good death was managed.

2 Popular Practices of Preparation: Confraternity Membership and Indulgences

For the early modern Catholic, mutual aid, to support each other in the quest for heaven, was important in life and in death. Preparation of the soul during life and the transition from the earthly to the heavenly realm, all required the support of family, friends, and community. One of the most important local institutions which helped in practical preparations for death and more specifically, to assist the dying, was the confraternity. Guilds and confraternities were widespread in the later Middle Ages, but the Reformation attack on saintly and collective intercession for the living and the dead led to a decline in membership in the mid-16th century, even in Catholic regions. From the later part of the century, however, with the reaffirmation of intercession by the Council of Trent and papal sponsoring of high-profile Roman confraternities as agents of Counter-Reformation, the confraternity once again became a prominent institution of religious life across Europe. There was a major expansion of devotional and philanthropic fraternities. All of these groups provided mortuary assistance for members and so adherence to such a group was an important part of the preparation for the afterlife. In addition, associations created specifically to assist the dying were introduced in the post-Tridentine period and spread widely. These groups, as well as parishes and conventual churches, were also major consumers of another post-Reformation revival, the indulgence. Pardons, especially papal plenary pardons, were widely sought as a means of avoiding purgatory at death and passing straight to heaven. The two

21 McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 198–202, 438.

22 Roche, “La mémoire de la mort,” 97.

institutions together were essential ways in which ordinary Catholics prepared for death.

2.1 *Confraternities and Support of the Dying*

Nicolas Terpstra defines the confraternity as “a self-governing congregation of lay Christians adapting and adjusting traditional clerical forms of group worship to their own situation and times.”²³ They were relatively independent organisations, raising and administering their own funds under supervision from clergy. They offered members training in and exercise of the communal rituals of the Catholic faith, education in doctrine through tutoring in the traditional statements of the faith, and many also encouraged private devotions.²⁴ New devotional confraternities were one of the great successes of the Catholic Reformation. Holy Sacrament confraternities were founded to promote the cult of the eucharist through more frequent administration of the sacraments of confession, penance, and communion. Confraternities of the Rosary encouraged Marian devotions. Many community and parish saints also generated associations. The 17th century saw a return to medieval levels of participation and then even more growth. In Rennes diocese in the 17th and 18th centuries, Catherine Jamet has located 302 confraternities, an average of 1.2 per parish. Almost 50 per cent were Marian, dominated by rosary groups; one-third were Christological, mostly Holy Sacrament, and the rest were dedicated to a variety of saints.²⁵ In Saint-Malo diocese, in 171 parishes and chapelries, Bruno Restif has counted 82 confraternities of the Rosary, 46 dedicated to the Holy Sacrament, and 32 parishes where other confraternities, to saints or the guardian angel, were organised. A wide membership was a notable feature of these new groups. In Rennes diocese, the confraternities of the Holy Sacrament charged low fees, to encourage widespread participation: at Boistruden, there was no entry fee or annual charge, to encourage the participation of the poor.²⁶ In the archdeaconry of Retz, south of Nantes, by the 1680s total membership of confraternities varied between 5 and 40 per cent of adults in many parishes. The entry fee for the All Saints confraternity at Saint-Jean de Montfaucon was 40 *sous* but that at Saint-Hilaire-du-Bois was only 2 *sous* and Saint-Fiacre’s

23 Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge: 1995), 49.

24 Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities*, 54–5.

25 Catherine Jamet, “Les confréries de dévotion dans le diocèse de Rennes aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles,” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest* 87 (1980), 481–491, on 482–3.

26 Bruno Restif, *La Révolution des paroisses: Culture paroissiale et Réforme catholique en Haute-Bretagne aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Rennes: 2006), 187.

confraternity charged 15 *deniers*, in addition to yearly subscriptions. These are not large sums when the daily wage of a mason was around 15 *sous* at this time.²⁷ Membership of confraternities was one of the most important means of preparation for death, for it provided a form of insurance that post-mortem needs of the soul were taken care of by an ongoing community of the living.

The reason for this is that all confraternities in early modern Europe offered services to the dying and particularly to the dead membership through their sponsorship of perpetual masses. Restif comments that the continued success of confraternities came from the fact that the statutes insisted on the solidarity between living members, and between the quick and the dead, as much as from interest in new devotions. Among late 16th and 17th-century confraternities, there was a return to the late medieval concern for the souls in purgatory and a resurgence of collective activity for the departed. Jamet comments that confraternity membership was a guarantee of having a good death, with prayers and sacraments, but also a fine death with a decent and well-attended funeral.²⁸ The collectivity also guaranteed post-mortem intercession, with its annual services and regular prayers with an assured congregation. The 1661 statutes of the Rosary confraternity of Aradon in Vannes diocese stated that there would be four anniversaries held a year for deceased confreres; following the death of a member, the others undertook to say a rosary or, if wealthy enough, to have a mass said for them at the rosary altar, within forty days of the death.²⁹ In the archdeaconry of Retz, all of the confraternities offered services for the dead. At Saint-Colombin the parish fraternity had regular processions around the cemetery, singing *Libera me domine* and the *Agonizants* based at La Trinité Church of Machecoul had a bell rung for each confrere who was dying, so that prayers could be said for him or her.³⁰

Confraternities also provided a framework in which members could undertake good works and build up their own store of treasure in heaven. Members were asked to assist sick confreres, by accompanying the viaticum and by praying for the sick. The statutes of the Holy Sacrament confraternity founded in the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Lices of Vannes in 1610 stated that members would accompany the host to the house of sick members with torches and candles and that members should attend the funeral of deceased confreres and the service held by the fraternity in the chapel of Notre Dame within fifteen

27 Jacqueline Ghenassia, "Les 'chevauchées' d'un archidiacre à la fin du 17^e siècle: La visite d'Antoine Binet dans le diocèse de Nantes (1682–1698)," *RHÉF* 57 (1971), 83–95, on 93.

28 Jamet, "Les confréries," 489.

29 Archives Départementales du Morbihan (hereafter ADM), G 1143. Arradon. Fondations.

30 Ghenassia, "Les 'chevauchées,'" 93.

days of their death.³¹ Some confraternities were also founded in this period specifically to assist the dying: the *Agonisant* or *Bonne Mort* associations. These were not found in the period before 1600, although they were effectively an extension of those long-standing associations for the dead like the *Ames du Purgatoire* and *Trépassés*. In papal registers of briefs for indulgences, between 5 and 9 percent were for these confraternities in the later 17th century.³² Some of the *Agonisant* confraternities were affiliated formally with the archconfraternity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the *Agonisants* at Rome, created in 1616. Their objectives were to give aid through prayer to those who were in their last agonies. Their emphasis on the dying points to new views on the best time for intercession. *Agonisant* confraternities emerged in France between 1640 and 1670; they undertook to sustain the dying in their final 'agonies' and to aid them in the final combat with the devil, assisting their confreres through the last rites, final communion, and prayers. The statutes of the confraternity based in Saint-Génies in Avignon published in 1641, stated that members would meet every Thursday to this end, but especially during the death of one of their members.³³ The statutes of a confraternity at Nancy of 1711 stated that the relatives of a dying member should alert the parish priest and have the large church bell rung thirty-two times. While this was taking place, the priest would expose the holy sacrament on the high altar and commence prayers and confreres should make their way to the church, to assist. Those who could not come to church should say the same prayers at home.³⁴ These associations were numerous. In Rennes diocese alone, eight confraternities of Notre Dame des *Agonisants* were created after 1663.³⁵ Philippe Desmette's work on plenary indulgences obtained in the dioceses of Cambrai shows that there were at least five in the see, three in parish churches and two in Jesuit churches, and probably more, which did not apply for papal pardons.³⁶ Most confraternities accepted dying and deceased members. For example, the *Agonisants* of

31 ADM 57 G 1. Cathédrale de Vannes. Confréries.

32 Françoise Hernandez, "Être confrère des Agonisants ou de la Bonne Mort aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," in *Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne (mi-XVe – début XIXe siècle)*, eds Bernard Dompnier and Paula Vismara (Rome: 2008), 311–338.

33 Marie-Hélène Froeschlé-Chopard, *Dieu pour tous et Dieu pour soi: Histoire des confréries et de leurs images à l'époque moderne* (Paris: 2006), 246.

34 *Règlements, statuts et prières pour la confrérie des Agonisants, érigée en 1711 en la paroisse de Saint Sébastien, ville neuve de Nancy* (Nancy: 1756).

35 Restif, *La Révolution des paroisses*, 183.

36 Philippe Desmette, *Les brefs d'indulgences pour les confréries des diocèses de Cambrai et de Tournai aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*: A.S.V. Sec. Brev. Indulg. Perpetuae, 2–9 (Brussels: 2002), passim.

Saint-Léonard of Fougères received seventeen new members from 1689–91, of whom eight were already dead and one was dying.³⁷

The *Bonne Mort* associations had a different focus, in that they were intended to help individuals prepare for their own deaths and were linked to a confraternity established by the Jesuits of Rome in their church of the Gesù in 1648. Two thirds of the known associations in Europe were housed in a Jesuit church.³⁸ Membership was linked to regular exercises of prayer and meditation. Typically, the confraternity would gather, confess to a priest, take the eucharist, listen to a sermon, and then pray and meditate on death and salvation. In addition, individual members would undertake personal meditations, on their own illness, dying, and death.³⁹ All of these confraternities played a vital role in preparation for death, they were “societies of mutual spiritual assistance; they assured a vast exchange of prayers of the living for the sufferings of souls which created a powerful solidarity of the mystical body and the cohabitation of the dead and the living, united by grace.”⁴⁰

2.2 *Indulgences*

A second collective intercessory institution frequently linked to confraternity membership, was the indulgence or pardon. From the later 16th century and particularly after 1600, indulgences again emerged – after a dip in popularity during the Reformation – as a popular part of the economy of salvation. For Anel de Lodève, writing in 1638, indulgences were the fourth means of escaping purgatory, after the eucharist, charity, and “satisfactory works” which included prayer, alms, vigils, and fasts.⁴¹ They required personal engagement in penance and good works. As Jean-Pierre Camus stated in *Instruction Catholique des Indulgences* published in Paris in 1641, an indulgence was a form of largesse and extraordinary dispensation which came from the treasury of merits of the church, accessed through the sacraments, firstly through baptism but primarily through penitence.⁴² The role of indulgences as a form of good work remained vital. Across the post-Tridentine period indulgences became more powerful as they were closely associated with the highest good work of

37 Jamet, “Les confréries,” 490.

38 Hernandez, “Être confrère,” 313.

39 Froeschlé-Chopard, *Dieu pour tous*, 249.

40 Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany 1480–1720* (Farnham: 2012), 201.

41 Anel de Lodève, *Defense du purgatoire et de l'honneur des ecclésiastiques et des religieux mesprizez et calumnies sans raison par les ministres de la religion pretendue reformée* (Tournon: 1638), 108–9.

42 Jean-Pierre Camus, *Instruction Catholique du Purgatoire* (Paris: 1641), 7, 9.

all, the sacrifice of the mass because to obtain a plenary indulgence, confession, contrition, and communion were the means of activating its power. Further, indulgences could be gained by having masses said at privileged altars, by taking part in jubilees, and by benefitting from pardons that came from privileged medals and rosaries.⁴³ It was possible to avoid purgatory by dying in possession of a plenary indulgence, with the words “Jesus Maria” on the lips and in the heart, so long as contrition was felt.

The post-1600 resurgence in indulgences is seen everywhere in Catholic Europe. Most surviving indulgences from the 17th century were papal pardons, evidence of shifts in authority over powers to loose and bind towards Rome. From early in the century, confraternity membership and indulgenced or “privileged” altars, where a mass said would release a soul from purgatory, seem to have become the principal means of acquiring pardons. Ollive Godart’s bequest of 1639 for two weekly masses in the Carmelite church of Nantes “at the altar privileged for the deceased” and Jeanne Gillot’s foundation of 1648 of an anniversary in the Minimes’ church at the “privileged altar” are examples.⁴⁴ In 1662, David de Cléguénec and his wife Jeanne du Mur of Cléguer in Vannes diocese founded weekly low masses in the church of the Dominicans of Quimperle, Récollets of Port-Louis and Carmelites of Hennebont at the “privileged altars.”⁴⁵ Individual parish churches also sought papal indulgences, to attract visitors and their donations on feast days. In 1626, Cléder parish church in Vannes diocese obtained a seven-year indulgence for its altar of St Sebastian, through the actions of one of the parish’s priests, Jean Charles, who visited Rome in the previous year.⁴⁶ In 1670, the parish church of Saint-Gonnéry received a plenary indulgence from Clement x for seven years “for the augmentation of the religion of the faithful and the salvation of souls” for visitors to the church on their feast of the Assumption.⁴⁷ In the second half of the 17th century, Saint-Patern parish church in the suburbs of Vannes seems to have undertaken an indulgence-acquisition campaign in association with its confraternities. In 1676, the confraternity of the *Agonisants* obtained a plenary indulgence for members and for visitors to their chapel on the Annunciation; the

43 Étienne Binet, *De l'estat heureux et malheureux des ames suffrantes en Purgatoire et des moyens souverains pour n'y aller pas ou y demeurer fort peu* (Rouen: 1635), 276.

44 Archives Départementales de la Loire-Atlantique (hereafter ADLA) H 227, H 321. Carmes de Nantes. Fondations.

45 ADM G 878. Cléguer. Fondations.

46 Alain Croix (ed.), *Moi, Jean Martin, recteur de Plouville; Curés journalistes de la Renaissance à la fin du 17e siècle* (Rennes: 1993), 101.

47 ADM 48 G 5. Cathédrale de Vannes. Indulgences.

chapel of Saint Marie-Madeleine followed in 1685 with a pardon for its feast day and in 1695 the confraternity of Saint-Barbe also gained an indulgence, again for members and for its feast.⁴⁸ There were also indulgenced activities. Participation in the Forty Hours' devotion, for example, gave pardons to the participants; this was introduced into Nantes in the early 1580s and into the rest of Brittany thereafter. We see examples in Martigné-Ferchaud in Rennes diocese in 1622 and Blain in Nantes diocese in 1665.⁴⁹ These were important, locally available means of preparing the soul for eternity.

The greatest consumers of indulgences were confraternities. Confraternities vied with each other to provide an attractive portfolio of indulgences for their members.⁵⁰ Plenary indulgences were granted on condition that on the first day of their entry members would repent, confess, and receive the holy sacrament. Plenary remission was also granted to the dying if they confessed and received the sacrament, if they were able to do so, or at least had contrition. A plenary indulgence was also granted for visiting the chapel or altar of the confraternity on its principal feast day, for praying for peace between princes, the eradication of heresy, and for the exaltation of the Holy Church. In addition, seven years of pardon were granted for assisting at the four annual feasts celebrated by the confraternity, if communion was also taken.⁵¹ Arch-confraternities benefitted from the general indulgences issued for the whole brotherhood. Thus, in 1600, a confraternity of the Rosary was erected in Saint-Sauveur Church of Locminé in Vannes diocese under sponsorship of the Dominicans. It was to receive members of both sexes "to participate in all the graces, privileges and indulgences which the other confreres enjoyed in the other churches of [the] order."⁵² Such confraternities also sought their own, particular, pardons. Thus, Locminé's confraternity had access to general indulgences granted to all Dominican Rosary confraternities but in 1657, it obtained its own papal indulgence for saying rosaries in private and, in 1666, another indulgence for visitors to its altar. Some rosary confraternities in Rennes diocese gave the obtaining of indulgences as the prime motive for their creation.⁵³ Membership of an indulgenced confraternity was thus a powerful form of preparation for dying. In

48 ADM 1053. Saint-Patern de Vannes. Indulgences.

49 Croix (ed.), *Moi, Jean Martin*, 91, 190.

50 Trevor Johnson, *Magistrates, Madonnas and Miracles: The Counter Reformation in the Upper Palatinate* (Farnham: 2009), 192.

51 Archives Départementales de Finistère (hereafter ADF) 9 G 2. Chapitre de la cathédrale de Saint-Pol-de-Léon.

52 ADM G1061. Locminé. Confrérie du Rosaire.

53 Jamet, "Les confréries," 485.

1611, an indulgence of Paul V was issued for the confraternity of the Virgin of the chapel of Brangallo in Noyal-Muzillac parish. The terms of the indulgence were of the standard form, with a plenary indulgence for people visiting the chapel on their feast of Saints Philip and James. Sixty days remission was also given for a wide range of “good works,” such as accompanying the viaticum or saying prayers for the dying, assisting in processions or funerals, for lodging the poor and pilgrims, making peace between enemies, strengthening the faith of individuals, and teaching the commandments of God to the ignorant, all classic works of mercy.⁵⁴

Indulgences were therefore a popular form of post-mortem intercession, acquired mostly while alive but also by the dead, as wills evidence shows where people left money for their acquisition. In 1663, Hervé Billou, *laboureur* of Botsorhel in Saint-Pol-de-Léon diocese, left 20 *sous* for indulgences from Paris hospitals, showing that campaigns of indulgence were still penetrating into the Breton-speaking rural communities of the far west.⁵⁵ They “gave more effective control over the future – one’s future – by guaranteeing that Purgatory had been provided for, that the deposit account in the Treasury of Merits would, with luck and effort, secure a speedy transit to heaven.”⁵⁶ Salvation could be assured without dependence on third parties, or the vagaries of fortune. The self could be saved, with foresight; although contingent on dying in a state of mind and faith to allow the pardons to be activated. Indulgences were the ultimate form of collective intercession, drawing on the merits of the whole church.

3 Last Things: The Rituals of the Deathbed

In 1542 in Ménéac in Vannes diocese, Marie Tual died. The parish priest recorded in the burial register that she was a “poor, old, beggar woman [who] had nothing with which she could make provision,” that is, for her soul.⁵⁷ That this was a matter for record shows the seriousness with which the need for intercession was taken, by all social groups. It also demonstrates that the site of final preparation for death continued to be the deathbed, when terminal arrangements for the soul were made. In baroque Europe, most people died at home,

54 ADM G 936. Noyal-Muzillac. Indulgences.

55 Francis Gourvil, “Le testament d’un paysan tregorais au XVII^e siècle,” *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique de Finistère* 95 (1969), 117–36.

56 R.N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England. Passports to Paradise* (Cambridge: 2007), 520.

57 Croix, *Moi*, Jean Martin, 16.

unless they were unfortunate enough to be involved in accidents, war, or epidemics such as plague which required separation from the living community. The dying were surrounded by friends, family, and neighbours, for whom consolation at the deathbed was a religious and social duty. While the physical and emotional care of the dying was provided by their kin, practical preparations also involved settling temporal matters with the law and in arranging spiritual matters with the special ministrations of the clergy.

3.1 *Making a Will and Bequests*

The desire to influence the post-mortem destination of the soul was at the heart of the introduction of will making in the central middle ages. Privileging the act of dying as the most important time and place for intercession for the soul, it was important to leave bequests for masses and prayers, to assist that journey and testamentary practice was a fundamental part of the preparation for death. The enormous number of spiritual bequests found in the wills of the later Middle Ages and post-Reformation Catholic Europe show that the desire for intercession for departed souls before God was widely internalised across the continent.⁵⁸

The physical context of will making was almost always the death bed, as it had been in the later Middle Ages. The contents were also very similar across western Europe, with only minor variations in phrases and formats. Wills commenced with a summary of the state of the health of the testator, typically “sick in body but whole in mind” and the reason for will-making, that “death is certain, the only uncertainty being the hour thereof” being a common formula. The ill health of the testator, as well as limited literacy in this period, meant that there was usually a scribe, most often a professional notary, writing down the contents, simultaneously moving vernacular languages such as Gallo and Breton into French, and using legal formulae and statements. Much discussion has taken place about the independence of testators in this situation, the standardisation of many wills, and the reliability of their personal content.⁵⁹ However, there were usually enough witnesses present to ensure that the wishes of the testator were recorded with some veracity. Wills are also overwhelmingly masculine, with only ten per cent recorded by women. They are also of the middling and upper social sort, with few pauper wills recorded. The formats of wills changed little across the 16th and 17th centuries, and in them we see the issues that concerned the dying and for which they needed to

58 Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: 2002), 27.

59 For example, J.D. Alsop, “Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae,” *JEH* 40 (1989), 19–27.

prepare. First came commendation of the soul, disposal of the body, burial and funeral arrangements, and pious bequests; once religious duties were finalised, the dispersal of property, payment of debts, and nomination of executors were recorded.

3.1.1 Salutation and Gaining of Intercession

The first act of the testator was to commend him or herself to God and the saints. The vast majority of wills from Catholic contexts began with the invocation "In the Name of God, Amen," either in Latin or in the vernacular language of the region. In the French notarial archives, testaments are easily observed among papers, for they are always marked at the top of the front page with a cross. The will of Claude Le Gay, widow, in Paris in 1634, demonstrates this in some detail:

firstly, as a good and true Christian and Catholic, she has recommended and recommends her soul to God the Creator, beseeching him by the infinite merits and passion of his son our saviour and redeemer Jesus Christ, wishing he would pardon her faults and offences and receive her soul when it pleases God to call her from this world to his kingdom of heaven ... imploring to this end the prayers and intercessions of the glorious Virgin Marin and of all the heavenly court of paradise.⁶⁰

A small number of testators saluted specific saints, asking for their intercession. In 1644 Estienne Tonnellier, a priest in Paris, made a will recommending his soul to God, Christ, and the Virgin, but also his guardian angel, St Michael, his patron saint, St Stephen, and the parish church patrons Saints Eustace and Agnes.⁶¹ The primary act of will-making was therefore to pay tribute to the heavenly court, for its protection of the soul.

3.1.2 Burial and Funeral Arrangements

The second religious provision of wills was to arrange for burial, the nature of which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Details of the cortège and its participants, burial place and ornaments, and the funeral ceremony itself, were laid out. The main concern of the dying person was to ensure appropriate rituals to accompany their body to the afterlife, in short, the foundation of masses. All over Europe, the numbers of testators requesting masses had been

60 Reproduced in Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 506.

61 Reproduced in Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 508.

high since the Middle Ages – in the Avignon region, between the second half of the 14th century and early 16th century, 65 to 70 per cent of testators requested masses to be said for their souls.⁶² After a mid-16th century decline, this was again the case in the 17th century. At the end of the century, 80 per cent of Provençal testators requested masses, for example.⁶³ By far the most frequently requested forms of post-mortem intercession were short-term mass cycles. Partly this was a result of practical economics – individuals commissioned affordable intercessory forms – but it was also a result of views about the fate of the soul immediately after death with particular, post-mortem judgement.⁶⁴

Thus, for example, in 1550, François Fabry, canon of Rennes, asked for 10,000 masses after his funeral and octave services.⁶⁵ In his will of 1559, André Le Gallois, a chorister at Notre Dame collegiate church of Nantes, asked for 100 masses at Notre Dame, 50 at Rouvier church, and for a trental at Saint-Denis in Nantes.⁶⁶ In the countryside, Jean Tacquet, *laboureur* from the parish of Questembert in Vannes diocese made a will in 1664 in which he asked for the “service accoutumé” for his funeral and a “huitaine” of eight services, one each day, for a week.⁶⁷ Pierre Chaunu shows that in later 17th-century Paris, in the parishes of Saint-Paul and Saint-Germain, 70 per cent of testators demanded masses, more than half stating “as soon as possible after death.”⁶⁸ A particular concentration of intercession was requested during the three days after death, when it was widely believed that God’s judgement was pending and it was still possible for the prayer of the living to influence his verdict.⁶⁹ Of 284 Parisian wills for the period 1646–72, 156 testators demanded “annuals,” a daily mass for one year, with poorer people asking for trentals which lasted only thirty days.⁷⁰ The most striking trend of the Counter Reformation was a growth in the numbers of masses requested over time, in all regions of Catholic Europe. Catherine Marle’s study of Valenciennes in the later 17th century, after it had

62 Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (c.1320-c.1480)* (Rome: 1980), 341.

63 Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident*, 347.

64 Alain Croix, *La Bretagne aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles: La vie, la mort, la foi*, 2 vols (Paris: 1981), 2: 1151.

65 ADM 55 G 2. Chapitre de Saint-Pierre, Vannes. Fondations.

66 ADLA G 313. Collégiale de Notre Dame de Nantes. Chapellenies et fondations pieuses; ADLA H 253. Chartreux de Nantes. Fondations.

67 ADM 6 E 964. Notaire Le Mauff. Questembert 1661–65.

68 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 424, 427.

69 Pierre Chaunu, “Mourir à Paris (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles),” *AESC* 31 (1976), 29–50, on 44–5.

70 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 417.

been incorporated into the French kingdom, shows that around 50 per cent of testators asked for masses and 90 per cent of these asked for short-term cycles, with a figure of 100–299 most frequently demanded.⁷¹ Concentration of prayer near to the moment of death was considered the best insurance for salvation for both temporal and spiritual reasons. It remained the most important investment for the soul, by the dying person in their will, across the period.

3.1.3 Post-mortem Intercessory Arrangements

The foundation of post-mortem intercession, especially perpetual masses by or for an individual, was based on the expectation that ongoing intercession was necessary after death, to help free a soul from its time-limited resting place in purgatory. Carlos Eire argues that there was clearly residual uncertainty about the afterlife and that those who requested perpetual masses were insuring themselves against the worst possible scenario, that the other masses would be insufficient, and that more would have to be said, until purgatory itself ceased to exist at the end of time.⁷² Thus, the organisation of permanent intercession was an important part of the preparation for death, by at least those individuals who could afford to do so. Perpetual masses offered a second layer of intercession, a scheme of intervention which followed after death and judgement of the soul, once it was lodged in purgatory. Thus, “for those who could afford them, [perpetual] masses apparently offered a singular kind of spiritual security. According to the complex ranking assigned to different kinds of masses by theologians, perpetual masses were considered the best kind of suffrage.”⁷³

The volume and importance of perpetual masses founded in the early modern period has been understated by many studies of piety based on wills. Foundations were made in large numbers but usually before will-making occurred. They were part of a life-time strategy of preparation for death, to ensure firmly and solidly that the means were in place, rather than leave them to the uncertain priorities of executors and kin: as perpetual stipendiaries and charitable bequests were complicated and expensive to found, men and women discharged as much as they could themselves before they made their wills.⁷⁴ For example, in a study of 2,500 perpetual mortuary foundations in the dioceses

71 Catherine Marle, “Le salut par les messes: Les Valenciennes devant la mort à la fin du XVIIe siècle,” *Revue du Nord* 79 (1997), 45–57, on 54.

72 Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 201–2.

73 Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 200.

74 Clive Burgess, “By Quick and By Dead. Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol,” *EHR* 102 (1987), 837–858.

of Brittany, almost 70 per cent were notarised acts by living donors, although these include kin and executors acting for the deceased.⁷⁵

The foundation of perpetual intercession was clearly the action of the better-off during the early modern centuries, but it was not the sole preserve of social elites. A wide variety of foundations was possible, with varying costs to suit different donors. Arthur Bissegger's study of the obits of St Paul's church at Villeneuve, shows that the majority of people commemorated were small proprietors and artisans and that the majority of foundations were by people of modest fortunes.⁷⁶ Chaunu's data shows that in Paris, testators requesting perpetual foundations increased over the period: from 11 per cent of men in 1550–1600, to 17 per cent in 1600–50 and 19 per cent in the second half of the century. Thus, almost one in five male testators requested perpetual intercession.⁷⁷ In Brittany, diocesan visitation records show that many parishes in the 16th and 17th centuries had foundations of weekly and/or anniversary masses and that they were part of the daily and weekly experience of the liturgy. A visitation of the western part of the diocese of Vannes in 1633 showed that more than one third of the rural and small-town parishes had chantries. Whereas a number of parishes such as Carnac had just one, others such as Kesven and Ploemur had two and Cléguerec had four.⁷⁸ By the time of the visitations of Archdeacon Antoine Binet in the diocese of Nantes in the 1680s, there was an average of around seven chantries and 8.6 anniversaries in each of the parishes of the deanery of Clisson and six of each type in the parishes of the deanery of Retz.⁷⁹ Perpetual intercession was therefore more widespread and involved more social groups than has hitherto been stressed. Again, it was part of a lifetime of preparation for eternity.

3.2 *Rites of Passage: Sacraments and Prayerful Consolation*

Once an individual looked certain to die, the legal officer gave place to the priest. The most important immediate preparation for death was the reception of the sacraments of the church, to give spiritual armour to the battle with demons that was to come and as a final good work to count in the soul's favour. The sacramental observance of dying and death was the feature of Catholic

75 Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Piety and Purgatory in Brittany 1480–1720* (Farnham: 2012), see chapter four.

76 Arthur Bissegger, *Une paroisse raconte ses morts: L'obituaire de l'église Saint-Paul à Villeneuve (XIVe–XVe siècle)* (Lausanne: 2003), 37.

77 Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 412.

78 ADM 41 G 1. Diocèse de Vannes. Visitation épiscopale 1633.

79 Ghenassia, "Les 'chevauchées'", 88.

mortuary culture that most marked it from Protestantism in the early modern period.

The Last Rites, as they came to be known, comprised a series of rituals conducted by a priest. The post-Tridentine Roman ritual was established by Paul v in 1614 and comprised three sacramental actions. First, there was confession by the dying person and administration of the sacrament of penance, followed by the priest's absolution. Confession and contrition were the most important of the ritual actions: in an emergency, confession could be made to a lay person or simply take place in the heart, and penance could always be performed in purgatory. The formal sacramental form was preferred, of course. Secondly, all the five senses of the dying would be anointed with oil, in what was known as Extreme Unction. Robert Bellarmine's *Shorter Catechisme* of 1614 stated that its function was to "blotteth out the reliques of sinnes; giveth ioye and strength to the soule, to fight againft the diueil in the laft houer; and also helpeth to recover bodilie health if it be so expedient for the saluation of the soule."⁸⁰ The Douai catechism of 1649 defined Extreme Unction as "the last sacrament given to dying persons, to strengthen them in their passage out of this life into a better."⁸¹ Then, if the patient was well enough, the eucharist or viaticum could be taken. All through this ritual, prayers would be said, the *commendatio animarum* and the rite of the plenary indulgence, particularly popular in Spain. Père Hanart summarised the ideal response of the dying: "acts of resignation to the God's pleasure, acts of faith, hope, confidence; invocation of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints; kissing lovingly of the crucifix, raising of the eyes to heaven; during with a blessed candle in hand; aspersion with holy water."⁸² A crucifix was placed between their hands, or held before their eyes to be seen. At the moment when the soul left the body, the priest would offer a prayer of commendation of the soul and asperse the corpse with holy water.

The importance of the eucharist in preparations for death can be seen in the dignity accorded to viaticum processions to the sickbed, which were frequent in early modern communities. When called upon for the purposes of ministering to the dying, the priest would go in solemn procession, carrying a special pyx containing the wafer, often under a canopy, accompanied by candles and bells. People knelt as the procession passed and in theory at least, said a prayer for the dying. In the diocese of Agen, for example, priests were enjoined by the synodal statutes that when they were about to set out with the holy oil of extreme unction, they should have the church bell rung a few times to alert

80 Bellarmine, *Shorter Catechisme*.

81 *An Abstract from the Douai Catechism for Children and Ignorant People* (London: 1737), 42.

82 Cited in Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, 349.

the neighbourhood to pray for the sick person.⁸³ Most plenary indulgences, commonly available to confraternity members, also made provision for forty days of pardon to be given to people who assisted in processions and who said prayers for the sick and dying. Their good work of intercession and assistance was in itself a preparation for their own deaths.

The importance of giving succour to the dying was of such magnitude in the church that it was the subject of regulation through episcopal synodal rulings. Firstly, the residence of priests with cure of souls in their benefices was vital, because of the need by parishioners to access sacraments, particularly for the dying. It was a great dereliction of duty to leave communities without a priest, lest parishioners die unshriven. The synodal enactments of Drogheda of 1614 stated that "parish priests are warned not to allow any persons [to] die without the last rites of the church; and any neglect in this regard is to visited with severe punishment."⁸⁴ The synodal statutes of the archbishop of Vienne of the early 18th century ordered all vicars and curates "to take care that no-one dies in their parish, particularly those over 14 years old, without having received extreme unction, because after having administered to them penance and the eucharist, they show them that the Church still has another help for them, which is the sacrament of extreme unction." To ensure that the dying received this while they were still able to comprehend it, priests were enjoined to visit often; but even if a person was unconscious and unable to confess or communicate, it should still be applied so long as they were not excommunicate.⁸⁵ This could be difficult in many regions, where dispersed settlement meant people were often distant from a priest. Serge Brunet writes of priests in some of the parishes of the Val d'Aran in the Pyrenees, who could take two hours or more to walk to the dying, up mountains and rivers, in difficult terrain.⁸⁶ But it was still customary, as summarised in the synodal statutes of the diocese of Agen of 1666, that priests must often remind their parishioners to alert them about the sickness of anyone, at any time of day or night, so they could visit them out of charity and so that they could receive the sacrament of extreme unction. Once the sacrament had been applied, the priest was enjoined to continue to

83 *Statuts et réglemens synodaux du diocèse d'Agen. Leüs and publiez depuis l'année 1666. Renouveler and confirmer dans le synode tenu à Agen les 11 and 12 du mois d'Avril 1673* (Agen: 1673), 112.

84 Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* (London: 2002), 13.

85 *Statuts synodaux publiés dans le synode de 1702 et les suivants tenus par M. Armand de Montmorin, renouvelés et confirmés par ... Monseigneur le Prince Henri d'Auvergne, archevêque de Vienne* (Vienne: 1730), 63.

86 Serge Brunet, *Les prêtres des montagnes : La vie, la mort et la foi dans les Pyrénées centrales sous l'Ancien Régime* (Aspet: 2001), 625.

visit, right up to the end of life, so they could make commendation of the soul to God, when the person died.⁸⁷ This sacrament was without charge or fee, as the statutes of the diocese of Agen clearly stated.

The importance of priestly ministry is also reflected in the large number of advice manuals written by fellow clerics, to help the clergy get it right. One such manual was Jean de Saint-Samson, *La Mort des saints précieuse devant Dieu ou les moyens de mourir saintement, et dans la grâce de Dieu* of 1657. The first seven chapters were effectively a theology of suffering, how it was useful for the sinner, and why it should be borne with fortitude as a source of grace from God. The rest comprises prayers to be said at different stages of illness and dying. Ministers and their assistants were advised not to refuse the dying and to offer them as much consolation as possible, including hearing their confession as often as they required. They were to bring before the dying the passion of Jesus and the merits of the Virgin and the saints, to read them holy scripture and even gentle music, to comfort them.⁸⁸ An ideal death therefore was one encompassed in the sacraments of the Church, conducted with dignity by clergy. Thus, the Annals of Loch Cé prepared in Connacht in the early 17th century described the death of Brian Og MacDermot 28 Jan 1636, “after the triumph of unction and penitence, and after obtaining victory over the world and the devil, and from the hands of very many orders and ecclesiastics; and after assuming the habit of St Dominic.”⁸⁹

In the Counter Reformation, dying a good death was also a confessional statement, used to show the superiority over Protestantism. For example, in Ireland Clodagh Tait has shown the importance of a ‘good’ death to reaffirm Catholic authority. In the Annals of the Four Masters, compiled by Franciscans in north-west Ireland in the early 1630s, a number of ‘good’ deaths were recorded as envisaged by the clerics of the Irish Counter Reformation. An example is that of Manus O'Donnell, injured in 1600, who was taken to Barnismore in Donnegal where his wounds were found to be incurable. Franciscan monks from the local monastery:

Were wont to visit him, hear his confession, to preach to him, and to confirm his friendship with the Lord. He made his confession without concealment, wept for his sins against God, repented his evil thoughts and pride during life, and forgave all who had wounded him ... Thus, he remained for a week, prepared for death every day, and a select father of

87 *Statuts et reglemens synodaux du diocèse d'Agen*, 112–13.

88 Saint-Samson, *La Mort des saints précieuse*.

89 Cited in Tait, *Death*, 12.

the said order constantly attending him, to fortify him against the snares of the devil. He received then the body of the Lord, and afterwards died on 22nd Oct, having gained the victory over the devil and the world.⁹⁰

It was particularly important for rulers to die well, with Catholic orthodoxy, to show their divine appointment and sovereign authority. Descriptions of the death of Philip III of Spain, for example, were widely circulated for this reason. It seems that on his deathbed, Philip had a crisis of confidence in his achievements as ruler and in the fact of his salvation. He feared the judgement of God, and all the deeds he had left undone. Father Florencia, a Jesuit, was brought in and through the priest's learned assurance of the great goodness and mercy of God, he was able to console and reassure Philip. The publication of these events for a reading public was an important way of demonstrating that the temptations of the devil at the end of life, could be resisted successfully, with the sacraments and prayers of the Church.⁹¹

4 Conclusions

Comfort of the sick and dying, preparing people to meet God, remained a primary function of the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church. There were many continuities across the 15th to the 17th centuries. While Protestantism denied intercession and the existence of purgatory, Catholics continued to believe in the third place as the likely destination after death and therefore the value of spiritual assistance. Also, the material circumstances of dying remained the same: at home, surrounded by friends and family, with a legal obligation to dispose of body, soul and property, through will making of some sort.

Yet there were differences between the baroque and the Renaissance death bed, certainly in France which has been the focus of this study. Lifetime preparation based on prayer, charity, and the sacrament of the eucharist, was increasingly privileged over the deathbed as the main site of salvation. Clerical management of the dying – already important in the later Middle Ages – was a fundamental part of the priest's role, with much guidance from synods and handbooks aimed at a clerical audience, to prepare them for this activity.

⁹⁰ Tait, *Death*, 12.

⁹¹ Didier Rault, "L'Agonie et la mort du roi d'Espagne Philippe III (1621)," in *De bonne vie s'ensuit bonne mort : Récits de mort, récits de vie en Europe (XVe-XVIIe siècle)*, ed. Patricia Eichel-Lojkine (Paris: 2006), 221–35.

There was also growth in confraternity membership and indulgence acquisition among all Catholics, in practical preparation for their mortal end.

The sacramental wrapping round of dying, with the eucharist the chief site of salvation, during life and on the deathbed, while based on the traditions of the Middle Ages, was the chief way in which Catholics separated their final journeys from those of Protestants. Also, Catholics did not travel across the great divide into the next world alone, they did so with the Virgin Mary, the blessed company of heaven, and the prayerful presence of their living friends and community members. A good baroque death was public, ritualised, and orderly, even if for many people this was an aspiration rather than a reality.

Dying, Death and Burial in the Christian Orthodox Tradition: Byzantium and the Greek Churches, ca. 1300–1700

Zachary Chitwood

Byzantine and Orthodox beliefs and practices associated with death, burial, and remembrance in the late medieval and early modern period (ca. 1300–1700), though in many respects similar to those in Catholic and (at the end of this epoch) Protestant Europe, were also nonetheless marked by a sense of separation. While Byzantine memorial practices up until roughly the turn of the millennium might have been regarded as different in degree rather than kind from those of other parts of the Christian world, theological developments in the West, above all the doctrine of purgatory, and the subsequent Byzantine/Orthodox rejection of these new tenants of the faith, would ensure that the Orthodox Church would tread its own *Sonderweg* with regard to death. Unlike the dogmatic approach of the Roman Church, Orthodox theologians were content with a fluid, even nebulous, understanding of the transition between this life and the next:

[D]espite the obvious importance of these themes, the nature of the human and its fate after death were never authoritatively defined or formalized by an ecumenical council, nor were they the subjects per se of systematic theological inquiry. Thus throughout the Byzantine world one finds an assortment of eschatologies strewn somewhat carelessly about.¹

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- 1 Nicholas Condas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream’: The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), 91–124, at 119. See also the more recent opinion of Vasilios Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium: The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art* (Cambridge: 2017), 2: “From the outset it should be said that, for all their reputed and professed preoccupation with the afterlife, the Byzantines never produced a systematic theology on the postmortem fate of the soul. Or, rather, they did so only in the fifteenth century, under duress at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, whose goal was the union of the Byzantine and Latin Churches.”

Medieval and post-medieval Greek authors who attempted to describe the hereafter were thus free to describe this unknowable sphere according to their own personal proclivities. Such accounts of death and the afterlife, even if broadly in agreement regarding fundamentals, often differed considerably in particulars.

In order to explore the Byzantine and immediate post-Byzantine relationship with death, dying, and burial, this chapter begins with a brief sketch of the development of these practices from Late Antiquity until the Fourth Crusade. An examination of mortuary customs is then offered with a focus on the Late Byzantine period (1204–1453). Finally, the further development of these mores is followed in the first centuries of Ottoman rule (1453–1700). Over the course of this survey several important developments in the Byzantine approach to death and dying can be discerned: first, the increasing importance of the commemoration of the dead through prayer and votive masses; second, the pivotal role the Byzantine rejection of purgatory played in funerary and commemorative practice; third, the centripetal tendencies of Byzantine and post-Byzantine memorial practices, which were initially centred upon Constantinople and later upon Mount Athos.

1 Background Context

In order to contextualize Byzantine funerary and memorial practices after 1300, a brief excursus on their development over the preceding millennium is necessary. Byzantine burial praxis as well as commemoration or *memoria* – the Latin conception, though broader in scope, essentially corresponds to the Byzantine term *mnemosyna* (μνημόσυνα) – were not comprehensively discussed by writers and theologians of Late Antiquity (ca. 300–800).² Indeed, the most influential Greek Fathers, such as the Cappadocian trio of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, as well as John Chrysostom, devoted little attention to death, dying, and burial in their writings, and on the occasions they did address such topics, such as in eulogies, they emphasized Christians' belief in the Resurrection and therefore the powerlessness of death.³ The famed testament of Gregory of Nazianzus, the only complete will

2 On this topic, with treatment of both the Latin and Greek traditions, see Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: 2009), esp. 140–175.

3 Christian Gastgeber, "Tod und Totenklage: Der Standpunkt der Kirchenväter," in *Tod am Nil: Tod und Totenkult im antiken Ägypten*, eds Harald Feschauer, Christian Gastgeber, and Hermann Harrauer (Vienna: 2003), 45–56, esp. 49–51 for the Greek Fathers.

in Greek transmitted by manuscripts and not by papyri from Late Antiquity, makes no mention of funerary or memorial provisions.⁴ This is a lacuna that has not gone unnoticed by scholars:

The most surprising aspect of Gregory's will was his lack of concern for his own memory. He never mentioned his own tomb, an epitaph, or commemorative celebrations. Instead, Gregory seems to have preferred to look back to the memory and wishes of his parents. The focus of his will was the church at Nazianzus, which was itself already a gift from Gregory's family.⁵

Some Christian customs in the context of memorial and funerary practice had obvious pagan antecedents. This included the pagan memorial meal, at which the living feasted and drank, so it was supposed, in the company of the dead to celebrate their memory.⁶ Though Tertullian in his *De testimonio animae* grasped onto the memorial meal as evidence that pagans were already familiar with the Christian notion of the dead having a continuing existence in the afterlife, later Western Church Fathers, such as Ambrose of Milan and Augustine, sharply criticized this custom and tried to redirect Christian funerary practice towards almsgiving, a tendency that lasted long into the Middle Ages.⁷ The Greek Fathers, by contrast, were more accommodating of this pagan relic, and indeed the so-called *agape* (ἀγάπη), the memorial meal, remained a fixture of Byzantine memorial praxis from its origins onward.

One key development in the Late Roman conception of death and the afterlife that did take place at the theological level was the articulation of the "part

4 As observed by Joëlle Beaucamp, "Le testament de Grégoire de Nazianze," *Fontes Minores* 10 (1998), 1–100, on 1–2.

5 Raymond van Dam, "Self-Representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series 46 (1995), 118–48, on 131; Cf. Fotis Vasileiou, "For the Poor, the Family, the Friends: Gregory of Nazianzus' Testament in the Context of Early Christian Literature," in *Inheritance, Law and Religions in the Ancient and Mediaeval Worlds*, eds Béatrice Caseau and Sabine R. Hübner (Paris: 2014), 142–57, on 156–7.

6 On which see in particular Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Mahl und Spende im mittelalterlichen Totenkult," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 18 (1984), 401–20.

7 Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Gegenwart der Toten," in *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke, *Mediaevalia Lovaniensia* 1.9 (Louvain: 1983), 19–77. Repr. in Andreas von Hülsen-Esch, Bernhard Jussen, and Frank Rexroth (eds), *Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen: Mittelalterforschung – Historische Kulturwissenschaft – Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Erkenntnis* (Göttingen and Oakville, CT: 2011), 99–155, on 128–9.

for the soul" (*psychikon*).⁸ Originally formulated by Basil of Caesarea and then further nuanced by the other Greek Fathers, the "part for the soul" was a doctrine that called for Christians to give a fraction of their estates – sometimes equivalent to the inheritance of an heir, sometimes a third of the estate, sometimes other amounts – for the benefit of their souls. Initially, the *psychikon* had a strongly caritative tint: it was directed above all at supporting the poor. The "part for the soul" in the following centuries remained an essential feature of Byzantine as well as wider Orthodox funerary and memorial praxis, including the period with which this contribution is concerned.

Already in the Primitive Church the commemoration of the deceased was marked by fixed rhythms of remembrance. In the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*, which were composed at the end of the 4th century and reflect the primitive practices of the Antiochene church, we find the following passage concerning funerary practice:

Let the third [day] of the deceased be celebrated with psalms and prayers, because of the One Who Rose after three days, and on the ninth [day] in the memory of the living and dead, and on the fortieth, according to the old usage. For the people thus also lamented Moses on the anniversary day in his memory. And let there be distributions to the poor made in his memory.⁹

Aside from noting that the commemoration of the deceased on the 30th day after death was common in the medieval West (and indeed it is found as a variant in manuscripts) but more or less unknown in Byzantium (where the 40th day was standard), it should also be mentioned that the *Apostolic Constitutions* were not recognized as canonical until the Council in Trullo of 691–2. The second canon of that council noted that the *Apostolic Constitutions* had to that point been suspected of heretical interpolations: thus, we cannot assume the widespread acceptance of the provisions of the text, including its

8 The best analysis of the emergence of this doctrine among the Greek Fathers remains Eberhard F. Bruck, *Kirchenväter und soziales Erbrecht: Wanderungen religiöser Ideen durch die Rechte der östlichen und westlichen Welt* (Berlin, Göttingen and Heidelberg: 1956), 1–75.

9 Franciscus Xaverius Funk (ed.), *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn: 1905), vol. 1, 552, 554 (8.42). For recent overviews of scholarship on the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Canons of the Apostles*, see Heinz Ohme, "Sources of the Greek Canon Law to the Quinisept Council (691/2): Councils and Church Fathers," in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, eds W. Hartmann and K. Pennington (Washington, DC: 2012), 24–114, on 28–33; Spyros Troianos, *Die Quellen des byzantinischen Rechts* (Berlin and Boston: 2017), 52–3.

prescriptions for the commemoration of the dead, until the close of the 7th century. Nonetheless, the essential features of Byzantine *memoria* – periodicity (commemorations on the 3rd, 9th and 40th days after death, though these numbers sometimes varied), prayer and distributions to the poor – would not be essentially different a millennium later, in the period which this chapter is concerned with.¹⁰

We do not possess any truly elaborate descriptions of funerary provisions and *memoria* in Byzantium until the 11th century, at which time a number of wills, as well as monastic charters (*typika*), allow much more information regarding memorial provisions to be ascertained. Though these documents evidence strong continuity with late antique funerary and commemorative practice in many respects, a far greater emphasis on the *memoria* of the dead through prayer and liturgical commemoration is also apparent. Moreover, the extraordinarily elaborate commemorative practices and descriptions of tombs that are related in the *typika* of the Georgian general Gregory Pakourianos in the 11th century for Bačkovó/Petrizos in Bulgaria and of Emperor John 11 Komnenos (r. 1118–1143) for Pantokrator in Constantinople can be compared with the archaeological evidence at both sites (and indeed the former is still a functioning monastery).

Two major events in the 13th century had a significant impact on the development of Byzantine funerary and commemorative practice after 1300, and together represent something of a *caesura*. The first of these events was the sack of Constantinople by the warriors of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The half-century occupation of the empire's most important city by the Latin Christians and the political fragmentation of former Byzantine territories ensured that the political and social context of death and dying was now varied and multi-polar: indeed, the presentation of material in what follows is not *stricto sensu* in every case 'Byzantine', representing as it does the wider Orthodox world or Byzantine commonwealth.

The second of these events was the development of the doctrine of purgatory in the Latin West, which was elevated to a dogma at the Second Council of Lyons (1274). This teaching was intensely debated over the course of the 13th century between members of the Latin and Greek Churches, particularly in

10 The three commemorations on the 3rd, 9th and 40th days after death appear to have been based on the concept of the soul's gradual departure from the body after death. On this point see Gilbert Dagron, "Troisième, neuvième et quarantième jours dans la tradition byzantine: Temps chrétien et anthropologie," in *Le temps chrétien de la fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge, IIIe–XIIIe siècle*, ed. Jean-Marie Leroux, Colloques internationaux de Centre national de la recherche scientifique 604 (Paris: 1984), 419–30.

mixed cultural contexts (southern Italy, Latin-ruled Constantinople, Cyprus).¹¹ Purgatory was never fully accepted by the vast majority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Orthodox Church and was vehemently rejected by the major monastic communities (particularly those of Mount Athos). Opposition to this doctrine became a touchstone of Orthodox belief, even though a comprehensive doctrine of prayer for the dead was not developed by Byzantine churchmen until the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439).¹² Byzantine commemorative practice as a result was not affected by certain features of the teaching of purgatory, such as the emphasis on continuous masses in a short period after death.

Our best evidence for memorial and funerary practices in Byzantium stems from sovereign burials, and to a lesser extent those of the elite more generally. From the time of Constantine I (r. 311–337) until Constantine VIII (r. 1025–1028), Byzantine emperors were interred in the Church of Holy Apostles in Constantinople, which very much functioned as an imperial mausoleum and played an important role in court ceremonial. Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–944), a usurper who sought to integrate his own family within the ruling Macedonian dynasty, was the first emperor to select (even though his eventual fall from the throne likely gave him little choice in the matter) a burial site outside of the Church of Holy Apostles. His so-called Myrelaion contained a monastic community as well as an almshouse. The daily distribution of 3000 loaves of bread at the Myrelaion strongly suggests the erection of a commemorative site. Though an outlier for the time, Romanos's tomb prefigured imperial burials from the second quarter of the 11th century onwards, which focused on the commemoration of individual emperors and their immediate family members. Recent scholarship has underlined that, despite certain sites (Pantokrator and Lips Monastery in Constantinople) containing the tombs of multiple emperors, in the last centuries of Byzantium there was never a concentrated attempt to create an imperial mausoleum along the lines of Holy Apostles.¹³

11 Gilbert Dagron, "La perception d'une différence: Les débuts de la 'Querelle du Purgatoire,'" *Actes du XVe Congrès International d'Études Byzantines. Athènes – Septembre 1976*, 4 vols (Athens: 1979–1981), vol. 4, *Histoire communications* (1980), 84–92, on 85–8.

12 For the Byzantine response to the doctrine of purgatory, see now Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 74–81.

13 For Pantokrator, see Paul Magdalino, "The Foundation of the Pantokrator Monastery in Its Urban Setting," in *The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople*, ed. Sophia Kotzabassi, *Byzantinisches Archiv* 27 (Boston and Berlin: 2013), 33–55; for the Palaiologoi, see Nicholas Melvani, "The Tombs of the Palaiologan Emperors," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 42/2 (2018), 237–60.

2 The Late Byzantine Period (1204–1453)

Before delving into specific cases from the Late Byzantine period, some features of Byzantine commemoration and burial in this era should be mentioned. One general problem in examining Late Byzantine burials is that burial in churches had already been forbidden in Late Roman law, and this prohibition was then continuously repeated throughout the Byzantine era.¹⁴ Yet burial in churches was extremely commonplace, thus apparently contradicting both canon and civil law. Late Byzantine canonists sought a compromise by differentiating between ‘dedicated’ churches and oratories, whereby burial was allowed in the latter, or by allowing burial away from the altar in the sides or narthex of a church.¹⁵ In any case, the evidence for burial in churches is so abundant that it is difficult to find examples where the canonical prohibition of burial in churches was strictly adhered to.

An issue more unique to the Late Byzantine period was the problem of burial and commemoration of Orthodox in churches of other Christian denominations.¹⁶ The preeminent Middle Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon (d. ca. 1200), apparently with an eye towards Orthodox mixing with Miaphysites and adherents of the Church of the East, had pronounced the worthlessness of prayers of schismatics for the deceased. By contrast, John of Kitros (end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century), found nothing harmful in Orthodox being buried in Latin churches and commemorated by mixed Byzantine and Latin communities. John of Kitros’ more relaxed attitude likely reflected not only the close links between Byzantine and Latin Christianity, but also a sense of pragmatism, given the significant proportion of Orthodox believers who lived under Frankish rule in the last centuries of Byzantium.

Given the comparatively abundant evidence regarding sovereign burials, it is worth going into some detail regarding the commemorative and funerary practices of the Byzantine emperors during this period, as well as sovereigns from other Orthodox lands. The Latin occupation of Constantinople (1204–1261) disrupted the, by then almost 900-year-old, tradition of imperial burials in the capital. The Byzantine successor states in Epiros (north-western Greece), Nicaea (western Asia Minor) and Trebizond (north-eastern Asia

14 The most comprehensive treatment of Byzantine burial and its regulation in law is Nikos E. Emmanouelides, *Tò díkaiou tῆς ταφῆς στὸ Βυζάντιο*, Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte. Athener Reihe 3 (Athens: 1989).

15 Patrick Viscuso, “Death in Late Byzantine Canon Law,” *Ostkirchliche Studien* 51 (2002), 225–48, on 241–2.

16 Discussed in Viscuso, “Death in Late Byzantine Canon Law,” 237.

Minor) all attempted to appropriate the imperial legacy in various ways, and this included the erection of new imperial tombs. For the Nicaean Empire the Monastery of Sosandra, founded by John III Vatatzes between 1225 and 1241 to commemorate victories over the Seljuk Turks and Latins, served as the main mausoleum for the brief rule of the Laskarid dynasty.¹⁷ Since this martial and pious emperor was buried there and later venerated as a saint, the monastery functioned as the site of an imperial cult before his relics were moved to Magnesia in the 14th century. Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, which also housed a monastic community, was built around the same time by Manuel I of the Grand Komnenoi (r. 1238–1261) and it seems to have been designed as a dynastic mausoleum. Interestingly, examination of the archaeological and artistic remains suggests that only the emperors were allowed burial within the main church, while the monks and other personages were buried outside of it. Anthony Eastmond has interpreted this development as a major change in imperial burial praxis:

The placing of tombs in two different locations – one inside the church, the others in the podium niches – indicates a revolution in imperial funerary practice. With only the emperor buried within the church, and all others (whether members of his family or court, or the monks of the monastery) buried around the exterior, it would suggest the beginnings of a cult of the individual emperor, in which the hierarchical relationships of life were reproduced after death.¹⁸

Imperial burials in the erstwhile capital resumed after the reconquest of Constantinople by the emperor Michael VIII in 1261, ending over half a century of Latin rule. With this momentous territorial acquisition Michael avenged the ruinous sack of Constantinople by the crusaders of 1204. The consequences of the sack and the crusade had been economically and politically ruinous for Byzantium, and the Byzantine churches and monasteries that had previously housed imperial tombs had not been unaffected by the catastrophe. The capital's famed monasteries had been ransacked, or in some cases been taken over by the Latins, while Constantinople's grand philanthropic institutions were never to return to their former glory. The Sampson Hospital, for instance, had

17 The foundation, dedication and in particular the localization of the monastery are discussed in detail in Ekaterini Mistiou, "The Monastery of Sosandra: A Contribution to Its History, Dedication and Localisation," *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 2 (2011), 665–84.

18 Anthony Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: The Empire of Trebizond*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman monographs 10 (Aldershot: 2004), 34.

been given to a special Latin hospital order.¹⁹ The Pantokrator, another lavish philanthropic complex that also served as a mausoleum for some members of the Komnenian dynasty, survived only as a monastery, shorn of its earlier hospital, home for the aged, and leprosarium, until the later Ottoman conquest.²⁰

It was therefore one of Michael VIII's principal tasks to recover some of Constantinople's ancient splendour after he had reconquered the city by refounding and rebuilding the capital's churches, monasteries, and philanthropic institutions.²¹ Thus, he restored a functioning school to the famed Orphanotropheion, although whether he was able to re-establish the complex's full range of charitable activities that had been offered after its refoundation under Emperor Alexios I Komnenos is rather doubtful.²² Yet for our purposes Michael VIII's most interesting act in the context of restoring the capital was his refoundation of the familial monastery of St Michael on Mount Auxentios. This foundation, located in the Asiatic suburbs of Constantinople southeast of Chalcedon, had been founded by Michael's grandfather, the *megas doux* Alexios, who later adopted the monastic name of Anthony.²³

The foundation had both a philanthropic and a commemorative function. Rather than allowing the monastery to accumulate wealth through the generation of a surplus, the imperial founder demanded that the surplus extracted

- 19 For the fate of the Sampson Hospital after 1204, see Dionysios Stathakopoulos, "Stiftungen von Spitälern in spätbyzantinischer Zeit (1261–1453)," in *Stiftungen in Christentum, Judentum und Islam vor der Moderne: Auf der Suche nach ihren Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden in religiösen Grundlagen, praktischen Zwecken und historischen Transformationen*, ed. Michael Borgolte, *Stiftungsgeschichten* 4 (Berlin: 2005), 147–57, on 147–9. He notes that the establishment during the period of Latin rule was closer to a western *hospitale*, a generalized welfare institution, than a more medically specialized traditional Byzantine *xenon*.
- 20 On the history of Pantokrator after 1204 see Sophia Kotzabassi, "The Monastery of the Pantokrator between 1204 and 1453," in *The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople*, ed. Sopia Kotzabassi, *Byzantinisches Archiv* 27 (Boston and Berlin: 2013), 57–70.
- 21 Michael VIII's building program is described in detail in Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993), 243–61.
- 22 Cf. Timothy S. Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington, DC: 2003), 194–5, who relies on *topoi*-laden lines describing the function of the *orphanotrophos* (aiding orphans, helping the lame, assisting the blind) in a poem of Manuel Philes as an argument for the complex's continuing offering of comprehensive philanthropic services.
- 23 Edition of the *typikon* in *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rykopisei*, vol. 1: *Typika*, pt. 1, ed. Aleksei Dmitrievsky (Kiev: 1895), 769–94 (hereafter cited as *Typikon for the Monastery of St Michael*), with an English translation by George Dennis in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, eds John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 35 (Washington, DC: 2000), vol. 3, 1207–36.

from the foundation's revenues be completely spent every year.²⁴ The monastery, in essence, was to finance charity rather than directly practicing it, a feature which perhaps points to the increasing recognition of the economic effectiveness of monasteries. The recipients of this largesse were to be prisoners, orphans, and dowry-less maidens. This triad of beneficiaries is interesting, because, although such needy groups had long been the target of Christian charity, with orphans even being housed in special orphanages, this appears to be the first recorded instance in Byzantine history that prisoners and dowry-less maidens benefitted from endowments.

Retaining imperial favour, even in the instance of dynastic change, would ensure that the monastery's primary function, namely the commemoration of members of the Palaiologan family, would continue to be performed.²⁵ The monastic community, which was not to exceed 40 monks, was obligated to pray for Michael's grandparents and parents (his grandfather Alexios, in religion Anthony; his grandmother Irene Komnene, in religion Eugeneia; his father the *megas domestikos* Andronikos, in religion Arsenios; and his mother Theodora Komnene, in religion Theodosia). These four progenitors of Michael were to be commemorated on 9 November, at a memorial meal at which 40 *hyperpera* (gold coins) were to be provided for the costs of illumination, food, and the distribution of charity at the monastery's gates. Michael himself expected to be included in these commemorations after his death, and as such the foundation was above all a vehicle for familial commemoration. Michael's *typikon* also included a plea to future rulers to preserve his modest foundation, which, he emphasized, was not over-generously endowed.²⁶

The (re-)foundation of the Constantinopolitan Lips Monastery undertaken by Michael's wife, Theodora Palaiologina, is marked by an even greater degree of familial integration: indeed, it was slated as a residence for female members of the imperial family,²⁷ and in many other respects can be viewed as a Byzantine *Hauskloster*. The empress emphasized that her children and grandchildren and their consorts, if they so desired, would be allowed burial in the foundation and given annual commemorations.²⁸ Moreover, it was more lavishly endowed, in the style, if not on the scale, of the Komnenian Pantokrator.²⁹ To

24 *Typikon for the Monastery of St Michael* 783–785; Eng. trans. 1226f.

25 *Typikon for the Monastery of St Michael* 787–8; Eng. trans. 1278.

26 *Typikon for the Monastery of St Michael* 789–90; Eng. trans. 1230.

27 *Lips Typikon* 128–9; Engl. trans. by Alice-Mary Talbot in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 3, 1254–86, at 1278.

28 *Lips Typikon* 130; Engl. trans. 1278–9.

29 *Lips Typikon* 130–4; Engl. trans. 1279–80.

its community of 50 nuns were attached four priests to celebrate mass in the foundation's two churches, as well as a hospital housing 12 patients and a staff of 20, including three doctors, a chief pharmacist, and two apothecaries.

As recent scholarship has underlined, Palaiologan Lips as well as Komnenian Pantokrator had been intended as sites of burial and commemoration for members of the immediate family, rather than as dynastic mausolea.³⁰ In this respect both Lips and St Michael's were continuing traditions of imperial foundations that had flourished before the Latin conquest of the capital. Like Michael's grander project of *renovatio imperii*, the tombs of the first Palaiologoi, though in some respects marked by the empire's reduced means, were aimed at restoration and retrenchment: both were refoundations, both were to benefit immediate family and, last but not least, both were Constantinopolitan endowments, and as such still assumed the pre-eminence of the "Queen of Cities" within the wider Byzantine/Orthodox world.

Lips and St Michael's represented a particular mode of sovereign burial: foundations in which emperors and empresses would be interred and eternally commemorated by the resident monastic community. Like Pantokrator, such monastic foundations stood under considerable imperial control and their communities exercised little independent authority. Excessive reliance upon and interference by the imperial founding family and underdeveloped monastic independence were to prove a deadly mixture for the long-term success of such imperial burial sites, as neither of these monastic foundations survived the Ottoman conquest.³¹

Those who could afford it, in particular Orthodox sovereigns, were therefore well-advised to ensure their post-mortem commemoration not only in the funerary churches and chapels they had endowed, but in other, more secure places as well. The Byzantine elite after ca. 1350, around the time the Ottomans had already established a beachhead in Europe, naturally reacted to the empire's weakness by increasingly investing their wealth, including endowments and donations associated with burial and commemoration, outside of

30 Melvani, "The Tombs of the Palaiologan Emperors."

31 Endowing or donating to vigorous reformist abbots and their communities, by contrast, was a recipe for the long-term success of monastic foundations both in the medieval West as well as in Byzantium: see Michael Borgolte and Zachary Chitwood, "Herrscherliche Klosterstiftungen im Westen und in Byzanz: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Reformforschung/Royal Monastic Foundations in the West and in Byzantium: A Contribution to Comparative Scholarship on Reform," in *Menschen, Bilder, Sprache, Dinge: Wege der Kommunikation zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen 2: Menschen und Worte*, eds Falko Daim, Christian Gastgeber, Dominik Heher, and Claudia Rapp, *Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident* 9.2 (Mainz: 2018), 51–61.



FIGURE 7.1 Patterns of sovereign patronage on Mount Athos in the late middle ages

SOURCE: CREATED BY THE AUTHOR ON THE BASIS OF GOOGLE MAPS

Constantinople. Instead, elite wealth began to be accumulated in the monastic federations of Athos near Thessaloniki and, to a lesser degree, Meteora in Thessaly, thereby becoming premier venues for the prestige foundations of Byzantine founders.

Monasteries, in particular those on Mount Athos, also increasingly served as repositories of elite wealth and vehicles for funding retirement, the latter via the development of so-called *adelphata*, or lifetime annuities. It was Nicolas Oikonomides who termed this phenomenon “Switzerland Syndrome”: in his analogy, Mount Athos in the 14th and 15th centuries served much the same function as a contemporary Switzerland, in that both served as magnets for elite wealth.³² Moreover, the Holy Mountain in this period also became an arena for competition between Orthodox rulers, who sought to enhance their own status by patronizing Athos and securing commemoration by the monastic communities there. This dynamic was hardly a one-way process, as the monks themselves left their cloistered confines to convince Orthodox sovereigns to richly endow their monasteries.

The feverish and even entrepreneurial environment of Athos in this period is illustrated by the undertakings of one its most charismatic monks, Chariton. When Chariton became the abbot of the Monastery of Koutloumousiou around the middle of the 14th century (ca. 1355/56), his community was, at

32 Nicholas Oikonomides, “Patronage in Palaiologan Mt Athos,” in *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism*, eds Anthony Bryer and Mary Cunningham (Aldershot; 1996), 99–111, on 100. Repr. in *Society, Culture and Politics in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: 2005), no. xxv.

least by Athonite standards, poor and unimportant. In three versions of his testament as well as a further document transmitted by the monastery's archive, Chariton and his patron related how he sought to secure the economic basis of his community and increase its status by seeking patrons across the Orthodox world.³³ This charismatic abbot was able to read the writing on the wall regarding the fate of the Byzantine state, and quickly surmised that the Byzantine emperor and patrons from the empire would not be able to fund the expansion of his monastery: "On its behalf I not only appealed to prominent Romans to support me in this endeavour, but also those of other nationalities, from whose donations I endowed this monastery with no small amount of possessions and funding, as well as a fair amount of property."³⁴

Instead, the monastery's key patron, who would later be designated by Chariton and the rest of the monks of Koutloumousiou with the honorific title of *ktetor* ("founder"), was Vladislav I Vlaicu (1364–1377), prince of Wallachia. Vladislav was ruler of a nascent Orthodox principality that had first gained independence from Hungary under his grandfather, Basarab I. Vladislav's father, Nicholas Alexander (r. 1352–1364), had already begun to patronize the monastery, chiefly, so it would seem, by funding defensive works there. Vladislav himself would continue his father's patronage of the monastery, richly endowing Koutloumousiou and thereby further enhancing the prestige of his new state. Indeed, in a document outlining his patronage activity, the Wallachian prince relates how Chariton had convinced him to become a benefactor of the monastery by emphasizing how Athos had become the new centre of the Orthodox world, the *oikoumene*: "He [Chariton] said that it would be fitting for my lordship to do what other lordships have already done, Serbs, Bulgarians, Rus and Iberians, who have taken pains for their commemoration and honour on this wondrous and holy mountain, which is, one might say, the eye of the entire world."³⁵ This turn of phrase – "The Eye of the Entire World" (ὁ ὀφθαλμός της ὁκουμένης της οἰκουμένης) – had previously been reserved for Constantinople, the "Queen of Cities."³⁶ That a Byzantine monk would now advertise the Holy Mountain rather than Constantinople as the centre of the Orthodox universe,

33 *Actes de Kutlumas*, ed. Paul Lemerle, Archives de l'Athos 2 (Paris: 1945), 102–105 (no. 26); 110–16 (no. 29); 116–21 (no. 30); 134–8 (no. 36). Engl. trans. by George Dennis for nos. 29, 30 and 36 in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 4, 1408–32.

34 *Actes de Kutlumas* 113; Eng. trans. 1414.

35 *Actes de Kutlumas* 102–105, no. 26, on 103, lines 8–10.

36 On the use of this designation for Constantinople, see Paul Magdalino, "Ο οφθαλμός της οἰκουμένης και ο ομφαλός της γης," in *Το Βυζάντιο ως οἰκουμένη*, ed. Evangelos Chrysos, Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών, Διεθνή Συμπόσια 16 (Athens: 2005), 107–23.

and that such an argument found a ready audience in the person of Vladislav, is reflective of the profound shift of gravity which had occurred within the geography of the Orthodox world after 1204. Athos, not Constantinople, was now seen as the most desirable site of Orthodox commemoration.

The case of Vladislav demonstrates that, regardless of where a ruler died and was interred –and it does seem in almost all of the cases of sovereigns endowing Athonite monasteries that they were not subsequently buried on the Holy Mountain – securing commemoration in this most prestigious of monastic centres was worth much money and effort. A well-documented case of this trend is that of the Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond who, though they were buried in Hagia Sophia in the capital of their Black Sea kingdom, also sought commemoration on Athos. Another enterprising abbot, Dionysios, a contemporary of Chariton, likewise sought a wealthy patron to secure the future of the Athonite monastery he had founded shortly after the middle of the 14th century.

Documents from the monastery's archive as well as his *vita*, written in the 16th century but based on an older version, show how this intrepid monk managed to attract patronage. Though Dionysios managed to attain the donation of various properties on the island of Lemnos from the Grand Stratopedarch George Astras Synadenos, the brother-in-law of the emperor John v Palaiologos, as well as Michael Hierakes, which were confirmed by an imperial chrysobull in 1364, these holdings apparently did not satisfy the ambitions that



FIGURE 7.2 Present-day view of the Monastery of Dionysiou, from the west

SOURCE: PHOTO TAKEN BY ZACHARY CHITWOOD, SEPTEMBER 2019

Dionysios had for his new monastery.³⁷ When his brother became the metropolitan of Trebizond shortly thereafter, Dionsysios visited him and, having impressed the Trapezuntine Emperor Alexios III with his ascetic way of life and holiness, secured a significant endowment for his community by means of an imperial chrysobull issued in 1374.³⁸

In this charter, the emperor played upon the origins of the father of Athonite communal monasticism, Athanasios (925/930–1001), the founder of the Great Lavra and a native son of Trebizond: “You might say that recently Athanasios was given to Athos from Trebizond, while Dionysios was given in return from Athos to Trebizond.”³⁹ Like Athanasios the Athonite himself, who had acquired imperial patronage for his Great Lavra in the person of Nikephoros Phokas, Dionysios convinced Alexios III to lavishly endow his own foundation: Trebizond would contribute 100 *somia* of gold, as well a further annuity of 100 *aspra* (silver coins) a year. This would allow Dionysios to provide his community with all the buildings necessary for a small monastery, including a church, a walled enclosure, cells, and an aqueduct.⁴⁰

How had Dionysios induced the potentate of this Black Sea kingdom to display such generosity towards his monastery? One argument the abbot had employed was a variation on Chariton’s statement that Athos had become the “Eye of the World”: Dionysios is quoted in the charter as having stated:

For all emperors, kings and princes have made themselves renowned by building for the Holy Mountain monasteries and cloisters for their undiluted memory. Since you excel many of them, it stands to reason that you must add something fitting to this, so that you might have, like many others, continuous commemoration and unending spiritual enjoyment.⁴¹

Indeed, commemoration of Alexios’ dynasty is heavily emphasized in the chrysobull: his forefathers, “those famous emperors and heroes, the Grand Komnenoi ... may [the monks] intercede for and bless with a ceaseless voice.”⁴² Also to be commemorated were Alexios himself, his mother, consort, children, and future descendants.

37 *Actes de Dionysiou*, ed. Nicolas Oikonomidès, Archives de l’Athos 4 (Paris: 1968), 447–50 (no. 3).

38 *Actes de Dionysiou* 50–61, no. 4.

39 *Actes de Dionysiou* 50–61, no. 4, on 60, line 20.

40 *Actes de Dionysiou* 60, lines 36–7.

41 *Actes de Dionysiou* 60, lines 22–4.

42 *Actes de Dionysiou* 60, lines 40–2.



FIGURE 7.3 Artistic rendering of the Monastery of Dionysiou, with captions showing the various parts of the monastic grounds. Printed at Venice in 1780

SOURCE: DISPLAY FROM THE BYZANTINE MUSEUM OF CULTURE IN THESSALONIKI. PHOTO TAKEN BY ZACHARY CHITWOOD, SEPTEMBER 2019

Nor did the quid pro quo on the part of the monks stop at commemoration: two further conditions were imposed. First, Dionysios' new foundation was to be called the "Monastery of the Grand Komnenos" (ἡ μονή τοῦ μεγάλου Κομνηνοῦ) – a demand that, so it seems, was never actually realized.⁴³ Second, any subjects of Trebizond desiring to join the monastic community, provided they were morally suitable, were to be accepted without hesitation by Dionysios.⁴⁴ Though the Byzantine emperor also patronized Dionysiou once more after Alexios III had issued his charter, it would be two further Grand Komnenoi who would confirm Trebizond's special relationship with the monastery, and indeed they are still commemorated by the monks of Dionysiou to this day.

43 *Actes de Dionysiou* 61, lines 46–74.

44 *Actes de Dionysiou* 61, lines 60–1.

Although the source material for the last centuries of Byzantium is much better than that of earlier periods, even this era is still marked by a dearth of testimony regarding death, burial, and remembrance among the non-elite. Compared to the abundant evidence for sovereign burials, the meagre sources for the funerary and commemorative practices of Byzantine peasants allow only limited conclusions. Nonetheless, some glimpses are still possible.

The founding of churches or monasteries and then insisting upon burial and commemoration in them, in the manner of Orthodox sovereigns or the elite, was not possible on an individual basis for the majority of Byzantine peasants and urban residents. While the collective foundation of churches in the Late Byzantine countryside is well-attested, a feat which seems to have been often accomplished by whole villages, it is not clear, and by no means to be assumed, that the individual members of such collective actions would have been guaranteed burial or commemorative rights in the churches they founded.⁴⁵

The most comprehensive set of sources we possess regarding Late Byzantine death, burial, and remembrance are the acts of the Pontic monastery of Vazelon. The basis of the present edition of the text is manuscript no. 743 of the State Library in St Petersburg, which contains 190 acts ranging from the years 1245 to 1704, with the vast majority of the acts stemming from before the year 1500. The peasants who lived in the Matsouka region in which the monastery was located appear to have been relatively well-off by Byzantine standards, and there is no mention in the acts of dependent peasants (*paroikoi*), indicating a prosperous peasantry with a weak rural aristocracy.

The death and burial of peasant donors are mentioned several times in the acts themselves; as in the *typika*, references to approaching death in the acts are not infrequent. It is difficult to determine whether discussing the inevitability of death was merely formulaic or whether most donors were in fact sick, aged, or infirm when they made their donations and bequests. A second, perhaps more unexpected reason cited by donors for making their pious bequests was more emotional: they became inspired to donate after visiting the monks. It is clear from the acts that men as well as women visited the monastery. There would have been numerous reasons for laypersons to come to Vazelon: to seek

45 On the collective foundation of churches in Late Byzantine society, see in particular Sophia Kalopissa-Verti, "Church Foundations by Entire Villages (13th–16th c.): A Short Note," *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta*, 44 (2007), 333–41; and "Collective Patterns of Patronage in the Late Byzantine Village: The Evidence of Church Inscriptions," in *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin. Actes du colloque international de l'Université de Fribourg 13–15 Mars 2008*, eds Jean-Michel-Spieser and Élisabeth Yota, *Réalités Byzantines* 14 (Paris: 2012), 125–40.

the spiritual counsel of the monks, who acted as spiritual fathers to some of Matzouka's residents; to visit icons or attend special services; or to consult the monastery's cartulary and to have the monks adjudicate local disputes.

Several acts of donation were connected with visits to the monastery. Among the most interesting is an act of the 13th century, in which a woman, Anna, had spent some time at the monastery, and while there became deathly ill.⁴⁶ Upon realizing that Anna would not recover from her illness, the resident monks tonsured her and gave her the monastic name of Anusia. She was then buried in the monastery.⁴⁷ The donors of this act, her father Theodore the priest of Limbos and his son Basil the reader, donated a field as a consolation to the monastery as well as for the salvation of Anna's/Anusia's soul. Act 65 of the year 1302 recounts how the donor Anna Ephainava came to visit the monastery because of the death of a relative, and upon seeing it "my soul loved the place of the monastery," whereupon she gave half of her family estate to the monks.⁴⁸ Donation was not always a pre-meditated act, and it would be interesting to research further the experience – literally the act of – convincing oneself or others to make a pious gift, which was often the subject of monastic critiques (e.g. Eustathios of Thessalonike).

In return for her donation, Anna requested liturgical commemoration, and a precondition of this sort for a donation was not unusual: commemoration (*mnemosyna*) appears in roughly one-sixth of the acts of donation for Vazelon. Far more common is the designation of a donation as intended for the salvation of one's soul – in Greek it is more literally rendered as for one's "spiritual salvation" (*psychike soteria*). Donations are normally a "spiritual gift" (*psychike dorea*) and "part for the soul" (*psychikon*), although other terms appear as well. That the expressions for "commemoration" and "salvation of the soul" were

46 I cite the individual acts of Vazelon according to the reprint/Modern Greek translation of the original edition: Τα Ἄκτα της Μονῆς Βαζελώνος. Στοιχεία για την ιστορία της αγροτικής και μοναστηριακής εγγείας ιδιοκτησίας στο Βυζάντιο κατά το 13–15 αί., eds F. I. Uspenskij and V. N. Benešević, trans. Ilias K. Petropoulos (Thessalonike: 2007), 226 (no. 70). Some acts of a new edition have now appeared: Alexander Alexakis and Giannis Mavromatis, "Eleven Documents from the Acts of the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Vazelon in Trebizond," in *Myriobiblos: Essays on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, eds Theodora Antonopoulou, Marina Loukaki, and Sofia Kotzabassi, *Byzantinisches Archiv* 29 (Boston: 2015), 1–24.

47 The burial of nuns in male monasteries and monks in female convents had already been forbidden by Justinian, a prohibition that was repeated in later secular and canonical collections. Yet as this case indicates, mixed burials appear to have been widespread: Viscuso, "Death in Late Byzantine Canon Law," 242–3.

48 Ἄκτα της Μονῆς Βαζελώνος, 223–4 (no. 65).

synonyms for liturgical commemoration is strongly suggested by one act in which the two terms are used interchangeably.⁴⁹

Several acts describe the specifics of how liturgical commemoration was implemented. Donors were to have their names written in the diptychs, and one even finds in some of the acts the term *diptycharion* (not for the diptychs but rather for the monastic cartulary). Thereafter the monks were to commemorate them forever; only one act of the year 1291 further specifies that commemoration was to be performed yearly.⁵⁰ No mention is made anywhere of the commemorations customarily performed on the 3rd, 9th, and 40th days after death, but there is no underlying reason to assume that these did not take place as well. Distributions to the poor, which as we have seen was a major component of Christian commemorative practice, are also curiously absent in the acts.

It is worth discussing who in fact was commemorated in the acts of Vazelon. First of all, while donors asking only for their own commemoration were not rare, they were certainly nonetheless in the minority. By far the most common category of commemorated person consisted of a donor's ancestors or forefathers, their *goneis* (γονεῖς). While one might be tempted to translate this word as "parents," and perhaps in many cases that is in fact what it meant, in one act (number 66 of the first half of the 14th century) the donor specifically distinguishes his mother and his *goneis*.⁵¹ In general it seems to have been a generic term for one's ancestors. Children, by contrast, appear much less frequently, and one gets the impression that a good number of the donors were childless, or at least there are some donations which do not account for the property claims of children on the inheritance. The profile of persons commemorated in the acts as well as the language of the acts themselves suggests that liturgical commemoration was in Matsouka primarily a backward-looking phenomenon: for the most part donors honoured their mothers, fathers, and ancestors with their bequests. Children sometimes represented a danger: the acts frequently enjoin a donor's children to be content with their share of the inheritance and not to disturb the monks of the Vazelon, lest their commemorations be impeded.

A final set of considerations regarding funerary and memorial customs among the non-elite during the Late Byzantine period concerns the development of canon law, and in particular how the understanding of the "part for the soul" mentioned at the beginning of this contribution shifted. In an utterly

49 Ἀκτα της Μονής Βαζελώνος, 269–70 (no. 116).

50 Ἀκτα της Μονής Βαζελώνος, 229–30 (no. 78).

51 Ἀκτα της Μονής Βαζελώνος, 224–5 (no. 66).

singular instance in Byzantine history, the patriarch Athanasios I (1289–1293, 1303–1309) in 1304 sent a list of ordinances concerning various topics to the emperor Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) for approval, who gave it legal sanction as a “novel” two years later. This piece of legislation is known in scholarship as the “Novel” of Athanasios I, a bizarre instance of a patriarch employing a mode of imperial legislation.⁵² The inclusion of the short recension of the novel in the *Hexabiblos* (1345) of the Byzantine canonist Constantine Harmenopoulos meant that it became part of the most popular collection of Byzantine canon law.

Inter alia this law prescribed remarkable new regulations for the “part for the soul”: it now became strongly connected with the commemoration of the dead. Section One of Athanasios’ “Novel” regulated the inheritance of widowed, childless men and women. More specifically, this provision concerned the status of such persons who were also dependent peasants, subject to either the state or a local lord. Upon the death of such peasants, their estates were to be divided into three parts, with one part each going to their lords, commemorative rites (*mnemosyna*), and surviving relatives, respectively. In the absence of next of kin entitled to the inheritance, one half of the estate would be earmarked for their overlords or commemorative rites, respectively.⁵³ A widower or widow with a child, however, whose child died retained all of the child’s property, both the matrimonial and patrimonial shares.⁵⁴ Yet even so one-third of the mother’s dowry would go to the child’s commemorative rites, while her parents would retain a second third, and the final third would go to the surviving spouse.

Though judging the actual implementation of the “Novel” shortly after its issuance is not possible, these provisions of Patriarch Athanasios for peasant inheritances would have had momentous consequences for dependent peasants. In the cases described above, a significant portion of the estate would have been dedicated to commemoration. Moreover, this “Novel” appears to have

52 v. Laurent, *Le patriarcat byzantin: Recherches de diplomatique, d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* / publ. par l'Inst. d'Etudes Byzantines des Augustins de l'Assomption (Kadiköy-Istanbul). Série 1, *Les registres des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople. Vol. 1, Les actes des patriarches 4, Les registres de 1208 à 1309* (s.l.; 1971), 389–95 (no. 1607); cf. Eleutheria Sp. Papagiannē, “Περὶ ‘ψυχικῶν’ καὶ ‘μνημοσύνων’: τὸ νομικὸ ὑπόβαθρο μιᾶς ἡθικῆς ὑποχρέωσης,” *Επιστημονικὴ Επετηρίδα Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 13 (2008), 171–81, on 171.

53 Κωνσταντίνου Ἀμενοπούλου *Πρόχειρον Νόμος ἢ Ἐξάβιβλος*, ed. Konstantinos G. Pitsakes, *Byzantina kai Neoellenika Keimena* 1 (Athens: 1971), 312 (5.8.95); cf. Papagiannē, “Περὶ ‘ψυχικῶν,’” 180.

54 Κωνσταντίνου Ἀμενοπούλου *Πρόχειρον Νόμος*, ed. Pitsakes, 312 (5.8.9). Cf. Papagiannē, “Περὶ ‘ψυχικῶν,’” 180–2.

deprived dependent peasants of testamentary capacity: there is no indication that Athanasios' ordinances only concerned intestate succession, where such provisions regarding the "part for the soul" normally appear in Byzantine law.

These inheritance provisions in the "Novel" of Patriarch Athanasios also parallel the broader trends regarding care for the dead in the other cases during the Late Byzantine period discussed above, in that commemoration now featured much more prominently than charity. Indeed, Athanasios no longer terms this portion as a *psychikon*, but instead describes it as a share for the commemorative rites of the deceased. While caritative distributions might still be supposed to have accompanied commemorative rites, it was the commemoration of the deceased that was now firmly emphasized.

3 The Post-Byzantine Period (1453–1700)

The gradual collapse of the Byzantine state, culminating in the Ottoman capture of Constantinople by Sultan Mehmet II in 1453, does not appear to have significantly affected Greek-speaking Orthodox funerary and commemorative practices. However, it should also be noted that studies on care for the dead in this epoch are sparse. Yet one might nonetheless highlight a few features of this period's commemorative and funerary practices.

Unlike in early modern Europe, where the theologians of the Protestant Reformation challenged and rejected many features of late medieval memorial culture, no parallel theological development emerged in the Greek Church, though the patriarch Cyril III (1620–35, 1637–8) did express some sympathy for Protestant views. Orthodox theologians, embittered by the last major attempt at the union of the Eastern and Western Churches at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, continued to reject vehemently Catholic doctrines regarding the afterlife, especially purgatory.⁵⁵

Byzantine sovereign burials, which are relatively well-attested compared with other social groups, ceased with the Ottoman conquest and the subsequent subjugation of most Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians under Turkish rule (*Tourkokratia*). Instead of Byzantine emperors or other Orthodox potentates (like the emperor of Trebizond), one of the best-documented examples of preparation for death and commemoration comes from a Serbian princess

55 See the extremely impressive and competent treatment of Greek Orthodox theology in this period of Gehard Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Türkenherrschaft (1453–1821): Die Orthodoxie im Spannungsfeld der nachreformatorischen Konfessionen des Westens* (Munich: 1988).

who became the wife and then the stepmother of a sultan, Mara Branković (ca. 1418–1487), who in many respects spans the transition from the Byzantine to the Ottoman world.⁵⁶ The daughter of the despot Djuradj Branković (1373/75–1456), for political and diplomatic reasons she was given as a bride in 1436 to the Ottoman sultan Murad II. Their union remained childless, and after the latter's death she was supposed to marry the last emperor of Byzantium, Constantine XI, but two years later Constantinople was captured by her stepson, Mehmet II. Enjoying good relations with Mehmet, she spent the second half of her life (1457–1487) in the Ottoman Empire, and in particular at her estate in what is now Daphni, in the western portion of the Greek region of Macedonia.

Her family had enjoyed close patronal relationships with two Athonite monasteries, Chilandar and St Paul, for around a century by the time she herself began making benefactions to these monasteries in the 1460s. On 21 May 1466, she had an act of donation drawn up in Church Slavonic in which she donated the incomes of her villages of Ezeba and Marabintzion, both of which she had received from Sultan Mehmet II, to Chilandar (three portions) and St Paul (two portions), in exchange for the commemoration of seven members of family, including herself.⁵⁷ Most interestingly of all, the revenues from the villages were to support young girls she had raised on her estate (presumably orphans), and the monasteries were to see to it that they became nuns.⁵⁸

Though the use of an endowment to support young, probably orphaned girls is interesting – and calls to mind the provisions of Michael VIII's foundation of St Michael's, in which the surplus revenues were to support prisoners, orphans, and dowry-less maidens – her patronage activity, by which she sought to secure commemoration for herself and her family, was in most respects very much in line with Byzantine tradition. Yet the fact that almost three years later (between 4 and 13 February 1469) she had another act of donation drawn up in Arabic, this time donating all of her property to the two monasteries (again three portions to Chilandar, two to St Paul's), brings our attention to the fact that she was addressing two different cultures and legal traditions: a characteristic even more apparent in another donation she made that year.⁵⁹

56 For her life, see Mihailo St. Popović, *Mara Branković: Eine Frau zwischen dem christlichen und dem islamischen Kulturkreis im 15. Jahrhundert*, Peleus 45 (Mainz: 2010).

57 Discussion of the donation in Popović, *Mara Branković*, 136–8.

58 Popović, *Mara Branković*, 138 convincingly argues that Mara's raising of (probably) orphaned girls on her estate was modelled after Jelena, the consort of King Uroš I (r. 1243–76).

59 Discussion of the donation in Popović, *Mara Branković*, 138.



FIGURE 7.4 Present-day view of the Monastery of St Paul, from the west

SOURCE: PHOTO TAKEN BY ZACHARY CHITWOOD, SEPTEMBER 2019

On 1 March 1469, she had a further act of donation drawn up (in Greek) whereby she donated a *metochion*, a dependent monastery, to St Paul in exchange for the commemoration of herself and her parents.⁶⁰ The *metochion* was located in the district of Proaulakas and included a tower and mill, which she had purchased for the not inconsiderable sum of 30,000 aspers, or around 667 Venetian ducats. A little over two years later, between 16 and 15 October 1471, she had two Ottoman confirmations of this donation composed: one in Turkish, in which the sale of the *metochion* to Mara before she herself donated it to St Paul was discussed, and a second in Arabic, which emphasized that the donation of the *metochion* was a valid legal act.⁶¹ Finally, she eventually retired to a house in Constantinople which she made into a *vakif* (Arabic *waqf*), which was to support herself while she lived and whose surplus was to go to the monks of another Athonite monastery, Vatopedi, who would inherit it after her death.⁶²

The provisions Mara undertook for her commemoration very much reflected the two worlds of the Byzantine twilight and Ottoman ascendancy that her

60 Discussed in Popović, *Mara Branković*, 143–4.

61 English translation of the second document in Phokion P. Kotzageorgis. “Two Vakfiyyes of Mara Branković,” *Hilandarski Zbornik* 11 (2004), 307–23, on 318–19.

62 English translation of the document in Kotzageorgis, “Two Vakfiyyes,” on 319–21.

life had straddled, not least of all in the way she had endowment and donation charters drawn up initially in Greek or Slavonic, and then in Turkish or Arabic:

Thus, the sparsity observed in the Ottoman documents may be interpreted as being due to the existence of documents in the languages of the two people involved (Serbian, Greek), where a more detailed description of the clauses and the purposes of the bequest is found. The Ottoman document functioned simply as a confirmation of the legal transaction and it provided the weight of official authority.⁶³

Her endowments are the first recorded *vakifs* of any Christian woman in the Ottoman Balkans. In addition to the hybrid nature of her patronage, her foundations also represent the culmination of long-term Byzantine/Orthodox commemorative trends. This included a continuing shift of patronage, which often touched upon funerary and commemorative aspects, from Constantinople to Mount Athos: as far as we can discern, all of her endowments went to Athonite monasteries (Hilandar, St Paul and Vatopedi).

Regarding the burial practices of the non-elite, an act of Patriarch Jeremiah I (1522–24, 1525–45), the longest-serving patriarch of the immediate post-Byzantine period, deals with the complaints of priests on the island of Lesbos who objected to having to perform funerary and commemorative rights for parishioners who had given a portion of their estates to monasteries.⁶⁴ In their view it was the monks who had the responsibility of burying such donors. The act can be construed as evidence for the continuing monasticization of the Orthodox Church, a process that had been underway by that point for over a millennium. Burial in monasteries and commemoration by monks had already been viewed by some authors as superior to interment in regular churches and memorialization by priests even in the Middle Byzantine period.

Like the acts of the Monastery of Vazelon in the Late Byzantine period, another well-preserved corpus of sources in connection with a single monastery allow us significant glimpses into the commemorative practices, if not necessarily the burial, of the non-elite of the Orthodox population under Ottoman rule as well. The so-called “Codex B” of the Monastery of St John Prodromos in Serres, Macedonia, contains acts of donation which are clustered in the period

63 The contents of the various versions of these charters also vary considerably in length and detail. According to Kotzageorgis, “Two Vakfiyyes,” 310–11.

64 Michael Stroumpakes, *Ιερεμίας Α' Πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1522–1546). Ο Βίος και το Έργα του* (Athens; 2005), 306–7 (no. 19).



FIGURE 7.5 Wooden commemorative register (*brebeion*) from the Church of Forty Martyrs, near Saranda (contemporary southern Albania), 1593-4
SOURCE: DISPLAY FROM THE BYZANTINE MUSEUM OF CULTURE IN THESSALONIKI. PHOTO TAKEN BY ZACHARY CHITWOOD, SEPTEMBER 2019



FIGURE 7.6 Wooden commemorative register (*brebeion*) from the Convent of the Life-giving Fountain in Thessaloniki, 1731. In this case the register was apparently never filled in (or the names were later painted over). The central panel of the register divides the names of those to be commemorated by category, including priests, ordained monks, and regular monastics.

SOURCE: DISPLAY FROM THE BYZANTINE MUSEUM OF CULTURE IN THESSALONIKI. PHOTO TAKEN BY ZACHARY CHITWOOD, SEPTEMBER 2019

1601–1664.⁶⁵ In a development paralleled by contemporaneous monasteries in Russia, though to the knowledge of the author not practiced before the early modern period, the price for commemoration by the monks had become fixed, fluctuating between 8000 and 5000 aspers (and in the process perhaps following the value of the currency) over the course of the 17th century.⁶⁶

4 Conclusions

In summation, practices regarding death, burial and remembrance among Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians in the Late Byzantine and early modern periods underwent a number of interesting developments. Perhaps the greatest change from Primitive Christian praxis over these centuries was the marked commemorative turn in burial and memorial customs: in both Late Antiquity and the Middle Byzantine period charitable distributions to the poor on behalf of the deceased were an important component of Christian funerary practice. The commemoration of the dead in liturgies and prayer was, by contrast, less emphasized in Early Christian tradition, yet became more pronounced over time.

The rejection of purgatory in the Orthodox tradition, in which many authors did, however, conceive of an intermediate state of the soul before the Final Judgment, had an effect on commemorative practice. Though the prevalence in Latin Europe of repeated votive masses held continuously after death quickly to better the state of the deceased in purgatory has been exaggerated – annual commemoration remained an important part of *memoria* in the Roman Church – in the Byzantine and Orthodox tradition regular, theoretically eternal, commemoration remained the basic goal of every founder and donor. Most commemorations were annual, celebrated on the day of death, though daily and weekly commemorations were not unknown.

Finally, the centre of gravity in the Orthodox world, the *oikoumene*, shifted in the period under examination from Constantinople to Mount Athos. Athos had become, as we have seen, the “Eye of the World” in the minds of many Orthodox Christians. Correspondingly, commemoration and patronage associated with funerary practice were increasingly focused upon the Holy Mountain, and not on the “Queen of Cities.”

65 Paolo Odorico, “Le prix du ciel: Donations et donateurs à Serrès (Macédoine) au XVIIIe siècle,” *Balkanika* 27 (1996), 21–44.

66 Odorico, “Le prix du ciel,” 30–3.

Death, Burial and Remembrance: The Christian Orthodox Tradition in the East of Europe

Ludwig Steindorff

The chapter will examine death, burial, and commemoration in the territories of Muscovy and of Ruthenia, that is, the Orthodox territories of Poland-Lithuania. The main focus is on the Muscovite territory, reflecting the expertise of the author and because a richer contemporary historiography exists for Muscovy on these topics. This includes a case study from Muscovy: the unique system of liturgical commemoration bound to a rich pragmatic writing culture which developed from the 16th century, similar to practices which flourished in western Europe in the high Middle Ages.¹ Differences and commonalities will be examined in attitudes to death, burial and commemoration in the medieval and early modern Latin west on the one side and in the Orthodox world of eastern Europe on the other. Finally, we examine differences between practices in Ruthenia and Muscovy.

1 Geographical and Religious Contexts

1.1 *Territorial Framing*

Muscovy and Ruthenia² were territories inhabited mainly by East Slavic populations and relied upon the tradition of the Kievan Rus', whose ruler Grand

¹ The term is chosen by me in correspondence with the German term "Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit," which is frequently used in German medievalist research from the late 1980s onwards. It refers to the production of texts which serve concrete, actual purposes of administration and are subject to changes and additions, unlike liturgical books or chronicles. Notarial books and urban statutes are classical examples of pragmatic writing literature in the secular sphere. The various books and lists for the administration of donations and commemoration form a central part of the pragmatic writing culture in the ecclesiastical sphere. On this topic, see the programmatic volume by Hagen Keller (ed.), *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen*, Münstersche Mittelalterschriften, 65 (Munich: 1992).

² Roughly the present-day regions of central and northwestern Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine.

Prince Vladimir was baptized by the Byzantine rite in 988 and where a stable Orthodox hierarchy developed from the 11th century onwards. Liturgy was celebrated in Church Slavonic. A mainly religious book culture developed in Cyrillic script.³

The Kievan Rus' principalities developed on the trade routes along the rivers from the Baltic Sea to Constantinople, and towards the silk roads in central Asia. In the 12th century, the Rus' expanded to the northeast. The city of Moscow is mentioned for the first time in 1147. At the same time, the different principalities of Rus', all of them in the hands of members of the dynasty of the Riurikovichs, increased their own power and gained more independence.

All territories of the Kievan Rus' were affected by the Mongol invasion in 1237–40. But only the principalities in the north and northeast remained under tributary rule of the Mongols for two and a half centuries. From the beginning of the 14th century, the princes of Moscow succeeded in gathering the Russian lands by successively subduing the other principalities in the north, including the trading city of Novgorod in 1478. The process was supported by the circumstance that from 1328, the princes of Moscow secured for themselves the title of the grand prince, and in 1325, the metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus' transferred his see to Moscow, after residing at Vladimir to the east of Moscow from 1299.⁴ We should mention as further *caesurae* the de facto autocephaly (ecclesiastical independence) of the church of Muscovy since 1448, the coronation of Grand Prince Ivan IV Vasil'evich in 1547 as tsar, and the official recognition of the autocephaly of the church in 1589, including granting the title of patriarch to the metropolitan.

The southern principalities of the former Kievan Rus', from Kiev in the east to L'viv (Russian form L'vov, Polish form Lwów) in the west, were integrated into Lithuania and Poland respectively until the end of the 14th century. After the Polish-Lithuanian union of 1386 they were mostly under one ruler. While expanding to the southeast, both realms incorporated territories with populations following Orthodox traditions, and after some earlier attempts the

3 For more detailed information concerning these topics see for example: Maureen Perrie, (ed.), *From Early Rus' to 1689*, The Cambridge History of Russia, vol. 1 (Cambridge: 2006); Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge: 2006); Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: 2015); Andreas Kappeler, *Ungleiche Brüder: Russen und Ukrainer: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: 2017).

4 I use the Russian form "Kiev" which corresponds to the form used in pre-modern sources. The modern Ukrainian form is Kyiv.

Lithuanian princes succeeded in establishing their own Orthodox hierarchy for these territories at the end of the 15th century.

While the Muscovite church was de facto autocephalous from 1448, the metropolitan of Kiev was under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus, the situation of the Orthodox population in Ruthenia was quite different from that in Muscovy, which despite certain contacts with Europe from the late 15th century, remained quite isolated from western cultural influences until the 17th century. Muscovy was proud of being the only politically independent Orthodox state at that time.

In Ruthenia, the Orthodox experienced life in a state under a Catholic ruler, and especially in the larger cities different religious denominations were used to living side by side. The coexistence increased after the Union of Lublin in 1566, which led to a firmer political integration of the Lithuanian nobility into the Polish-Lithuanian composite state and resulted in territorial changes. Also, the east of Ruthenia including Kiev became a part of Poland within the Union, rather than part of Lithuania.

The Union of Brest in 1596 aimed at a firmer integration of the Orthodox population into the state. The church hierarchy was to recognize the pope as head of the church, while the rites and the use of the Church Slavonic language in liturgy could remain. But the new Greek-Catholic church was not generally accepted by either the hierarchy or the believers, so from the 17th century there existed three clerical establishments: the Orthodox, the Greek-Catholic, and the Roman-Catholic.

The attempt to establish a Cossack state independently from Poland under the protection of the tsar of Muscovy in 1654 quickly failed. In 1667, Kiev and all territories east of the Dnepr came under Muscovite rule, and in 1686 the patriarch of Constantinople delegated the right of consecration of the metropolitan of Kiev to the patriarch of Moscow. The western parts of Ruthenia remained within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until the partitions of Poland beginning in 1772. The experience of coexistence with western religious and secular culture from the late Middle Ages turned out to be among the preconditions for the formation of the modern Ukrainian and Belorussian nations.

1.2 *Religious Framing*

Although there were closer contacts with western Christianity in Ruthenia than in Muscovy, the religious framing of death, burial, and remembrance was much the same across the whole Orthodox east of Europe. As elsewhere, Christianization included the change to burial *ad sanctos* at least among the elite, around or even within churches, as early as the era of the Kievan Rus'. One of the first motives for building churches and founding monasteries was to

secure a burial place and commemoration.⁵ After the first centuries of Christianization, certainty in the expectation of salvation declined, to be replaced by a belief in the need for ‘managing’ the salvation of the soul. Already in the period of the Kievan Rus’ we see all elements of medieval Christian memorial culture: the care for the deceased through donations, prayer including liturgical commemoration, and charity. These interlinked actions were to aid the soul to secure salvation at the Last Judgement.⁶

In contrast to the west, however, a concept of purgatory did not develop, and in general, eschatology remained more pluralistic.⁷ But there was a rich imagery around the ‘small’ eschatology, the state of the soul during the 40 days immediately after death, from the separation of the soul from the body until God’s decision about the place in which the soul would reside to await the day of the Last Judgement. As shown also on 15th-century icons of the Last Judgement, the soul had to pass the heavenly “tollbooths” referring to different sins. Only good deeds performed during a lifetime and the prayers of the living helped to compensate for sin and thus paid the “toll” for the soul. While in Muscovy the tollbooths were shown on top of a snake, which had replaced earlier depictions of the River of Fire, in Polish-Lithuanian territory the new motif was quickly transformed into a zigzag

5 Gerhard Podskalsky, *Christentum und theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus’ (988–1237)* (Munich: 1982), 52; cf. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (trans. and eds.), *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, MA: 1953), 137, entry for the year 6545 (1037) about the Grand Prince Yaroslav Vladimirovich: “[...] During his reign, the Christian faith was fruitful and multiplied, while the number of monks increased, and new monasteries came into being. Yaroslav loved religious establishments and was devoted to priests, especially to monks.”; 141, entry for 6531(1051) about the foundation of the Kievan Cave monastery: “Many monasteries have indeed been founded by emperors and nobles and magnates, but they are not such as those founded by tears, fasting, prayer, and vigil.”

6 Ludwig Steindorff, *Memoria in Altrußland: Untersuchungen zu den Formen christlicher Totensorge*, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa 38 (Stuttgart: 1994), 24–9, 136–56. The triad of donation, commemoration and charity is frequently summarized under the research term *Memoria* in German historiography, see for instance the programmatic volume by Karl Schmidt, Joachim Wollasch (eds.), *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 48 (Munich: 1984). For research in English on *Memoria* in the medieval West see for instance Barbara Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny’s Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, NY: 1989); Giles Constable (ed.), *The Abbey of Cluny: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Eleven-Hundredth Anniversary of its Foundation*, Vita regularis, 43 (Berlin: 2010).

7 For an overview of this imagery see Steindorff, *Memoria*, 87–91. The Uniates also do not mention purgatory in their testaments; see Lilya Berezhnaya, “‘True Faith’ and Salvation in the Works of Ipatii Potii, Meletii Smotryts’kyi, and in Early-Modern Ruthenian Testaments,” *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 58 (2017), 435–464, on 460.

road or ladder of boxes, the ladder resembling the Ladder of Divine Ascent by John Chrysostom.⁸

Of course, we must remember that Christianization was a long process, starting with the urban centres and the elite and only slowly penetrating remote areas. Burial places far outside of rural settlements were not unusual even into the 16th century. Ancient customs on the basis of the pre-Christian concept of the presence of dead among the living survived within a syncretic practice, condemned as *dvoeverie* ("double faith") by ecclesiastical authors, and described as *bytovoe pravoslavie* ("everyday Orthodoxy") by modern ethnographers.⁹

2 Death Preparation, Dying, and Burial

The ideal of a good death was the same as we know it from medieval western sources: death follows a short phase of illness and weakness. The person discerns the approach of death and is not alone during the last days: there is opportunity to reconcile oneself with relatives, neighbours, and followers, to make dispositions about property and the funeral, if this has not been settled beforehand in a will or testament.¹⁰

There are two wonderful texts describing the last days of a person in a surprisingly realistic manner, far from a hagiographic style. The first of these is the *Tale about the Death of Pafnutii of Borovsk*, who founded the monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God near Borovsk in 1444 and who had been its first *igumen*, abbot.¹¹ Soon after Pafnutii's death on 1 May 1477 his disciple Innozentii wrote down an account of the last week in the life of Pafnutii, beginning

8 David M. Goldfrank, "Who Put the Snake on the Icon and the Tollbooth on the Snake? – A Problem of Last Judgment Iconography," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995), 180–99; Lilya Berezhnaya and Paul Himka, *The World to Come: Ukrainian Images of the Last Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: 2014), xviii, xxiv–xxv.

9 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 38–40.

10 As summarized by Philippe Ariès, *Studien zur Geschichte des Todes im Abendland* (1980) (Munich: 1981), 19–31 in the subchapter "Der eigene Tod" ("La mort de soi").

11 Text: L.A. Dmitriev, (ed.), "Rasskaz o smerti Pafnutiia Borovskogo," in *Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi: Vtoraia polovina XV veka*, ed. D.S. Likhachev (Moscow: 1982), 478–512; T. Allen Smith, "Death and Transfiguration: The Final Hours of Muscovite Monks," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 48 (2006), 119–36. For a German translation with commentaries: Ludwig Steindorff, "Die Erzählung vom Tod des Pafnutij Borovskij," URL: <https://www.histsem.uni-kiel.de/de/das-institut-1/abteilungen/osteuropaeische-geschichte/materialen/Die%20Erzaehlung%20ueber%20den%20Tod%20von%20Pafnutij%20Borovskij.pdf> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

from the moment on Thursday, 24 April, when Pafnutii gave instructions to Innokentii on how to repair the dam of the monastery's fishpond. But when Innokentii asked Pafnutii to supervise the work, the latter answered: "I cannot care about this, because an urgent matter is waiting for me." Some hours later he told Innokentii: "You do not know what is pressing me, the shackles want to come loose." But Innokentii did not yet guess the meaning of these words. The following days are described in detail: the services Pafnutii attended; which of the brethren was by his side in the cell; what Pafnutii said and to whom. As a gesture of modesty Pafnutii refused any visits from outside the monastery, even by emissaries of the Grand Prince Ivan III Vasil'evich, his mother Mariia Yaroslavna, and his wife Sofia Paleolog. The funeral service in the church and the burial of Pafnutii are included in the Tale, but these events were of no real interest to Innokentii, because they followed normal practice.

The second text refers to a secular person, the Grand Prince Vasilii III Ivanovich, who died on 4 December 1533. The *Tale of the Illness and the Death of Vasilii Ivanovich* was written by an eyewitness who was present throughout most of the events. It starts at the end of August 1533, shortly before the outbreak of the grand prince's illness, an abscess most probably due to periostitis. We can follow the itinerary of the grand prince and his family, the first vain attempts to continue life as before, the return to Moscow, the call for doctors (one among them certainly a foreigner from Lübeck), consultations with his entourage, the increasing consciousness about his impending death, the composition of a new testament, the goodbye to his wife, the "Office at the parting of the body from the soul."¹² Shortly before death Vasilii desired to be tonsured. This practice of dying as a monk became increasingly popular in Muscovy from the 14th century, although less among the princely families than among the service nobility and other social groups. Vasilii was the first grand prince to adopt this practice. Despite the hesitant attitude of secular attendants, finally the metropolitan Daniil fulfilled the wish and Vasilii died as the monk Varlaam.¹³ He was commemorated in liturgy later under this name. Among the future rulers of Muscovy only his son Ivan IV Vasil'evich the "Terrible" and Boris

12 This testament is lost. See Robert Craig Howes (ed. and trans.), *The Testaments of the Grand Princes of Moscow* (Ithaca, NY: 1967), 299; the translation of an older version from 1523 on 299–303.

13 Text: N.S. Demkova, (ed.), "Povest' o bolezni i smerti Vasiliiia III," in *Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi. Seredina XVI veka*, ed. D.S. Likhachev (Moscow: 1985), 18–46; Isolde Thyret, "The Tale of the Death of Vasilii Ivanovich and the Evolution of the Muscovite Tsaritsa's Rule in 16th Century Russia," in *Dubitando. Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski*, eds Brian J. Boeck, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington, IN: 2012), 209–24.

Godunov followed his example and died as monks, Iona in 1584 and Bogolep in 1606 respectively. Like his predecessors and his later successors, Vasilii III was buried *ad sanctos*, in the Church of the Archangel, the sepulchral church of the dynasty, within the Kremlin of Moscow. Again, the account of the burial itself is not worked out in detail. Despite the specific circumstances in which the two tales happened, they certainly corresponded to a general practice of preparation for death which comprised the settlement of questions of inheritance and succession, confession, reconciliation and farewell, communion and accompanying rites.

It may be questioned to what degree believers at that time had internalized the Church Slavonic text of the "Office at the parting of the body from the soul," which is similar in images and ideas to the western late medieval *ars moriendi*, but which relies on the corresponding Greek rite, in which the text alternates between moments which evoke despair and appeals to hope.¹⁴ In about 1500, the Middle Low German *Dialogue between Life and Death* was translated into Old Russian at Novgorod. The widely distributed *Tale about the Quarrel between Life and Death*, a later version from the middle of the 16th century, integrated motifs from the Greek-Slavonic tradition.¹⁵ The successful transfer of the motifs of a Western text into Old Russian literature serves as proof of the common basis of religious experience in pre-modern societies: despite all hope of salvation the fear of something horrifying is inextinguishable.

As proved on the basis of testaments and sermons from Ruthenia, fear of the moment of death in Orthodox documents was less expressive than in Catholic ones, and this is confirmed by the Muscovite material as well.¹⁶ While

14 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 87–8. For an English translation of the rite see: The Office at the Parting of the Soul from the Body, URL http://orthodoxinfo.com/death/service_parting.aspx (last accessed 28/6/2020); following the edition by Isabel F. Hapgood, *Service book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic (Greco-Russian) Church* (Cambridge: 1906), 360–7.

15 R.P. Dmitrieva, *Povesti o spore zhizni i smerti* (Moscow: 1964); Theodor Lewandowski, *Das mittelalterliche Zwiegespräch zwischen dem Leben und dem Tode und seine altrussische Übersetzung: eine kontrastive Studie*, Slavistische Forschungen 12 (Cologne: 1972).

16 I.V. Dergacheva, *Posmertnaia sud'ba i "noi mir" v drevnerusskoi knizhnosti* (Moscow: 2004), 146–87, on the basis of *sinodiki*, memorial books from the Muscovite territory (see below); Lilya Berezhnaya, "Sin, Fear and Death in the Catholic and Orthodox Sermons in the 16th–17th Century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (An Attempt at Comparison)," in *Être catholique – être orthodoxe – être protestant: Confessions et identités culturelles en Europe médiévale et moderne*, eds Marcus Derwich and Michael V. Dmitriev (Wrocław: 2003), 253–84; M.S. Cherkasova, "Pozemel'nye akty kak istochnik dlia izucheniia religioznogo soznaniia srednevekovoi Rusi," *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievisti* 8/2 (2000), 35–47; Olga E. Kosheleva, "Death: Emotional Undercurrents in the Wills and Letters of Seventeenth-Century Russian Aristocrats," in *Das Individuum und die Seinen: Individualität in der*

in Catholic sermons God appears as severe judge or even avenger, in the Orthodox text he is merciful and a friend of mankind:

The most essential is the idea of reconciliation to death, an appeal not to feel fear of its coming and to prepare oneself for the passage to the better world. [...] The main effect of the Fall is mortality, not corruption of a human nature, as it was usually described in the Catholic sermons.¹⁷

Usually the burial took place the first day after death. The rites differed, depending whether the deceased had been a layperson, a parish cleric, or a monk.¹⁸

2.1 *Burial Places*

When writing about burial customs in Muscovy, Western travellers were especially surprised by the expressive death laments and by the custom of putting a letter of indulgence, a kind of permit, into the coffin. These letters are also well known from Ruthenia. Travellers recorded the custom of a meal at the burial place after the funeral and on memorial days, a custom present also in other Orthodox regions, corresponding to syncretic conceptions of the continuing presence of the dead among the living.¹⁹

Local graveyards of the lower urban classes and the rural population were not kept in any great order. Also, in contrast to the late medieval and early modern west, the elite did not develop a culture of representational sepulchral monuments. The most prestigious monuments were sarcophagi as mentioned in the records of the Church of the Archangel in the Kremlin, the burial church of the ruling dynasty.²⁰ Normally, grave sites within a church

okzidental und in der russischen Kultur in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit, eds Yuri I. Bessmertny and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: 2001), 216–30. No hyphen: 17th-century?

17 Berezhnaya, “*Sin, Fear and Death*,” 274.

18 S. Ju. Shokarev, “Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol’: Na materialakh Moskvyy XVI–XVII vv.,” in *Kul’tura pamiati. Sbornik nauchnykh statei*, eds E.A. Shupelova and A.V. Sviatoslavskii (Moscow: 2003), 141–88, on 149–54.

19 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 93–4, 96–7; Nikolaos Chrissidis, “Between Forgiveness and Indulgence: Funerary Prayers of Absolution in Russia,” in *Tapestry of Russian Christianity: Studies in History and Culture*, eds Nickolas Lupinin, Donald Ostrowski, and Jennifer B. Spock (Columbus, OH: 2016), 261–93; for Ruthenian practice see Leonid Volodymyrovych Tymoshenko, “Tradyciia i praktyky pomynannia pomerlykh u Kyivs’kii metropolii v druhij polovyni XVI – pershii polovyni XVII st. Vnesok tserkovnykh bratstv,” *Drohobyt’s’kyi kraieznavchyi zbirnyk* 14–15 (2011), 123 [I thank Kyrill Kobsar for turning my attention to this publication.]

20 Shokarev, “Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol’,” 165–6.

or in the courtyard of a prestigious monastery were covered by limestone slabs incised with an inscription and modest decoration.²¹ Even if the inscriptions or plates are lost nowadays, we are sometimes able to identify a burial place from contemporary lists of burial grounds. These were needed for liturgical purposes, since on the occasion of an annual commemoration the monks and clerics would have a procession to the grave of the commemorated person.²²

We may even surmise a correlation between the comparatively modest sepulchral culture and the flourishing practice of liturgical commemoration. We do not see any interest in the dead body itself in the sources, except for the question of how to dress it before laying out and burial.²³

We can see an evolution over time in elite practice: while earlier generations were buried in small churches on their own estates, from about 1450 it became more usual to be buried in a large monastery, because liturgical commemoration would be secured more firmly there.²⁴ Although it did not correspond with canon law, some women were also buried in male monasteries, and vice versa, and this practice was even confirmed by the Hundred Chapters church council at Moscow in 1551.²⁵ The burial practice of the Orthodox in Ruthenia also corresponded to this pattern. The majority of the *szlachta* [lesser nobility]

21 T.D. Panova, *Tsarstvo smerti: Pogrebal'nyi obriad srednevekovoi Rusi XI – XVI vekov* (Moscow: 2004); Sergei Z. Chernov, "Die Nekropolen der großen koinobitischen Klöster der Moskauer Rus' des 15.-16. Jahrhunderts als Spiegel des Prozesses der Verkirklichung der Gesellschaft," in *Monastische Kultur als transkonfessionelles Phänomen. Beiträge einer deutsch-russischen interdisziplinären Tagung in Vladimir und Suzdal'*, eds Ludwig Steindorff and Oliver Auge, Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Historischen Instituts Moskau 4 (Berlin and Boston, MA: 2016), 193–216.

22 Cf. the archaeological identification of burial sites by S.Z. Chernov, "Nekropol' Iosifo-Volokolamskogo monastyria v svete arkheologicheskikh issledovanii 2001 god: Staryi i novyi pridely," in *Prepodobnyi Iosif Volotskii i ego obitel'*, eds Sergii Hegumen (Voronkov), Panteleimon Monakh (Dementienko) and G.M. Zelenskaia (Moscow: 2008), 269–314, on the basis of the Feast Book of the monastery: Ludwig Steindorff (ed., transl.), *Das Speisungsbuch von Volokolamsk. Kormovaia kniga Iosifo-Volokolamskogo monastyria: Eine Quelle zur Sozialgeschichte russischer Klöster im 16. Jahrhundert*, Bausteine zur Slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte, NF, B 12 (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna: 1998), 367–74.

23 Shokarev, "Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol'," 149.

24 Examples in Steindorff, *Memoria*, 158.

25 Shokarev, "Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol'," 144; A.D. Gorskii, (ed.), *Zakonodatel'stvo perioda obrazovaniia i ukrepleniia russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva*, Rossiiskoe zakonodatel'stvo X–XX vekov 2 (Moscow: 1985), 31. "Hundred chapters," in Russian *Stoglav*, because the decisions of the council were presented in the form of answers to a hundred questions of the tsar.

was buried in larger churches and monasteries.²⁶ Only a few of them chose a small village church on their hereditary lands.²⁷

Numerous travellers to Muscovy mentioned the open mass graves in which the corpses of people without relatives, or those who had drowned or frozen to death, were interred. These mass graves are well known from Muscovite sources under the names *ubogyi dom*, “house for the poor,” *Bozhi dom*, “house of God,” or *skudel'nitsa*, “pottery field,” referring to the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 27:10). As most frequently reported, these graves were closed on the *semik*, on Thursday before Whitsunday, which was devoted especially to those who had not obtained a regular funeral service and burial, because of the circumstances of their sudden death. From about 1581, the monks of St Spiridon monastery for poor people, a dependency of the Monastery of the Dormition near Volokolamsk, were obliged, following the rule of the latter, to collect corpses and to bury them in their *Bozhii dom*, in this case a small chapel, and even to commemorate them if their names were known.²⁸ The care for those who had died a “bad” death was an act of charity, parallel to the distribution of alms to the poor.

We should mention also burials in caves, beginning from the 12th century in the Kievan Cave monastery. Hermits living near the monastery lived in natural caves in the sandstone hillsides above the Dnepr/Dnipro and enlarged them. Soon, the caves served as burial places as well, and through the centuries a labyrinth of caves, serving as an underground cemetery, developed.²⁹ Another famous cave cemetery exists within the compound of the Holy Dormition Pskov-Caves Monastery at Pechory about 35 miles west of Pskov in the northwest of Russia, which was founded in 1473. About 10,000 persons – monks and from 1528 laypersons as well – were buried there through the centuries. About 350 plates of stone or ceramic from the 16th until the beginnings of the 18th century, have been preserved.³⁰

26 The Polish and Lithuanian nobility into which noble Orthodox families were also integrated.

27 Berezhnaya, “‘True faith’ and Salvation,” 460–1.

28 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 71–8; Shokarev, “Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol,” 145–7.

29 Vadym Pavlovsky, “Kyivan Cave Monastery,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, URL: <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/previous.asp?bottomMenuDisplay=pages%5CKY%5CY%5CKYivanCaveMonasteryGospel.htm&KidNumer=7130> (last accessed 1/11/2019). The article corresponds to the printed *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 2 (1989), and includes historical maps and photographs of the caves.

30 M. Tolstoi, “Sviato-Uspenskii Pskovo-Pecherskii muzhskoi monastyr,” in *Russkie Monastyri*, vol. 2, eds A.A. Feoktistov and A.A. Antonov (Novomoskovsk: 2002), 41–58, on 54–6; Shokarev, “Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol,” 171–2.

3 Commemoration Immediately after Death

In the West-European tradition we know of special commemoration for the deceased on the 3rd, 7th, and 30th day after the death of an individual. The commemoration days in the Orthodox tradition, the 3rd, 9th and 40th day, are of corresponding importance. Both series of days are of pre-Christian origin but are explained by various dates from the Bible and patristics, for instance the Resurrection of Christ, the Appearance of Christ to the apostle Thomas, and the Assumption.

In literary prefaces to the *sinodiki*, memorial books, discussed in detail below, the sequence of obsequies correlates to the soul's journey from the moment of its separation from the body until God's decision about where the soul was to rest in preparation for the day of the Last Judgement.³¹ The Western *tricenarius*, the Trental, a series of 30 masses, has its equivalent in the Forty Liturgies, in Russian *sorokoust*, which sounds like "40 mouths," but in fact it is a vernacular form deriving from the Middle Greek word *sarakoste*, "forty." The answers of the Bishop Nifont to the Novgorodian priest Kirik from the 12th century in the *Voproshanie Kirikovo* ("Questionary of Kirik"), deal among other topics with the practice of the *sorokoust*. Bishop Nifont explained to Kirik that *sorokousty* were also adequate in the case of the death of a still innocent child: "We do not sing because of the sins, we sing for the deceased, as if the person was a saint."³² Nifont recommended a price of six *kuny* for one *sorokoust*, which corresponded to 40 grams of silver. He gave detailed instructions for the use of wine, incense, and candles.³³

The mid-15th century saw the advent of a richer tradition of testamentary practice. Wills offer information on subjects such as the distribution of property to relatives, the freeing of serfs debts and loans, and frequently they refer to the three dates after death as well as to the *sorokoust*.³⁴ Testamentary

31 For the composition of the prefaces and the origins of the texts see I.V. Dergacheva, *Drevnerusskii Sinodik Issledovaniia i teksty* (Moscow: 2011). Compared to Muscovy, such prefaces are not common in the *pomianniki*, (memorial books) from Ruthenia, for which see Tymoshenko, "Tradycia i praktyky," 120–1, 123.

32 Leopold Karl Goetz, *Kirchenrechtliche und kulturgeschichtliche Denkmäler Altrusslands nebst Geschichte des russischen Kirchenrechts*, Kirchenrechtliche Abhandlungen 18–19 (Stuttgart: 1905, repr. Amsterdam: 1963), 263 (§ 51). The edition of this source within the monograph (pp. 209–342) presents the Old Russian text, a German translation and rich commentaries.

33 Goetz, *Kirchenrechtliche und kulturgeschichtliche Denkmäler* 213 (§ 3); for necessary corrections of the translation cf. Steindorff, *Memoria*, 106–7.

34 Daniel H. Kaiser, "Death and Dying in Early Modern Russia," in *Major Problems in Early Modern Russian History*, ed. Nancy Shields Kollmann (New York: 1992), 217–57. Kaiser

directions include special memorial services, the distribution of alms to clerics and to the poor, and sometimes also festive meals for the brotherhood of a monastery at the “three days’ mind.”

In many cases the testators ordered *sorokousty* in numerous churches and monasteries, sometimes even more than 20 and up to 40. They chose these places because they felt bound to them as a result of family tradition or personal experience. Normally these churches were scattered around the region where the deceased person lived. The princess Agrafena Semenevna Ros-tovskaia, born Lykova, disposed in her last will of 9 December 1568 that 18 churches should obtain money for a *sorokoust* around the city of Tver’, north-west of Moscow, but 12½ roubles were to be sent to a monastery at Sviazhsk on the Volga about 450 miles from Tver’. The family had been banished there by Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible from 1566 to 1567.³⁵

Executors of wills were expected to distribute the means for the *sorokoust*. Financing a *sorokoust* during the lifetime of a person, or even worse, singing it, was strictly forbidden, since it would suggest that the person was already dead. The directions about burial, the three special dates of commemoration, and the *sorokoust* referred to the belief in the ‘small eschatology’ of the first 40 days after death, during which the soul was said to need help on its way to the throne of God. Consequently, the allocated sums in testaments were relatively small, compared to donations referring to the ‘great eschatology’, the Last Judgement. Normally the allocation for one *sorokoust* in Muscovy was between a half and two roubles, i.e. between 33 and 132 grams of silver.³⁶

Testaments are, however, not very helpful sources regarding permanent commemoration in expectation of the Last Judgement. Large donations were usually made long in advance, during a lifetime, even if the donor remained usufructuary until his or her death. The donor was expected to experience the sacrifice him or herself. So, beside prescriptive texts and the rich “pragmatic writing” or legal literary culture concerning the administration of the names to be commemorated, special deeds and donation books are the main sources of information on large donations. Testaments only rarely repeat or specify the dispositions of these deeds, which became more common at the same time as written testaments.³⁷

bases his study on a large number of testaments. He has published a catalogue of pre-served published testaments, URL: <http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/kaiser/wills.html> (last accessed 1/11/2019).

35 A.A. Zimin, (ed.), *Akty feodal'nogo zemlevladieniia i khoziaistva. Chast' 2* (Moscow: 1956), 349–51 (no. 332). See Steindorff, *Memoria*, 114–16 with further examples.

36 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 103–18; for the value in silver see p. 107.

37 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 167–9; Shokarev, “Russkii srednevekovoi nekropol,” 157.

3.1 *Remembrance – General Commemoration*

Remembrance, all acts of maintaining, securing, and creating the memory of a deceased person, takes place first in an informal individual form, but we are not often able to trace such remembrance in the sources. Exceptions are the aforementioned tales about the deaths of Pafnutii Borovskii and Grand Prince Vasili III. In the accounts of the eyewitnesses, we can recognize moments of personal, individual remembrance. Accordingly, we will concentrate on the forms of institutionalized remembrance which are recognized by a group based on convention. Looking at the Orthodox Eastern Europe, remembrance formed a part of the Orthodox religious tradition which included syncretic forms.

There were general memorial days which are still observed today: Butter Saturday, the last Saturday when meat is allowed before Great Lent, i.e. the Saturday before cheese week, eight weeks before Easter. *Radunitsa* on the Monday or Tuesday in the second week after Easter was originally a pre-Christian spring feast which was integrated into the Christian calendar of the Eastern Slavs in Muscovy as well as in Ruthenia. The “screams at *radunitsa*” were still condemned by the Hundred Chapters church council at Moscow in 1551.³⁸

The next traditional day of general commemoration was Saturday before Whitsun. It was called *vselenskaia subbota* (“ecumenical Saturday”) because it was celebrated like Butter Saturday in all Orthodox countries. Besides the Orthodox liturgical practice there remained syncretic customs as well: the council of 1551 condemned screaming, music, and dancing at burial sites on that day. A confessional “mirror” or handbook from the 17th century even advised the priest to enquire as to whether the sinful practice of heating the bathhouse for the dead had been committed on that feast day.³⁹

In autumn, a general feast was celebrated on *Dmitrievskaia subbota*, the Saturday before the feast day of St Demetrius on 26 October. The feast is probably of South Slav origin. In Muscovy, although not in Ruthenia, the feast was soon linked to the remembrance of Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi and the blessing he received in 1380 from Sergii of Radonezh before departing for the victorious battle of Kulikovo against the Tatars.⁴⁰

While in the church calendar liturgical commemoration was reduced during the period of the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany due to the joyful feasts, popular culture was full of customs which suggested the care taken by the living to fulfil the physical demands of the dead, who were imagined

38 Gorskii, (ed.), *Zakonodatel'stvo*, 310.

39 A. Almazov, *Tainaia ispoved' v pravoslavnoj vostochnoi tserkvi*, vol. 3: *Prilozheniia* (Odessa: 1884), 170.

40 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 54–8, 66–8, 78–80.

as being not far away from the living. While in the syncretistic vision direct contact between the living and the dead appeared to be possible, the standard Christian memorial culture is based only on indirect relations. As summarized above, care for the deceased was carried out through donations, prayer, liturgical commemoration, and charity.⁴¹

3.2 *Remembrance – Individual Commemoration*

The most fascinating aspect of remembrance is what I would like to call 'delegated remembrance', liturgical commemoration in monasteries and churches based on donations. The mention of the individual donor's name should evoke remembrance by God. The first trace of this delegated remembrance reaches back to the era of the Kievan Rus' and was borrowed from Byzantine tradition. In it, we can see the rise of commemorative practice in Muscovy and Ruthenia as a continuation and further development of older practices. But new forms of an elaborated commemoration, evident from the end of the 15th century in Muscovy, were at the same time closely bound to the development of the monastic landscape in the north, which began with the work of Sergii of Radonezh in middle of the 14th century. This 'ascetic age' was characterized by the idea that life as a monk was the most secure way to salvation and that the prayers of monks were the most efficacious means of achieving this.

While in former times monasteries in Rus' had only been founded close to urban settlements, foundations from the 14th century were made in remote and far less developed areas. In the 15th century, the wave of foundations reached the White Sea. Because of the attraction of monasticism, the primary intention of ascetic retreat from the world soon lost its importance. The monasteries became centres of colonization, partly in competition with the local population. They proved to be important factors of the economic and cultural development of Muscovy, comparable to the role played by monastic landscapes of the high Middle Ages in the West.⁴²

It was a matter of piety and prestige for the elite to make donations for themselves and their relatives to large monasteries, and in return donors expected elaborate liturgical commemoration. Serving as centres of care for the deceased became one of the central functions of monasteries. Similar to the West, there was a time lag between the first large-scale patronage of

⁴¹ Steindorff, *Memoria*, 84, 246–7.

⁴² For the rise of the most important monastery in Muscovy see. Pierre Gonneau, *La maison de la Sainte Trinité: Un grand-monastère russe du Moyen-Âge tardif (1345–1533)* (Paris: 1993); David B. Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh, his Trinity Monastery, and the Formation of the Russian Identity* (De Kalb, IL: 2010).

monasteries to the growth in requests for individual commemoration. A differentiated organization of commemoration started only when the first monasteries of the colonization era had existed for more than a century, that is, in the middle of the 15th century.⁴³

Individual commemoration relied on the Byzantine tradition of using diptychs, originally a double table-plate containing the names of living and dead persons to be commemorated, and later, by a metonymic shift, to mean any list with this function. From the 12th century we meet the loan translation *pominanie*, literally “the remembering,” in sources from the Rus’, later also *po-miannik* (South Slav variation *pomenik*; modern Ukrainian form *pomiannyk*). Among the Northern Rus’ this word was later frequently replaced by the designation as *sinodik*. While the term is widely present in sources from Muscovy, it does not appear in Ruthenia at all. Another term used in Ruthenia was *subbotnik*, e.g. “the list for *subbota*, Saturday,” the day which is devoted to the individual commemoration of the dead within the weekly liturgical cycle.⁴⁴

In its original sense the name *sinodik* refers to a *synodos*, the church council of 843, which condemned iconoclasm. The Greek *synodikon* contained the decisions of the seven ecumenical councils and listed people under anathema as well as high-ranking persons who deserved well-being on earth and, if deceased already, eternal memory. This text was read only once a year, within the Orthodox rite, on the first Sunday of Lent. We know of adopted translations of the *synodikon* from Georgia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and from the Rus’.⁴⁵ The latter is also called *sinodik pravoslaviia*, “*sinodik* of the Orthodoxy,” or *vselenskii sinodik*, “ecumenical *sinodik*” – a very specific kind of remembrance. While it was not meant to secure the salvation of the commemorated persons, it served the self-assurance of the commemorating community: it defined the border between those who belonged to the community and those who did not.

43 Rosenwein *To Be the Neighbor*, 39; Ludwig Steindorff, “Donations and Commemorations in the Muscovite Realm – A Medieval or Early Modern Phenomenon?” in *Religion und Integration im Moskauer Russland: Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen*, 14.–17. Jahrhundert, ed. Ludwig Steindorff, *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 76 (Wiesbaden: 2010), 477–98, on 486.

44 Tymoshenko, “Tradyciia i praktyky pominannia,” 122–3; Steindorff, *Memoria*, 52.

45 For the date of the translation see V.V. Dergachev, “K istorii russkikh perevodov Vselenskogo Sinodika,” in *Stanovlenie povestvovatel’nykh nachal v drevnerusskoi literature XV–XVII vekov (na materiale sinodika)*, ed. Irina Dergacheva, *Specimina Philologiae Slavicae* 89 (Munich: 1990), 165–88 (placing it ca. 1275); K.A. Maksimovich, “K utochneniiu korpusa drevnerusskikh domongol’skikh perevodov s grecheskogo: Sinodik v nedeliu pravoslaviia,” *Drevniaia Rus’. Voprosy medievistiki* 4/46 (2011), 77–86 (placing it in the era of the Kievan Rus’).

As mentioned above, in the northern Orthodox communities the word *sinodik* received a second meaning, denoting a list of many names. Therefore, looking at sources from Muscovy we must distinguish carefully between the types of *sinodik* we refer to. In practice the two types are easy to distinguish, since the *sinodik pravoslaviia* enumerates the names in the dative: *anafema* (“a curse upon”), and *vechnaia slava* (“eternal glory”). In the other *sinodik*, in the diptychs the names appear in the accusative corresponding to the call: *Pomiani, Gospodi*, (“Remember, O Lord!”), or simply in the nominative. From the middle of the 15th century donors asked more frequently for commemoration in their deeds, and the large monasteries in particular had to deal with increasing numbers of names to be commemorated. This ultimately required the use of two separate lists of commemoration of different liturgical value, depending on the size of the donation.

The sources which best illustrate the functioning of this system in detail for the first time come from a comparatively young monastery, the aforementioned Monastery of the Dormition near Volokolamsk, founded by Iosif Sanin in 1479, and also called the Iosifov Monastery in the English-language historiography. The practice at Iosifov relied upon the experience of older large monasteries, but the Iosifov Monastery played a crucial role in its systematization.⁴⁶ Iosif himself mentioned the practice in his Rule, and between 1506 and 1510 he explained it in detail in a long letter to the Princess Mariia Golenina, who had complained about the high cost and the allegedly small liturgical “gifts” she received in return.⁴⁷ The most elaborated normative text from Muscovy concerning donation and commemoration is to be found in the *Obikhodnik* of Iosifov and dates from about 1581. The *Obikhodnik* is a kind of rule, outlining the specifics of individual monasteries, and is similar to the Western monastic *consuetudo*, beside the general Rule. Chapter five is devoted to the burial of

46 See Ludwig Steindorff, “What Was New about Commemoration in the Iosifo-Volokolamskii Monastery? A Reassessment,” in *Iosif Volotskii and Eastern Christianity: Essays Across Seventeen Centuries*, eds David Goldfrank, Valeria Nollan, and Jennifer Spock (Washington, DC: 2017), 137–52.

47 David M. Goldfrank (ed., trans.), *The Monastic Rule of Iosif Volotsky*, revised edition, Cistercian Studies Series 36 (Kalamazoo, MI, Spencer, MA: 2000), 277, 309–11; for details on this letter see Ludwig Steindorff, “Princess Mariia Golenina: Perpetuating Identity through Care for the Deceased,” in *Culture and Identity in Muscovy, 1359–1584/Moskovskaia Rus’ (1359–1584): Kul’tura i istoricheskoe samosoznanie*, eds A.M. Kleimola and G.D. Lenhoff, UCLA Slavic Studies, New Series 3 (Moscow: 1997), 557–77; German translation with commentaries in the collection: Ludwig Steindorff (trans.), “Quellen zu Stiftungswesen und Totengedenken im Moskauer Russland,” URL: <https://www.histsem.uni-kiel.de/de/das-institut-1/abteilungen/osteuropaeische-geschichte/materialien/Quellen%20zu%20Stiftungswesen%20und%20Totengedenken.pdf> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

the brothers, to the types of mortuary or commemoration lists, the practice of reading, and the fees for the entry of names.⁴⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that the terminology is not completely uniform even within one monastery, while describing the system, I shall keep to the terms most frequently used at the Iosifov Monastery. The lowest level of commemoration was based upon an entry in the *vechnyi sinodik*, the “eternal *sino-dik*.” The price for the entry was a quarter of a rouble, and it included the whole family. Because the *vechnyi sinodik* grew very quickly and soon contained tens of thousands of names, it was read during the longer sections of the day, outside of the ongoing liturgical offices.⁴⁹ The second level was the entry in the *povsednevnyi spisok*, the “list for every day.” The price was one rouble per person for one year, at a time when you could buy an entire village for 50 roubles. Only a donation of 50 roubles in cash, or the equivalent value of land or movable property, secured an entry in perpetuity. Of course, this list grew much more slowly, so it could be read at the corresponding hours during the daily liturgical cycle.

The extant copy of the “list for everyday” from Iosifov dating to about 1600 contains around 1000 names, grouped by monks and nuns on the one hand and laity on the other. These groups are further differentiated as members of the family of the grand prince and tsar, princely and other families. In principle, the names follow the chronological order of death. Because the family name is written in small red letters above the baptismal name or the monk’s name is given alongside his religious affiliation, it is frequently possible to identify persons by cross-referencing to other sources.⁵⁰

The highest level in this system was an annual *korm*, literally a “feeding,” a feast in memory of the donor or of the person in whose memory the donor had established the feast, normally on the saint’s day or on the day of death of the donor or the person to be commemorated. The price of one *korm* was an enormous 100 roubles. On the day of commemoration by a *korm*, the name was read aloud in the corresponding services and at the end of the meal. The

48 Full publication: E.E. Golubinskii: *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, vol. 2, 2 (Moscow: 1911, repr. The Hague, Paris: 1969), 577–80; German translation with commentaries within the collection: Ludwig Steindorff (trans.), “Quellen zu Stiftungswesen und Totengedenken im Moskauer Russland,” URL: <https://www.histsem.uni-kiel.de/de/das-institut-1/abteilungen/osteuropaeische-geschichte/materialen/Quellen%20zu%20Stiftungswesen%20und%20Totengedenken.pdf> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

49 Presentation of the tariffs in detail in Steindorff, “What Was New,” 138–9, 148, note 5.

50 For a detailed analysis of the composition of this list see Steindorff, *Memoria*, 191–2; Ludwig Steindorff, “Commemoration and Administrative Techniques in Muscovite Monasteries,” *Russian History* 22 (1995), 439–41.

kormovaia kniga, the Feast Book, contained detailed instructions for what should be served during the meal, depending on the size of the donation and the prestige of the person.⁵¹ Commemoration on a higher level always included lower-level rituals as well. So, every person registered in the *Kormovaia kniga* appears in the “List for every day” as well, but not vice versa.

Despite the more limited sources for other monastic communities compared to those available for the Iosifov Monastery, we have enough reliable proofs that other large monasteries, among them the Troitse-Sergiev Monastery and the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery, followed the same system of three levels of commemoration, and the prices were the same everywhere. The prices in the normative texts are confirmed by corresponding sums of 50 or 100 roubles in deeds and in the donation books.

The practice was bound to an abundance of pragmatic or legal texts and we can verify how carefully the different lists were kept at least in large monasteries of Muscovy. The most useful aids for modern research are the donation books which were regularly kept in many monasteries from the 1560s onward, following the ruling of the church council in 1551 which obliged monasteries to fulfil their obligations to donors “in memory of their souls and those of their relatives for eternal commemoration and for the inheritance of the eternal goods.”⁵²

The introduction of two lists of different value was an answer to how to cope with the ever-rising number of names to be commemorated. Medieval monasteries in the West had been confronted with such a phenomenon as well, but the solution was different. Instead of keeping *Libri vitae*, similar to the *vechnyi sinodik*, the individual commemoration was limited to one day per year, to the day of death of the individual, and names were registered in the necrology in the form and order of a calendar.⁵³

We can trace the practice of two lists also outside Muscovy, from the Kievan Cave Monastery.⁵⁴ But, compared to Muscovy, the corresponding pragmatic

51 Published and translated into German by Steindorff, *Kormovaia kniga*. The Feast Book appears as chapter 6 in the *Obikhodnik*.

52 Gorskii (ed.), *Zakonodatel'stvo*, 352 (Stoglav, glava 75).

53 See Steindorff, “Commemoration and Donation,” 483–9.

54 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 198; Ludwig Steindorff, “Desirable Ubiquity? Family Strategies of Donation and Commemoration in Muscovy,” *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 57 (2016): 2–3, 641–665, especially 661–662. My student Kyrill Kobsar has analysed the oldest *pomiannik* from the Kievan Caves monastery in his master's thesis and is preparing a dissertation about liturgical commemoration of the dead by the Orthodox church in Poland-Lithuania in the later Middle Ages and the early modern period. His results will offer much more detailed information on the memorial practices of the Orthodox in Polish-Lithuania.

literature was not as elaborate, and donation books are largely missing.⁵⁵ The reason why this literature was not as elaborate among the Orthodox in Poland-Lithuania may be due to the weaker economic position of the Orthodox elite, and to the fact that nobles had converted to Protestantism or Catholicism. But it may also fit with the influence from the West, where such an expression of care for the dead had lost its attractiveness already and had been replaced by the “visible” commemoration of a splendid sepulchral culture. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the practice of commemoration and of keeping *pomianniki* in churches and monasteries was no less popular than in Muscovy.

Who felt obliged to secure delegated permanent remembrance, and for whom? From the middle of the 16th century the *vechnye sinodiki* in Muscovy and the *pomianniki* in Ruthenia were often grouped by sections of just one family, normally containing between five and twenty names, that is, comprising about two or three generations. Sometimes people from outside the family were included, as a sign of gratitude and friendship. However, for the elite, an entry in the *vechnyi sinodik* was neither of high-prestige nor of high-liturgical value; an entry in the “list for every day” or even the establishment of a feast was of much greater significance.

An analysis of the donation book of the Iosifov Monastery shows that most commemorations in the “list for every day” were based upon donations by the donors themselves. Next in order of frequency were donations for father, mother, and husband. The most frequent combinations of donations for more than one person are: donor – father – mother; male donor – wife; donor – father, female donor – husband; father – mother. Fewer than 10 per cent of donations were made by women. But about 25 per cent of the names commemorated in the “list for every day” were of women, normally due to a donation by the husband.⁵⁶ Other research shows that the rates are surprisingly similar in all large monasteries.⁵⁷

Donation and foundation patterns correspond to Western medieval practices. Securing permanent commemoration was exclusively a family matter, consanguinity was a stronger link than marriage, except for the married couple itself. In kinship bonds, male and patrilinear relations were dominant.⁵⁸ We

55 A preliminary result of the research by Kyrill Kobsar.

56 Steindorff, “Wer sind die Meinen?” 239–52, on the basis of the “list for every day,” the donation book and the feast book from Iosifov.

57 Kaiser, “Death and Dying,” 217–57, especially 244; David B. Miller, “Motives for Donations to the Trinity-Sergius Monastery, 1392–1605: Gender Matters,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 14 (1997), 91–107.

58 For a case study of a woman as donor see Ludwig Steindorff, “Equality under Reserve: Men and Women in Donations and Commemoration in Muscovite Russia,” *Canadian-American*

can also see that the higher the status of the family, the greater the share of women being commemorated. However, the practice was flexible and allowed exceptions to these rules. Securing remembrance was concentrated on a circle of people surprisingly close to the modern nuclear family.⁵⁹

Questions might be asked about the choice of a site of liturgical commemoration for patronage purposes. Looking at elite practice in Muscovy, we can determine a hierarchy of preference among monasteries. In first place were the Troitse-Sergie and Kirillov Monasteries.⁶⁰ In the *sinodiki* of smaller monasteries the geographical catchment area was limited to the neighbouring region.⁶¹ Donors tended to concentrate their large donations on one monastery. They avoided scattering their fortunes and tried instead to secure a high level of commemoration in one monastery.

We know of donations to the Kievan Cave Monastery from individuals in Muscovy. Tsar Ivan IV even made donations to the patriarch of Constantinople and to the Monastery Hilandar on Mount Athos, and Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, to the Sinai Monastery.⁶² However, in general, the network of places where people from Muscovy were commemorated was contained within the territory of Muscovy. The social and religious practice of donation and commemoration was a means of integrating the elites of the region and of the state. In contrast, I have not found any donations from the Polish-Lithuanian territory to a Muscovite monastery in sources from the late 15th and 16th century, which are the focus of my research. Future research could look at how practices of donation and the regional distribution of commemoration changed, with the integration of the eastern parts of Polish-Lithuanian territories, including Kiev, into the Muscovite state in 1667.

Slavic Studies 49 (2015), 193–210; Maria Hillebrandt, “Stiftungen zum Seelenheil durch Frauen in den Urkunden des Klosters Cluny,” in *Vinculum Societatis: Joachim Wollasch zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds Franz Neiske, Dietrich Poeck, and Mechthild Sandmann (Sigmaringen: 1991), 61–3.

59 Ludwig Steindorff, “Wer sind die Meinen? Individuum und Memorialkultur im frühneuzeitlichen Rußland,” in *Das Individuum und die Seinen: Individualität in der okzidentalen und in der russischen Kultur in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, eds Yuri I. Bessmertny and Otto Gerhard Oexle, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 163 (Göttingen: 2001), 231–58, especially 241–52; Steindorff, “Desirable Ubiquity,” 659.

60 This was worked out on the basis of a case study from Iosifov by Steindorff, “Desirable Ubiquity.”

61 For example, Nikita V. Bashnin, “Sinodiki mittelgroßer Klöster und die Möglichkeit ihrer Erforschung (am Beispiel des Dionisij-Glušickij-Klosters in Vologda und des Nikolaus-Klosters in Staraja Ladoga vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert),” in *Monastische Kultur als transkonfessionelles Phänomen*, 261–76.

62 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 196–8.

Furthermore, also before the time of Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible (1547–1584), Muscovite rulers made numerous donations, but the value of the donations did not exceed significantly that normally given by other members of the elite. It was only from the 1560s and with the increasing persecution of alleged or real enemies of the tsar, that the amounts given grew rapidly. The tsar himself gave donations for the victims of persecution, for those he had deprived of a 'good' death and of a decent burial. In 1583, the tsar established commemoration in the *sinodik opal'nykh*, the "sinodik of the disgraced" as an act of repentance. He ordered the composition of a list of victims of his persecutions. The list comprises 1240 names, and when figures for unnamed victims are added, this made 2060 people. Copies of this list and large donations were sent to many monasteries, which entered these names in their *sinodiki* and included them in their regular commemoration.⁶³ Remembrance by commemoration was also secured for fallen warriors, first in the *Sinodik pravoslaviia*, and from the 17th century also in the *vechnyi sinodik*.⁶⁴ It was also in the 17th century that the tsar confirmed his status as ruler by being the most generous donor and by taking care to secure lavish commemorations for the members of the dynasty.⁶⁵

How did families recollect the names for which they had commissioned or might one day commission commemoration? Despite the lack of preserved documents from that time, it is likely that, parallel to the rise of the monastic book-keeping of names, families also started to keep small private memorial booklets. Such books are extant from the 17th century. Adam Olearius, author one of the best-known travelogues about Muscovy, describes how in 1634 in Narva, women gave such books to a priest who would read them in the Orthodox cemetery on Whit Saturday.⁶⁶ So far, we know of just one document in which a family systematically registered the donations made for the commemoration of family members. The list from the house of the Mstislavskii princes,

63 Text in: R.G. Skrynnikov, *Oprichnyi terror* (Leningrad: 1969), 266–88; Robert Payne and Nikita Romanoff, *Ivan the Terrible* (New York: 1975), 394–9; Steindorff, *Memoria*, 226–31.

64 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 226–34.

65 Russell E. Martin, "Gifts and Commemoration: Donations to Monasteries, Dynastic Legitimacy, and Remembering the Royal Dead in Muscovy," in *Religion and Integration im Moskauer Russland: Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen*, 14.–17. Jahrhundert, ed. Ludwig Steindorff, *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 76 (Wiesbaden: 2010), 499–525; Russell E. Martin, "Praying for the Dead in Muscovy: Kinship Awareness and Orthodox Belief in the Commemorations of Muscovite Royalty," in *Tapestry of Russian Christianity: Studies in History and Culture*, eds Nickolas Lupinin, Donald Ostrowski, and Jennifer B. Spock (Columbus, Ohio, IL: 2016), 189–226.

66 English translation of the passage by Samuel Baron in *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth Century Russia* (Stanford: 1967), 40–1.

which covers the years from 1550 to 1625, shows some upheavals, when important members of the family died, and numerous years without any donation.⁶⁷

As early as the 17th century, memorial culture in the sense of an elaborate system of liturgical commemoration of the dead and corresponding pragmatic writing culture declined and played a less important role as a factor of socio-political integration. This development was due to the rise of new forms of a more individual piety and to the fact that donating and asking for entry in the *sinodik* became a part of popular religious culture. At the same time, donations for religious acts gradually lost their function of expressing the prestige of the donor. In the elite culture which developed after the era of Peter the Great, memorial culture in the old sense played a marginal role. Yet, giving for individual commemoration *za zdavie i za upokoi*, "for health and eternal peace," remains an aspect of the religious practice of Russian Orthodox believers even today. Somehow it still appears as a means of integrating Russian Orthodox people into a cultural community.

As discussed above, there is less evidence for the sort of elaborate system of Orthodox elite commemoration in Ruthenia similar to the one practised in Muscovy from the end of the 15th until the second half of the 17th century. But there are abundant materials proving the importance of remembrance by commemoration as part of religious life in urban as well as in rural areas in Ruthenia. Despite the change of hierarchy of a church or a monastery from the Orthodox to the Uniate rite, commemoration of Orthodox ancestors continued.⁶⁸ What we also see in this region is an intertwining of Catholic and Orthodox traditions in the commemoration of the dead. Following the Catholic pattern, Orthodox brotherhoods were founded from the middle of the 15th century; some of them joined the Greek-Catholic church later, but some were founded within this church. Brotherhoods were active at L'viv and Kiev and in many smaller cities. Most of them were formed around parish churches as parallel organizations of laymen. The brotherhoods helped to bind the population to the parish and to consolidate their ethno-confessional identity.⁶⁹

67 Russell E. Martin, "Gifts for the Dead: Death, Kinship and Commemoration in Muscovy (The Case of the Mstislavskii Princes)," *Russian History* 26 (1999), 171–202.

68 Berezhnaya, "True Faith and Salvation," 459–60.

69 For the practice of commemoration by the brotherhoods see the well-documented article by Tymoshenko, "Tradyciia i praktyky pomynannia." Iaroslav Isaievych, *Voluntary Brotherhood: Confraternities of Laymen in Early Modern Ukraine* (trans. from Ukrainian) (Edmonton, AB: 2006) is an excellent overview of the brotherhoods, but without any information on burial practice and commemoration. For some information on the Orthodox and Uniate brotherhoods at Polotsk (Belorussian: Polatsk) see Stefan Rohdewald, "Vom Polocker Venedig": *Kollektives Handeln sozialer Gruppen einer Stadt zwischen Ost- und*

One of the functions of the brotherhoods beside catechization, education, and charity was to secure a decent burial and commemoration of the members.⁷⁰ Numerous *pomianniki* of the brotherhoods are preserved from the second half of the 16th century onwards and may serve as helpful sources for the social composition of their membership. Instead of clerics, the brotherhoods were responsible for keeping the books. Statutes of the brotherhoods mandate that the brothers should enter their deceased parents and other relatives in the *pomiannik* and that the priest should read the book regularly, for instance “in the morning service and in the evening service on the days of [general] commemoration and during Great Lent,” as pointed out in the Statute of the Brotherhood of the Dormition at L’viv following the dispositions of the charter from 1586 by Patriarch Yoakhim of Antiochia for the brotherhood. The priest should celebrate the Divine liturgy, i.e. a eucharistic service, twice a year *za zdравie i za upokoi*, “for health and eternal peace,” of the brothers.⁷¹

If we look for particular features of Orthodox church life in Ruthenia, we have to mention the flourishing memorial practices of the Orthodox brotherhoods, which were formed following the pattern of Catholic brotherhoods. However, in terms of religious practice, the brotherhoods were certainly part of the Orthodox world.

4 Conclusion

Looking at the period of 400 years from about 1300 until 1700 in the Orthodox Eastern Europe we do not see a watershed like the Reformation in central and northern Europe. Only within the Orthodox Polish-Lithuanian territories was religious discourse influenced to some degree by ideas from Protestantism. As for the practices of preparation of the dying, of death, burial, and remembrance, continuity with the Orthodox tradition clearly dominated. This was also true of the Greek-Catholic Church.

We may summarize the development as a general process of churchification (in German *Verkirchlichung*) and as increasing ecclesiastical socialisation. This included the organization of time in correspondence with the church year, participation in the Orthodox rites, the development of the monastic landscape

Mitteleuropa (Mittelalter, frühe Neuzeit, 19. Jahrhundert bis 1914), Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa (Stuttgart: 2005), 254–8.

70 For this aspect cf. Antoni Mironowicz, “Charitable Work of the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (16th-17th c.),” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 87 (2003), 43–54.

71 Tymoshenko, “Tradyciia i praktyky pomynannia,” 119–21.

and later of a dense network of parishes. The role of the monasteries as centres of care for the deceased, the practice of donation and commemoration, and the rise of pragmatic literacy in this field influenced each other. Surviving syncretic elements were not an indication of a beginning of dechristianisation, but of a not fully developed churchification.

Dechristianisation started in the 18th century on the territory of the Russian Empire, especially due to the reforms of Peter the Great. However, the old world of traditions around death, burial, and remembrance was only damaged from the second half of the 19th century and particularly during the Soviet era. Still, surprisingly perhaps, much of this world, especially the practice of remembrance, has survived and has even been revitalised as part of religious life during the last decades in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus'. Fernand Braudel distinguishes three levels of history: *structure*, *conjoncture* and *événement*.⁷² The *longue durée* is characterized by extremely stable structures. Certainly, through the centuries, changing *conjonctures* presented in this chapter were quite different from and not simultaneous with those affecting the Western churches, especially in Muscovy and to a lesser degree in the Polish-Lithuanian territory. Notwithstanding these differences and the non-simultaneity, the *conjonctures* relied upon the common *longue durée* of attitudes towards death, burial, and remembrance in Christianity.

⁷² Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée," in idem, *Écrits sur l'histoire* (Paris: 1969), 41–84 (first published in 1958).

PART 2

Cultural and Emotional Responses to Loss: Grief and Commemoration



Body, Liturgy, and Tomb Monuments in the Later Middle Ages

Robert Marcoux

This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

LUKE 22:19



These words of Jesus to the apostles, which instituted the eucharist, point to two major concepts upon which medieval civilization draws its social dynamics and artistic and cultural production: memory and materiality.¹ While the death of the Saviour has been celebrated through mass since the early Christian period, by the late Middle Ages its liturgical commemoration had become increasingly material. Settling a debate going back to the Carolingian period, the Fourth Lateran Council first declared, in 1215, that the consecrated wafer was the corporeal body of Christ. This, in turn, led the host to develop into a primary devotional object, which the faithful worshipped through a myriad of images, vessels, and structures.² Although they operate on an entirely different

- ¹ Research on both topics is vast. Studies on memory as a liturgical and cultural trait of medieval society were undertaken in the 1980s by the Fribourg-Münster School with the notable work of Gert Tellenbach, Karl Schmid, and Otto Gerhard Oexle, leading to the programmatic volume by Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (eds.), *Memoria, Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter* (Munich: 1984). It was notably followed in the United States by the work of Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: 1994). In addition to the classic study of Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: 1966), the mnemonic aspect of memory was simultaneously explored by Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: 1990) and *The Craft of Thought* (Cambridge: 1998). As for the question of materiality, research on the topic is best exemplified by the more recent work of Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality* (New York: 2011) and that of Beth Williamson, *Material Culture and Medieval Christianity* (Oxford: 2014).
- ² In addition to the work of Bynum cited above, see on the subject Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi. The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: 1991), Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion in*

level, funeral monuments underwent a similar evolution. Far from being passive memorials, late medieval tombs provide the dead with a bodily presence with which the viewers are compelled to interact.³ As will be argued in this chapter, the interaction between the living and the dead is reciprocal. Through their material characteristics, iconography, and settings, the tombs act as loci of articulation between the past of the deceased, the future of their souls, and the present of their community.

1 Body and Self

The end of the Middle Ages is readily associated with the unsettling iconography of decayed flesh and bones.⁴ The artistic phenomenon is often attributed to the anxiety brought about by the many wars and diseases that plagued the period. To be sure, the political and social turmoil of the 14th and 15th centuries – and most of all the traumatic experience of the Black Death – rekindled the moral rhetoric of the *memento mori* that is openly at play in such themes as the Three Living and the Three Dead and the Dance of Death.⁵ However, as evidenced by the fact that many such images adorn sumptuous objects such as prayer books and monumental tombs, the representation of

the Late Middle Ages in Europe (Princeton: 1994) and Beth Williamson, "Altarpieces, Liturgy, and Devotion," *Speculum* 79/2 (2004), 341–406.

- 3 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Cambridge: 1996); Clive Burgess, "‘Longing to Be Prayed For’: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages," in *Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 44–65. For an archaeological perspective on the material culture of death and remembrance, see Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: 2006), 215–21.
- 4 An image forcibly painted by Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919; repr. and trans. London: 1924), who sees in the macabre signs of moral crises and the bitterness of material loss.
- 5 The influence of the plague on art was famously studied by Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton: 1951). Meiss, however, dealt less with macabre imagery than with the stylistic and iconographic impact of the epidemic on traditional religious themes. At the same moment, Alberto Tenenti, *La Vie et la mort à travers l'art du XV^e siècle* (Paris: 1952) associated the macabre iconography with a "love of life," an idea reprised and further developed by Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore: 1974). For a critical assessment of Huizinga's and Ariès' influence on interpretations of the macabre, see Binski, *Medieval Death*, 123–33. The correlation between the calamities of the late Middle Ages and macabre iconography was convincingly disproved by Jean Wirth, "Il macabro nell'arte occidentale: Saggio d'interpretazione," *Fondamenti: Rivista quadrimestrale di cultura* 11 (1988), 41–58.

a human corpse does not necessarily reflect contempt for the material world, and much less for the dead body. On the contrary, the content of wills and testaments of the late Middle Ages suggests that the fate of the latter is a matter of great concern.⁶ If the multiplication of *pro anima* bequests is a sign that spiritual salvation is of utmost importance, testators rarely omit to acknowledge the issue of their physical remains. Indeed, most of them begin their wills by simultaneously commending their soul to heaven and their body to the earth. Although the preamble is formulaic, it is also indicative of the Christian conception of the individual as a psychosomatic unity. According to this notion – which the scholastic age greatly helped develop – death is a temporary and unnatural state of separation between the body and the soul.⁷ Thus, despite its inevitable decay and dissolution, the dead body stays relevant as an intrinsic part of the deceased.⁸ Accordingly, and even when they describe it as food for worms, a majority of wills give precise instructions for the handling of the corpse. While they provide for their souls by demanding masses and prayers, testators often ask that their bodies be buried in specific places. Many scholars have focused on the spiritual and social strategies behind such requests.⁹ Fundamentally, fixing the location of one's body ensures a certain control over its destiny, an issue that becomes significant in the wake of crises with the looming threat of mass burials.¹⁰ With the likely fear

6 As observed in France by Martin de La Soudière, "Les Testaments et actes de dernière volonté à la fin du Moyen Âge," *Ethnologie française* 5 (1975), 57–80; and Marie-Claude Marandet, "L'élection de sépulture et les croyances relatives à 'l'après-mort' dans la région toulousaine entre 1300 et 1450 d'après les testaments," *Archéologie du Midi médiéval* 3 (1985), 103–22.

7 As expressed, for example, by Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae*, pars 1, 151: *Necesse est autem hoc quod est animam a corpore separatam esse, per accidens esse et contra naturam*. For discussion on the topic, Elizabeth A.R. Brown, "Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: The Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse," *Viator* 12 (1981), 221–70; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: 1995), 229–78.

8 Katherine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 50 (1995), 111–32. More recently, Remedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers* (Ostfildern: 2014) has brought to the fore the relevance of the dead body in medieval culture.

9 Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066–1550* (London: 1997), 87–115; Robert Kinsey, "The Location of Commemoration in Late Medieval England: the Case of the Thorpes of Northamptonshire," in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval England*, eds C.M. Barron and C. Burgess (Donington: 2010), 40–57.

10 Samuel Cohn, "The Place of the Dead in Flanders and Tuscany: Towards a Comparative History of the Black Death," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 17–43, quoting the works of Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de*

that anonymous graves lead to neglect and oblivion, demands for “holy” or “ecclesiastical” burial in the hallowed ground of cemeteries or churches tend to localize the body’s resting place with greater accuracy. Depending on the cultural area from which they come, testators specify whether they wish to join the tomb of immediate family members (wife or husband and sometimes children) or that of their parents and ancestors. Despite regular attempts at banning the practice, many testators also indicate the exact site of their burials within the church, usually close to an altar or shrine. Their objective here was to profit from the presence of the eucharist or relics, and of the liturgy and prayers they give rise to.¹¹

Proximity to loved ones or to spiritually charged sites thus suggests that the dead body retains a certain agency in terms of social and ontological identity: it preserves the familial bond of the deceased and channels benefits to his or her soul. In other words, far from being reviled carrion, the corpse clearly functions as the physical locus of a commemoration that is both retrospective and prospective.¹² On the one hand, it perpetuates the memory of the deceased among the local community, and on the other, it acts as a mediator for salvific performance. This, of course, operates fully during the liturgy for the dead. Essentially composed of vigil, mass, and burial, the funeral gathers the living around the body of the deceased to initiate the process of mourning and assist the soul’s transition into the afterlife.¹³ Subsequent commemorative activities further these objectives by re-enacting the funeral at regular intervals, traditionally three, seven, and 30 days after the funeral, and annually thereafter.¹⁴ Again, the body is at the centre of most of these commemorations. When it is not next to an altar for the celebration of masses and offices, the burial place is often the setting for complementary actions that too involve members of the clergy.

l’Au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d’Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (vers 1320–vers 1480) (Rome: 1980) and Jean-Pierre Deregnaucourt, *Autour de la mort à Douai: Attitudes, pratiques et croyances, 1250–1500*, unpublished PhD dissertation (Université de Lille-3: 1993).

- 11 Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066–1550* (London: 1997), 86–91.
- 12 On the dialectic of retrospective and prospective commemoration, see Robert Marcoux, “Memory, Presence and the Medieval Tomb,” in *Revisiting the Monument: Fifty Years Since Panofsky’s Tomb Sculpture*, eds Ann Adams and Jessica Barker (London: 2016), 49–67.
- 13 In the Christian beliefs of the medieval period, it is commonly held that the soul’s separation from the body is a gradual process that is completed after one year, when the flesh is entirely decomposed, see Park, “The Life of the Corpse,” 115.
- 14 Knud Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead* (Copenhagen: 1993), 44.

The will of Perrin d'Auxon, a citizen from Besançon who died in 1459, contains most of the details pertaining to the role of the body beyond death:

The burial of my body I elect and want and order that my body be buried in the parochial church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Besançon in front of the chapel founded in said church in honour of saint Denis, under the tomb under which my beloved wife Ysabel, daughter of Jehan Tarevelot, formerly burgher of Noroy, was and is buried. [...] Also, I want and order that on the day of my death and on the eve of its third, seventh, thirtieth and anniversary days, be well and devotedly said the Vigil of the dead with nine psalms and nine lessons in the aforementioned church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Besançon by priests or vicars and chaplains of the said church, and on the day of the aforementioned third, seventh, thirtieth and annual obits be said and celebrated a *Requiem* Mass on the main altar of said church by said priests or vicars, and after the celebration of each of the said masses, I want and order that the *Aperite*¹⁵ be said by the aforementioned priest or vicars and chaplains on the tomb under which I shall be buried, as ordained; [...] and I want that each and every priest celebrating Mass, after the celebration, be kept to say *De profundis*¹⁶ and the *Oratio fidelium*¹⁷ on the tomb in which my body shall be buried, and sprinkle it with holy water.¹⁸

As these excerpts demonstrate, the testator focuses intently on the fate of his own remains. He first orders that his body be buried in his wife's grave near a chapel within the parochial church. Though it is unclear whether the gravesite is where the clergymen must recite the vigil of the dead on the eve of every commemoration mass, Perrin clearly establishes it as the culmination point of the latter. It is here, above the body of the deceased, that prayers are to be said

15 Antiphone taken from Ps. 117:19–20: “Aperite mihi portas iustitiae: ingressus in eas confitebor Domino. Haec porta Domini: iusti intrabunt in eam.” On its use in the context of burials, Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: 1990), 42.

16 Responsory from the Office of the Dead taken from Ps. 130:1–2: “De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine. Domine, exaudi vocem meam: Fiant aures tuae intendentes, in vocem deprecationis meae.”

17 Oratio from the Office of the Dead: “Fidelium Deus omnium conditor et redemptor, animabus famulorum famularumque tuarum remissionem cunctorum tribue peccatorum: ut iudulgentiam, quam semper optaverunt, piis supplicationibus consequantur. Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum.”

18 Personal translation.

and holy water sprinkled in a re-enactment of the interment. More exactly, the performance of these cyclical actions are to take place on the *tombeau* of the deceased, certainly the same *tombeaux* underneath which already lies his wife. While there is no description of the monument itself, its use as a marker is explicit: first by situating the gravesite desired by the testator (that of his wife), then by locating the commemoration of his burial. In both instances, the corpse is therefore dependent upon the material trace of a memorial. It is because of the monument that the body is able to avoid dissolving into complete oblivion, taking with it the memory of the deceased.

2 Memory and Materiality

Church writers acknowledged the mnemonic role of tombs as early as the 5th century. In his *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* ("On the care of the dead"), written around 422, St Augustine calls upon the etymological evidence to explain that funeral monuments ('*memoriae*' vel '*monumenta*') serve to "remind someone of" the deceased.¹⁹ The same explanation finds itself alongside comments on other sepulchral terms in Isidore's *Etymologies* and Rabanus Maurus' *De Universo*.²⁰ A shift in meaning however occurs between the 12th and 13th century in the work of liturgists. Focusing on the term *monumentum*, writers such as Jean Beleth, Sicard of Cremona, and Guillaume Durand associate the mnemonic function of the tomb to that of a *memento mori*: the monument moves the viewer to remember that he or she is dust and shall return to dust.²¹ In

19 Augustine, *De cure pro mortuis gerenda*, 111, 6d., in *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 41, ed. Joseph Zycha (Vienna: 1900), 630: "Sed non ob aliud vel Memoriae vel Monumenta dicuntur ea quae insignita fiunt sepulcra mortuorum, nisi quia eos qui viventium oculis morte subtracti sunt, ne oblivione etiam cordibus subtrahantur, in memoriam revocant, et admonendo faciunt cogitari: nam et Memoriae nomen id aperissime ostendit, et Monumentum eo quod moneat mentem, id est, admoneat, nuncupatur. Propter quod et Graeci μνημεῖον vocant, quod nos Memoriam seu Monumentum appellamus; quoniam lingua eorum memoria ipsa qua meminimus μνήμη dicitur." See also Paula Rose, *A commentary on Augustine's De cura pro mortibus gerenda. Rhetoric in Practice* (Leiden: 2013), 192–99.

20 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive Originum*, xv, 11, in *PL*, 82, 552A; Rabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, xxviii, *PL*, 111, 408C.

21 Jean Beleth, *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, clxix, *PL*, 202, 157A: "Monumentum vero nominatur a monendo, quod nos praetereuntes qui in monumentis et sepulcris sunt, admoneant, et se olim fuisse et perinde mortales, ut et nos meminerimus, quod cineres simus et in cineres revertimur, pulvis et in pulverem redibimus"; Sicard of Cremona, *Mitralis de officiis*, ix, 50, Gábor Sarbak and Lorenz Weinrich (eds), *CCCM*, 228 (Turnhout: 2008), 673, 221–3: "Dicitur et monumentum, quasi monens mentem cuiuslibet transeuntis, quod

other words, according to the liturgists, the memory of the deceased prompted by the tomb would serve above all a moralistic purpose.

In addition to the etymological considerations of the Church authors, the tombs themselves manage to reveal information about their own role and function through the inscriptions they bear. Indeed, with the epitaphic content provided by the collection of French genealogist and antiquarian François-Roger de Gaignières (1642–1715), which holds over 1500 drawings of medieval tombs, it is possible to get a better understanding of the dynamics between body, monument, and memory.²²

The vast majority of tomb inscriptions follow a standard formula. They begin with (a) the deictic *hic jacet* (here lies) followed by the name and titles of the deceased. They then give (b) the date of death most often according to the liturgical calendar, before ending with (c) the traditional blessing *requiescat in pace* (may he/she rest in peace). Although formulaic, the structure of the text confirms the importance of the dead body by immediately locating its resting place, sometimes described as *tumba*, *tumulus*, *sepultura*, *fossa* or, more rarely, *terra* and *locus*. The fact that the name of the deceased generally follows the deictic suggests a strong identification to the material remains of the individual. However, some inscriptions make explicit mention of the latter with words such as *corpus* (body), *carnis* (flesh), *ossa* (bones) or *cineres* (ashes) and *pulveris* (dust). Negative references to the body as putrid (*putris*) or “food for worms” (*vermibus*) also exist but are quite rare, suggesting that the macabre rhetoric is a marginal trend in funeral art.

If the first part of the inscription locates the body of the deceased in space, the second one situates his or her memory in time. By detailing the date of death, it implicitly establishes its annual commemoration (obit) and, in some cases, associates it with a chantry. For example, on the tomb slab of Etienne de la Cheze, formerly in the cloister of La Ferté abbey, the inscription mentions that the esquire died “on the year 1463, the fifth day of March [and that he] has founded an anniversary mass to be celebrated each year on the day that he passed.”²³

cinis sit et in cinerem reuertetur”; Guillaume Durand, “Rationale Divinorum Officiorum,” I, v, 8, Anselme Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau (eds) *CCCM*, 140 (Turnhout: 1995), 59, 57–59: “Monumentum dicitur, quia monet mentem cuiuslibet inspicientis ut recordetur quia cinis est et in cinerem reuertetur.”

22 On the Gaignières Collection, Anne Ritz-Guilbert, *La collection Gaignières: Un inventaire du royaume au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 2016).

23 BNF Paris, fr. 8226, fol. 205: CY GIST NOBLE SEIGNEUR ESTIENNE/ DE LA CHEEZE ESCUIER QUI TRESPASSA / LAN MIL QUATRE CENS LXIII LE CINQUIESME IOUR DU MOIS DE MARS LEQUEL A FONDER UN ANNIVERSAIRE DUNE MESSE A CELEBRER

Finally, the last part of the inscription gives meaning to the previous one in that it wishes for the deceased to find his or her rest, an objective towards which the commemorative liturgy is primarily dedicated. Indeed, even though it is not specified, the “peace” hoped for by the *requiescat in pace* formula is that of the soul. This is made clear in the French inscriptions which almost systematically end with the words “que Dieu ait son âme” (may God have his or her soul).

In short, the content of most tomb inscriptions establishes that the body firmly lies in a specific locus while the soul’s repose remains uncertain and therefore dependent upon the commemoration of the deceased. Within this logic, it is possible to surmise the role of the funeral monuments by considering the words used to describe them. Contrary to the liturgists, the terms *memoria* and *monumentum* are largely absent from the inscriptions. Rather than their mnemonic function, the vocabulary of tombs focuses on their materiality. Often the words directly refer to the matter from which the monument was made, primarily *lapis* and *petra* (stone) but sometimes also *marmorea* (marble) and *aes* (copper). In many of these cases, the inscriptions locate the deceased (or their body) underneath (*sub*, *subjacet*) these materials, therefore likening these to a physical cover. In addition to the occasional use of the term “slab” (*tegmine* in Latin or *lame* in French), other inscriptions reinforce this material conception of tomb monuments through adjectives concerning the remains of the deceased. Indeed, when it is not described simply as “buried” (*humatus*, *coopertus*), the body is said to be “entombed” (*tumulatus*, *intumulatus*, *sepultus*), “enclosed” (*claudius*, *seratus*), “preserved” (*conditus*) or else “concealed” (*tectus*) and “veiled” (*velatus*). Thus, according to the vocabulary of tomb inscriptions, the fundamental role of the funeral monument would be to protect and conceal the dead body; that is, to insure its rest until the day of its resurrection, and to veil the process of its corruption until the time of its regeneration.

Such protective function is in full accordance with the burial liturgy. According to Jean Beleth and Guillaume Durand, tombs tend to attract demons who seek to unleash their fury on the remains of the deceased.²⁴

CHASCUN AN A TEL QUIL TRESPASSA/ AU MONASTERE DE CEANS DIEU PAR SA PITIE
VEILLE METTRE EN VRAY LIEU SON AME.

- 24 Jean Beleth, *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, CLXI, PL, 202, 163D: “Deinde vero ponitur in sepulcrum, et isthic aqua apponitur benedicta, ac prunae cum thure. Et profecto aqua benedicta ideo ne ad corpus daemones accedant, quos hujusmodi aqua abigit ac propellit”; Guillaume Durand, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, VII, XXXV, 38 CCCM, 140B (Turnhout: 1995), 99, 413–419: “Deinde ponitur in spelunca in qua, in quibusdam locis, ponitur aqua benedicta et prune cum thure. Aqua benedicta ne demones, qui multum

That is why, during the burial, holy water is sprayed upon the tomb. It is meant to ward off the demonic threat and allow the body to lie in peace. The re-enactment of the ritual requested by many testators is a way to consolidate this state. As mentioned, it is performed two or three times during the month following the entombment (i.e. when the soul is said to remain near the corrupting flesh), before becoming an integral part of most annual commemorations.

In this sense, one may consider that the tomb monument assumes the mnemonic function of the memorial recognized by Augustine and reprised by the liturgists. To ensure the repose of the dead body, it not only protects and conceals, but also marks its location in order to perpetuate its rest. In other words, the monument acts as a sign of the deceased's corporal presence; it is, to reconfigure and reinterpret the Pythagorean and Platonian play of words, the *soma's sema*. Perhaps this explains why another term commonly used to describe it, both in tomb inscriptions and wills, is *tumulus*. Like its adjective form *tumulatus*, the word may sometimes refer simply to the tomb, as when the deceased is said to rest *in tumulo*.²⁵ However, on many occasions, it clearly corresponds to the monument under which lies the body.²⁶ As such, the term is in perfect agreement with its medieval etymology. According to Isidore of Seville, *tumulus* derives from *tumens tellus*, meaning "swollen ground."²⁷ To this, Guillaume Durand later adds that the mound is actually formed by the presence of the

eam timent, ad corpus accedant; solent namque deseuire in corpora mortuorum ut quod nequiuierunt in uita, saltem post mortem agant. Thus uere ibi ponitur propter fetorem corporis remouendum, seu ut defunctus Creatori suo acceptabilem bonorum operum odorem intelligatur obtulisse."

- 25 Tomb of Jean de Charonne, abbot of Jouy (d. 1351), BNF, Paris, Est. Réserve Pe 10, fol. 38: I(OHANNES) DE CARRONA PATER IN TUMULO IACET ISTO SIC PLACEBAT CHRISTO QUI DET SIBBI CELICA DONA CUM BENE SIT CERTUM QUEM TERRA FINE MORTUARI NIL VALET INCERTUM COR MUNDO NIL VENERARI MORS PERSUARSA FECIT QUOD FUIT ISTE ET ERIT HEC FECIT SPECTRA QUEM TEGIT ISTA PETRA.
- 26 Tomb of Jean de Nanteuil, bishop of Troyes (d. 1298), BNF, Paris, Est. Réserve Pe 1n fol. 1 and fr. 17029 fol. 110: ECCE SUB HOC TUMULO SUNT PRESULIS OSSA JOHANNIS TRECENTI POPULO QUI MULTIS PREFUIT ANNIS CUJUS NANTOLIUM FULSIT PER PROGENITORES NAM GENUS EGREGIUM, SED SENSUS NOBILIORES HIC HUMILIS, MUNDUS LARGUS FUIT ATQUE JOCUNDUS MORIBUS ANGELICUS CLEMENS CUNCTIS ET AMICUS SI DUO DEMANTUR TRECENTI MILLEQUE DANTUR ANNI TUNE MORITUR QUANDO STEPHANUS REPERITUR.
- 27 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive Originum*, XV, 11, PL, 82, 552A: "*Tumulus dictus, quasi tumens tellus*." The etymology appears afterwards in Raban Maur and in the work of the liturgists quoted above, with the exception of Jean Beleth who derives *tumulus* from *terra tumens*, possibly by using Titus Livius as reference.

buried body.²⁸ In other words, he defines the *tumulus* as the visible trace left on the surface of the tomb by the corporal remains of the deceased. In this light, the funeral monument is more than just a tomb marker; it is a physical reminder of the tomb's content.

3 Salvation and Identity

Within the psychosomatic logic of Christian ontology, standing in for the dead body is not detrimental to the soul of the deceased. As mentioned, the body lies in a state of rest secured by a proper burial (and its re-enactment) until Judgement Day: such is the sense of the *hic jacet* formula. Conversely, the state of the soul is in the meantime uncertain and one can only hope (and intercede) for its rest: such is the sense of the *requiescat in pace* formula. What the epitaphic inscriptions here express verbally to the reader, the monuments manage to communicate implicitly to the viewer. By revealing the resting (and decomposing) body of the deceased, the monumental tomb likewise becomes an indexical sign for the *disembodied* soul that is potentially in need of intercession. To put it simply, recognition of the former arouses thoughts of the latter.

That this visual transaction of meaning relies fundamentally on the physicality of the monument can be surmised by the numerous tomb slabs that bear little else other than an inscription.

Beyond questions of financial constraints and humility, such austerity brings to the fore the evocative power of their rectangular format. Espousing the surface of the tomb, the shape alone alludes to its content and suffices to enable the commemorative function of the memorial. Moreover, by enclosing the body in the ground, the slab is suggestive of the transient nature of the tomb.²⁹ Once sealed after burial, the tomb is meant to be reopened solely at the end of time, for the resurrection and final judgement. While it is closed, focus should therefore turn to the soul and its fate in purgatory. Such rationale rests upon the concept of the "double judgement" (*duplex iudicium*), notably discussed by Thomas Aquinas.³⁰ According to this concept, the judgement of

28 Guillaume Durand, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, I, v, 8, CCCM, 140 (Turnhout: 1995), 59, 55–7: "*Tumulus dicitur quasi tumens tellus, quoniam homine in terra sepulto terra aliquantulum eleuatur.*"

29 On the transient nature of the Christian tomb and the "open-close" dialectic, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde ...* (Paris: 1992), 9–25.

30 Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* X, quaestio 1, articulus 2: "Dicendum, quod iudicium ordinatur ad retributionem praemiorum: unde secundum duplex praemium, scilicet animae et corporis, est duplex iudicium Dei." Brian Davies and Turner Nevitt (eds), *Thomas Aquinas's Quodlibetal Questions* (Oxford: 2019), 130.



FIGURE 9.1 Tomb slab of Perrin de Reugney (d. 1342), Saint-Seine-l'Abbaye
 SOURCE: FRANCE © M. ROSSO, MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE ET DE LA
 COMMUNICATION – DRAC DE BOURGOGNE – SRI, 2006 © SERVICE
 INVENTAIRE ET PATRIMOINE, RÉGION BOURGOGNE-FRANCHE-COMTE

the soul after death is restated at the end of time, when applied to the psychosomatic unity of the raised body. Using a concept developed by Reinhart Koselleck, Jérôme Baschet convincingly argued that, within this dual logic, the Last Judgement works therefore as a “horizon of expectation,” i.e. a cultural and existential backdrop against which the disembodied soul emerges as a clear and present concern.³¹ In this perspective, the tomb monument would then find its meaning and agency in the prospect of the resurrection of the dead. Viewed through the same open-close dialectic that is at play in the vocabulary of the inscriptions, the memorial points to the current needs of the soul, while the body awaits the final judgement. The Breviary of Louis de Guyenne epitomizes this whole idea in a famous miniature accompanying the Office of the Dead.³²

Placed above the *lectio prima* taken from Job 7:17–21, which refers to the corruption of the body, the image depicts a monumental tomb set in a cemetery. The surface of the monument is a simple slab bearing a peripheral inscription, while its side is composed of three niches, each containing a skull associated with a member of the social elite, i.e. a pope, an emperor, and a prince. Between the two sections, the content of the monument reveals itself to the viewer. Lying on its back, a decaying corpse appears against a dark backdrop suggestive of the tomb's interior. Like the three skulls, the cadaver serves here as a *memento mori*, reminding the reader of the vanity of earthly life and the frailty of the flesh. However, enclosed in the tomb monument, it also emphasizes its state of waiting in accordance with the responsory of the first reading, which expresses faith in the resurrection (*Qui Lazarum resuscitasti a monumento foetidum* [...], “You who raised Lazarus from the stinking tomb [...]”). However, it is with the detail of the monk or friar that the image manages to stress efficiently the correlation between the temporary repose of the body and the intercession needed for the soul of the deceased. By lying atop the stone slab, the cloaked and hooded figure acknowledges the tomb as a sealed location in which the recumbent corpse decays. Concurrently, by reading what is likely a breviary – and perhaps even the very passage associated with the miniature – the monk or friar recognizes the site as a designated locus to commemorate the deceased. In other words, the image operates a *mise en abyme*

31 Jérôme Baschet, “Jugement de l’âme, Jugement dernier: Contradiction, complémentarité, chevauchement?” *Revue Mabillon* 6 (1995), 159–203; and “Une image à deux temps: Jugement Dernier et jugement des âmes au Moyen Âge,” *Images Re-vues* hors série 1, (2008): <http://journals.openedition.org/imagesrevues/878> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

32 Châteauroux, Médiathèque Équinoxe, ms. 2, fol. 395v. The open-close dialectic also informs the other iconographic themes used for the Office of the Dead, mainly the liturgical scenes of obsequies and burial and the biblical scene of the Raising of Lazarus.



FIGURE 9.2 Miniature from the Office of the Dead (detail), *Breviary of Louis de Guyenne* (1410–1413). Châteauroux, Médiathèque Équinoxe, ms. 2, fol. 395v

SOURCE: © INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE ET D'HISTOIRE DES TEXTES – CNRS

that expounds the ontological implications of death in order to give meaning to the liturgical text it accompanies. More importantly, it clearly uses the tomb monument as a visible extension of the buried body, which becomes the setting for commemoration and intercessory prayer for the dead.

Although the monument can fulfil this function solely through its material shape, the role of iconography is not superfluous. Indeed, depicting the deceased on the surface of a monument further evokes the presence of the body underneath it. This is specially the case with the tombs of monks and clergymen. According to their customaries, members of religious orders are first exposed and then buried in their monastic habit.

The same is true of priests and bishops whose corpses are clad in their sacerdotal vestments in order to present their virtuous status before God, according to Guillaume Durand.³³ In the case of ecclesiastical burials, the appearance of the effigy on the tomb would therefore match that of its content, a concordance often verified by archaeological evidence. In particular, the material found in the tombs of bishops often corresponds directly to the attributes worn by the effigies depicted on their monuments: chasuble, sandals, pallium, crozier, ring, etc.³⁴

Of course, funeral iconography does more than evoke what lies underneath the memorial. It also individualizes and personalizes the tomb's content by communicating the deceased's social identity. From burghers to kings and queens, from monks to archbishops and cardinals, the effigies typically bear distinctive attributes that reflect the hierarchy of late medieval society. Heraldry provides further means of identification by associating the deceased with a specific lineage. In short, the iconography of the tomb translates into visual cues the principle information given by the epitaphic inscription: presence of the body, social status and function, familial affiliation. The tomb monument of Bishop Jean de Blaisy in the abbey church of Saint-Seine best exemplifies this.

The deceased appears as a recumbent skeleton with arms crossed on the chest, an image akin to the remains once buried underneath the large stone slab in front of the main altar. The crozier at his side, combined with the tonsure still garnishing his skull identify him as an abbot, while the emblazoned shield to his right designates him as a member of the Blaisy family. Though they cast aside the contribution of the deceased to his abbey and the date of

33 Guillaume Durand, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, VII, 35, 41, CCCM, 140B (Turnhout: 1995), 100, 453–456: “[...] vestes enim sacerdotales virtutes significant cum quibus prae ceteris sunt Domino presentandi.”

34 See for example Christian Sapin, “Une inhumation exceptionnelle mise à jour à Saint-Germain d’Auxerre,” *Icauna* 14 (2005), 2–3. Also, Binski, *Medieval Death*, 84.



FIGURE 9.3 Tomb slab of Eudes de Bèze (d. 1419), Saint-Seine-l'Abbaye

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FIGURE 9.4 Tomb of Jean IV de Blaisy (d. 1439), Saint-Seine-l'Abbaye

SOURCE: FRANCE © M. ROSSO, MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE ET DE LA COMMUNICATION – DRAC DE BOURGOGNE – SRI, 2006 © SERVICE INVENTAIRE ET PATRIMOINE, REGION BOURGOGNE-FRANCHE-COMTE

his death, these details cover the essential elements of the monument's peripheral inscription, e.g. those that are traditionally condensed at the beginning of the text³⁵: "Here lies brother Jean de Blaisy, doctor in law, abbot of this church of Saint-Seine in the year 1398, who used his power and his time in the service and for the restauration of this said church, who died in the year 1439 on May Fourth. Pray God for him."³⁶

The iconography also manages to expound the call for prayer that ends the inscription. It does so by placing above the skeleton of the deceased an image of his soul arriving at the threshold of heaven. Like the miniature from the breviary commented on above, the iconography plays with the concept of psychosomatic unity in opposing the resting body in the ground to the uncertain fate of the soul in the hereafter, a display that is likely to prompt the viewer into taking action for the salvation of the deceased. To this end, the presence of speech scrolls which stem from both the soul and the skeleton seems even to show the way. Carrying prayers addressed to the Virgin and Christ, they too become visual cues that complement the content of the inscription by expressing the need for intercessory prayers.³⁷

The location, material, and iconography of late medieval tomb monuments do not answer only to a number of liturgical or para-liturgical imperatives determined by the prospective logic of what Jacques Chiffolleau coined the "accounting of the hereafter."³⁸ To be sure, the monuments do play a primary role in the commemorative dynamics of the church space. As argued here, they provide the mnemonic setting for the cyclical re-enactment of the funeral and the performance of other intercessory actions by visually locating the site of the deceased's physical remains, those that lie in wait while the fate of the soul requires assistance from the living. However, tomb monuments also serve earthly interests. Occupying the public space of churches, often in combination with stained-glassed and painted images, they not only perpetuate the memory of the deceased, they glorify it through the importance of their location, the quality of their materials and the artistry of their

35 Vincent Debiais, *Messages de pierre: La lecture des inscriptions dans la communication médiévale (XIII^e-XIV^e siècle)* (Turnhout: 2009), 263–8.

36 CY GIST FRERE IEHAN DE BLAISY DOCTEUR EN/ DECRET ABBE DE CESTE EGLISE DE SAINT SEINGRE EN LAN MIL CCC IIIIX XVIII LEQUEL A EMPLOYE/ DE SON POUOIR SON TEMPS AU SERVICE ET/ REEDIFICATION DE CESTE DICTE EGLISE QUI TRESPASSA LAN M CCCC XXXIX EN MAY LE IIII PRIES DIEU POUR LUY.

37 *MATER DEI MISERERE MEI PECCATORUM ADVOCATRIX SIS PRO ME MEDIATRIX, IESU CHRISTE MISERERE MEI REDEMPTOR MUNDI PARCE MICH I PECCATORI.*

38 Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité*.

iconography. With the crowding of churches through the piling of monuments and objects of all kinds, the use of sculpture in the round and of canopies, in particular, becomes the firm sign of a preeminent status. The benefits of such glorification obviously go beyond the reputation of the deceased. Through their dominating images and structures, the greater memorials often support the construction of collective identities, those of families and institutions.³⁹ They become *lieux de mémoire* through which the retrospective memory of an individual and that of a group coalesce. In addition to the spiritual needs of the deceased, they remind the living of the part he or she played in the history of the local community. Thus, in the abbey church of Saint-Seine, the great-canopied monument with sculpted effigy and various statues that once rose next to the tomb slab of Jean de Blaisy celebrated the memory of Guillaume de Vienne (d. 1407), a former abbot who successively became bishop of Autun (1379–1387), bishop of Beauvais (1387–1389) and, finally, archbishop of Rouen (1389–1407).

Although the prestigious titles kept him away from Saint-Seine, Guillaume richly endowed the abbey and participated in the restoration of its church. Along with numerous shields bearing the Vienne family arms, the monumental tomb likely stands as a testimony of this contribution. Somewhat compensating for his long absence, it boasts Guillaume's loyalty to the monastic community.⁴⁰ While the deceased would certainly gain spiritual profit from all this, notably by rallying the prayers of his former brothers, the ostentatious appearance of the tomb monument suggests the importance of worldly concerns. It establishes a retrospective narrative that binds the identity of the deceased and of his family to that of his former abbey where henceforth his body lies.

Memorials of founding figures tend to take this commemorative function further yet, as they are often commissioned many years, even centuries after their deaths. Such is the case of Nicolas d'Estouteville's monument in the abbey church of Valmont. Although Nicolas died around the year 1177, his memorial bears the distinctive features of late 15th century tomb sculpture, in both its style and iconography.⁴¹

39 Marcoux, "Memory, Presence and the Medieval Tomb," 50–8.

40 Robert Marcoux, "Looking Beyond the Face: Tomb Effigies and the Medieval Commemoration of the Dead," in *Picturing Death, 1200–1600*, eds Stephen Perkinson and Noa Turel (Leiden: forthcoming).

41 Still extant, the monument underwent major modifications in the 19th century but its overall aspect matches the one given by the drawing of the Gaignières Collection, BNF, Paris, Est. Réserve Pe 8 fol. 471.



FIGURE 9.5 Tomb of Nicolas d'Estouteville (d. 1477?), Valmont Abbey

SOURCE: DRAWING FROM THE GAGNIÈRES COLLECTION. PARIS,
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As its founder, Nicolas would have been included in the commemorative liturgy of the Benedictine community of Valmont for the sake of his soul and those of his ancestors, as the foundation charter confirms.⁴² It is possible that the late medieval monument replaced a former one that served as a locus for the liturgical commemoration of Nicolas (possibly destroyed during the Hundred Years' war). However, its commission more than three centuries later rather appears as an attempt to reassert the link between the abbey of Valmont and the Estouteville family.⁴³ Indeed, in addition to the ostentation of the family coat of arms on the tabard of the effigy and the heraldic display in the middle portion of the sarcophagus, the monument exhibits an impressive maquette of the abbey church. Originally placed at the foot of the effigy, the model summarizes in a way the monument's objective. Its architectural details are not those one would expect to find on the church founded by Nicolas at the end of the 12th century but is in keeping with the flamboyant style of the late medieval period. Consequently, the prominent feature expresses the idea of continuity by renewing the narrative of the abbey's foundation. In other words, the tomb monument uses the prospective channel of the commemoration of the dead to act primarily as a retrospective device for the benefit of both the Estouteville family and the Valmont monastic community.

4 Conclusions

The funeral monument of Nicolas d'Estouteville brings to the fore the dual impetus of the liturgical commemoration of the dead. Since the institution of the eucharist, liturgy has involved an interpenetration of temporalities in a sacred space. To put it briefly, the eschatological future informs the commemoration of the past in the present. With the resurrection of the flesh and the Final Judgement working as a horizon of expectancy, commemorating the dead actualizes both the past life of the deceased and the present status of his or her soul. As the designated locus for such remembrance – in both its liturgical and para-liturgical forms (those of ritual performance and individual prayers), the tomb thus becomes the nexus of retrospective and prospective strategies. In answer to these, the monument materializes the body of the deceased in the

42 Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime. Fonds de l'abbaye de Valmont, 19 H 2.

43 Bernard Beck, "Le mécénat des d'Estouteville," in *L'Architecture de la Renaissance en Normandie I: Regards sur les chantiers de la Renaissance. Actes du colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle (30 septembre – 4 octobre 1998)*, eds Bernard Beck, Pierre Bouet, Claire Étienne, and Isabelle Lettéron (Caen: 2003), 23–40, on 28.

space of the church. Its presence therefore binds the dead with the living in an interactive relation, one that involves the spiritual issue of individual salvation and temporal matters of collective identity. More than mnemonic tools used to prompt pre-arranged commemoration and personal prayers, tomb monuments embody, stabilize, and perpetuate the values, practices, and tensions of late medieval society.

Images of Death in Art and Literature in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (1300–1700)

Christina Welch

The range of literary and visual material produced on the topic of death between 1300 and 1700 across Europe is vast, and this chapter seeks to explore a representative cross-section of it, highlighting continuing themes, notably the influence of Christian theology (both official and vernacular), and areas of difference, such as the gender of Death. Divided into two sections, the chapter explores visual representations of death and the dead before moving on to literary representations of death and the dead; it draws on the existing scholarship, but also includes some new readings of death imagery, including medieval illuminations and medical illustrations, and adds some background to literary tropes, such as the reasons for the medieval disdain for the elderly and the prevalence of corpse medicine in early modern works. Because literature during this time was often illustrated, the second section also includes some references to illustrations, notably in relation to Books of Hours where imagery not only elucidated the written word but, through the use of symbolism, magnified the meaning of the text, highlighting the connections between this life and the afterlife.

Art as a designation is loaded with culturally contextualised notions of what might count as aesthetically valuable High Art, and what might not. On the one hand, *The Ambassadors* (1533), an oil-on-oak painting by Renaissance artist Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), depicts Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve in a form of what is normally considered High Art. Replete with the symbolism of death, including an anamorphic skull, this *memento mori* represents a consideration of the transient earthly vanities of life in regard to human mortality and the eternal afterlife; interestingly, *memento mori* was the personal motto of de Dinteville (1504–1555).¹ Nevertheless, this very same *memento mori* theme can also be found in more homespun church wall paintings, often considered Low or Vernacular Art, owing to its naïve style: an

1 Libby K. Escobedo, "Holbein's *Memento Mori*," in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomani (Leiden: 2018), 366–78.

example here would be the painting of man depicted as a dandy paired with a figure representing death, decorating the south nave wall in a window recess in St Cadoc's church, Llanccarfan, Wales.² This artificial division can affect literature too, with the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343–1400) and William Shakespeare (1564–1616) set apart from vernacular folktales, and clerical sermons. Yet visual and textual sources of all kinds informed people on every level of society about death and dying. As such, this chapter does not seek to enter into the debates over High versus Low culture, although it will acknowledge levels of proficiency in regard to visual imagery, not only in terms of overall artistic representation of the dead or dying body, but also in terms of observable anatomical knowledge of the human form. Visual representations during the period 1300 to 1700 vary widely with realistic portraiture (*verism*) being a notable introduction. Further, the scientific dissection of the human form led not only to better knowledge of it, but to more accurate depictions of the living and the dead.

The examples of late medieval and early modern visual and literary representations of death in this chapter have been taken geographically from across northern and southern Europe to provide as broad a spectrum of coverage as possible. However, the art included in this chapter is constrained by what has survived. Due to shifts in attitudes towards visual culture during this period in parts of northern Europe, a dramatic change occurred. Because of the Reformation, in places such as Germany, Britain, and Scandinavia, lavish Roman Catholic depictions of saints were hidden or destroyed in the shift towards more austere Protestant churches, whilst subsequent iconoclasm added to the destruction of a good deal of overtly religious art.

1 Visual Representations of Death and the Dead

Visual representations of death date to the early 14th century and took the form of anonymous skeletal figures.³ The “Three Living and the Three Dead” *memento mori* imagery that typically, but not always, depicted three living aristocratic men meeting three animated dead counterparts in differing stages of decay, could be seen in book illuminations and illustrations, and on church murals. Although the origins of the imagery is unknown, there is a “dazzling

2 Christina Welch, “Let's Talk of Graves, of Worms, and Epitaphs: Afterword,” in, *Dancing with Death: An Awful Warning in a Welsh Church*, ed. Madeline Gray (Llanccarfan: 2016), 25–27.

3 Ashby Kinch, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture* (Leiden: 2013), 111–14.

variety and scope of [extant] images" from across mainland Europe, with additional, now destroyed, images in this style referred to in historical texts.⁴ One of the best-known of the visual representations in the "Three Living/Three Dead" genre is from the *De Lisle Psalter* (ca. 1308-ca. 1340) held in the British Library.⁵ This miniature illumination accompanies a poem in Anglo-Norman French entitled *Compaynouns ueez ceo ke ieo uoy* which translates as "companions see what I see." The depiction shows three crowned women in fine gowns on one page facing three corpses on the opposite page. The woman and corpse closest to each other have direct eye contact. This corpse is part skeletal, part dressed (in rags), hands crossed over the chest with eight maggot-like creatures on its belly. The woman, who holds a falcon, grabs the hand of the lady behind her. The second skeletal figure is shrouded and, like the second woman, has its eyes cast to the ground. This skeleton rests its right hand on the left shoulder of the first skeleton, so the touch of the two women is mirrored by the two skeletons. The third skeleton is naked, without a shroud, and is eviscerated with the inside of the spine showing inside the open belly. It looks outwards at the viewer/reader engaging them directly. Like the third woman, it stands disconnected from the other two figures in the group; the third lady gazes upwards towards the heavens. These artworks were highly symbolic: the third woman's upward gaze, coupled with the third skeleton's direct gaze, was designed to remind the viewer/reader to consider their post-mortem spiritual fate.

Although the direct gaze as an artistic concept is more generally present in paintings from the Renaissance and later eras, it is evident in this pre-Renaissance *memento mori* illumination.⁶ The symbolism is clear, the imagery relates to us. Furthermore, the fact that the first skeleton and the first lady hold each other's gaze is also symbolic, as if to suggest that as the skeleton now is, so the lady shall be. Additionally, the falcon that this lady holds was an allegory of romantic love and of male genitalia in this period.⁷ Here then

4 Ashby Kinch, "Image, Ideology, and Form: The Middle English 'Three Dead Kings' in its Iconographic Context," *The Chaucer Review* 43/1 (2008), 48–81, on 49.

5 *De Lisle Psalter*, England (ca. 1308-ca. 1340). BL. Arundel MS 83, f. 127v. The digitised manuscript can be seen at: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-three-living-and-the-three-dead-princes-from-the-de-lisle-psalter> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

6 Eugene Dwyer, "Gaze," in *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. Helene E. Roberts (Chicago, IL: 1998), 357–62; Colum P. Hourihane, "Gender Studies in Medieval Art," in *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*, vol.1 (Oxford: 2012), 646–9.

7 Diane Wolfthal, "Picturing Same-Sex Desire: The Falconer and His Lover in Images by Petrus Christus and the Housebook Master," in *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality and Sight in Medieval Text and Image*, eds Emma Campbell and Robert Millis (Basingstoke: 2004), 17–46, on 23.

we can see the sin of *eros* (love, lust, and erotic passion) come eye to eye with *Thanatos* (death). The inevitable consequence of fecund life is shown in the creatures of decay on the skeleton's belly added to heighten the impact of the juxtaposition. "As you are now, I once was," and "as I am now, so shall you be," is the message of the visual exchange between the two figures. As noted, the middle figures look penitently to the earth, the place of burial and decomposition, whilst the outer figures turn their eyes to God and to the viewer/reader, effectively asking them to think on the effects of earthly materiality and its inherent sinfulness. Indeed, in the vernacular text that accompanies the diptych illumination, the women declare that they are afraid, imagining that what they see are devils. But the corpses reply that they were once fair like the women, and that the women will in time become corpses like them. One even warns, "*For Godes Love bewere by me*" (For God's love, beware by me). These powerful images acted as a stark reminder to the, undoubtedly wealthy, owner of this prestigious text, to think about their death and their own after-life, for as the Bible reminded many times, money could not buy a place in the hereafter.⁸

A similar, although less sophisticated, "Three Living/Three Dead" illumination can be found in the *Taymouth Book of Hours*.⁹ Here three men, again one with a falcon, meet three skeletal figures in varying stages of decay who pass on the "as I am so shall you be" warning. This genre of artwork peppered not only expensive manuscripts informing the wealthy of their fate, but also graced churches across Europe in the form of wall paintings that allowed the general population to benefit similarly from the admonition.¹⁰ This type of mortuary didacticism was of course not limited to the 14th century, indeed it stretched into the 1500s and was popular across Europe, where it survived the Protestant Reformation at least in literary form through a transformation of Books of Hours into devotional texts.¹¹ Widely popular before the Reformation, Books of Hours contained prayers to be said at the canonical hours in honour of the Virgin Mary, that is, the times of daily Christian prayer.

It is likely that the "Three Living/Three Dead" genre started in France, which is notable for another typical form of mortality art, the *danse macabre*, or

8 For example, Matt 19:24–28, Luke 16:19–24, 1 Tim 6:9–10, Proverbs 11:28.

9 *The Taymouth Hours* (second quarter of the 14th century). BL. Yates Thompson MS 13, f. 127v. f. 123v.

10 Willy F. Storck, "Aspects of Death in English Art and Poetry, I," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 21, 113 (1912), 254–6.

11 Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240–1570* (New Haven: 2006), 121–40.

"Dance of Death" mural.¹² One of the most famous of these murals was painted onto the wall of the cemetery of *Les Saints Innocents* in Paris (1424–25), a 'sought-after' cemetery where bones were regularly exhumed and placed in charnel houses or ossuaries, some of which were founded by wealthy citizens such as Nicolas Flamel, an alchemist to whom we shall return shortly.¹³ Although no longer extant, woodcuts of the mural dating from 1485 give, according to art historian Sophie Oosterwijk, "a fairly reliable impression."¹⁴ The *danse* typically consisted of a series of male characters flanked on each side by a genderless skeletal figure. However, there were variations. The English poet John Lydgate (1370–1451) is notable for adding female characters to one of his versions of the poem (ca. 1430), while an elderly female representation of death leads away a canon in a *danse* mural painted by the Swiss artist, Nicholas Manuel Deutsch (1484–1530), for the Dominican Abbey in Berne in 1517.¹⁵ The *danse* genre featured people from all levels of society (although predominantly the social elite), but in essence pronounced that death came to all, from babies to bishops. No matter what one's rank and status, death was the ultimate social leveller.

The *danse* as a visual *memento mori* spread throughout northern Europe and into the Baltic countries, with notable examples inside an Estonian church in the city of Tallinn, and in rural churches around the Swiss city of Lucerne, which was a heartland of proto-Reformation thought.¹⁶ Perhaps the

- 12 Candace A. Reilly, "Bonne de Luxembourg's Three Living and Three Dead: Abnormal Decompositions," *Inquiries* 3/7 (2011) at: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/555/bonne-de-luxembourgs-three-living-and-three-dead-abnormal-decomposition> (last accessed 28/6/2020); Christine M. Kralik, "A Matter of Life and Death: Forms, Functions and Audiences for 'The Three Living and the Three Dead' in Late Medieval Manuscripts" (University of Toronto, PhD diss.: 2013) at: https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68951/1/Kralik_Christine_M_201306_PhD_thesis.pdf (last accessed 28/6/2020).
- 13 Sophie Oosterwijk, "'Fro Paris to Ingland'? The Danse Macabre in Text and Image in Late-Medieval England" (Leiden University, PhD diss.: 2009), at: <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/13873>, 60 (last accessed 28/6/2020).
- 14 Oosterwijk, "*Fro Paris to Ingland*?" 64.
- 15 Oosterwijk, "*Fro Paris to Ingland*?" 36; Christina Welch, "Death and the Erotic Woman: The European Gendering of Mortality in Times of Major Religious Change," *Journal of Gender Studies* 24 (2015), 399–418, on 404.
- 16 Sophie Oosterwijk, "Of Corpses, Constables and Kings: The *Danse Macabre* in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Culture," *Journal of British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004), 61–90; Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie Knoll (eds), *Mixed Metaphors: The Danse Macabre in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: 2011); Elina Gertsman, "The Dance of Death in Reval (Tallinn): The Preacher and His Audience," *Gesta* 42/2 (2003), 143–159; Rolf P. Drier, "Dances of Death in the Small Parishes of Rural Lucerne," *e-Sharp* 7: Faith, Belief and Community (2006). An example of the genre from

best known of this genre, however, is the series of 41 *Totentanz* woodcuts by Hans Holbein the Younger, completed in 1525 but not published until 1538.¹⁷ The series begins with Creation, followed by the Temptation of Adam and Eve. In the third woodcut death appears, for biblically it was not until the first couple were ejected from Eden that death came into the world. Holbein's fourth *Totentanz* woodcut depicts the consequences of the Fall, with Adam tilling the earth and Eve nursing a child, whilst the fifth shows a crowd of skeletons summoning humans to their inevitable fate: the grave. Woodcuts six to 33 show men and women, old and young, from a variety of social classes in the company of skeletal death; some go quietly, some resist. Woodcut 39 shows death taking a small child from its distraught parents; an hourglass in the foreground is symbolic of the inevitable transience of human life. Woodcut 40 shows the Last Judgement, and 41 the Escutcheon of Death. In these images, Holbein is keen to show how death is connected only to earthly sinfulness and the outcome of the Original Sin: the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Holbein is famous for a further depiction of death: *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521–22).¹⁸ Painted in oil and tempera on limewood, Holbein images a slightly larger than life-size recumbent Christ in the early stages of decomposition. Emaciated and naked bar a loincloth to preserve his modesty, this particular representation can be considered alongside the *Transi* genre of artistic representations of death. *Transi* imagery includes mortuary brasses and memorial sculpture that show a dead, emaciated and frequently decomposing, naked corpse laid on a burial shroud. Common across northern Europe, in England they had largely disappeared as a form of memorial by the time Queen Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558.¹⁹ However, in France, Germany, and Ireland, they remained as a form of memorial well into the 1600s.²⁰

Transi were a form of *memento mori*, reminding all who looked on them that death was inevitable and thus the afterlife should be at the centre of one's earthly thoughts and deeds. *Transi* sculpture, which started in France in the

The National Gallery, Ljubljana, can be seen at: <https://www.ng-slo.si/si/stalna-zbirka/1200-1600/mrtvaski-ples-janez-iz-kastva?world=3707> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

17 Hans Holbein (with an introductory note by Austin Dobson), *The Dance of Death* (Adelaide: 2014).

18 Hans Holbein's 'The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb' (1521–22), Kunstmuseum, Basel.

19 Christina Welch, 'Exploring Late-Medieval Memento Mori on the Effigial Corpse, Carved Cadaver Sculptures,' in, *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomani (Leiden: 2018), 331–65.

20 Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley, LA: 1973), 189–94.



FIGURE 10.1 Transi effigy of Sir John Fitzalan (d.1434); in the Fitzalan Chapel Arundel Castle, England

SOURCE: © LAMPMAN. CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE

late 1390s, could either just depict a naked, emaciated corpse, or juxtaposed this with a carved effigy of the individual *en-vie* (in-life).

The *en-vie* figure conformed to the norms of day, acting as a status symbol memorial representing the deceased in garb that emphasised their social position.²¹ The reason why most memorial effigies depicted an individual *en-vie* was that in Christianity there was the promise of eternal life post-mortem through the grace of God and belief in the saving power of Jesus Christ.²² However, this did not mean that death was welcome, for earthly life was bound up with sinfulness through the Fall and the dead had to account for, and purge, their earthly misdeeds. This was done in purgatory,

21 Nigel Llewlyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, c.1500– c.1800* (London: 1991), 22.

22 Clive Burgess, “‘Longing to Be Prayed For’: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages,” in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 44–65, on 57.

the initial afterlife in Roman Catholicism for all bar the sainted and the damned.

By the time *Transi* had become popular as a form of memorial, purgatory had become an increasingly complex theological issue that revolved around a community of prayer involving both the living and the dead, although the value of praying for the dead was only officially adopted by the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1545–63).²³ The communal economy of prayer during this time is evident from the “pray for me” request on many of the extant *Transi* sculptures, and also from contemporary wills. In effect, if the living prayed for the dead they were carrying out one of the seven spiritual acts of mercy and this could help lessen the pains of, and time spent in, purgatory; the dead would similarly benefit from these prayers and as such there was a mutual dependence between the living and the dead based on the power of prayer.

Transi were a form of memorial for the socialite elite as they were, in all their forms, expensive to commission. They imaged an individual person and often had an element of *verism*. Many of the continental *Transi* sculpture featured rotting or verminous cadavers to bring home visually to the viewer the reality of individual death and the need for prayer and performing good works in this life, and prayers for the dead in the after-life. An early illustration of a verminous cadaver can be found in the *Lay de la fragilité humaine*, a vernacular verse published in 1383 by the French poet Deschamps (1346–1406/07). The featured cadaver echoes the words of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) (*Lotario dei Segni* b.1160/61), showing how human sinfulness manifests itself in rot. In the illustration by Pierre Remiet (1350–1430) the upper limbs of the cadaver inside the tomb are wrapped by worms or serpents, whilst toads or frogs crawl towards the corpse.²⁴ However, not all continental *Transi* depicted verminous corpses, one notable example being the memorial for the previously mentioned scribe and alchemist Nicholas Flamel (1340–1418) whose tombstone features an incised *Transi*. Originally located in the church of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie where Flamel was buried, it is now located in the Musée de Cluny, Paris. Like most of the incised *Transi*, it is relatively poor in terms of its depictions of the body’s anatomy; it is significant that some of the best carved examples of *Transi* figures are three-dimensional effigy sculptures, which strongly suggests that their sculptors had a good level of knowledge in human surface anatomy.²⁵

23 Cohen, *Metamorphosis*, 189–91; Jacques le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: 1984), 10–11; *Council of Trent: Decree: De invocation veneration et reliquis sanctorum, et de sacris imaginibus*. 3 December 1563, session 25.

24 Michael Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet* (New Haven: 1996), 168–71.

25 Welch, “Late-Medieval English Memento Mori,” 349–54.

European depictions of the human body's internal anatomy date to at least the late 1200s, and relate to early autopsy, although the division and dissection (evisceration) of the corpse for transportation from place of death to site of burial predates this form of anatomization.²⁶ Until the Renaissance however, illustrations of the human body were typically anatomically inaccurate and highly stylised. It was the publication of *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* by Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564) that changed the way the dead human body was depicted.²⁷ First published in 1543, it described in words and imagery the various systems of the human body (muscular, arterial, skeletal) in a hitherto unknown manner, as Vesalius scientifically dissected human corpses to gain detailed information about how the human body worked. Two of the most well-known of the *Fabrica* plates are Plates 163 and 164, two of a series of three posed skeletons.²⁸ These particular woodcuts, by an anonymous artist employed by Vesalius, show a human skeleton in very life-like postures.²⁹ Plate 163 depicts the front view of an articulated skeleton resting almost nonchalantly on a spade in a barren mountainous wilderness beside what appears to be the corner of a hole, probably a freshly dug grave. The head is shown tilted slightly to the left and backwards, with the bony left hand pointing to the earth and the eye sockets gazing upwards. The pose of this figure suggests it is pointing to the resting place of the body (the grave) and looking at the destination of the soul (heaven), making the illustration both secular (scientific-anatomical) and spiritual. However, as the jawbone and cranium are shown as slightly apart, it is unclear whether the figure finds the prospect of death entertaining or terrifying; both expressions could be read into the imagery. A hair, or possibly a wriggly worm, shown hanging from the skeleton's left ear, adds to the incongruity of this particular depiction of the dry bones of a human body.

Plate 164 of *Fabrica* shows a side-on view of a skeleton leaning against a plinth.³⁰

26 Katherine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 50 (1995), 111–32.

27 Andreas Vesalius is the Latinised form of the Dutch name Andries van Wesel. Vesalius was born in Brussels, which was at the time part of the Habsburg Netherlands.

28 Plate 163 from Vesalius's *Fabrica* (1543) can be viewed at *Historical Anatomies on the Web*: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/Images/1200_pixels/Vesalius_Pg_163.jpg (last accessed 28/6/2020).

29 The discussion in this paragraph comes from Glenn Harcourt, "Andreas Vesalius and the Anatomy of Antique Sculpture," *Representations* 17 (1987), 28–61.

30 *Fabrica*, Plate 164: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/Images/1200_pixels/Vesalius_Pg_164.jpg (last accessed 28/6/2020).

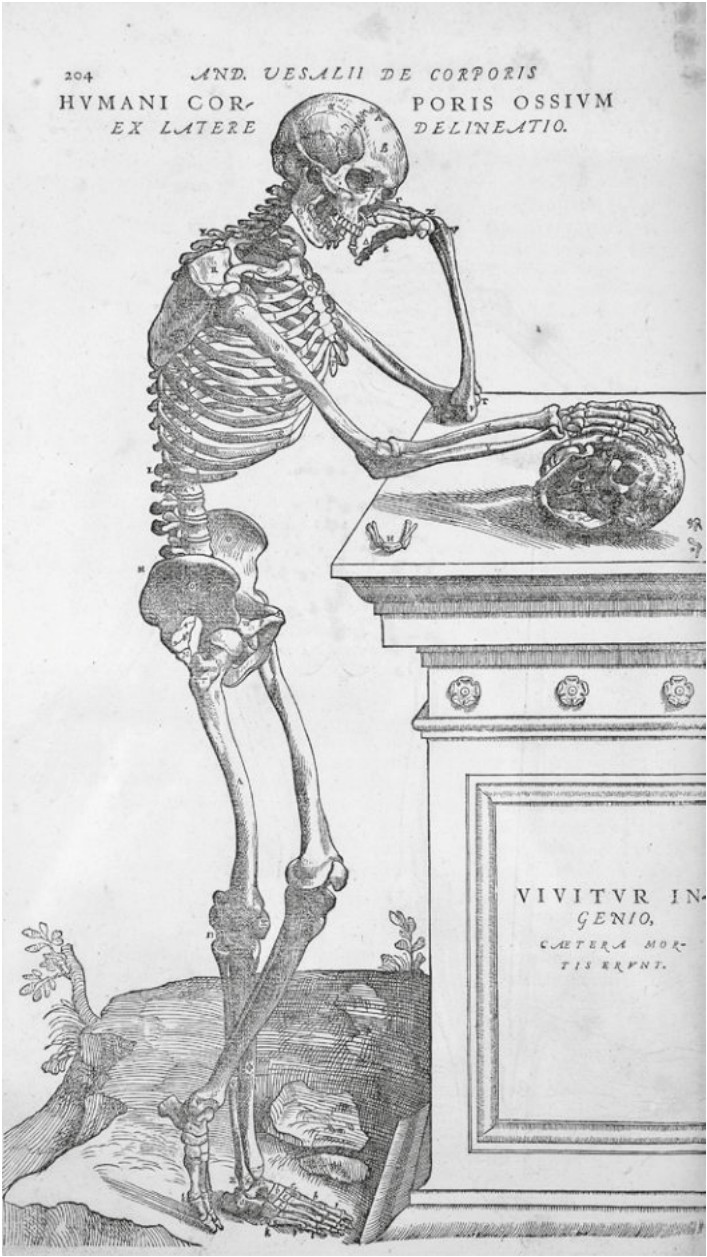


FIGURE 10.2 Andreas Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica*, plate 164
SOURCE: © PUBLIC DOMAIN

The figure's left arm is bent with the elbow resting on the plinth, and the hand is bent back to support the skull. The figure's right hand holds another skull, so positioned that there is a direct gaze between the two bony eye sockets. With its legs casually crossed, this skeletal figure is not a lifeless skeleton representing death, but the bare bones of an individual contemplating mortality. Following on is the third posed skeleton of the triptych (the less well-known Plate 165).³¹ This view of the human skeleton is largely of the back. The figure is slightly hunched over and looking downwards at the earth in a thoughtful manner. Whether the illustrator intended this triptych of the human skeleton to resonate with theological concerns about one's post-mortem fate is unknown, but the philosophical postures of the three skeletons suggest strongly that they did. Knowledge of the Bible in Europe during this time was a given, and it can be assumed that any Renaissance viewer/reader of *Fabrica* would find it hard not to think of Ezekiel's prophecy that God breathes life into dry bones so humans may know the Lord at the end of time.³²

The importance of theology in visual representations of death and the dead cannot be underestimated. Protestant, and proto-Protestant theology emphasised adherence to the Bible, and individual responsibility for one's own sins. Further, the Roman Catholic tenet that praying for the dead in purgatory could help lessen their pains and their time spent there, a tenet only adopted as doctrine at the Council of Trent (1545–63), was considered questionable and eventually became entirely defunct.³³ Thus, images of the dead moved away from their pray-for-me didacticism (such as with *Transis*) and acted purely as a reminder that death was inevitable and could come at any time, and without the ability to purge one's sins away, heaven or hell were the only afterlife options.

Reformation theology, and the pre-existing theological debates dating from the before the 14th century that culminated in it, impacted on the visual depictions of death beyond the notion that purgatory did not exist. With biblical adherence central to reformed thought, and with Romans 5:12 asserting that "through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin," it was clear to the reformers that Adam, through his sinful disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden, was responsible for human mortality. However, as both Adam and Eve

31 *Fabrica*, Plate 165: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/Images/1200_pixels/Vesalius_Pg_165.jpg (last accessed 28/6/2020).

32 Graham D. Caie, "Lay Literacy and the Medieval Bible," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 3 (2004), 125–44, on 126; Ezekiel 37:1–5, 12.

33 Cohen, *Metamorphosis*, 189–91; Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 10–11; *Council of Trent: Decree: De invocation veneration et reliquis sanctorum, et de sacris imaginibus*. 3 December 1563, session 25.

were responsible for the Fall, whilst Adam brought sin and death, Eve brought sin and life, symbolised by *vanitas* (the transience of human life) and *voluptas* (earthly pleasures). As such, from the late 15th century, particularly in the Germanic-speaking countries, the image of death as an anonymous skeletal figure shifted to Death personified, or Death as the Grim Reaper.

The first images of Death as a gendered individual can be attributed to the German painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) who twinned a male Death (Adam) with a female figure of earthly temptation (Eve) in the engraving *Young Woman Attacked by Death* or *The Ravisher* (ca. 1494). Here a young woman sits on the lap of an elderly bearded naked man (Death). She appears to be pulling away from him, but Death holds her skirt tightly to stop her escaping. However, her left hand is placed lightly on his left arm, which might suggest that she cannot quite resist his advances. There are a number of other German-speaking artists, often known as the Little Masters from the proto-Reformation era, who also depict Death as male.³⁴ Linguistically, with death as masculine in German, gendering Death as male (Herr Todd) is artistically sensible. In the painting *The Three Ages of Woman and Death* (1509–10) by the German Little Master Hans Baldung Grien (1484–1545), Death is imaged as a decomposing man with a ragged, fleshy penis, and the whole image is replete with symbols of mortality.³⁵ Death holds up an hourglass for the elderly woman who, in an act of futility, tries to push his arm away – she is unable to stop the onward march of time. Death also holds a gauze cloth that covers the genitals of the maiden who is vainly preoccupied with her hair and her reflection in a mirror, and at the same time envelops a baby shown with a hobbyhorse and an apple at her feet; the mirror and toy are symbols of transient amusement and the wages of sin, while the apple reminds the viewer of the Original Sin.

The Baldung Grien oil painting is a classic Reformed theology ‘Death and the Maiden’ image, but even when Death is shown as skeletal and thus ungendered, given the heteronormativity of the era, the depiction of a skeleton in the presence of a woman strongly suggests that Death is male. Two works by the German Little Master Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550) best exemplify this gendering of a skeleton. *Death and Three Nude Women* (ca. 1535–37) shows a skeletal Death as part of a circle of four individuals. The women include an elderly female with sagging breasts shown side-on, and a plump woman depicted from behind whose right foot rests on the cranium of a skull, and whose

34 Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: 1993), xvi.

35 The image can be seen at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hans_Baldung_-_Three_Ages_of_the_Woman_and_the_Death_-_WGA01189.jpg (last accessed 28/6/2020).

right hand touches the vulva of the third woman. This third woman is shown full-frontal. She is holding a cloth, possibly a burial shroud, and is being leered at by the skeleton, who maintains an eye to eye (socket) contact; the skeleton's lecherous expression casts little doubt that Death here is male.³⁶

Sebald Beham's 1548 engraving *Death and the Sleeping Woman* (1548) cements the notion that Death, even if skeletal, when paired with naked women, is male. *Death and the Sleeping Woman* shows a naked woman asleep on a bed. She is reclining with her right arm under her head, and her left arm resting on her left thigh. Her legs are apart; the left leg on the bed, and the right positioned over the side of the bed so her right foot is on the floor; a bedpan is close by to emphasise earthiness. Kneeling on the bed behind the sleeping woman is a skeletal figure with wings holding an hourglass. Beham placed the woman's vulva at the very centre of the engraving; there is no pubic hair to cover her genitals and as such the image is highly voyeuristic.³⁷

All the Little Masters specifically highlighted the connection between sex and death. In Sebald Beham's *Death and the Indecent Pair* (1529), Death is shown as a fully fleshed man with a skull head; his erect (uncircumcised so distinctly Christian) penis rests on the left hand of a naked male, who in turn has his left hand on the head of a child.³⁸ Death is holding the man's left hip and shoulder as if to keep him in place. On the man's right side is a naked woman. Her left hand tousles the man's hair while her right hand grasps his non-erect penis and testicles; the man's right hand is placed between her thighs and they stare at each other intently. Along the side of the engraving a plaque states: *Mors Vltima Linea Rerum* (Death, the final boundary of things). The human figures represent Adam and Eve as the first couple (with the child as fruit of their earthly coupling), but Death has the last word, for it was desire that brought about the Fall and with it sin, sex, and death.

Another sexually explicit image is Deutsch's 1517 *Death and the Maiden*.³⁹ Here a decomposing figure is shown kissing a young woman who clearly signifies *voluptas*, his hand has pulled up her skirt and is between her thighs; her hand holds his in place. The couple are in an opulent baroque landscape, and she has ribbons at her knees; the scene symbolises vanity, lust, and materiality

36 Hans Sebald Beham, *Death and Three Nude Women* (1535–37): private collection.

37 It should be noted that Sebald Beham engraved several images of women showing their vulva; *Die Nacht* (1548) is one of them. Hans Sebald Beham, *Death and the Sleeping Woman* (1548), Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

38 A circumcised penis would indicate a Jewish or Muslim male and as such Death in Beham's *Death and the Indecent Pair* is firmly shown as Christian.

39 Niklaus Manuel Deutch, *Death and the Maiden* (1517), Kunstmuseum, Basel.

and connotes that all will come to nothing in the end, for death triumphs. But not every depiction of Death by a German-speaking Renaissance artist imaged a predatory male. As previously noted, in one 'Dance of Death' mural, Deutsch depicts Death as a woman but this depiction of Death as female is unusual. However, Death being designated as female was normative in literary work from countries where the linguistic designation of Death was grammatically female, such as France, Spain, and Poland.

2 Literary Representations of Death and the Dead

A classic example of designating Death as female comes from the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca, known as Petrarch (1304–1374). After his death, his work "found a ready readership [as] his vernacular lyrics were accessible."⁴⁰ In his poem, *Trionfo della morte* (the third of his *Trionfo* series dating from 1340–74) he described Death as "a woman shrouded in a dress of black," furious, ruthless, and pitiless. Death, presented in a variety of visual forms based on Petrarch's work, was also imaged as long-haired and "wielding a scythe," or stood on a chariot draped with cloth and "hung with skulls and bones," whilst beneath its wheel were "the bodies of living and the dead."⁴¹ Here, Death is not the sexually predatory male imaged by Dürer and the Little Masters, but a fierce, wild woman.

In the Spanish 'Dance of Death' text, dating from the 15th or early 16th century and known as *Dança*, Death is described as an ugly woman. Unlike its Northern European counterparts, *Dança* was textual only,⁴² but it was just as didactic. The *Dança* poetry uses a preacher's voice in the prologue to inform the readers to take heed of the poem's advice. The prologue emphasises the vanity of earthly materiality (*voluptas*) which causes moral decay, and the poem features a number of characters, from across society, being taken to their death. In these elements it differed little from the non-Spanish 'Dance of Death' representations that focused visually and textually on the inevitability of death. However, linguistically the *Dança* adds some depth to the overall genre. In the *Dança* when death addresses the Knight, the term *Athaona* (meaning an occupation) is used. Here occupation means not just one's job,

40 Sara Sturm-Maddox, "The French Petrarch," *Annali d'Italianistica* 22 (2004), 171–87, on 173.

41 Karl S. Guthke, *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature* (Cambridge: 1999), 69–70.

42 Léonard P. Kurtz, *The Dance of Death and the Macabre in European Literature* (Geneva: 1975), 147.

but the work of grieving. The use of the term *Athaona* accentuates the sorrow and monotony of humanity's eternal dance of death. Comprised only of male characters (as in the Parisian mural at the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents), in the *Dança* each man laments the pleasures he must leave behind, expresses fear of the unknown, and despairs that he did not accept the reality of death before the moment of his demise. The female figure of Death confirms and affirms this before moving onto her next character/victim, and so the poetic dance continues.⁴³

Another example of female Death in literature is the Polish *Rozmowa Mistrza Polikarpa ze Śmiercią* (Master Polikarp's Dialog with Death). Written in the early 15th century, what remains of the original (an incomplete copy from ca. 1463–1465) presents a variety of scenes in which a conversation takes place between Master Polikarp, an educated man, and Death. Wielding a scythe, Death is described as a pale, skinny, bald, and hideously ugly, rotting yellowish corpse who is missing the tip of her nose and has blood oozing from her eyes.⁴⁴ Death informs Polikarp that he should not be afraid of Her until She comes for him. She states that She will come for everyone eventually, and that She was inside the forbidden fruit that Eve gave to Adam; once Adam ate of that fruit, he was destined to die and bring death into the world. Death states how much She loves human sin, and names a variety of occupations and types of people, asserting that She will have them all and will avenge every one of their crimes (sins). In many ways this poem resembles the 'Dance of Death' in its theological overtones, and the variety of individuals noted, and as such it should be understood as part of this European trope.

The biblical connection of sin with death is evident in many other works of literature, such as John Milton's (1608–1674) epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667). Book Nine of *Paradise Lost* informs the reader that death was ingested with the forbidden fruit, and here there are echoes of Death in the Polish Polikarp tale noted above. However, Milton's Death is male, and Satan is noted as his father. Described in Book Two, Death is shapeless and black, a fierce and terrible thing "with what seemed his head, the likeness of a kingly crown had on."⁴⁵ Milton's highly biblical worldview appears based on there being several types of death, with the Latin document *De Doctrina Christiana* (*On Christian*

43 Nicolás Asensio Jiménez, "La danza en la *Dança General de la Muerte*," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 92 (2017), 377–98.

44 Staropolska online, *Conversations of a Master with Death: A Selection* (translated by Michael J. Mikoś), at: http://staropolska.pl/ang/middleages/sec_poetry/conversation.php3 (last accessed on 28/6/2020).

45 Tzachi Zamir, "Death, Life, and Agency in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015), 201–30.

Doctrine), which was discovered in a bundle of his papers in 1823, informing this understanding.⁴⁶ In *De Doctrina* there are four distinct types of death: the physical cessation of the body; a sort of living death due to the guilt of the Fall; spiritual death where one is enslaved to sin due to losing the sense of right reason; and the eternal death of those condemned to eternal torment for rejecting the gospel. For Milton, obedience to God and, therefore, morality are central to his thinking about mortality.

Morality and mortality are also linked in an earlier work about death, the Middle-English poem, *A Disputacioun betwyx þe Body and Wormes* (1435–40).⁴⁷ The *Disputation* is a conversation held in the grave between a female body and the worms that are eating her. The woman is described as recently interred in an elaborate tomb, and the poem is initially narrated by a passing pilgrim who took his rest in the churchyard and dreamt of the verbal exchange. After a brief scene setting, the poem moves on to relate the words of the woman and the worms, who speak plainly. She laments that she cannot buy her way out of the situation, and the worms tell her of the stench of her rotting, horrible flesh as it decomposes. They state that this process is one which they are not able to see, smell, or taste, and as such it does not repulse them. The full goriness of the description would doubtlessly have been familiar to people of the time, given the commonality of charnel houses/ossuaries, and the intercutting of graves in urban areas.⁴⁸

The lady in the *Disputacioun* notes her sinfulness, and how proud, how beautiful, self-indulgent, and also promiscuous she had been. These sins set her as ‘everyman’, and indeed she notes towards the end of the poem that everyone should avoid fleshly temptation. The link between women and the sinfulness of earthly materiality has been noted previously, although in the *Disputacioun* her gender does not add to her innate sinful nature, but draws attention to the temptations of the flesh that both genders embody and that scripture discourages. For added horror, the worms in the poem note they were born of the lady’s rotting flesh (and thus of her sins), and that other beasts will follow them in eating her body. Some of the additional creatures the worms name are fantastical, like the dragon and basilisk, but most are

46 Filippo Falcone, “More Challenges to Milton’s Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*,” *ACME: International Journal of Critical Geographies* 63 (2010), 231–50.

47 Jenny Rebecca Rytting, “*A Disputacioun betwyx þe Body and Wormes*: A Translation,” *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 31 (2000), 217–32.

48 Jennifer N. Crangle, “A Study of Post-Depositional Funerary Practices in Medieval England” (University of Sheffield, PhD diss.: 2015), at: <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/13315/1/JNC%20Thesis.pdf> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

more commonplace and include lizards, moles, toads, snakes, ants, crabs, spiders, and newts, all creatures reminiscent of those represented in many of the continental and Irish *Transi* sculpture.⁴⁹ Interestingly, the poem is helpfully illustrated, giving additional poignancy to the words.⁵⁰ The stark contrast between the fair lady and her rotting corpse is visualised in the form of a tiered *Transi* tomb, with the lady lying recumbent in her finery above a corpse in its worm-filled shroud. In both word and image, it is clear there is no escape from being consumed post-mortem, for death is the wages of sin and the price humanity paid for the Fall.

That the woman in *Disputacioun* is in dialogue with the worms despite being dead speaks to an understanding of post-mortem sentience that, although theologically incorrect, was widespread in vernacular culture and, as discussed in the chapter by Polina Ignatova, appears to have been potentially pedagogical. The most widespread types of beings that in wider European literature were depicted as remaining sentient post-mortem, were ghosts and apparitions, but revenants (corporeal ghosts) also featured, especially in German, English, and Icelandic writings.⁵¹ Typically, these revenants returned to the living to warn of the pains of purgatory and to encourage the living to lead better lives, to avoid the Seven Deadly Sins, and to embrace the Seven Corporal and Seven Spiritual Acts of Mercy. The liminal time when the dead were decomposing (the wet stage of death) was commonly understood as the most dangerous,⁵² and medical historian Catherine Park has argued that “belief in the continued animation of the corpse could be found at all levels of society and culture [and] was analysed, debated, and defended, with copious erudite references, by learned northern writers on theology, medicine, and law.”⁵³ One particularly notable work that resonates with this notion of post-mortem sentience and the pedagogical return of the dead is the anonymous English 15th-century *Revelation of Purgatory*. The *Revelation* imparts a holy woman’s vision of a nun describing the pains she endures in purgatory. The nun comes to the holy woman as a spirit asking for masses to be said to ease her sufferings and is

49 Katherine Dixon, “Devotion and Decay: Death in the Late Medieval Imagination,” *Vanderbilt Historical Review* (2016), 58–61 and Rytting, “*Disputacioun*.”

50 *A Disputacioun betwyx þe Body and Wormes*, BL. MS Add. 37049.

51 Winston Black, “Animated Corpse and Bodies with Power in the Scholastic Age,” in *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster (London: 2017), 71–92, on 72.

52 Nancy Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture,” *Past and Present* 152 (1996), 3–45, on 33, and dangerous, and Medical.

53 Park, “The Life of the Corpse,” 117.

described as having skin that is shredded and burning, with fire leaping from her mouth.⁵⁴

Of course, the most famous and influential of all texts dealing with post-mortem sentence in purgatory, and the torments inflicted there, is Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) *Divine Comedy* (ca. 1308–20).⁵⁵ Dante learns that the time spent and the pains endured in purgatory can be reduced by prayers from the faithful in the living world, and that committing any of the Seven Deadly Sins (pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust) brings about related purgatorial punishments. For instance, the arrogant carry heavy rocks on their backs to keep their once proud faces to the ground, while the greedy are forced to stare at the ground, their hands and feet tied as their soul was once tied by their greed and graspingness. A poem in a similar vein is *Prik of Conscience*. Written in Middle-English in the first half of the 14th century, the poem teaches, or reinforces, the message that each of the Seven Deadly Sins has a specific pain in purgatory. The poem makes clear that the soul suffers in purgatory far more than the body ever did on earth; although the distinction between the suffering of the soul and the body post-mortem is decidedly blurred. The purgatorial suffering described in *Prik* includes gout and “whitrows” (ulcers) in the dead, caused by sloth during life; pride produces a fever; gluttony gives the dead sores; envy brings about abscesses and palsy; and lechery leaves the dead in general misery.⁵⁶ What is clear here is that, as with the *Divine Comedy*, the souls of the sinful dead suffer physically, and contemporary illustrations in editions of the book visualised the viscosity of these punishments.

Books of Hours were another form of literary work where illustrations supported the written word. A sophisticated set of illuminations in a Book of Hours by the Flemish miniaturist Gerard Horenbout (ca. 1465–ca. 1541) depicted *Souls in Purgatory* (ca. 1500). One illumination depicts at least 15 individuals with flames burning among them. One individual, bent over in prayer, has a tonsure and thus represents a cleric, while two figures appear to symbolise the laity: a bearded male, and a woman. A further person holds their hands at their chest in prayer, but most of the depicted individuals are illustrated either as just faces, or as undifferentiated figures with their hands raised to the skies.

54 Marta Powell Harley, *A Revelation of Purgatory by an Unknown Fifteenth-Century Woman Visionary: Introduction, Critical Text and Translation* (Lewiston, NY: 1985), 60–4.

55 Werner P. Friederich, *Dante's Fame Abroad, 1350–1850: The Influence of Dante Alighieri on the Poets and Scholars of Spain, France, England, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States* (Chapel Hill: 1950).

56 James H. Morey (ed.), *Prik of Conscience* (Kalamazoo: 2012): part 3: Of Death and of the Pain that With Him Goes, at: <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/morey-prik-of-conscience-part3> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

The overall scene is potently suggestive of the universality of purgatory and its punishments.

Horenbout (1465–1541) had an international clientele and produced works for the wealthy and well-connected in Austria, Portugal, and Venice. He also produced the miniatures in a Book of Hours for King James IV of Scotland and was one of the artists who illuminated the Book of Hours known as the *Rothschild Prayer-book* (ca. 1505). One illumination in this Prayer-book depicts an elaborate burial: clerics abound, veiled women weep, and the laity are in attendance, as is the gravedigger. In the image, as two monks lower a wooden coffin into the ground, a skull emerges, and further skulls are visible on the left-hand side of the church door, close to the weeping women shrouded in black, possibly nuns.⁵⁷ Beneath the scene in an inhabited border are three skulls and some bones. On the facing page in a type of picture cycle, again in an inhabited border, are four long bones and eight skulls; notably, only one of all the skulls has a mandible.

What is interesting in these two images in the *Rothschild Prayer-book* is that they combine what the social historian Philippe Ariès termed the “Tame Death,” and the “Death of the Self” in his study, *The Hour of Our Death* (1981). In Ariès’s model of changing perceptions to death over time, the notion of a tame death typified the early medieval period and was characterised by frequent deaths, and a resignation to death as a result of Original Sin or misfortune.⁵⁸ It was marked by burials in city churchyards, where the church was the ultimate authority and took total charge of the formalised death rituals. Ariès characterised the “Death of the Self” as the typical death of the later-medieval period and he argued that although the rituals surrounding death remained the familiar ‘tame death’ rituals, the growing awareness of the self as an individual, and an increase in materialistic desires, meant that death had more of a social effect. It was during this period that, he noted, coffins began to hide the corpse and thus the realities of the process of death, at least for the social elite.⁵⁹ The two illuminations in the *Rothschild Prayer-book* highlight how death and post-mortem decay was, by the 1500s, hidden away from the world

57 The role of women as mourners and even keeners at funerals is explored by Kristen Mills in her PhD thesis “Grief, Gender and Mourning in Medieval North Atlantic Literature” (University of Toronto, PhD diss.: 2013). She argues for the centrality of women as mourners in the medieval Irish tradition, some of them even dying of grief over the deaths of the men they loved. See https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68979/1/Mills_Kristen_M_201306_PhD_thesis.pdf (last accessed 28/6/2020).

58 Phillipe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (Oxford: 2004), 11.

59 Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 606–7.

of the living (death of the self), but that death (symbolised by the skulls) was still commonplace (tame death) and ritualised under the jurisdiction of the church. Because of the date of this Book of Hours, the scene can be placed within the remit of Roman Catholicism and thus purgatory as the afterlife destination of the individual being buried. Clearly illustrating the concerns over death, the text cited in the illumination on the page facing the burial scene is Psalm 114, the first of the five psalms used in the Office of the Dead at vespers.⁶⁰ This office was one of the devotions that any individual could recite (barring a Sunday or a Solemnity – a feast day of the higher rank), and was, and indeed remains, central to Roman Catholic prayers for the dead, including those read for the feast of All Souls, where bells were rung for the comfort of the deceased in purgatory.⁶¹

Whilst learning about death through illuminated Books of Hours was the preserve of the wealthy literate elite, vernacular culture informed the masses, and in regard to Renaissance perceptions of death nowhere was this more the case than through the works of William Shakespeare (1564–1616). Almost every conceivable type of death, from suicide to murder, occurs in his plays, and people of all social classes are killed off through hanging, stabbing, and poisoning. In a number of plays many of the main characters die, with *Titus Andronicus* (1594) and *Macbeth* (1606) having particularly high head counts: 14 in *Titus Andronicus*, and at least that number in *Macbeth*, as it is unclear how many of the MacDuff household are murdered. But it is in *Hamlet* (1609) that death could be said to be the central theme. The play features a ghost at the start and a bloodbath at its close, the main protagonist has an obsession with death, and it contains the famous “to be or not to be” soliloquy on existence. Although written when England was firmly Protestant, much of the play resonates with the notion of purgatory and revolves around what can happen when someone does not die well.

Purgatory was, as noted, the normative afterlife destination in Roman Catholicism, and in its communal certainty there was some comfort, but comfort was also to be found in dying well and the *Ars moriendi* (ca. 1415 long version, ca. 1450 short version), a Latin text popular across Europe, explained how to do this. The notion of the socially ‘good’ death is explored in chapters 2 and 3, and the *Ars* was, as Stephen Bates and Madeleine Gray discuss in their chapters, a hugely popular illustrated printed tradition which portrayed the “deathbed as the centre of an epic struggle for the soul of the Christian man.”⁶² It included

60 Translation by Tomas Olding.

61 Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400–1700* (Oxford: 1996), 146–51.

62 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (London: 1992), 317.

advice on how to live well, which meant avoiding temptation, making regular confession of sins, being remorseful, and desiring not to sin again. The *Ars* also asserted that no one was beyond forgiveness and that even at death, good could triumph over evil, allowing the dying person who expressed true contrition the opportunity to reduce their time in purgatory and thus eventually attain their place in heaven.⁶³

With the Protestant Reformation however, the security of purgatory disappeared. The insecurity of one's post-mortem fate was highlighted in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1603); "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where: To lie in cold obstruction and to rot; ... the weariest and most loathed worldly life ... is a paradise to what we fear of death" (3.1.129-142). *Hamlet* also plays with the notion that the afterlife might not be straightforward, for the ghost, a corporeal revenant rather than a spiritual apparition, appears to be in a liminal place; neither in heaven nor hell. However, as well as highlighting the insecurity of one's afterlife destination, *Hamlet* powerfully draws on the sleep as death analogy. This trope appears in a number of his plays and poems, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595/6), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), as well as informing the aforementioned *Ars moriendi* and Edmund Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene* (1590). With both classical and theological resonances, "the similitude of death for sleep and sleep for death [was in] vogue in medieval and Renaissance literature and iconography."⁶⁴ With the Bible stating that the dead were in a form of sleep (Matt 9:24, Luke 8:52-53), and Jesus resurrecting individuals who appeared dead (such as Lazarus in John 11:11-13), the parallels between sleep and death would have been familiar to late medieval and early modern audiences.

Although sleep was God-given (Psalm 127), it was also a time connected with the realm of the supernatural. This connection took a sinister form in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) where Satan, the fallen angel, plants the idea of eating from the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" in Eve's mind while she sleeps (Book 5, l.55-61). Although in the poem, Adam and Eve are protected by angels in Eden (from the appearance of malevolent spirits as night falls), it is by eating the forbidden fruit that the couple are expelled from the Garden, and cast, with death, into the world. This ambiguity of sleep/death is, unsurprisingly, expressed in *Hamlet*: "for in that sleep of death what dreams may come" (Act III, s.1, l. 60). But as Shakespeare showed, death did not necessarily

63 Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The ars moriendi in the German Reformation (1519-1528)* (Aldershot: 2007), 20.

64 S. Viswanathan, "Sleep and Death: The Twins in Shakespeare," *Comparative Drama* 13 (1979), 49-64, on 49.

mean resting in peace, for many of his plays featured the return of the dead to the land of the living. In *Hamlet*, as noted, the returning ghost was not a spiritual entity but appears in corporeal form having the features of a mortal body. Indeed, the likeness of the ghost to the king is mentioned several times and at one point it is even seen wearing armour.⁶⁵

Whilst for some theologians and scholars of the era, ghostly apparitions and revenants were pure fancy, vernacular belief in the supernatural was widespread.⁶⁶ The biblical tale of the raising of Lazarus was popular in the medieval era and featured in both the English and French drama cycles (often termed Passion Plays). Occasionally, individuals did appear to come back from the dead.⁶⁷ Historian Nancy Caciola, in her book on the return of the dead in the medieval era, recounts the story of a nun from Freiberg, Germany, who died three times before finally shuffling off her mortal coil in 1458.⁶⁸ In England, a Mrs Blunden of Basingstoke, described as a “fat gross woman [accustomed] many times to drink brandy” was buried alive twice in 1674.⁶⁹ Until a corpse “began to putrefy and break down, mortality could be difficult to certify.”⁷⁰ The potential liminality of the dead therefore was a particular fascination, and in the late 1600s, a French magazine published Eastern European tales of walking corpses (revenants) and methods to ensure their destruction.⁷¹

Tales of revenants peppered vernacular European literature, and the stories of the dead having some form of sentience was also evidenced in the bier-rite where a deceased murder victim was believed to bleed afresh in the presence of their murderer.⁷² A number of Elizabethan plays employed this motif, including Shakespeare’s *Richard III* where Lady Anne Neville accuses Richard Duke of

65 Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: 2001), 206–16, 232–5, 252.

66 Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: 2002), 237.

67 Kathleen M. Ashley, “The Resurrection of Lazarus in the Late Medieval English and French Cycle Drama,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 22 (1986), 227–44.

68 Nancy M. Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (New York: 2016), 68–70.

69 Feanois J. Baigent and James E. Millard, *A History of the Ancient Town and Manor of Basingstoke in the County of Southampton* (Basingstoke: 1889), 162–66.

70 Caciola, *Afterlives*, 88.

71 Stephen Gordon, “Sleep Paralysis and the Nightmare in Medieval Europe,” *Social History of Medicine* 28 (2015), 425–444, on 443.

72 Caciola, “Wraiths”; Caciola, *Afterlives*; Jacqueline Simpson, “Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England,” *Folklore* 114 (2003), 389–402; Thea Tomani, “The Corpse as Testimony: Judgement, Verdict and the Elizabethan Stage,” in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomani (Leiden: 2018), 274–301.

Gloucester of murder stating, "O Gentlemen, see, see dead Henry's wounds open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh, blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity for tis thy presence that exhales this blood" (1.2.55-58). The notion of post-mortem sentence in England survived the Protestant Reformation, despite the official abolition of purgatory, and Shakespeare provides evidence for this. In *Hamlet*, the ghost of the king reports suffering in the fires of purgatory, although states that he is "forbidden to tell the secrets of my prison-house" (1.5.12-22). He does note however, that the suffering relates to retaining the emotions and vexations of life in his head, having been taken from the earthly realm before he was able to make his peace and die a socio-religiously good death, i.e. in old age and fully confessed. Shakespeare, in his plays, not only casts a light on the numerous ways to die a socio-religiously bad death (unconfessed and before one's natural time), but he also makes allusions to a further fate that could await the dead body, that of becoming mummy/*mumia* or corpse medicine. In *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), the rather rotund character Falstaff notes how he would make a "mountain of a mummy" (3.5.1764), while in *Henry IV Part 1* (1600) Falstaff gives a companion leave to "powder me, and eat me too" (5.4.3077). Mummy is an ingredient in the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth* (1606) (4.1.1570), and also appears in *Othello* (1604) (3.4.72), although here, not as something to ingest, but in relation to the magical properties of Desdemona's handkerchief.⁷³

The purported properties of mummy/*mumia* as a medicine to cure and/or stave off diseases has a history dating back to Galen and perceptions of the four humours, but in Christianity the notion was further reinforced through the natural biblical lifespan of threescore years and ten (Psalms 90:10).⁷⁴ To summarize this briefly, our bodies contained life essence enough for our natural life-span of seventy years, and should people die before this time then the life-essence not utilised could be taken on by others. The potency of human body parts was a commonplace belief across medieval Europe as an acceptance of the power of religious relics was an essential part of Christian life in the Middle Ages.⁷⁵

73 Park, "The Life of the Corpse," 116. For studies on the potency of medicinal cannibalism see: Kenneth Himmelman, "The Medicinal Body: An Analysis of Medicinal Cannibalism in Europe, 1300-1700," *Dialectical Anthropology* 22 (1997), 183-203; Louise Noble, *Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: 2011); Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (New York: 2011); Ian Smith, "Othello's Black Handkerchief," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64 (2013), 1-25.

74 The four humours according to Galen had associations with the seasons of the year, personality traits, the elements, and one of four periods of life; they were Blood (spring, passion, air, and childhood); Yellow bile (summer, anger, fire, and youth); Black bile (autumn, sluggishness, earth, and adulthood); Phlegm (winter, melancholy, water, and old age).

75 Patrick J. Greary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: 1994), 200-1.

The earliest extant evidence for the use of human mummy (powered human body parts) as a medicine dates from the 13th century, when the Italian surgeon Lanfranc of Milan cited it as a cure for broken bones, and the Spanish physician Arnold of Villanova prescribed oil from human bones, as a general cure-all.⁷⁶ The 16th-century Swiss physician Paracelsus (1491–1541) believed that mummy was the “noblest medicine,” and a number of medical works extolled its almost miraculous properties. One of the more interesting of these works is William Salmon’s *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* (first published in 1678) which provided a detailed description of the various types of mummy, and also instructions on how to make one’s own should purchase be problematic.⁷⁷ However, while popular medical literature largely praised the use of human mummy, non-medical texts were often less favourable; Shakespeare uses it as part of the unnatural witches’ brew in *Macbeth*, and relates it to the disreputable character Falstaff in *Henry IV Part 1*. The poet John Donne (1572–1631) “problematizes the healing potential” of mummy in his poem, *Love’s Alchemy* (ca. 1590), and does likewise in his work *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624) (XXII: Meditations).⁷⁸ Indeed, in a letter to Sir H.G. Donne notes that “Mymmy have in it no excelling quality.”⁷⁹ But while for Shakespeare the ingesting of human flesh was distasteful, and for Donne it was ineffective, for Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* ingesting mummy suggested cannibalism and he utilised the trope as an anti-Catholic rhetoric against the eucharistic ritual of the sacrament. Here the bread and wine were believed to turn into the body and blood of Christ via transubstantiation during the mass.⁸⁰

Death in literature was not always politically charged though, and indeed death was not always portrayed as inherently depressing. The Spanish text *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, first published in 1499, was a black comedy about illicit love with tragic ends. Although in part it was a morality tale about reckless lovers, the numerous deaths of the supporting cast, plus the accidental demise

76 Sugg, *Mummies*, 18–19.

77 Louise Noble, “‘And Make Two Pasties of Your Shameful Heads’: Medicinal Cannibalism and Healing in the Body Politic in ‘Titus Andronicus,’” *English Literary History* 30 (2003), 677–708, on 681; William Salmon, *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis, or the New London Dispensatory* (London: 3rd edition, 1685). The 1824 edition was the first not to contain remedies using human *mumia*.

78 Noble, “Two Pasties,” 687; John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624): <http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/DONNE/DEVOTIONS/Download.pdf> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

79 Janel Mueller (ed.), *John Donne: Selected Writings* (Oxford: 2015), 598.

80 Noble, *Medicinal Cannibalism*, 89.

of the protagonist Calisto and the suicide of his grief-stricken lover Melibea, inject the tale with a deliberate sense of the ridiculous through the use of “unnecessary and inappropriate flourishes of language,” and deaths that are never dignified.⁸¹

There is also a sense of the light-hearted in the face of death in *The Decameron* (1353), a collection of novellas written by the Florentine author Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375). The work provides a contemporary record of the emergence of the plague, its physical progression, and the utter devastation that it left in its wake, but it centres around how society distracted itself from the deadly effects of the contagion through music and joviality, rather than pious prayer (1 Introduction, 93).⁸² The disease arrived on Florentine shores in 1348 where it destroyed “an innumerable multitude of living beings ... [and] propagated itself without respite from place to place.”⁸³ The dreadful symptoms were described by Boccaccio, who claimed the only remedy was to flee for “there was no medicine for the disease superior or equal in efficacy to flight.”⁸⁴ Many contemporary chroniclers from across Europe noted that the plague tended to upturn the natural order of death, with the young especially prone to succumbing to the contagion. In 1361, Geoffrey le Baker, an English chronicler, wrote that “the pestilence seized especially the young and strong, commonly sparing the elderly and feeble.”⁸⁵ This perception is also found in an anonymous Middle English lyric which stated, “Be mindful of death: now there is a gate for all men born; / Often it takes to itself young men before old.”⁸⁶ The seeming unfairness of indiscriminate deaths from the plague can be seen in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Pardoner’s Tale*, one of the 24 stories that comprised his *Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400). In the story a Roister is informed that one of his comrades has been taken by “an unseen thief, called Death ... who hereabouts makes all the people die ... / He’s slain a thousand with this pestilence / Both man and woman, child and hind and page.” The Roister attempts to find death but on his way encounters “an old man, and a poor” whom he asks: “What? Churl of evil grace ... / Why do you live so long

81 Connie L. Scarborough, “Gallows Humor in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*,” in *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Boston: 2016), 357–372, on 368, 371.

82 Martin Marafioti, *Storytelling as Plague Prevention in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: The Decameron Tradition* (Oxford: 2018), 11.

83 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. James M. Rigg (Lawrence, Kansas: 2010), 19.

84 Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, 19–21.

85 Peter G. Beidler, “The Plague and Chaucer’s Pardoner,” *The Chaucer Review* 16 (1982), 257–69, on 261.

86 Robert D. Stevick (ed.), *One Hundred Middle English Lyrics* (Chicago: 1994), 80.

in so great age?."87 As the conversation ensues, there is an ill feeling from the Roister towards the old man, solely due to his age. The elderly man, for his part, feels a sense of guilt that he is alive, spared from the dreadful disease.⁸⁸ The tale clearly presents evidence that death was perceived as unfair when the young were taken over the old, and life cut-short. In *The Merchant's Tale*, Chaucer informs the reader that old age acts as a harbinger of social death: the social death of the elderly precedes their physical demise, for as age removes socially valued qualities (in men, strength, and in women, fertility), the social usefulness of elderly individuals within their community becomes lowered, even non-existent. This narrative shows that an individual could die socially by being removed from his social setting before shuffling off his/her mortal coil and dying biologically.

3 Conclusions

This chapter has examined late medieval and early modern representations of death in art and literature using a wide range of sources from across Europe, and spanning the entire period from 1300 to 1700. Yet, it is of course not comprehensive. Death, dying, the dead, and the afterlife were preoccupations in late medieval and early modern Europe, and as such featured heavily in textual and pictorial form; the present chapter offers only a representative sample.

With death common and seemingly random in its selection of victims, some order needed to be placed on the experience of death to stop it from overwhelming the experience of living. Within the Christian context of the period 1300 to 1700 in Europe, this ordering meant the use of rhetoric and rituals connecting death with sin.⁸⁹ Death was understood to have come into the world as the consequence of the Fall, and the Fall was a result of human sinful disobedience to God: consequently, one's afterlife destination took account of the sinfulness of one's earthly existence. As such, the intimate connection between morality and mortality expressed in poetry and prose is unsurprising. From vernacular literature through to the devotional books of the elite, and from sonnets to plays, all types of literary works informed readers that the wages of sin were death, and that death might come at any time. Intimately related to this was fear of the afterlife.

87 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. J.U Nicolson (New York: 2004), 260–1.

88 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 261–2.

89 Phillipe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (Oxford: 2004), 11.

Before the Reformation, when Catholicism predominated, that afterlife was purgatory with its suffering. For those following the new Reformed Christian faith, however, heaven or hell were the only post-mortem options. Regardless of faith, though, dying appropriately was believed to be important. This theme was addressed in detail by the *ars moriendi*, for there were potentially dire consequences of a socially bad death, such as returning to the land of the living, as happened with King Hamlet's ghost. However, ghosts and revenants, such as the nun in *Revelation*, typically returned to inform the living on how to live a more devout life and thus gain a better afterlife, which meant less suffering or time in purgatory, or avoiding the liminal earthly haunting that Protestants believed an unnatural death might bring.

Another constant across the period is that death was understood as a social leveller, and this was more easily expressed in artworks than in literature. From the "Three Living/Three Dead," through to the "Dance of Death" and the *Transi* memorials, artworks informed viewers that everyone was mortal, and therefore everyone had a designated fate awaiting them once they had died. Even with the theological shift in parts of northern Europe from Catholicism to Protestantism, the pedagogical aspect of death imagery remained. However, there was a shift in how death was visualised: anonymous, ungendered images of the dead as signifiers of generic death were replaced by images of personified Death, gendered according to regional linguistic traditions.

For some of the best-known writers of this period though, death remained ungendered. This is particularly the case in English, where typically words for death are neutral. Without doubt Shakespeare is the most famous English writer to have written about death and the dead. As well as providing numerous examples of socio-religiously 'bad' ways to die, he also advised his audiences that after a premature death, their bodies could be made into mummy. Shakespeare additionally warned that the dead might not rest in eternal sleep. Despite the potent connections between sleep and death, the notion that the dead might come back to life or that the dead were in some way sentient is one that informed both literature and art. Post-mortem sentience aided the communal relationship between the living on earth and the dead in purgatory through the economy of prayer, and depictions of that fearful place painted the suffering in visceral terms. Dante's *Comedy*, the *Prik of Conscience*, and prayer-book illuminations, all showed that the purging of earthy sins was an agonising process.

Noticeably, until the publication of *Fabrica* by Vesalius, the visual depictions of the dead human form were by and large fairly crude, and the "Three Living/Three Dead" and "Dance of Death" depictions are examples here, although a number of the *Transi* sculpture did show the human body in a more accurate way. But regardless of where the images of the human corpse were, even the

more scientific of them could not be removed from the more spiritual ones. Vesalius' skeletons may have shown the dead body in novel ways, but as the triptych of Plates showed, they were ways intimately connected with the theological contemplation of death.

Overall therefore, in late medieval and early modern European art and literature, death appears to have been a constant preoccupation. Concerns about death, dying, the dead, and the afterlife informed everything from vernacular wall paintings in country churches to exquisite illuminations in books for the wealthy, and inspired great works of painting. Such concerns featured as central topics in all forms of literature from folklore, through vernacular poems and prose, to verse by authors still celebrated today. Death has always been the biggest of life's big questions. We are born to die, but it is rare that we know where or how our death will take place; death is both a reality, but it is also unknowable, and it was always thus. In late medieval and early modern Europe, the big questions that death poses were explored in art and in literature, and the plethora of material available today provides a window through which we can glimpse some of their meanings.

Funeral Sermons and the Reformation: The British Isles and Germany

Part 1. Funeral Sermons over Time: From Catholic to Protestant in the British Isles

Jacqueline Eales

The editors¹ of the *Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* have described the sermon as a potent instrument of “religious politics and a literary form of central importance to British culture.”² This was all the more so in the case of funeral sermons, which marked moments of extreme disruption to family and social networks as well as occasions for communities to reinforce their political and religious bonds.³ Before the Reformation, sermons were preached at the funerals of notable or wealthy individuals as well as commemoratively at the “month’s mind” some 30 days after death, at the “year’s mind,” and sometimes for several years thereafter. Thus, the term “funeral sermon” can very loosely be used for most of these occasions when ministers preached for the dead even when the corpse was not present.

Susan Wabuda has observed that sermons only held “a supplementary place in the devotional framework of the later Middle Ages.”⁴ The rejection of belief in purgatory by the Edwardian reformers together with the Protestant emphasis on the preaching of God’s word meant that the sermon gradually came to have a much greater prominence in burial rites for the dead. After the Reformation the funeral sermon became more properly associated in England with preaching before burial and usually in the presence of the corpse,

1 I would like to thank Ralph Houlbrooke, Peter Lake, and Penny Pritchard for their help with the research for this chapter.

2 Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford: 2011), xiv.

3 Key surveys of funeral sermons from the late Middle Ages to the early 18th century are to be found in Susan Powell and Alan J. Fletcher, “‘In die sepulture seu Trīgintali’: The Late Medieval Funeral and Memorial Sermon,” *Leeds Studies in English*, new series 12 (1981), 195–228; Frederic B. Tromly, “‘According to Sounde Religion’: The Elizabethan Controversy over the Funeral Sermon,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13/2 (1983), 293–312, and Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480–1750* (Oxford: 1998), 295–330.

4 Susan Wabuda, *Preaching During the English Reformation* (Cambridge: 2002), 8.

but in contrast, the Scottish Calvinist Kirk rejected funeral sermons and initially some of the stricter English reformers followed their lead. In Ireland, as Clodagh Tait notes, there were very few references to sermons before burial even after the Reformation, and hardly any manuscript or printed funeral texts have survived from Ireland in the century from 1550 to 1650.⁵

Similarly, manuscript texts of few pre-Reformation Catholic funeral sermons have survived and even after the advent of print, funeral sermons were rarely published in England in the 16th century. Frederic B. Tromly has traced only 20 printed funeral sermons from the whole of Elizabeth's reign.⁶ Funeral sermons were provided for all the Tudor kings and queens, but it was only in the Stuart period that royal funeral sermons were routinely published. By the end of the early modern period funeral sermons were also preached in many parishes at the death of the monarch and no less than 16 sermons for the death of William III were published in 1702.⁷ During the 17th century the aristocracy, the gentry, wealthy merchants, and the professional classes such as prominent lawyers and clerics were also increasingly accorded a printed funeral sermon as were their wives.

Wills and diaries indicate that funeral sermons were also preached for the middling sort in greater numbers from the late 16th century onwards in England, but these were unlikely to be published. Ralph Houlbrooke has identified 214 printed sermons for England in the first half of the century, rising to 534 in the second half. These figures can be contrasted with the 240,000 funeral sermons traced for Germany between 1570 and 1770 where both the Lutheran and Catholic traditions vigorously encouraged the practice. Houlbrooke also emphasises that our knowledge of the changes made to the English funeral sermon from the 1530s onwards depends on investigating the 1300 or so examples printed up to 1750.⁸

The late medieval and early modern sermon was however, first and foremost, a performative act, often lasting an hour or more, and although the surviving texts of funeral sermons reflect the drama inherent in preaching at a death, yet the gestures, tone of voice, and skill of the preacher in delivery are

5 Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* (Basingstoke: 2002), 42.

6 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 306–10; Powell and Fletcher, “‘In die sepulture sue Trigintali,’” 207, n. 1; Tromly, “‘According to Sounde Religion,’” 306.

7 Penny Pritchard, “The Protestant Funeral Sermon in England, 1688–1800,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689–1901*, eds Keith Francis and William Gibson (Oxford: 2012), 322–37, on 322–3.

8 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 386–7; 326.

largely lost to us.⁹ While the influence of the printed funeral sermon on readers has been widely discussed, the impact of the preached word on funeral congregations is more difficult to retrieve. When Bishop William Bedell of Kilmore in Ireland preached in 1638 at his own wife's funeral "with that moderation of affection, and yet just commendation of her worth" there were "few drie eyes in the church all the while," but such accounts are relatively rare.¹⁰

There are also difficulties inherent in matching printed texts of funeral sermons to their oral delivery. Some preachers added to or rewrote their spoken texts for publication and such editing is to be expected, but most chose not to allude to any revisions in their work. Peter Watkinson was unusual in explaining exactly how he had expanded his sermon for Lady Mary Wharton for publication in 1674 by incorporating "what was prepared, but could not be delivered in the short time allotted for such discourses" and by adding "many particulars, whereof I had no knowledge, before this was intended to be published."¹¹ Even with this acknowledgement, it is impossible to discern what Watkinson had originally preached. The funeral sermon was also a sub-category of several wider literary genres including the growing interest in life writing and the tradition of the *ars moriendi*, or instruction on the art of dying, which emerged in the late Middle Ages and continued to be popular throughout the period under consideration here. Our understanding of the development of the funeral sermon after 1500 thus lies at the intersections of changing preaching conventions on the one hand and the history of print culture, literacy, and reading habits on the other.

The use of the funeral sermon as a tool of Protestant teaching was, however, slow to take shape and one of the best known complaints of the reformers was the lack of preaching in the English parishes, even in Elizabeth's reign, while in Wales and Ireland the campaign to promote Protestant preaching was even slower to take root. As Wabuda has demonstrated, there is clear evidence of preaching before the 1530s by bishops and other church dignitaries, by friars, and by university-trained secular clergy.¹² Many parishes would not have benefited from their ministry, however, and the survival of various late medieval

9 See for example J. B., *Chirologia, or, the natural language of the hand composed of the speaking motions, and discoursing gestures thereof: whereunto is added Chironomia, or, The art of manuall rhetorike consisting of the natural expressions, digested by art in the hand* (London: 1644).

10 Evelyn Shirley Shuckburgh (ed.), *Two Biographies of William Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore: with a selection of His Letters and an Unpublished Treatise* (Cambridge: 1902), 151.

11 Peter Watkinson, *Marys Choice Declared in a Sermon preached at the Funeral of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wharton* (London: 1674), leaf A3v.

12 Wabuda, *Preaching During the English Reformation*, 20–63.

manuscripts of generic sermons, or homilies, indicates that the parish clergy, who often lacked a university education, were regarded as in need of guidance in their preaching. The most popular of these works, which were designed as patterns for the clergy to adapt or to read to their congregations, was written in the 1380s by the Abbot of Lilleshall in Shropshire, John Mirk. His sermon cycle for the church year survives in nearly 40 manuscript copies and includes a sermon for the Feast of All Souls, a burial sermon, and notes for the clergy on burial.¹³

Mirk's *Festial* was first printed by William Caxton in 1483 and the last edition was published in 1532; thereafter the theological shifts of the Henrician Reformation made such Catholic sermon cycles obsolete.¹⁴ They were replaced at the start of Edward VI's reign by twelve *Certain Sermons or Homilies* of 1547 that were to be read regularly on Sundays in churches and were designed not only to ensure that parishes without a preacher could hear God's word expounded, but also that Catholic preachers instilled the new Protestant faith in their congregations. The ninth homily was an exhortation against the fear of death, and it marked a complete break from the doctrines of Rome. Unlike pre-Reformation funeral sermons, it did not dwell on the terrors of hell, but described at length how the comforts of heaven could be attained through true faith and by the merits of Christ. Parishioners were no longer called upon to perform rituals of prayer and commemoration for the dead, but to act in charity to their neighbours. The homily furnished preachers with a host of appropriate biblical texts for reflecting on death including the two most popular texts chosen by funeral preachers over the next two hundred years.¹⁵ These were St Paul's First Epistle to the Philippians:21–4 which was used in over thirty printed sermons, and Revelation 14:13, which Houlbrooke identifies as "by far the most popular text used in over 60 printed sermons" between 1500 and 1750.¹⁶ The latter was the text used for Prince Arthur in 1502 when it confirmed his role as a leading Christian within the Catholic community and it was also chosen by the bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner,

13 *Certayne sermons, or homelies appoynted by the kynges Maiestie, to be declared and redde, by all persones, vicars, or curates, euery Sondaye in their churches, where they haue cure* (London: 1547), sig. Oiiiiiv-Qiiiiiv.

14 Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: 2006), 8–10.

15 *Certayne sermons, or homelies appoynted by the kynges Maiestie*, sig. Oiiiiiv-Qiiiiiv.

16 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 306–7. Houlbrooke states that preachers chose either verse 21 from the Epistle "for to live is Christ, and to die is gain" or verses 23–4 "for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

for Henry VIII's funeral at Windsor in 1547, when the text could be seen as affirming the righteousness of the king's religious policies.¹⁷ The Edwardian homily had a profound influence on the English funeral sermon as it provided nearly 60 biblical quotations, many of which would be used as proof texts for subsequent funeral preaching.

The newly Protestant Edwardian church initially looked to the Lutherans for advice about how to formulate funeral sermons. The *Simple and Religious Consultation* by the Archbishop of Cologne and Lutheran convert, Hermann von Wied, published in London in 1547, instructed that funeral sermons should consist of an exposition of a biblical text and an exhortation about the greatness of sin and the wrath of God.¹⁸ The following year Walter Lynne, a London-based Flemish translator, published two sermons by Martin Luther that were suitable to be read at burials.¹⁹ Although the theological underpinning of early Protestant funeral sermons was influenced by Lutheran doctrine, the later dominance of Calvinist theology and the so-called "Calvinist consensus" of the English clergy is strongly present in the funeral sermons of the 17th century, which commonly made reference to the doctrine of election whilst also carefully avoiding wading too deeply into the topic of predestination.

Yet sermons for the dead were not without controversy. They were intended as occasions for the instruction or exhortation of the laity about religion and the afterlife, but they also provided the opportunity to praise an individual for their exemplary life, especially if a preacher was surveying the life of his own patron or of a great personage. Such was the funeral sermon preached for Edward the Black Prince in 1376 by Bishop Brinton of Rochester, who eulogised the prince as a great warrior, both pious and wise.²⁰ From an early date, excessive commendation of the deceased was criticised as detracting from the religious message of the sermon and for its resemblance to Ciceronian and other orations for the dead in the classical world. Thus, the Office of the Dead in the 15th-century sermon cycle *Speculum Sacerdotale* warned that no praise or thanks should be made for the dead.²¹ The concern to counter objections to

17 Gordon Kipling (ed.), *The Recyt of the Ladie Kateryne*, EETS 296 (Oxford: 1990), 81–93; John Strye, *Ecclesiastical Memorials Relating Chiefly to Religion*, vol. 2. Part ii (London: 1721), 3–18.

18 Hermann von Wied, *A simple, and religious consultation of us Herman by the grace of God Archebishop of Colone, and prince Electour* (London: 1547).

19 Walter Lynne, *A briefe collection of all such textes of the scripture as do declare ye most blessed and happie estate of the[m] that be byseted wyth sycknes* (London: 1549).

20 Mary Aquinas Devlin (ed.), *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373–1389)*, Camden Third Series 85 and 86 (London: 1954), 354–7.

21 Edward H. Weatherley (ed.), *Speculum Sacerdotale*, EETS 200 (London: 1936), 233.

preaching for the dead is also evident well before the Reformation. The 15th-century funeral homily *Memorare novissima tua* argued that men may lawfully gather at funeral services, burials, and commemorations so that they can pray for the dead, that the mourners could be comforted and be offered examples of godly behaviour.²²

Bishop John Fisher of Rochester addressed this issue when he declared at the burial of Henry VII, "let no man thynke that myn entent is for to prayse hym for ony vayne transytory thynges of this lyfe, whiche by the example of hym all kynges and prynces may lerne how slydyng, how slippery, how faylyng they be."²³ Similarly, when Matthew Parker, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, preached one of the earliest surviving Protestant funeral sermons at Cambridge in 1551 for the continental reformer Martin Bucer, he emphasised that he did not speak for Bucer's "commendations ... They be not Bucers commendations but Gods commendations in hys chosen servant."²⁴

As the Protestant funeral sermon took shape, English preachers responded to the objections against commendation by dividing their address to the mourners into two distinct sections. The longer part was devoted to the exposition of a biblical text while a second concluding section consisted of a biographical survey of the deceased's religious bearing, which according to the inclination of the preacher might be generalised and very brief, thus avoiding accusations of excessive praise of an individual. Preachers were keen to distance this part of the sermon from other ways in which an individual could be more fully commemorated including poetical elegies, secular funeral orations, and epitaphs, although sermons were sometimes published along with poems in honour of the deceased. Yet, the attractions of the funeral sermon as a means of presenting a pattern of godly piety for others was so strong that by the end of the 17th century the dissenting minister Samuel Clarke made a virtue of reprinting only the biographical sections of funeral sermons. These appeared in a series of omnibus editions designed, as Clarke explained, to be examples of godly behaviour worthy of emulation.²⁵

22 Gloria Cigman (ed.), *Lollard Sermons*, EETS 294 (Oxford: 1989), 207–8.

23 John Fisher, *This sermon folowyng was compyled [et] sayd in the cathedrall chyrche of saynt Poule within ye cyte of London by the ryght reuerende fader in god Iohn byssshop of Rochester, the body beyng present of the moost famouse prynce kynge Henry the Vij* (London: 1509), leaf Aii.

24 Cited in Tromly, "According to Sounde Religion," 308.

25 See for example Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons in this Later Age* (London: 1683).

Clarke included other “godly lives” in these volumes, which had been specifically written for publication, and the success of his endeavours, which were “printed four times in a few years space, and yet never less than a thousand at a time,” demonstrates the continued appetite in contemporary readers for literature about and in preparation for death.²⁶ As Peter Lake has noted, Clarke situated his work within the traditions of martyrology and of ecclesiastical history, but was also responding to the specific political circumstances of 1651 to 1683, when the moderate Puritanism he espoused was under particular threat. Clarke’s editorial decision to reprint only the spiritual biographies of funeral sermons also emphasises the relationship of the genre to both life writing and biographical writing.²⁷

As this brief introduction indicates, funeral sermons are an important historical and literary source. They demonstrate not only the mid-16th century displacement of Catholic belief systems by Protestant observances and the exhortation to a godly life, but also the ways in which individuals and social groups were fashioned as good Christians at their death. It is here that we can witness the post-Reformation funeral sermon as a site of striking innovation, as the English clergy used their funeral sermons to celebrate the role of clergy wives in response to Catholic accusations that clerical marriage was illegitimate, and that ministers’ wives were whores. While many historians have mined funeral sermons for evidence of female piety in the period, the presentation of the entirely new social group of clergy wives and daughters in funeral sermons has not yet been given the prominence that it deserves. The presentation of male piety in funeral sermons has also been largely overlooked, partly because the behaviour of men has been perceived as normative by past societies and also because modern commentators have analysed it primarily to highlight the ways in which female religiosity can be read “against the grain” of a text. The emphasis on the female relatives of the clergy and the nuances of male piety in the funeral sermons of the early modern period were important aspects of the genre and both will be examined here in greater detail.

26 Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, 1–11.

27 Peter Lake, “Reading Clarke’s Lives in Political and Polemical Context,” in *Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England*, eds Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Oxford: 2008), 293–318. I am grateful to Peter Lake for giving me a draft of his forthcoming book on Clarke, *Making Memory: Samuel Clarke and the Construction of a Puritan Tradition*.

1 The Contents of Funerary Sermons

Before the Reformation a sermon was not usually part of the observances at burials, when those who could afford to do so paid instead for intercessory masses, requiems, and prayers designed to ease the passage of the soul through the pains of purgatory on its way to heaven.²⁸ The theology of purgatory was so central to the moment of death in the late Middle Ages that wealthier individuals left bequests for masses and prayers to be performed for a specified time or even in perpetuity. The very wealthiest in society funded chantry chapels where regular services for the founders and their families could be maintained. The less wealthy left money to guilds or confraternities of laymen and women, who professed devotion to a specific saint or to Christ, the Trinity, or the Virgin Mary, and guild members paid for the burial and the commemoration of their fellows through masses and prayers. Model sermons, or homilies, for the feast of All Souls on 2 November when all the dead, including the poor, were remembered show similar beliefs in the efficacy of prayer rather than preaching to aid souls in their delivery from purgatory.

In England bequests for Catholic funeral rites tailed off from the mid-1530s, and fell away sharply after the abolition of chantries by the Edwardian Chantries Act of 1547 and the clear repudiation of purgatory in the 42 articles of religion of 1553, which described purgatory as “vainly invented” with no grounds in scripture and “repugnant to the Word of God.”²⁹ Yet it was not until the 1580s that the custom of requesting a funeral sermon in wills became more evident. In a survey of probate accounts from Berkshire, Kent and Lincolnshire, Clare Gittings has noted that the numbers of funeral sermons mentioned in the accounts increased steadily between 1591 and 1650.³⁰ A case study of this is provided by the village of Cranbrook in Kent, where in an isolated example from 1582 a local shoemaker left 6s 8d for a sermon at his burial, but from 1596 onwards such bequests appear more frequently and in the next quarter of a century clothiers and their widows, yeomen, a tapster, a shoemaker, a tanner, and a saddler, amongst others, commonly left 10 shillings or £1 for the minister of Cranbrook to preach a funeral sermon for them.³¹ This was undoubtedly a

28 Peter Marshall, “Fear, Purgatory and Polemic in Reformation England,” in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, eds William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: 1997), 150–66. See also Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: 2002).

29 Gerald Bray (ed.), *Documents of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: 2004), 297.

30 Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early modern England* (London: 1984), 240.

31 Jules de Launay, *Abstracts of Cranbrook Wills 1396–1640* (Canterbury: 1984), 198, 220, 237, 242, 256, 257, 262, 274, 284, 357.

reflection of the increase in the number of printed funeral sermons in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, which created a fashion for the genre.

Such bequests also demonstrate that funeral sermons were not a routine part of the burial service. Ministers might make an address to the congregation at a burial, but an individualised sermon making reference to the deceased was reserved for notable individuals, for those who could afford to pay a preacher, or for those with household chaplains performing a last office for their patron. The issue of payment for this service in England is further underlined by the hostile comments of the Scottish Calvinist minister Robert Baillie in 1644 that the English clergy would not abandon the practice of preaching at funerals, because it was “a good part of the minsters livelyhood; therefore they will not quitt it.”³²

Late medieval English funeral sermons were designed to instruct the hearers about the four last things of death, judgement, hell, and heaven. Surviving texts considered the efficacy of good works to salvation and how the soul could be released from purgatory, which according to the tastes of the preacher might variously include the prayers of friends and of the faithful, generous oblations and charity, the observation of fasts, and above all, the salvation offered by the sacrament of communion. Various combinations of these aids were offered in the 15th-century revisions and extensions of Mirk’s *Festial* such as the model sermon *In die sepulture seu trigintali*, which took as its organising theme acts of charity and the “precious prayers” of friends that would help to release the souls of all Christians from the prison of purgatory.³³ Similarly, the burial sermon *In die sepulture alicuius mortui*, acknowledged the power of prayer and the sacraments, but emphasised that the mass was the chief and principal succour to all souls.³⁴ The *Memorare novissima tua* was also traditional in taking the four last things as its organising theme. Here the ten pains of hell were graphically described as including fire, great cold, darkness, foul stink, dread and despair, but they were contrasted with the comforting spectacle of the joys of heaven encompassing immortality, love, and comfortable company as well as sight of the Trinity.³⁵

Changing emotional responses to death and dying in the medieval and early modern periods have become a topic of interest for historians and others, but we can also see some of the continuities between the medieval

32 David Laing (ed.), *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: 1841), 245.

33 Devlin, *Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, 206–9, 260–72, 280–4, 340–3; Powell and Fletcher, “*In die sepulture sue Trigintali*,” 215–28.

34 Susan Powell, (ed.), *John Mirk’s Festial*, EETS 335:2 (Oxford: 2011), 256–9.

35 Cigman, *Lollard Sermons*, 231–9.

conventions about preaching for the dead and early modern funeral sermons. The late 17th century writer, Oliver Heywood, believed that the subject matter of a funeral sermon should speak “terroure and caution” to the mourners, and like their Catholic forebears Protestant preachers certainly used vivid imagery to provoke sympathy for the deceased and a dread of a life spent in sin.³⁶ Nicolas Estwick questioned whether his auditors had seen “a heap of dead men’s bones? Hast thou not seene their skuls without flesh, a grim spectacle to behold, the very eyes being wasted and turned into dust? Hast thou not seene their mouthes (as it were) grinning and shewing their corrupted teeth.”³⁷ Such graphic descriptions were intended to evoke fear in the auditors and to persuade them to turn from sin.³⁸ Funeral preachers also held out the prospect of salvation to the righteous reassuring them in the words of Alexander Gosse, minister of Plympton St Mary, Devon, that “in the evening of our age, when death commeth, we shall sup with the Lambe of *God*, *Christ Jesus*, and there will be great joy indeed.”³⁹ The extended emphasis on the salvation of the godly was one of the defining hallmarks of the English Protestant funeral sermon in the transition from its late medieval form and was a corollary of the rejection of Catholic theology of death at the Reformation.

The impact of the Reformation on the funeral sermon in England has been described by Tromly as “cataclysmic” since the severance of its Catholic roots meant that it had to be reinvented, while it was also the subject of prolonged controversy about its legitimacy in a reformed church.⁴⁰ While Tromly is correct in his assessment of the impact of doctrinal change on the funeral sermon in 16th century England, the attack on preaching for the dead was not as serious as he suggests, as it came from a very small minority of advanced presbyterian and independent groups in the 1580s and 1590s, and their objections did not have a significant impact on burial practices in England. Their leaders

36 Horsfall Turner (ed.), *The Rev. Oliver Heywood B.A., 1630–1702; His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdote and Event Book*, vol. 4 (Bingley: 1885), 48. See Rebecca F. McNamara and Una McIlvenna “Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying,” *Parergon* 31/2 (2014), 1–10.

37 Nicolas Estwick, *A learned and godly sermon preached on the XIX. day of December anno Dom. MDCXXXI. At the funeral of Mr. Robert Bolton* (London: 1639), 11.

38 Andrew Spicer, “‘Rest of their bones’: Fear of Death and Reformed Burial Practices,” in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, eds William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: 1997), 167–83.

39 Alexander Gosse, *Death’s Deliverance and Eliahs Fiery Charet, or the holy mans Tryumph after Death. Delivered in two Sermons preached at Plymouth* (London: 1632), 10.

40 Tromly, “‘According to Sounde Religion,” 293.

were enthusiastically answered, amongst others, by the future Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, and this very public endorsement of the practice by church luminaries certainly made the funeral sermon a desirable commodity for those able to afford the costs.

The greatest disruptor to medieval funeral sermons lay, as Tromly has argued, in the new doctrines that were introduced into England by the Reformation and the Protestant rejection of Catholic theology. The Edwardian repudiation of belief in purgatory was specifically driven forwards in funeral sermons, which provided the perfect opportunity to make this doctrinal point. A printed funeral "oration" of 1550 delivered by John Hooper, the future bishop of Gloucester and Marian martyr, illustrates the energetic dismantling of the theology of purgatory by the reformers:

the lernynge of man wythout iudgement, knoweledge, and grace wyll compell and force them what lyue to beleue there frendes soules departed to be broyled in Purgatory. Desyre them to giue you a reason why? Aunswere haue they none, but that ye muste so beleue, or els be accounted for an Heretike.⁴¹

Hooper insisted that salvation was obtained through faith and not by the good works and prayers of others. His text was unadorned by any praise for the deceased, in which respect he was in harmony with the practice of the later English exiles in Geneva in Mary's reign, who stipulated in their *forme of prayers and ministration of the sacraments*, approved by John Calvin, that the congregation should accompany the corpse to the grave without ceremonies. After the interment the minister might exhort the people about death and resurrection, but no mention was made of any commendation in the minister's address.⁴² The Scottish Calvinist reformer, John Knox, had a hand in writing the *forme of prayers* and on his return to Scotland, Knox was one of a group of presbyterian ministers who devised the Protestant Kirk's *First Book of Discipline* in 1560. The authors of the *Book* expressed their disapproval of funeral preaching, because they claimed that if ministers preached at all burials they would be overly occupied with funeral sermons, but they could not with any conscience preach

41 John Hooper, *A funerall oratyon made the xiiij. day of Ianuary by Iohn Hoper, the yere of our saluation, 1549* (London: 1549), sig. Aiiiiv-Aiiiiir.

42 *The forme of prayers and ministration of the sacraments, andc vsed in the Englishe Congregation at Geneua and approued, by the famous and godly learned man, Iohn Caluyn* (Geneva: 1556), 88.

only for the “rich and honorable.”⁴³ Perhaps with the Genevan allowance for the minister to exhort the people in mind, Knox did preach at the burial of the Earl of Moray after his assassination in 1570 and funeral sermons were allowed by authority in Montrose in the 1580s.⁴⁴

Simultaneously, the leading English presbyterian clerics, John Field, Thomas Wilcox, and Thomas Cartwright, engaged in a protracted debate with the authorities about further church reforms, which included the legitimacy of the funeral sermon. In 1572 Field and Wilcox attacked burial sermons, which they insisted in their *Admonition to the Parliament* had been removed by the best reformed churches, because the practice gave rise to abuses.⁴⁵ The *Admonition* was answered meticulously point by point by the then dean of Lincoln, John Whitgift, who cited the Genevan *forme of prayers* as evidence that Calvin had approved of funeral sermons. Whitgift asked whether there was any better time than at a funeral to preach the mortality of mankind and the judgement to come, or to beat down “trentalls, sacrificing for the dead, prayers for the dead, purgatorie, and such like, than that wherein they were accustomed to be most used?.”⁴⁶ This view was widely shared in the English Church and as late as the 1690s English funeral preachers continued to describe the doctrine of purgatory as a delusion, imaginary, and a fable.⁴⁷

In response to Whitgift, Thomas Cartwright asserted that members of the English congregation in Geneva had told him that they did not use funeral sermons nor were they used in Calvin’s church there. In line with the Scottish *Book of Discipline* he argued that funeral sermons were for the rich and those in authority, and they were seldom preached at the burial of the poor, therefore “it is most convenient to leave both.”⁴⁸ The assault on funeral sermons was

43 *The First and Second booke of discipline, as it was formerly set forth in Scotland by publicke authoritie, anno 1560 And is at present commanded there to be practised, anno 1641* (London: 1641), 71.

44 Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (London: 2002), 341.

45 John Field, *An Admonition to the Parliament* (Hemel Hempstead: 1572), leaf Biiir.

46 John Whitgift, *An answere to a certen libel intituled, An admonition to the Parliament* (London: 1572), 200.

47 John Shower, *The mourners companion, or, Funeral discourses on several texts* (London: 1692), 34; John Howe, *A discourse relating to the much-lamented death and solemn funeral of our incomparable and most gracious Queen Mary, of most blessed memory* (London: 1695), 40; George Stanhope, *The happiness of good men after death a sermon at the funeral of Mr. Robert Castell, late of Deptford in Kent* (London: 1699), 19.

48 Thomas Cartwright, *A replye to an answere made of M. Doctor VVhitgift Against the admonition to the Parliament* (Hemel Hempstead: 1573), 201. For Whitgift’s further response see John Whitgift, *The defense of the aunswere to the Admonition against the replie of T.C.* (London: 1574), 733.

subsequently taken up by the Independent leaders Henry Barrow and John Penry, who argued that funeral sermons were not commanded by the Bible. As a Welshman, Penry was particularly concerned to see the best reformed practices extended into Wales, which the radical reformers regarded as a dark corner of the land where Catholic practices persisted and preaching was still lacking.⁴⁹ Their insistence on separation from the established Church led to both men's execution on charges of sedition in 1593.⁵⁰

Despite this controversy, there was little wider support for the Presbyterian and separatist positions in England. By 1600 funeral sermons had been printed for various aristocratic patrons including Walter, Earl of Essex in 1577, Francis, Earl of Bedford in 1585, Sir Henry Sidney in 1586, Anne, Countess of Warwick in 1591, and Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton in 1593. Other ranks were also commemorated in print, including in 1581 the lawyer Robert Kelway, who was also the surveyor general of the court of wards and in 1597 John Piers, the Archbishop of York.⁵¹

The publication in 1602 of two funeral sermons by William Leigh and William Harrison for the Puritan Lancashire gentlewoman Katherine Brettergh marked a watershed in the print history of the genre. *Deaths Advantage Little Regarded* was as Tromly points out "the first extant [funeral] sermon preached for a woman who was not titled." It was printed seven times between 1602 and 1642 and its popularity owed much to the "brief discourse" of Katherine's life and death appended to the sermons as well as to its hostility to Catholicism.⁵² Katherine died at the age of 22 after a spectacular deathbed crisis during which she repeatedly flung her Bible to the ground and which Harrison interpreted as a diabolical assault. The publication of *Deaths Advantage Little Regarded* was intended to rebut the accusation by local Catholics that Katherine had suffered because of a crisis of faith. The depiction of her life, death, and funeral in print also gives an insight into the isolation felt by Katherine's Puritan circle

49 John Penry, *An exhortation vnto the gouernours, and people of Hir Maiesties countrie of Wales, to labour earnestly, to haue the preaching of the Gospell planted among them* (London: 1588), 98–9; Henry Barrow, *A brief discoverie of the false church* (London: 1590), 126.

50 Claire Cross, 2004, "Penry, John (1562/3–1593), religious controversialist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 14 Jul. 2019. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-21894> (last accessed 28/6/2020). Patrick Collinson, 2004, "Barrow, Henry (c. 1550–1593), religious separatist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 14 Jul. 2019. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1540> (last accessed 28/6/2020).

51 Tromly, "According to Sounde Religion," 299–304.

52 Tromly, "According to Sounde Religion," 310.

in Lancashire where traditional Catholicism was still strongly evident even at the start of the 17th century.

Funeral sermons for women have had a particular attraction for historians of female piety in the early modern period. Eric Josef Carlson has identified 43 funeral sermons for non-royal women preached between 1600 and 1640, 29 of which contain biographical material. They encompassed the range of religious leanings that had developed in the established Protestant Church by the time of the civil wars. The preachers from the conservative wing included John Cosin and John Donne, although they were outnumbered by the Puritan tendency, which was represented by Stephen Dennison, Thomas Gataker, and Thomas Taylor amongst many others. Despite the preachers' different religious traditions their sermons all focused on the domestic nature of women's religious practices.⁵³ Patrick Collinson has argued that the constraints of the genre meant that such texts were highly formulaic and generalised whereas Peter Lake and Carlson rightly contend that women's funeral sermons and their associated godly "lives" do reveal individual behaviours that went "against the grain" of conventional social codes.⁵⁴ Thus, Katherine Brettergh was praised for correcting her husband for being angry on the Sabbath and for pursuing a tenant in rent arrears for then, as she said, you "oppress" the poor.⁵⁵ In this example Katherine's godly behaviour trumped the obedience expected of a wife to her husband in an ostensibly patriarchal society.

Significantly, the printed funeral sermons of the 1620s and 1630s also commemorated an entirely new social class of women for the first time. Funeral sermons for the wives, daughters, and other female relatives of the clergy should be interpreted not only as contributing to the development of the

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- 53 Eric Josef Carlson, "English Funeral Sermons as Sources: The Example of Female Piety in Pre-1640 Sermons," *Albion* 32/4 (2000), 567–97. See also Jacqueline Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives' of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Women in the Church*, eds W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 27 (Oxford: 1990), 365–76; Elizabeth Hodgson, "The Domestic 'Fruit of Eves Transgression' in Stuart Funeral Sermons," *Prose Studies* 28/1 (2006), 1–18; Femke Molekamp, "Seventeenth-Century Funeral Sermons and Exemplary female Devotion: Gendered Spaces and Histories," *Renaissance and Reformation* 35/1 (2012), 43–63; Raymond A. Anselment, "Anthony Walker, Mary Rich, and Seventeenth-Century Funeral Sermons of Women," *Prose Studies* 37/3 (2015), 200–24.
- 54 Patrick Collinson, "A Magazine of Religious Patterns': An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism," in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, ed. Patrick Collinson (London: 1983), 499–527; Peter Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The Emancipation of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe," *Seventeenth Century* 2 (1987), 143–65.
- 55 William Harrison and William Leygh, *Death's Advantage Little Regarded and the Soul's Solace against Sorrow. Preached in Two Funeral Sermons* (London: 1606), 9–10.

genre, but also as part of a wider debate about the legitimacy of clergy marriage, which had been initiated by the Reformation. This debate remained a live issue for the English clergy throughout the 17th century and funeral sermons for the women of clergy families can fruitfully be read within the context of this ongoing debate between the English Protestant clergy and their Catholic opponents.

The first printed funeral sermon for a clerical wife was Nicholas Guy's *Pieties Pillar* (1626), in which he described Elizabeth Gouge as a "pious, prudent, provident, painfull, carefull, faithfull, helpfull, grave, modest, sober, tender, loving Wife, Mother, Mistris, Neighbour."⁵⁶ Elizabeth was married to William Gouge, the famed godly preacher of St Anne's Blackfriars, and at her death she had just given birth to a son, her 13th child. *Pieties Pillar* was published at the "importunity" of her husband and it marked a significant turning point in the creation of a new social identity for clergy wives in post-Reformation England. We can trace, for example, an extremely close relationship between the description of Elizabeth Gouge in this sermon and the idealised conduct of wives as set out in William Gouge's domestic advice book for the laity *Of Domesticall Duties* first published four years earlier in 1622. In this book Gouge also made a clear defence of clerical marriage, arguing that it was lawful for "all sorts of persons" to marry and that the Church of Rome's restraint on marriage for those entering holy orders was "impure and tyrannical."⁵⁷

Pieties Pillar was the complete answer to Catholic accusations that clerical marriage was nothing more than concubinage and it set the tone for funeral sermons for other women from clerical households and in particular their domestic support for their husbands' vocations. It was also seen as a model for all godly women to follow. In 1659 Edward Reynolds published a godly "life" for Mrs Mary Bewley, in which he noted that "in this nation reverend divines have judged it expedient and useful to propose some women as patterns to other." Amongst the works he cited was that of "Mr Nicholas Guy, his Narration of the life and death of Dr Gouge's wife."⁵⁸

56 Nicholas Guy, *Pieties pillar: or, A sermon preached at the funerall of mistresse Elizabeth Gouge, late wife of Mr. William Gouge, of Black-friers, London With a true narration of her life and death* (London: 1626), 41.

57 William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties eight treatises* (London: 1622) 183–4. For further discussion of the relationship between conduct literature and the debate about clerical marriage see Jacqueline Eales, "Gender Construction in Early Modern England and the Conduct Books of William Whateley (1583–1639)," in *Gender and Christian Religion*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Studies in Church History 34 (Woodbridge: 1998), 163–74.

58 Edward Reynolds, *Imitation and caution for Christian woman: or, The life and death of that excellent gentlewoman, Mrs. Mary Bewley* (London: 1659), 2.

While the construction of femininity and female piety presented in funeral sermons has been closely analysed, the same cannot be said about funeral sermons for men. Sermons about individuals have always been a staple of biographical research about both men and women, but the genre has not been the central focus for wider studies of masculinity. Yet a wide range of male ranks and professions are represented in the printed sources including courtiers, gentlemen, soldiers, merchants, lawyers, judges and of course, clerics. Each grouping represented particular facets of male behaviour and reinforced the contemporary patriarchal expectations that men should act as leaders in their public vocations and in their homes, whilst also displaying Christian values of piety, charity, and compassion.

The clergy thus used their funeral sermons to strengthen the bonds within masculine spheres of operation. Francis Rogers's funeral sermon for Lieutenant Colonel William Proud, who died at the siege of Maastricht in 1632, was delivered in Canterbury Cathedral to a congregation which included the deputy-lieutenants of East Kent "to whom the chiefest charge of military discipline ... is committed." Rogers skilfully used the obedience required of the soldier to emphasise the need to obey God's laws and commands, and invoked the bravery of men in battle to exhort his listeners to fear neither death nor the Devil, who he assured his listeners could be overcome like a coward.⁵⁹ Similarly, when Edward Dunsterville preached in Dublin in 1642 at the funeral of Sir Simon Harcourt, a colonel in the English forces in Ireland and a member of the Irish Privy Council, he addressed a congregation of judges, privy councillors, military commanders, and soldiers involved in the colonisation of Ireland. Dunsterville lamented Harcourt's death at the hands of their Irish enemies and warned that "this should worke every Colonell, Officer and Souldier of an Army to a holy care to prepare themselves for every event before-hand, and to make their peace with God on their knees in their Chambers before they go into the field."⁶⁰

The funerals of the clergy themselves were occasions for solemn gatherings of networks of ministers. When the minister of Little Walsingham in Sussex died in 1605 his coffin was carried by a group of preachers, which included John Knewstubb, who preached the funeral sermon. Few clerical funerals could have been as well attended by fellow ministers, though, as that of the Reverend Fish, a London minister buried on 23 August 1662. In a show of religious and political

59 Francis Rogers, *A sermon preached on September the 20. 1632. in the cathedrall church of Christ at Canterbury, at the funerall of William Proud* (London: 1633), leaf A2r-v.

60 Edward Dunsterville, *A sermon at the funerall of the truly vertuous, honourable, valiant, in fame never-dying, Sir Simon Harcourt* (London: 1642), 11.

force, his funeral attracted the presence of 100 “dead” ministers, who expected to be removed from their parishes on the following day for refusing to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity recently passed by Parliament.⁶¹ Funeral sermons for the clergy also provided an overt opportunity for the preacher to reflect on the impact of the clerical profession on their flocks. Nicolas Estwick asserted in his 1631 funeral sermon for his fellow Northamptonshire minister Robert Bolton that “the consciences of millions converted, can witnesse that Ministers have beene their spirituall fathers, their preaching hath beene the key to open the Kingdome of Heaven, and they are appointed by GOD for the gathering of the Saints.”⁶²

While some sermons, like those for Proud and Bolton, are entirely laudatory others revealed tensions between praiseworthy male behaviour and the inability to live up to this ideal. Omitting to adumbrate the moral failings of the deceased when addressing a congregation that knew them well could render a preacher's sermon an empty exercise. In 1682 Oliver Heywood noted that a notable local drunkard, who was a “filthy” talker had been sent “straight to heaven” by the preacher at his funeral “I suppose upon ignorance of him.” Heywood hoped that this disparity would not encourage the wicked to continue in their sinful courses.⁶³

The gendered assumptions of early modern society were clearly exposed at funerals as the preachers considered that men were prone to a wider range of moral lapses than women. Funeral sermons for women might flag up a certain transitory dullness in religious observation, a questioning of faith that had been overcome, and even the deathbed temptations of Satan, but the sins of men were more varied and included drunkenness, gambling, swearing, fornication, and a failure to engage with religious worship in varying degrees. When faced with the task of preaching at the funeral of the notorious rakehell John, Earl of Rochester, in 1680 his wife's chaplain, Robert Parsons, admitted that “so great a sinner as now lies before us” was a subject that “might deserve and exhaust all the treasures of religious eloquence.” Parsons took refuge in the biblical text Luke 15:7 “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninetie and nine just persons.”⁶⁴

Some forty years earlier, Robert Abbot, the minister at Cranbrook used the occasion of a funeral sermon for the young apothecary William Rogers to

61 *Winthrop Papers 1498–1629*, vol. 1 (Boston: 1929), 89; Ernest Axon (ed.), *Oliver Heywood's Life of John Angier of Denton*, Chetham Society, 97 New Series (Manchester: 1937), 127.

62 Estwick, *A learned and godly sermon*, 54.

63 Horsfall Turner (ed.), *The Rev. Oliver Heywood B.A.*, 48.

64 Robert Parsons, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester* (Dublin: 1680), 5.

address the deceased's coterie of drinking companions and warn them against irreligion and its consequences. Rogers had been a young man of "sweet" disposition, but he persistently rejected church-going in favour of the alehouse. As the sermon made clear, Rogers suffered a failure of faith on his deathbed and died in terror believing he was damned.⁶⁵

Penny Pritchard has noted that preachers were faced with particular challenges when preaching about the religious conduct of merchants, whose lives had been dedicated to earthly profits.⁶⁶ When preaching at the burial of his good friend John Juxon, a London merchant tailor, Stephen Dennison was conscious that some people "wil not speake well [of him]" because of his trade, but remembered how Juxon had once told him that "his conscience did not accuse him of any one groate then in his possession, which was gotten by vniust meanes."⁶⁷ If Juxon was aware of any gossip against him, he was determined to demonstrate that he had the confidence of the communities in which he moved and as a wealthy man, he was prepared to pay for their attendance at his funeral. His will stipulated that nine "godlie ministers," including Dennison, should be paid £4 each to wear mourning gowns and attend his corpse to the church; 80 boys from Christ's Hospital were to accompany them along with liveried members of the Merchant Tailors Guild, as well as Juxon's friends and kindred. A further 50 poor men were paid 11 shillings each to attend the body to burial dressed in "comely" black mourning gowns. As Dennison preached the funeral sermon at St Laurence Pountney church he thus faced a congregation which represented Juxon's livelihood as a merchant, his charity to the poor, and his networks of religious and family contacts.⁶⁸

The allegation that funeral sermons were open to abuse was underlined by the 1640s debate about the production of a *Directory for Public Worship* by the Westminster Assembly of Divines tasked with reforming the English Church during the first phase of the English civil wars. The Scottish representatives to

65 Robert Abbott, *The young-mans warning-peece, or, A sermon preached at the buriall of William Rogers, apothecary with an history of his sinfull life and woefull death* (London: 1639); see also Lorraine Flisher, "The Sinful Life and Woeful Death of William Rogers: Textual Legacy and Puritan Culture in 1630s West Kent," in *Kentish Book Culture 1400–1660*, ed. Claire Bartram (Oxford: forthcoming).

66 Penny Pritchard, "The Eye of a Needle: Commemorating the 'Godly Merchant' in the Early Modern Funeral Sermon," *Journal of Religious History, Literature and Culture* 3/2 (2017), 70–90.

67 Stephen Dennison, *Another tombestone; or, A sermon preached at Laurance Pountneys-Church London, vpon the last day of August, in the yeere, 1626 At the celebration of the funerals of Master Iohn Juxon* (London: 1626), 60–1.

68 TNA PROB11/150/25.

the Assembly made their disapproval very clear in 1643 when they refused to listen to the funeral sermon preached by Stephen Marshall for the parliamentary leader John Pym. Robert Baillie, one of the Scot's contingent, remarked that "for funeral sermons we must have away with the rest." A year later Baillie reported that the differences between the English and the Scots over the issue of funeral sermons appeared to be irreconcilable. He described the practice as a reward for the rich and said that there had been three days of debate in the Assembly over the wording of directions for burying the dead in *the Directory for Public Worship*, which was to be used in England, Scotland and Wales.⁶⁹ The final version of *the Directory* decreed that there should be no praying, singing, or reading at the burial "as no way beneficial to the dead" and that the mourners should instead apply themselves to appropriate meditations and discussion. If a minister were present then he "may put them in remembrance of their duty."⁷⁰ While Presbyterian and independent clerics were expected to adhere to the rubrics of the *Directory*, the Royalist clergy had no such scruples and, as Houlbrooke has observed, the period 1660 to 1714 would be "the heyday of the 'Anglican' funeral sermon."⁷¹

2 Conclusions

During the 16th century the delivery, contents, and reception of funeral sermons altered considerably in the British Isles as a result both of religious politics and the increasing popularity of the genre as a printed literary form. From the early 1550s leading figures in the established English Church regarded preaching at burials as the key opportunity for spreading the reformed faith and combatting the doctrines of Catholicism, and by the early 17th century this even extended to the championing of clerical marriage. Funeral sermons were also important locations for the expression of gendered modes of personal piety as well as the construction of the ideal religious behaviour expected of certain social groups such as clerics, soldiers, and merchants. In England and Wales opposition to funeral preaching was voiced by a small group of extreme reformers, but their reservations about the practice did nothing to halt the growing fashion amongst the majority. Even in Scotland, where funeral sermons were actively discouraged, there is evidence that the practice took a sporadic hold.

69 Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, 11, 118, 245.

70 Chad Van Dixhoorn (ed.), *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1652*, vol. 5 (Oxford: 2012), 145–6.

71 Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 299.

Some of these developments, including the presentation of male piety in funeral sermons are yet to be fully explored, but perhaps the largest gap in the literature thus far concerns the expository aspects of the genre. The debate about the formulaic nature of funeral sermons initiated by Collinson has centred closely on the biographical sections of these sermons and his critics, including Lake and Carlson, have responded by analysing them for evidence of individualism. Yet by far the greater part of a funeral sermon was constructed from the exposition of a biblical text, and this element in the sermons has remained almost completely unexamined by historians and literary critics. Yet, the shift from Catholic to Protestant usage released funeral preachers from the constraints of teaching Catholic belief in purgatory and in an imminent hell. As a result, the exposition of the text became a much freer form ranging from the sophistication of John Donne's sermon for the heraldic funeral of Sir William Cockayne in St Paul's Cathedral to the simple, short sermon by Francis Tallents at the burial of the dissenting minister Philip Henry minister at Broad Oak in 1696, which was attended by "most of the neighbouring gentry, with a vast multitude of others."⁷²

Although, as Houlbrooke has argued, the Anglican clergy would retreat from publishing their funeral sermons in the 18th century as a reaction against religious enthusiasm, the dissenting clergy continued to publish, although the overall numbers of printed sermons would fall after the mid-point of the century. Despite the rise and fall of the appetite for printed funeral sermons in the early modern period, the practice would remain firmly embedded in English funeral practices throughout the ensuing centuries.

Part II. Protestant Funeral Sermons in Early-Modern Germany

Ruth Atherton

"You should not grieve because of those who are asleep ... like the others who have no hope."^{73,74} In delivering the funeral sermon for Martin Luther in 1546, Johannes Bugenhagen sought to give the grieving parishioners hope and

72 Peter McCullough, "Preaching and Context: John Donne's Sermon at the Funeral of Sir William Cockayne," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, eds Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: 2011), 213–67; J.B. Williams (ed.), *Eighteen Sermons by the Rev. Philip Henry, A. M.* (London: 1816), 3–30, 373.

73 I am grateful to Dr Benedikt Brunner for his helpful comments on a draft of this chapter.

74 Johannes Bugenhagen, *Eine Christliche Predigt / uber der Leich und begrebnis / des Ehrwirdigen D. Martini Luthers / durch Ern Johan Buugenhausen Pomern / Doctor / und Pfarrer der Kirchen zu Wittemberg / gethan* (Wittemberg: 1546), unpaginated.

comfort regarding the delivery of the Wittenberg reformer from this world. Acknowledging the “rightful mourning” of those gathered, Bugenhagen gently reminded his audience that “in this sorrow we should also rightly recognize God’s grace and mercy to us and thank God that he has awakened for us through his spirit this dear Dr. Martin Luther against the antichristian doctrines of the abominable satanic pope.”⁷⁵ The theme of the sermon was one of thanksgiving and hope: Luther long desired “to be rid of this miserable life and to be with Christ.”⁷⁶ Echoing Justas Jonas’s immediate report regarding Luther’s death, Bugenhagen confirmed that the reformer died well, secure in his faith, and although those he leaves behind are sorrowful, they should remember that “God himself now holds [Luther] precious and beloved.”⁷⁷ In August 1532, Luther had delivered a sermon on the occasion of Elector John of Saxony’s funeral. In this, Luther drew on the same words of consolation from 1 Thessalonians 4:13 that Bugenhagen was to employ for Luther’s own funeral fourteen years later.⁷⁸ The words were intended to comfort Elector John’s grieving family, friends, and subjects. Acknowledging the instinctive human reaction to death, Luther taught that grief is not to be ignored but “it must be Christian in moderation.”⁷⁹

Taking the theme of comfort as its primary focus, this chapter explores the development of Protestant funeral sermons over the course of the 16th and 17th centuries in Germany.⁸⁰ It considers how Protestant preachers used funeral

75 Bugenhagen, *Eine Christliche Predigt*.

76 Bugenhagen, *Eine Christliche Predigt*.

77 For a discussion of the reports regarding Luther’s death, see Jochen Birkenmeier, “‘Den Würmern einen guten feisten Doktor zu verzehren geben’: Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Berichte über Luthers Tod,” in *Luthers Tod: Ereignis und Wirkung*, ed. Armin Kohnle (Leipzig: 2019), 141–57; Bugenhagen, *Eine Christliche Predigt*.

78 “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.”: 1 Thessalonians 4:13, New International Version. For more on the use of Scripture in funeral sermons, see Robert Kolb, “[...] da jr nicht trawrig seid wie die anderen, die keine hoffnung haben: Der Gebrauch der Heiligen Schrift in Leichenpredigten der Wittenberger Reformation (1560–1600),” in *Leichenpredigten als Medien der Erinnerungskultur im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Eva-Maria Dickhaut (Stuttgart: 2014), 1–25.

79 Martin Luther, “Zwo Predigt uber der Leiche des Churfürsten Herzog Johans zu Sachsen, 1532,” in *D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe* [hereafter, *WA*], 128 vols (Weimar: 1883–1929), vol. 36, 237–70. See also Volker Leppin, “Schmerz und Trost: Beobachtungen zu Luthers Umgang mit dem Tod,” in *Luthers Tod: Ereignis und Wirkung*, ed. Armin Kohnle (Leipzig: 2019), 49–68.

80 For more on the broader topic of consolation, see Ronald K. Rittgers, “The Age of Reform as an Age of Consolation,” *Church History* 86/3 (2017), 607–42. For more on the genre of funeral sermons see Forschungsstelle für Personalschriften (<http://www.personalschriften.de/leichenpredigten.html> last accessed 28/6/2020).

sermons to instruct the living on how to live and die well, drawing attention to the dangers of sin and ungodly lifestyles, whilst simultaneously serving to comfort listeners in their time of grief. The findings presented here support both Ulrike Ludwig's and Alexander Kästner's suggestion that funeral sermons contributed to the abundance of literature focusing on the *ars moriendi*, or the art of dying, while focusing attention also on how the individual can live well.⁸¹ Further, this chapter will argue that the genre of funeral sermons reflects shifts in the broader cultural landscape while recognising also that they were shaped by local religious climates. In so doing, the findings resonate with those of Larissa Taylor, who argues that funeral sermons delivered in 16th-century France were "an unsurpassed vehicle for religious propaganda," noting that they could be "adaptable to the needs of a preacher."⁸²

1 Dying, Death, and Grief

Research into popular religion has demonstrated the sustained engagement between the realms of the living and the dead in late medieval and early modern Europe: the saints in heaven interceded for the living, while the living interceded for those souls languishing in purgatory, accruing merit to assist their own journey towards heaven.⁸³ The Protestant Reformation first challenged and subsequently transformed the concept and understanding of death.⁸⁴ As well as reforming the rituals surrounding death, the possible destinations of one's spiritual journey were reduced to two: heaven and hell, with the concept of purgatory being denied by Protestant theologians. This change was not immediate – in his Ninety-five Theses, Luther had retained the notion of

81 Ulrike Ludwig, "Erinnerungsstrategien in Zeiten des Wandels: Zur Bedeutung der Reformation als Generationserfahrung im Spiegel sächsischer Leichenpredigten für adlige Beamte," *A/R* 104/1 (2013), 158–84, on 161–2; Alexander Kästner, "Die Ungewissheit überschreiten: Erzählmuster und Auslegungen unverhoffter Todesfälle in Leichenpredigten," in *Leichenpredigten als Medien der Erinnerungskultur im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Eva-Maria Dickhaut (Stuttgart: 2014), 147–72, on 153–4.

82 Larissa Juliet Taylor, "Funeral Sermons and Orations as Religious Propaganda in Sixteenth-Century France," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 224–39, on 225.

83 Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, "Introduction," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: 2000), 1–16, on 4.

84 See Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (Houndmills: 2000).

purgatory but in 1530 he denied its existence altogether arguing it lacked scriptural justification and it was incompatible with the doctrine of justification by faith alone. By extension, the effectiveness of indulgences in aiding the souls languishing in purgatory was challenged, nullifying the practice of masses for the dead.⁸⁵ Scholars such as Anna Linton have explored how the transformations wrought by the Protestant Reformation impacted early modern expressions of emotion and displays of feeling, noting that although reformers recognised the sorrow that accompanied the death of a loved one, they admonished the faithful to grieve in moderation and instead sought to encourage the individual to prepare for their own death.⁸⁶ Indeed, Albrecht Classen has commented that a chief purpose of Lutheran funeral sermons was to document that the individual had died a good Christian death which indicated that they had led a good Christian life and Kästner notes that Künzelsau pastor Michael Baumann's volume of funeral sermons published in 1659 focused on the uncertainty of death as an occasion to advocate leading a pious life and warning of the dangers of sin.⁸⁷

Protestant church orders published across the Holy Roman Empire echoed these objectives.⁸⁸ For instance, the Lutheran Elector Ludwig VI's church order, published in the Palatinate in 1577, included four exemplar funeral sermons – two designed for elderly parishioners, one for a child, and a final shorter text to be used “where you do not have much time.”⁸⁹ Each sermon imparted the same

85 Martin Luther, *Ein widderauff vom Fegfeuer* (Wittenberg: 1530), WA, vol. 30 II, 360–90.

86 Anna Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement in Early Modern Lutheran Literature* (Oxford: 2008), 8.

87 Albrecht Classen, “Die Darstellung von Frauen in Leichenpredigten der Frühen Neuzeit: Lebensverhältnisse, Bildungsstand, Religiosität, Arbeitsbereiche,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 108 (2000), 291–318, on 292; Kästner, “Die Ungewissheit überschreiten,” 155–6.

88 Church orders were drawn up by theologians who aimed to encourage the reform of worship, doctrine and education. Often commissioned by the local secular ruler or city council, church orders included varying degrees of instruction on the many duties and occasions that pastors would be required to undertake and participate in on a regular basis, including baptisms, weddings, holy day services, and funerals. See also *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, eds Emil Sehling, Eike Wolgast, and Gottfried Seebaß (Tübingen, 1904–17); Robert Kolb, “Orders for Burial in the Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg Circle,” in *Gute Ordnung: Ordnungsmodelle und Ordnungsvorstellungen in der Reformationszeit*, eds Irene Dingel and Armin Kohnle (Leipzig: 2014), 257–79.

89 Ludwig VI, *Kirchenordnung, Wie es mit der Christlichen Lehre / Administrierung der heiligen Sacramenten und Ceremonien / in des Durchleuchtigste / Hochgebornen Fürsten unnd Herren / Herrn Ludwigen Pfalzgrauen bey Rhein / des heiligen Römischen Reichs Ertztruchsässen vnd Churfürsten Hertzogen in Bayern / ic. Chur: und Fürstenthumb gehalten werden soll* (Heidelberg: 1577), 98a.

lesson: parishioners were advised to “stay in constant readiness” for death, a status achieved if they “withdraw from sin, grow in the faith of Jesus Christ, and lead an unspotted life.”⁹⁰ They were encouraged “not to despair” but to take comfort in the life and death of Christ.⁹¹ A woodcut appearing on the title page of the printed funeral sermon of the ex-soldier and minor noble Christoph Pfinzing of Hefenfeld in 1629 visualised the impending nature of death: an hourglass adorned with wings is placed beside a human skull and wilting flowers.⁹² Reminiscent of the works of the artist Albrecht Dürer produced over a century earlier, this image serves to remind readers that life on earth is fleeting and that the summons of death is but a matter of time. In conjunction with the Protestant rejection of intercessory abilities on behalf of the dead, the focus of funeral sermons was centred on encouraging the living to lead holy lives and to be ever ready to meet death. A funeral sermon delivered in Heidelberg in 1661 warned against being unconcerned about illness and dying, accusing such people of having made “a covenant with God” rather than looking to improve themselves, and warning that they should take note of the signs of God’s anger.⁹³

Despite the theological challenges to the concept of death and the after-life, Protestants certainly recognised that during times of grief and sadness, parishioners sought comfort and needed guidance. While Susan Karant-Nunn has argued that Protestants perceived grieving as exposing “a human will that struggled against the divine plan,” research into funeral sermons has demonstrated that it was accepted that the living would grieve for their departed loved ones: Claudia Jarzebowski’s analysis of funeral sermons delivered for children has revealed the depth of parental love, thereby challenging suggestions that emotions were internalised during the early modern period, and Sarah Lehmann’s work on 17th-century Catholic and Lutheran funeral sermons demonstrates that both faiths recognised the need to provide consolation to gathered mourners.⁹⁴ Indeed, Luther did not admonish those who wept at funerals and

90 Ludwig VI, *Kirchenordnung*, 98a; 95a.

91 Ludwig VI, *Kirchenordnung*, 93.

92 Sigismund Faber, *Christliche und Einfältige Leichpredigt bei Adelicher Leichbegängnuß / Deß Edlen unnd Ehrvesten Herrn Christoff Pfinzings von Henfenfeld seliger Gedachtnuß* (Nuremberg: 1629), title page.

93 Johann Jakob Elser, *Christliche Leich-Predigt Von aller Menschen Hinfelligkeit und Sterblichkeit. Gehalten den 25. Februar. Ann 1661. zu Heidelberg / in der Kirchen zu S. Peter / Bei Christlicher und ansehnlicher Bestattung Des Wohl Edel-Gebornen und Besten Jungern Ludwig Friderich Effingers von Wildegt / Herren zu Wildenstein* (Heidelberg: 1661), Aii.

94 Susan C. Karant-Nunn, “‘Christians’ Mourning and Lament Should not Be Like the Heathens’: The Suppression of Religious Emotion in the Reformation,” in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, eds John M. Headley,

in the 17th century preachers sought to comfort the bereaved, with Hartmann Creidius commenting in his funeral sermon for the Augsburg merchant Marx Hueber in 1652 that “nobody will blame us [if] we cry and are sad.”⁹⁵ Similarly, Calvinist funeral sermons acknowledged the grief felt by loved ones: Daniel Tossanus’s funeral sermon for the Calvinist Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate, delivered in 1576, commented on the “sorrow and sadness” of the living.⁹⁶ Church orders encouraged pastors to sympathise with their grieving parishioners upon the death of loved ones, with some ordinances having entire sections devoted to “Comfort against Disgrace (*Schande*) and Death.”⁹⁷

While recognising the natural sadness that accompanies death, there were, of course, differences between Catholic and Protestant processes of dying and the subsequent funeral.⁹⁸ Lutheran church orders sought to remove “papist” superstitions from the funeral service, and the church order published in Leipzig in 1581 demanded that “obdurate papist folk who fall and die without penitence shall be separated from the Christian funeral.”⁹⁹ Moreover, at the moment of death, Lutheran parishioners could be supported by friends and family gathered at their bedsides, but two particularly significant departures from the

Hans J. Hilderbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot: 2004), 107–30, on 125; Claudia Jarzebowski, *Kindheit und Emotion: Kinder und ihre Lebenswelten in der europäischen Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2018), especially chapter 3; Sarah Lehmann, *Jrdische Pilgrimschafft und Himmlische Burgerschaft: Leid und Trost in frühneuzeitlichen Leichenpredigten* (Göttingen: 2019).

95 Hartmann Creidius, *Christliche Leichpredigt Auß dem 11. 12. 13. 14. Verß. Deß Gebetts Manassis. Bei ansehnlicher unnd Volckreicher Bestattung deß weiland Ehrnvesten und Wolfürnemmen herren Marx Huebern / Gewesenen Kauff: und Handelsmanns in Augspurg seel angedenckens* (Augsburg: 1652), 4.

96 Daniel Tossanus, *Leichpredig / So zu Begrebnuss des Durchleuchtigsten / Hochgebornen Fürsten und Herrn / Herrn Friderichen / diß Namens des dritten / Pfalzgrauen bei Rhein / Herzogs in Baiern / des Hei. Rom. Reichs Erztruchsäß und Churfürstens / ic. ist gehalten worden / Durch ihrer Churf. G. Hochseligster gedechtnuß Hoffpredigern / M. Danieleum Tossanum / den 12. Tag des Monats Novembris. Anno 1576* (Heidelberg: 1576), ii.

97 *Kirchen Ordnung: Wie sich die Pfarherrn und Seelsorger in irem beruff mit leren und predigen / allerley Ceremonien und guter Christlicher Disciplin unnd Kirchenzucht halten sollen: Für die Kirchen inn dem Fürstenthumb Hessen: Aus der Aposteln / irer Nachfolger und anderen alten Christlicher reiner Lehrer schrifftten gestellet* (Marburg: 1566), CLXXXXA–CLXXXIIIA.

98 For a comparison of Catholic and Protestant funeral sermons, see Sarah Lehmann, “Wir haben hier keine bleibende Stadt: Leid und Trost in Leichenpredigten über den Hebräerbrief,” *Daphnis* 45 (2017), 156–200.

99 *Kirchen Ordnung / Wie es in Religions sachen / mit der seligmachenden Lehr des heiligen Göttlichen worts / Christlicher administration der hochwürdigen Sacramenten / und allerlei denselben anhängenden / auch sonst zu dem heiligen Predigamt gehörigen löblichen und heilsamen Ceremonien / In den Graffschafften Hoya und Bruichausen / einmütiglich gehalten werden sol* (Leipzig: 1581), 144.

Catholic tradition would be apparent. Firstly, the sacrament of extreme unction was (usually) prohibited and, secondly, the final journey to be made by the individual was to be undertaken alone – the soul would either enter heaven immediately upon death or be cast down to hell.¹⁰⁰ It was not possible for the living to intercede on behalf of the deceased and, as Luther had written in 1522:

we are all summoned to death, and no one will die for another. But everyone alone must fight his own battle with death by himself. We can scream into ears, but everyone must himself be prepared for the time of death: I will not be with you then, nor you with me.¹⁰¹

Evidently, the fate of the deceased was out of the hands of the living but the bereaved still had the opportunity to improve their lives and prepare themselves for the inevitable death that was to come. The final moments of the dying person would not be without succour though: the opening prayer at the funeral of Christoph Pfinzing acknowledged that God “will comfort us poor sinners in our final sobbing.”¹⁰²

Research has recognised the multifunctional purposes of funeral sermons. They served to construct official memories of the deceased; they supported dynastic objectives of ruling families; and they provided an opportunity to educate the gathered mourners on scriptural messages.¹⁰³ As Ulrike Ludwig has noted, Protestant funeral sermons were not intended only to remember the deceased but they served as forms of edification for their listeners and, when

100 The moment of death has been recognised as a threshold moment for individuals as opposed to the end of one's life. This view remained largely unchanged until the 18th century: Hillard von Thiessen, “Das Sterbebett als normative Schwelle: Der Mensch in der Frühen Neuzeit zwischen irdischer Normenkonkurrenz und göttlichem Gericht,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 295/3 (2012), 625–59, on 627–8.

101 “Wir seint allsampt zu dem tod gefodert und wirt keyner den andern storben. Sonder ein yglicher in eygner person für sich mit dem todt kempffen. In die oren künden wir voll schreyen. Aber ein yglicher muß für sich selber geschickt sein in der zeyt des todts: ich würd den nit bey dir sein noch du bey mir”: Martin Luther, ‘Invocavit Sermon’, 1522, in *WA*, vol. 10:3, 1–2.

102 Faber, *Christliche und Einfältige Leichpredigt bei Adelicher Leichbegängnuß*, Aii.

103 See Sivert Angel, *The Confessionalist Homiletics of Lucas Osiander (1534–1604): A Study of a South-German Lutheran Preacher in the Age of Confessionalization* (Tübingen: 2014), esp. 31–9 and chapter 3; Ludwig, “Erinnerungsstrategien in Zeiten des Wandels”; Andrew L. Thomas, “Wittelsbachs, Habsburgs, and Hohenzollerns: Gender, Kinship, and Confession in the Funeral Literature for Susanna of Bavaria,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 48 (2017), 131–44; Magdalena Schlosser, *Leichenpredigten des Barock als Forschungsgegenstand* (Mainz: 2016); Frank Alexander Kurzmann, *Die Rede vom Jüngsten Gericht in den Konfessionen der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2019), esp. 135–45.

published, their readers, although, of course, a printed sermon may have been changed from the version that was delivered orally.¹⁰⁴ Much focus has been placed on the biographical details included in funeral sermons, as Jacqueline Eales has shown for England, above.¹⁰⁵ Cornelia Niekus Moore's study of Lutheran funeral sermons, for instance, focuses on their biographical content, suggesting that sermons could reflect changes in the political landscape, such as the unrest in Brunswick in 1602–1604, and Sven Tode has demonstrated that the details provided in funeral sermons can tell us much about the nature of early modern education, including schooling and intellectual networks.¹⁰⁶ Further, Kalina Mróz-Jablecka notes that funeral sermons can reveal information on the upbringing, education and status of women in early modern Europe, and Moore notes that the bibliographies provided in some sermons can tell us about the devotional reading patterns of women, as well as men.¹⁰⁷

With regards to the broader genre of sermons, scholars have recognised the role they played in the creation of confessional identities and the shaping of collective memory. Ludwig notes that though funeral sermons served as a way for the family to remember the deceased, their subsequent publication demonstrates that they were intended for a much wider audience.¹⁰⁸ Irene Dingel has suggested that broader political considerations meant that funeral sermons preached and published in Silesia tended not to reveal the beliefs of noble families who had adopted the Reformed faith.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Nicholas Must argues that Huguenot sermons preached in 17th-century France

104 Ludwig, "Erinnerungsstrategien in Zeiten des Wandels," 3.

105 Rudolf Lenz, *Leichenpredigten als Quelle historischer Wissenschaften* vols 1–3 (Cologne: 1975–84).

106 Cornelia Niekus Moore, *Patterned Lives: The Funeral Biography in Early Modern Germany* (Wiesbaden: 2006), esp. chapter 4; Sven Tode, "Verkannte Quellen: Leichenpredigten als Analysegrundlage der Bildungs-und-Sozialgeschichte," in *Konfession, Migration und Elitenbildung: Studien zur Theologenausbildung des 16. Jahrhunderts*, eds Herman J. Selderhuis and Markus Wriedt (Leiden: 2007), 209–30.

107 Kalina Mróz-Jablecka, "Sibylla Schwarz in der Leichenpredigt von Christoph Hagen: Die Lebenswelt der gelehrten Jungfrau aus der Greifswalder Stadtelite – ein Vergleich mit Breslau," *Daphnis* 44 (2016), 223–40; Cornelia Niekus Moore, "The Quest for Consolation and Amusement: Reading Habits of German Women in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Graph of Sex and the German Text: Gendered Culture in Early Modern Germany 1500–1700*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Amsterdam: 1994), 247–68; see also Classen, "Die Darstellung von Frauen in Leichenpredigten der Frühen Neuzeit."

108 Ludwig, "Erinnerungsstrategien in Zeiten des Wandels," 3.

109 Irene Dingel, "Spuren reformierter Konfessionalität in Leichenpredigten auf Angehörige des schlesischen Adels," in *Die Reformierten in Schlesien: Vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Altpreußischen Union von 1817*, eds Joachim Bahlcke and Irene Dingel (Göttingen: 2016), 15–30, on 19.

were pivotal in the creation of a Reformed identity, and Sabine Holtz suggests that funeral sermons delivered in 18th-century Augsburg “served to strengthen confessional identity.”¹¹⁰ However, part of a Lutheran or Reformed identity rested on a sound understanding of salvation through faith alone and the correct preparation for death. Thus, while recognising the sorrow of those who grieved for their deceased loved one, a further purpose of funeral sermons sought to instruct on the dangers of sin and the transient nature of life. By way of reinforcement, a stark warning issued by Duke Julius of Brunswick-Lüneburg in his 1569 church order announced that those who died unrepentant after a life filled with “impudent sin” should not be buried in the same way as good Christians, that is, without “processions, singing and other Christian ceremonies.”¹¹¹

Funeral sermons formed part of the corpus of pastoral and educational measures adopted by Protestants over the course of the 16th century. Many of these sermons drew on themes of obedience and discipline, although Robert Kolb and Mary Haemig have cautioned against viewing sermons only in this light, noting instead that “Luther counted as the measure of his success his cultivation of the hearers’ believing, praying, their ability to suffer and preparedness to die in faith.”¹¹² Funeral sermons could be published as stand-alone texts or in collections. Johann Spangenberg, for instance, published a collection of 15 funeral sermons in 1545 intended to aid fellow Lutheran pastors who lacked experience or training in preaching of pastoral care.¹¹³ In comparison to Lutheran funeral sermons, those produced by Reformed Protestants are far fewer in number. Amy Nelson Burnett’s study of Johann Brandmüller’s collection of funeral sermons notes that Reformed preachers tended to publish their funeral sermons as Latin homilies that “functioned as commentaries on the text of scripture and were intended primarily for professional use by the clergy.”¹¹⁴

110 Nicholas Must, *Preaching a Dual Identity: Huguenot Sermons and the Shaping of Confessional Identity, 1629–1685* (Leiden: 2017); Sabine Holtz, “On Sermons and Daily Life,” in *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long 18th Century*, ed. Joris van Eijnatten (Leiden: 2008), 263–312, on 305.

111 *Kirchenordnung Unnser von Gottes Genaden / Julij / Hertzogen zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg / ic. Wie es mit Lehr und Ceremonien unsers Fürstenthumbs Braunschweig / Wolffebüttlichen Theils / Auch derselben Kirchen anhangenden sachen und verrichtungen / hinfurt (vermittelst Göttlicher Gnaden) gehalten werden sol* (Wolffenbüttel: 1569), 129.

112 Mary Jane Haemig and Robert Kolb, “Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits in the Age of Confessionalization,” in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, ed. Robert Kolb (Leiden: 2008), 117–57, on 122.

113 Johann Spangenberg, *Funffzehen Leichprediget / So man bey dem Begrebnis der verstorbenen / jnn Christlicher Gemein thun mag* (Wittenberg: 1545).

114 Amy Nelson Burnet, “‘To Oblige my Brethren’: The Reformed Funeral Sermons of Johann Brandmüller,” *SCJ* 36/1 (2005), 37–54, on 41.

Nonetheless, there are examples of Reformed funeral sermons printed in the vernacular, including the sermon delivered by Daniel Tossanus on the death of the Reformed Elector Frederick III of the Palatine in 1576 and the sermon delivered by Melchior Anger at the funeral of Johan Casimir, administrator of the Palatinate, in 1592.¹¹⁵

As a genre, Protestant funeral sermons evolved over time, both in terms of content and length. By the end of the 17th century, Lutheran funeral sermons had come to contain significant biographical comments and had grown in length from 15 or so minutes to 2 or 3 hours.¹¹⁶ Despite this evolution, key features remained constant: the importance of preparing for death whilst alive; the significance of sin and forgiveness in our daily lives; and the hope of eternal salvation achieved through faith in Jesus Christ. The following case studies seek to chart the development of Lutheran and Calvinist funeral sermons across the Holy Roman Empire in the 16th and 17th century, illustrating the continuities and changes in content and tone.

2 Lutheran Sermons

At the turn of the 16th century, Wittenberg was the capital of Electoral Saxony. Despite its status, the city was small, with a mere ca. 2000 inhabitants: the Catholic priest and early opponent of Martin Luther, Johannes Cochlaeus, described it as “a miserable, poor, dirty village ... it is not worthy to be called a town of Germany,” and upon his arrival at the university in 1508 as professor of theology, Luther had considered it to be “on the edge of civilization.”¹¹⁷ Yet, after the onset of the Reformation, Wittenberg became an important centre of printing and learning, with the university soon becoming one of the most popular in Germany.¹¹⁸ Wittenberg proved fertile for reform and Luther combined his literary prowess

115 Tossanus, *Leichpredig*; Melchior Anger, *Exequiae Casimirianae. Beschreibung des todtlichen Abgangs und Begrebnus / des Durchleuchtigsten / Hochgebornen Fürsten und Herren / Herren Johans Casimiri / Pfalzgraffen bei Rhein / Vormunden und Administratoren der Churfürstlichen Pfalz / Herzogen in Baiern / etc. Christlichster gedechtnuß* (Heidelberg: 1592).

116 Haemig and Kolb, “Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits,” 132.

117 Helmar Junghans, “Luther’s Wittenberg,” trans. Katharina Gustavs in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald M. McKim (Cambridge: 2003), 20–38, on 21–23; Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe – and Started the Protestant Reformation* (New York: 2015), 7–8.

118 Junghans, “Luther’s Wittenberg,” 27; Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, especially 11. For the spread of the early Reformation in Saxony, see Thomas Kaufmann, *Der Anfang der*

with regular preaching and lecturing in order to aid religious change.¹¹⁹ Though Luther's teachings were to spread far beyond Wittenberg, the city remained his base until his death in 1546. Thereafter, the Reformation continued in Wittenberg, with the university largely remaining a "stronghold of Luther's theology."¹²⁰

Luther delivered four funeral sermons over his career, two for the funeral of Elector Frederick the Wise (1525) and two for that of the Elector's brother and successor, John the Steadfast (1532).¹²¹ In his survey of 16th- and 17th-century funeral sermons, Eberhard Winkler commented that those delivered by Luther rejected the concept of intercession for the dead and focused on encouraging the living to improve their lives.¹²² Luther's funeral sermons sought to praise God, and to provide instruction and consolation to his listeners.¹²³ In his funeral sermon for Elector John of Saxony, delivered in 1532, Luther sought to comfort the gathered audience, teaching that death is but a sleep and, significantly, that at the moment of death, one's thoughts should not be on "how pious we are."¹²⁴ Rather, the individual should remember that Christ died for them and that they will be saved by God in turn.¹²⁵ In concluding his sermon, Luther encouraged his listeners to "humble yourself and improve your life, so that you, like him [the Elector], may be among those who suffer and die with Christ."¹²⁶

Similar messages can be seen in later Lutheran funeral sermons delivered across Germany. For instance, in 1554, Georg Major delivered the funeral sermon for Prince George of Anhalt. This sermon praised the Prince far more than Luther had commended the Saxon Dukes, but key themes from Luther's sermons remained. The audience was reminded of the saving power of God for those who believed in his Word.¹²⁷ Major taught that "though, because of

Reformation: Studien zue Kontextualität der Theologie, Publizistik und Inszenierung Luthers und der reformatorischen Bewegung (Tübingen: 2012).

119 In a letter of 1518, Luther wrote "each evening I expound to children and ordinary folk the Commandments and the Lord's Prayer": cited in Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 118.

120 Junghans, "Luther's Wittenberg," 33.

121 For more on the sermons Luther preached for the funeral of Elector John see Neil R. LeRoux, *Martin Luther as Comforter: Writings on Death* (Leiden: 2007), esp. chapter 4.

122 Eberhard Winkler, *Die Leichenpredigt im deutschen Luthertum bis Spener* (Munich: 1967), 30–1.

123 Winkler, *Die Leichenpredigt*, 31.

124 WA, vol. 37, 252.

125 WA, vol. 37, 252.

126 WA, vol. 37, 254.

127 Georg Maior, *Eine Predig über der Leich des Hochwirdigen / Durchlauchten und Hochgebornen Fürsten und Herrn / Herrn Georgen / Fürsten zu Anhalt / Grauen zu Ascanien / Herrn zu zerbst und Berneburg / Thumprobts zu Magdeburg und Meissen / hochloblicher und seliger gedechnis / den 19. Octob. Anno 1553. zu Dessaw* (Wittenberg: 1554), A4.

sin the body must die, decay and rot, the best part of the body however lives, namely the Soul, which is carried and preserved in the hands, arms and bosom of the Lord Christ.”¹²⁸ With regards to sin, Major explained that it is “the cause of all human suffering” but teaches that those who

pray and confess to God the Lord, do penance, improve themselves, and believe that God will forgive their misdeeds, their sins, through the Lord Christ, and that he takes them again to grace, [as] his children and heirs ... [are] not without comfort.¹²⁹

For both Luther and Major, sin is unavoidable but trust in God’s Word and the sacrifice of Christ serve to redeem the faithful. Similarly, Georg Miller’s funeral sermon for the Wittenberg painter Lucas Cranach the Younger (1586) asked what the difference was “between Christians and all the other people on earth,” answering that “Christians, who [have] true faith ... do not see death,” while the non-believers “lie in hell.”¹³⁰ By way of encouragement to lead a good life, in 1592 Jodocus Preisenstein began his funeral sermon for Ludwig Rabus, a Lutheran minister, by drawing on 2 Timothy: 7–8:

I have fought a good fight. I have completed the race. I have kept faith. From now on the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. Not only to me, but to all who crave His appearance.¹³¹

Justification by faith alone underpins the theology of these sermons and each preacher eulogised the dead by connecting their piety and certainty of eternal life with their sustained belief in God’s Word.

However, not all Lutheran funeral sermons followed this pattern. As the nature of the Reformation varied from city to city and town to town, preachers could respond directly to local religious tensions and concerns, or express differing interpretations of the evangelical teachings. Andreas Osiander (1498–1552), the leading evangelical reformer in the imperial city of Nuremberg, for

¹²⁸ Maior, *Eine Predig*, A4.

¹²⁹ Maior, *Eine Predig*, Ciii–Ciiia.

¹³⁰ Georg Miller, *Christliche Predigt / Bey der trawrigen/ Leich vnd Begrebnus / des weiland / Ehrnuesten vnd Fürnemen Herren Lucas Cranachs, gewesenen Bürgermeisters / in der weitherhumbten Stad Wittenberg* (Wittenberg: 1586), Aiiia.

¹³¹ Jodocus Preisenstein, *Ein Christliche Leichpredig / Bei der Leiche und Begrebnuß / des Ehrwürdigen und Hochgelehrten /Herrn Ludovici Rabt / der Heiligen Schrifft Doctori / Pastorn, und Superintendenten, &c* (Tübingen: 1593), Aii.

instance, sought to promote the role of the clergy in the individual's journey towards salvation. Osiander spent most of his career in Nuremberg and he devoted his time there to protecting clerical authority from magisterial interference.¹³² In his catechism, sermons, and broader activities, Osiander emphasised the need for sinners to seek forgiveness from pastors. Osiander delivered one funeral sermon over the course of his career, although he preached on the topic of death more broadly. The sermon was delivered at the funeral of Susanna of Bavaria in 1543 after Osiander had received a specific request from her husband, the Count Palatine Ottheinrich of Neuburg, to write her funeral sermon. Andrew L. Thomas has analysed this sermon in some depth, noting that Osiander focused on the denouncement of purgatory and provided only a "rather generic" account of Susanna's personal life.¹³³ Osiander's lengthy and emphatic rejection of purgatory was influenced by Susanna's Catholic faith and reflects the confessional division between the Catholic and Lutheran branches of the Wittelsbach dynasty. In the sermon, Osiander stressed that those who have faith in God's Word will be saved and between the moment of death and the future resurrection, faithful individuals sleep in "peace and quiet."¹³⁴ He emphasised that Christ's death served to forgive us our sins, and that believing in the existence of purgatory undermined Christ's redeeming sacrifice.

However, another aspect of Osiander's funeral sermon for Susanna deserves greater attention: his interpretation of justification. Thomas argues persuasively that "gendered expectations of female piety could transcend confessional boundaries" and suggests that Susanna's acts of charity and self-sacrifice enabled Osiander to "envision [her] soul in a state of grace."¹³⁵ Thomas does not consider in depth Osiander's understanding of justification as presented in Susanna's funeral sermon, but doing so reveals traces of a theological splintering that culminated in a bitter battle between Osiander and fellow Lutherans in the 1550s with both sides arguing that they adhered

132 For the Reformation in Nuremberg see Guy Fitch Lytle, "The Renaissance, the Reformation and the City of Nuremberg," in *Nuremberg: A Renaissance City 1500–1618*, ed. Jeffrey Chipps Smith (Austin: 1983), 17–22; Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA: 2004); P.J. Broadhead, "Public Worship, Liturgy and the Introduction of the Lutheran Reformation in the Territorial Lands of Nuremberg," *EHR* 120 (2005), 277–302.

133 Thomas, "Wittelsbachs, Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns," 137.

134 Andreas Osiander, "Leichenpredigt für Pfalzgräfin Susanna" (1543), in *Andreas Osiander d.A., Gesamtausgabe* [hereafter, *AOGA*], eds Gerhard Müller and Gottfried Seebaß, 10 vols. (Gütersloh: 1975–1997), 8: *Schriften und Briefe April 1543 bis Ende 1548*, 60–82.

135 Thomas, "Wittelsbachs, Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns," 140.

to Luther's theology.¹³⁶ Essentially, Osiander believed that justification comprised two parts: forgiveness, and reconciliation, which are achieved through the indwelling of Christ's divine nature. Forgiveness alone did not represent justification, rather, we are justified by Christ's essential righteousness which dwells within us through the union with Christ.¹³⁷ This was in opposition to Philip Melancthon who argued that righteousness was forensically attributed.¹³⁸ In his 1550 defence of justification, Osiander presented justification as bringing the dead back to life. This was "a movement of the spirit, which God awakens in our hearts through the words of the preachers and His Holy Spirit."¹³⁹ Osiander's views on justification were rejected by fellow Lutherans to whom he protested that he had taught the same thing for thirty years without causing a controversy.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, the funeral sermon for Susanna supports Osiander's claim. In this, Osiander taught that becoming justified does not mean one "has only forgiveness of sin, but [one] is cleansed of sin."¹⁴¹ Through baptism, Osiander explained, a Christian is "new born, created after God, becomes a temple of God, a member of Christ, and a child of God ... he is incorporated into Christ and Christ is in him."¹⁴² In rejecting purgatory, Osiander questions how a "Christian soul, in which Christ as true God, in his temple truly and really is present and lives, shall go into purgatory."¹⁴³ Osiander connected the indwelling of Christ in the individual with the process of justification, the point around which the later controversy surrounding Osiander's teachings centred. This example demonstrates that Lutheran funeral sermons did not follow a uniform doctrinal approach, illustrating divergence from Luther's teachings even during his lifetime, and shows that funeral sermons served to advocate aspects the individual pastor's interpretation of their faith.

Though Osiander expressed his views regarding justification in this funeral sermon preached in Neuburg in 1543, as well as in other sermons and

136 For a detailed consideration of the Osianderian Controversy, see Timothy Wengert, *Defending Faith: Lutheran Responses to Andreas Osiander's Doctrine of Justification, 1551–1559* (Tübingen: 2012).

137 Andreas Osiander, *Disputatio de justificatione* (Königsberg: 1550), esp. theses 76 and 77, Ciiia.

138 Wengert, *Defending Faith*, 13–14.

139 'Sed motum spirituale, quem Deus per uerbum praedicatum, et spiritum suum sanctum, in cordibus nostris excitat': Andreas Osiander, *Disputatio de justificatione* (Kaliningrad: 1550), Bii.

140 AOGA, 10: *September 1551 bis Oktober 1552 sowie Posthumes und Nachträge*, 426.

141 Osiander, "Leichenpredigt für Pfalzgräfin Susanna," cii.

142 Osiander, "Leichenpredigt für Pfalzgräfin Susanna," ciiib.

143 Osiander, "Leichenpredigt für Pfalzgräfin Susanna," ciiib.

catechetical material delivered to his Nuremberg parishioners, his influence in the city did not prove long-lasting.¹⁴⁴ This can be seen in Christoph Pfinzing's funeral sermon, delivered in the city in 1629. In this sermon, the pastor began by describing three mountains that must be overcome in an individual's life. The first of these was the "Mountain of Sin" which is overcome "with true penance and conversion of the heart ... and with faith in Christ."¹⁴⁵ The majority of the sermon focuses on sin and desire, whilst also denouncing Catholic beliefs in purgatory and limbo and exhorting – as Luther and Osiander had done almost a century earlier – that "death is the best doctor."¹⁴⁶ The pastor declared that God "lives in us by the grace of the Holy Spirit and Christ's will" but does not suggest that the indwelling nature of Christ contributes to salvation.¹⁴⁷ The final part of the sermon focused on Pfinzing, providing an overview of his life and achievements. The tone of the sermon is not without comfort, but it is far more admonitory than Luther's sermons had been and, in this, was more akin to Osiander's approach. In particular, the lengthy denouncement of Catholic doctrines and rejection of 'papist' beliefs takes much of the attention away from Pfinzing just as Osiander's dismissal of purgatory had taken attention away from Susanna.

Lutheran funeral sermons taught common messages regarding sin, but the process of justification was not presented consistently. This is significant: one of the key tenets of Lutheran doctrine – justification – was not delivered in a uniform manner across Lutheran Germany and its teaching was subject to the interpretation and beliefs of individual preachers. Studies have demonstrated that religious identities could be fluid across early modern Germany, but research in education and pedagogical texts tends to suggest that confessional documents were designed to encourage the formation of confessional or clerical identities that transcended geographic and chronological boundaries.¹⁴⁸ However, Osiander's parishioners, for instance, would have a different

144 For instance, see Andreas Osiander, *Catechismus oder Kinderpredig / Wie die in meiner gnedigen herrn / Margraven zu Brandeburg / un̄ eins Erbarñ Raths der stat Nürnberg oberkait un̄ gepieten / allent halbē gepredigt werdē/ Den Kindern un̄ jungen leutē zu sonderm nuz also in Schrifft verfaßt* (Nuremberg: 1533), 290.

145 Faber, *Christliche und Einfältige Leichpredigt bei Adelicher Leichbegängnuß*, 6.

146 Faber, *Christliche und Einfältige Leichpredigt bei Adelicher Leichbegängnuß*, 14. In the 1543 funeral sermon, Osiander declared that "The death of Christ is a satisfaction and medicine for sins": Osiander, *Leichenpredigt für Pfalzgräfin Susanna*, ci.

147 Faber, *Christliche und Einfältige Leichpredigt bei Adelicher Leichbegängnuß*, 8.

148 Bernd Moeller, "Was wurde in der Frühzeit des Reformation in den deutschen Städten gepredigt?" *AfR* 75 (1984), 176–93; Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (New York: 2010); John

understanding of justification than those of Melancthon, although both men saw themselves as adhering to Luther's teachings. The theological diversity presented in Lutheran funeral sermons calls into sharp focus the methodologies employed to gauge the development of confessional identities in early-modern Germany and suggests that differences in educational texts could have significant ramifications regarding the development of uniform religious identities across the Empire.

3 The Palatinate

The Palatinate was a tempestuous region in the 16th century. Charles Gunnoe Jr. has provided a comprehensive overview of the territory in the decades before the publication of the Reformed *Heidelberg Catechism* in 1563 and highlights the political expediency of the Palatine Electors remaining on good terms with the Habsburgs. Gunnoe comments that Lutheranism made deep inroads into the Palatinate in the 1520s, facilitating its formal acceptance in the mid-16th century.¹⁴⁹ The succession of Elector Frederick III in 1559 marked a political and religious turning point for the Palatinate. Sympathetic to Calvinism, Frederick encouraged the adoption of the Reformed faith, overseeing the publication of the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the introduction of a Reformed liturgy through his church order of 1563. However, upon his death in 1576, his Lutheran son, Ludwig, succeeded. He quarrelled with his Calvinist brother, Johan Casimir, over who would deliver their father's funeral sermon. Casimir was in favour of the Calvinist court preacher, Daniel Tossanus, while Ludwig wanted the Lutheran court preacher Johann Schechsius to deliver the sermon. In the end, the brothers agreed that both preachers could publish their funeral sermons – a compromise that reflected the negotiated Reformation in the Palatinate more broadly.¹⁵⁰ The delivery of a funeral sermon for the Calvinist

Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: 2010); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Reading Catechisms, Teaching Religion* (Leiden: 2016).

149 Charles D. Gunnoe Jr., "The Reformation of the Palatinate and the Origins of the Heidelberg Catechism, 1500–1562," in *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology*, ed. Lyle D. Bierma (Grand Rapids: 2005), 15–47, on 20. The infiltration of Lutheranism began in the 1520s and by 1558 there was a majority of Lutheran followers in the council at Amberg; Trevor Johnson, *Magistrates, Madonnas and Miracles: The Counter Reformation in the Upper Palatinate* (Farnham: 2009), 28–9.

150 Volker Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat: Regierung und Zentralbehörden der Kurpfalz, 1559–1619* (Stuttgart: 1970), 272. For more on the negotiated Reformation in the

Elector is noteworthy: Amy Nelson Burnett has commented that the Palatine was the only Reformed territory outside Basel where parishioners expected funeral sermons to be preached.¹⁵¹ Successive Palatine church orders, both Lutheran and Calvinist, permitted funeral sermons to be preached but decreed that they should not seek to intercede for the dead because they have “already without our wishes, desires, prayers, help and intervention, the peace of eternal blessed life.”¹⁵²

The preachers of Elector Frederick III’s funeral sermons took the opportunity to deliver messages that reflected their confessional and political persuasions. Tossanus declared that “everyone must acknowledge that there now exists in Heidelberg, and in the entire Palatinate, order, quietness, and a Christian-like state of affairs, very different from what it has been in past years” and he warned that God would punish the Palatinate should the religious policies of Frederick III be reversed.¹⁵³ The funeral sermon was fraught with warnings of divine wrath with comfort being offered to the righteous. Drawing on Isaiah 57:1, Tossanus explained that the death of the righteous is a “particular warning from God” and chastised those who did not recognise the Elector’s death as a sign of God’s anger, refusing to convert and to lead upright lives.¹⁵⁴ For the righteous who die, they “come to peace and quiet” and death is but a “gentle sleep.”¹⁵⁵

Perhaps by way of response to Tossanus’s warnings of divine punishment should Ludwig seek to return the Palatinate to the Lutheran confession, Schechsius opened his sermon with Kings 2:2, referring to David’s final instructions to his son, Solomon:

I am to go the way of all of the earth. So be comforted and be a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, that you walk in His ways and keep His customs, commandments, ordinances, and decrees, as is written in

Palatinate see: Ruth Atherton, “The Pursuit of Power: Death, Dying and the Quest for Social Control in the Palatinate, 1547–1610,” in *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation Europe*, eds Elizabeth C. Tingle and Jonathan Willis (Farnham: 2015), 25–48.

151 Nelson Burnett, “Reformed Funeral Sermons,” 42–3.

152 *Kirchen Ordnung. Wie es mit der Christenlichen Leere / heiligen Sacramenten / unnd Ceremonien / in des Durchleuchtigsten Hochgebornen Fürsten unnd Herren / Herrn Ottheinrichs / Pfalzgrauen bey Rhein / des Heiligen Römmischen Reichs Erzdruchsesssen unnd Churfürsten / Herzogen in Nidern uñ Obern Bairn ic. Chur und Fürstenthumben gehalten wirdt* (Neuburg/Donau: 1556), 67a.

153 Tossanus, *Leichpredig*, xiii.

154 Tossanus, *Leichpredig*, iiiii–vii.

155 Tossanus, *Leichpredig*, ii; xiii.

the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you turn.¹⁵⁶

This can be interpreted as encouragement for Ludwig to stand firm in his convictions. The first part of Schechsius's sermon consoled the mourners in their grief, reminding them of Frederick's piety and generosity, and confirming that the deceased Elector has "come to peace."¹⁵⁷ The pastor acknowledged that "death itself is caused by sin" but exhorted the parishioners to remember that Christ's death has "fully paid for our sin."¹⁵⁸ The sermon is comforting throughout, juxtaposing the fear of sin and death with the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus and God's boundless mercy. Both pastors sought to comfort the bereaved: Tossanus and Schechsius acknowledged the feelings of grief endured by the elector's friends, family and subjects and sought to offer comfort through teaching that he has "not died, but certainly lives before God's countenance."¹⁵⁹ However, there is a stark difference in the structure of their respective sermons and both preachers can be seen to have used the occasion to promote their religious objectives, essentially politicising their funeral sermons.

Despite Tossanus's warnings, Elector Ludwig indeed sought to return the Palatinate to Lutheranism, issuing a new church order and banning the *Heidelberg Catechism*. His brother, Casimir, followed in the faith of his father and welcomed exiled Calvinists to his territory. Upon Ludwig's death in 1583, Casimir acted as regent for his nephew, the future Elector Frederick IV. Under Casimir's administration, the Palatinate returned to the Reformed faith. After Casimir's death in 1592, Melchior Anger delivered a funeral sermon in which he taught that sin had caused God to be angry and that death is a deliverance from this anger: "the godless are present and live in the world afflicted with great punishment."¹⁶⁰ This echoed a similar theme to that of Tossanus's sermon for Frederick III and reflects Calvin's theology regarding death. In his *Institutes*, Calvin taught that

we shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows free from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illuminates God's grace by this contrast: that

156 Johann Schechsius, *Eine Christliche und einfältige Predigt, gehalten bei dem Begräbnis des ... Herrn Friedrichs, dieses Namens des III. Pfalzgrafen bei Rhein* (Heidelberg: 1576), vi.

157 Schechsius, *Eine Christliche*, x.

158 Schechsius, *Eine Christliche*, xiii.

159 Schechsius, *Eine Christliche*, x.

160 Anger, *Exequiae Casimirianae*, unpaginated.

he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others.¹⁶¹

In contrast, Schechsius's funeral sermon for Frederick III had consoled the parishioners through teaching that because the elector had lived in "proper true knowledge and confession of the only life of Prince Jesus Christ, our redeemer and saviour, and in undisputed faith in his hallowed blood and death ... he is asleep with the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁶² The difference between the funeral sermons delivered by Lutherans and Calvinists in the Palatinate is that the former sought to comfort through the doctrine of justification by faith alone, while those of Tossanus and Anger juxtaposed the release brought about by death with the sins and future punishment that is to be inflicted on the living. Essentially, for Anger and Tossanus, death was a form of election for the righteous.

In the 17th century, funeral sermons changed somewhat in the Palatinate. At the funeral of Lucretia Spanheim, wife of the theologian Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, in 1668, Johannes Salmuth delivered a sermon that was divided into the themes of sin and hope. The first half of the sermon emphasised the evil nature of humankind and our fall from God's grace. The second half focused on hope, declaring that "a hopeless life is a miserable and lifeless life ... hope is the believer's certainty and firm anchor in this life."¹⁶³ This sermon exhorted the faithful to place their hope in God and reminded them of his promise to save those that trust in his word. The theme of the sermon is Lutheran in content, reflecting the religious landscape in the Palatinate in the latter part of the 17th century, but its structure was reminiscent of the 16th century Reformed funeral sermons delivered in Heidelberg in that it began by focusing on the wretched condition of humanity before emphasising the hope of redemption through God's mercy.

4 Conclusion

Protestant funeral sermons remained popular until the mid-18th century after which their use declined.¹⁶⁴ Holtz suggests this was a result of the

161 John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil (Westminster: 1960), Book III, XXI.1.

162 Schechsius, *Eine Christliche*. ix.

163 Johannes Laurentius Salmuth, *Christliche Leich-Predigt | Von der Kinder Gottes in der Nichtigkeit dieses Lebens steiffer Hoffnung* (Heidelberg: 1668), 18.

164 Rudolf Mohr, "Das Ende der Leichenpredigten," in *Leichenpredigten als Quelle historische Wissenschaften: Personalschriftensymposium, Forschungsgegenstand Leichenpredigten*, ed. Rudolf Lenz (Marburg: 1984) III, 293–30.

Enlightenment and the accompanying rejection of devotional literature.¹⁶⁵ But for over two centuries, Protestant funeral sermons formed part of a corpus of literature that provides insight into the processes of dying and death, both of which were transformed after the Reformation. The sermons reflect the nature of the religious and political landscapes in which they were delivered and allow us to trace the contours of confessional developments across Germany. The focus of many of these sermons was not to eulogise the deceased but to encourage the living to improve their lives and look to their own journey towards salvation. While differences can be detected between Lutheran and Reformed funeral sermons, there are key similarities that transcend confessional division and, as with Lucretia Spanheim's funeral sermon, there could be a merging of structure and content between the faiths.¹⁶⁶ Further, grieving mourners were comforted but to differing extents. While Luther and, later, Schechsius framed their funeral sermons within the context of hope, the Calvinist Tossanus prefaced the theme of comfort with stark warnings of God's anger for those who refuse to improve their lives or seek to discontinue with Elector Frederick III's religious policies. In this, there are similarities with 18th-century funeral sermons delivered in bi-confessional Augsburg. Holtz notes that funeral sermons delivered here were polemical tools, designed as a "means of shoring up and defending one's confessional identity."¹⁶⁷ Far more research into the connections between funeral sermons and the development of confessional identities is needed for 16th- and 17th- century Germany, but this chapter has shown that theological interpretations and emphases articulated in the sermons reflects the fluid and evolving nature of religious change across the Empire. Preachers developed individual approaches to funeral sermons that reflected their specific experiences of the Reformation and distinct interpretations of a given confession.

165 Holtz, "On Sermons and Daily Life," 274.

166 Lehmann argues that there was a degree of interconfessionality between Lutheran and Catholic funeral sermons, particularly in their use of biblical examples relating to sorrow and efforts to console mourners: Lehmann, *Jrdische Pilgrimschafft und himmlische Burgerschafft*, 299.

167 Holtz, "On Sermons and Daily Life," 305.

Dramatizing and Celebrating Death in the Early-Modern Visual Arts: The Fortunes of the Post-Tridentine Iconography of Martyrdom

Ralph Dekoninck

In representing martyrdom and ecstasy, suffering and love, the art of the 17th century reached the depths of feeling; it remained only for it to show the anguish of death to have expressed all the extreme emotions of the soul.¹



This quotation from *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente*, published by Émile Mâle in 1932, a true milestone in the study of baroque art in its relation to religion, clearly links death to suffering and to love, a connection that constitutes a distinctive feature of the baroque period. Thanatos and Eros are joined together in a kind of theatricalization of the most extreme emotions. One work in particular epitomises this encounter between suffering and ecstasy: Bernini's famous *Lodovica Albertoni*, located in Rome in the Franciscan church of San Francesco a Ripa, the very site of this blessed woman's tomb.²

The dramatization of an agony we might call ecstatic results in an aesthetic of "sacred horror" (*sacer horror*), to employ an expression that was in use at the time, to denote a mixture of fascination and fear.³ This mixture characterises a certain experience of the sacred and of the manner in which death is imagined in the baroque period, as we will attempt to show in this chapter.

¹ Emile Mâle, *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente* (Paris: 1932), 203.

² See among other analyses of this famous sculpture: Giovanni Careri, *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion*, trans. Linda Lappin (Chicago: 1995), 51–86.

³ Ralph Dekoninck and Annick Delfosse, "Sacer horror: The Construction and Experience of the Sublime in the Jesuit Festivities of the Early Seventeenth-Century Southern Netherlands," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8/2 (2016), DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.9.



FIGURE 12.1 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Lodovica Albertoni*, 1674, Church of San Francesco a Ripa, Rome

SOURCE: © SAN FRANCESCO A RIPA, ROME

In the early modern period, when wars and major epidemics decimated the population, and religious conflicts, real civil wars, tore apart northern Europe in particular, death became an almost daily tragic spectacle.⁴ The bloody theatre of the wars of religion fuelled the imagination of artists, an imagination which found a parallel with both artistic and religious ideals that had become prominent since the beginning of the 16th century. It is this encounter between death experienced and death represented, or rather the way in which the latter transfigured the former, that I will examine here.

One area of exploration might have been that of the funerary arts and funeral ceremonies, whose splendour was taken to extremes in the 17th century. At that time, artists competed in inventiveness and ingenuity in staging death, and at the same time as celebrated those whose memory was deemed worthy of preservation. As has been clearly shown in relation to funeral

4 For a major contribution to the study of this topic see Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525–vers 1610* (Paris: 2005).

ceremonies, ephemeral art and the sumptuary display it deployed were an *arte guida* for all forms of artistic expression: they were a site of experimentation for many artists whose surviving works, like the numerous funerary monuments, appear to be only the tip of this immense iceberg of the culture of baroque spectacle.⁵ Whether lasting or ephemeral, funerary art celebrated both the triumph of death and the triumph of those who survive thanks to the arts. In a famous passage in his treatise on painting, at the beginning of the 15th century Leon Battista Alberti had praised this “divine force” of representation, which “not only makes absent men present, as friendship is said to do, but moreover makes the dead seem almost alive.”⁶ Within the perpetuation of this intrinsic link between the image and death, funerary art exploited its resurrectional power converted into commemorative strength that truly makes of the work of art a monument, that is a place of memory but also a place of political and religious investment that sought to inscribe the past in the present.

1 The Martyr: A Figure of Paradox

The subject of funerary art has already been widely explored in the historiography, to the extent of becoming, along with the theme of Vanity and its *memento mori*, one of the main entry points to the study of a type of macabre aesthetic peculiar to the baroque. As a result, I have chosen to examine another form of visual meditation on death, which is just as characteristic of the period as the changes in mortuary imaginary that we see in the visual arts and in other forms of artistic expression, such as literature, theatre, and music, discussed by Christina Welch in chapter 11 above.⁷ The form discussed here is the iconography of martyrdom, which at that time enjoyed remarkable success and which appears as a powerful indicator of contemporary religious ideals, while also

5 See two recent contributions to this field of inquiry: Minou Schraven, *Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy: The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Commemoration* (Farnham: 2014); Franck Lafage, *Le théâtre de la mort: Lecture politique de l'apparat funèbre dans l'Europe du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: 2012).

6 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting (De Pictura)*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven, CT: 1966), 2:63.

7 For the theatre in France see Christian Biet (ed.), *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants (fin XVIe-début XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: 2006); Christian Biet and Marie-Madeleine Fragonard (eds), *Tragédies et récits de martyres en France (fin XVIe-début XVIIe siècle)* (Paris: 2009).

revealing the other face, both violent and morbid, of a hedonist Renaissance and a vitalist baroque.⁸

The defining feature of the iconography of martyrdom is the close link between death and the violence and suffering which precede and lead to it. More so than death itself, it is the death throes which are highlighted, seeming to be a struggle not against death but for holy death and the salvation which is its outcome. In short, it is a matter of exalting a victory over death rather than a victory of death. Here, then, the macabre is no longer found in the corpse but in the torture of a body suspended between life and death. The figuration of martyrdom in effect captures a transitory state: not of an earthly life to an earthly death, but of an earthly death to a celestial life; a life for a death and a death for a life. This figuration seeks also to capture a series of paradoxes that are constitutive of martyrdom, beginning with that of victory in death. The power of the martyr is that of faith in opposition to political power. Martyrdom is born in effect from an action that has nothing of the heroic about it, at least nothing of combative heroism, since it is characterised by passivity and receptivity. Rather than being a lamb without self-awareness, a simple innocent victim which is sacrificed, martyrdom is driven by a desire that nevertheless cannot be suicidal, even if there might have been excesses of sacrificial enthusiasm. God's witness must be moved by divine Providence. But this accepted and unsought sacrifice becomes the ultimate act of heroism, the model *par excellence* of Christian courage. It is thus the values of religious patience and constancy that are required when confronted with those of political power and violence. From the ideal of physical power, we move to that of spiritual strength, a resigned and superhuman strength opposed to the animal weakness of the torturer, as it is showed by many paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries which contrast the bestiality of the executioners to the impassiveness of the martyr. From action, we move to passion, but a passion whose effects are deemed to be much deeper and much more enduring.

Furthermore, this inversion affects all actions and all roles: those who judge and condemn are judged and condemned by God. The guilty one becomes the victim and then the saint. The confession, in the sense of avowal, that is sought through torture, becomes the *confessio*, in the sense of the profession or

8 For a more general approach and a comparison between the Protestant and Catholic worlds: Peter Burschel, *Sterben und Unsterblichkeit: Zur Kultur des Martyriums in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2004); Carolin Behrmann, *Tyrann und Märtyrer: Bild und Ideengeschichte des Rechts um 1600* (Berlin: 2015); Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1585–1603* (Aldershot: 2003); Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: 2001).

proclamation of an unshakeable faith in God. Execution on a scaffold is transformed into sacrifice on an altar. Suffering is turned into victory, exemplary punishment into divine election, defeat into triumph, torture into apotheosis, scandal and horror into a spectacle of delights, arousing astonishment and *enthusiasm* in the etymological sense of divine possession. It is through this series of inversions and oppositions that holiness is revealed. As Frank Lestringant has pointed out, the privileged figure of speech in the poetics of the martyrs is the oxymoron, that is union of contraries.⁹

If the construction of this figure of the martyr, through hagiographical texts and martyrologies, but also through images, inevitably resonates with the very real violence perpetrated during the wars of religion or by the tortures inflicted on Christians in newly evangelised lands, it also testifies to a desire to give a meaning to this lived violence. This meaning works essentially through the conjunction between three dimensions closely linked to one another in the reaffirmation of Catholic ideals confronted with Protestant criticism: the dimensions of holiness, of relics, and of images. These three dimensions were examined together at the last session of the Council of Trent, the resulting decree bearing the explicit title of *On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images*.¹⁰ Now, the unprecedented promotion of the figure of the martyr contributed to link together these three dimensions. We might say that it was an attempt to re-establish the legitimacy of the image in the spectacle of sacrifice, and to build holiness on the testimony of the living image that is the martyr, an image revealed by suffering and death and which in turn engenders material relics and images.

2 The Return *ad fontes*

This promotion was, in addition, underpinned by the desire to (re)build a Christian history. When dogma was no longer sufficient in counteracting the adversary, who also sought to find legitimacy in the purity of the early times, the Catholic Church attempted to revitalise itself through contact with the early heroes of Christianity, the founders of a Church that gained its strength in the persecutions it had to endure.¹¹ “The blood of martyrs is the seed of

9 Frank Lestringant, *Lumière des martyrs : Essai sur le martyre au siècle des Réformes* (Paris: 2004), 11.

10 *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, eds Giuseppe Alberigo et al. (Bologna: 1991), 774–6.

11 Cf. the *Magdeburg Centuries* published by Lutheran scholars between 1559 and 1574 and covering the first 1300 years of the history of Christianity. The Catholic reply was the

Christians,” in Tertullian’s words.¹² Their death brings life and strength. It is this seminal death and its contagious power that are to be celebrated, by writing its history and even more by making it visible. The work of the historian and the work of the artist are in effect joined in the same exercise of testimony, i.e. in continuity with the original testimony of the earliest witnesses of the faith, in accordance with the very etymology of the word “martyr” (*martus* in Greek meaning “witness”). We must bear in mind that since Herodotus, the *histôr* has been a witness who tells what he has seen with his own eyes. He is an eye that writes and, in the present case, who proceeds to the “autopsy” (with the etymological meaning of “seeing for oneself”) of martyrdom, that is to say, one who supplies proof *de visu*.¹³ Now, as we will go on to see, the artist makes himself a historian by supplying, in a much more convincing and above all more persuasive manner, proof *via* the image.

The link to death is thus also a link to history, the history of a succession of martyrdoms, uninterrupted but of variable intensity (very strong in the early centuries of Christianity and then reactivated in the 16th century); that is to say, a history of sacrifices granted in imitation of an original and foundational sacrifice, that of Christ. The promotion of sacrificial suffering made it possible to reaffirm and consolidate the close link between the golden age of the primitive Church and that of a modern Church that also presented itself as involved in struggle, not against a dominant paganism but against heresies in Europe and polytheisms in the new lands undergoing evangelisation, lands which in turn produced their own share of new martyrs. We are dealing, then, with a combative Church which claimed to be reliving forms of persecution and for which holiness, born out of the trial of death, must be founded in that chain of imitations which is a chain of testimonies. In the eschatological perspective revived by the wars of religion, the present must nourish itself from a past in order to walk towards a future, that of the Kingdom of God. We may therefore speak of a regime of presentist historicity: the account of a past is given in the name of a present in which the cult of the dead assumes a ritualised form, that of the reiteration of an origin, of the celebration of a transcendent

Annales Ecclesiastici by Cesare Baronius (1588–1606) which retraces in 12 volumes the history of the first 12 centuries of Christianity.

- 12 *Sanguis martyrum, semen Christianorum*. Tertullian, *Apologeticus adversus gentes pro Christianis*, cap. L, PL I, 535 A.
- 13 Lestringant, *Lumière des martyrs*, 121–2. See also Carolin Behrmann and Elisabeth Friedl (eds), *Autopsia: Blut- und Augenzeugen. Extreme Bilder des christlichen Martyriums* (Munich: 2014).

permanence.¹⁴ The “remember you will die” (*memento mori*) of Christianised ancient ethics is thus complemented by a “remember those who have died” (*memento eorum qui mortui sunt*) in the propagation of faith, the *ars moriendi* that every Christian must practice, thus having to situate itself between this past and this future of death. Salvation is therefore intimately linked to the memory and to the cult of the finest flower of the community of Christians, those dead whom one wishes to be living/surviving, or whose death one wishes to make live once again in the collective memory.

The archaeological enterprise carried out by the post-Tridentine Church, with, for example, the new interest in the catacombs, was a part of this return *ad fontes*.¹⁵ In this respect we may speak of a *translatio* not only *studii* and *imperii* but also *spiritualis* which takes the form of a *translatio reliquarium*, in the strict sense of the transfer of what remains, materially, of this past.¹⁶ So, it was a matter of inventing, in the double meaning of the Latin verb *invenire* (to find and to create), an original time and foundational sites, time and sites of sacral recharging. Among these sacred “chronotopes” were those of martyrs’ tombs, *martyria* that are the foundation stones of the first Christian churches (which were no more than mausoleums) and the cornerstones of the Church itself. Along with the catacombs they too are sites from which sacrality was spread.

This happened by means of two principal media, the medium of relics and the medium of images. These had a double relationship to the sacred, and at that time attempts were made to distinguish them: a metonymic or indexical relationship, and a mimetic relationship, both of which were surpassed by the relationship of presence that the eucharist alone was able to guarantee. Following the Protestant crisis, one of the aims was to avoid any confusion between these different regimes of presentation and representation, at the risk otherwise of idolatry, the spectre at the heart of all debate. As the reformers never ceased to emphasise, the cult of the early martyrs was at the root of idolatry. People kneel today, they claimed, before images of those who have refused to kneel before idols. This was the vicious circle, according to them: pagan idols were destroyed in order to raise up new images that in turn became idols that

14 François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (New York: 2003).

15 The term *ad fontes* means literally, a return to the sources or origins. It is used to describe an intellectual movement of returning to the early writings of the Christian Church, particularly the Bible, to study its origins and evolution over time.

16 That is, a movement of academic study and spiritual renewal, using the evidence of the material remains of the past.

had to be destroyed. Conversely, the Catholics noted that the sanctuaries of the martyrs were built on the ruins of pagan temples so as to destroy these definitively. Hence the Jesuit Louis Richeome (1544–1625), citing Theodoret of Cyrus (*A Cure of Greek Maladies*, Book VIII) states that:

the materials of the demolished temples, having served to construct the churches and altars of the martyrs, have been purified. For Our Lord has placed those who died in his name in the place of the false gods, whom he has stripped of honour, and has honoured his servants.¹⁷

Furthermore, Richeome closely links the tribute paid to the tombs of the martyrs and the veneration of images. He thus reminds us that one of the characteristics of the Christian martyrs of the early centuries was to have died precisely for having turned away from images of “false gods.” They were, so to speak, sacrificed because of their refusal to sacrifice to idols. Having thus spilled their blood for having refused to worship these idols and having testified to their unshakeable faith, these living and suffering images worthy of imitation appear as counter-models to the dead and mortiferous images of idolatrous cults. So, while the bodies of saints who refused to worship idols were tortured and executed in the early centuries, in the present the Protestants destroy images and bodies, re-performing the martyrdom of the early times and confirming the coincidence between bodies and images.

Whether on the Protestant side, in order to castigate papist idolatry, or on the Catholic side, to denounce pagan idolatry and so distinguish it clearly from the veneration of Christian images, the aetiology of this supreme sin led back to the cult of the dead. It led back in particular to a mourning that tended to gradually heroise mere mortals: they ultimately gained the status of authentic divinities, a process encouraged, even for some unleashed by the arts. It was necessary therefore to neutralise the effects of this resurrectional presence of the image that Alberti spoke of. But in the wake of the crisis of mediation and of representation resulting from nominalism and the Reformation, it was also necessary to give meaning back to signs. And one of the ways to do this was to make the image into a monument testifying to a truth that was no longer ontological but historical; the memorial, as we have already emphasised, not of a presence but of a survival, that of a living memory and not a simple *aide-mémoire* for souls that were naturally forgetful.

17 Louis Richeome, *Trois discours pour la religion catholique: des miracles, des saints et des images* (Bordeaux: 1597), 745. Author's translation.

To use Blaise Pascal's words, the challenge was that the image conveyed simultaneously both absence and presence, for it was in this oscillation that its *virtus* lay: its power was not in action but in potential, the force of truth and of persuasion.¹⁸ *Re*-presentation – a word whose prefix gives it its meaning of reiteration in difference – thus takes its distance, in theory at least (for we must bear in mind the promotion of certain images known as *acheiropoieta*, vestiges-witnesses of an original age of the Christian image), in relation to an indexical regime that had long underpinned the sacred medieval image. By dissociating the image from the relic and even more so from the sacrament, it became anchored in a mimetic regime, which is precisely the regime promoted by the nascent theory of art.

But faced with what was perceived in clerical spheres as mannerist excesses that led to a proliferation of the uncanny and of unbridled fantasy, this regime, which acknowledged the semiotic break, had to re-legitimise itself in a different way, to re-establish its truth in a manner other than a simple imitation of nature: it did so by means of history and emotion, but also through miracle. Since this last dimension is closely linked to that of relics, covered by Freddy C. Dominguez in this volume, let us examine the other two dimensions that inflect martyrological imagery. This imagery has the distinctive characteristic of combining an archaeological ideal with a dramatic effect, the former distancing in time and the latter bringing this past to life in the present. Bringing together memory and affect in this way is, furthermore, to reconnect two of the three main functions of the Christian image. As Thomas Aquinas notes, as well as “the teaching of the unlearned,” images make it possible for “examples of saints to be more present in the memory by being presented every day,” while they are also created to “arouse the feeling of devotion, for what one sees stimulates more effectively than what one hears.”¹⁹

In terms of history, it was first of all a matter of re-narrativising the figure of the saint. Indeed, the transition from the devotional figure to the narrative scene characterises the iconographic transformations of the 16th century, as can be seen in particular in the painting of the Southern Low Countries.²⁰ The devotional figure preserved the memory of martyrdom through the presence

18 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: 1963), 533.

19 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentarium Super Libros Sententiarum*, l. III, d. 9, a. 2, q. 2. Author's translation.

20 David Freedberg, “The Representations of Martyrdom During the Early Counter-Reformation in Antwerp,” *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), 128–38; Koenraad Jonckheere, *Experiments in Decorum: Antwerp Art after Iconoclasm, 1566–1585* (London: 2013).

of attributes alone, which by now were no more than symbols almost emptied of their tragic meaning. Falling into line with the precepts of ancient tragedy, what mattered from now on was the *actio* (act) of the putting to death and not the petrified outcome of one of the living dead attracting what was potentially idolatrous devotion. The intention was to emphasise that the martyr is a true *dramatis persona* who matters as much for what s/he does as for what s/he is, if not more. The martyr is an *exemplum* rather than an *exemplar*, an example of behaviour to be followed, rather than a prototype, that is to say a figure of holiness whose image is worshipped in isolation.

This *exemplum* had to be inspired by the most trustworthy sources, in this case those collected in the martyrologies.²¹ For the creativity of painters could not draw on the imagination alone but had to stay very close to those accounts deemed to be most truthful. Rather than imitating, it was a matter of reproducing “things as they are,” as the Italian ecclesiastic and writer Giovanni Andrea Gilio states in his *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de’ pittori circa l’istorie* of 1564. Aristotelian verisimilitude was therefore transformed into pure conformity to holy story, “which should be painted in a faithful, pure, simple, true, and chaste way.”²² And as the theologian of Leuven University Johannes Molanus (1533–1585) writes, citing St Basil:

we must emphasise that images and paintings based on well-established accounts must also be respectfully acknowledged by all. There is no need to supply lengthy proofs. However, let us mention what we find in Basil the Great in his sermon on the forty martyrs: “What the story shows through discourse, the painting reveals silently in reproducing reality.” This is why, just as the Church venerates with total devotion the battles of the holy martyrs and the Lives of the Fathers, when they are written with rigour, so it calls on us to venerate with the same piety the painting that shows them.²³

The painter-historian thus had to supplant the painter-poet, and conform to what the sources said, which amounted to stripping painting of the fabulous.

21 Together with the *Martyrologium romanum* (Rome: 1583), one of the most influential Catholic compilations is Laurentius Surius, *De probatis sanctorum historiis*, 12 vols (Cologne: 1571–1575).

22 Giovanni Andrea Gilio, *Dialogue on the Errors and Abuses of Painters*, eds Michael Bury, Lucinda Byatt, and Carol M. Richardson, trans. Michael Bury and Lucinda Byatt (Los Angeles: 2018), 51.

23 Johannes Molanus, *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (Louvain: 1570), 77. Author’s translation.

The painter was able to find assistance in the works of historical erudition that proliferated at the time, some of which used images as aids to demonstration, assuming the form of a reconstruction. One of clearest examples in this respect is the *Trattato degli instrumenti di martirio e delle varie maniere di martirizzare* by the Oratorian priest Antonio Gallonio, published in Rome in 1591. Uniting texts and images (designed by Giovanni Guerra and engraved by Antonio Tempesta), this work collects and reproduces the different forms of suffering inflicted on the martyrs and the instruments used to torture them.²⁴

3 The Truth of Emotion

In the transition from the figure to the act, from the *idola* or *icona* (idol or image, depending on whether the point of view is Protestant or Catholic) to the *historia*, which resituated the saint in the distant time of the story of his death, it was important to arouse an intense emotion that actualised the scene with a view to starting off a process of emulation. Given that one believes to be truer that which produces an emotion, according to a belief widely held at the time, truth can adapt to verisimilitude in terms of the display of cruelty, a verisimilitude whose goal is strictly persuasive.²⁵ As the Archbishop of Bologna and the author of one of the most influential treatises on images Gabriele Paleotti (1522–1597) points out, “There is leeway when that which is narrated or depicted has a high degree of probability and is also apt to move hearts and excite devotion.”²⁶ Regarding the iconography of martyrdom, it is thus essentially through the passions aroused (and the palette can be a highly varied one: anger, indignation, regret, admiration ...) that the efficacy of the image is asserted, rather than through some ontological link to the model.

The most extreme emotions are truly those which are supposed to imprint themselves most durably in the memory and move hearts most deeply.²⁷ This point is emphasised by those post-Tridentine writers who took an interest in

24 Jetze Touber, *Law, Medicine, and Engineering in the Cult of the Saints in Counter-Reformation Rome: The Hagiographical Works of Antonio Gallonio, 1556–1605* (Boston/Leiden: 2014).

25 “The verisimilar is that which sets forth things of which there is no clear record so rationally and with appropriate circumstances that it makes them convincing and satisfies the common understanding of persons” Gabriele Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. William McCuaig (Los Angeles: 2012), 223.

26 Paleotti, *Discourse*, 161.

27 We should remember that the *imago agens* promoted by the arts of memory in ancient rhetoric had recourse to precisely these lively emotions.

art and the image. They remind us of the legitimacy and even the necessity of the display of violence and death in religious matters. Thus, while Paleotti condemns all scenes of horror and all bloody spectacles that are depicted with no virtuous aim (gratuitous violence and death stimulate in some people an unhealthy fascination and in others disgust), he does recommend, when it is a question of encouraging people to love virtue, the representation of saints with all the instruments of their martyrdom and the cruellest torments inflicted on them. This is in order to give these “heroic emblems” of patience and magnanimity as an example to the Christian people.²⁸ Taking as his ultimate reference the horror of Christ’s Passion, which artists could not gloss over in wishing to submit themselves to the beauty of art, the Jesuit Antonio Possevinno (1533–1611) also advocates a certain utilitarian verism:

And if one asks about the reason why they do not express these sufferings of Christ, they reply that one must submit oneself to art, so that this above all things be recognised. They say that they achieve this by painting the Lord as extremely handsome, and very elegant. But it is clear that art demands that, as far as possible, the truth of such a great event be established. In fact, the truth is that the Lord wanted the whole world to see his son Jesus sullied because of our sins, spilling his blood, flayed by the blows of the whip, covered in spittle, deathly pale, overwhelmed by blows. Indeed, it is certain that it is in this manner that the weight of the crimes is felt more profoundly and more correctly by sinners, and that these sinners therefore feel contrition and sadness in preparation for Salvation.²⁹

The truth of the death throes – of which the ancient model cited is the Laocoon – must prevail over beauty if one is to arouse a feeling of contrition.³⁰ This was a profound grief felt at the idea of having offended God.³¹ This truth works

²⁸ Paleotti, *Discourse*, 257–8.

²⁹ Antonio Possevinno, *Tractatio de Poesi and Pictura ethnica, humana, and fabulosa collata cum vera, honesta, et sacra* (Lyon: 1594), 295–96. Author’s translation.

³⁰ “In fact, the bitterness of pain was also expressed in the statues of the ancient pagans, as can be seen in the Vatican in the figure of Laocoon, close to death, tormented by pain, he and his sons cruelly defeated by the serpents: therefore, who could deny that the same thing may be obtained in relation to Him in whom all types of pain and cruelties are brought together?” Possevinno, *Tractatio*, 296. Author’s translation.

³¹ On the relationship between art and compunction, see Steven F.H. Stowell, *The Spiritual Language of Art: Medieval Christian Themes in Writings on Art* (Leiden/Boston: 2014), 16–70.

through all the details related to the instruments of torture as well as to the passions, vile or virtuous, that this torture provokes:

Hence, no person of sound mind would deny that it is necessary to paint Blaise torn apart by iron combs, Sebastian pierced by many arrows, Lawrence burned on a gridiron, lacerated and with his entrails spread about, stripped of all beauty. To what end might one object to me that Stephen was stoned without rocks, that Blaise maintained his body intact and beautiful, on a rack without blood, that the apostle James is without a club in his head, Sebastian without arrows, Lawrence radiant in the flames? Truly, since (it is said) art and the details of muscles and veins demand that it should be so. For my part, I strongly maintain that the summit of art is to imitate reality itself, that is to say martyrdom and martyrs; to express the tears of those who weep, the pain of those who suffer, the glory and the joy of the resurrection and to fix all that within souls. Such is assuredly the very essence of art: it is what gives art its beauty, that is to say what is worthy of being seen.³²

This last sentence says it all: the beauty of art is to show everything concerning cruelty and holy deaths. The feeling one should take from it cannot be that of pleasure, contrary to what a certain idea of *mimesis* and of Aristotelian *catharsis* continues to maintain, an idea according to which if the real spectacle of torture produces no pleasure, but rather disgust, that of its theatrical or pictorial representation does in fact do so.³³ This pleasure of representation is said to derive from a distancing that transforms the true into the credible and from an aesthetic mediation that attracts the gaze by reason of its expressive qualities. While this principle holds true for many horrific subjects (monsters or corpses), there is nevertheless an exception, which is precisely that of martyrdom.³⁴ The rule of *decorum* that imperatively applies to it demands that minds be struck violently, a necessity leading to what one might call an anti-aesthetic approach, characterised by a sober and severe style.

32 Possevino, *Tractatio*, 296–7. Author's translation.

33 This example does not appear in Aristotle's *Poetics* but is highly evident in the *Poetics* of the 16th and 17th centuries. See Emmanuelle Hénin, *Ut pictura theatrum: Peinture et théâtre, de la Renaissance italienne au classicisme français* (Geneva: 2003), 492–6.

34 "Such is the delight that imitation brings, that things that by their nature normally cause repugnance and horror in the viewer, like seeing a monster or a cadaver or a mole, have the opposite effect when they are well imitated, and delight us miraculously." Paleotti, *Discourse*, 113.

In addition, following the famous Horatian formula *Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi* ("If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself"),³⁵ it is recommended that the artist draws inspiration not from his intellect but from his own emotions born out of meditation on the sufferings of the martyrs:

Since this is the case, the painter must understand that it is necessary for him to conceive, in his prayer (a thing of the utmost importance), as in his meditation, not so much the idea of his future work, as the feeling of suffering that Our Lord Jesus, and those who followed him fearlessly, endured long ago.³⁶

It can be seen very clearly here that what should guide the painter is not the idea that he conceives or contemplates in his mind, but deep feeling. This is precisely what Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), if we are to believe the biography written by his son, wished to experience when he was attempting to create the expression of suffering on the face of his martyred Saint Lawrence, a saint to whom he paid special devotion, even going so far as emulating him through the use of his very name.³⁷ But Bernini was not content with an inner experience of this suffering, and he took emulation even further by burning himself in order "to feel in himself the martyrdom of the saint" ("per cui venendo a provare in se il Martirio del Santo").³⁸

4 The Strength of Evidence

History and rhetoric constitute the two pillars of a re-foundation of the powers of the image. These powers are no longer those of a presence in or of the image, but of an effect of presence and of the real, that cancels out historical and interpretative distance in order to offer raw images, images that are both

35 Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 102.

36 Possevino, *Tractatio*, 300. Author's translation.

37 See Maarten Delbeke, "A Thin Line between Love and Hate: Martyrdom and the White Marble Statue," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 82 (2019), 355–76; Maarten Delbeke, Evonne Levy, and Steven S. Ostrow (eds), *Bernini's Biographies: Critical Essays* (Pennsylvania: 2006), 172–3.

38 Domenico Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, trans. Francesco Mormando (Pennsylvania: 2011), 102–3.



FIGURE 12.3 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence*, 1617

SOURCE: © UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

brutal and basic, that is to say, images that offer up reality just as it is or just as it was supposed to be. Hence, we may speak of evidence, that is, of what imposes itself on the sight and on the mind in so forceful a manner that it becomes irrefutable. Let us recall that the Latin word *evidentia* is derived from the combination of philosophical and rhetorical meanings in the Greek word *enargeia*, referring to what is presented to the sight in all its splendour and imposes itself forcefully on the perceiving subject. Images thus become the site of evidence, for “when seen, they are immediately recognized by everyone and serve as the common tongue of all nations,” but also as stimulus for all the passions.³⁹ According to Quintilian, through this effect of presence “our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.”⁴⁰ This evidence is therefore particularly effective in arousing the passions. Note too that *enargeia* is mixed with *energeia* in the Aristotelian sense, that is to say, of that which is in movement.

This setting before the eyes and this setting in motion are the two constitutive dimensions of martyrdom and its representation. For one of the

39 Paleotti, *Discourse*, 63.

40 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, VI, 2, 32.

fundamental features of martyrdom which the visual arts were to exploit – the theatre even more than painting, perhaps, and this since the mystery plays of the late Middle Ages – is to be first of all a spectacle, which it had been since its Roman origins. It is underpinned by an urge to be seen and to see. The martyr offers his/herself in a spectacle, for the testimony has meaning only if it is made public, the spectator of martyrdom becoming the witness of holy witnesses, a second-degree martyr who must endure the sight of violence and death. The martyr, paroxysmal figure of compliance with the divine will, must display his/herself, put his/herself on stage as a living image ready to die. But this is a spectacle whose horror is transformed into jubilation. Such is the paradox, noted earlier, of this triumph through suffering and death. What finally matters in this jubilation faced with the display of violence, suffering, and death, is the effect of emulation. But in order for the testimony of truth, created by the image of an exemplary death, to produce a real mimetic contagion, it must be broadcast. Hence the importance of the image in this *propagatio fidei* (propagation of the faith) which here assumes the form of an *imitatio martyrii* (imitation of the martyr).

If the imitation of Christ was conceived of as sympathy, that is to say, as imitation in suffering, then the images that martyrdom offered to the view functioned according to this same principle. The spectacle of this sympathy for the martyr had to arouse the empathy – that is the suffering one feels inside oneself – of the spectator, according to a view widely held at this time. The classical and frequently cited, example of this was the tears shed by Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) at the sight of an image of the sacrifice of Isaac.⁴¹ This example was part of the battery of Catholic arguments designed to show the Protestants the greater efficacy of images in shaking up the feelings. For example, Paleotti wrote:

Let us first recall what Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes, adduced more than once in the seventh synod, that the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac had been so vividly and piteously portrayed by a painter that every time the saint gazed upon it, he was so entirely altered that he was unable to hold back his tears.⁴²

The force of the image therefore resides in its capacity to strike the spectator's imagination and, in the present case, to extract tears from him; emotion which

41 Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio laudatoria sancti ac magni martyris Theodori*, PG 46, 737–739.

42 Paleotti, *Discourse*, 121–2.

is not, however, an end in itself, since it must ultimately lead to virtuous and holy action.

5 Proof by Image

The showing and proving power of martyrdom would find fertile ground in the visual arts, continuing this intimate and original link between image and martyrdom. The figuration of martyrdom thus became one of the main sites of expression of a power of visibility and a visibility of power, but of a power that is supposed to be strictly Christian. So, let us now focus on the way in which the arts of the 16th and 17th centuries staged and brought into play all these dimensions specific to martyrdom, and in particular the paradox and the conflict which are its constitutive features.

The example par excellence of the anti-aesthetic and of martyrological verism is undoubtedly the cycle of 32 frescoes commissioned by the Society of Jesus and created, around 1582–83, by Niccolò Circignani, also known as Pomarancio, for Santo Stefano Rotondo, the church of the Jesuit College of the Hungarians in Rome.⁴³ This cycle is a part of a series of other groups of frescoes created at the same time by the same artists for the church of the English College of St Thomas and the church of the German College of Sant'Apollinare. These last two groups no longer exist but remain known to us through engravings.

The frescoes in Santo Stefano Rotondo represent the tortures of the early Christian martyrs, sparing viewers none of the sordid details. The rector of the Hungarian College, Michele Lauretano, wrote of them:

The fact of seeing an infinity of kinds of torments and such a great number of martyrs awakens much devotion; the painting is of mediocre beauty (*mediocrement bella*), but very pious; many cannot see without tears and spiritual movement (*moti spirituali*).⁴⁴

The emphasis is thus placed on the spiritual and affective dimension, which in relation to martyrological iconography derives from the commonplace,

43 Leif H. Monssen, "The Martyrdom Cycle in Santo Stefano Rotondo, Part I," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 2 (1982), 175–310; "Part II," 3 (1983), 11–106; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610* (Toronto: 2003), 122–52.

44 Michele Lauretano, *Diario*. Archivio del Collegio Germanico-Ungarico, Rome. MS, Hist. 103, fol. 49. Author's translation.



FIGURE 12.4 Niccolò Circignani, *Martyrdom of Saint Peter bishop of Alexandria*, detail, 1582
SOURCE: © SANTO STEFANO ROTONDO, ROME

at least as seen in the aforementioned example of Gregory of Nyssa's tears, which resonate too with those shed by Pope Sixtus v on seeing the frescoes of Santo Stefano Rotondo. If it was necessary to make tears flow, it was in order to shake souls all the more. Emotion must lead to internal movement (*moti spirituali*) and ultimately to external movement. Representation of the martyrs must in fact have stimulated a form of emulation in young Jesuits and in the students of their colleges, ready in their turn to sacrifice themselves spiritually or physically in the lands of the Protestant mission or in even more distant ones, such as Japan. We have here, then, a summary of many Tridentine ideals: those of a Church militant and triumphant, spreading a message that is as unambiguous as possible, in a style that is sober but with a striking iconographic content, and all this for the aims of conversion or rather strengthening of convictions.

In addition, these frescoes have the distinctive feature of being punctuated by letters referring to a legend identifying each scene, a device which counterbalances the highly dramatic dimension of the paintings, by revealing the artifice of such a presentation. To put it another way, it breaks the mimetic pact which is, however, fundamental in terms of projective or immersive effects

and, hence, of emotions. This lettered presence aims to be the guarantor of fidelity to the texts to which each scene of martyrdom refers, and thus of the accuracy of what is offered up to the sight. We thus get the idea of a reading of the image, of a lettered image, with a horizon that is, so to speak, bookish, which the almost instant reproduction of the frescoes in engravings, with international distribution in book form, seems to confirm.⁴⁵

As we have seen, from a stylistic, if not iconographic, point of view the rector of the college describes the style of the frescoes as “mediocre,” an epithet one must understand in the rhetorical sense of a “medium” or moderate style which curbs mannerist effects. To a certain extent it neutralises the emotions of the protagonists, which constitutes a paradox for painting that must arouse emotion and, in particular, empathy. On this art “senza tempo”⁴⁶ Giulio Mancini in his *Considerations on Painting* of 1615 is not wrong when he speaks of Circignani’s two styles or brushes (*due pennelli*): “the style of an ordinary master and the other of a fine and expert master.”⁴⁷ According to Mancini, the *pennello ordinario* or ordinary style is certainly the one used for Santo Stefano Rotondo. It is meant to evoke the ideal of the primitive Church at a time when there was a veritable palaeochristian revival, which partly explains the new fashion of inscriptions in the painting of the late 16th century.⁴⁸ There is a stated intention to give an account of a historical, not to mention an archaeological, truth, a dimension that has echoes of the excavations carried out at the same time in the catacombs.⁴⁹ What matters here is not conformity with a text but with a time, that of the original Church.

45 To give this cycle of frescoes an even greater striking power, it was quickly distributed and imitated throughout Europe by means of engraving (a first series circulated, from 1583, with the title *Ecclesiae militantis triumphus*). In the records of the English Jesuit College in Rome from 1582 we read that “we have distributed copies of this work very widely, as far as the Indies, so that the infamy of these most disastrous of persecutions, the frenetic rage of the heretics, the invincible resolution of the Catholics, may be known everywhere.” Henry Foley, *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (London: 1880), 6: 83. See also Kirstin Noreen, “*Ecclesiae militantis triumphus*: Jesuit Iconography and the Counter-Reformation,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29 (1998), 689–715.

46 Federico Zeri, *Pittura e controriforma: L'arte senza tempo da Scipione di Gaeta* (Turin: 1957), 56–9.

47 Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. Adriana Marucchi, vol. 1 (Rome: 1956), 206–7.

48 Emmanuelle Hénin, *Ceci est un bœuf: La querelle des inscriptions dans la peinture* (Turnhout: 2013).

49 See for a recent contribution: Kelly Magill, “Reviving Martyrdom: Interpretations of the Catacombs in Cesare Baronio’s Patronage,” in *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650*, eds John R. Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives (Burlington: 2015),

The system of deconstruction of the image by letters must certainly have assisted the meditation exercises of the Jesuits and their students, employing the pedagogical techniques inculcated both in academic and spiritual subjects, and in close connection with the arts of memory. But this system may also be likened to the techniques of illustration employed in scientific works, in particular those of the anatomists, whose illustrations resonate with the iconography of martyrdom.⁵⁰ We may even speak of a martyrological imaginary in certain engravings of the early treatises of anatomy, beginning with the *De humani corporis fabrica* of Vesalius (Basel, 1543) and the *Anatomia del corpo humano* of Juan de Valverde (Rome, 1560). In these captioned plates, the letter is the instrument of dissection. Hence, in the same way that the anatomical plate proceeds to a real dissection of the human body represented, we might speak of an anatomy of martyrological images in Santo Stefano Rotondo. This analogy is further strengthened by the theatrical dimension shared by the spectacle of martyrdom and the spectacle of anatomy. The aptly named “anatomical theatres” were built in such a way as to stage dissection, like the theatres of cruelty staging executions, and not just those of martyrs. The panoptic dimension of the church of Santo Stefano Rotondo reinforces this analogy, even if at the centre of the device there is no longer the body of the martyr or the dissected body but the body of the spectator contemplating the entirety of the frescoes on the ambulatory of this circular church. It is not excessive, then, to speak of a real anatomy or autopsy of martyrdom, exhibiting with a certain veracity the almost surgical atrocities suffered by the early champions of the Faith.

87–116. See also, among others, the study by Simon R. Ditchfield: *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge: 1995).

50 Ralph Dekoninck, “Alphabétisation et dissection de l’image: Retour sur le cycle martyrologique de Santo Stefano Rotondo,” in *Aiutando l’arte: Les inscriptions dans les décors tridentins d’Italie*, eds Anne Lepoitevin and Gwladys Le Cuff (Paris: forthcoming); Antoinette Gimaret, *Extraordinaire et ordinaire des Croix: Les représentations du corps souffrant. 1580–1650* (Paris: 2011), 603–19; Paola Pacifici, “Chairs mortifiées: Connaissance anatomique et esthétique de la souffrance dans la représentation des martyrs au 16e et au 17e siècle,” in *Corps sanglants, souffrants et macabres, 16e-17e siècles*, eds Charlotte Bouteille-Meister and Kjerstin Aukrust (Paris: 2010), 19–30; Carolin Behrmann, “Testimonium und αὐτοψία: Märtyrerbild und epistemischer Wert,” in *Autopsia: Blut- und Augenzeugen. Extreme Bilder des christlichen Martyriums*, eds Carolin Behrmann and Elisabeth Priedl (Munich: 2014), 89–108; Mateusz Kapustka, “Martyrs or Scientists, or: How to Prove Torment with Images,” in *Autopsia: Blut- und Augenzeugen. Extreme Bilder des christlichen Martyriums*, eds Carolin Behrmann and Elisabeth Priedl (Munich: 2014), 109–124; Katharine Park, “The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994), 1–33.

Furthermore, we can speak of violent scenes giving rise to violent images. The painting is decomposed by references just as the holy bodies are torn apart and dismembered, *membra disjecta* that will become relics. This 'scientific' imaginary is based on the idea of visual proof in order to disclose a truth that is at one and the same time historical and doctrinal. Above all, in order to make this truth not only as convincing as possible but also as striking as possible, so as to imprint it most profoundly on souls, this theatre of cruelties is also a theatre of memory. In the end, the painted image that relates these atrocities in turn may well be called a martyr, but this time in the etymological sense: it bears *witness* to what surpasses the imagination.

This emphasis on the testimony of the image can also be found in Catholic martyrologies such as the *History of the Martyrs of Japan* by the Jesuit Nicolas Trigault.⁵¹ This work, published in 1624, transports us from the Europe of the wars of religion to the new lands undergoing evangelisation, lands where the missionaries, Jesuits in this case, also endured martyrdom. We may read in the preface: "because there you will see torments peculiar to the tyrants of that country, which are very difficult to imagine, the printer has had them printed on plates which are at the front of each book, and which will give you a perfect understanding of them."⁵²

These startling images thus help once again towards a belief in the unthinkable. They were created in order to strike the imagination not of the witnesses of the executions but of a European public discovering these inhuman scenes thanks to the modern means of the reproducible image distributed on a very wide scale. Here too, rather than leading to violence, driven by a thirst of vengeance – which must certainly have been fuelled by images of massacres, tortures, and executions at the time of the wars of religion in Europe, the enemy quite possibly being a neighbour or geographically very close – the emphasis is placed on the empathy with the victim that it is necessary to follow in suffering even unto death.

The logic is inverted in an illustrated work which also features as a pioneer in the promotion of Catholic martyrdom. It no longer consists of encouraging love of the victim and the desire to imitate him in sacrifice to the greater glory of God but in arousing hatred of executioners. This work is *The Theatre of the Cruelties of Heretics of Our Time*, published in Antwerp in 1587 by Richard Verstegan, an English Catholic exiled on the continent.⁵³ It consists of 29

51 Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire des martyrs du Japon* (Paris: 1624), "Avis au lecteur," n. p.

52 Trigault, *Histoire des martyrs*, "Avis au lecteur," n. p.

53 Richard Verstegan, *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* (Antwerp: 1587). See Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Louvain: 2004). Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 243–76.



FIGURE 12.5 Anonymous, *Michael et Matthias occumbunt*, engraving from Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire des martyrs du Japon* (Paris, 1624)

SOURCE: © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS

engravings denouncing the crimes of English “schismatics and Protestants,” of French “Huguenots” and “Beggars” from the Low Countries. These engravings, each one accompanied by a title, an accompanying text, and also dotted with letters referring to a facing page in which each scene is identified and commented on, offer us a showcase of horror. And indeed, we find in it a sample of the worst atrocities committed by the Protestants on the Catholics, thereby martyred for their faith. The use of engraving is justified in these terms in the preface:

Gentlemen, we have erected this Theatre in order to show the miserable tragedies that our heretics have played in our Europe, and to make you see what they have committed and perpetrated [...]; there is no mouth to speak it, nor spirit to imagine it, far from it there is a cutting [that is, engraving] that may represent it to your eyes.⁵⁴

The theatre erected displays of the “cruelly performed” tragedies whose stage directors, but also performers and executors, were the Protestants. If the executioners theatricalise death for propagandist goals, the theatrical analogy also designates the dramatization that is at the heart of Verstegan's project, which essentially works through the staging of images designed to show what cannot be said or written, for one cannot imagine all their horror. Indeed, every engraving is saturated with scenes of nameless cruelty: stake, decapitation, dismemberment, evisceration, etc. Every atrocity is included in order to obtain the maximum emotional shock.

It is a question of showing in order to demonstrate and disseminate truth, which is the truth of the martyr but even more so, through him, the truth of God:

So that the truth and glory of the martyrs be not obscured and hidden, but imparted to and known by the whole world, we have shown in certain images a part of the torments and cruelties committed by the Huguenots in France, by the Beggars in the Low Countries, and the schismatics and protestants in England [...]. So that if one looks at these paintings and plates, one will find that never has a Church endured such a cruel and deadly plague, nor suffered more violent ruin [...]. Hence I desire that in the contemplation of these images each of the faithful be moved to

54 Richard Verstegan, *Théâtre des cruautés des hérétiques de notre temps* (Antwerp: 1588), prologue, n. p. Author's translation.



FIGURE 12.6 Anonymous, *Horribilia scelera ab Huguenotis in Gallia perpetrata*, engraving from Richard Verstegan, *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* (Antwerp, 1587)

SOURCE: © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS

praise God for the constancy of his martyrs, and to detest the impiety of heretics, and their doctrine.⁵⁵

The image thus broadcasts as widely as possible the truth of a suffering Church that cannot but move to emotion, but an emotion instantly converted into praise addressed to God and into hate towards the heretics.

While violence has no name, being of the order of the unspeakable, it is manifestly not of the order of the unimaginable. For it is necessary to see it to believe it and it is necessary to show it to make it believed, which proves that in matters of cruelty the shock of images wins out over the weight of words. The writer powerless to name the unnameable must turn himself into an exhibitor of *tableaux vivants* or rather of *tableaux morts*. Moreover, Verstegan takes care to make it clear:

55 Richard Verstegan, *Théâtre* (Antwerp: 1607), 15. Author's translation.

that if you think that this spectacle has been invented to give you pleasure, we beg you to pardon us; for to the contrary we intend to draw tears from your eyes, moans from your mouths, sighs from your hearts and sobs from your breasts, unless you be without eyes, mouth, heart and breast, and there is within you no humanity.⁵⁶

This remark shows clearly the paradox of the beauty of horror or of the pleasure associated with the spectacle of violence, that is supposed to make tears flow but which we suspect had the effect of fascination on minds avid for this kind of cruel display.

The fortunes of the iconography of martyrdom were not confined to the illustrated book or to widely circulating engravings but also flourished in 16th- and 17th-century painting. Among these many representations, of which it is impossible here to list all the variations of theme, place, time or commission, let us look at one sufficiently emblematic example of the iconography of martyrdom at the beginning of the 17th century: the *Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus* painted by Nicolas Poussin around 1628 for one of the altars of St Peter's in Rome.⁵⁷

Here we can recognize the typical iconography of evisceration (as popularised by Dirk Bouts in the 15th century), the last torture before death, inflicted on the Bishop of Antioch as part of his persecution by the Emperor Maximian Hercules. According to the *Golden Legend*, from which Poussin clearly drew inspiration, the emperor ordered the saint to sacrifice to the gods, but the saint replied that "he refused to sacrifice to the gods of stone that you resemble."⁵⁸ Once the statue had been taken into the temple of Jupiter, it crumbled into dust. But the statue shown here at the upper right represents not Jupiter but Hercules, so reminding us of the emperor's surname. In a diagonal composition that was to enjoy great success, Poussin features the dominant figure of the idol. Hence the tension between the two images, the true and living image

⁵⁶ Verstegan, *Théâtre* (Antwerp: 1588), prologue, n. p. Author's translation.

⁵⁷ Mickaël Szanto, "Le Martyre de saint Érasme," in *Poussin et Dieu*, eds Nicolas Milovanovic and Mickaël Szanto (Paris: 2015), 164–6; Louise Rice, *The Altar and Altarpieces of the New Saint Peter's Outfitting the Basilica 1621–1666* (Cambridge: 1997), 225–32; Konrad Oberhuber, *Poussin. The Early Years in Rome: The Origins of French Classicism* (Oxford: 1988), 195–8; Giuliano Briganti, "L'altare di Sant'Erasmus, Poussin e il Cortona," *Paragone. Arte* 9 (1960), 16–20.

⁵⁸ "Alquale disse l'imperatore: posati e sacrifica agli dei, altrimenti io ti farò morire di mala morte. Rispose il Beato Erasmo: Imperatore, non sarà mai vero che alle pietre e alle statue a cui tu sei simile io sacrifichi; io sacrifica a Dio vivo." Jacobus de Voragine, *Legendario delle vite de' santi* (Venice: 1588), 406.



FIGURE 12.7 Nicolas Poussin, *Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus*, 1628
SOURCE: © VATICAN MUSEUMS, ROME

of the saint and the dead and false one of the idol, is conveyed eloquently. This polarised construction clearly takes its inspiration from the treatment by 16th-century Italian painters of the martyrdom of St Lawrence, who adopted the same opposition.⁵⁹ Poussin re-used and refined this confrontation: the figure of St Erasmus, thrown backwards, is opposed to the Hercules raised up on his pedestal, here an incarnation of brutal force, that of the violence of the idol as condemned by the Prophets and the Church Fathers. The face of this idol resembles that of the main executioner, but also the face of Erasmus himself, a new Hercules at the crossroads between idolatrous abomination and iconophile salvation. This agonistic relationship is reinforced by the gestural rhetoric: the gesture of the priest dressed in white attempting to extract a final conversion while pointing at the idol, but also the gesture of a Roman soldier on horseback pointing out Erasmus to one of the executioners. All these interlaced postures and gestures of pointing turned in opposite directions not only articulate terrestrial space, that of the suffering endured with resignation by the saint and the celestial space of the triumph of the Christian over the pagan, but they also contrast the quasi invisible power of divine intervention and the only too visible – impotent, although dominant and violent – pagan power.

Now, it is interesting to note that this scene in which the idol is displayed at the time of torture and execution, finds an inverse counterpart in the religious practices of the period: in Italy there existed brotherhoods of *San Giovanni decollato* (Beheading of St John the Baptist) whose members would accompany to the scaffold those condemned to death.⁶⁰ Their mission was to keep before the eyes of these condemned people tablets (*tavolette*) fixed to a handle and painted on both sides: on one side was the image of the crucified Christ and on the other side that of a scene of martyrdom related to the type of execution which would be inflicted on the criminal. Instead of extracting a conversion by forcing the martyr to worship the idol, the image of the martyr, true antidote to idolatry, is intended to encourage the sinner to repent and above all to endure with strength the ultimate trial of suffering and of death.

59 See for example Titian, 1557–1559 (Venice, Gesuiti); Agnolo Bronzino, 1569 (Florence, San Lorenzo); Palma Giovane, 1581–82 (Venice, San Giacomo dall'Orto); Pellegrino Tibaldi, 1592 (El Escorial). But it is also true of other scenes of martyrdom, such as the martyrdom of St George (for example: Veronese, 1564, Verona, San Giorgio in Braida).

60 Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca-London: 1985), chapter 5; Massimo Ferretti, "In Your Face: Paintings for the Condemned in Renaissance Italy," in *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville: 2000), 79–97; Larry J. Feinberg, "Imagination all Compact: Tavolette and Confraternity Rituals for the Condemned in Renaissance Italy," *Apollo* 161 (2005), 48–57.

6 Conclusion

By means of these images we can see how post-Tridentine Catholicism sought to regenerate itself by commemorating the violent deaths that marked the triumph of a truly Christian heroism, the heroism of Grace, with martyrdom issuing out of the encounter between a human desire and a divine gift. This kind of representation attempted to comprehend this divine choice, the acme of an improbable time that joined past, present, and future through the temporal crashing together of torture, death, and salvation. Furthermore, these images constructed a figure of holiness through the contrast with or opposition to everything that is presented as its contrary: sin, madness, abjection, bestiality, inciting hatred of the executioners, who unleashed their own hatred against Christians, and love for the martyrs, whose own love for Christ led them to death. From the *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ) to the *imitatio martyria* (imitation of the martyrs), a whole process of mimetic conformation presents the image itself, which becomes re-legitimised in its opposition to the idol. This fight for and with the image is that of the reconquest of a *deiformitas* in suffering and in death; one might even say, a *deiformitas* through *deformitas*, that is to say through disfigurement, to use the very words of St Augustine: *Deformitas Christi te format* ("The deformity of Christ forms you").⁶¹

61 Augustine, *Sermones*, XXVII, PL 38, col. 181.

The Motion of Another's Death: Grief and Mourning

Christopher Ocker

Pleine de deuil et de mélancolie,
Voyant mon mal qui toujours multiplie
Et qu'en la fin plus ne le puis porter,
Contrainte suis pour me reconforter
Me rendre a toy le surplus de ma vie.
Je te requiers et humblement supplie,
Pour les douleurs de quoy je suis remplie,
Ne me vouloir jamais abandonner.
Puisqu'a vous suis la reste de ma vie.

Full of grief and melancholy,
Seeing my pain only multiply
And that its end I can no longer bear,
To comfort myself I am constrained
To give you the surplus of my life.
So I beg you and humbly appeal,
For the sufferings with which I am filled,
Wish never to abandon me.
For I am for you the rest of my life.

JOSQUIN DESPREZ (d. 1521), *Pleine de deuil*

These verses from a love song by Josquin Desprez point to the affective spectrum along which grief ran throughout one's life. Grief was a species of pain.¹ Its degree was felt in comparison with equal pleasures, and people knew grief in a proportion to the desire for happiness. From the 12th to the 17th centuries, these proportions could be studied in scholastic debate, in devotional literature and art, and in popular fictions. Consider Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which dramatized the linkage between feelings

¹ Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–700* (New York: 2016), 248–87.

of sorrow and love.² Kept separate by their parents, Pyramus and Thisbe planned to meet secretly by a tree near a tomb to consummate their frustrated longing. But when Thisbe arrived, she found Pyramus dead. Falling over his body, mingling her tears with his blood, she ended her life with the same dagger that he, driven to despair by misapprehension (he thought she had been killed by a terrible lion), had used to take his own. That was where grief could lead. It was triggered by the loss of an object of desire and intensified by the strength of attachment. Alcuin, the leading scholar at Charlemagne's court once noted, "Love cannot endure forgetting," *caritas oblivionem non patitur*.³ Grief could express not mere association with a love that was gone, but a share in dying, or as Desprez suggested, it reflected a kind of substitutionary, consolatory economy, because the mourner sought relief by sharing a surplus of one's own living with the grieved. For grief, like love, could not let go.

This sorrow designated a soul moved by separation, and mourning was the activity that performed, replicated, exercised, and compensated for grief. Medieval and early modern scholars understood grief as a kind of internal motion, which Renaissance musicians expressed through overlapping, harmonic waves of slowly falling and rising cadences.⁴ Historians today see it as a manifestation of a soul in a turbulent state, unless it slips into a morbid, melancholic stasis, a condition more threatening still; although melancholy could also provoke reactions of intellectual or artistic genius.⁵ In the turbulent nothing left by an interrupted attachment, mourning ritual – prayers, masses, and other *memoriae* – filled the emptiness with compensatory affections. This required not only

2 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Brookes More (Boston: 1922), iv.55–166, and 140 for tears and blood, <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-eng1> (last accessed 14/9/2019); Gabriele Bucchi, "Au-delà du tombeau: Pyrame et Thisbé dans deux réécritures de la Renaissance italienne," *Italique* 13 (2010), 53–80.

3 Alcuinus, *Epistolae*, Ep. 189, ed. Ernst Dümmler, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Epistolae, vol. 4, part 2 (Berlin: 1895), 316, line 21. This is a letter written near the end of the 8th century to Cunebert, Bishop of Winchester. Joachim Wollasch, "Memoria," in *Enzyklopädie des Mittelalters*, eds Gert Melville and Martial Staub, 2 vols (Darmstadt: 2008), 1:364–6, here 365.

4 This was especially characteristic of the Renaissance motet, Edward E. Lowinsky, "Music in the Culture of the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 15 (1954), 509–53, on 523–5. For Ockeghem, a particular influence on Desprez and on Renaissance mourning, see Sean Gallagher, *Secular Renaissance Music: Forms and Functions* (New York: 2016), 143–6. For post-Renaissance developments, Michael Tolmouth and David Ledbetter, "Tombeau," *Grove Music Online*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28084> (last accessed 26/8/2019), and the literature noted there.

5 Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 248–52 and the literature noted there; Erin Sullivan, "A Disease unto Death: Sadness in the Time of Shakespeare," in *Emotions and Health, 1200–1700*,

an imagination directed toward an absent or departed love through a set of routinized activities (rites of mourning), but time and space to perform them. Grief had a psycho-physical quality, and it had an obvious dependency on the rituals discussed in this volume. It was a movement inside the self's envelope of skin, and mourning was its external, social channel. For on the outside, since Carolingian times, the rites of mourning helped knit together not only the living with the dead, but also the living with the living, the many people who spoke or heard the names of the departed spoken in public *memoriae*.⁶ These linkages are precisely what the Reformation seemed to challenge, by removing the possibility of helping dead people with the *suffragia* by which an "emotional community" was formed.⁷ But could Protestants destroy the bonds of love between the living and the dead, or the living with the living? Did they even want to? The religious controversy around Luther certainly intensified Catholic memorials, but it also diverted others to different (Protestant) memorialization practices. And the anatomy of grief, the form and purpose of sad motion, remained consistent from the late Middle Ages through Renaissance and Reformation, even while the practices of mourning changed.

The following introductory account must be highly selective, even while it tries to draw from scholarship that ranges across the medieval-Renaissance divide in diverse historical subfields, such as theology, science, and literature. A first section describes a general consensus among medieval and Renaissance intellectuals on emotion and grief as psycho-mechanical motion. The chapter then turns to religious dimensions of grief, namely, the centrality of this emotion in a Christian view of ultimate human purpose. A concluding section considers the continuity of sorrowful affect that predated and survived the Reformation's challenges to mourning rituals and customs.

1 The Anatomy of Grief

Scholars in medieval and early modern Europe tried to explain emotion in a systematic, psycho-mechanical manner. To them, grief, or any feeling, was a

ed. Elena Carrera (Leiden: 2013), 159–83; Angus Gowland, "Medicine, Psychology, and the Melancholic Subject in the Renaissance," in *Emotions and Health, 1200–1700*, ed. Elena Carrera (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 185–219.

6 Consider Joachim Wollasch, "Die mittelalterliche Lebensform der Verbrüderung," in *Memo-ria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, eds K. Schmid and J. Wollasch (Munich: 1984), 215–32.

7 Adapting Barbara Rosenwein's term, Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 3–10.

complex set of variable movements. The scholar's view of grief was shaped by an Aristotelian-Hippocratic, hybrid view of the physical, sensitive body and the powers of soul that lent a person self-awareness and deliberate control. The hybrid was transmitted to the Latin Middle Ages through Galen and Arabic commentary on Aristotle.⁸ Aristotle's *De anima* added depth to the psychological explanation of emotion, while new Renaissance translations of Galen and growing interest in anatomy would eventually expand earlier accounts of the medical conditions and physical consequences of affect.⁹ Aristotle's *Physics*, first translated into Latin by James of Venice sometime between 1125 and 1150, provided a general theory of change as the movement between potential and actual states of being. Translations of Arabic commentaries, written at the tail end or in the immediate aftermath of the Abbasid Golden Age, in the 9th and 10th centuries, and the abiding impact of Galen on medical science in the west well into the Enlightenment stood on an Aristotelian foundation, allowing scholars to think of the passions in a generally consistent manner.¹⁰ It went like this.

Passions were movements of attention and affect toward desirable objects (for example, the body of a loved one) or away from repugnant objects (for example, the deadness of such a body), and these objects were either present to the senses,

8 Galen was mediated largely through Stephen of Antioch's translation of the *Book of Medicine* or *Royal Book* (*Regalis dispositio* in the most common Latin translation) by 'Alī ibn al-'Abbās al-Mağūsī, known as Haly Abbas, which circulated in manuscript and was also published at Venice in 1492 and Lyons in 1523. Aristotle was mediated largely through William of Moerbeke's enormously influential retranslation of the *Shifā'* (*Liber de anima* in the Latin west) by Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna. Simo Knuuttila, "Medieval Theories of the Emotions," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/medieval-emotions/> (last accessed 29/8/2019). For the relevant section of Haly Abbas (his treatment of temperaments) in an early edition, Haly Abbas, *Liber totius medicine*, trans. Stephen of Antioch, ed. Michael de Capella (Lyons: 1523), 71-19v. Avicenna treated grief in his discussion of the passions of the soul. Avicenna, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus*, pars 5, cap. 1, ed. S. van Riet, 2 vols (Leiden: 1968, 1972), 2:69-81, esp. 74. Sadness is discussed in conjunction with fear, as accidents triggered by imagination and memory, *ibid.*, 2:43, 58, and 61. Bodily spirit is treated as a nexus with the powers of soul in his discussion of sensation, in connection with the nervous system, *ibid.*, 1:125-126, 139, 214, and *passim*.

9 Nancy Siraisi, "The Faculty of Medicine," in *Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilda De Ridder-Symoens, 4 vols (New York: 1992), 360-87, here 382-3; Knuuttila, "Medieval Theories of the Emotions," provides an excellent summary of medieval views.

10 For changes in the 17th and 18th centuries, see Amy Schmittler, "17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/emotions-17th18th/> (last accessed 29/8/2019).

remembered, or imagined. Once the impact of Aristotle's psychology came to be felt, beginning in the early 13th and continuing into the 14th century, scholars became increasingly preoccupied with the details of an affective psychology. They differentiated the soul's specific motions of attraction and aversion, analysed the connections between particular feelings, studied the objects that elicited these responses, and reconstructed the steps by which the responses progressed.¹¹ They also disagreed about many things. What exactly were the names of discrete emotions, and how were they organized? While the names and their number varied, it became common to group feelings as either "concupiscent" (the soul desiring *x*) or "irascible" (the soul averting *x*). But was the movement of the soul a response to an "intention" intrinsic to the provoking object, as Avicenna and, in adapted form, Aquinas believed, or was it rather a response to a representation of the object, as John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) argued? Was the movement a feature of the soul's capacity to integrate and evaluate sense input (Aquinas) or a volitional dimension in its power of intellect, which granted passion a place in rationality itself (Bonaventure, Scotus)? Creative variations of opinion about narrow arguments relative to such things, very generalized here, multiplied, just as opinions did in every topic of theology in the generations after John Duns Scotus. Those arguments continued well into the 16th century. They helped scholars give account, for example, of the arduousness of objects of the "irascible" passions, like fear or anger, feelings often hard to get started but very hard to end. They allowed for an increasingly complex view of the relationship of many shades of desire and aversion. And they helped scholars try to analyse the possibility and limits of emotional control.

The psychology of emotion was coupled with a physiology. The soul was thought to exercise its power upon the body by means of a vital, animal substance called *spiritus*, or πνεῦμα in Galen's mother tongue, the word for air, breath, or spirit. Galen thought it was essential to life (hence πνεῦμα ζωτικόν, *spiritus vitalis*, life-giving or vital spirit), a vaporous, corporeal fuel that the liver, heart, and brain produced, mixed with blood, accumulated, refined, and dispersed throughout the body – the chest-central, throbbing heart occupying pride of place in the system.¹² Spirit was essential to the physiology of emotion,

11 Summarized as classifications of emotions by Knuuttila, "Medieval Theories," sections 3–5, on which the following liberally paraphrased account relies.

12 "spiritus est subtilis uapor ex sanguine expressus, uirtute cordis incensus, ut sit uelut flammula, suppeditans uim in exercendis actionibus." Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima* (Wittenberg: 1540), f. 134r (=sig. R6r); on bodily "spirits" in general, ff. 134r–136r (=sig. R6r–R8r); ff. 136r–177v (=sig. R8r–Z1v) for a Galenic account of the physical basis of the soul's operations; ff. 117v–197v (= sig. Z1v–b5v) treats the passions. Also Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: 1995), 75–123; G. Verbeke, "Le 'De anima' d'Avicenne, une conception spiritualiste de l'homme," in Avicenna, *Liber de anima*

because it formed the tangible link between the physical body and the soul, the soul being a name for the subsistent powers (thus a “substance”) that distinguished animals and plants from non-living things. Willpower, a faculty of soul unique to animals and possessed by humans in a more deliberative, “rational” configuration, could directly affect the production and flow of *spiritus*, while *spiritus* in turn moved the physical body. So too, the physical conditions of the body could constrict or improve this “spiritual” current, while the force or weakness of the current could rebound onto the soul and affect the actions that settled into, or tried to escape, the rutted pathways of habit. That is, human biology was thought to influence a person’s ability to think or exercise willpower, and consciousness was thought to influence biology. And this, by the way, was basically thought to be an animal trait, not only a human one.

Emotions belonged to a comprehensive “ecology.” At any given time, the body’s “temperament” or “complexion” consisted of a physical proportion of mixed substances in living flesh, the four “humours”: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. The four humours were physically associated with the four elements of air, fire, earth, and water. The natural qualities of the four elements – dry, hot, cold, and wet – were made physically present in the body’s mixtures of humours and in the natural world, while the gyrations of heavenly bodies, among other things, also impacted the mixtures of dry, hot, cold, and wet, most obviously in the four seasons of the year. Accordingly, one’s physical “complexion” was affected by both its individual physical tendencies and its interaction with the environment that conditioned it at every point of intersection between the body and its surroundings, from eating, breathing, the way one directed one’s five senses (hearing the right kind of music was healthy), and just inhabiting a specific geography and weather.¹³ There was a physical connection between both realms of operation, the individual, embodied person and the universe.

In this medieval-Renaissance conception, the soul naturally “moved” toward or away from real and imagined stimuli. The motion could be a spontaneous response to circumstances or prompted and conditioned by deliberate

seu sextus de naturalibus, ed. S. van Riet, 2 vols (Leiden: 1968, 1972), 2:1*-73*, esp. 54*-56*; Avicenna, *De medicina cordialibus*, tractatus 1, chapters 7–8, and the concluding section of the *cantica Avicennae* included in the volume. See also Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 144–168; Nicholas E. Lombardo, “Emotions and Psychological Health in Aquinas,” in *Emotions and Health, 1200–1700*, ed. Elena Carrera (Leiden: 2013), 95–146; Alan R. Perreiah, “Scotus on Human Emotions,” *Franciscan Studies* 56 (1998), 325–45.

13 Penelope Gouk, “Music and Spirit in Early Modern Thought,” in *Emotions and Health, 1200–1700*, ed. Elena Carrera (Leiden: 2013), 221–39.

choice, by habit, and by the balance of humours and the production of vital spirit.¹⁴ When a passion was “felt,” one was sensing an increase or decrease of spirit in the chest, in the diaphragm, in the head, or throughout one’s frame, as a consequence of a motion happening in the soul, and the bodily motion rebounded on the soul’s apparatus itself, shifting or reinforcing its natural or habitual desires and aversions. Feelings were so changeable because soul, body, and environment were in constant flux.

Scholars could therefore agree that, whether prompted spontaneously, consciously, unconsciously, from a disappointed hope or an actual loss, sadness and grief were both cognitive-emotional and physical. When Avicenna said that the power of judgement becomes “thin” in a person hurting with moaning and sadness, contributing to a crushing dissolution, he meant it literally, because sadness was actually linked to the operation of the heart, which made it particularly dangerous.¹⁵ His psychology, which delineated emotions and their connection to sense input, memory, deliberation, and will, suggested how one emotion could progress into a distinctly other feeling, for example, moving from fear to grief.¹⁶ For Aquinas, in a more purely psychological explanation of feeling, sadness was no more harmful to the body than other passions were, but sadness nevertheless impacted all the operations of the soul. Contrary to Avicenna, he thought it was connected not to fear, which reacted against a future bad, but arose directly from loss in the present.¹⁷ Although Aquinas’s treatment of the passions in the *Summa theologiae* was arguably larger and more detailed than any other medieval discussion, it left room for competing opinions. Among the most influential alternative approaches, John Duns Scotus distinguished between sadness as an expression of present desire (“one grieves desiringly” with “care for an object of desire”) and sadness as an expression of aversion to a future bad result or experience (“one grieves about ‘what cannot be claimed,’ when there is no power of claiming”), each of which had noticeably different physical effects.

14 Consider Melanchthon’s *De anima* commentary of 1540 and Juan Luis Vives’s *De anima et vita*, which both recognized the overlap between Galen’s medical description of the passions and Aristotle’s “psychological” one, trying, in effect, to coordinate Galen and Aristotle. Juan Luis Vives, *The Passions of the Soul: The Third Book of De anima et vita*, trans. Carlos G. Noreña (Lewiston: 1990).

15 Avicenna, *Liber canonis, de medicinis cordialibus, et cantica*, trans. Gerard of Cremona (Basel: 1556), 1043–4, 1062.

16 Avicenna, *De anima*, pars 5, chapter 1, 2:73–74.

17 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Prima Secundae, questions 36–37, *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, 47 vols (Rome: 1882–2014), 6:249–256; Lombardo, “Emotions and Psychological Health in Aquinas,” 19–46.

Sadness of the desiring kind involves a different interaction with an organ in the sensitive part than does sadness of the averting kind. The desiring kind comes with a restriction, since desire is set against delay, while sadness of the averting kind happens with a warming, which is an accumulation of blood around the heart.¹⁸

And this meant that, involving different organs, the two kinds of sadness could be remedied by different contrary motions in a parallel way. They did, Scotus believed, different things in the body, and they felt very different.

The payoff of studying grief in such terms, at once psychological and physical, is conveniently suggested by Robert Burton, the Elizabethan writer whose massive study of melancholy represents a highpoint of Renaissance emotional theorizing. Burton described, in unprecedented detail, the physical symptoms of melancholy and the food, environmental conditions, physical health, and internal affective networks that conspired to undermine the contented equilibrium of humours and feelings.¹⁹ To him, depression, self-harm, or suicide could be triggered by the death of someone near. But this was systemically connected to lesser losses, such as the departure of a visiting friend, which drove some people to wailing and a deep emotional gutter.²⁰ One harm could succeed or compound another. Emotions were also linked to each other by counterposing pathways. The Renaissance commentator Jodocus Badius once noted that laughter was mingled with sorrow, and mourning occupied the endpoint of joy.²¹ A miracle investigation from the mid-14th-century Venaissin region, in the south of France, discussed a terrible case of maternal despair, in which the mother, mourning the death of a child, teetered between murderous rage against the attending wet nurse and the desire to show her mercy.²² The quixotic nature of emotional linkages gave affect its dramatic flux.

What matters most to the cultural historian examining death and dying is not necessarily the growth and diversity of taxonomies of emotion or the exact

18 John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, III, d. 34, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Commissio Scotistica, 21 vols (Vatican City: 1950–2013), 10: 198.

19 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Philadelphia: 1883), 232–59 and passim.

20 Burton, *Anatomy*, 218–22.

21 Jodocus Badius Ascensius, *In Parthenicen Catharinariam Baptiste Mantuani expositio*, book 2, ed. A.P. Orbán, CCCM, 353 vols (Turnhout: 1992), 119A: 443–583, line 429; book 3, line 1340. In general, Paul White, *Jodocus Badius Ascensius: Commentary, Commerce and Print in the Renaissance* (New York: 2013).

22 Nicole Archambeau, "Tempted to Kill: Miraculous Consolation for a Mother after the Death of Her Infant Daughter," in *Emotions and Health, 1200–1700*, ed. Elena Carrera (Leiden: 2013), 47–66. For Badius and Mantuan, White, *Jodocus*, 235–42.

mechanical differences medieval and Renaissance scholars argued in their concepts of grief, which belonged to rigors of the classroom or intellectual salon and all of which are beyond the scope of this chapter. What matters is a consensus that sadness was not merely an emotional condition with a physical expression, but rather belonged to a comprehensive and dynamic psycho-physiology, a comprehensive system of constantly moving parts. Even theologians deeply sceptical of the value of natural philosophy in Christian doctrine, like Martin Luther and John Calvin, seemed to accept a basic medical consensus on feeling and *spiritus*, which had to influence their understanding of a spiritual and affective vocabulary, when they read words like spirit, heart, or sadness in the Bible or repeated them in their pamphlets and sermons.²³ It meant that the embodied feeling of grief moved with mutable elements of soul, body, and their social, inter-psychic, and physical surroundings – a self and an environment in motion.

2 “Blessed are those who mourn”

In medieval and early modern Christianity, grief was a privileged emotion, which is easily illustrated by the third beatitude, “blessed are those who mourn.” The beatitude associated the feeling of religious grief, *lugere*, with purity, rather than coupling two contrary feelings as such, sadness and its joyous remedy. Jerome’s translation of this beatitude, *beati qui lugent* for the Greek original’s μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, “happy are those who wail,” tried to preserve the irony of the original Jesus-saying, when he chose to render the Greek term for “happy,” “prosperous,” or “blissful” with the Latin *beati*, “gladdened” or “fortunate.” But under the weight of a Christian theory of salvation, by the high Middle Ages *beati* came to mean *sancti*, the very truly and permanently happy, namely the saints in heaven. In canon law, the word acquired a specialized meaning, which remains the official teaching of the Catholic church today: *beati* were those who had not yet been acknowledged as saints by legal procedures that emerged in the high Middle Ages to confirm their intercessory powers.²⁴ It turns out that this technical difference between *sancti* and *beati*

23 Christopher Ocker, “The Physiology of Spirit in the Reformation: Medical Consensus and Protestant Theologians,” in *Miracles Revisited: New Testament Miracle Stories and their Concepts of Reality*, eds Stefan Alkier and Annette Weissenrieder (Berlin: 2013), 115–57. Christopher Ocker, “Spirit, Writers, and Biblical Readers in ‘the Practical Circumstances of Life’: A Political Hermeneutic,” in *Sola scriptura*, ed. Stefan Alkier (Tübingen: 2019), 59–82.

24 Matt. 5:3; Jacques Verger, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (New York: 1997), 85–103.

(officially acknowledged vs unconfirmed saints) did little to weaken the synonymy of both words in popular usage. While canon law regarded the *beati* as possibly dodgy objects of local devotion, popular religion saw *beati* simply as saints.²⁵ They were, in other words, extraordinarily holy dead people.

Accordingly, the most widely used scholastic commentary on the Bible, the Ordinary Gloss, treated the eight beatitudes as a roadmap marking the prime qualities of a holy soul, namely the seven virtues, the first and last beatitudes treating a prime virtue of humility and the remaining virtues sandwiched between humility in the first and last.²⁶ They set this species of sadness in a context of salvation theory. The blessed who mourn in the third beatitude felt not just grief, but sorrow “for their sins and the sins of others”: “The person who mourns for sins or on account of longing for heaven earns consolation, and no other,” said the Ordinary Gloss.²⁷ Their consolation was eternal joy in the Holy Spirit or the solace of being a saint. This reiterated a common patristic theme, as Thomas Aquinas would soon point out, in quotations he took from Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Jerome. In his commentary on this passage, Aquinas used Augustine and a gloss by Anselm of Laon (quoted anonymously) to expand the idea, saying that mourning was also provoked by the loss of cherished possessions, which the blessed give up in exchange for consolation from the Holy Spirit. *Luctus* (sorrow, mourning) involved two kinds of compunction, according to Aquinas, for the miseries of this world (an irascible aversion to the bad, by the way) and desire for heaven (concupiscent), and only the poor and meek, who do not desire the world, could feel this *luctus*.²⁸

The Ordinary Gloss and Aquinas expressed what remained an utterly common view of grief among theologians and spiritual writers. The church was a *domus luctus*, the early Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx once said in a sermon for the Feast of the Circumcision, a house of mourning for mortality, a consequence of sin, but also the house where Christ was born, and therefore “a house of joy, a house

25 Verger, *Sainthood*, 95.

26 Glossa ordinaria, at Matt. 5:3. Glossae scripturae sacrae-electonicae (Gloss-E), https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/editions_chapitre.php?livre=../sources/editions/GLOSS-liber55.xml&chapitre=55_5 (last accessed 22/8/2019). This electronic edition reproduces the 1481 version edited by Adolf Rusch and published at Strasbourg. For recent scholarship on the gloss, see Christopher Ocker and Kevin Madigan, “After Beryl Smalley: Thirty Years of Medieval Exegesis,” *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 2 (2015), 87–130, here 91–4.

27 Glossa ordinaria, at Matt. 5:5, reading the interlinear and marginal comments together.

28 Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea* (Mt.), eds Martin Morard et coll. (Paris: 2019), CMT5#3, <https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr>, version of 25.3.1.2019 (accessed 22/8/2019).

of mirth, a house of laughter” among the sinners Christ had saved.²⁹ One or another version of the sin-specific form of grieving could be found in the work of many different preachers, commentators, and spiritual writers, for example, Bernardino of Siena, Denys the Carthusian, Jan Hus, the *devotio moderna* adherent Arnold Gheyloven, Desiderius Erasmus, the Dominican theologian Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, Martin Luther, and the Puritan Robert Bolton.³⁰ The motion of grief revealed a soul's comprehension of the ultimate cause of death, the transgression of Adam and Eve and the transmission of Original Sin to all human beings. Recognizing this connection began the ultimate life-turn of conversion from grief to permanent beatitude. The goal of spiritual counsellors was therefore diversionary, to move the mourner from “profane consolations” to “mourn for the remission of sin, for the salvation of good neighbours and the condemnation of evil ones, for liberation from their exile, for the evasion of future punishment, and for obtaining future glory.”³¹ In the best case, grief should be embraced and directed to achieve its holy purpose.³² For the body was a medium, a contact point, in which the holy and the profane manifested themselves.³³

But the animal boundaries of emotional instinct were characterized by flux, and salvation was discovered within them. Peter von Moos, author of a

29 Aelred Rievaulx, *Sermones*, ed. G. Raciti, 3 vols, CCCM vol. 2C (Turnhout: 1989, 2001, 2012), 2C:43.

30 Bernardino of Siena, *Tractatus de octo beatitudinibus euangelicis*, sermo 1, art. 3, in S. Bernardini Senensis *Opera omnia* (Quaracchi: 1959), 6:343, 347; Denys the Carthusian, *Commentaria in Psalmos omnes Davidicos*, *Opera omnia*, 42 vols (Monstrolius: 1896–1912), 6:326, 380, 526, 587; Jan Hus, *Postilla adumbrate*, sermo 127 (in festo omnium sanctorum), and sermo 128 (in festo omnium sanctorum), ed. B. Ryba, CCCM 261 (Turnhout: 1992), 506, 508; Arnoldus Gheyloven, *Gnotosolitos paruus*, ed. A.G. Weiler, CCCM 212 (Turnhout: 2008) 393; Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei* (Cologne: 1522), sign. g4r–g4v; Martin Luther in the defense of his 95 theses he produced in late spring 1518, “Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute, conclusio 1,” WA 1:530–531. Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, in an interesting gloss on the standard interpretation, dissociated *luctus* in the beatitude from the ordinary emotion of sadness, such as people feel when they observe the anniversaries of the dead, but described it as the controlled and guided emotion of those who feel sorrow for sin, the affect of the penitent who contrast sorrow in this life with the joys of heaven. Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, *Evangelia cum Commentariis Caietani* (Venice: 1530), 11v. Consider also Calvin in note 32, below. Another variation can be detected or the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs (d. 1646), for whom the blessed mourner recognizes not the penalty of sin but the hand of providence in one's sufferings. Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints Happiness* (London: 1660), 94; Stephen Pender, “Rhetoric, Grief, and the Imagination in Early Modern England,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43 (2010), 54–85, here 55.

31 Gheyloven, *Gnotosolitos paruus*, 393.

32 Gheyloven, *Gnotosolitos paruus*, 394.

33 Christian Kiening, *Fülle und Mangel. Medialität im Mittelalter* (Zurich: 2016), 244.

two-volume study of consolation literature and death, finds medieval grief to move between opposite poles, between

reason and passion, denial or justification of tears, stress on the commandment to love or the commandment to believe, pastoral responsibility or compassionate participation, rejection of death-wish for community's sake or envy for the blessed, certainty of salvation or anxiety in connection with the fate of the dead.³⁴

Christian Kiening observes that medieval writers tried not to smooth over such tension, but rather to give it voice. He cites Bernard of Clairvaux's mourning of Brother Gerhard, included in a sermon on the Song of Songs and the dialogue of Lawrence of Durham on the death of his friend as examples of the dialectic of grief and consolation. He also notes a growing prevalence since the 12th century of themes that intensified affect associated with death in salvation history: the expulsion from Paradise, where Adam and Eve run with horror from the garden toward death, the suffering of Job, Herod's massacre of the children of Bethlehem, the mourners in scenes of Lazarus, and of the course Christ's passion, where increasingly bystanders are drawn into the affects of participants in the event.³⁵ Lay literature cannot be juxtaposed to "the affective praxis of clerical thought- and life-worlds." Clerical discourse had embraced a Christianized Stoic repression or relativizing of grief already in late antiquity, and the current continued in later concern for decorous grieving.³⁶ That concern could only increase as preoccupation with emotion steadily grew over our period – and grow it did. A tendency to portray "the 'factual' external world as an 'experienced' internal world" has even been detected in account books and diaries, family albums, autobiographies, and etiquette books, all of which increased in number after 1500.³⁷

34 Peter von Moos, *Consolatio. Studien zur mittellateinischen Trostliteratur und zum Problem der christlichen Trauer*, 2 vols (Münster: 1971–1972), 1:75. Quoted by Christian Kiening, "Aspekte einer Geschichte der Trauer im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit," in *Mittelalter und Moderne: Entdeckung und Rekonstruktion der mittelalterlichen Welt*, ed. Peter Segl (Sigmaringen: 1997), 31–53, here 39; Han Baltussen, "Nicholas of Modruš's *De consolatione* (1465–1466): A New Approach to Grief Management," in *Ordering Emotions 1100–1800*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Leiden: 2015), 105–120.

35 Kiening, "Aspekte," 39–41, also for what follows.

36 Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling* (New York: 2010), 194–6, 210–14. Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (London: 1977), 144–5, 162–3.

37 Kiening, "Aspekte," 41, 47, and passim. Kiening cites (from Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* [Ithaca: 1991], 172–185) diverse materials by merchants and clergy: Giovanni di Pagolo di Bartolomeo Morelli; Ludwig von Diesbach; Lucas Rem; Magdalena Paumgartner; Balthasar Sibenhar; Johannes Tepl. Consider also the

Other stories explored the tensions between the passive virtue of persecuted women and a virility associated with their patient righteousness. These are perhaps best known in Philippe de Rémi's 13th-century novella, *La Manekine*, which presents a woman who was wrongfully maimed and survives long, exilic despair, before finding herself restored to good fortune. They are known in Boccaccio's *Griselda*, a mother who bears patiently her husband's demand that each of their daughters be killed: her patient concessions to that perverse man were finally rewarded by the discovery that the daughters lived, and the husband was only putting her to a test.³⁸ Stories like these and their variations valorised patient grieving, but also transferred virtues associated with widowhood to marriage, challenged the cult of beauty and teasing affection, and could elevate women as political agents, Yasmina Foehr-Janssens argues. Laments by Mary Magdalene and the Blessed Virgin during the crucifixion, which arose in the 12th century and continued as a staple of passion plays and devotional literature in European vernaculars, toyed with the distinct nuances of the Magdalene's regret for sin and the Virgin's despair at her son's suffering.³⁹

The "emotionalization" of religion can be easily tracked from Bernard of Clairvaux to 18th-century pietism. It has been associated mostly with the feeling of love.⁴⁰ But it was also associated with grief, as displayed in diverse genres. Medieval lullaby lyrics, for example, "transform the emotional intimacy of the first interactions between mother and child into a lesson in parental mourning."⁴¹ This is reinforced by two general characteristics of English nativity lyrics, the fact that they always referred to the crucifixion and their stress on the emotional interaction between Mary and Christ child. Self-control, however, was both relative and variable, and much evidence can be found of

role of guilds and fraternities in urban *memoria*. Christian Kuhn, "Totengedenken und Stiftungsmemoria: Familiäres Vermächtnis und Gedächtnisbildung der Nürnberger Tucher (1450–1550)," in *Haus- und Familienbücher in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Birgit Studt (Cologne: 2007), 121–34, and the literature noted there. Veronique Pasche, "Pour le salut de mon âme": *Les Lausannois face à la mort (XIVe siècle)* (Lausanne: 1989), 86–90.

38 Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, *La veuve en majesté* (Geneva: 2000), 263–273 and *passim*.

39 Peter Dronke, "Laments of the Maries: From the Beginnings to the Mystery Plays," in *Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe* (Rome: 1992), 457–89.

40 Otto Gründler and Ulrike Strasser, "Die Emotionalisierung der Religion von Bernhard von Clairvaux bis zum Pietismus," in *Empfindsamkeit*, ed. Klaus P. Hansen (Passau: 1990), 15–33.

41 Amy N. Vines, "Lullaby as Lament: Learning to Mourn in Middle English Nativity Lyrics," in *Laments for the Lost in Medieval Literature*, eds Jane Tolmie and M.J. Toswell (Turnhout: 2010), 201–23.

scholars reacting against bottled up grief.⁴² Even John Calvin, who documented the influence of Stoicism in his first academic publication, a commentary on Seneca, insisted that weeping was a natural and appropriate response to suffering.⁴³ They understood the mobility of grief, a “dialectic of mourning,” and “the field of movement of all affective phenomena determined by the mortality of a love object.”⁴⁴ This dynamic field of movement has a western genealogy that includes the Iliad, the Gospel of John, Dante, Shakespeare, Madame de Lafayette, Edmund Spenser, Joseph Conrad, and Jacques Lacan. It is motivated by what originated as the Platonic hierarchical arrangement of libidinal object to love, in which the highest love is imperturbable and transcendent, but in Christian sources stands in tension with the desired individual. Tension begets motion.

The mobility of grief can be illustrated by the foremost exemplar of Christian mourning, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and by one of the most striking

42 Christian Kiening adduces evidence from Italian consolation literature, which multiplied from the early 15th century, drawing on George McClure's *Sorrow and Consolation in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton: 1990): Coluccio Salutati's argument with Francesco Zabarella (1400/1) and Giannozzo Manetti's *Dialogus consolatorius* (1438). Kiening also adds evidence from Central Europe, namely the Vienna Franciscan Guillelmus Savonensis's *An mortui sint lugendi an non* (1453) for the Klosterneuburg canon Wolfgang Winthager, mourning the loss of his mother and his friend Johannes Schwarz (notable, says Kiening, not for Guillelmus's consolatory rhetoric but for Winthager's – a character in the dialogue – attachment to grieving); and Heinrich Lur's argument against Hermann Schedel, defending the compatibility of grief with the right ordering of reason and will; and even Jean Gerson's *Tractatus de consolatione in mortem amicorum*, and Geiler von Kaysersberg's German translation of it, which complains of the uselessness and harmfulness of wailing and sadness, but nevertheless consider mourning natural. Kiening, “Aspekte,” 50–3.

43 Calvin, otherwise anxious to stress the importance of humble remorse for sin, thought mourning in the third beatitude was caused by persecution of those who follow Christ's teachings. John Calvin, *Commentarius in harmonium evangelicam*, Matt. 5 and Luke 6, *Calvini Opera*, 59 vols., eds Guillaume Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Eduard Reus (Braunschweig: 1863–1900), 45:162. His French version of the commentary (which stressed an affective interpretation by using the terms *bien-heureux* for *beati* and *qui pleurant* for *qui lugent*, “happy are those who weep”) described the suffering of people in “the school of our Saviour” at some length and stressed how natural it was to weep when persecuted. John Calvin, *Harmonie évangélique*, sermon 62, *Calvini Opera*, 46:771–784, esp. 781–784.

44 For this and the following, Henry Staten, *Eros in Mourning* (Baltimore: 1995), xi for the quotation, 1–20 and passim for the argument. The source of the notion of mourning as loss of an object of libidinal desire: Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), *The Standard Edition to the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 24 vols (London: 1953–1974), 14:243–258. Also Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: 1989).



FIGURE 13.1 Rogier van der Weyden, *Descent from the Cross*, ca. 1436

SOURCE: © MUSEO DEL PRADO, MADRID (USED WITH PERMISSION)

portraits of her sorrow from the early Renaissance, Rogier van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*.

Art historians have long been aware of the painting's argument for Mary's co-redemptive compassion with Christ.⁴⁵ It is obvious in how her body mirrors the posture of her dead son and Saviour. But the painting also freezes a riot of movement between distinct forces. One force presses downward, in the two central, falling bodies, in everyone's downcast gazes, in the elaborate drapery of several figures, in the contorted arms and bent knees of Mary Magdalene at the right, and in the falling tears that litter the faces of Joseph of Arimathea, holding Christ's legs, and Mary's half-sister Mary Cleophas, the veiled woman at the far left with her eyes buried in a kerchief.⁴⁶ A single tear eludes

45 O.G. von Simson, "Compassio and Co-redemptio in Roger van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*," *The Art Bulletin* 35 (1953), 9–16. Also Jennifer R. Hammerschmidt, "Beyond Vision: The Impact of Rogier van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, eds Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: 2013), 201–18.

46 Following identifications made by the Prado description, which includes an extensive bibliography. L. Campbell, "Rogier van der Weyden," Museo Nacional del Prado, 2015,

self-control, falling from the right eye of the Apostle John, who reaches for the fallen Virgin's shoulder; and another tear drops over the cheek of Mary's other half-sister, Mary Salome, the woman who helps John hold the falling Virgin in her imitative pose.

A second motion moves bilaterally. Amy Powell poignantly observes that Christ is being taken to the right, while Mary falls to the left, implying that the motions are about to proceed beyond opposite sides of the crowded frame:

In the centre of the composition, there is a hole that will expand as the centrifugal movement of the figures prevails, moving the centre to the periphery and eventually completely out of view. That surprisingly deep space between Christ and the fainting Virgin, which is filled with the impossibly abundant folds of Mary's robe, stands as a portent of what is to come: the scattering of the image to the four winds.⁴⁷

Mary is vanquished by grief, collapsing under the impact of a dangerous contraction of heart, a depletion of spirit that mirrors the Son's loss of life, who "bowed his head and surrendered his spirit" (*et inclinavit capite tradidit spiritum*, John 19:30). But the falling body of a decidedly extraordinary human corpse sets the entire ensemble in downward and sideways motions.

Early viewers would have 'read' this painting with an array of familiar scenes depicting Mary as she endured the passion of her Son in mind. In this context, van der Weyden's portrait shows a woman whose inner turmoil reaches its mortifying collapse, but numerous narratives of Mary's trials stood behind this moment. They involved a tension between two distinct Mariological traditions, Reindert Falkenburg points out. In one tradition, suggested by Ambrose and promoted by Bernard of Clairvaux, Mary contained her grief in exemplary self-control. In another, promoted by much late medieval passionate devotion, Mary shared Christ's suffering. Both traditions found support in the late Middle Ages.⁴⁸ Moreover, taken as a whole, late medieval painting had Mary display

74–81 at: <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-descent-from-the-cross/856d822a-dd22-4425-bebd-920a1d416aa7> (last accessed 1/9/2019). See also Moshe Barasch, "The Crying Face," *Artibus et Historiae* 8/15 (1987), 21–36, stressing the function of tears as indicators of sanctity.

47 Amy Powell, "Errant Image: Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition*," *Art History* 29 (2006), 540–62, here 557.

48 Reindert Falkenburg, "Decorum of Grief: Notes on the Representation of Mary at the Cross in Late Medieval Netherlandish Literature and Painting," in *Icon to Cartoon: A Tribute to Sixten Ringbom*, eds M.T. Knapas and A. Ringbom (Helsinki: 1995), 65–89, here 66–7; K.C.J.W. de Vries, *De Mariaklachten* (Zwolle: 1964), 262–5 note 11.

a spectrum of feelings, ranging from numbed acedia to inconsolable weeping. She displayed an internal conflict “with the feelings of decorum of the compiler or with those of the intended audience for the book. That is the problem that faced the writer of a Passion narrative and which can be seen operating in a number of *Vita Christi* tractates.”⁴⁹ Devotional writing described different forms of emotional flux. Some writers saw Mary’s grief concentrated in decorous weeping until she was overcome and fainted.⁵⁰ Others portrayed a mother seized by conflicted feelings, silent when others wailed at the crucifixion, but kissing the drops of blood falling from the cross so ardently that her face was soon covered with blood.⁵¹ One Dutch version of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin alleged that when the cross was erected, Mary cried till her eyes bled, then later cried herself into a faint when Christ expired, yet somehow avoided a grotesque show.⁵² Mary’s grief-management, her ‘mannered’ fainting at the cross, was sometimes contrasted with Mary Magdalene’s clamorous behaviour (her weeping lacks control in van der Weyden’s *Descent*).⁵³ But taken together such scenes rendered the idea of a mourner’s holy stasis absurd. Grief involved a complex of emotions, and emotions were movements of body and soul.

The physical environment of the painting localized its portrayal of grief in a geography. When Amy Powell refers to the scattering of the image to four winds, she alludes to the movement of the work from its original home in the church of Leuven’s *hoofdgilde* of crossbowmen, one of the most prominent guilds of the city and all of Brabant, to the court of Mary of Hungary by the 1540s, and finally to the Spanish court of her nephew Philip II in 1564; and she refers to the more than fifty copies of the image that are known to have been made.⁵⁴ It is tempting, but very speculative, to think of this as a result of an impetus invested in the panel by the emotions it so powerfully portrays. Such intrinsic power seems less speculative in the painting’s early use, however, when it adorned the altar of the chapel of the crossbowmen’s guild. Jennifer Hammerschmidt, like most art historians who have examined the work,

49 Falkenburg, “Decorum,” 68.

50 John of Caulibus [Pseudo-Bonaventure], *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, lxxviii, lxxix, trans. Francis X. Taney, Anne Miller and C. Mary Stallings-Taney (Asheville: 2000), 256, 258. Josse Clichtove, *De dolore beatae Virginis in passione Filii sui* (Paris: 1513), 67v–69v.

51 Dutch variations of Ludolf of Saxony’s *Life of Christ: Dit is dleven ons heeren Jhesu cristi*, published at Antwerp in 1536, was the version with Mary’s face covered in Christ’s blood, which the translator apparently considered “decent and well mannered.” Falkenburg, “Decorum,” 69.

52 Falkenburg, “Decorum,” 70.

53 Falkenburg, “Decorum,” 71.

54 Hammerschmidt, “Beyond Vision,” 201–18 and the literature noted there.

points out the importance of Marian devotion to the guild and the prominent place the crossbowmen enjoyed in the city's famous annual procession on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. They marched in full armour near the end of the train, just before the Leuven magistrates. During the feast, the guild retreated to their chapel for mass. Hammerschmidt argues that the painting culminated scenes represented during the procession in *tableaux vivant*, on wagons, and in open air performances of scenes from the Virgin's life and the crucifixion, all of which entangled the sufferings of mother and child.⁵⁵ The theatricality of the procession had grown since the end of the 14th century, with an increase in the number of tableaux and new plays along the route to further elaborate themes in the tableaux just at this time. The Descent from the Cross was not included in the performances of the feast day, so that the painting seemed to add an ersatz display to conclude Mary's suffering through the crucifixion in the crossbowmen's church. The events of the day, an expression of the growth of interest in Mary's co-passionate suffering, which was attested by sermon literature and drama, intensified the viewer's empathy, or as Hammerschmidt says, "the rendering of pain for the purpose of sensory evocation" and "a physical experience as well as an emotional one."⁵⁶ Van der Weyden set the scene within the frame of a painted niche, as though its sainted figures moved like living relics on a wall of the crossbowmen's church. The movement crowded within and toward the exterior of the frame suggests movement in a church. The crossbowmen would have ended their procession before this painting, and family members would have grieved lost loved ones while hearing masses before the panel's altar. The communal rites of Marian devotion in Leuven position the scene's riot of empathetic motion as an endpoint of transits across the town, a time when guildmembers would disperse and an occasion to perform the emotional work of separation.

As in pictorial art, so in literature: grief was a movement among motions. Christian Kiening describes a growing tendency in courtly literature since the

55 Hammerschmidt, "Beyond Vision," 201–18; Mark Trowbridge earlier suggested that the posing in the *Descent* may mimic the scenes of models in frozen poses commonly portrayed on carts in Flemish processions. Mark Trowbridge, "The *Stadtschilder* and the *Serment*: Rogier van der Weyden's 'Deposition' and the Crossbowmen of Louvain," *Dutch Crossing* 23 (1999), 5–28, here 12. For the importance of similar theatrical performances in Ghent for the interpretation of Hugo van der Goes' *Lamentation*, see Mark Trowbridge, "Sin and Redemption in Late-Medieval Art and Theater: The Magdalen as Role Model in Hugo van der Goe's Vienna Diptych," in *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative and Emotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, eds Sarah Blick and Laura D. Gelfand, 2 vols (Leiden: 2011), 1:415–45.

56 Hammerschmidt, "The Impact," 214.

late 12th century to probe “not only the linguistic, gestural, and situational modalities of the articulation of grief,” but also to show “the grief of the living as an uncircumscribed power, whose ‘lethal energy’ is not simply to be diverted step by step to an internal world.”⁵⁷ It poses a stark contrast with a much-discussed “loss of grief” among the moderns. Grief was dynamic. A study of grief in late medieval French art and literature concluded that, although mourning had settled into patterned gestures and narrative themes (“among them the ‘no greater grief’ topos, the grief of Nature, the cloak raised to the eye, the raised eyebrow, the difficulty of articulating intense emotion”), “the expression of grief and the representation of mourning are not uniform during this period. Grief is not conventionalized out of existence. ...”⁵⁸ The sorrow could be processed by reading and writing. Nadia Margolis sees, in Christine de Pisan’s *Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* (1410), the offer of a motivational strategy:

Throughout this lament, her frequent and continuous references to tears render the effusion aggressive rather than traditionally passive, as she strives to move her aristocratic readers towards more effective action, especially her female ones so prone to feeling helpless because of their femininity.⁵⁹

In Christine’s *Heures de contemplacion de la Passion de Nostre Seigneur* (ca. 1425–1429), which she may have written in response to the death of her son Jean de Castel in 1425, the author “immerses” herself in the pain of the Blessed Virgin’s loss, only to be drawn upward to the figure of Christ suffering on the cross, not only for the pain of crucifying torture but also for his mother’s grief.⁶⁰

In short, the evidence of theology and devotion underscores the inherently unstable nature of grief’s motions, downward and touching everyone’s

57 Kiening, “Aspekte,” 34. Armin Nassehi and Georg Weber, *Tod, Modernität und Gesellschaft: Entwurf einer Theorie der Todesverdrängung* (Wiesbaden: 1989), 257–62. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 578–80. Contra isolation, narrower studies can suggest the opposite, for example in Britain and Ireland. Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (New York: 2011), 109, 131–44. Also, Sarah Tarlow, *Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality* (Oxford: 1999), *passim*.

58 Leslie Abend Callahan, “Signs of Sorrow: The Expression of Grief and the Representation of Mourning in Fifteenth-Century French Culture,” 2 vols (City University of New York: PhD dissertation, 1996), 2 vols, 1:283–4.

59 Nadia Margolis, “Christine de Pizan’s Life in Lament: Love, Death, and Politics,” *Laments for the Lost in Medieval Literature*, eds Jane Tomie and M.J. Toswell (Turnhout: 2010), 265–81, here 276.

60 Margolis, “Christine de Pizan’s Life in Lament,” 281.

mortality, laterally, severing the bonds of love. Authors found in grief an opportunity for emotional experiment, probing the soul that struggles with its attractions and aversions, the body convulsed by those movements, and the will trying to cope with them.

3 The Public Trajectory of Grieving

How, then, were these intimate movements governed in public places over time, and what could public management do to the nature of grief? It could erase grief no more than it could erase love. Death was, of course, deeply personal. Ritual consolations, such as the sacrament of holy anointing, and the popular carnivalesque portrait of late medieval dying, the *danse macabre*, for example, bespoke the terror of death.⁶¹ The anointing of holy unction was sharply focussed on the dying victim. It directed their attention to sin and forgiveness at a crucial transition-point of a spiritual biography, while the priest whispered, "through this anointing, may God grant you his holy and most devout mercy," in the name of the Holy Trinity, according to the 15th-century Archbishop Anthony of Florence in his well-known *Summa confessionalis*. The eyes should be dabbed with oil, in the style of St Ambrose, but secular priests added a hope for forgiveness for "whatever fault you committed by the eyes." A more elaborate and still more intimate rite was also possible, Anthony thought, following guidance from Pope Gregory the Great: anoint the ears, the nose, the closed mouth, the palms, and the feet, invoking the Trinity each time and modifying the incantation for auditory, odorous, gustatory, tactile, and ambulatory sinning.⁶² The individual is prepared for the final, perilous separation of living soul from inert body. In late medieval paintings and block books of the *danse macabre*, a badly decomposed corpse led exemplary characters from high and low estates to their death. The force of this threat was individually felt, precisely because it was so embarrassingly public and socially indifferent, insensible to privilege or prestige.⁶³ Death was a great leveller. But a funeral, by contrast, never was. The distinctions of privilege and wealth were nowhere more apparent than there and in the *memoriae* that followed.

61 For the importance of considering the circulation of emotions between individual and group, Stephanie Trigg, "Introduction: Emotional Histories – Beyond the Personalization of the Past and the Abstraction of Affect Theory," *Exemplaria* 26 (2014), 3–15.

62 Anthony added that the secular clergy also anoint the arms. *Summa confessionalis domini Antonini Archiepiscopi Florentini* (Venice: 1566), 222r–223r.

63 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Les rythmes au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 2016), 615–27.

Mourning – the performance of grief – was stereotypical. Determined by local custom, its rudiments could nevertheless be observed in most cultures: gestures of complaint (screaming, crying, ringing the hands), auto-aggression (pulling out, cutting, or burning hair, striking one's head, face, or breast, tearing clothes, etc.), rites associated with laying the body in state, its preparation and burial, and a continuation of regular remembrances. They were all practices that should condition the way we judge the normative portraits of grief we have considered so far.⁶⁴ Funerary and memorial rites controlled and channelled the dangerous emotional flux reflected in wailing or self-harm. The traditional church established the default position of European mourning. Grief was meant to follow a spatial-temporal, ritually measured progression across scripted activities, through sacraments of confession, the *viaticum*, and holy unction, through the office of the dead and other consolations voiced at a deathbed, through a vigil, a funeral mass, the burial, and the continuing cycles of prayers, masses, and other remembrances over days and years. For “the shadow of death loomed over many of the rhythms of religious life at the end of the Middle Ages: testamentary formulas, the granting of indulgences to relieve souls in Purgatory, processions of penitents and flagellants, and many other displays.”⁶⁵ The flow of affect was to move from the room where one died, where professional or semi-professional mourners might help a family pray the office of the dead, then on to a procession from a house to a church where a mass was performed, then on again to the place of burial, and sometimes farther still through the circulation of death notices and mortuary rolls requesting additional suffrages, expanding the spatial and temporal frame of the fact of an individual's departure, expanding the fraternity created or reinforced by a death into a particular geography of remembrances.⁶⁶

64 Kiening, “Aspekte,” 36, 38; Anne L. Klinck, “Singing a Song of Sorrow: Tropes of Lament,” in *Laments for the Lost in Medieval Literature*, eds Jane Tolmie and M.J. Toswell (Turnhout: 2010), 1–20, here 8. Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers* (Ostfildern: 2014), 4–7 and passim, in great detail, explores points of departure between norm and practice.

65 Schmitt, *Les rythmes au Moyen Âge*, 611.

66 Schmitt, *Les rythmes*, 417–28; Lynda Rollason, “Medieval Mortuary Rolls: Prayer for the Dead and Travel in Medieval England,” *Northern History* 48 (2011), 187–223. Protestants sometimes expanded the use of funeral processions to publicize a death apart from an appeal to suffrages, as in the cases, for example, of Luther's protector Friedrich the Wise, which proceeded through 30 kilometres of Electoral Saxony, and Martin Luther himself, which proceeded from Eisenach to Wittenberg. Natalie Krenz, *Ritualwandel und Deutungshoheit: Die frühe Reformation in der Residenzstadt Wittenberg (1500–1533)* (Tübingen: 2014), 362. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf, 3 vols

Of course, there was, also before the Reformation, variability within and between places, within and between different social ranks.⁶⁷ It can be challenging to study this variability even in narrow contexts. At French and Burgundian courts, for example, mourning rituals had differentiated kin groups, degrees of affinity, and position, but the distinctions were not always observed strictly.⁶⁸ The opportunity to create occasions, places, and instruments of remembrance depended on the size and quality of one's social network, and money. The variety of remembrances and the gifts and relationships of patronage that accompanied them have barely been investigated on an appropriately large scale, although their importance in European societies is clear, for the entire period since Carolingian times at least until the 18th century, when a continent-wide, Christian orientation toward transcendence in the face of death yielded to a 'cultural science' less certain about the afterlife, which favoured more anonymous forms of remembrance.⁶⁹

Yet the variability notwithstanding, rites and customs followed that basic movement from private to public domains: from individual to internal group to public space. The flow of grief continued through the Reformation. No amount of polemic against "papal necromancy"⁷⁰ could completely erase the need to reproduce class-distinction, family history, and social bond in the remembrances of the dead, even though the customs by which the dead were separated from the living now changed along confessional lines: "the same divisions of hierarchy, sex and age that dominated in life can be seen in the utilisation of

(Minneapolis: 1993), 3:377–82. Calvin's funeral included a more modest mid-day procession through the city. Max Engammare, "L'inhumation de Calvin et des pasteurs Genevois de 1540 à 1620," in *Les funérailles à la Renaissance*, ed. Jean Balsamo (Geneva: 2002), 271–93, here 272.

67 Variety in burial practices is emphasized by Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter*, 19–114, 337–404.

68 Kiening, "Aspekte," 46. Bernhard Jussen, "'Dolor' und 'Memoria': Traueritten, gemalte Trauer und soziale Ordnungen im späten Mittelalter," in *Memoria als Kulture*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: 1995), 207–52, here 212–18, 251.

69 Wollasch, "Memoria," 364–66; Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialbild," in *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenken im Mittelalter*, eds Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Munich: 1984), 384–440, here 429. For the concept of cultural memory, over against a shorter-term communicative memory, Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: 2008), 109–18.

70 Pierre Viret's term. See Karine Crousaz, "La mort, les funérailles et l'au-delà: La rupture de la Réforme en Suisse romande," in *Le Marbre et la poussière: Le patrimoine funéraire de la Suisse romande – XIVe–XVIIIe siècles* (Cahiers d'archéologie romande; no. 143), ed. Dave Lüthi (Lausanne: Musée cantonal d'archéologie et d'histoire, 2013), 65–76, here 143.

space for burial.”⁷¹ Or at least that was the case where and when burial could regularly occur. In France, for example, Protestants could count on an undisturbed interment only after the Edict of Nantes (1598), when they first received the right openly to maintain cemeteries – and only for a brief, troubled century.⁷² In iconoclastic Geneva, where that peaceful opportunity did exist, the burial of pastors – exemplars of Christian piety and practice – displayed an on-going “attachment of the living with the dead.”⁷³ While details of Calvin’s own prudent funeral are barely known, we do know that his body was accompanied to its final resting place by a large throng of pastors and citizens.⁷⁴ Grief still moved across town. In spite of all that the Protestants changed when they nullified purgatory and the value of pious deeds and endowments for the dead, how much could they really alter the fundamental motion of mourning from bedside to public buildings and open air, or the association of grief with the admission of sin before an assurance of salvation?⁷⁵ Anxiety over keeping the performances stipulated by long, Catholic tradition, and the difficulty monks and nuns had to honour the many anniversary contracts that had accumulated over time, seems to have contributed to early Protestant disillusionment with tradition.⁷⁶ We could think of Protestant rebellion as an attempt to improve upon the care of the dead and the grieving they left behind. Protestants still

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- 71 Will Coster, “A Microcosm of Community: Burial, Space and Society in Chester, 1598 to 1633,” *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, eds Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (New York: 2005), 124–43. Chris Marsh, “Sacred Space in England, 1560–1640: The View from the Pew,” *JEH* 53 (2002), 286–311. The same was even true in Geneva, where at the time of Theodore Beza’s funeral, social rank played an evident role in funerary rites: Engammare, “L’inhumation de Calvin,” 282–6.
- 72 Consider Paul Romane-Musculus, “Les anciens cimetières protestants toulousains,” *Annales du Midi* 81 (1969), 454–63, and Engammare, “L’inhumation de Calvin.” The right was lost during the reign of Louis XIV and only restored after the French Revolution.
- 73 Engammare, “L’inhumation de Calvin,” 293.
- 74 Calvin’s contemporary John à Lasco, reformer of Emden but also influential throughout reformed Protestant Europe, prescribed church interments, funeral preaching, public prayer and benediction, and the distribution of alms to the poor. Engammare, “L’inhumation de Calvin,” 277–8.
- 75 Consider Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, 196, 203–204. Emblematic of the most comprehensive Protestant disassociation of reformed from Catholic mortuary practices were the six dialogues composed by Pierre Viret on purgatory, the Office of the Dead, anniversary masses, and hell, whose influence spanned Swiss and French Protestantism. He tried to reconstruct the similarities between Catholic and ancient pagan-idolatrous practices. Pierre Viret, *Disputations chrestiennes* (Geneva: 1544); Crousaz, “La mort, les funérailles et l’au-delà,” 65–76.
- 76 Mireille Othenin-Girard, “‘Helfter’ und ‘Gespenster’: Die Toten und der Tauschhandel mit den Lebenden,” in *Kulturelle Reformation: Sinnformationen im Umbruch, 1400–1600*, eds Bernhard Jussen and Craig Koslofsky (Göttingen: 1999), 159–91.

took Christ and even Mary as the avatars of proper grief and as instruments of a consolation concentrated around gospel promises.⁷⁷ Funerary monuments had sometimes presented mourners in sculpture “as a constant sign of the emotional participation of living survivors”; but among Protestants biblical inscriptions, paintings, and memory books could reiterate the survivors’ commitment, shared with the departed, to evangelical comfort. It was an expression of love that tied individual to clan and eternity, a fact confirmed by the achievements of Protestant reform.⁷⁸ It would be callous to assume that biblical inscriptions or actual Bibles could not become focal points of affection for lost loved ones any more than an altarpiece or a prayer offered to a saint. Most Protestants eschewed neither funeral processions nor funerary monuments in an evangelically corrected form.⁷⁹ Grief still moved from household to church and final resting place. These still comprised a geography of remembrances.

4 Conclusion

For the cumulative evidence scholars have derived from scholastic debate, devotional literature and art, popular fictions, and the reflections of humanists on the body and its feelings portrays grief as a turbulent motion. It is caused

77 Helmut Puff, “Memento Mori, Memento Mei: Albrecht Dürer and the Art of Dying,” in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Leiden: 2010), 103–32.

78 Kiening, “Aspekte,” 47. *Les Pleurants dans l'Art du Moyen Âge en Europe* (Musée des beaux-arts de Dijon: Dijon:1971), passim; Callahan, “Signs of Sorrow,” 179–285; Mia Mochizuki, *The Netherlandish Image after Iconoclasm: Material Religion in the Dutch Golden Age* (Aldershot: 2008); Angela Vanhaelen, *The Wake of Iconoclasm: Painting the Church in the Dutch Republic* (University Park, PA: 2012), 9–10, 159–178; Claudia Jarzebowski, “Loss and Emotion in Funeral Works on Children in Seventeenth-Century Germany,” *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany*, ed. Lynn Tatlock (Leiden: 2010), 187–213; Ronald Rittgers, “Grief and Consolation in Early Modern Lutheran Devotion: The Case of Johannes Christoph Oelhafen’s *Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Bereavement* (1619),” *Church History* 81 (2012), 601–30; Anna Carrdus, “*Thränen-Tüchlein für christliche Eltern*: Consolation Books for Bereaved Parents in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Germany,” *German Life and Letters* 49 (1996), 1–17; Marie-Dominique Legrand, “*Les Larmes de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay*,” *Albineana, Cahiers d'Aubigné* 18 (2006), 243–63.

79 Jill Bepler, “Enduring Loss and Memorializing Women: The Cultural Role of Dynastic Widows in Early Modern Germany,” in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Leiden: 2010), 133–60; Mara R. Wade, “Paper Monuments and the Creation of Memory: The Personal and Dynastic Mourning of Princess Magdalena Sibylle of Saxony,” in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Leiden: 2010), 161–86.

by the impact of loss. It extends through the body from the self to its surroundings. When grief was felt alone, a living soul could expect its movement to shift and change into any number of other feelings. Its ebbing and flowing could be felt in breath, heartbeat, sweat, and tears. But it was not meant to be left languishing there in the individual, eating away or even destroying human personality. The rites and customs of mourning tried to manage its flux, until desire for the dead was redirected to its place among the living.

Relics and Saints: Commemoration and Memorialization of the Holy Dead

Freddy C. Domínguez

The courtyard of the Holy Innocents Church in Paris was an important civic centre during medieval and early modern times. Sermons could be heard by thousands of congregants, parishioners could exchange news, scribes could copy documents for the illiterate, and occasionally rebellion burst forth.¹ This and much more would happen amid visible, often nauseatingly present vestiges of death. A large communal pit would have had a mound of rotting corpses. Legend had it that putrefaction amid such piles of flesh would take just a day—the cemetery of the Holy Innocents was known as the “flesh eater.”² Around the perimeter of the ample yard, charnel houses stored bones and more bones, some of them decoratively displayed as *memento mori* – reminders of life’s transience. A well-known cycle of frescoes along the south wall depicted the *danse macabre*.³ Viewers would see death, in the form of a skeleton, calling and leading men and women from all levels of society to their inevitable ends. These images were reminders of material ephemerality, of the body’s unimportance and the primacy of the soul. There were, however, exceptions to such a truism and this chapter will explore how these exceptions – the holy dead – were construed by early modern men and women.

Inside the church, the relationship between life and death was different. The miracle of the eucharist, the central moment of the mass, would have made the presence of Christ physical. Past and present were warped, the crucified and the resurrected united in material form. These moments of high spiritual drama occurred among permanent remnants of sanctity. Perhaps the most important among these at the Holy Innocents was, according to a contemporary,

1 Vanessa Harding deals with the Holy Innocents throughout her seminal book: *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670* (Cambridge: 2008); Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: 1981), 269. Christine Métayer, *Au tombeau des secrets: Les écrivains publics du Paris populaire. Cimetière des Saints-Innocents XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: 2015).

2 Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 360.

3 Harding, *The Dead and the Living*, 102.

“an innocent entirely encased in gold and silver.”⁴ This was purportedly one of Herod’s child-victims as told in the Gospel of Matthew. The bejewelled corpse of the murdered boy was an exception that proved the rule of bodily inconsequence. That such holy figures did not undergo normal death, that they often resisted human rot, and that they sometimes emitted a sweet odour instead of a deathly stench, charged them with spiritual energy absent in the decomposing skin and brittle bones outside.

The importance of the holy dead in pre-modern Christian culture is unquestionable. In a recent survey, Charles Freeman unflinchingly states that with the expansion of medieval Christianity, relics and saints’ cults “were accepted at every level of life, among rich and poor, king and serf, theologian and illiterate, without challenge.”⁵ The yearly feast calendar was defined in part by celebrations of the dead, intercessory prayers were said to saints with specific occupations and powers, and their physical remains could both protect and punish, thus eliciting concentrated devotion. Saints were ever-present. Their physical remnants abided in bits and pieces, whole corpses, or objects that they had touched. Christians carried the pilgrim’s staff far to contact holy remains and share in their spiritual power.

Stories about saints collected in martyrologies, legends, and individual *vitae* were just as important. They survive in the many thousands from early Christian times through the age of print. In general, they were to serve as exempla for Christians and as such had transformative powers. As one influential early modern Jesuit put it, lives of the saints taught man “more through acts than through words.”⁶

Although the importance of saints and their relics was well-established before the middle ages, their significance was not. As Peter Brown argued, perceptions of the dead were defined by a blend of theological assumptions and a series of social circumstances and specific cultural needs.⁷ This could be said about any period of Christian history, but there are certain epochs during which the place of the holy dead elicited greater contemplation and (re)consideration by contemporaries.⁸ This chapter will explore the place of the holy

4 Robert W. Berger (ed.), *Public Access to Art in Paris: A Documentary History from the Middle Ages to 1800* (Pennsylvania, PA: 1999), 29.

5 Charles Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT: 2012), xiv.

6 Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Flos sanctorum de las vidas de los santos* (Barcelona: 1734), sig. ¶¶ 2v.

7 Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: 1981).

8 For important dynamics and changes over time regarding saints, saints’ lives, and martyrs see: André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge (1198–1431): Recherches sur les mentalités religieuses médiévales* (Rome: 2014 [orig. 1981]). Robert

dead within the context of such a period marked by intellectual currents of the Renaissance and the confessional battles resulting from the Reformation. I will not argue for a 'light-switch' dynamic in which 'traditional' medieval beliefs were destroyed by incipient modernity, but instead will highlight the force and perseverance of beliefs and practices concerning the holy dead amid reformist impulses between the 15th and the late 16th centuries. This chapter will demonstrate ambiguities and tensions over how early modern Catholics understood the place of saints and their relics in light of efforts to achieve consensus and stability during times of seismic change.⁹

1 Scholars and Folktales

Humanists were assiduous critics. The term *umanista* was initially scholarly slang for teachers of humanistic disciplines in Italy, but with time it became more capacious to include men (and from our vantage point, women) of different backgrounds and professions that, in various contexts, shared disciplinary interests and a deep passion for classical antiquity in its myriad textual, material, and imagined forms. Humanists collected and catalogued (ancient) objects, carried out thorough philological investigations, and developed techniques of source criticism to 'revive' the past. As their intellectual aspirations grew, so did their egos. Humanists, especially in their earliest guises, had little patience for their immediate intellectual predecessors whom they often spoke of in infantilized terms and with barbed criticisms of their ignorance. An older historiography once maintained that, within an Italian milieu where humanism was born, this blend of classical revivalism, exacting scholarship, and snippy temperaments, led to secularization and the diminishment of spiritual fervour.¹⁰ Such claims have been proven overly simplistic, but there is no doubt that humanist inclinations influenced a reappraisal of certain kinds of devotional activities in early modern life.¹¹

Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: 2013).

- 9 Reference to stability is a reference to T.K. Rabb's classic synthesis: *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: 1976).
- 10 For the classic secularising narrative: Jacob Burckardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel: 1860).
- 11 For a complex assessment of secularizing and religious impulses see Riccardo Fubini, *Humanism and Secularization: From Petrarch to Valla* (Durham, NC: 2003). James Hankins, "Religion and the Modernity of Renaissance Humanism," in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Leiden: 2006), 137–53.

The holy dead were ripe for critical treatment because they played such a crucial role in late medieval society and because the stories linked to them were thought to be rife with fraudulence and shameful interpolations. That 'authenticity' or truth claims made about saints became an issue of pivotal concern in the early modern period itself marks a hermeneutical shift among some contemporary scholars. Medieval hagiographers were often interested in persuading readers of their truthfulness and they were aware that some stories were merely rumours or vulgar tales. But even among those who were uncomfortable with apocrypha, sincere devotion was deemed important, sometimes even more important, than unvarnished truth. This relative laxity is partly because hagiographical texts were not considered theological works; rather, they were pious ones and thus did not garner the most exacting attention. The shift toward a rhetoric of absolute veracity (among some) resulted, in part, from the textual activities of humanists who aimed to produce useful, elegant, and accurate classical books and who had a general interest in 'pure', uncontaminated texts. With such goals in mind, the unreliable pedigrees of saints' lives and the questionable provenance of some relics posed serious problems.

Lorenzo Valla exemplifies humanist concerns. A scholar and statesman of the highest order, he is today best remembered for his critique of *The Donation of Constantine*, a forged medieval document that was used as evidence for papal authority. In his famous oration on the subject, Valla unsurprisingly linked his historico-philological efforts to a general cleansing of church falsehoods that were believed by many Christians out of ignorance. Fantastical tales of talking statues and similar preternatural phenomena were imbibed unthinkingly and miracle stories were repeated without account of accuracy. He claimed not to "impugn admiration of the saint nor deny their divine works ... On the contrary, I defend and protect those works, but I refuse to let them be confused with made-up stories."¹² He suggested that fallacious narratives must have been created by "infidels" to mock true faith. In a sense, they had succeeded since those lies had been largely assimilated, not only by the credulous masses, but by the Church itself. For Valla, then, the expurgation of myths was as much the instinct of a rigorous scholar as it was of a good Christian fighting against heresy.

Erasmus of Rotterdam, an admirer of Valla and perhaps the most famous scholar of his day, was among the most zealous exponents of this humanist sensibility. He was keenly interested in distinguishing between *historia* and

12 Lorenzo Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine*, trans. G.W. Bowersock (Cambridge, MA: 2007), 128.

fabula both in secular and sacred realms.¹³ As a result, he could be a vicious critic of false traditions, including devotion rendered to apocryphal saints. Erasmus's famed satire, *The Praise of Folly*, goes further than pointing out textual inaccuracies and errant beliefs by underlining the dangers of popular ignorance and wrong-headed devotional activities. He sneers at those who

have arrived at the foolish but gratifying belief that if they gaze on a picture of Polyphemus-Christopher they will not die that day, or that whoever salutes in certain prescribed words an image of Barbara will come through a battle unharmed.¹⁴

Such practices are discussed amid descriptions of how men gullibly fear monsters and goblins and how individuals wrongly assume that they could partake in various schemes – last-ditch prayers, charms, and payments – to achieve salvation. Thus, misplaced devotion to spurious objects was akin to popular beliefs in mythical creatures and noxious ideas about easy salvation. Fervid belief could not make up for deep ignorance and the consequence of such mistaken zeal could be damnation.

Such critiques do not imply total distancing from traditional devotional practices. Alison Frazier's ground-breaking book, *Possible Lives*, argues that even early Italian humanists were deeply and variously involved in editing saints' lives, often employing philological, antiquarian, and broadly historical techniques to fix errors of textual transmission.¹⁵ To be sure, humanists were not always comfortable in their hagiographer's hats. Leon Battista Alberti, for example, started a large editorial project, but only made it through one *vita*, that of the second century martyr St Potitus. To the extent that he persevered, however, he approached his work with scholarly rigor. As Anthony Grafton has described, he stayed true to humanist techniques: "the collation of witnesses, the setting of testimonies into their proper chronological order, the denunciation (and explaining away) of scribal error, matched those of the most erudite humanists of the time."¹⁶ His decision to stop at one life may have been due to

13 Peter G. Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age* (Leiden: 1994), 154–9.

14 Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, trans. Hoyt Hopewell Thomas (Princeton, NJ: 2015), 55–7.

15 Alison Knowles Frazier, *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York: 2005). For the German context along these lines see David J. Collins, *Reforming Saints: Saints' Lives and Their Authors in Germany, 1470–1530* (Oxford: 2008).

16 Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1997), 63.

the fact that his efforts could only go so far, given the paucity of sources surviving for any given saint. He may have also been wary of the values espoused by martyrological literature. As Guido Guarino argued decades ago, stories of Christian submission and disengagement from the world may have seemed unworthy to humanists increasingly interested in civic engagement and classical values such as glory.¹⁷ Still, as Frazier has shown, other humanists could very easily “use” hagiographical texts to underline classical interests and values. For example, when Valla wrote about the 4th century Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, he ably matched religious fervour with more classically tinted ideals of “group-oriented fidelity and active fortitude that constitute military virtue.”¹⁸

Humanist devotion to saints emphasized holy figures in their image. Erasmus could pelt those who believed in made-up saints and made fools of themselves at spurious shrines, but he was undoubtedly devoted to the life and works of St Jerome, the biblical translator and church father. For much of his career, he undertook the “Herculean” task of editing all of Jerome’s works. The first volume of this project contained Erasmus’s life of the saint, in which he promised to follow the most exacting scholarly standards. He distinguished himself from old authors who:

esteemed it dutiful and proper to make use of appropriate fictitious narratives for the public good, to encourage them to embark on an upright and pious way of life, or to excite their minds towards the study of honourable things, or to stiffen the sinews against any feebleness, or to frighten the impious.¹⁹

Erasmus, however, thought it best to “describe saints in just such a way as they actually were.”²⁰ He does not reject the goals of traditional *vitae* – spiritual instruction and motivation toward piety remained central – but these ideals should be the effects of truthful narration. That said, Erasmus’s textual effort was not devoid of personal interest. As Lisa Jardine has suggested, Erasmus’s biography focuses less on Jerome’s miraculous relationship with God and more on the miraculous nature of his work as a result of scholarly rigor, making him

17 Guido A. Garino, “Leon Battista Alberti’s ‘Vita S. Potiti,’” *Renaissance News* 8 (1955), 86–9.

18 Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 63. Mariarosa Cortesi, “‘Sanctissimum militum exemplum’: I Martiri di Sebastia e Lorenzo Valla,” *Bollettino della badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 54 (2000), 319–36.

19 Quoted in Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton, NJ: 1993), 60; Erasmus, *Eximii Doctoris Hieronymi Stridonensis vita* (Basel: 1519), 3–4.

20 Erasmus, *Eximii Doctoris Hieronymi Stridonensis vita*, 3–4.

out to be a scholar-saint, a paradigm of eloquence and a master exegete. In Jerome, humanists thus had one of their own. As Eugene Rice has shown, the Renaissance image of the church father mutated from that of a penitent out in the wilds, to that of an author. Erasmus, as good a publicist as there has ever been, made sure that he himself was taken as both the saint's emulator and his restorer.²¹ But even more than this, as Jardine suggests, by emphasizing Jerome's erudition, the saint (and Erasmus) modelled piety based on attentive reading and study.

If humanists might try to co-opt and occasionally make hagiography conform to humanist interests, they lived within a culture of hagiography and relics which fundamentally structured their way of thinking. Not only did humanists believe in the powers of saints and their remains (be they textual or physical), but their own intellectual activities were influenced by the culture of sanctity in which they lived. This topic is still fresh and open for further inquiry, but Hester Schadee has pointed out the resonances between early humanist textual activities and contemporary religious practices. She has shown that humanists believed classical authors were "present" in their texts and that the codices that carried these texts were thought of and spoken of in "corporeal" terms, indeed as relics. Like the holy relic, manuscripts "had the power to transmit; together text and codex formed a medium that allowed dead authors to speak to the living, and enabled humanist readers to hear the voices of antiquity."²² Schadee insists humanists did not transform secular figures into divine ones, but she emphasizes "concepts, practices, and discursive traditions of contemporary Christianity as framing the ambitions and expressions of the early humanists."²³

Devotion to the holy dead no doubt created an imaginative space for engagement with the secular past, even among the most hard-nosed humanists and statesman like Niccolò Machiavelli. In a famous letter to his friend Francesco Vettori, he tells him of an intriguing evening ritual after cavorting with locals during a period of rustic exile. When Machiavelli returned home, he entered his study:

on the threshold I take off my work clothes, covered with mud and dirt, and put on the garments of court and palace. Fitted out appropriately,

21 Eugene F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD: 1985).

22 Hester Schadee, "Ancient Texts and Holy Bodies: Humanist Hermeneutics and the Language of Relics," in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in honor of Anthony Grafton vol. 1*, eds. A. Blair and A. Goeing (Leiden: 2016), 675–91 on 685.

23 Schadee, "Ancient Texts and Holy Bodies," 686.

I step inside the venerable courts of the ancients, where, solicitously received by them, I nourish myself on that food that alone is mine ... where I am unashamed to converse with them and to question them about the motives for their actions, and they, out of their human kindness, answer me.²⁴

While Machiavelli is clearly talking about his communion with pagan authorities, his language evokes a level of interaction that had deep roots in forms of reading usually associated with devotional texts. As readers would search for *exempla* in the lives of the saints, so Machiavelli seeks the lessons of ancient wisdom. Just as saints' lives were meant to be a source of spiritual nourishment, so Roman historians and philosophers such as Machiavelli. More broadly, of course, just as reading and devotion to saints implied a kind of time travel, the transcendence of divinity, so too the men of antiquity came alive for present needs, disregarding traditional temporal limits.

Books were not the only physical remnants of antiquity. Much of the period's intellectual electricity depended on the collection, transcription, and identification of objects undertaken with antiquarian zeal. Thus, when Valla attacked *The Donation of Constantine*, part of the historical evidence depended on numismatics. He dwells on the incongruence between the document's claims of imperial authority and the nonexistence of imperial coins bearing a papal image.²⁵ Alberti tried his hand at proto-marine archaeology when he attempted to dredge up an ancient shipwreck – two of Caligula's pleasure barges – in Lake Nemi. There were also prodigious collectors like the merchant Cyriac of Ancona, who left behind precious notebooks of inscriptions he copied along the Mediterranean.²⁶ Few were greater seekers (by proxy) of ancient material culture than Pope Nicholas V (r.1447–1455), who, according to the humanist Biondo Flavio, was interested in the “mastery of all learning, of the whole of antiquity, of universal history and of the greatness of Italy.”²⁷

Just as churchmen became avid collectors of non-Christian antiquities, so humanists were at the forefront of Christian archaeology.²⁸ For example,

24 Machiavelli to Vettori, Florence, 10 December 1513. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (eds), *Machiavelli and his Friends: Their Personal Correspondence* (Dekalb, IL: 1996), 264.

25 Valla, *On the Donation*, 53.

26 Marina Belozerskaya, *To Wake the Dead: A Renaissance Merchant and the Birth of Archaeology* (New York: 2009); Cyriac of Ancona, *Life and Early Travels*, eds Charles Mitchell, Edward Bodnar, and Clive Foss (Cambridge, MA: 2015).

27 Biondo Flavio, *Italy Illuminated*, ed. Jeffrey A. White (Cambridge, MA: 2005), vol. 1, 5–7.

28 William Stenhouse, “Visitors, Display, and Reception in the Antiquity Collections of Late-Renaissance Rome,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005), 397–434.

15th-century members of the Roman Academy led by Pompeo Leto had a deep interest in Christian sites and monuments. Aesthetic delight was an important motivator for their efforts, and they were just as likely to admire religious objects for their antiquity as for their ancient beauty. When members of the academy went to explore the catacombs – early Christian burial grounds – the irreverent graffiti left behind by these scavengers also suggest that they were not moved by solemn piety alone. Pompeo Leto, for example, signed his name and somewhat scandalously gave himself the title of “Supreme Pontiff.” And yet, one important member of the Academy, Bartolommeo Platina, insisted that his interest in these sacred grounds was also due to a desire to be near the bodies of ancient martyrs.²⁹

Saints and their relics thus existed within a secular and spiritual continuum of knowledge production. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park have noted that medieval collectors wanted to amass “wonderful” objects, primarily relics, which belonged to a divine order, but these holy items were physically and, to a point, thematically tied to a range of natural specimens. A cathedral might be chock-full of saintly odds and ends, but it also displayed ostrich eggs and alligators, all part of a complex program to show off wealth through ownership and a symbolic effort to inspire awe in the viewer and remind him or her of God’s marvellous nature.³⁰ In the early modern period, partly as a result of humanist practices together with developments in the field of medicine and incipient ‘scientific’ culture, cabinets of curiosity and early museums became important intellectual spaces bringing *naturalia* and man-made artefacts together, articulating a growing sense of man’s ability to ‘possess’ nature. Saints were an important part of the visual rhetoric in such spaces, but their significance could be multi-faceted especially outside an ecclesiastical environment. As Alexandra Walsham has pointed out, “It is often impossible to disentangle the mixture of motives that has inspired their collectors and the sensual, aesthetic, religious, and scientific elements of visitor experience.”³¹

Saintly images could play complex roles inframing early modern collections themselves. A 16th-century treatise on proto-museums by Dutch scholar Samuel Quiccheberg reveals that sacred images, “both painted and sculpted, or produced by some other craft” held a place of prime importance at the entrance

29 Richard J. Palermino, “The Roman Academy, the Catacombs, and the Conspiracy of 1468,” *Archivum Historiae Pontificae* 18 (1980), 117–55.

30 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: 1998), esp. 68–88.

31 Alexandra Walsham, “Introduction: Relics and Remains,” in *Relics and Remains*, ed. Alexandra Walsham (Oxford: 2010), 32.

to the ideal learned area.³² Among these numbered, not relics themselves, but depictions of “the saints, male and female.”³³ Their presence played a variety of roles. These images had a quasi-genealogical function as they were of a piece with the portraits of family members. While family history was meant to tell of the earthly origins of the museum in question, holy images alluded to a sacred history, to the origins of humanity and everything else. Moreover, having such images would ensure “that the gods favour the entrance to the theatre or collection.”³⁴

Such an integral role in knowledge production ensured that saints continued to be part of a repertory of political authority. Rulers had long been among the most avid hoarders of relics and the trend did not diminish in the early modern period. By 1509 Frederick III, elector of Saxony (r. 1486–1525), who would be Martin Luther’s defender, had over 5000 relics as advertised in a richly illustrated book with woodcuts depicting reliquaries by Lucas Cranach.³⁵ The book fits generically into a tradition of describing relic holdings and locations for pilgrims, and as such had several public functions. Frederick’s relics were objects of private devotion, but they were also meant for display, both in situ and via print. Prefatory material to the reliquary guide, especially a striking image of Frederick in trance-like prayer and another prominent picture of Frederick’s recently built church-cum-university in Wittenburg, suggest that he wanted to convey something both about his piety and his authority. These preciousities were being advertised at a moment when Frederick wanted to underline his strength, the worthiness of his still fledgling institution, and the seat of his power. Indeed, he wanted to put Wittenburg on the Christian map. Moreover, the ownership of thousands of relics – he would have more than 18,000 by the end of his life – was meant to awe.

There was no more important collector of sacred objects than Philip II of Spain (r.1556–1598), whose relics numbered well over 7000. As with Frederick, Philip’s avidity had much to do with the king’s personal piety. He believed in the efficacy of saintly remains as evinced most strikingly in his decision to place the whole body of St Diego of Alcalá next to his ailing son, Charles, during a period of serious illness. As the Hieronymite monk José de Sigüenza put it,

32 Mark A. Meadows and Bruce Robertson (eds), *The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quiccheberg’s Inscriptiones 1565* (Los Angeles, CA: 2013), 62.

33 Meadows and Robertson (eds), *The First Treatise on Museums*, 86.

34 Meadows and Robertson (eds), *The First Treatise on Museums*, 78.

35 *Dye zaigung des hochlobwidigen hailighthums der Stifftkirchen aller hailigen zu Wittenburg* (Wittenburg: 1510).

the king was moved by “a saintly zeal and by a pious and holy desire.”³⁶ But, as Guy Lazure argued in a path-breaking article, Philip’s collection of relics must be placed within broader frameworks and contexts.³⁷ Relics were objects of devotion, but they were also tools of political authority. For example, Philip’s collection included relics related to local saints within his vast empire and thus created, symbolically, a union between himself and his territories. More practically, relics could be used as important currency within a gift-giving culture to establish bonds with localities. Such possessions were also part and parcel of the king’s ambitions to sacralize and biblicalize his kingship.³⁸ While he paid for extensive research by scholars to uncover the biblical origins of Spain, he also wanted to establish his proximity to the holy in ‘real time’. Moreover, relics reveal the king’s possessiveness. They were brought together in the same way that other natural objects, art, books, maps, and surveys of his realms across the globe attempted to satisfy a monarchy who embraced a covetous motto: “the world is not enough.”

The hegemony of learned practices suggested here helped re-orient the traditional historico-theological activities of those firmly within the Church. The great exemplar of this is Cesare Baronio, a member of the Congregation of the Oratory, a cardinal, and most famously an ecclesiastical historian. He would be charged with writing a history of the Church (from a Catholic perspective) and was also chosen in the mid-16th century to re-write Rome’s official martyrological calendar. He approached the latter project with as much reformist zeal as Erasmus would have and, indeed, the enterprise was the continuation of earlier humanist efforts under papal employ. As Baronio noted in a prefatory letter to Pope Sixtus v, the martyrology was based on the highest scholarly standards, the deep study of the church fathers, and ecclesiastical history for maximum accuracy.³⁹ Another prefatory note by the Bishop of Roermond (Netherlands) insists that the project is devoid of inaccuracies and superstitions.⁴⁰ Such claims of accuracy, or at least the aspiration to it, were based on techniques of collection (documents and objects), assiduous source criticism, and philological acuity that were just as much the result of current secular

36 José de Sigüenza, *Historia de la orden de san Jerónimo*, ed. Juan Catalina García (Madrid: 1907), vol. 2, book 3, 423.

37 Guy Lazure, “Possessing the Sacred: Monarchy and Identity in Philip II’s Relic Collection at the Escorial,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007), 58–93.

38 Adam Beaver, “A Holy Land for the Catholic Monarchy: Palestine in the Making of Modern Spain, 1469–1598” (Harvard University: PhD diss., 2008).

39 Cesare Baronio, *Martyrologium Romanum* (Rome: 1598), sig.* 3r-v.

40 Baronio, *Martyrologium Romanum*, n.f.

modes of scholarship as they were the intellectual traditions within the church going back to antiquity itself with scholars such as Origen and Eusebius.⁴¹

Scholarship on church history in the 16th century required awesome international efforts that sharpened critical skills and galvanized intellectual forces on a large scale.⁴² Because the stakes were so high in getting the narratives 'right' about the Christian past and its significance, Christian scholars used the most advanced tools at their disposal. So much so, as Anthony Grafton has argued in a provocative essay, that the flourishing of 'scientific' culture during the period was deeply influenced by the practices of ecclesiastical historians.⁴³

Just as the 16th century witnessed a deepened interest of textual and historical reconstruction among clerics, there were also renewed efforts to 'uncover' the physical remnants of a Christian past, which early humanists pioneered. As Grafton explains, "Roman scholars dedicated themselves to the Christian past with the same sense of mission that had inspired their classicist predecessors a century before. They sought to reconstruct the experience of liturgical life, the saintly lives, and terrible deaths of early Christians."⁴⁴ Filippo Neri, founder of the Roman Oratory to which Baronio belonged, was among the avid who led tours into ancient cemeteries and churches. Others, like the Dominican antiquary Alonso Chacón, sketched Christian antiquities with special zeal. After the (re)discovery of the Catacombs of the Giordani in 1578, archaeological studies flourished further and culminated in one of the great antiquarian books of the early modern period, *Roma sotteranea*, which posthumously published the work of the Hieronymite monk, Antonio Bosio. As a prefatory note to this book makes clear, his efforts meant to "represent in real life the early church" and to show that though many sacred bodies had over time been moved to churches, there are plenty that remain underground: the "viscera" of Rome hide roads "sanctified with the blood of martyrs, with the sighs and tears of the faithful."⁴⁵

The desire to assert the proper origins of the Church was not (only) the direct result of a humanistic penchant for accuracy or new-fangled intellectual

41 Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA: 2008).

42 Gregory B. Lyon, "Badouin, Flacius, and the Plan for the Magdeburg Centuries," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003), 253–72.

43 Anthony Grafton, "Where was Solomon's House? Ecclesiastical History and the Intellectual Origins of Bacon's New Atlantis," in *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*, ed. Anthony Grafton (Cambridge, MA: 2009), 98–113.

44 Anthony Grafton, *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture* (New Haven, CT: 1993), 115.

45 Antonio Bosio, *Roma sotteranea* (Rome, 1623), no pagination.

practices. Scholarly activities were put at the service of the church, or various churches, in the wake of Latin Christendom's fracturing resulting from the Reformation. Indeed, when Martin Luther split the ground of Latin Christendom, the holy dead could not escape unscathed. Although it is dangerous to talk in absolutes about a phenomenon – the Reformation – of such varied character, it is safe to say that Protestant theologies undermined the traditional role and representations of saints. Within the context of strict scripturalism and solafidianism, saints would no longer be promoted as intercessory figures and, especially among hardliners, sacred images, including relics and depictions of saints, would become emblematic of Catholic idolatry inspired by demonic forces. In the most extreme situations – which Luther himself found discomfiting – acts of iconoclasm, the destruction of reliquaries and other sacred objects, was deemed a necessary act of purification by some reformers. These challenges to Catholic tradition did not lead to rejection or neglect of the holy dead, but a renewed emphasis on them. While the Council of Trent insisted that abuses should be eliminated, it stated

that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Saviour.

Further, on relics:

the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ, which bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life, and to be glorified, - are to be venerated by the faithful; through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men.⁴⁶

If 'Renaissance culture' or, more specifically, humanistic impulses can be said to have caused any shift in Catholic engagement with the holy dead, it has more to do with textual sensibilities than core beliefs. Circumspection about hagiographical narratives and relics were quite often discussed and assessed through the intellectual lenses of the time, but ultimately the victims of these

⁴⁶ H.J. Schroeder, (ed.), *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Charlotte, NC: 2011), 218.

inclinations were not saints, but texts that became antiquated and (sometimes) popular traditions that did not meet the more exacting expectations of the period. One book can serve as emblematic of the phenomenon. Jacobus de Voraigne's *Golden Legend* was largely a collection of saints' lives that became one of the most read texts of the late Middle ages: a thousand manuscripts survive.⁴⁷ In the age of print, the book fared less well. Aside from the end of the 15th century when the book saw a good number of incunabula editions, by the 16th century it fell into relative obscurity. To be sure, it did not fade away altogether and it had its adherents, but more often than not it came to the forefront of theological discussion because it was being attacked by learned theologians.⁴⁸ Amid efforts to make clearer, 'truer' narratives of saints, the (in retrospect) suspect elements of Jacobus's book would simply not do.

2 The Counter-Reformation and the Recent Dead

The searing critiques by Protestants and the onslaught of religious violence in the 16th century required a response from the Catholic Church. As noted above, the Council of Trent through its decrees re-affirmed Catholic theology while insisting that errors of faith or belief should be properly fixed. This required the vigilance of bishops and would depend on many of the scholarly interventions established by humanistic studies. But if the 'purification' of old traditions was a matter of concern, the Church was not only involved in antiquarian pursuits. Indeed, it had to figure out how to adjudicate and streamline decisions about the propriety of devotional activities and, more importantly for our purposes, to establish processes for recognizing sanctity itself.

Rome dealt with these challenges by expanding on late medieval trends and institutional developments. Ultimately, episcopal and inquisitorial bodies would watch for heresy and gross devotional misconduct. As far as sanctity was concerned, however, Rome insisted on papal authority over the matter and, unlike the medieval church, established a bureaucratic body – The Congregation of Faith – to process claims from throughout Catholic Christendom. These efforts became more important within the context of religious strife, both because Protestants questioned the role of saints and their relics and because

47 Jacobus de Voraigne, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: 1993); Jacques Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus de Voraigne and The Golden Legend*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, NJ: 2014).

48 Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda aurea: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History* (Madison, WI: 1985), 27–43.

contemporary contexts of religious violence provided *new* Christian heroes. Post-Reformation Catholicism witnessed renewed missionary zeal, hundreds of new martyrs, and a slew of famous spiritual reformers. If the place of long-established saints was (more or less) secure, moving forward, how would new saints and their bodies be aggregated to extant canonical tradition? As André Vauchez has pointed out, from the late Middle Ages onward, the process of making such decisions was necessarily a negotiation between local devotions and an expanding bureaucratic centre.⁴⁹

The problem with dead saints might be illuminated by living individuals with claims to special spiritual acuity. The 'living saint' was not a new development in Counter-Reformation Christianity, but some contemporaries marvelled at the spike in the number of individuals – predominantly women – who claimed to have ecstatic visions and direct communications with God.⁵⁰ These mystical experiences were accompanied by miracles, including signs of the stigmata, prophetic visions, and healing powers. Were such miracles the result of fraud or were these genuine reflections of divine grace? Important Catholic thinkers could and did take radically different positions on the topic. For example, the Dominican friar, Luis de Granada – one of the best-selling authors of the 16th century – promoted ecstatic figures and argued that one must take seriously outward signs of sanctity even if it might lead to error. His friend, the very influential Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra, had little patience for modern mystics and urged caution since it is impossible to look into the souls of men and women.

One example of such a contentious figure will suffice. Toward the end of the 16th century, Luis de Granada became a promoter of a Portuguese nun, Maria da Visitação who became Mother Superior at the Convent of the Anunciada in Lisbon. She bore the stigmata, communed with Christ and various saints, had revelatory visions, and performed miracles. Such was her fame, that people sought handkerchiefs daubed in the blood from her holy wounds. Even the rich and powerful sought her blessing – the Duke of Medina Sidonia, commander of the 1588 Armada, went to see her before setting sail against England. News of her and her purported sanctity spread across Europe through printed texts and epistolary networks to much acclaim and admiration. Within her own convent, however, some nuns had their doubts and after an inquisitorial process she confessed to have fabricated her stigmata, was deemed a fraud, and was ultimately imprisoned in a convent outside Lisbon.

49 André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident*.

50 Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: Cultura e religiosità femminile nella prima età moderna* (Turin: 1990).

Her story is instructive because it is a reminder of the tensions between those who believed saints walked among them and ecclesiastical (not to mention political) leaders that wanted to dampen such claims. As I have suggested elsewhere, it is no coincidence that efforts to promote Maria came during a time of relative diffidence in Rome.⁵¹ Between 1525 and 1588 the pope canonized no saints. This in no way impinged on the vitality of already-recognized saints, but many faithful felt the need of a more immediate presence of sanctity. Thus, when Granada and others tried to 'sell' Maria, they were aware that her story had important implications for the state of the present church. Aside from the prodigal aspects of her life, her Dominican supporters reminded other Catholics that God was on their side and defied Protestants who claimed that Rome had never had divine sanction. Among other things, Antonio de la Cerda, an important Dominican friar in Lisbon, claimed Maria showed that "[m]iracles have always existed in the Catholic Church."⁵² Moreover, in part because Maria claimed communion with saints and because she both venerated and produced holy objects (the aforementioned handkerchiefs), her story also spoke of how "it is necessary to revere and honour saintly images" and that "male and female saints in paradise are intercessors and our advocates." It was in living flesh, then, that God imprinted his message of support for the true church. These lived and visible experiences in turn confirmed the role of the holy dead.⁵³

Circumstances had conspired to make the 16th century an era of martyrdom not unlike the early Church that witnessed the massacre of Christians under Roman authorities. During an age of religious warfare, Protestants and Catholics alike celebrated those who died in defence of the true faith as they saw it. The period is thus filled with accounts of these victims in print and manuscript. The most famous works of martyrological literature of this period were produced by Protestants, in England John Foxe's *Booke of Martyrs* (1563) and in Geneva Jean Crespin's *Le Livre des martyrs* (1554). The Catholic world produced less iconic collections, but libraries and archives are teeming with accounts of men and women who died beneath the cross in Protestant lands and on global missions. There were no more active or passionate promoters of modern martyrs than English Catholics who suffered, especially under the

51 Freddy Domínguez, "From Saint to Sinner: Sixteenth -Century Perceptions of La Monja de Lisboa," in *A New Companion to Hispanic Mysticism*, ed. Hilaire Kallendorf (Leiden: 2010), 297–322.

52 Cipriano de Valera, *Tratado para confirmar los pobres cativos de Berberia* (London: 1594), 121.

53 Cipriano de Valera, *Tratado para confirmar los pobres cativos de Berberia* (London: 1594), 121.

reign of Elizabeth I. Their efforts to highlight current victims of state wrath are revelatory of how the recent dead were utilized by the faithful.

The Elizabethan regime killed nearly 200 Catholics. The reasons for the scale of execution are debatable. Elizabeth's government claimed they punished traitors who were plotting against the monarchy often with the help of foreign powers, especially the pope. English Catholics, on the other hand, would claim that the executions occurred for reasons of conscience. Those who would not bend to the will of the queen and those who promoted the lives of their martyrs embraced a culture of supreme sacrifice for a faith they believed to be true. Catholics (and Protestants) surely believed themselves, as Brad Gregory has put it, "participants in a historical community of the unjustly persecuted, rooted in scripture and exemplified in their saviour's crucifixion."⁵⁴ That the victims themselves and their devotees were moved by faith is undoubtable, but both the martyrs and their promoters were well aware that they were taking part in a war of words and perceptions both against the confessional enemies and within their own confessions. English Catholics became among the most vocal, most aggressive propagandists for their martyrs across Europe.⁵⁵

Many contemporaries of the 16th and 17th centuries would have thought of the ancient martyrs in tight connection with more recent exemplars. English Catholic propagandists promoted their own holy dead with an eye to using them as evidence of historical continuity which both underlined the stability of the True Church and emphasized the holy nature of recent victims. Even before the full onslaught of Elizabethan justice against Catholics took force the Catholic priest and exile, Nicholas Sander, made the point in his heavy theological tome, *De visibili monarchia*.⁵⁶ Among other things, the book provides an exhaustive chronological table of heresies from the origins of the church up to modern times together with refutations by Doctors of the Church. This timeline is broken up by commentary telling of Catholic martyrs through the early 1570s when the book was first published. Though the book does not deal with English martyrdom exclusively, by the end the great examples of Catholic fortitude are all English, emphasizing how English suffering was part of a

54 Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: 1999), 28.

55 Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535–1603*, 2nd ed. (New York: 2016). Thomas McCoog, "Constructing Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1582–1602," in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester: 2005), 95–127.

56 Nicholas Sander, *De visibili monarchia libri octo* (Louvain: 1571).

historical continuum and implicitly how the English served as exemplars for modern Catholics.

New circumstances, echoing as they did ancient times when Christians were forced to live in hiding, fundamentally re-charged the meaning of the martyr and the symbolic potency of the holy dead. No longer was the venerated martyr intended to speak to the general suffering of man on earth as it had been in late medieval times (during a time of Christendom's hegemony in the Latin West), but the holy dead carried a more visceral message during a period of renewed bloodshed. Not everyone was worthy of dying for the faith, but death seemed like a worthy goal to many. The English colleges that sprung up after the 1560s across Western Europe were in essence schools for martyrs. Unsurprisingly, during refectory these students would be read stories of cruel martyrdom and in the Roman College at least, they were often confronted with graphic images of martyrs from ancient times through to the present as a way to inspire pity for the faithful as well as a combination of rage and resolution to imitate that sacrifice should they be called to it.

In some ways, modern martyrs had potential to supersede the ancient ones, at least in terms of didactic potential. Thus, the influential Jesuit Robert Persons (1548–1611) expatiated on the greatness of recent English victims by underlining the important role they played in fortifying the faith within present turbulent times. In 1590, Persons compiled a short martyrology for Spanish readers, the *Relacion de algunos martyrios, que de nuevo han hecho los hereges de Inglaterra* (Relation of Some Martyrdoms Once Again Committed by English Heretics).⁵⁷ Broadly, the collection provided the faithful with, as Persons put it, a mirror where “we can see ourselves and fix ourselves, and reform our lives.” The glorious dead reminded readers that recusants, especially those who fled from England and ended up in various colleges, were worthy guides. Martyrs had long been placed before the faithful but reading about holy men and women of the past was less effective than news about contemporaries. “Present things are very moving and that which we see is much more of a stimulus than those things that we read or hear about.”⁵⁸ English martyrs allowed for the participation in a kind of holiness that otherwise required a sophisticated historical imagination. Now martyrdom became more communicable. Their deaths also had immediate significance.⁵⁹

57 Robert Persons, *Relacion de algunos martyrios, que de nuevo han hecho los ereges de Inglaterra* (Madrid: 1590).

58 Persons, *Relacion de algunos martyrios*, 11.

59 Persons, *Relacion de algunos martyrios*, 2v–2r.

This message of English suffering was intended as a warning for others as well. In pamphlet after pamphlet, the evils of the Elizabethan regime were highlighted to remind Catholics of the existential threat posed by heretics. Nowhere was this message more important than in France at the end of the 16th century, as it had descended into religious war with no end in sight.⁶⁰ As the rebellious Catholic League gained traction in and around Paris in 1587, more than 20 percent of their propaganda output centred on British themes.⁶¹ There is no doubt that the League tried to magnify English horrors to fan flames against French Calvinists and the threats they posed. For example, in June 1587 at the cemetery of Saint-Séverin, League leaders enabled the public display of engravings by English exile Richard Verstegan depicting English martyrdoms. Many onlookers were also given copies of Verstegan's *Briefve description des diverse cruauitez que les Catholiques endurent en Angleterre pour la foy*. One contemporary anti-Catholic account speaks of the throngs – at least 5000 people a day – and sneered that “some English knave priest ... points with a rod,” describing the macabre images and insisting on their accuracy:

Others aposted purposefully for the matter show then how likely Catholics are to grow to that point in France if they have a king a heretic, and that they are next door to it, which is indeed the chief intent that the things set there to animate and mutiny the people.⁶²

If English Catholics were interested in promoting Christian fortitude in general, they also tried to solicit aid from Catholic powers to maintain them and their cause against English heresy. This could take on many forms. In German lands, the tack tended to be subtle with messages emphasizing the links between English and Germanic Catholicism. In prefatory material for a polemical book by Jesuit John Gibbons printed in Trier, author and printer underline the connected histories of England and Germany in matters both “sacred and profane.”⁶³ Catholic publishers in Germany underscored how the tales of the martyrs could nourish German Catholicism in the way that so many English missionaries had done in antiquity.⁶⁴ The point, then, was not simply to tell

60 Katy Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in Late Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Woodbridge: 2011).

61 Alexander Wilkinson, *Mary Queen of Scots and French Public Opinion, 1542–1600* (New York: 2004).

62 Quoted in Stuart Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise Family and the Making of Europe* (Oxford: 2009), 266–7.

63 [John Gibbons, SJ], *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia Adversus Calvinopapistas and Puritanos* (Trier: 1583), 7.

64 Robert Persons, *De persecutione Anglicana commentariolus* (Ingolstadt: 1592), 2.

a gruesome tales of evil monarchs and holy martyrs, but to ensure that these stories fleshed out a history of communal suffering, and perhaps just as importantly, of ancient debt owed to the English who now suffered and sought aid from abroad.⁶⁵

The message could be more aggressive when pitched to those who might most actively intervene in English affairs. Especially, though not exclusively, in Spanish Habsburg territories and Rome where some of the most ardent English exiles took refuge, stories of recent martyrs took on an air of special pleading. In order to fight back against English heresy, English Catholics had to convince a range of people – supporters and benefactors – that English Catholics like themselves were involved in a fight to save Christendom and thus worthy of continued support. When English Catholics tried to establish a seminary in Valladolid in the 16th century, one of the first things they did was to publish a list of martyrs emanating from other such establishments across Europe as a way to garner support. A broadside by Juan López Mançano (the new rector) listed martyrs from English seminaries across the Continent, a preview of what would come for some of the young men in his care.⁶⁶ Joseph Creswell, an English Jesuit, was forthright about this imperative as he prepared a short martyrology about Robert Walpole and several other priests who were executed in England in 1595. Clearly, their stories were meant to edify, but as he told Pope Clement VIII, they were stories that were particularly worthy of the pope because he was “Father and Protector of this holy enterprise [against England].”⁶⁷ The book was sent directly to the Spanish king with the same intention and, at least according to Creswell, it had worked very well.⁶⁸ Other times, though, it did not. William Allen, de facto head of English exiles on the continent and founder of the first two English colleges there (Douai and Rome), lamented more than once that the English cause was neglected despite “so many books written about the persecution, the martyrs, the institution of the colleges and the sending of priests ... from so much bloodshed before the whole world, from

65 This and some of what follows is discussed more fully in Freddy Cristóbal Domínguez, *Radicals in Exile: English Catholic Books during the Reign of Philip II* (College Park, PA: 2020).

66 London, Archivum Britannicum Societatis Iesu, Anglia A I, fol. 53. *Breve catalogo de los martyres que han sido de los colegios y seminarios ingleses que residen en Roma y en la ciudad de Rhemis* (Valladolid: 1590).

67 Creswell to Clement VIII 24 February 1596. Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Borghese III, 124 g. 2, 89v.

68 Creswell to Aldobrandino, Madrid 24 Feb 1596. Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Borghese III, 124 g. 2, 89r.

so many and such cruel writings and public laws published against our and your efforts.”⁶⁹

Especially within a Habsburg sphere, the stories of martyrs took on a militant tone. As I have argued elsewhere, the stories of English martyrs were promoted in Spain and ultimately absorbed within the context of arguments for Spanish military intervention against the Elizabethan regime. There were no more exemplary lives than those recently executed by the Elizabethan regime, most notably the Jesuit Edmund Campion and others involved in the 1580/81 mission to England. Could Campion's end help illuminate other lives? The Spanish Jesuit and fervid English Catholic ally Pedro de Ribadeneyra hoped so. Through righteous death he overcame “all the miseries of this fragile and mortal body” and enjoyed “the triumphant crown of his fortunate confession.”⁷⁰ More specific to the current times, Ribadeneyra emphasized that God allowed tyrants to thrive so that there would be no lack of martyrs.⁷¹ Slain English Catholics epitomized a holiness on par with (if not greater than) “our ancient and fortunate martyrs,” and as such would reap divine benefits in heaven. On earth they would serve as examples for the faithful and for heretics “who often convert and die of the same faith [as the martyrs] because they saw Catholics die with such fortitude and meekness.”⁷² Ribadeneyra asked Spanish readers to consider English suffering when they lamented their own plight. Those who faced poverty should cast an eye toward the rich and noble in England who were stripped of everything they once had. The ill should consider the torture and suffering faced by women and priests. When readers tired of working and felt the pangs of hunger, they too should think of English persecutions to make it through the day. English suffering was a gift to help “confirm our faith, awaken our hope, inflame our charity, teach us of divine grace, fortify our patience, awaken our devotion, condemn the gift of our flesh, feel shame of our weakness, and finally to confound our negligence.”⁷³ This was all uttered on the eve of the Spanish Armada of 1588.

Promoters of English martyrs wanted to emphasize their utility to the living. There was a general sense that the dead imparted some of their sanctity to teachers and supporters. After Allen was raised to the cardinalate it was said

69 Allen to Agazzari, Rheims, June 12, 1585. P. Renold (ed.), *Letters of Allen and Barrett* (London: 1967), 155.

70 Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Historia ecclesiastica del scisma de Inglaterra* (Madrid: 1588) 294v-295r.

71 Ribadeneyra, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 177v.

72 Ribadeneyra, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 161v-152r.

73 Ribadeneyra, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 176r-v.

of him that the scarlet of his cap “is tintured with the blood of the martyrs he has instructed.”⁷⁴ Such language only served to enhance his authority as a church leader and as the future leader for a renewed Catholic England. He embodied, or at least carried on him the blood of all those whom he released to the English dogs. In Spain, Persons was intent on highlighting how the Spanish king, Philip II, “sustained, protected, and favoured these servants of God.” In return for royal protection, the English had given their blood, and “there in heaven we should believe that they [martyrs] intercede particularly for those who have favoured them here on earth.”⁷⁵ The Iberian connection with English Catholics provided a way to imbricate the English with the Spanish empire. After Philip II’s death, English and Spanish Catholics would hearken back to the king’s kindness to inspire his son.⁷⁶ Indeed, some would suggest that support for English Catholics had become a defining feature of Habsburg rule. Diego de Yepes, Philip II’s confessor, argued that Philip III, through his father’s efforts, held a stake in English martyrdom. The martyrs themselves had become something like “an inheritance and legitimate patrimony.”⁷⁷

It would be too simple to say that these martyrological discourses fit seamlessly within a Counter-Reformation spirit. The lives of recent martyrs could be used for polemical purposes within the English Catholic community. As Peter Lake and Michael Questier have shown, the lives of martyrs could be polemical tools within a Catholic community in disagreement about the definition of a good Christian.⁷⁸ Because English Catholics could not freely exercise their faith and because doing so often went against Elizabethan law, the English Catholic community adopted different models of worship and practice that encompassed different degrees of accommodation to the regime. Fierce polemics emerged among those who fundamentally disagreed on this – those who could abide nothing but open resistance fought against those who argued for various forms of compromise. In these circumstances, the lives of martyrs could be held up as exempla of ultimate resistance. Lake and Questier show how the *vita* written by secular priest Robert Mush of Margaret Clitherow, a Catholic woman crushed to death for her intransigence,

74 Cardinal of Caraffa, “La causas donde importa much el servicio de dios y causa de la religion de Inglaterra” (1587?). Madrid, Biblioteca Francisco de Zabálburu, Altamira, 248, GD.30, fol. 219v.

75 “A la señora Infante de España Doña Ysabel” in Parsons, *Relacion de algunos martyrios*, n.f.

76 *Algunos motivos y razones, que ay para favorecer los Seminarios Ingleses* (n.p., n.d.), fol. 1. Valladolid, Archivo Colegio de San Albano, Series 2, Legajo 1.

77 Diego de Yepes, *Historia particular de la persecución de Inglaterra* (Madrid: 1599), sig. ¶ 5v.

78 Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London: 2011).

reveal fissures within the Catholic community as some pushed her in one way or another to conform. The book speaks forthrightly about all the insults her holiness inspired, not only among Protestants “but also for her virtue by some one or other emulous Catholic.”⁷⁹ More importantly, it intended to reject that sort of Catholic compromise as wrong-headed. By insisting on the valour of those who ultimately gave their lives for the faith, authors were criticizing those who were unwilling to take a strong stance against the Elizabethan regime.

Because there was a range of English Catholic experiences and postures, the attempt to promote a maximalist ‘recusant’ stance by those martyr propagandists might rub some the wrong way. Luisa de Carvajal, a Spanish noblewoman and ascetic who chose to live in England, noticed an ambivalence among some English Catholics. She claims that English Catholics could not see themselves in the stories of martyrs and even went as far as questioning their veracity. Many were said to have asked, according to Carvajal “[w]hy do they write such lies in these books?”⁸⁰ We should not take Luisa too literally as she was trying to reinforce the negative image of ‘bad’ Catholics. Nevertheless, her claim suggests that the debate of propriety and impropriety among English Catholics was profoundly influenced by the idea of martyrdom.

Other forms of established sanctity did not cease to matter. When Teresa of Ávila died in 1588, despite some uncomfortable moments with the Inquisition during life, many were certain of her sanctity. Indeed, as soon as she died, her body was said to emit a sweet scent and the people thronged to her, even biting off bits of her flesh to take home. The ‘people’ were making her their own and defining her sanctity even before Rome could say a word. The vitality of her story, the embedded memory of her life and death, were no doubt important reasons why the Spanish Habsburgs pushed her canonization in Rome and why she was (rather quickly) deemed a saint in 1622, just three decades after her death. The power of this Counter-Reformation image was of such importance that Spanish elements wanted to raise her up to the status of patron saint along with the more traditionally accepted Santiago, a matter that, as Erin Rowe has shown, led to great debates.⁸¹ The ensuing disagreements are not as important here as the fact that Teresa’s vitality rested in large part on her

79 “Mr. John Mush’s Life of Margaret Clitherow” in *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, ed. John Morris (London: 1877), vol. 3, 404.

80 Luisa de Carvajal to Joseph Creswell. Jesús González Marañón and Camilo María Abad (eds), *Epistolario y poesías* (Madrid: 1965), 333.

81 Erin Rowe, *Saint and Nation: Santiago and Teresa of Ávila, and Plural Identities in Early Modern Spain* (Pittsburg, PA: 2011).

currency and in this particular case how that value pushed against the embedded traditions going back centuries.

The long-dead also remained vital. Priests, historians, and antiquarians across Europe explored deep into their pasts not only to confirm broadly held assumptions of sanctity, but to push local saints that had long-been neglected. Simon Ditchfield, in his ground-breaking book about Pietro Maria Campi, a small-town priest and antiquary, showed the intellectual tools used by one man to try to save and promote the spiritual particularities of a town by promoting a local saint.⁸² Indeed, this was part of a trend identified by Ditchfield: “when early modern Roman Catholics wanted to express their collective identity or articulate their collective memory, more often than not they did so in terms of their devotion to their local churches whose holy custodians were the saints.”⁸³ Sometimes such devotions were promoted by forms of deceit and deception as was the case in late-16th-century Granada when the bodies of saints were found along with fabricated lead tablets attesting to the permanence of Christianity in Spain even after Muslim invasions. These objects allowed for the construction of Granada’s identity as a “Christian republic” as overseen by its patron saint, Cecilio, who helped maintain Christianity even during Muslim centuries. Such fabrications were carried out under the veneer of scholarly rigor, an instantiation of what some scholars have shown to be the origins of criticism through fraud.⁸⁴

The point here is simple. Post-Reformation Catholicism continued to find ways to promote the holy dead. But contextual realities – religious warfare, theological disputes – sparked an urgency that inspired the use of established tools of evidentiary analysis and required them to look into the recent past, the wonders of their own time, to find inspiration and to forge ahead against the religious challenges of the times.

3 Conclusion

As presented here, this chapter falls somewhat into a trap of discussing the holy dead in two different, hermetically sealed cultural contexts – the Renaissance and

82 Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge: 2002).

83 Simon Ditchfield, “Thinking with Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early Modern World,” in *Saints: Faith without Borders*, eds François Meltzer and Jas Elsner (Chicago, IL: 2011), 157–90, on 177.

84 Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton, NJ: 1990, this version 2019).

Reformation. Things, of course, are not that simple. On the one hand, the methods, techniques, and aspirations that had once been something like humanist innovations were so prevalent that they could not but colour how people thought about the holy dead, especially in their historical guises. The philological and historical tools developed over the course of more than a century were not cast aside amid new waves of religious fervour. Moreover, aside from techniques of historical reconstruction, the new space for discussing and promoting the holy dead was fundamentally a product of a rhetorical culture that did much to create public for a politico-religious debate – a realm of polemical warfare almost as consequential as the gallows or the battlefield.

And yet, something crucial happened in the aftermath of 1517, which would not allow for the unchallenged primacy of reformist efforts against old legends within a bookish or antiquarian mould. The explosion of religious wars caused the bloodied bodies of men and women to mean something special. As far as many Catholics were concerned, the contemporary situation was a reminder of ancient wounds, divinely ordained both to inspire reform within the church and to prove in blood the merit of the True Church. This dynamic only served to re-inscribe a tension between the church as an aspiring centralized bureaucracy and the pullulating spiritual worlds experienced far away from Rome. The presumed sanctity of martyrs did not mean that they would be recognized officially as such, and indeed it would not be until the Victorian era that their cases would be taken up fiercely by Catholic revivalists in England. The case of martyrs was only a particularly exposed example of the tense dynamics of centre and periphery, but men of letters, proto-archaeologists, and local historians also looked to the deep past to establish local piety and Christian *bona fides* based on history and the long dead whose energies resounded and whose significance did not wane in the period discussed here or for centuries to come.

As with so much to do with the (holy) dead, these dynamics are all a testament to the persistent efforts to tie loose ends, to close caesuras dividing past and present. The holy dead were, as soon as they took their last breaths, history. But their import, their consequence, was spelled out in their aftermath. Within the Catholic tradition especially, their importance did not accrue because of the marmoreal tincture of their narratives, but because descriptions of the holy dead (not to mention physical permanence and pictorial representations of the holy dead) all spoke to their presence, a level of sempiternity imbued by sanctity.

The Undead: Ghosts and Revenants

Polina Ignatova

In the period between 1300 and 1700 Western society witnessed a number of commotions and changes, from the ravaging of the Black Death, to Renaissance and Reformation. This chapter, however, will be concerned not with the affairs of the living but with the life of the (un)dead, whose activities were described in many contemporary sources. It will consider the literary sources about ghosts and walking dead, created between 1300 and 1700, arguing that the development of late medieval and early modern narratives about revenants was dominated by a great deal of continuity and adherence to long-established patterns, some of which existed already in Antiquity.¹ This analysis will highlight the importance of tradition and established plot patterns for medieval and early modern narrators and demonstrate how new ideas were incorporated within the old frameworks of ghost stories.²

The chapter will commence by defining the difference between ghosts and walking dead in the texts from the period we are concerned with, and the roles these two types of revenants occupied in the narratives. It will be argued that that the Black Death and the Reformation – two major watersheds in the historiography of the period – did not affect the way ghost stories were composed.

- 1 An analysis of the transmission of ideas in literary sources, this chapter does not study psychological reasons for the existence of ghosts in medieval imagination. Such an attempt was made by Aline G. Hornaday, "Visitors from Another Space: The Medieval Revenant as Foreigner," *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Classen (London: 2002), 71–95 – a work which should be treated with great caution. Hornaday's comparison between medieval ghosts and alien invaders in modern popular culture is questionable, and her argument relies on the misreading of primary sources. The incident in Buckinghamshire, described by William of Newburgh (see below in the present chapter) involved one walking corpse, and not multiple ghosts, as Hornaday has claimed (Hornaday, "Visitors," 82).
- 2 For an overview of narratives about revenants see S.G. Bruce, *The Penguin Book of the Undead: Fifteen Hundred Years of Supernatural Encounters* (New York: 2016); R.C. Finucane, *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead and Cultural Transformation* (New York: 1996). See N. Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: 2016) for the argument about the pagan origins of the undead narratives; P. Marshall, *Invisible Worlds: Death, Religion And The Supernatural In England, 1500–1700* (London: 2017); J.-C. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. T.L. Fagan (Chicago: 1998) for the discussion of medieval revenants in the framework of contemporary culture and society.

Finally, this chapter will highlight the changes that narratives about revenants underwent throughout the centuries, showing how these developments were accommodated within plot patterns which had been firmly established in the Middle Ages. Because this chapter aims to highlight the continuity of ideas, primary sources will be discussed in thematic strands, rather than in strict chronological order.

1 Restless Corpses and Ghosts: The Question of Corporeity

It is reasonable to start this chapter by introducing its main protagonists. Ghosts are conventionally understood to be the souls of deceased individuals. They are incorporeal entities made of air, and can act independently of their bodies, regardless of the latter's condition or location. Walking dead are partially re-animated cadavers with or without a soul inside. The distinction between the two was clear in classical texts, as in many cases authors stated explicitly which type of a revenant they were writing about.³

In the Middle Ages approaches towards ghosts and walking dead started to differ depending on the region. In Continental Europe the narrators often did not explain whether they were writing about ghosts or about the walking dead, which implies that they found this information unimportant for their audience.⁴ There is no Latin word for a walking corpse, as instead the narrators described how a dead person's cadaver climbed out of their grave and wandered around. The walking dead can be recognised in a text because protagonists in these cases are often shown either to destroy them physically, or move them to another location, something which cannot be done to a ghost. A number of revenants described by Continental narrators possess corporeal features, or

3 For classical ghosts see Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, ed. W.M.L. Hutchinson, trans. W. Melmoth, vol. 2 (London: 1961), lib. 7, XXII, 68–72; Lucian of Samosata, “The Lover of Lies, or the Doubter,” in *Lucian*, ed. T.E. Page, trans. A.M. Harmon, vol. 3 (London: 1961), 319–82; Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. C. Scarre, trans. H. Cary (London: 1992), book 5, ch. 92, 341. For classical restless corpses see Pliny the Elder, *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII*, ed. C. Mayhoff, vol. 2 (Leipzig: 1875), lib. 7, c. 52, 44–5; M.A. Lucanus, *Pharsalia*, ed. C.E. Haskins (New York: 1971), 209–26; L. Apuleius, *Metamorphoseon Libri XI*, ed. R. Helm (Leipzig: 1955), lib. 2, c. 28–30 and lib. 9, c. 30, at 48–50 and 225–6.

4 For European revenants of ambiguous nature before 1300 see Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH SS. rer. Merov.*, vol. i, pt. 2, 2nd ed. (Berlin: 1969), 294–370, c. 72 at 340–1; Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. R. Holtzmann, *MGH SRG Nova Series*, vol. 9 (Berlin: 1935), lib. 1, c. 11–13, 16–20; Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, eds. and trans. N. Nösges and H. Schneider, vol. 5 (Turnhout: 2009), lib. 12, c. 18, 2214–6, c. 20, 2218–20.

appear in cemeteries, which could make it possible for a modern scholar to view them as restless cadavers. However, since European narrators were not as explicit as the classical authors, it is not clear whether they ever intended to describe their revenants as walking corpses.

For example, Thietmar of Merseburg wrote in his *Chronicon* (1012–1018) how the priest of a church in Deventer saw the dead making offerings in the cemetery and inside the church. The priest reported these events to the bishop Baldric of Utrecht and the latter ordered him to sleep in the church. On the first night the dead threw the priest out together with his bed. On the second night the priest stayed awake because of fear and indeed, when the dead arrived, they carried the priest to the altar and burned him to ashes. We do not know if these undead were spirits or walking corpses. Thietmar refers to them as “*mortui*” and “*defuncti*” and does not explicitly say that the revenants climbed out of their graves. Their ability to carry the priest does not indicate their corporeity since medieval and early modern ghosts were also able to move objects. These revenants are also not described as malignant – their hostility towards the living priest is caused by his trespassing on their territory.⁵

Latin sources produced in medieval England differ from their Continental counterparts, as English narrators ascribed different tasks to different types of revenants and hence in most cases they stated explicitly whether they were writing about ghosts or walking corpses.⁶ The benign undead who appeared to manifest their departure, to ask for help politely, or to warn the living about the afterlife were ghosts. The dangerous revenants, whose purpose was to terrify the reader, were restless corpses. Almost all medieval English walking dead were former sinners, and even in the rare cases when they managed to ask the living for help, their main aim in a narrative was to incite horror and disgust.⁷

5 Thietmar, *Chronicon*, vol. 9, lib. 1, c. 12, 16–18.

6 For medieval English ghosts before 1300 see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1969), lib. 4, c. 3, 344, c. 9, 360, c. 23, 412; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, Oxford Medieval Texts, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1998–9), lib. 3, c. 237, 440–4; J. Stephenson (ed.) *Chronicon de Lanercost 1201–1346. E codice Cottoniano nunc primum typis mandatum* (Edinburgh: 1839), 125–6, 136–7. For examples of medieval English walking dead before 1300 see R.C. Love, (ed. and trans.), *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: 1996), 50–72; Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Miracles of St Edmund*, ed. and trans. T. Licence with the assistance of L. Lockyer, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: 2014), 10–14 and 142–4.

7 For benign restless corpses see A. Wilmart (ed.), “La légende de Ste Edithe en prose et en vers par le moine Goscelin,” *AB* 56 (1938), 34–101 and 265–302, on 281–3; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum*, vol. 1, lib. 1, c. 124, 194–196; Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*,

Some of the restless corpses were shown to be controlled by the devil, meaning that these revenants were not connected with the soul of the deceased individual, being the product of diabolic activity.⁸

The division of labour between ghosts and walking dead in English sources also had a practical reason. In contrast to the 'good' undead, the 'bad' undead needed to be defeated to conclude the story. The idea that something material is necessary to exorcise an evil revenant can be traced back to ancient Mesopotamia, where the connection between a soul and a body was believed to stay after death, as evidenced by some of the exorcism rituals.⁹ During the Neo-Assyrian period in order to put a ghost to rest one was supposed to make a figurine of it and bury it with funerary rites. It is probable that the figurine was treated as a substitute for the corpse, if the latter was missing. The Greeks also used to bind or bury figurines in order to protect themselves from ghosts – the ritual was likely to have been borrowed from Mesopotamia.¹⁰ English sources followed similar logic – for the narrative to resolve the living protagonists had to be able to chop off the heads of the evil revenants, strike them with weapons, or burn them to ashes, hence the revenants had to be corporeal.

Understanding whether the revenant in a certain narrative is a ghost or a restless corpse provides us with a better vision of how medieval authors imagined the (un)dead and allows to learn more about the origins and purposes of a given source. The *Byland Collection*, discussed in a following section, has attracted scholarly attention due its featuring tangible, or "corporeal" ghosts. While some scholars have assumed that the "corporeity" of Byland ghosts indicates their folklore origin, the following section will demonstrate that the nature of this work is more complicated than it initially appears.¹¹

ed. and trans. M.R. James, C.N.L. Brooke and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: 1983), dist. ii, c. 30, p. 206.

- 8 See Geoffrey of Burton, *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. and trans. R. Bartlett, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: 2002), c. 47, 190–8; Map, *De Nugis*, dist. ii, c. 27, pp. 202–204; William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, Rolls Series 82, vol. 2 (London: 1884), lib. 5, c. 23–24, pp. 476–82.
- 9 J.R. Porter, "Ghosts in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *The Folklore of Ghosts*, ed. H.R.E. Davidson and W.M.S. Russell (Cambridge: 1981), 215–38, on 216.
- 10 C.A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece," *Classical Antiquity* 10.2 (1991), 165–205, 207–20.
- 11 Schmitt, *Ghosts*, 147; J. Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England," *Folklore* 114 (2003), 389–402, on 395–400.

2 'Corporeal' Ghosts of the *Byland Collection*

The so-called *Byland Collection*, inserted by an anonymous monk of Byland Abbey, North Yorkshire, onto the blank pages of a book containing works of Cicero and the *Elucidarium*, constitutes a good example of the continuity in the narratives about revenants. The book was originally made in the late 12th or early 13th century, but the stories date from around 1400.¹² The case study of the *Byland Collection* reveals the links between late medieval sources and earlier texts, demonstrating that the latter determined the way stories about revenants were composed in the period studied here. The study also establishes the methodology applied in this chapter.

The *Byland Collection* has traditionally been assumed to reflect contemporary beliefs and superstitions for the following reasons.¹³ The second story in the collection, according to the narrator, happened in the reign of Richard II (r. 1377–1399), and so the author is referring to the events from his recent past.¹⁴ A few times the author is reluctant to state the names or the particular sins of the ghosts he describes, possibly because it could annoy the still-living relatives and friends of the deceased person.¹⁵ In most of the tales the action is set in the villages neighbouring Byland Abbey, such as “Ampliforth,” “Gillyng,” “Killeburne,” “Kereby,” “Boltebi,” and “Heslerton.”¹⁶ The narrator references “the old” as his sources.¹⁷ The text is written in very heavy cursive; the stories are inconsistent and tend to end abruptly. Occasionally the narrator concludes a story and then adds the details he has forgotten to mention earlier.¹⁸

The *Byland Collection* stands out among medieval English sources, as in its stories the line between corporeal and incorporeal revenants is uncharacteristically blurred. Thus, the fifth story tells of a woman who caught a spirit and brought it inside the house so people could see her hands sinking into the “spirit’s flesh” (*carne spiritus*), as if it was putrid, and “not solid, but supernatural” (*non solida sed fantastica*).¹⁹ The sixth tale features an undead Newburgh canon, who could not find peace after stealing a few silver spoons and attacked a

12 M.R. James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” *EHR* 37 (1922), 413–22, on 414.

13 See S. Gordon, “Medical Condition, Demon or Undead Corpse? Sleep Paralysis and the Nightmare in Medieval Europe,” *Social History of Medicine* 28/3 (2015), 425–44, on 438 n. 89.

14 James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 2, 415.

15 James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 2, 415, n 4, § 3, 418.

16 James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 2, 415, §3, 418, § 4, 418, § 8, 419, § 12, 422.

17 “senioribus,” James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” §4, 418.

18 James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 3, 418, § 5, 418–19, and § 9, 420.

19 James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost stories,” § 5, 418–19.

living man tearing apart his clothes.²⁰ In the twelfth story of the collection, the nature of the revenant is not obvious. The story describes the sister of Adam de Lond, who gave her brother certain property charters due to a discord with her husband, thus disinheriting the latter together with their sons. After the woman's death, Adam expelled her family from their home and seized all their property. Consequently, the dead woman could not find rest and haunted the neighbourhood seeking justice. Although the narrator does not state explicitly that she is a corporeal revenant, it is possible that he had a restless cadaver in mind. He does not use the word "spirit" referring to Adam's sister, and the first sentence says: "It should be stated that the aforesaid woman was buried in the cemetery of Ampleford and after a short time was caught by William Trower Senior."²¹ The fact that the narrator mentioned her having been buried before being caught indicates that he could be writing about a walking corpse.

At the first glance we can assume that the corporeal nature of the Byland ghosts can be explained by the inconsistencies in the narrative structure of the collection and the folkloric origin of the stories. Indeed, if the Byland monk picked these stories from local lore, it is unlikely that medieval villagers concerned themselves with the consistency of their tales. Yet a detailed analysis shows that the *Byland Collection* still attempts to distinguish between walking dead and ghosts, as the narrator makes it clear when he writes about restless corpses by stating that the revenants climbed out of their graves. In the third story he writes: "the aforesaid Robert the younger died and was buried in a cemetery but used to exit his grave at night."²² The fourth story relates that: "someone named James Tankerlay was buried near the chapter of Byland and used to go out of his grave as far as Kereby."²³ However, in Robert's story the narrator creates confusion by entitling it "Concerning the spirit of Robert the son of Robert de Boltebi of Killeburne caught in a cemetery."²⁴

Furthermore, a more careful examination of the text reveals that it bears a number of similarities with earlier sources. For instance, the second story of the *Byland Collection* describes how a tailor named Snawball was attacked and

20 James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 6, 419.

21 "Memorandum quod predicta mulier in cimiterio de Ampilford sepeliebatur et infra breve post mortem comprehendebatur per Willelmum Trower seniore," James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 12, 422.

22 "predictus Robertus iunior moriebatur et sepeliebatur in cymiterio sed solebat egredi de sepulcro in noctibus," James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 3, 418.

23 "quidam nomine Iacobus Tankerlay [...] sepeliebatur coram capitulo Bellelande et solebat egredi in noctibus usque kereby," James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 4, 418.

24 "De spiritu Roberti filii Roberti de Boltebi de Killeburne comprehenso in cimiterio," James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 3, 418.

wounded by a ghost. Attempting to fight back, he kept striking the spirit with a sword, but realised he was unable to damage the spirit and it felt like he was striking a pile of turf.²⁵ A similar motif appears in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*, as Caesarius describes a revenant, which, when struck with a sword, was not injured, but emitted a sound of a soft bed being hit.²⁶

Another source which most probably influenced the Byland monk was William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum* as it contains four stories about walking corpses, which showed up in Buckinghamshire, Berwick, Melrose, and the castle of Anantis.²⁷ The aforesaid James Tankerlay, the rector of Kereby, was described to exit his grave near the chapter of Byland at night and walk back to Kereby where his concubine lived, on one occasion blowing out her eye. Eventually, the coffin containing his body was dumped in the lake Gormyr.²⁸ Two of William's restless corpses also haunted the women they were associated with during their lifetimes: the walking cadaver from Buckinghamshire climbed into his wife's bed, while his counterpart from Melrose haunted the lady whom he served as chaplain while alive.

Furthermore, in Snawball's story the spirit requested that the tailor gets an absolution for him. Having acquired the letter of absolution, Snawball buried it in the dead man's grave.²⁹ William of Newburgh's Buckinghamshire corpse was laid to rest exactly in the same manner: the letter of absolution, written by Bishop Hugh of Lincoln himself, was placed inside his grave.³⁰ In this story, as well as in the case of the Anantis revenant, the clergymen held a council in order to decide what should be done with a restless cadaver.³¹ The same occurs in Snawball's tale: when the tailor approached the priest and told him his story, the latter was first reluctant to absolve the ghost and consulted other

25 "Tandem resurgens et constans in fide pugnavit cum eo cum gladio suo quousque fuerat lassus, et videbatur sibi quasi percuteret t[er]ricidui[m] more," James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 2, 415.

26 "Gladio saepe caedebatur, sed non poterat vulnerari; talem ex se sonum emittens, ac si mollis lectus percuteretur," Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol. 5, lib. 12, c. 15, 2210.

27 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 22–24, 474–482. Joseph Stephenson identifies the Anantis castle as Annan or Annand in Dumfriesshire, and Stephen Gordon as Alnwick in Northumbria. See *The History of William of Newburgh*, ed. and trans. J. Stephenson (London: 1996), 660, n. 1.; S. Gordon, "Social Monsters and Walking Dead in William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum*," *Journal of Medieval History*, 41/4 (2015), 446–465, on 454.

28 James "Twelve Medieval Ghost stories," § 4, 418.

29 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 22, 475.

30 James "Twelve Medieval Ghost stories," § 2, 416.

31 The location of "Anantis" is unsure. William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 24, 481.

clergymen.³² After the second encounter with the spirit, Snawball met two more ghosts haunting the same area. One of them was a former cleric, who appeared in the shape of a hunter with a horn.³³ The cleric from Melrose, described by William, was punished by restlessness for his secular lifestyle, particularly his love of hunting.³⁴

The aforesaid Robert of Killeburne was described to wander around after death pursued by packs of dogs. He often stopped by the houses, lurking by doors and windows and listening to the living. Eventually, the brave young men of the village agreed to go to the cemetery and capture the revenant, but upon seeing the walking corpse almost all of them ran away in fear. The remaining two caught the dead man at the cemetery and summoned the priest, who asked the revenant about his cause. The latter confessed his sins, which included being an accessory to a murder. Having been absolved by the priest, Robert rested in peace.³⁵ Packs of barking dogs also followed William of Newburgh's restless dead from Berwick and Anantis. Like Robert, the Anantis restless corpse also wandered around the houses of the living. In Berwick and Anantis the restless cadavers were similarly captured by young men.³⁶ Some linguistic correlations can also be traced. William of Newburgh uses the words "*egrediebatur*," "*egredientia*," "*egrediens*," when talking about corpses exiting their graves, while the Byland monk employs the cognate verb "*egredi*" in his walking-dead stories.³⁷ Both narrators use the word "*lues*," William of Newburgh for "plague," and the Byland monk, most likely, for "misfortunes," as well as the word "*exanimis*" for "dead."³⁸ The possibility of direct borrowing is likely as both Newburgh priory and Byland monastery are in Yorkshire.

The corporeity of the Byland ghosts, therefore, occurs due to the influence of earlier sources rather than to the local lore. As Caesarius's *Dialogus* had clearly influenced our narrator it is not surprising his stories resemble a continental type of a ghost-story, without a sharp distinction between ghosts and walking dead. Furthermore, the Byland monk endowed his undead with features borrowed from William of Newburgh's walking-dead stories. The Byland

32 James "Twelve Medieval Ghost stories," § 2, 416.

33 James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 2, 416–17.

34 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 24, 478.

35 James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 4, 418.

36 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 23 and 24, at 476 and 480–2.

37 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 23, 476, c. 24, 477 and 480; James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," §§ 3 and 4, 418.

38 For "*lues*": William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 23, 477; James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 2, 417. For "*exanimis*": William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 23, 476, c. 24, 481; James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 2, 415.

ghosts do not reflect any changes in the way the English imagined the afterlife or shifts within contemporary religious thought. Instead, the peculiarity of the collection is determined by its author's sources.

3 Pestilential Revenants and Continuity in Ghost Stories

The case of the *Byland Collection* highlights a trait common in many ghost stories: they are mainly based on earlier texts. The motif of ghosts being soft, for example, carried on into the early modern period: Noël Taillepied, a 16th-century Franciscan theologian from France in his work *A Treatise of Ghosts* (1587/88) advised not to try and fight with a revenant, for many who did achieved nothing as they felt as if they were beating a soft feathery substance.³⁹

The *Compendium Maleficarum*, composed in the early 17th century by an Italian monk, Francesco Maria Guazzo, also drew substantively on old ghost tales.⁴⁰ While Guazzo references some of his sources, he also rewrites a few stories in a different context without referencing the original. For example, he narrates the following miracle, which happened Correto (a town not far from Pavia) in 1601. A notary died and while the funeral rites were performed in the church, the dead man suddenly rose up in the coffin and related that he had kept in secret a certain document, and now was doomed to be punished in hell. To amend the situation one of the notary's relatives was requested to find the document in the notary's house and restore it to the rightful owner.⁴¹ A very similar story appeared in Caesarius's *Dialogus*. A man from Strasbourg revived on his funeral bier in order to warn his wife to dispose of all the ill-gotten property, and died again in three days.⁴²

The tradition of building a narrative upon earlier sources reduced the possibility for ghost stories to reflect contemporary events, for each new plot constituted a mixture of ideas borrowed from previous texts. In his influential work on restless corpses P. Barber has connected medieval and early modern stories about the undead with the outbreaks of plagues, arguing that without

39 N. Taillepied, *A Treatise of Ghosts*, trans. M. Summers (London: 1971), 169. See also Timothy Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: 2011), 21 – 63. See also E. Tingle, "Ghost Stories: Noël de Taillepied's *Psychologie ou apparition de esprits* (1587) and the Rehabilitation of Purgatory in Late Sixteenth-Century France," in *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation Europe*, eds E. Tingle and J. Willis (London: 2016), 175–96.

40 F. M. Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Milan: 1608).

41 Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, lib. 1, c. 18, 121.

42 Caesarius, *Dialogus*, lib. 11, c. 37, 2128.

understanding the nature of infection people blamed the first victim of the outbreak, assuming that that individual turned into a revenant and continued spreading infection after death.⁴³ A few medieval sources created before 1300 contain stories about spirits and walking dead spreading infection.⁴⁴ It is indeed tempting to interpret wandering cadavers as diseased individuals suggesting that dangerous infections led to their carriers being perceived as walking corpses – just like lepers were referred to as “living dead.”⁴⁵ Following this logic, one would expect a proliferation of stories about pestilential undead around the time of the Black Death. The latter, however, did not change the way stories about revenants were composed.

The Black Death arrived in Constantinople in 1347, brought by the Genoese fleeing from Caffa, and reached Italy the same year. By 1348 the plague reached the Holy Roman Empire, France, England, and the Iberian Peninsula. The plague seemed to have receded by the end of 1349, but returned in a smaller wave to England in 1361, and outbreaks continued in the 15th and the 16th centuries.⁴⁶ However, this period did not see the proliferation of ghost stories, let alone stories about pestilential undead. The only walking-dead story appearing in England in the 14th century is an account from *Polychronicon*, composed in the 1320s, i.e. before the Black Death, describing how Richard, Duke of Normandy, entered a church at night to pray and was attacked by a cadaver which was lying there. Richard defeated the revenant by cutting it in two with his sword.⁴⁷ This story is modelled upon a tale included by Thomas of Cantimpré in his *Bonum universal de apibus*, created in the mid-13th century. A virgin kept coming to a church every early morning in order to pray. On one occasion there was a corpse of a dead man left inside the church resting on a bier. The virgin nevertheless proceeded with her routine as usual. Seeing this, the devil entered the body of the dead man and attacked the maiden. Eventually she smashed the head of the corpse with the staff topped with a cross, causing the devil to flee.⁴⁸

Pestilential dead re-appeared in England only in the 15th century in the *Byland Collection*. The restless spirit wounded the tailor Snawball in order to

43 P. Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven, CT, 1988), 96.

44 Geoffrey of Burton, *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, c. 47, 190–98; Map, *De Nugis*, dist. ii, c. 27, 202–4; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 23–24, 476–82.

45 R. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Malden, MA: 2007), 54–6.

46 Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death* (Manchester: 1994), 9–12.

47 Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon*, vol. 6 (London: 1876), lib. 6, c. 7, 446–448. For the dating see J. Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford: 1966), 2.

48 Thomas de Cantimpré, *Bonum universal de apibus*, ed. George Colvener (Brabant: 1627), 541–2.

secure an absolution from him – if the tailor fulfilled the task, the ghost would tell him how to be cured, but otherwise his flesh would rot and his skin would fall off and he would decay on the inside.⁴⁹ In addition to the curse the tailor fell ill after each encounter with the spirit. The man who wrestled with the ghost of a Newburgh canon also fell ill afterwards.⁵⁰ As in both cases the illness afflicted only one person, the narrator clearly did not have the Black Death in mind.

Byland's pestilential ghosts further demonstrate a debt to the earlier sources. Orderic Vitalis's *Ecclesiastical History* (1141) contains a story about the priest Walchelin, who witnessed a procession of ghosts and afterwards got ill. The use of words suggests that the Byland monk could be familiar with the text of the *Ecclesiastical History*, as while Orderic wrote "*graviter egrotavit*," the Byland monk put "*graviter egrotabat*" ("was seriously ill").⁵¹ The idea that a contact with the supernatural makes one sick is also prominent in Caesarius's *Dialogus* – one story described two youths who fell ill after seeing a demon.⁵²

After the final meeting between Snawball and the spirit the latter warned Snawball not to look at fire at least for one night.⁵³ This idea was also probably borrowed from Caesarius, as in one of his stories a monk, who saw a demon and then looked at fire, was ill for several days. Caesarius explained that this happened because fire produced light, while the devil produced darkness, and the monk fell sick after seeing two opposing elements in close consequence.⁵⁴

In addition, Caesarius described two creatures of vague origin, inflicting illnesses upon the living. The first appeared from the site of the cemetery in a shape of a pale woman dressed in white – a shroud, it could be implied. By gazing over the lands belonging to two families the creature caused deaths from illness in both households.⁵⁵ Another incident took place in Bonn: after vespers the scholars saw a creature of human shape coming out of one of the graves and entering into another. After a while a canon died and was buried in the same tomb where the monster had entered.⁵⁶ Although the nature of these

49 James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 2, 416.

50 James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," § 2, 416, § 6, 419.

51 Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and tr. Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts, vol. 4. (Oxford: 1973), lib. 8, c. 17, 248; James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost stories," § 2, 418.

52 Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol. 3, dist. 5, c. 30, 1064–66.

53 James "Twelve Medieval Ghost stories," § 2, 418.

54 Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol. 3, dist. 5, c. 28, 1052–54.

55 Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol. 5, dist. 11, c. 63, 2170–72.

56 Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol. 5, dist. 11, c. 64, 2172–74.

creatures is not clear, their appearance at the cemetery, as well as the woman's resemblance of a corpse, could lead the readers of the *Dialogus* to assume that Caesarius had a pestilential revenant in mind, and to reproduce the connection between seeing the undead and falling sick in their own writings.

The available textual evidence thus demonstrates that stories about pestilential undead created between 1300 and 1700 echo earlier sources rather than reflect contemporary events. The idea of a ghost spreading pestilence continued to be recycled well after the Black Death. Taillepie wrote that spirits can inflict pestilence upon the living, causing their lips to crack and swell, and their faces to bloat.⁵⁷ John Aubrey, an English antiquary and writer, included an account of a malicious revenant in his *Brief Lives*, which he wrote in the second half of the 17th century. A certain man called Francis Fry was haunted by the ghost of Mrs Furze, the second wife of his former master. Mrs Furze kept beating up poor Fry making him gravely ill.⁵⁸ Aubrey's contemporary, English theologian Richard Baxter, described a child, who, when tortured by an evil spirit, lost the power of speech, barking like a dog and, clucking like a hen.⁵⁹ While it is tempting to rationalise these examples by suggesting that it was the contemporaries' way of explaining causes for illness and insanity, early-modern ghost stories included sickness following the tradition established in the Middle Ages.

4 The Reformation and Old Stories in New Contexts

The medieval tradition of creating narratives about revenants using a certain set of patterns was not undermined by the Reformation, although the latter was followed by a wave of treatises denying the existence of revenants. In 1569 a Swiss reformer, Ludwig Lavater in his work *De Spectris*, translated into English in 1572 as *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght, and of Strange Noyses, Crackes, and Sundry Forewarnynges*, rejected the existence of ghosts, explaining them as devilish tricks, drunkenness, or general inclination towards fear, particularly typical of women.⁶⁰ Thomas Nashe in the essay entitled *The Terrors of the Night, or, a Discourse of Apparitions* argued that what people mistake

57 Taillepie, *A Treatise of Ghosts*, 78–9, 107.

58 John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. O.L. Dick (Harmondsworth: 1982), 269–72.

59 Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London: 1834), 143.

60 L. Lavater, *De Spectri Lemuribus et Magnis* (Geneva: 1580). See also L. Lavater, *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght, and of Strange Noyses, Crackes, and Sundry Forewarnynges*, trans. Robert Harrison (London: 1596).

for ghosts is the result of diabolical activities.⁶¹ Even King James I and VI himself reasoned that the devil is the source of all apparitions, either assuming the shape of a deceased person, or entering and moving dead bodies.⁶²

Scepticism towards ghosts was by no means new, as the ability of the dead to interact with the living had been denied already by St Augustine of Hippo.⁶³ Even before the spread of Christianity there were authors like Lucian of Samosata, who mocked people believing in ghosts, and the tradition of confusing ghosts with devils in a narrative stretches back to ancient Mesopotamia, where spirits of the dead appeared most often in exorcist texts, lumped together with evil creatures of non-human origin.⁶⁴

Medieval writers, such as Walter Map and Caesarius of Heisterbach, also argued that not all the apparitions claiming to be ghosts of the dead should be treated as such. Map described a knight, who perceiving the re-animated corpse of his father, feared it was a diabolical trick.⁶⁵ Map also reasoned that occasionally devils, with God's permission, can create illusions, which he referred to as "*fantasma*."⁶⁶ Caesarius wrote about a dead girl, who returned as a ghost to do her penance for whispering in the church choir. One living girl saw her and reported the apparition to the abbess. The abbess first assumed that it was a diabolical trick, and suggested that the next time the ghost appears, the living girl should bid it by saying "Benedicite," and if it was really the soul of the dead girl the apparition should reply "Dominus."⁶⁷ Another example of scepticism comes from William of Auvergne, who argued that the dead in the afterlife have neither will nor time to return as revenants and kill the living.⁶⁸

In 1595 Catholic Nicholas Rémy, the provost of Nancy and a witch prosecutor, published his treatise known as *Daemonolatriae Libri Tres* arguing that evil spirits often linger around cemeteries, attracted by the foulness of

61 T. Nashe, "The Terrors of the Night, Or A Discourse of Apparitions. Post Tenebras Dies," in *The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. A.B. Grosart, vol. 3 (London: 1883), 219–82.

62 King James I and IV, *Daemonologie*, ed. G. B. Harrison (Edinburgh: 1966), book 3, 56–81.

63 Augustine of Hippo, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, ed. J. Zych, *CSEL* 41, sect. 5, pt. 3 (Leipzig: 1900), 619–60. For the translation see Augustine of Hippo, *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, trans. C.T. Wilcox, C.T. Huegelmeyer et al., in *Writings of Saint Augustine*, ed. R.J. Deferrari, vol. 15, The Fathers of the Church 27 (Washington, DC: 1955), 351–84.

64 Lucian of Samosata, "The Lover of Lies, or the Doubter," 364–9.

65 Map, *De Nugis*, dist. 2, c. 30, 206.

66 Map, *De Nugis*, dist. 2, c. 13, 160.

67 Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol. 5, dist. 12, c. 36, 2262–66.

68 William of Auvergne, "De Universo," in *Guilielmi Alverni Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt-on-Main: 1963), pars 3, c. 24, p. 1069.

decomposing bodies, and it is “silly” to mistake them for ghosts of the dead.⁶⁹ Scepticism regarding the ability of the dead to appear to the living therefore was not invented by Protestants and was not always connected to Protestant ideas, as they were not the only group questioning the nature of ghostly apparitions. While the Reformation spurred proliferation of treatises discouraging the belief in ghosts, similar scepticism existed in textual sources long before Protestant thinkers put their pens to paper.

The sceptics’ efforts did not prevent ghost stories from being composed and the latter continued to follow the established plot lines observed throughout the Middle Ages. Thus, revenants still returned to seek justice. Aubrey narrated a story about a certain William Barwick, who killed his pregnant wife and hid her body. The crime was manifested by the ghost of the murdered woman appearing by the pond where she was drowned.⁷⁰ In the 17th century natural philosopher George Sinclair described a ghost of a murdered woman appearing in a terrifying form, covered in blood and with five wounds on the head, to a certain miller in order to tell her story.⁷¹ Compare this to the account found in the 13th-century *Liber Exemplorum ad usum praedicatorum*, where a man sought to marry a noble widow, but was rejected for his low status. To acquire wealth, he killed a rich merchant, taking all that he found on the corpse. He then returned to the lady proposing the marriage again, but, as she demanded to know the source of his wealth, he confessed the truth. The lady then asked him to go and keep a night vigil by the place where the merchant’s body was lying, and as he did, he saw the dead man sitting down with his hands stretched to Heaven, praying to God for justice.⁷²

Some ghosts still appeared to foretell an individual’s death. Natural philosopher and geologist John Beaumont (d. 1731) wrote about a maiden visited by the ghost of her mother, who predicted the girl’s own death in a few hours.⁷³ The same narrative model appears, for example, in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*. Eorcingota, the daughter of Eadbald, the king of Kent, had a vision foretelling her death: men dressed in white entered the monastery where she was a nun saying they had come to collect a golden coin which had arrived from Kent.⁷⁴

69 Nicolas Rémy, *Daemonolatreiae Libri Tres* (Frankfurt: 1597), lib. 2, c. 1, 178–9.

70 Edition used for this chapter: John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (London: 1784), 134–45.

71 G. Sinclair, *Satan’s Invisible World Discovered* (London: 1814), 13–15.

72 *Liber Exemplorum ad usum praedicatorum saeculo xiii compositus a quodam Fratre Minore Anglico de Provincia Hiberniae*, ed. A.G. Little (Aberdeen: 1908), 65–7.

73 J. Beaumont, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits* (London: 1705), 398–400.

74 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 1, lib. 3, c. 8, 236–8.

Like in medieval sources, early modern ghosts kept returning to fulfil their death pacts. Usually such stories commence with two friends or relatives agreeing that the one who dies first appears to the survivor within a certain number of days after the death to prove the existence of the afterlife.⁷⁵ One early modern version of this motif was narrated by Sinclair: a dead major appeared to his friend, a captain, urging him to amend his ways, since God does exist. The ghost also rebuked the captain for not keeping the sword which used to belong to the dead man in proper condition. Sinclair completely adhered to the medieval plot pattern: like in earlier sources, the major failed to make it to the arranged date, for the world of spirits is busy, and appeared when his living companion had already lost hope of seeing the major again.⁷⁶

The medieval idea of ghosts returning to amend the mistakes they made while alive or at least to confess their sins also carried into the early modern period practically unchanged, with Protestant writers utilising it to describe ghosts as trying to sort out inheritance issues. Anglican cleric Joseph Glanvill (d. 1680) narrated a story resembling the case of Adam de Lond's sister. One man stated that if he died without heirs, his land should pass to his brother. After his death his widow realised that she was pregnant. The brother, however, refused to return the land to her, calling the woman "a whore." A few years after the son had been born, on a summer night the widow was undressing him in her yard, when she beheld the ghost of her late husband bidding her to go to his brother and demand the land back. She did accordingly, but the brother refused to return the land yet again, changing his mind only after he had seen the apparition himself.⁷⁷ Sometimes it is not the heirs but the poor who have been wronged. Another story by Glanvill features the ghost of a late Mrs Bretton, who appeared to her maid, asking for her help in order to restore a part of her lands to the poor, as these lands had been seized unjustly by her father.⁷⁸ Compare this story to an episode from Orderic Vitalis's account: one of the dead knights encountered by Walchelin was William of Glos, who begged the priest to help him return the mill, which he had gained through usury, to the poor.⁷⁹

Meanwhile, Catholics employed the plot pattern of a ghost confessing its sins to defame Protestants. For example, Taillepié wrote about the wife of the Provost of the city of Orleans, who died and was buried in the Franciscan church, by the tombs of her ancestors. The following night her ghost appeared

75 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, vol. 1, lib. 3, c. 237, 440–4.

76 Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World*, 28–31.

77 J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London: 1700), 351–2.

78 Glanvill, *Saducismus*, 352–4.

79 Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, lib. 8, c. 17, 244.

with lamentable outcries and confessed that she had secretly joined the Lutherans and now her body needed to be cast out of the church and buried in the unconsecrated ground.⁸⁰

Still, despite the general adherence to medieval patterns, Protestant rhetoric brought certain changes to the way English ghost stories were composed. As the Reformation declared that all apparitions of the dead were to be understood as the result of diabolic activity, English ghosts were forced to leave their niche of representing the 'good' dead. In the early modern period, therefore, stories about poltergeists, a particular type of ghost, haunting a house and torturing its inhabitants, became prominent not only in Continental, but also in English sources.

5 Poltergeists and Communication Challenges

The idea of a ghost bringing harm was not created after the Reformation and is not connected to Protestant doctrine. Evidence for similar beliefs appeared already in ancient Mesopotamian texts, which blamed ghosts of the dead for bringing storms and pestilence.⁸¹ In the classical period the dead were perceived as having to be pacified, and special festivals were observed for this purpose.⁸² Stories of haunted houses were created already in the classical period, the most prominent example recorded by Pliny the Younger and repeated by Lucian of Samosata.⁸³ Poltergeist-like ghosts, invisible and particularly keen on throwing objects, also appeared in medieval sources. Gervase of Tilbury described the spirit of a late husband killing his widow with a salt mortar for remarrying to his mortal enemy. The witnesses could not see the ghost, but everyone beheld a mortar lifted in the air.⁸⁴

In the early modern period the number of troublesome ghosts significantly increased. Taillepié wrote about ghosts who made a mess in the house by drawing blankets and linen off the beds, smashing crockery and pots, breaking

80 Taillepié, *A Treatise*, 76–7.

81 R.C. Thompson, ed., *The devils and evil spirits of Babylonia: being Babylonian and Assyrian incantations against the demons, ghouls, vampires, hobgoblins, ghosts, and kindred evil spirits, which attack mankind, translated from the original Cuneiform texts, with transliterations, vocabulary, notes, etc.*, vol. 1 (London: 1903), xxiv.

82 Finucane, *Ghosts*, 11.

83 Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, vol. 2, lib. 7, XXII, 68–72; Lucian of Samosata, "The Lover of Lies," 364–9.

84 Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, eds. and trans. S.E. Banks and W. Binns, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: 2002), lib. 3, c. 99, 752–754.

doors off the hinges, throwing stones, and making noise at night by moving kitchen utensils and furniture.⁸⁵ Similar symptoms were exhibited by an English poltergeist described in the 17th century by Glanvill. Members of the unfortunate household haunted by the evil spirit saw shoes flying across the room, bed linen being torn off the beds, and the chairs walking as if alive. Sometimes the family heard panting, purring, or scratching, as if an animal was around. The children were afflicted particularly badly and eventually had to be removed from the house. Horses suffered too, one of them was found on the floor of the stables, with a hind leg stuck in its mouth so firmly that several men had to remove it with a lever, and the same poltergeist snipped a pair of pincers at the nose of a local blacksmith. The absurdity of these interactions makes one wonder if Glanvill's account was not meant to amuse.⁸⁶ Baxter described objects thrown and furniture dancing in the house haunted by an evil spirit, which eventually showed itself in the form of a "blackamoor child," clearly the continuation of the medieval tradition of describing demons appearing in the shape of Ethiopians.⁸⁷ Another vivid story about a poltergeist is the abovementioned account of Mrs Furze's post-mortem activity provided by Aubrey. A barrel full of salt marched between rooms, an andiron laid itself over a pan of milk which was being warmed up on the fire, and two flitches of bacon came down from the chimney where they were hung and landed on top of the andiron. Periwig, clothes, and gloves were torn to pieces. Mrs Furze herself appeared in various forms: her own, as a horse, and as a dog breathing fire. The latter shape clearly corresponds with the image of a demon, described by Gervase of Tilbury.⁸⁸

The proliferation of poltergeists went hand in hand with another trait—over the centuries the number of stories featuring revenants which cannot communicate to the living directly has significantly increased. While classical ghosts appeared to the living in a visible form and usually explained their cause, medieval revenants often needed to be first addressed by the living, for otherwise they had no power to speak.⁸⁹ In a number of stories ghosts performed certain services, or, on the contrary, appeared frightening and dangerous, in order to

85 Taillepié, *A Treatise of Ghosts*, 78–9, 106.

86 Glanvill, *Saducismus*, 270–85.

87 Baxter, *The Certainty*, 144. For medieval examples see Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, lib. 8, c. 17, 238; William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, Rolls Series 82, vol. 1 (London: 1884), lib. 2, c. 21, 151.

88 Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, lib. 3, c. 70, 692–4.

89 See n. 2 above.

get the attention of a living person. The spirit from the first story of the *Byland Collection* helped the living man to carry a sack of beans, in exchange for an absolution. Before doing it the ghost captured the attention of the living man by appearing first in the form of a horse, standing on its rear legs, and later as a whirling heap of hay with light in the middle.⁹⁰ The spirit in story number eight also sought help, following a certain William of Bradeforth crying “how how how” in a horrible voice, and appearing to him later in the shape of a pallid horse, apparently, a common animal for ghosts to turn into. Not being too sympathetic, William bid the spirit in the name of God and in the virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ to leave him alone. Hearing this, the ghost withdrew and assumed the appearance of a four-angled rotating piece of canvass. “From which he [William] understood that it was a spirit wanting greatly to be invoked and efficiently helped,” concluded the Byland monk.⁹¹

As shown in the previous section, the early modern period still has examples of ghosts able to speak, though the number of stories about ghosts who had trouble interacting with the living significantly increased. Throwing objects and causing havoc, these restless spirits completely lacked the skills of communication, often staying invisible and conveying their messages by knocking. This was the main way of communicating employed by the ghost of a dead nun Alis, described first in 1528 by Adrian Montalambert, and later included by Nicolas Lenglet-Dufresnoy in his collection of ghost stories.⁹² Aubrey in his *Miscellanies* dedicated a chapter to how inexplicable knocks were omens of someone’s approaching death.⁹³ Compare these uncertain timid signs to much more prominent medieval ones: Thietmar of Merseburg described death being foreshadowed by the dead grunting or conversing loudly.⁹⁴

Glanvill’s poltergeist also negotiated with the living only by means of knocking. Adhering to the Protestant doctrine, Glanvill explained that his evil spirit was the devil. Therefore, the latter has also become more modest in his appearances to the living, abandoning his favourite medieval activity of moving around dead bodies and making them speak. Divine manifestations were also occasionally reduced to weird sounds. Sir Thomas Tresham, a leading Catholic loyalist in Elizabethan England, reveals in one of his letters how, while one

90 James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 1, 414.

91 “Ex quo colligitur quod fuit spiritus desiderans magnaliter coniurari et efficaciter adiuvari,” James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 8, 419.

92 N. Lenglet-Dufresnoy, *Recueil de Dissertations Sur les Apparitions, les Visions et les Songes*, vol. 1, part 1 (Paris: 1751), ch.5, 15–28.

93 Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, 117–18.

94 Thietmar, *Chronicon*, vol. 9, lib. 1, c. 13, 18–20.

of his servants was reading the *Christian Resolution* out loud for him, God indicated His approval by three loud knocks “as yf yt hade been with ane yron hanmer.”⁹⁵

6 Bodies of the Walking Dead and the Loss of Control

The image of walking cadavers in written narratives underwent a similar transformation. In classical sources souls of the dead that returned to their dead bodies could use them exactly in the same way as when they were alive. In fact, classical restless dead were described as undistinguishable from the living.

Medieval narrators started to touch upon the issue of putrefaction. William of Newburgh wrote that the Berwick and the Anantis cadavers were decomposing and hence spread pestilence in the area. The 13th-century *Cambridge Dominican Collection* described a walking corpse with a swarm of huge flies whirling around his neck, a detail which could also point at putrefaction. In the Icelandic *Grettir's Saga* (ca. 1325) the corpse of Glam, a grumpy shepherd killed in mysterious circumstances and turned into a revenant, was blue and swollen to the size of an ox.⁹⁶

Furthermore, authors in the Middle Ages started to describe the dead body of a revenant not as an aid for the soul to communicate with the living, but as a burden. Medieval restless corpses were less talkative than their classical and early-Christian counterparts, often they just groaned and murmured.⁹⁷ For example, walking dead in the later Middle Ages did not use their tongues to speak. Consider how the Byland monk described the undead Robert of Killeburne: “he spoke from inside of his bowels and not with his tongue but as if from an empty barrel.”⁹⁸ Probably the narrator imagined the soul was sitting inside the corpse as if inside an empty barrel, which caused the voice to echo.

Unable to explain themselves, late medieval and early modern walking dead did bizarre things instead. In a story from a collection of sermon manuscripts in medieval French, created in Brittany in the early 15th century, a dead baker returned to help his family knead the bread. His efforts were not appreciated, and the living chased him and broke his legs in order to stop his wanderings.⁹⁹

95 *HMC Report on MSS in Various Collections*, vol. 3 (London: 1904), 92.

96 *Grettir's Saga*, eds D. Fox and H. Pálsson (Toronto: 1974), ch. 32, 72.

97 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, vol. 2, lib. 5, c. 24, 478–9.

98 “loquebatur in interioribus visceribus et non cum lingua sed quasi in vacuo dolio,” James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories,” § 3, 418.

99 Hervé Martin “A la recherche de la culture populaire bretonne à travers les manuscrits du bas Moyen Âge,” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 86/4 (1979), 631–3.

In addition, walking dead resorted to one common activity, which has been overlooked by previous scholarship: they returned to spend a night with a living person. Indeed, Phlegon of Tralles's story of Philinnion, a maiden who after her death left her grave for a love affair with her parents' guest, clearly gave inspiration to a number of narrators.¹⁰⁰ In medieval England the motif was repeated by William of Newburgh in his story about the restless corpse from Buckinghamshire (see above). In the early 16th century Alessandro Alessandri, a notary from Naples wrote a somehow similar story about a man, who had buried his friend but was visited by him at night as he was lodging in an inn on his way back from the funeral. The corpse said nothing, but undressed and got in the bed, embracing his living friend. The latter, seized by fear, kicked the dead man, thus warding him away.¹⁰¹

Another version of this trope was retold in the late 1220s by Jean de Mailly in his work *Abrégé des Gestes et Miracles des Saints*. On the feast of St Mary Magdalene, Peter's stepfather ordered him to plough the land. Being angry at having to work, Peter cursed his oxen and the plough, and, as a result, was punished by divine justice, as one of his legs was suddenly seized by fire. After numerous prayers and a trip to the church of the Virgin Mary, Peter was granted a new leg, and, in order to show his gratitude, decided to lock himself in a monastic cell and to live for God alone. Annoyed at Peter's virtues, the devil started coming to his cell every night in the shape of a naked woman, and the more vigorously Peter resisted, the more shamelessly the devil laid upon him. One night certain knights saw through the window of the cell Peter struggling with the woman. Being strengthened by their presence, Peter asked the knights to bring him a priest's stole, which he put around the woman's neck strangling her. The cell immediately got filled with stench, which made everyone present conclude that Peter had been troubled by the corpse of a dead woman possessed by the devil. This theory was further proven by the discovery of a torn and putrid shroud lying on the window of the latrine through which the woman had been entering the cell.¹⁰²

A story in a similar vein to Jean de Mailly's was retold in the late 16th century by Rémy: there was a certain man called Aulicus, whose deceased wife visited him the first night after her burial. They carried on living together for a while until an exorcist drew away the demon which was possessing the dead woman's corpse.¹⁰³ The same tale, also strikingly similar to de Mailly's, reappeared

100 Phlegon of Tralles, *Book of Marvels*, ed. and trans. W. Hansen (Exeter: 1996), 25–8.

101 Alexandri ab Alexandro, *Genialium Dierum Libri Sex*, ed. A. Teraqueau, vol. 1 (Leiden: 1673), 324–6.

102 Jean de Mailly, *Abrégé des gestes et miracles des saints*, ed. A. Dondaine (Paris: 1947), 322–4.

103 Rémy, *Daemonolatreiae Libri Tres*, lib. 2, c. 1, 180–181.

in the early 17th century in one of the letters of an English theologian, Daniel Featley. A French advocate was seduced by the devil who assumed the shape of a beautiful lady. In the morning a dead woman was discovered in his bed. It turned out that the body belonged to a woman who had recently been executed, and her neck bore the trace of a rope.¹⁰⁴ As these examples demonstrate, the image of an early modern walking corpse, just like an early modern ghost, was largely based on earlier sources. Just like ghosts, over the centuries walking dead became less capable of conveying their messages, with their activities described as more and more difficult to interpret.

7 Conclusion

Narratives about revenants created between 1300 and 1700 bear a number of traits which indicate borrowings from earlier sources. These stories are based on a long trail of previous accounts stretching back to Classical Antiquity. This adherence to tradition makes ghost stories impermeable to social changes, and, as a result, they cannot be viewed as specific for a given period of time. There is no evidence for the influence of the Black Death upon the development of a ghost-story narrative, and while the Reformation had brought a few novelties, stories were still composed within the framework of a medieval plot structure. It is true that the images of a ghost and a walking corpse changed over the centuries, with both being described as less and less powerful when it came to communicating with the living. However, the onsets of these changes can be noticed before 1300, meaning that the developments we have noticed between 1300 and 1700 constituted a continuation of processes which had started long before. Thus, while the world of the living underwent numerous trials and tribulations, the world of the dead remained surprisingly consistent, reflecting tradition and continuity, rather than contemporary events.

104 A.A. Wood, *Athenae Oxoniense: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford*, ed. P. Bliss, vol. 3 (London: 1817), cols. 166–168.

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